

Acceptance Speech of

PROFESSOR MANSOUR I. AL. HAZMI

Co: Winner of the 2001
King Faisal International Prize for Arabic Literature

Friday 16 February 2001 (22 Dhu Al: Qedah 1421H)

Your Royal Highness, Prince Abd Allah bin Abd Al: Aziz
The Crown Prince, Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers and
Head of the National Guard
Your Royal Highnesses
Your Excellencies
Distinguished Guests

Assalam Alaikum

This is a memorable occasion for me. It is also a splendid scientific and cultural event which the King Faisal Foundation holds in the wonderful city of Riyadh (*Hajar*), the cradle of classical Arabic poetry of the 5th century, and the capital of Arabic culture at the turn of this century. Fifteen centuries have elapsed between tradition and novelty, but this is a short period in the age of the universe, although we, human beings, find it long and wearing. Through the centuries, *Al Yamama* has lived numerous precious moments and many glorious days. Tonight's celebration is one of

them. Each year, the minds and hearts meet here, and hands from all parts of the world shake. Each year, the festival returns, talents blossom and aspirations grow.

Tonight's ceremony echoes the past, when our forefathers gathered in the open desert to cherish and celebrate poetry. They, too, commissioned a jury to judge poets and select the best of them. In those days, poetry was the "knowledge" in the Arabian peninsula, and the peninsula was the world. Today, knowledge and the world grow fast. Some say that this growth and expansion bring goodness and happiness to humanity. I wonder what happiness, what virtue, there is, when we see Muslims and Arabs falling victims of aggression in many places? The concept of globalization we talk about so much these days was upheld decades ago by the late King Faisal, though his approach was different. His was a globalization of virtue and universal fraternity. It is heartening to see his sons following his steps. May Almighty Allah reward them, and all lovers of peace, justice and humanity throughout the world.

I will not talk about the Prize since people throughout the world know and respect it. But I must commend its tradition of changing the topics of the Prize annually to allow as many scientists and intellectuals as possible to look forward to winning it. This year's topic for Arabic Literature was devoted to studies of modern Arabic literature and, for that reason, King Saud University nominated me. I am proud to have been servant of that university since its early years, specifically since 1959. My memory goes back to that year, when I not only dared to teach my students about arts of the Arabic novel but also to hold a public lecture jointly with my colleague, Mansour Al-Khiraiji, on Damanhouri's Arabic novel *The Cost of Sacrifice*. It is heartening to see tonight that King Saud University did not forget its veterans. It makes me happier to realize that my efforts, and those of my Department, the Department of Arabic Language, have come to fruition. Today's extensive research into the treasures of Arabic literature was hardly known in the old days, when most of the attention of Arab critics and writers was centered on poetry.

I conclude by extending warm thanks to the patrons of the Prize, to His Royal Highness Prince Khalid Al-Faisal, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Prize, Dr. Abd Allah Al-Uthaimin, Secretary General of the Prize, members of the Selection Committee and all the staff of the Prize. I wish them and the Prize continued success.

Salam Alaikum.