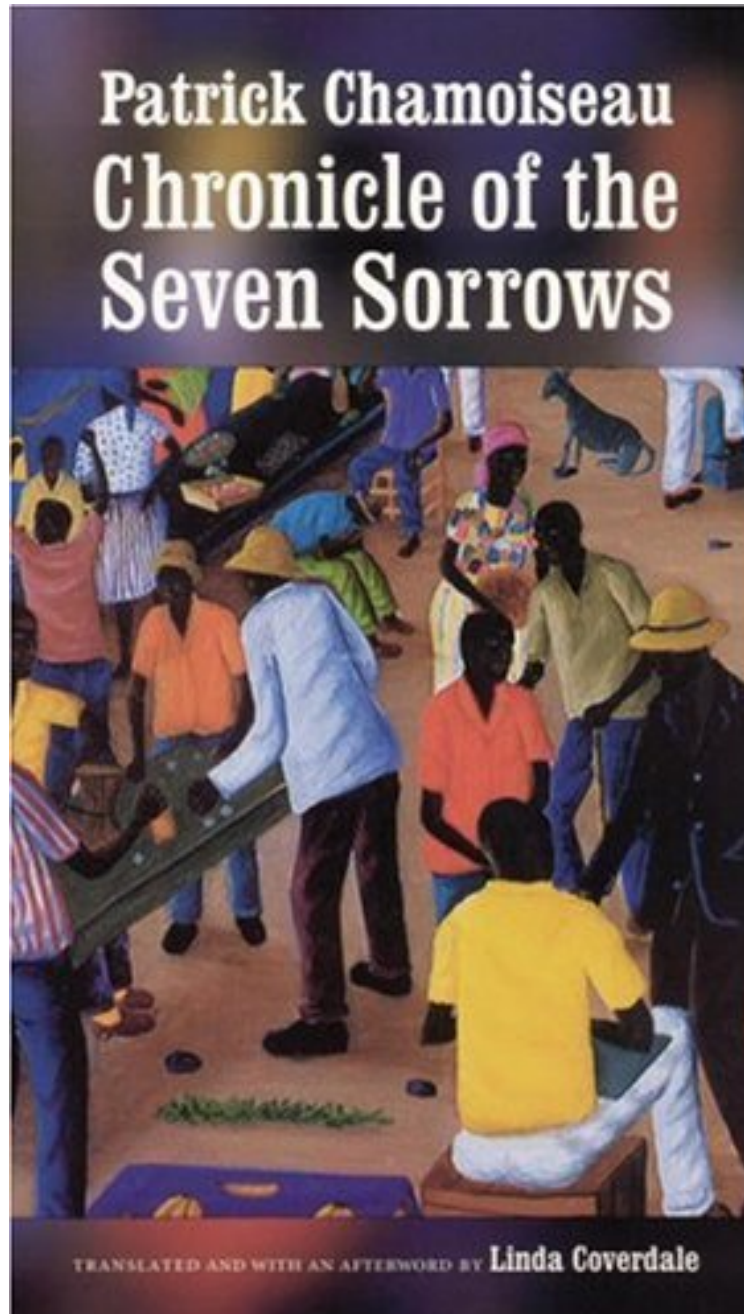


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Chronicle of the Seven Sorrows

