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## Gilles Chamerois: Obituary

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The life and works of Gilles Chamerois (1966–2021).

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There are few specialists of the works of Thomas Pynchon in France. Gilles Chamerois (11/4/1966–4/1/2021) was one of them, and a most active participant in International Pynchon Weeks, from one of the earliest, in Malta – the year he completed his PhD on “The Line and the Word in *Mason & Dixon*” – through IPW 2017 in France which he co-organized, to the latest to date, in Rome. Along the years, those attending his papers have all noted his keen eye for unexplored details in Pynchon’s works, be it open windows, wallpaper or alterations in galley proofs, and his talent for conveying profound critical readings in the most seemingly effortless manner.

In his early twenties, before he became an academic who specialized in the study of American literature, photography and film, Gilles had received formal training as an image technician at France’s top film-making school, École Nationale Louis Lumière. In his senior year, he was selected to spend a year as an exchange student at the Australian Film, Television and Radio School in Sydney. After graduation, he remained in Australia for a further two years, working in the film industry and as an independent film-maker. On his return to France, he continued working in the industry, mostly in television productions, while embarking on his second course of studies, in the English department at the University of Tours.

His Australian experience, coupled perhaps with impressions of his early childhood spent in Algeria, had imprinted a desire to look beyond the French borders – he turned his eye to America, devoting his early research work as a Master’s student to Raymond Carver’s volume of short stories *Short Cuts* and their adaptation by Robert Altman.

Early in his English studies, Gilles had shifted from the discreet position of the eye-behind-the-camera to the more exposed stance of the teacher – first as a French language assistant in Coventry (UK), then, having passed the most highly selective French teaching certificate (*agrégation*), as a teacher of English in French secondary schools. Furthering his interest in American literature, he completed a final Master’s thesis on Annie Dillard, following which he was hired as a Teaching Assistant at the University in Tours, while writing his PhD on *Mason & Dixon*.

His subsequent election to a teaching and research position in Brest, in the English Department of the University of Western Brittany, allowed him to bring together his various interests into a rich array of courses and further the joint exploration of literature and film. Most recently, he took an active part in the creation of a new Arts department, where he set up a curriculum in American Film Studies.

Since his earliest research on *Mason & Dixon*, Gilles remained a passionate reader of Pynchon and a prolific contributor to Pynchon studies, as is evidenced in Michel Ryckx’s precious bibliography (<https://www.vheissu.net/biblio/person.php?p=1960>).

He was looking forward to joining the first Canadian IPW, next year in Vancouver. He died last month of cancer, leaving his wife Pascale and their beautifully named sons, Jonas and Félix. “Death, no idle prankster, is always [...] just outside the window” – Gilles, who loved reading, dreaming, riding his motorbike, and sharing good food with good friends, died on April first, aged fifty-four.

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### **Competing Interests**

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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