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Theater BY ANNA GRACE

Ponder Like It's 1999

New Play will be read at Lord Leebrick Theatre

Where do I belong?
It's a question we all sit with, perhaps never more strongly than in our 20s.

It is a question that James can't shake. As New Year's Eve 1999 approaches, he returns to Road's End, where the past can illuminate the future.

Fin de Siecle is local author Greg Foote's latest play, and the last in his Road's End Trilogy (which includes *Road's End* and *This Patch of Sky*.) His work digs at deep questions and is critical of society's expectations. Smart, with a healthy dose of humor, Foote offers his audience an evening of "ah-ha..." So I was pretty stoked to hear he had another piece ready for a public reading, and I was curious as to what it is about these characters that keeps Foote returning to their stories.

"*Road's End* was never intended as a trilogy, or even a sequel," Foote says. What began as an epilogue became a second play, *This Patch of Sky*. "The trilogy resulted not so much from my love of the characters as from the progression of the lives of people of my generation," Foote notes. The plays begin with a character shipping out to the Vietnam War and ends in the months before the bombing of the World Trade Center.

While this play foreshadows the September 11th bombing, it "... is not so much about 9-11 as it is about Y2K, and, even then, the story is mainly about finding one's place in the world. The time periods help shape the story and the characters," Foote says. The title, which is French for "end of the century," refers to a period in French arts and letters at the end of the nineteenth century. "I saw parallels with the turn of the 20th-21st centuries and chose to use the title."

Many of Foote's plays feature wonderfully rich and realistic youth characters. *Fin de Siecle* includes Eli, a homeless teenager who is a refugee from

a fundamentalist Mormon community in Utah. I asked Foote how his work with teenagers (he is, among many other things, the "Mouth of South," announcing basketball and soccer games) informs his younger characters. He says, "I've resisted the pressure, and there has been some, to 'dumb them down' because my experience is that kids are often wiser than we give them credit for... I have been privileged to know some amazing kids, and I've tried to respect that in my characters."

This respect is evident throughout Foote's characters, making for a rich read. But while *Fin de Siecle* is already really good, it's still not finished.

His work digs at deep questions and is critical of society's expectations

No play is complete without audience feedback. The play will be read aloud by a group of well-known local actors (Colin Gray, Storm Kennedy and Paul Rhoden among others) under the direction of Carol Horne Dennis. There, Foote will judge audience reaction and make further edits to the play. A talk back will be held afterwards.

People of Eugene, this is your work. Show up, watch critically, be honest in your feedback. "It is truly a work in progress, but has reached the point where audience input is valuable," Foote says. The reading is free to the public, and it will make you laugh and think. So get out there and give 'em your opinion, make *Fin de Siecle* your play, too. **EW**

Fin de Siecle will be read at Lord Leebrick Theatre at 7 pm Wednesday, July 25. Admission is FREE.

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