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## from Viviane Crystal *The Historical Novels Review* -- a review of *The Vanishing Moon*

The endless possibilities for employment and prosperity after World War I slowly begin to crumble in the Great Depression. Indeed, symbolically and potently, Joseph Coulson describes the summer of 1931 as the "season of dying trees." Stephen and Phil Tollman heroically but ineffectively attempt to prevent the disintegration of their family in the midst of economic ruin, physical illness, tragedy and increasing despair. *Vanishing Moon* is the lyrical account of the Tollman family's demise, but it is so beautifully crafted that one keeps turning the pages rapidly; that is, when one isn't stopping to ponder its poignantly poetic phrases and sentences depicting the scenery and dynamic characters. Stephen possesses the most vivid narrative voice as he tells the tale of love and hate toward a father who loses the family's money, and who cannot prevent a mother's pending blindness nor a rebel brother's increasing and unresolved fury at "a life that demanded commitment but offered no guarantees because we are bound to promises that living will not let us keep." One also learns of the progressive history of the American railroad industry within these pages, the patriotic American response to World War II, and the rise of the unconventional feminine personality that refuses to conform to the expected social values of the time. A waxing and waning thread persists in comparing the two brothers whose sensitivity or lack thereof determines the resolution of so much pain prevalent throughout the entire story. Indeed, one must acknowledge it symbolic of what all of America was experiencing at that time.

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