

Bookhounds of London

South London Rumours

A seemingly unremarkable edition of Dryden found in a sale bin in Bermondsey contains a tipped-in pen-and-ink autopsy sketch of an unearthly monstrosity, all the more horrible for the evident realism of the draftsmanship. The drawing is signed “Wm. Hogarth, Oct.ber 1763 at Kew; No. 4 of 14.” Are there 13 more books out there with apparent Hogarth drawings (from life?) of such things, tipped in between signatures or slipped behind the boards? The book bears the plate of Lord Castlereagh, the former Foreign Secretary, who slit his own throat in 1822.



The Rosicrucian seer and scryer Frederick Hockley moved all over London in the years before his death in 1885, always bringing his library with him. Most of his books were sold to the dealer George Redway; some of them wound up in the private collections of the men who would found the Golden Dawn two years later. As a younger man, Hockley copied manuscript grimoires for a select clientele; leaves of an unknown Hockley manuscript (The Grimoire of Dauriel) have begun turning up bound into books sold in estate sales around Lambeth, where Hockley lived in 1881. Has someone found a new cache of Hockley manuscripts? Is Hockley’s ghost returning, compelled to copy one last work?



The poet, mystic, and engraver William Blake never designed a Tarot deck incorporating his intensely personal cosmology of malign or indifferent giants somehow embodying and empowering human thought, creativity, and history. So why does every book scout south of the Thames have a broadsheet offering such a deck at auction at the Asylum Tavern in Camberwell?



Book scout urban legend says that if you burn a page from any Poe first edition in front of the bust of the god Hypnos (anonymous donor, ca. 1922) in the Horniman Museum, you will dream of an amazing book find the next night.

