

For Immediate Release | 23 March 2022

## Launching Irene Gammel and Jason Wang's Book *Creative Resilience and COVID-19*

In March 2022, two years after Ontario announced its first death by COVID-19 and declared a provincial state of emergency, COVID-19 is finally an endemic. Yet the long-term impact will be felt for years to come. The difficult years of the pandemic have taught us resilience, survival, and community building, despite the crisis's impact on increasing social inequalities, isolation, and despair. What is the role of the Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences in helping us cope with the COVID-19 pandemic? What lessons can they teach us for future disasters of this type?

Readers will find answers to these questions in *Creative Resilience and COVID-19: Figuring the Everyday in a Pandemic*, to be published with Routledge in late March 2022. Edited by Irene Gammel and Jason Wang, this book is the result of an international conversation and a unique network of scholars cultivated via the Modern Literature and Culture Research Centre, which provided a timely platform to discuss humanities-oriented responses throughout the pandemic.

*Creative Resilience and COVID-19* examines arts, culture, and everyday life as a way of navigating through and past COVID-19. Drawing together the voices of 23 international experts and emerging scholars from Canada, Germany, Kazakhstan, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States, this volume explores themes of creativity and resilience in relation to the crisis, trauma, cultural alterity, and social change wrought by the pandemic.

One chapter contemplates the outbreak narrative in Fang Fang's *Wuhan Diary*, written between January and March 2020, a participatory online diary forum in which the audience helped shape the lockdown narrative. Another essay contemplates the soundscape of the pandemic, the sudden silence that filled the streets, yet also the computer-mediated music that originated in the bedrooms of teenage stars who sought to escape the isolation during lockdown. Other essays explore the myriad of visual responses to COVID-19, such as American writer-artist Amitava Kumar's fragile and haunting collage postcards in which he overpainted obituaries from the *New York Times* with a flower from a bouquet his wife had brought home. When you look closely at the image, used for the cover artwork, the words "pandemic" and "COVID-19" can be discerned. As the book reveals, these expressive works emphasize the emotional landscape of the pandemic: countering the increasing inequalities and frustrations; the closing of businesses and the growing sense of isolation; along with creative action. More than just constituting a documentary record of COVID-19, the art works and writings discussed assumed an aesthetical dimension during the crisis helping with loss, mourning, and trauma. As this collection documents, creative practitioners also draw attention to the artist's own evolving subjectivity during the pandemic—recording the dailiness of tragedy and adaptation.

The book fills an important scholarly gap, providing foundational knowledge from the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic through a consideration of the arts, humanities, and social sciences. In doing so, *Creative Resilience and COVID-19* expands non-medical COVID-19 studies at the intersection of media and communication studies, cultural criticism, and the pandemic.

*Creative Resilience and COVID-19* will be launched on **April 14, 4—5 PM EDT**, with the international contributors and Routledge editors participating. The event is moderated by CBC anchor **KELDA YUEN** and features Live greetings from special local and international guests including University President Mohamed Lachemi. This event is Zoom-mediated, and open to the public.

## INTERNATIONAL PRAISE FOR *CREATIVE RESILIENCE AND COVID-19*

“In this time of crisis, never had there been a better time to spotlight the cultures and practices of everyday life. The contributions to this wonderful book show in compelling and often heart-breaking ways just what it has been like to live with fear, grief and loss in pandemic conditions. But there is also an abundance of hope and meaning making emerging across these essays, captured in ways that invite the reader to enter into the worlds of people enduring these COVID times.”

-- **DEBORAH LUPTON**, University of New South Wales, Sydney, co-editor of *The COVID-19 Crisis: Social Perspectives* (Routledge)

“Irene Gammel and Jason Wang have put together an intellectual’s guide to the COVID-19 pandemic’s effects on our everyday lives. From labor struggles to ‘Netflix and chill,’ this edited volume explores how the pandemic rearranged everyday life, and it connects those changes to the medical, political, and social struggles that have defined this moment. Reading these essays, I remembered things from the pandemic that I had already forgotten, and I am glad to have this book as a way to keep that time with me.”

--**DANIEL WORDEN**, Rochester Institute of Technology, author of *Neoliberal Nonfictions: The Documentary Aesthetic from Joan Didion to Jay-Z* (University of Virginia Press)

“Creative Resilience and COVID-19 offers a vital record of these times, tracing how, amid the vast scale of a global pandemic, the patterns and details of daily life profoundly change. The collection’s scope stretches across continents and cultural mediums and draws on a rich set of creative responses—from music, theatre, film, photography, diaries, graphic memoirs, and social media, to architecture, city planning, and public life and health. The essays illuminate the overt and subtle shifts the pandemic has brought to individuals and communities, asking central questions about survival, resilience, and recovery. An invaluable, timely volume for the COVID era.”

--**ELIZABETH OUTKA**, University of Richmond, author of *Viral Modernism: The Influenza Pandemic and Interwar Literature* (Columbia University Press)

“A thoughtful and timely book on the unprecedented non-medical effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the intersections of media and communication. This book raises important questions on the new veracities of life during the pandemic and helps us to understand present-day realities. The clarity of authors’ writings on various topics dealing with media and communication makes the book accessible to students, academics as well as anyone who would like to make sense of the impact of the pandemic on everyday life.”

--**VALERIE VISANICH**, University of Malta, author of *Education, Individualization and Neoliberalism: Youth in Southern Europe* (Bloomsbury)

## THE PANDEMIC WEBINAR SERIES AT THE MLC RESEARCH CENTRE

*Creative Resilience and COVID-19* grew out of the initiative of the [Pandemic Webinar series](#) at the [Modern Literature and Culture \(MLC\) Research Centre](#). The webinar series was launched in late March 2020 and is still running—the longest cultural and arts-focused initiative addressing the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada and possibly in the world. To date, there have been over 60 international speakers and experts and around 2,000 participants, offering an international dialogue on the role of the arts and culture in navigating the pandemic and preparing for post-pandemic recovery.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, TO BOOK AUTHOR INTERVIEWS, & REQUEST IMAGES, CONTACT:**

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