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The Tender Passion, , , Peter Gay, Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 1986, 0195051831, 9780195051834, 490 pages. Education of the Senses , the first volume of Peter Gay's The Bourgeois Experience, was hailed as "a subtle, elegant, profound and prodigiously researched book" (Washington Post Book World), "the most learned, as well as the wittiest, survey of human sexuality ever to be published" (The New York Times). In this, the second volume, Gay continues his eloquent, psychoanalytically informed exploration of the lives of the Victorian middle classes. Whereas Education of the Senses focused on Victorians' sexual behavior and attitudes, The Tender Passion concentrates on their notions of love. Gay argues that, contrary to popular belief, Victorians were able to know love in its most exalted sense. "Freud was only summing up the current wisdom," he writes, "when he observed that 'a completely normal attitude in love' requires the uniting of 'two currents,' the 'tender and sensual.'" Beginning with the stories of two young men, one English and one German, Gay proceeds to a wide-ranging inquiry into the ideal and real meaning of love for the Victorians. Based on a vast amount of material--including philosophical treatises, medical texts, letters, diaries, works of fiction, and art--the book explores such topics as homosexual love, class differences in the perception of love, and the diversion of love in music and religion. There are also fascinating insights into the lives of eminent 19th-century figures, including Dickens, Stendhal, Balzac, Wagner, and Beatrice Webb. A work of remarkable erudition and analytical sophistication, The Tender Passion is an impressive addition to "one of the major historical enterprises of the decade" (The New York Review of Books)...

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