



SUBMITTED

Trinity Finlay

## One poet's long journey

Trinity Finlay content to live in Fredericton after residencies in Australia, Toronto, Sackville. Story by Thomas Hodd

Don't call Fredericton poet Trinity Finlay a Torontonian. She's about as close to being a Maritimer as you can get. You might even say it's in her blood.

"My grandparents were from Nova Scotia," Finlay jokes as we chat over coffee in the local Second Cup. "So I guess that partly explains it."

Dressed casually in a black summer dress that shows off the intricate tattoo on her right shoulder, the blond hair, blue-eyed writer chats openly about her love for the Maritimes and her new adopted home. Two years ago Finlay landed a full-time position at the University of New Brunswick teaching creative writing and Canadian literature and hasn't looked back. "We are so happy to be in Fredericton," she tells me.

But it was a long road.

Finlay was born about as far away from the Maritimes as you can get – in Melbourne, Australia, while her parents were on a two-year work exchange for the Toronto board of education in 1975-76.

Baby Trinity then moved to Toronto with her two older sisters, Tamara and Tracia, and the family resumed its place in their father's childhood home in the popular

east-end neighbourhood known as the Beaches. Finlay's parents were both educators. Her father was principal of a local elementary school and her mother taught Grade 1 French immersion.

"It was a wonderful area of town to grow up in. The bad part was that mom taught at the school we went to," Finlay says with a chuckle. "It was also difficult at times to find your own space. Between a disciplined household run by teachers and a busy schedule of tap dance, jazz and gymnastics I needed an outlet."

So at the ripe old age of six Finlay began writing poems and short stories. "I still have the journals," she says with pride.

Finlay was also a voracious reader. Her favourite authors weren't canonical greats like Jane Austen, Emily Brontë or George Eliot. Instead, Finlay gravitated to the new kid books section, especially Gordon Korman's Bruno and Boots series. "He was so inspiring," Finlay says. "I just worshipped him."

As for Canadian literature, she had to discover that later. "They didn't teach them much in high school," Finlay tells me. "Not only that. My parents were readers, but not buyers. So I had to go to the public library."

Finlay fast-tracked through public school, skipping Grade 2 and completing high school in four years (Ontario still had Grade 13 in those days). She then followed her mother's footsteps, and began studies at Mount Allison University in 1993. Finlay completed her first two years, but decided to take a three-year break from studies to work as a nanny in Toronto. She returned to Mount Allison in 1998 and graduated with an honours degree in English literature. It was also during this time that Finlay published her first poems.

"It was thrilling," Finlay says. "It really helped my confidence as a young writer."

Finlay was then accepted into the English and creative-writing program at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton, where she completed her master's degree. It was the first time she had ever experienced the support of a writing community. "It was different from anything I had experienced," she says. While in Fredericton she also met her future husband, Drew, who was an aspiring artist.

"He's also from Nova Scotia," Finlay says with a twinkle in her eye.

In 2002, the couple moved to Toronto and Finlay began doctoral studies at the University of Toronto. Two years later, she published her first collection of poetry, *Splitting Off*. That same year she and Drew got married. Then, in 2005, their son Sebastian was born. But something was missing.

"The only thing we would talk about was, 'When are we going back to the Maritimes and how can we get there?'" Finlay says.

Then the job came up at UNB Fredericton. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Now that Finlay's back, she keeps herself busy by teaching students about writing and literature, playing with her son, and reading mysteries and children's books. Her latest collection of lyrics, *Histories Haunt Us*, has just been released by Nightwood Editions, a small press in British Columbia that specializes in publishing the country's best new writers. Finlay is also hard at work completing her Ph.D. dissertation on the contemporary Canadian long poem.

On top of that, she has begun a new creative project, a long poem tentatively called *Scavenge*. "It's an unrequited love story," Finlay says. "Which is kind of funny because I never really experienced that."

Perhaps not in her personal life, but Trinity Finlay certainly has an inspiring passion for writing and New Brunswick. ☺

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