Patrick Chamoiseau

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Patrick Chamoiseau : Chronicle of the Seven Sorrows before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Chronicle of the Seven Sorrows:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A Glimpse of the Martinique We've ForgottenBy hikeeba_comSome of the best things we've ever been, the connections that make us who we are, will never be recorded in print. The life we lived and where we fit in survives only in memory. After those who knew us are gone, there will be no one to repeat our stories. Entire populations will vanish, perhaps to make a brief appearance in accounts of war or disaster. Don't let that happen. The people in Chronicle Of The Seven Sorrows will never grace the pages of textbooks. Their very existence is almost lost to time. A culture rich in heritage, beliefs, and far too much suffering has vanished. Only ghosts and a few authors like Chamoiseau strive to keep the past alive. It is our loss, you'll realize after reading Chronicle Of The Seven Sorrows. We have cheated ourselves and we have been cheated. There was a time in Martinique when its people still listened to the voices of ghosts, *dorlis*, and zombies. The undead as much a part of their lives as the buyers in the marketplace, and often, the only verbal link to their past. Memories of slavery, brutality, and stolen moments of joy, remained only beneath grave soil. And, while not everyone stayed to hear the song of their history, there were some who were unable to tear themselves away. Pipi Soleil, king of the marketplace *djobbers*, was one of the enchanted. He was destined to become the master of masters of the wheelbarrow and to be lured away from that exalted position again and again by the spirits' voices. His life story forms the core of this spellbinding and animated account of a lost time and way-of-life. Chamoiseau's words tumble over themselves, and read like a late-night storytelling session. Each tale attempts to top the ones before it. The conversational style recaptures the oral tradition and, like truly great gossip, captures the reader, too. The voice of Fort-de France, Martinique's vegetable market people spills out in an irresistible tangle. The residents of Chronicle Of The Seven Sorrows speak in the distinctive Creole tongue. Coverdale's translation retains that flavour and sound, so you may spend some time flipping to the notes in the back of the novel. Some phrases may need translation, but the momentary pause is well worth the detour; there is as much history in the notes as in the story. The original words are essential; when you spy on Phosphore the grave-digger and Anatole-Anatole (father and son *dorlis*) listening to the sad murmurs of the burial ground's deceased residents. Missing the wrenching questions of Afoukal the zombie would be a deprivation akin to his own. Yes. Most of the population of Martinique was undead. But how much more life they embodied! How much more they had in the time before progress and government "assistance" banished them to fading shadows. The people and cultures don't have to wither away. Fight back. Cherish every word of Chamoiseau's you can latch onto. The voice of the past of Martinique will make you grieve for precious things lost, and hunger for more stories to bring them back just once more.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. I recommend this to any Chamoiseau fanBy A CustomerIf you have read Chamoiseau's other novels, you should appreciate this. Although it is not as fully developed as his later novels, *Solibo Magnifique* and *Texaco*, it is a wonderful first novel. His style and personality as a writer are clear from the start. The reader gets a treat at the end. Included are several poems that Chamoiseau wrote that evoke the people, places, etc. These poems were written as part of the planning process of the book and even though they were left out of the text of the book, they capture the spirit.

Chronicle of the Seven Sorrows traces the rise and fall of Pipi Soleil, king of the wheelbarrow at the vegetable market of Fort-de-France, in a tale as lively and magical as the marketplace itself. In a Martinique where creatures from folklore walk the land and cultural traditions cling tenuously to life, Patrick Chamoiseau's characters confront the crippling heritage of colonialism and the overwhelming advance of modernization with touching dignity, hilarious resourcefulness, and truly courageous *joie de vivre*.

.com Pity the poor translator who has to grapple with Martinican writer Patrick Chamoiseau's playful and imaginative mélange of formal French and Caribbean Creole--but envy the lucky reader who gets to enjoy his tasty gumbo, Chronicle of the Seven Sorrows. First published in France in 1987, Chamoiseau's debut novel is reminiscent of the work of Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Salman Rushdie in its wild tumbling cascades of language, its host of characters, and its freewheeling use of magical realism. Consider, for example, the origins of protagonist Pierre Philomène "Pipi" Soleil: That evening, Hlose went to bed a virgin for the last time, because meanwhile, black Phosphore had revealed to his sorrowing son the Method he'd learned from a sepulcher, and had turned him into a *dorlis*. Anatole-Anatole's *modus operandi* remains unknown. People get lost in conjecture trying to figure out if he used the technique of the toad hidden beneath the bed, the one of the ant that slips through keyholes, or the one of three-steps-forward-three-steps-back that lets you walk through walls. The fact remains that on the evening in question, he found himself in Hlose's bedroom despite all locks and barricades. Putting his new expertise as a *dorlis* to work, he went inside her without waking her up and spent eight delicious hours on her sleeping body. When Hlose wakes up the next morning, bruised and bloodied, she knows she's been assaulted by an incubus and takes measures (a pair of black underpants worn backwards) to protect herself against him. Unfortunately, the damage has already been done, and nine months later she gives birth to a son, who eventually grows up to be "king of the *djobbers*." The novel's plot, such as it is, follows Pipi's fortunes as he wields his wheelbarrow through the crowded market streets of Fort-de-France. Chamoiseau structures his tale like a collection of oral histories, dipping in and out of the life stories of minor characters, circling back and forth in time to cover a wide range of topics from slavery to World War II to relations

