The current method of editing classical Arabic texts was devised in the second half of the nineteenth century. Initially, the publishers and editors were professors at European universities who had expertise in classical Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, Arabic, and Persian texts. The art of editing (fann al-taḥqīq), as it has become commonly accepted, does not preclude European interest in the Classical Arabic Heritage (turāth) prior to the nineteenth century. European Classicists began to edit and publish Arabic texts as early as the sixteenth century. They carried out their work, however, in different contexts relating to the study of the Bible’s Old and New Testaments and to polemics against the Qurʾān, as well as to the study of the medical, philosophical, and mathematical texts which had been translated from Arabic into Hebrew and Latin during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. These prior historical moments (viz., the twelfth- and thirteenth-century translation movement, early modern studies of the Bible, and the sixteenth-century Humanists) have been for some time incorporated in studies of Islam’s relationship with the West and the role of Arabo-Islamic mediation between Ancient Greece and Medieval Europe.1

Rather, what I discuss here is the movement to publish Arabic texts during the nineteenth century. This movement occurred within three new contexts: the rise of Historismus (Historicism); the European Enlightenment; and the great movement of European expansion in the “Old World,” especially in the Asian continent. According to the famed German historian of Historismus, Friedrich Meinecke (1862–1954), both the Enlightenment ideals and Historismus originated in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For it was in these two centuries that the idea of Europe came into existence originating out of a powerful and dialectical movement that found expression in: the excavation and search for European origins; the use of these origins to define other features of the present; the rush to reform the European cultural and scientific spheres from within; and the bold expansion into the non-European world under the pretext, or without pretext, of missionary activity. This search for European origins revived interest in the Greek and Roman eras that created novel texts, images, events, characters, and empires.

These studies led to a new approach to Islam and Islamic civilization and also aided in determining features of the present since the Ottoman Empire still posed a standing challenge to the West. The push for cultural reform and revival coupled with expansion into Asia from the Near to the Far East placed European intellectuals at the forefront in the European confrontation with Arabs and Muslims. The notion of a revival based on classical origins and the idea that historical knowledge is the foundation for the understanding of that glorious past is located at the nexus of the Enlightenment and Historismus. Renaissance means, among other things, the return to Greco-Roman origins effaced by Christianity. History that is based on revived texts of its past is a tool that enables a civilization to renew awareness of itself and the world. Thus, it was at the turn of the nineteenth century that the humanistic revival movement made the study of Classical history its most important science, with its main fields of inquiry classical philology followed by comparative linguistics: Indo-European and Semitic.

From these two origins, the Ideological/Revivalist and Philological/Historicist, European scholars of Semitic studies published Arabic texts as the basis for understanding Islamic civilization and its origins. As was the case with Historismus, attention was first given to linguistic, literary, and poetic texts, then to historical and geographical texts and to employing what was amassed during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and Renaissance Humanism for the publication of religious texts. Three interesting facts inform these move-

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