

from Donna Seaman, *Booklist* — “Joseph Coulson,” a review of *The Vanishing Moon*

Joseph Coulson

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The Tollman children — spitfire Phil, the eldest; musing Stephen, his shadow; charming but doomed Margie; and stuttering Myron — adore their lovely, competent mother and cannot forgive their lackluster father for allowing her to go blind. So destitute are they at the worst of the Great Depression that they end up living in a tent outside Cleveland’s city limits, where life is as brutal and sporadically transcendent as the moody Midwest’s meteorologic extremes. Assured and purposeful, first-time novelist Coulson infuses each surprising and evocative moment with great feeling and mythic resonance as he leapfrogs forward in time, subtly tracing the impact of the Second World War, the civil rights movement, and the Vietnam War on his emotionally damaged characters. Shifting between Cleveland and Detroit, and among several points of view, including that of Katherine, a brilliant pianist with whom both Phil and Stephen fall madly in love, Coulson writes with surpassing clarity and dignity about grief, anger, sexual passion, the need for art, brotherly love, and the resilience of good women, creating a somberly beautiful family saga.