In England, France, and the Netherlands, the study of Near and Middle Eastern languages (e.g., Arabic), cultures (e.g., the manner and customs of the modern Egyptians), and religions (e.g., Islam) resulted from these countries’ colonial exposure to large numbers of subjects sharing those tongues and persuasions.¹ In German-speaking countries, however, the interest in Classical Arabic was purely academic, if not, in its very beginnings, theological. The first Jewish lexicographers and grammarians of Hebrew in Muslim medieval Spain and North Africa recognized Arabic as a cognate of Hebrew, which knowledge spread to Christian scholars during the Renaissance. The study of foreign cultures for their own sake (or rather, for the sake of broadening the intellectual and anthropological horizon of their students) was not achieved before the Enlightenment. Still, the great Göttingen biblical scholar and Arabist J. D. Michaelis inspired the Danish expedition to Arabia in 1761–1767 hoping for “einen glücklichen Erfolg sowohl für die Förderung der Wissenschaft im allgemeinen, als auch für die nähere Deutung der Heiligen Schrift im besonderen.”² The study of language and literature, treated very much

¹ See E. Said, Orientalism (1978); in the present volume, Said is engaged by A. W. Hughes (89–91) and N. Sinai (145).
as “dead” as Classical Greek and Ancient Latin, remained the domain of German “oriental studies” well into the twentieth century. Such study focused on philology, history, maybe literary studies; Muslim religion and theology found a handful of students only, of which the first and some of the most influential, as the volume under review shows in detail, did not originate from the German academic mainstream but from the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, that is, modern Judaic studies that commenced in the nineteenth century.

Three programmatic essays serve as an introduction. “‘In the Full Light of History’: The *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and the Beginnings of Critical Qur’ān Research” (11–24), by A. Neuwirth (repeated in German, 25–39) presents the Qur’ān as a piece of religious literature from Mediterranean late antiquity. It demands for its full appreciation both “Western” historical-critical approaches and a thorough knowledge of the rich and very polyphonic traditional Muslim interpretation (*tafsīr*)—and variant readings. Historical-critical investigation of the Qur’ān was inaugurated by Abraham Geiger, founder of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in Germany, by his doctoral dissertation “Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen” (What Did Muhammad Receive from Judaism?) from 1833, and culminated between 1937 and 1939 with Heinrich Speyer’s *Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran*. Jewish scholars were predestined for this research by their knowledge of Arabic (indispensable for the study of medieval Judaism from Spain to Iraq) and their acquaintance with the phenomenon of “rewritten Bible” in the haggadah, a type of literature to which the Qur’ān basically belongs. To this observation, which remains fundamental but might serve to propagate an unfair image of the Arabian prophet as a “copy-cat” (which is exactly his perception in the Christian polemics from Saint John Damascene to Nicolaus Cusanus and beyond), one must add, from a post-colonial perspective, that there is never, in the exchange of nonmaterial goods between peoples, reception without transformation and hybridization. Reception is, like reading, a very creative act. Neuwirth demonstrates very well the tremendous loss for Qur’ānic research (or, at least, for its quality) by the forced demise of Jewish scholars from German academic life after 1933. In the contributions of non-Jewish researchers, the Qur’ān has not been spared any of the theories (or fancies) of biblical exegesis, from the veneration of “prophetic genius” (J. Fück, T. Andrae) and attempts at source criticism (R. Bell) to radical “revisionist” redactional criticism (J. Wansbrough). Neuwirth, on the basis of her own form-critical study of the Qur’ān (in the tradition of W. Richter), rightly points out that the Qur’ān, from the time when Muhammad recited—and thus taught his followers—the first sūras, was a collective possession of the community and inscribed in its memory as much as on parchment (or palm leaves).

M. J. Marx presents, under the heading “Ein Koran-Forschungsprojekt in der Tradition der Wissenschaft des Judentums: Zur Programmatik des Akademievorhabens Corpus...”
“Coranicum” (41–53), the Berlin project that commenced in 2007 and has two parts. The textdoku
mentation will establish the first historical-critical edition of the text of the Qur’ān, in which variant readings from both ancient manuscripts and Muslim Qur’ān
exegesis will be entered. The second part, a historical-critical commentary to the Qur’ān,
will be based on a collection of intertexts, exemplified by Q 112:1, “Speak: He is One
God,” and the Shema (Deut 6:4), “Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is One,”
on the one hand, and Q 5:110; 3:47–50 and the Gospel of Thomas 2. For the sake of this
commentary, a collection of texts from the Umwelt of the Qur’ān is also inaugurated. This
all sounds very promising and is documented by a number of (sometimes hardly legible,
due to the reproduction technique) printouts from the project’s databases. Page 44
announces the presentation of first results in the Internet by 2009; even now, the website
(http://www.bbaw.de/bbaw/Forschung/Forschungsprojekte/Coran/de/Startseite/) contains
only the project description.

W. Homolka, in “Das Erbe der Wissenschaft des Judentums im Religionsdialog heute”
(55–61), states, possibly as a surprise to some, that Judaism and Islam are much closer to
each other than they are to Christianity; recalls the positive attitude of Muslim societies,
prior to the late twentieth century, toward Judaism and Jews when the attitude of most (if
not all) Christian states was negative to very negative; and hopes that the integration of
historical-critical readings of the sacred texts, as achieved by Judaism in the course of the
nineteenth and twentieth centuries, might point the way to Islam in the twenty-first
century. A reader asking In which Judaism? finds the answer in a lengthy quote from
Rabbi E. H. Yoffie’s speech to the Islamic Society of North America from 2007 (55–56).

