



# **Fitzgerald's Mentors: Edmund Wilson, H. L. Mencken, and Gerald Murphy**

*Professor Ronald Berman*

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*Fitzgerald's Mentors* is a fresh and compelling study of F. Scott Fitzgerald's intellectual friendship with Edmund Wilson, H. L. Mencken, and Gerald Murphy.

Fitzgerald was shaped through his engagements with key literary and artistic figures in the 1920s. This book is about their influence— and also about the ways that Fitzgerald defended his own ideas about writing. Influence was always secondary to independence.

Fitzgerald's education began at Princeton with Edmund Wilson. There Wilson imparted to Fitzgerald many ideas about education and literary values, among them respect for the classics and an acute awareness of literary tradition.

In New York H. L. Mencken impressed upon Fitzgerald his belief in the stifling effect of public morality on writers. Furthermore, Mencken's *The American Language* changed Fitzgerald's thinking about the power of everyday language.

After moving to France in 1924, Fitzgerald's intellectual life took a very different turn. Gerald Murphy exposed him to the visual arts— including the work of Fernand Leger, Pablo Picasso, and Man Ray—and to people deeply interested in the perception of art in daily life. Equally important, Fitzgerald had many discussions about artistic values with both Gerald and Sara Murphy.

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