



# **The Problematic Bourgeois: Twentieth-Century Criticism on Thomas Mann's Buddenbrooks and the Magic Mountain (Studies in German Literature Linguistics and Culture)**

*Hugh Ridley*

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Since their publication in 1901 and 1924, Thomas Mann's two great novels have established themselves firmly in the canon of the 20th-century novel. Critics have come to see them as exemplifying two major movements in literature: "Buddenbrooks" (1901), Mann's first novel, epitomizes the Realist mode of the 19th century, which the author both brought to perfection and began to question; "The Magic Mountain" (1924) is a classic of the Modernist movement, one of the novels which, like those of Proust and Joyce, completely changed perception of the genre. Their reception has taken on the exemplary qualities of the works themselves. Not just "dead classics", respected, but not provocative, the critical response to them, divided between admiration and hatred, has never been lacking. A daunting volume of secondary literature has grown up around these novels: some of the best (and worst) critics of the day have made Mann their subject, and changing tastes have affected their reception. Following the thread of major literary and historical developments - including the modernism debates and Freudian criticism - this account of Mann's reception sets the critical work against the background of the times.

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