between the white and black Martinicans. There's little if any real character development, but that's not what this "word scratcher" is after. In his dizzying cut-and-paste collage of Caribbean life, Chamoiseau is attempting nothing less than to communicate the soul of his homeland--a challenge at which he succeeds brilliantly. --Alix Wilber

From Publishers Weekly
Published in France in 1986 and appearing in the U.S. for the first time in Coverdale's excellent translation, Chamoiseau's first novel, written before *Texaco*, is an astonishingly assured piece of work. Famous for rejecting the Negritude style of writing, with its combination of leftist sentiment and archly Parisian French, Chamoiseau instead salts Creole narrative styles with vernacular phrases and riddles, songs and occult stories. Narrated by the departed spirits of the *djobbers*--independent haulers of goods--of Fort-de-France, Martinique, this novel, set between the 1940s and the 1970s, tells the story of master *djobber* Pipi. Born to Mam Elo and a *dorlis* (a kind of incubus), Pipi grows up in the streets of Fort-de-France. His first job, in the time of Vichy France, is transporting Gaullist Martinicans to British Dominica. He and his partner, Gogo, generally drop them in the drink, however, which backfires one night. When Pipi makes it back to land alone, he gives up his oars for a wheelbarrow. Crowned king of the *djobbers* for his knowledge of shortcuts and traffic, which he demonstrates in a race to transport a country vendor's giant yam, he is nevertheless unable to win Anastase, the beautiful daughter of a master of the martial dance called *laghia*, and he drinks himself into the gutter. Then he gets the gold bug, and takes up a vigil over the grave of a famous *zombi* named Afoukal, who supposedly guards a jar of gold. Through Afoukal, Pipi channels the African spirit of Martinican history. An immensely engaging comic figure, Pipi is the catalyst for a host of interlocking stories involving everything from gravedigging to *Aim? C?saire*. This hallucinatory, bottoms-up account of modern Martinique is a tour-de-force of nonlinear storytelling. Notes. (Nov.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal
Every great writer must start somewhere, and this novel was the jumping-off point for French Caribbean master Chamoiseau, winner of the Prix Goncourt for the revelatory *Texaco*. Published in France in 1986, the current work follows the fate of Pipi--"grand master of the wheelbarrow, king of the *djobbers*"--in the market of Fort-de-France, Martinique. Born rather miraculously of H?lo?se after Anatole-Anatole managed to penetrate her locked room as a *dorlis*, Pi-Pi (short for Pierre Philom?ne) serves as a pretext for telling the story of Fort-de-France's poor--and a beautifully told story it is, rich with wonderfully wrought characters. There's Gogo the Albino, the hard-working Clarine, the hapless Elyette--pierced by love while in a cathedral and widowed early, she takes up a trade in funeral goods--and many, many more. Throughout, their privations are evident, but the tone of the novel might be described as bustling, and the characters always sparkle with unrepressed life. Chamoiseau is a born storyteller, unspooling tale after remarkable tale like silken skeins, but the real star here is the language itself--so gorgeous, so delectable that you will leave the book feeling slightly drunk. Highly recommended. A
Barbara Hoffert, "Library Journal" Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.