FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

General

**Fool**
Frederick G. Dillen
Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill
978-1-56512-234-5
(January 9, 1999)

It's tough to feel sorry, or feel anything, for privileged losers. Dillen (author of Hero) presents Barnaby Griswold, a wine soaked fluffmeister who eases into million-dollar deals between rounds of drinks and tennis at La Cote country club. The author smoothes through Barnaby's story early on with a conceited sense of omnipotence—the "hero" being presented with naked honesty, which robs the reader of the natural process of character-motivated psychological discovery.

Dillen redeems Fool though, when Barnaby's past—the ghost of his financially-failed father following him, offering sound money advice—and his present—a love interest with a golden-haired courtside debutante—collide with the predicted failure of a major oil investment. The author further engages his audience with Ada, Barnaby's ironic and lusty mother-in-law who is certainly one of the most interesting characters.

Barnaby is a fool who knows he is foolish— transcendent in beauty and time because foolishness is his charm and his saving grace. To be a fool and not know it is to subscribe to the country club inertia that has ruined many American entrepreneurs. But to be a fool and sell bad deals to other moneyed losers is a living.

Fool's seduction is that it takes a Griswold to recognize a foolish offer. In Barnaby's case, it's the Old Ladies Bank of Oklahoma— a meeting between the west and the northeast destined to leave bodies in its wake, yet it's as tastefully and bluntly presented by Dillen as Hemingway's childhood-inspired In Our Time stories.

Drinking and the giving up of drink torment Barnaby in a motivational way as suffering (for an alcoholic dreaming of that big glass of heaven) pushes the rawest of artists. Is Barnaby simply another son in the chain of conservative foolishness that has plagued his family, or is he the temporary light that leads the good people to safety?

Beating back against the waves of time that push us to the future is romantic in itself.

Being clever enough to pretend you’re dumb is Barnaby’s pot of gold.