

PART II

21st-Century Narratives of World History

Ah Love, could you and I with Him conspire,
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire!

...

The sages who have compassed sea and land,
Their secret to search out, and understand, —
My mind misgives me if they ever solve
The scheme on which this universe is planned.

*Omar Khayyam, The Rubaiyat*¹ (12th c.)

NOTES

1. Omar Khayyam, The Rubaiyat, in *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam: Comprising the Metrical Translations* by Edward Fitzgerald & E.H. Whinfield, and the Prose Version of Justin Huntley McCarthy, ed. Jessie B. Rittenhouse (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1900), pp. 44 (Fitzgerald Version) and 172 (Whinfield Version). The poem was originally written in 1120 CE, and first translated into English by Fitzgerald in 1859. In a version designed for reading aloud, “Him” in the first line is translated “Fate” (http://w.okdac.net/docs/PERFORMANCE_SCRIPT.pdf; last accessed: July 28, 2016). I intend no suggestion that world history is necessarily based on ‘intelligent design’ in quoting this passage, only intimation of its complex and continually contested interpretation.