

H-France Salon  
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### Remembering Dominique Kalifa (1957-2020)

Venita Datta, Stéphane Gerson, and Robin Walz

This H-France Salon is the result of a friendship the three editors shared with Dominique Kalifa. It was born in the immediate aftermath of his untimely passing on September 12, 2020, in a flurry of emails, texts, and phone calls. As we mourned Dominique, we decided to honor his memory by asking colleagues, on both sides of the Atlantic, to share personal memories as well as reflections on his wide-ranging oeuvre and his central contribution to our academic world. The Salon includes eight essays by eleven contributors from France, the United States, and Canada as well as a recorded roundtable featuring three other scholars based in the U.S. and France. The international scope of Dominique's work included exchanges with scholars in other parts of Europe, Latin America, and Asia as well; this Salon is by no means comprehensive.

We begin with essays by two of Dominique's long-time contributors and friends. Marie-Ève Thérénty explores his investigations of a "*régime médiatique*," which encompasses representations, material and institutional frameworks, and social practices, while Anne-Emmanuelle Demartini traces the evolution and ramifications of his influential concept of *l'imaginaire social* as it played out in space and time. The next three contributions are devoted to Dominique's role as a writer, scholar, and colleague. Stéphane Gerson explores the multi-faceted poetics of his writing, between *déambulation*, *enquête*, and *montage*. Quentin Deluermoz, Thomas Dodman, and Hervé Mazurel illuminate his role as a *passeur* who established new bridges between disciplines, between generations of scholars, and between the academic and non-academic universes. Drawing from her own past experiences as a doctoral student in literary studies, Mélodie Simard-Houde emphasizes Dominique's central role as a mentor to countless junior scholars. The final three essays return to thematic explorations of Dominique's oeuvre. By inviting us to join her and Dominique on a vivid tour of the *bas-fonds*, Andrea Goulet illuminates his empathetic relationships with our past and present underworlds. Robin Walz retraces Dominique's resurrection of the Société des Amis de Fantômas, guided by a lifelong passion for *le roman populaire* that nourished his academic work. In the concluding essay, Venita Datta and Willa Silverman examine the final turn in Dominique's research: a critical exploration of *chrononymes*, these period names that constitute our relationships to time, memory, and history.

Together, these contributions help us grasp Dominique's contributions to the cultural and social history of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century France. From *l'imaginaire social* to *les bas-fonds* to *chrononymes*, he provided concepts and frameworks that many scholars have put to productive use in their own research. Skeptical of the ahistorical bent of structural linguistics and certain approaches in the social sciences, Dominique developed a historical approach to "truth production" that is materially grounded, culturally mediated through mass media, and in constant, dynamic reinvention and circulation. This approach is attuned to marginalized and scorned populations in the French metropole as well as its colonial holdings—what he called "les

envers de la société du dessus.” Again and again, the contributors recall a historian who viewed scholarship as a collective enterprise and displayed remarkable generosity (*bienveillance*) towards students and colleagues at all stages of their careers, within and beyond France. They also recall Dominique’s humor and zest, the spirit of eternal discovery, and the theatrical sense that turned his research and writing into a *ludique* pursuit, open to the darkest corners of the past as well as the most joyous dimensions of human life.

The past year has been one of grief and isolation and also, out of necessity, of new rituals of mourning. To honor Dominique, a man of the written word who gravitated toward the company of others, this forum closes with a round table among scholars who knew him and related to his work from distinct generational and field-specific perspectives. In conversation with Stéphane Gerson, Mame Fatou-Niang, John Merriman, and Miranda Spieler explore a work that was haunted by monstrosity and yet dared to confront the quotidian in all its dimensions. Melding emotion and intellectual reflection, they pay homage to a historian whose curiosity opened up new expanses, across the fluctuations of history and our own relationships with the past.

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### **Dominique Kalifa: Selected Bibliography**

This bibliography includes all of the parenthetical references referred to in the essays of this H-France Salon, as well as some of Dominique Kalifa’s significant works in French and English.

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