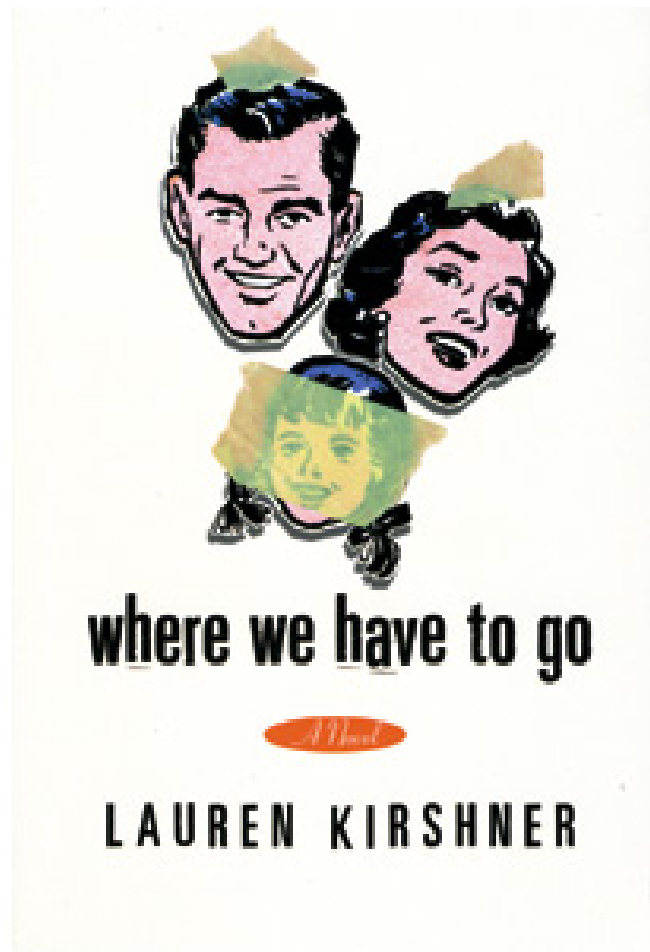


**CRAFTY KIRSHNER**

BY SUSAN G. COLE JUNE 16, 2009 12:59 PM



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**WHERE WE HAVE TO GO** by Lauren Kirshner (Emblem, McClelland & Stewart), 326 pages, \$22.99 paper. Rating: **NNN**

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It sure is hard being a teenager, and Lauren Kirshner makes that vivid in her very good debut novel.

[rssbreak]

Lucy's got a lot to worry about. Her parents are breaking up, she's too brainy to make it in the social scene and she's stopped eating.

Showing terrific powers of observation, Kirshner takes us through these teen experiences, making sure to add humour to the painful mix. Lucy's schoolmates may be cruel, but the writer knows how to use a witty metaphor to skewer them. Even a sequence set inside a home for the "criminally thin" can elicit a laugh.

Kirshner creates some appealing characters - especially Lucy's maybe-gay guy friend Tommy and her BFF Erin, whose appearance two-thirds in energizes the narrative just as it threatens to go flat.

A scene at the CNE where Lucy faints from hunger is a knockout, and the ruminations on the disadvantages of being smart ring true.

Like many first novelists, Kirshner wants to address all of life's major challenges. A major plot point toward the end comes out of the blue and could have inspired a book in and of itself.

And having worked with Kirshner when she contributed to NOW, I see that her style has grown more conventional. Hope nobody was reining her in. But this is an impressive debut from a gifted writer.

Kirshner launches *Where We Have To Go* Monday (June 22) at the Gladstone. [See Readings.](#)

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DECEMBER 15, 2014

*Critics' Picks Festive Season Queer Stage Theatre*  
**INTIMATE EXPERIENCES: BABY, IT'S COLD OUTSIDE**  
Dec 15, 2014 7:30 PM  
**BUDDIES IN BAD TIMES THEATRE**

*Critics' Picks Stage Theatre*  
**#UNCLEJOHN**  
Dec 15, 2014 7:30 PM  
**THE GREAT HALL**

*Critics' Picks Music Pop/Rock/Hip-Hop/Soul*  
**CHUCK RAGAN, ADAM FAUCETT, EAMON MCGRATH**  
Dec 15, 2014 8:30 PM  
**HORSESHOE**

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