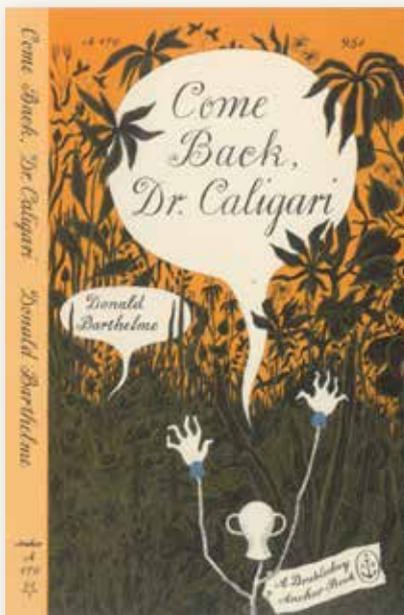
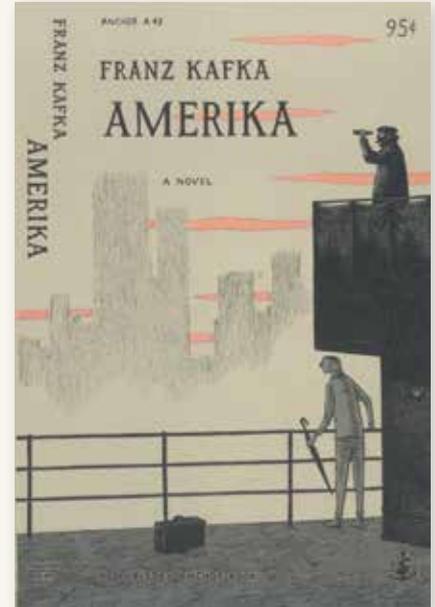
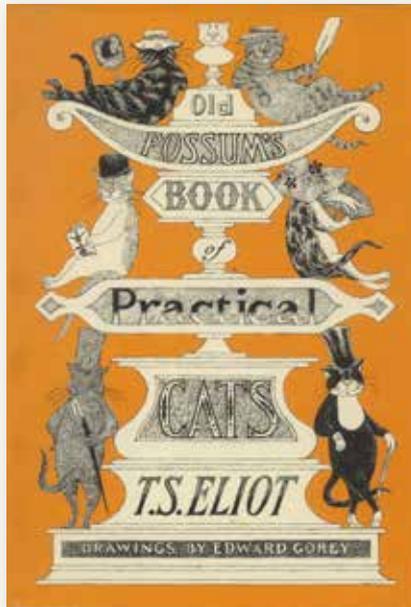
