

Dinny Gordon, Intellectual: Anne Emery's Postwar Junior Fiction and Girls' Intellectual Culture.

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Abstract

In her *Dinny Gordon* series (1958–1965), junior novelist Anne Emery's heroine manifests intellectual desire, a passionate engagement in the life of the mind along with the desire to connect with like-minded others. Within a genre which focused on socialization and dating, in *Dinny*, Emery normalizes a studious, inner-directed, yet feminine heroine, passionate about ancient history rather than football captains. Emery's endorsement of the pleasure *Dinny* takes in intellectual work, and the friends and boyfriends *Dinny* collects, challenge stereotypes of intellectual girls as dateless isolates while suggesting an alternative model of girlhood operating within apparent conformism to postwar "good girl" standards.

JILL ANDERSON

DINNY GORDON, INTELLECTUAL: ANNE EMERY'S POSTWAR JUNIOR FICTION AND GIRLS' INTELLECTUAL CULTURE

In Anne Emery's 1961 junior novel *Dinny Gordon, Sophomore*, high school sophomore Dinny Gordon and her friend Melinda Jones stop by their town's public library, where Dinny happily checks out a new book on the Dead Sea Scrolls, held for her by the librarian. When Melinda, surprised, asks about her reading choice, Dinny replies, "Oh, I like books about finding the ancient world. . . . I'm going to be an archaeologist someday." Melinda, who has never heard the term, asks, "Why, for goodness' sake?" Dinny, hugging the book, responds, "Oh, well . . . I'm just queer for that sort of thing. I think it would be more fun than anything else," then adds, for the sake of the friendship, "Who knows? Maybe next year I'll decide to be a teacher," the more typically feminine profession Melinda hopes to pursue, though Melinda carefully adds that she would rather be a wife and mother.¹ What is remarkable about Emery's Dinny Gordon series is that Dinny never changes her mind. The character's passion for ancient history is established in *Dinny Gordon, Freshman* (1959) and continues throughout the series. Though her original circle of friends fails to understand her fascination with Latin and ancient history, beginning in *Sophomore* Dinny amasses like-minded friends—girls and boys alike—who share her intellectual orientation and support her progress toward her long-term goal of becoming an archaeologist.

Emery published four books in the Dinny Gordon series, the last of several junior novel series she wrote, with the final book, *Dinny Gordon, Senior*, coming out in 1965, two years after the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*. One of a number of authors who made names for themselves by writing for teenage girls, Emery, a former schoolteacher with five children of her own, wrote over twenty junior novels between 1946 and 1965. Emery consistently used the formulaic nature of the junior novel, with its emphasis



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