

## *My Life in Crime and Other Academic Adventures* By Martin L. Friedland

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is sometimes considered of “inferior” quality to the literatures of other nations, and excessively solipsistic, nationalist and regionalist.

*New Canadian Library* has the paradoxical effect of both emphasizing and undermining the importance of the NCL in Canadian literary history. In other words, it reminds us that Canadian literature as we know it is the product of a process of selection in which personal biases, pragmatic and financial concerns, and sometimes-questionable editorial practice have played crucial roles. But the book is not so much a critique of the NCL as a reminder that readers ought to be both critical of and grateful for the series.

It is hard to find fault with Friskney’s timely, readable, and reasonable book. It does, however, seem unusual that she divides it into two parts: “The Historical Narrative”

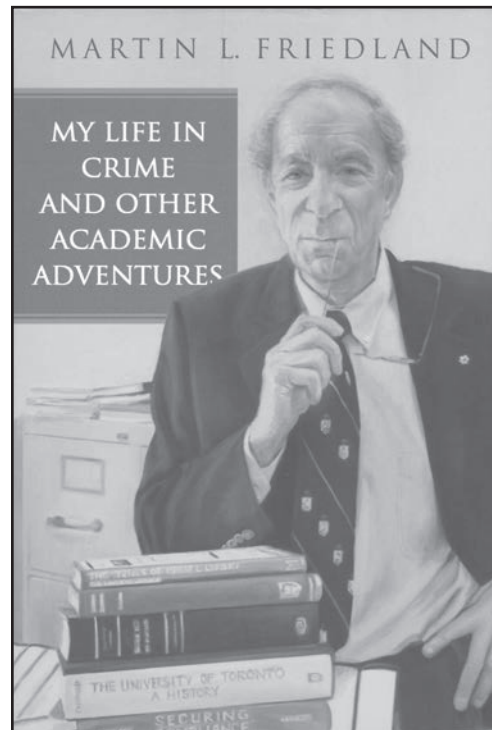
is obviously meticulously researched and makes a strong claim to authority despite its selectiveness and the absence of key documents. The second section, “Editorial Practices and the Selective Tradition,” deals with a variety of theoretical issues that grow out of the history: canonical processes, selection of texts, editorial practice. The book might have been more effective had it not been bifurcated in a manner that suggests that literary history and theory exist in different realms. Friskney’s observations, in fact, consistently remind us that it is impossible to separate the historical development of the NCL from a range of fascinating cultural forces and theoretical concerns.

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### *My Life in Crime and Other Academic Adventures*

By Martin L. Friedland. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007. xii + 513 pages. \$45.00 hardcover. ISBN 0-8020-9790-3 ([www.utppublishing.com](http://www.utppublishing.com))

This book will probably have a mixed reception, largely because the author is writing for two different groups of readers—lawyers and academics—and may not satisfy both. Friedland is an academic lawyer who spent his career in the Faculty of Law of the University of Toronto rather than in practicing law. Much of the book consists of discussions of his contributions to various commissions of enquiry into legal and public policy issues. While this material will be new to lay readers it may not be new to lawyers. He spends relatively little of the book in discussion of the academic side of his career. Although the author is a lawyer writing about the law, the book is accessible to a wide readership because it is free of off-putting legalese and post-modern jargon. Professor Friedland writes well.



He begins his book with the expected account of his early life: his upbringing in Toronto in the 1930s and '40s, undergraduate years at the University of Toronto followed by his introduction to law at the University's Faculty of Law, and research at Cambridge which led to a PhD. He describes weighing a career in the practice of law against the study and teaching of the law, finally coming down in favour of a life in academia. He taught briefly at Osgoode Hall before returning to the University of Toronto's Faculty of Law where he remained for the rest of his career. This first part of the autobiography tells us much about the author and makes an excellent introduction to the book.

Professor Friedland has concentrated his attention on his experience in research and writing about the law. Twenty-two of the twenty-eight chapters in the book are devoted to this theme. He clearly was sought after to participate in commissions of enquiry and he was happy to accept. Most of the chapters concern his contributions. Each reader will no doubt find some chapters more interesting than others. This reviewer—a non-lawyer—found the discussions of *The Enforcement of Morality* and *Gun Control* particularly notable. Unfortunately, there is a tone of self-congratulation in the reports that some may find irritating. Professor Friedland briefly allows his interest in the history of the law to intrude. He devotes a chapter to each of three murder cases that took place rather more than a century ago, one in the U.K., one in Canada and the third in the USA. Each gave rise to concerns about possible miscarriage of justice. These chapters make fascinating reading, and indeed Professor Friedland wrote a book about each investigation.

During his long career Professor Friedland published a great deal, a product in the main of his enthusiasm for research and his own hard work. He points out two aspects of his *modus operandi* that greatly helped him:

he negotiated with the various commissions with which he was working for the right to publish his contributions and, secondly, he made use of research assistants most of whom were law students. Little of his research seems to have been done without their assistance. Indeed he mentions in the Preface that over his career he had the help of “over one-hundred excellent research assistants.” (p. xi)

Although comments on university matters crop up in the legal chapters, Professor Friedland devotes only one chapter, ‘Deaning and the University,’ specifically to the U. of T. He began a seven-year term as Dean of the Faculty of Law in 1972 and devotes part of this chapter to his work as Dean. He reports that he came to office with three objectives in mind: (1) to revise the first year curriculum, (2) to integrate the School more closely with the University and (3) to improve teaching and scholarship. He considers he achieved all three. The remainder of the chapter concerns his service on University committees and the reform of the governing structure of the University. Indeed in this chapter discussion does wander a bit from one topic to another.

This is a book that will primarily interest students of the law and of legal education. Given Professor Friedland's decades of university life, his experience as an academic administrator, and his authorship of a recent history of the University of Toronto, it is surprising to find in his autobiography that he has so little to say about the changing state of academia and of the changes in the University of Toronto in particular. After all, the University is now a very different place from what it was in the 1950s and '60s.

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*Bibliography:*

Friedland, Martin L. *The University of Toronto: A History*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.