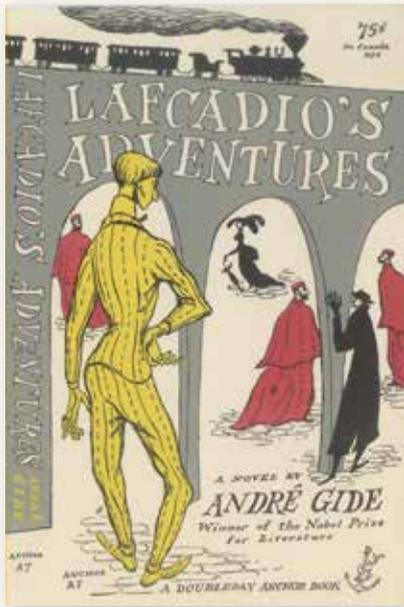
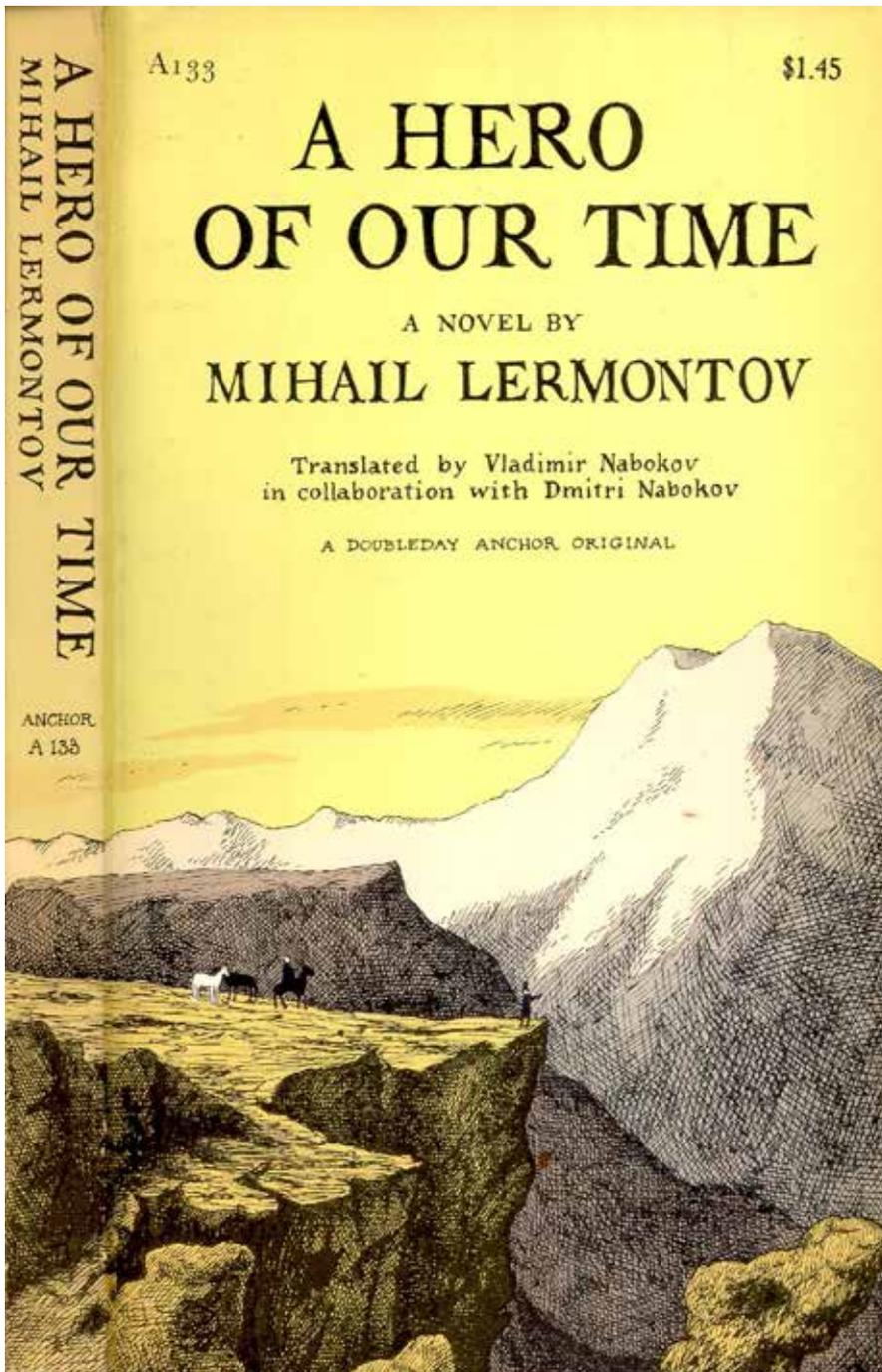