The first main part, “Abraham Geigers Leben und Werk (1810–1874) und die Wissen-
schaft des Judentums,” comprises the following essays: S. Heschel, “Abraham Geiger and
the Emergence of Jewish PhiloIslamism’ (65–86); A. W. Hughes, “Contextualizing in
Context—Orientalism and Geiger’s Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume
aufgenommen? Reconsidered” (87–98); and Ch. Schulte, “Kritik und ‘Aufhebung’ der
rabbinischen Literatur in der frühen Wissenschaft vom Judentum” (99–109).

The second part, “Koran-und Islamstudien aus der Wissenschaft des Judentums,” covers
“The History of Heinrich Speyer’s Die biblischen Erzählungen im Quran” (113–16), by
Franz Rosenthal (d. 2003), who corrects the widely assumed but wrong date 1931 for its
publication; “Josef Horowitz—Ein jüdischer Islamwissenschaftler an der Universität
Frankfurt und der Hebrew University of Jerusalem” (117–30), by G. Jäger; “Der Gefangene
von Budapest: Ignaz Goldziher (1850–1921) zwischen Tora und Koran” (131–43), by F.

3. It might be advisable to add all known Aramaic versions of intertexts drawn from the Hebrew or
Christian Bibles, for this is, in all probability, the language in which these texts entered Arabia.

The third main part offers “Studien in der Tradition der Wissenschaft des Judentums” under the heading “Der Koran und seine spätantike Umwelt.” A. Neuwirth, in “Psalmen—im Koran neu gelesen (Ps 104 und 136)” (157–89), draws attention to a regrettable gap in comparative biblical and qur’ānic studies, which are mostly preoccupied with narrative texts. The “liturgical” character of the Qur’ān clamors, however, for intertextual readings in the context of Jewish, Christian, and biblical liturgies, which consist largely of Psalms and its applications. This essay is a promising beginning of much more that could and should be done. I would, however, recommend on the side of the biblical texts to use the commentary of E. Zenger and F.-L. Hossfeld instead of H. Gunkel’s outdated romanticism. Q 55:26 recalls, at least to my ear, Ps 102:12–13 rather than 104:29, 31 (157). D. Hartwig, in “Der ’Urvertrag’ (Q 7:172): Ein rabinischer Diskurs im Koran” (191–202) traces the motive of God’s giving of the Torah at Sinai from the Bible via rabbinical exegesis to the Qur’ān. R. Leicht’s “Das Schriftlichkeitsgebot bei Darlehensverträgen im Koran (Sure 2:282)—Perspektiven eines Vergleichs mit dem rabinischen Recht” (203–21) proposes that Hellenistic juridical literacy was transmitted to Muhammad’s community via rabbinic law. This article illustrates well the “Empty Hijaz” fallacy (cf. M. Marx, 51–53). The author is unaware of the rich language of contractual law attested in Aramaic from the Nabatean realm (the Babatha archive) and in Greek from the Ghassanid’s sphere of influence (the Petra papyri), which, together with the unbroken tradition of script and writing that leads from Nabatean Aramaic to Early Standard Arabic and, finally, to the language of the Qur’ān, leads to the probability that legal and commercial literacy was part and parcel of Mecca’s and Medina’s social life at the beginning of the seventh century C.E. The same criticism—too much dependence on literary texts, too little acquaintance with the epigraphic and iconographic evidence—mars L. Amman’s attempt to describe “Der altarabische weltanschauliche und religiöse Kontext des Koran” (223–33). The impact of pre-Islamic Arabia’s Christianity on the Qur’ān, minimized by Amman, is paid due attention by I. Toral-Niehoff, “Eine arabische poetische Gestaltung des Sündenfalls: Das vorislamische Schöpfungsgedicht des ‘Adi b. Zayd” (235–56). The poet was a Nestorian Christian who lived in the second half of the sixth century C.E. The last contribution switches from pre-Islamic Judaism (and Christianity) to post-Islamic Judaism: A. Kosman, “Giving Birth between the Horizontal and the Vertical: The Sarah-Hagar Narrative and Its Impact on the Medieval Jewish Attitude to Islam” (257–78). As

4. I regret that Rosa Klinke-Rosenberger was deemed of too little import for qur’ānic studies to be covered in this section, although her edition of Ibn al-Kalbī’s Kitāb al-ASNĀM should have shaped the perception of ancient Arabian “paganism” by numerous scholars who worked in this field for the past sixty years.
an appendix, A. Sh. Bruckstein presents her project of a “transnational platform for Jewish-Muslim cooperation in philosophy, science/humanities and art” (281 n. 3): “Manifest: Ha’Atelier—Werkstatt für Philosophie und Kunst: Für eine Renaissance der jüdischen und islamischen kosmopolitischen Traditionen” (281–88). Finally, there are a list of contributors and indices.

The origins of Islam stand not so much “in the full light of history” as nineteenth-century historians believed and as some of their twenty-first-century successors still maintain, who tend to reconstruct history on the basis of ancient historiographical narrative. The only reliable and contemporary source for these origins is the Qur’ān itself—if read in the context of the totality of its intertexts and in its social context, which modern anthropology might help to elucidate. The ocean of intertexts—especially if one includes epigraphy, archaeology, and iconography—is seemingly endless and definitely contains more items than a single scholar or a single generation of scholars can be fully aware of. Even if there are probably more data than any publicly funded research project can be able to engage in its lifetime, the Corpus Coranicum is a necessary, timely, and valuable project to which one can only wish the best of luck; it is introduced by the present volume very well.