By the 1880s or 1890s the creation of the transcontinental Dominion, the partial settlement of and assertion of control over western Canada, the arrival of railways, and growing economic ties to the United States had created quite a different Canada. Indeed, the rather disappointing years from the Riel rebellion to the new prosperity at the turn of the century begs to be seen as a period of calm, albeit disappointing calm, between two quite dynamic eras.

There is another and very broad interpretive issue to be considered. On one side Nelles is writing a primer on Canadian history for a general audience. He says that he wants his book to give Canadians and travellers "a concise overview" of the basic elements of our history. On the other side, he says explicitly that this is a "personal interpretation, not a textbook" (p. ix) These comments are somewhat contradictory and reflect a degree of tension within the book. At times the work is refreshingly interpretive and has moments of rhetoric that are both iconoclastic and irreverent. The great hero Wolfe is more or less dismissed. The Winnipeg general strike "set back the organized labour movement in Canada by a generation" (p. 169). Even echoes of Creightonian distrust of the United States appear from time to time. At other times it has the characteristics of a text, covering the required facts with minimal comment, little anecdote, and fairly routine attention.

Most of all, in a personal interpretation of Canadian history, it would have been refreshing if Nelles had given us his sense of what Canada is all about. Nelles has a career of distinguished research and teaching. In these years he, like all of us, has confronted the many interpretations, myths, and clichés about our nation. We have been called the peaceable kingdom, the great multicultural experiment, the dominion of the north, and the conservative reaction to republican excess. We are cratophiles to our neighbour's cratophobia and we are the helpful fixers, the nation that was carpentered rather than forged, and so forth. Comment on these myths and, ultimately, on what, aside from change itself, Nelles sees as the essence of Canada would have taken the author out on a limb, but it would also have added much to the history.

Broad interpretations invite broad comment. In making mine, however, I do not want the most fundamental conclusion to be missed. This book is a real success and a valuable contribution to the reworking of Canadian history.

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OLIVER, Peter (ed.) — *The Conventional Man: The Diaries of Ontario Chief Justice Robert A. Harrison, 1859–1878*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press for the Osgoode Society, 2003. Pp. xii, 644.

A social historian running across the title of this volume in a list of new acquisitions would not likely linger on it more than a second or two, just long enough to decide whether or not to suppress an incipient yawn. The cover, with its portrait of the portly diarist in full judicial regalia, quill pen poised to sign some no doubt impenetrable

legal document, seems only to confirm the impression gained from the title. On closer inspection, however, the cover contains some visual clues that render the portrait less the confident portrayal of an eminent Victorian at the height of his powers, and more of a Lytton Stracheyesque deconstruction. The painting is a study in sinuosity and disorder, from the rich folds of the background drapery, to the parchment curling off the judge's writing table, to the extravagantly carved S-shaped legs of that table and the curvaceous chair supporting the judge's considerable bulk. Beside him, a large book lies carelessly open in an A-shape on the floor, spine in the air, pages awkwardly bent beneath the weight of the cover, as if thrown down by its user in a fit of petulance. Chief Justice Harrison stares defiantly, impatiently, at the viewer, interrupted, it seems, in the midst of an important task. Unbeknownst to him, much more important than any of his official duties, which left no discernible trace to posterity, was the maintenance of his diary. Through it, claims editor Peter Oliver, "we are enabled to enter in an extended way into the intellectual, spiritual, physical and emotional life of a man who died almost a century and a half ago", rendering the diary "one of the most remarkable documents of its type to survive from Victorian Canada" (p. 6). This reviewer wholeheartedly agrees with this assessment. The exegesis of women's diaries is almost a cottage industry in historical circles. Where, however, is the *journal intime* of a male figure to set aside those penned by women in such profusion? Charles Ritchie and Mackenzie King stand virtually alone on this particular shelf in the library of Canadian letters.

The tension between the public and the private Harrison displayed in the cover portrait is amply documented in the diary itself, which provides a rare look at the private turmoil swirling beneath the public façade of this confident Victorian jurist. Far from being a dry record of writs issued, clients defended, and thanks tendered to the deity for his ever-increasing material and professional success, Harrison's diary records primarily the highs and lows of his personal life — relations with his wives, children, parents, siblings, in-laws, and friends — along with reflections on his own triumphs and shortcomings, and miscellaneous observations about servants, clergymen, entertainments, and daily life in general. There is surprisingly little about politics and public affairs, and entries about Harrison's legal work are rather perfunctory, though occasionally spiced with pungent comments on judges and juries. If Harrison is conventional in many of his attitudes, as editor Oliver notes, he is seldom uninteresting — though in editing out some 70 per cent of the original for publication Oliver has no doubt excised most of the tedious bits.

Born in 1833 in Montreal to parents who had immigrated to Canada from Northern Ireland, young Robert moved with his family to Toronto as a child. He excelled at Upper Canada College, took up articles with a law firm at the age of 16, and later studied for a degree in civil law at Bishop Strachan's new University of Trinity College. One of his principals, John Hawkins Hagarty, later became chief justice of the court of Queen's Bench, reflecting "Harrison's unerring instinct to attach himself to the rising stars of the profession" (p. 4). The timing of Harrison's parents could not have been better. Their son's professional horizons expanded with the wheat boom and the relentless proliferation of the railways in mid-century southern Ontario, as Toronto and its hinterland experienced rapid commercial development. Harrison

easily straddled the roles of solicitor and advocate, advising large financial institutions such as the Royal Canadian Bank but also carrying on a large and diverse litigation practice. The railway allowed Harrison to follow the court circuits around the province with some ease as he appeared in everything from seduction actions to murder trials to complex commercial litigation.