# Edward Gorey

## HIS BOOK COVER ART & DESIGN



Essay by **Steven Heller**



*A Hero of Our Time* by Mihail Lermontov  
Doubleday Anchor, 1956, PB

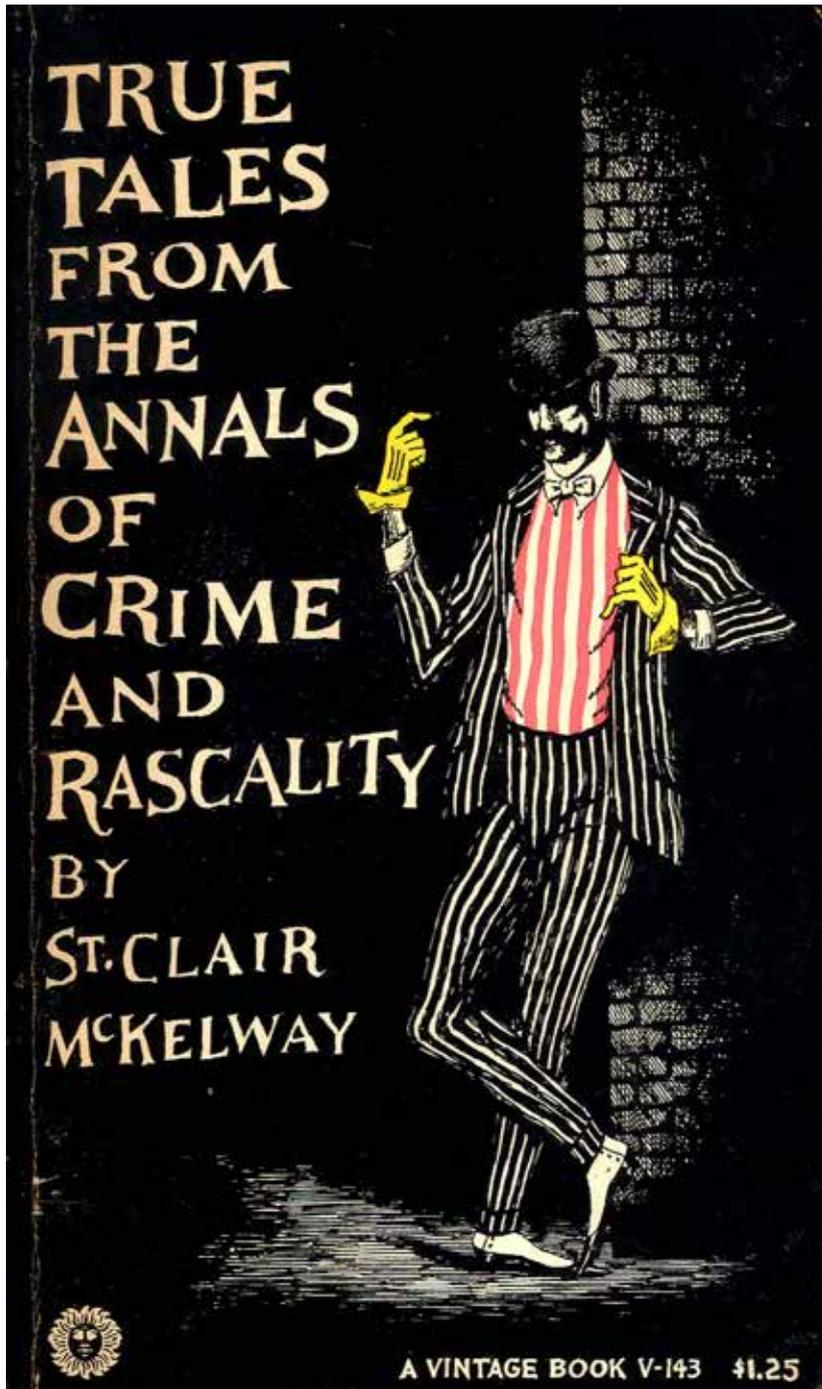
# EDWARD GOREY'S COVER STORY

Steven Heller

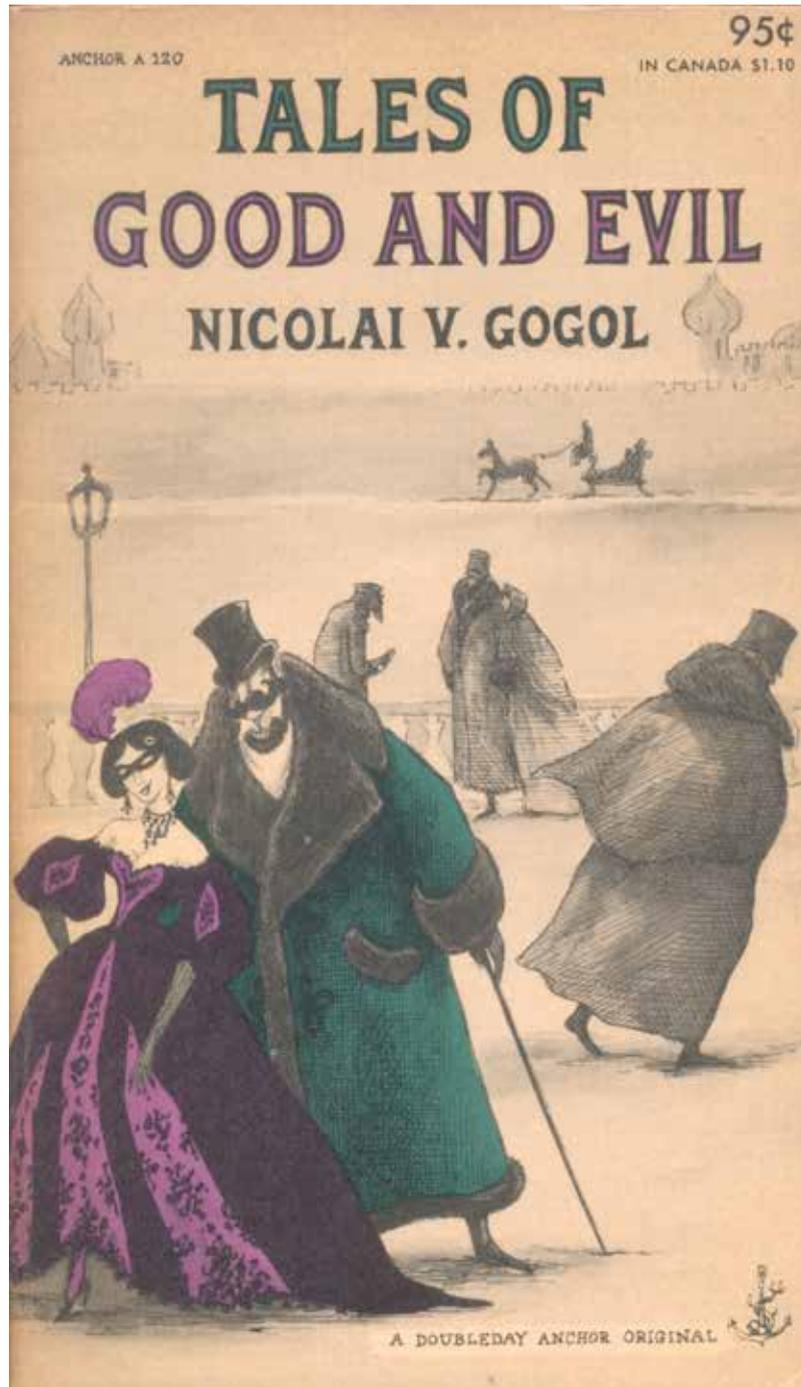
Deliciously and subversively cryptic, Edward St. John Gorey's iconic books, plays, postcards, toys, stage sets, and costumes—indeed an entire lifetime of utterly sublime, mockingly apprehensive artistry and authorship—are duly celebrated and critically acclaimed by everyone from cultural pundits to goth cultists. The rare front-page *New York Times* obituary by Mel Gussow on April 17, 2000, is testament to Gorey's eclectic narrative range. "In creating a large body of small work, he made an indelible imprint on noir fiction and on the psyche of his admirers," the *Times* reported. Yet understandably, less attention is devoted today to the more than 200 illustrated paperback covers and hardcover jackets that Chicago-born, Harvard-educated Gorey (known to his friends as Ted) created while working as a staff artist in Doubleday Anchor's art department, art director and editor at Random House's Looking Glass Library, art director at Bobbs-Merrill (which Gorey called "Boobs Muddle"), and as a freelance illustrator throughout a large portion of his career.

In two brief sentences, his obituary tossed aside this impressive output: "After graduation he remained in Boston, illustrating book jackets. Then he went to New York and worked in the art department at Doubleday, staying late in the office to create his own books." Still, these pen-and-ink crosshatched and hand-lettered gems from the nascence of his more than fifty-year career arguably challenged prevailing American publishing conventions while they helped define Anchor's and other publishers' visual identities. His covers also unleashed a troupe of melancholy Victorians and Edwardians, woeful infants and tykes, and eerie reptilian and mammalian beasts that haunted his proto-graphic novel "novels," which earned legions of loyal fans over the ensuing decades.

