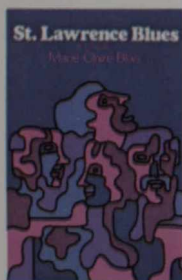


river profiles, tectonics, surface materials, wetlands, soil climates, vegetation, precipitation, growing seasons, frost, temperature ranges, explorations, northern settlements, population distributions, personal incomes, mother tongues, horses and sheep, forest products, fossils, fuels and pipelines and many, many, many more items of information. Some of the large maps (Glacial Geology, for example, on pages 33 and 34) could be prints of first-class abstract paintings. Others are extraordinary nutshells of staggering amounts of information (Posts of the Canadian Fur Trade on pages 79 and 80).

[A SUPREME INTERPRETER]



FRENCH CANADA is a distinct place. It is difficult for outsiders to see the intellectual and philosophical difference — the English-speaking tourist is prepared to be charmed and he is; he eats good meals in good restaurants, is impressed by the twenty-first century *élan* of Montréal and amused, perhaps, to find that waitresses and Métro change-makers address him in French. He is ready to say, "Vive le difference" (though not perhaps to pronounce it correctly) and go back to Cincinnati or Vancouver flushed with the realization that he, as a proper understanding of the Québécois.

Well, he hasn't, not exactly, and Marie-Claire Blais is here to assist the tourist of the mind. Her most recent novel, *St. Lawrence Blues*, translated into English by Ralph Manheim and published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., \$7.95, is dedicated to the late Edmund Wilson, who once said she was the supreme interpreter of the French Canadian world. She may well be.

The style is picaresque and in the end almost surrealist; the prose crisp, and the essence (to the English speaker) both familiar and exotic. Here is the opening passage:

"When I was a kid at the orphanage they called me Ti-Pit, when it wasn't Ti-Père, Ti-Cul, or Ti-Noir, and you know what that means in French? It means 'little nothing' or 'big hole in the ground.' I'm not like other people, no education at all, not a speck, but I catch words like the measles, I have these high falutin confabs with myself, that's my secret, words seem to pick you up when you haven't anybody else."

[PLAY TIME]

CANADIAN PLAYWRIGHTS have become increasingly visible as Canadian regional theatres have bloomed. Handsomely illustrated in three volumes, *A Collection of Canadian Plays* presents the logical result. There are fifteen authors and twenty-one plays, five authors to a volume. The publisher is Simon & Pierre, P.O. Box 280, Adelaide St. Station, Toronto, Ontario, M5C 1J0.

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