

Speech by
Professor Pierre Larcher

I feel immense pride and honor for receiving the 2026 King Faisal Prize for Arabic Language and Literature, whose topic this year is Arabic Literature in French. I also wish to express my deep appreciation to King Faisal Prize board and the refereeing members who have bestowed this distinction upon me.

I wish to extend my heartfelt thanks to the Institute for Research and Studies on Arab and Muslim Worlds, affiliated with Aix-Marseille University, where I serve as Professor Emeritus, for nominating and supporting my candidacy for King Faisal Prize.

Winning such an international prize is a tribute to half a century of continuous academic work in the fields of Arabic linguistics and the translation of Arabic literature, particularly pre-Islamic Arabic poetry; two disciplines closely intertwined. Pre-Islamic poetry occupies in the Arab civilization a place comparable to that of Homer's works in the Greek civilization.

Through my experience as a translator and my specialization in Arabic classics, I am convinced that poetry can only be truly translated through poetry itself. My translations, above all, rest on a linguistic analysis of the poems, carried out using the tools of modern textual linguistics.

Finally, I dedicate this prize to the memory of my mentor, André Miquel (1929-2022), who held the Chair of Classical Arabic Language and Literature at the Collège de France in Paris. He supervised all my academic work, beginning with my master's thesis in 1972, devoted to the structural analysis of the Mu'allaqat. He also wrote the preface to my translation of The Mu'allaqat, first published in 2000 and republished in 2015. That translation later enabled me to contribute to the French edition of the Mu'allaqat, Millennium Generation, issued by Ithra Center in 2022.