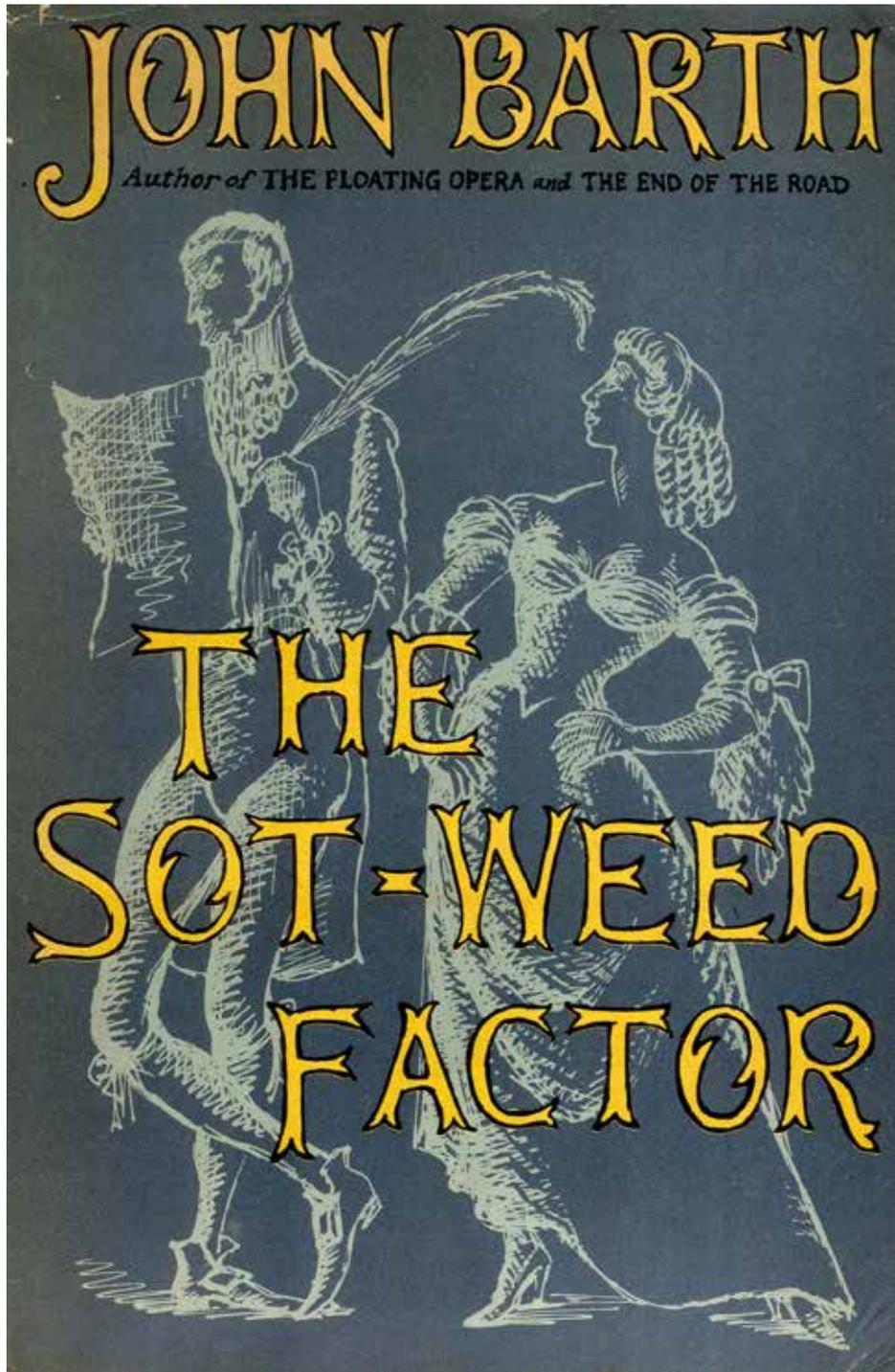
Commercial book cover design is, admittedly, a minor portion of Gorey's award-winning legacy, but not a lesser art. His linear expression and droll comedy are integral ingredients. There are also covers that are stunning for their hidden allusions. The barren landscape, for example, on the cover of *The American Puritans* evokes an otherworldly quietude, but speaks to concealed psychological demons as well. Although this work is perceived as less significant because he was responding to assignments from editors to illustrate other artists' creative offerings, at the very least they serve as historical markers of Gorey's evolving artistic persona. Yet some covers, such as the one for Alain-Fournier's *The Wanderer*, have artistic integrity both on *and* beyond the specific volume.



