Neil MacKinnon — *This Unfriendly Soil. The Loyalist Experience in Nova Scotia, 1783-1791.* Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986. Pp. xii, 231.

In many ways, sound loyalist history only began to be written in the last twenty-five years. Earlier historiography seemed blighted equally by both the hagiographers and the villifiers. Few American historians have much understanding of loyalism, while elsewhere, the subject remained largely the domain of the genealogists, some of whom were audacious enough to write the initials U.E.L. after their names, as if it was some earned university degree or honour won on the battlefield. Today, their ideology and political history are much better understood, whether they settled in the British Isles, the West Indies or British North America. Much less well researched, perhaps because it seemed for long an unnecessary task, were the social and economic origins of the loyalist settlers and the impact they made in the first generation after their migration, especially on the lower provinces of British North America.

The thesis of this book, a revision of a doctoral thesis written in the 1970s, is found in the title itself. The soil of Nova Scotia has befriended few families since the Acadians were cruelly and stupidly deported in 1755, thereby setting back the colony's development by a generation. Nova Scotia disappointed many of its would-be settlers before the loyalists began to arrive, when the British army evacuated Boston in 1776. Those who found themselves in the province avoided the certain, if short-term, tyranny of the victorious American patriots for the long-term toil involved in attempting to tame a wild and largely unsettled place, whose climate and circumstances were almost everywhere inferior to those the Americans had abandoned.

Their modest hopes for political stability and of recouping their economic position proved for many utterly illusory. The problem, in the period up to 1791, was compounded by the bureaucracy's inability to cope with the large numbers which, perhaps, trebled the colony's population within twelve months, in 1783-1784. Led by an incompetent governor, John Parr, a military officer without imagination, sympathy or administrative flair. Admittedly, his responsibilities, in the short-run, were at least as onerous as those ever experienced in peacetime by any eighteenth-century governor in North America. Much land had to be surveyed quickly and lands granted. None of this was done well, swelling the sense of disappointment among the refugees. Although free provisions were distributed for several years, for many families, it was insufficient. An enormous amount of capital was wasted at Shelburne, enriching still further the New Englanders who provided so much of the supplies and building materials. Agriculture in the province could not meet the demands of the population, food had to be imported as well from the British Isles.

The best parts of the book are those which bring out the grim realities of these loyalist refugees. To have emphasised their disappointments and frequent failures was to have made a valuable corrective contribution to the historiography. In this, Dr. MacKinnon's work contrasts with the flawed study of Shelburne, *King's Bounty. A History of Early Shelburne, Nova Scotia* (1983). It goes beyond, while making use of Walker's excellent *The Black Loyalists: The Search for the Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone* (1976). It develops all the promises signalled in two previous articles by the author, articles which appeared earlier in *Histoire sociale — Social*

History (1972) and in *Acadiensis* (1973). Readers can now look forward to MacKinnon's next book as he completes his research, now well under way, on the first full generation of loyalist refugees in Nova Scotia. To aid him is an array of recently published guides and manuscript materials, some of them generated during the last few years as part of the international scholarly co-operation marking the bicentenary of the American Revolution and the War of Independence, which completed it.

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Robert Muchembled — *L'invention de l'homme moderne : sensibilités, mœurs et comportements collectifs sous l'Ancien Régime.* Paris: Fayard, 1988. Pp. 513.

Readers familiar with Muchembled's previous work will not be surprised by the thesis of this book, but many surely will be joined by first-time readers in applauding the visionary scope, interdisciplinary methodology and considerable synthetic abilities Muchembled brings to the writing of history. Using monographs and a variety of primary documentation from literature (like the *Cent nouvelles nouvelles*, or Guillaume Bouchet's *Serées*) to paintings, from civility manuals to *mémoires* and travelers accounts, from letters of remission to post-mortem inventories and royal *lettres de cachet*, Muchembled, in part echoing Norbert Elias' by now classic formulation of the civilizing process, consistently and forcefully argues that "the invention of modern man" is at once a product of "a growing perception of difference between the elite and the vulgar and a...power struggle within the human being against himself in order to repress his animality beneath a code of civility" (11).

In the premodern fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, in contrast to our own or even the seventeenth century, Muchembled contends that all social classes shared a world where violence was as "quotidian as bread" (16) and "filth, foul odor and scatology" (*la saleté, la puanteur, la scatologie*) were omnipresent. Indeed, the emergence of "the importance of odor as a factor in social differentiation" (51-52) came only in the seventeenth century, a clear sign for Muchembled that there was little cultural distinction, in the ethnological sense of the term, before that. In this rough-and-tumble world, all social groups mingled in a "universe" centered on the tavern, which functioned as a sort of school and, in the absence of institutions of justice, served as the choice place where the "eternal cycles" of vengeance and peace were balanced (Muchembled, here as elsewhere, reveals his methodological debt to structuralism and its assumptions about homeostasis). It was the place *par excellence* where the constantly rent social tissue was as constantly mended (32).

If there is a world that we have lost, however, it is this one. Muchembled repeatedly invokes the metaphor of a cultural trench which the modernizing process dug between the urban and rural worlds, and the first spadefuls were unearthed in the sixteenth century. This transitional period witnessed a widening gulf between city and country which led simultaneously to a "depreciation of the peasant" (44). One very