First, though, Harrison gained invaluable exposure to the inner workings of government. Shortly after being called to the bar in 1855, he became chief clerk in the Crown law office — in effect, attorney-general John A. Macdonald's "first secretary". When the government moved to Quebec in 1859, Harrison moved into private practice with the security of having been appointed the attorney-general's agent in Toronto. There he remained until his appointment as chief justice of Ontario in September 1875, though he also served one term in the new Canadian parliament (1867–1872). Oliver asserts that Harrison was probably the busiest lawyer in Canada West in his heyday, with the possible exception of Matthew Crooks Cameron. His brilliant reputation overcame even the obstacle of partisanship: in a highly unusual move, it was the Liberal government of Alexander Mackenzie that appointed the Conservative Harrison to the bench. Unfortunately Harrison's judicial career was cut short after only three years: he died in office at the age of 45, apparently of heart disease.

The joys and sorrows of family life occupy equal space in Harrison's diary with his career. What strikes the reader immediately is the omnipresence of death in the Victorian home. Between the ages of 26 and 32, Harrison endured the deaths of his parents, two children (one at a year old, one at one week), and his first wife. Within this short span of time, as Oliver observes, Harrison "settled prematurely into middle age as a somewhat weary, rather jaded man who had accepted, although not before shedding copious tears, many of the harsh realities of nineteenth-century life" (p. 30). Harrison's siblings were also a source of worry, his sisters because of their difficulty in finding acceptable spouses, his brothers because of a failure to settle in acceptable occupations. His sister Ellen had to be packed off to England to save the family's honour after carrying on a notorious affair with a married man while she herself was married. It is not altogether surprising to read that, when searching for a second wife, Harrison rejected one candidate because she had "too many brothers and sisters" (p. 312). Even though Harrison's second wife was herself an only child, there proved to be ample scope for conflict between her and Harrison's daughter Anna from his first marriage and with his unmarried sister Sophia, who had run his household after the death of his first wife. For anyone interested in the history of Victorian masculinity, sexuality, marriage, courtship, and familial relations, this diary is a goldmine.

For those interested in the history of law and the legal profession, the diary is a valuable addition to the existing repertoire of primary sources, but less of a treasure than it is for social historians. Harrison's reflections on the judges and juries of his day are of interest, but his sketchy accounts of many of the thousands of cases in which he was involved are not of much value without more information than he tells us about the underlying proceedings. Probably the diary will be of most use in the short term in bringing to light cases that have until now slumbered in archival obscurity, including a number of trials for abortion and seduction. Harrison the law-

yer remains a somewhat more shadowy figure in the diary than Harrison the husband, father, and brother.

Peter Oliver has provided a 120-page introduction that functions both as a biography of Harrison and as an overview of the major themes of the diary. He has also provided biographical sketches of some of the figures most frequently encountered in the diary, but has not annotated the text itself except for the very occasional footnote. Some matters that are puzzling on a first read are clarified in the introduction, but others are not. At a minimum, some indication in the text of the diary as to where in the introduction certain incidents are explained would have been useful. I might have preferred a more intrusive style of annotation, but no doubt others will appreciate being able to read the diary "straight up", without editorial meddling. The historical profession — and, one hopes, some general readers — owe a debt of gratitude to Harrison's grand-daughter Barbara Goodfellow for labouriously transcribing the diary over many years, to Peter Oliver for performing "radical surgery" to bring it to publication, and to the Osgoode Society and the University of Toronto Press for publishing this very handsome edition.

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PÉTRÉ-GRENOUILLEAU, Olivier — *Les traites négrières. Essai d'histoire globale*. Paris, Gallimard, 2004, 468 p.

During the 1980s the late Serge Daget, specialist on the nineteenth-century French slave trade, once predicted that some day historians would finally succeed in synthesizing the impressive amount of research published on the history of the slave trade since the 1960s. Canadian historian David Eltis, with the aid of associates, has recently accomplished an important element of this task by providing a detailed statistical breakdown and analysis of the entire transatlantic slave trade and the ships involved in it from the sixteenth century through the nineteenth century (David Eltis, Steven Behrendt, David Richardson, and Herbert S. Klein, *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-Rom*, Cambridge University Press, 2000). Now Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau, expert on the financing of the slave trade at the Université de Bretagne Sud in Lorient, has chosen to build upon this and other research to go one step further. Exploiting the rich historiography published on the slave trade over the last 50 years — instead of primary sources of which this study is almost devoid — Pétré-Grenouilleau has provided us with an overview of the world-wide slave trade throughout the ages. In skilfully reading and interpreting the vast compendium of publications on the slave trade, he has been able to produce a wide-ranging summary and analysis, replete with personal reflections, of the transatlantic, Muslim, and African slave trade from antiquity to the present.

Pétré-Grenouilleau's intent was to write a global and comparative history of the slave trade for both historians and the general reading public that would destroy "the myths and persistent legends" (p. 7) prevailing on the subject. He approaches this