*True Tales from the Annals of Crime and Rascality* by St. Clair McKelway  
Vintage Books, 1957, PB



*Tales of Good and Evil* by Nikolai V. Gogol  
Doubleday Anchor, 1957, PB



*The Sot-Weed Factor* by John Barth  
Doubleday, 1960, HC

# CAUTIONARY TALES FOR CHILDREN



HILAIRE BELLOC  
REDISCOVERED AND ILLUSTRATED BY  
EDWARD GOREY

*Cautionary Tales for Children* by Hilaire Belloc  
Harcourt, 2002, HC, text illus.

# Edward Gorey

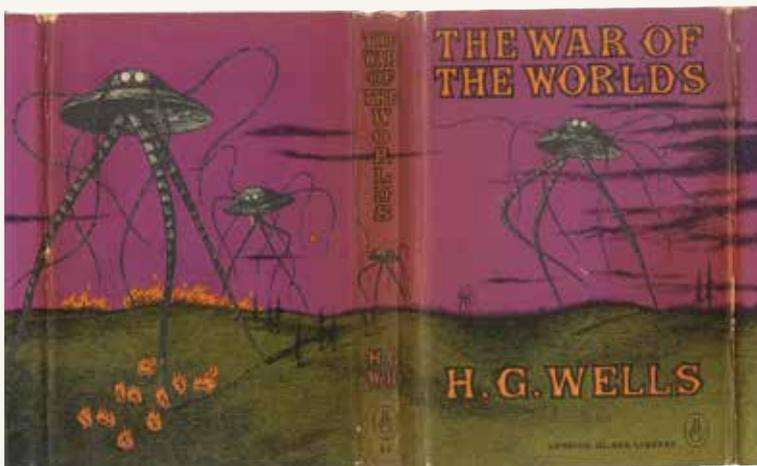
## HIS BOOK COVER ART & DESIGN

The master creator of finely crosshatched illustrations and sinisterly amusing tales, Edward Gorey (American, 1925–2000) got his start in publishing by designing book covers for such New York houses as Doubleday, Grosset & Dunlap, Vintage Books, and later Random House. Today, his prodigious output of hundreds of dust jackets and paperback covers evidences his distinctive flair for design and his extraordinary ability to portray the essence of the books that came his way. *Edward Gorey: His Book Cover Art & Design* features a broad selection of his work, created from 1953 to 2000, collected together for the first time.

In his essay, Steven Heller—a *New York Times* art director for thirty-three years—offers an insightful overview of Gorey’s book cover art and design. He writes, “Successful cover design requires the expertise of an artist, typographer, poster designer, and logo maker. Many book design specialists were incapable of designing a cover or jacket with the same Gorey aplomb, even if they tried.”

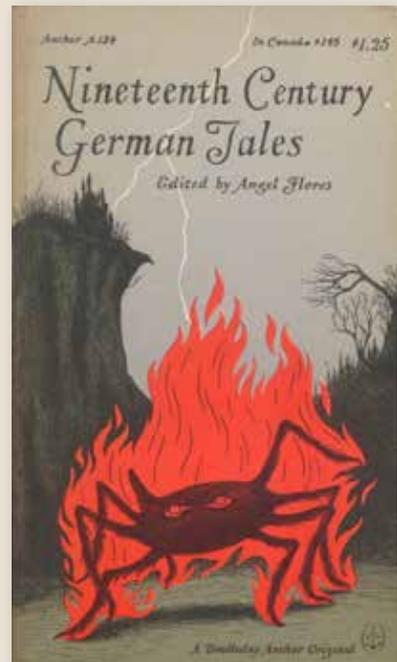
### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steven Heller is cochair of the School of Visual Arts MFA Design / Designer as Author + Entrepreneur program, author or editor of 170 books on design and popular culture, and recipient of the 2011 Smithsonian National Design Award.



Above: *The War of the Worlds*, 1960

Front cover: *Lafcadio's Adventures*, 1953; *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, 1982; *Amerika*, 1955; *Come Back, Dr. Caligari*, 1965; and *From Beowulf to Virginia Woolf*, 1963



Above: *Nineteenth Century German Tales*, 1959

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