



**Press Statement by the Festival Director of the George Town Literary Festival  
5 July 2017**

## **The George Town Literary Festival returns for its seventh edition with the theme 'Monsters & (Im)Mortals'**

**George Town, Penang** – The George Town Literary Festival returns for its seventh edition this year with the theme 'Monsters & (Im)Mortals'.

In a world ruled by demagogues, we are reminded of a time when the immortals - the gods - ruled, where myth and legends pervaded our understanding of the world and the cosmos, where human beings were human and the gods immortal. Monsters lived in their midst and it was one of the reasons the gods went to war, to wage battle against fearsome beasts who threatened all manner of destruction. But there were also men who became monsters, who turned against all that was good and all that was human. 'Monsters & (Im)Mortals' looks at light and dark; of genius and madness, reality and fantasy, the element of the shadow in literature and of divine tragedy.

The GTLF is one of the most anticipated literary events in the region and was this year, shortlisted for the International Excellence Awards at the London Book Fair's The Literary Festival award, putting us on the world stage. Tan Twan Eng, Malaysia's first winner of the Man International Booker Prize has said: "One of the world's best literary festivals."

This year I am pleased to include two curators who will assist me in the festival programming. Joining the GTLF team are Gareth Richards and Pauline Fan, both excellent moderators, editors, writers and translators. The task of programming a festival of this scale is a feat in itself, and I am grateful that we are now able to include two other talented minds in the planning of this festival. We are also privileged to be working with the Penang Convention & Exhibition Bureau (PCEB) which has been tasked to be the official Festival Producer of the GTLF from this year forth.

Once again, we are privileged to welcome writers from all over the world and we have confirmed luminaries like David van Reybrouck (Belgium), Mei Fong (USA/Malaysia), Laksmi Patmunjak (Indonesia), Gerður Kristný (Iceland), Paul McVeigh (Northern Ireland), Kosal Khiev (Cambodia), Sonny Liew (Singapore), Ulrike Draesner (Germany), Caroline de Gruyter (Netherlands), Maung Day (Myanmar) and our very own Zen Cho, Fahmi Mustaffa, Rahmat Haron, Latiff Mohidin and many more.

The GTLF draws local and international audiences, features writers, poets and performers from all over the world, and most importantly, celebrates world literature. Many students and teachers of literature and creative writing attend the festival, and they come from all over Malaysia and beyond, making this a yearly pilgrimage.

The GTLF celebrates the written and spoken word in all its glory, in multiple languages and multiple forms. Our themes have often resonated with the state of the world, and we task our writers with engaging on many levels – provoking them to challenge the role of the writer and poet in society – which is now, more crucial than ever.



We will continue to have riveting conversations, panel discussions, a poetry marathon, book launches, workshops, and for this first time this year, we will also host a Translators' Roundtable, featuring writers and translators Jerome Bouchaud (France/Malaysia), Lee Yew Leong (Singapore/Taiwan) and Muhammad Haji Salleh (Malaysia) and more. This half-day event aims to give more visibility to the role of translators in local literature, and to also highlight the many issues that translators face today. The Translators' Roundtable will be curated by Gareth Richards and Pauline Fan and is made possible by the Penang Institute and Gerakbudaya Bookshop Penang.

We are also pleased to announce the Fay Khoo Award for Food and Drink Writing, created in memory of this daughter of Penang, who lived with passion and love for food, and who lost her swift battle with cancer earlier this year. The winner for this year's inaugural award will be announced at the festival. This year's GTLF will continue to acknowledge the winners of the DK Dutt Memorial for Literary Excellence, now in its 3<sup>rd</sup> year.

We are, as ever, grateful to the continued support from the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Embassy of Belgium in Malaysia, the British Council, the Goethe Institut, Culture Ireland, the South Australian Writers Centre, the Icelandic Literature Centre, Gerakbudaya Bookshop Penang and many more. We are indebted to your continued support in the spirit of exchange and of bringing writers from your countries to share and engage with our writers and audiences.

Finally, the George Town Literary Festival is made possible by the State Government of Penang, Penang Global Tourism and PCEB under the directive of Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng, in the belief that freedom of speech and expression is necessary in creating a cultured society that celebrates discourse, diversity in thought and language, and understanding of its own humanity.

The George Town Literary Festival, which continues to be free and open to the public, is one of the most anticipated festivals in the region, and we welcome you to join us in Penang this year.

Thank you.

**Bernice Chauly**  
Festival Director