We barely glimpse Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) in this magisterial tomes first 75 pages, which are devoted to the revolutions wrought by the French people in politics and Immanuel Kant in philosophy. They must be understood, argues British scholar Nicholas Boyle in the second volume of a projected trilogy, because their impact transformed Goethes life and art: What had been a cultural quest, winding through the complex social certainties of the German ancien regime, became an interrogation of all levels of existence in an epoch of world-wide revolution and nascent Romanticism. Examining the period simplistically known as Weimar classicism (1790-1803), Boyle offers penetrating analyses of Wilhelm Meisters Apprenticeship, Faust: Part I, and The Natural Daughter, the works through which Goethe developed his mature theme of renunciation, the silence that acknowledges the absence from reality of the Ideal. But the author also limns with acuity Goethes relations with other German intellectuals, in particular his intimate friendship with Friedrich von Schiller, and his less rarified activities, notably the common-law marriage to a woman who rooted him in everyday life. This is not a book for the light-minded or easily daunted reader, but those up to its challenges will revel in a thrilling blend of comprehensive biography and an epic intellectual history. --Wendy Smith

My Personal Review:
I'm not a student or a scholar, I'm just a huge fan of Goethe, and he's not very prominent in America. There are two volumes out and a third planned for the biography...my recommendation is get a background in Goethe first. Werther, then Faust, Wilhem Meister, Egmont, Ellective Affinities, I also highly highly highly recommend Goethe's conversations with Eckermann. Nietzshhe called it the best book in the German languange and I have to
agree. In other words, develop a taste for Goethe, then Boyle’s biography will be an engrossing exploration of genius. It's not just the story of Goethe, it's a battle of enlightenment vs. romanticism, idealism vs. realism, Goethe vs. the world and Goethe vs. himself. The ideas here are bigger than the story. I'm at a loss as to how this biography was actually written. It's a major accomplishment to finish it, an even bigger one to understand it, an absolute triumph for Boyle in writing it.

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Goethe: The Poet and the Age: Volume II: Revolution and Renunciation, 1790-1803 (Goethe, the Poet of the Age) by Nicholas Boyle - 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!