

Yeats's inscribed *Land of Heart's Desire*

Since having my article published on the inscribed copy of Mosher's printing of Yeats's *The Land of Heart's Desire* (*Yeats Annual*, 2013), two other copies have come on the market. A signed copy of the second edition was first listed by a bookseller on ABE Books around December 2014 with Yeats's name written beneath the title on the title page and bearing no date of signing. The description indicated that it was the first Mosher title they had seen signed by Yeats. That may indeed be so but with a modicum of Internet research they would have certainly come upon a whole article devoted to a lengthy inscribed copy which was published in *Yeats Annual* and freely accessible on-line in February 2014. It also indicated that "Yeats did not like Mosher's piracies." The other copy recently appeared at PBA Galleries in San Francisco and is now here in the Mosher Collection:

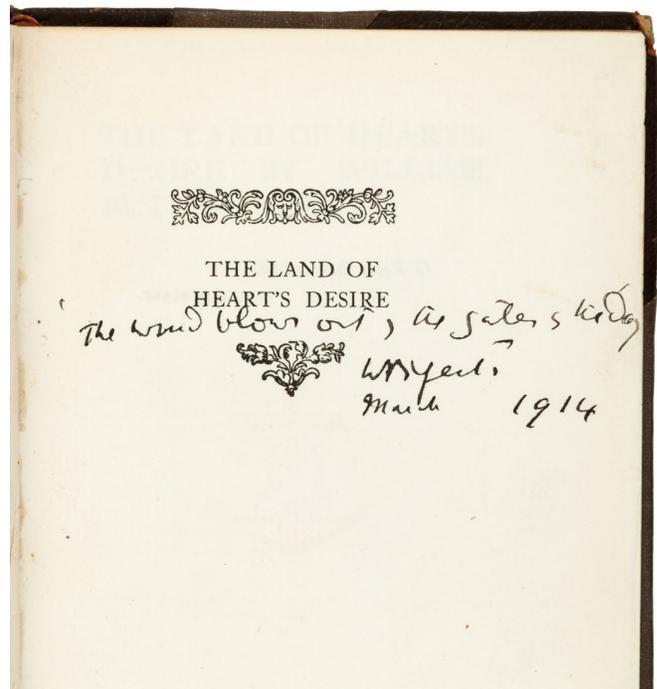
Lot 323: Author: Yeats, William Butler; Title: The Land of Heart's Desire; Place Published: Portland, Maine; Publisher: Thomas B. Mosher; Date Published: 1906; Description: (12mo) period half brown morocco and cloth, spine lettered in gilt. 1/950 copies. Sixth Mosher Edition. Signed and inscribed by Yeats "The wind blows out the gates of the day". Dated March 1914. Yeats was not fond of Mosher's unauthorized printings, rarely seen signed. Condition: Front cover detached, light wear; internally very good. PBA Galleries' Fine Literature-Miniature Books-Books in All Fields Auction 551 Thursday, 15th January 2015
Estimate: \$1000-1500

Picture from PBA Galleries listing

This copy is intriguing for a couple reasons. First it's both **inscribed and signed/dated by Yeats** using the first line from the last page of the play: "*The wind blows out of the gates of the day.* / W B Yeats / March 1914" which is referred to as the Faeries' Song:

A VOICE [*singing outside*].
*The wind blows out of the gates of the day,
The wind blows over the lonely of heart,
And the lonely of heart is withered away
While the faeries dance in a place apart,
Shaking their milk-white feet in a ring,
Tossing their milk-white arms in the air;
For they hear the wind laugh and murmur and sing
Of a land where even the old are fair,
And even the wise are merry of tongue;
But I heard a reed of Coolaney say,
"When the wind has laughed and murmured and sung,
The lonely of heart is withered away."*

[*The song is taken up by many voices, who sing loudly, as if in triumph. Some of the voices seem to come from within the house.*]



Secondly this copy is also of marked interest because it shows that Yeats signed this 1906 "Lyric Garland Series" copy in March 1914. By that time the title had made eleven appearances in the Lyric Garland Series. Additionally two other editions were also published by Mosher, one in the Miscellaneous Series in 1909 (Wade 13A) and the privately printed edition of 1903 (Wade 12), not to mention its very first appearance in the June 1903 issue of *The Bibelot*.^{*} So even after fourteen printing appearances of *The Land of Heart's Desire*, Yeats still apparently found it unobjectionable to sign and inscribe a copy of Mosher's enduring republication.

In the descriptions on each of the above copies (ABE copy and the PBA copy) the similarly worded didacticism is that Yeats did not like Mosher's doings: "Yeats did not like Mosher's piracies" and "Yeats was not fond of Mosher's unauthorized printings." Of course the ABE copy and the two in the Mosher Collection immediately beg the question: so why did Yeats sign or inscribe them if he objected to their printing? The answer is quite simple. He did not object (others did however), in fact he gave his permission for *The Land of Heart's Desire* to be published by Mosher,** and Yeats reveled in the fact that Mosher's edition was selling quite well (CL3, 555). At the end of his tour in the U.S., Yeats wrote to George P. Brett of Macmillan & Co., Ltd. to boast of his speaking engagements "at over sixty-four colleges and literary societies in America" (Quinn estimated Yeats spoke before 25,000-30,000 people during this time), citing the Mosher editions of *The Land of Heart's Desire* as yet another barometer of his need for a regular trade publisher in the States: "I only learned yesterday that Mosher's second edition of my little play, 'The Land of Heart's Desire', each edition being 950 copies, has become exhausted, and that this has been done within the last few months. I believe that ultimately I shall have a considerable market in this country...'

For me, what's of interest here is that there are now three copies of the Mosher publication of *The Land of Heart's Desire* known to have been signed and/or inscribed by Yeats. One is dated in 1908, another six years later in 1914, and one only signed and undated. The very fact that two of these signed volumes were dated six years apart suggests that over that length of time Yeats had no problem inscribing the Mosher issue of *Land of Heart's Desire*. Why would you sign or inscribe what you objected to?

Footnotes:

* Mosher's first trade edition of the revised play appeared in the fall of 1903 (Wade 13)

** Yeats's revised edition of *The Land of Heart's Desire* first appeared in Mosher's serial publication, *The Bibelot*, IX, No. 6, in June 1903, with Mosher's proud encomium, "It is, therefore, with especial delight that with Mr. Yeats' permission, we reprint *The Land of Heart's Desire*, written ten years back, but now given according to his latest revision." ([p. 181]). Direct evidence of Yeats's formal or informal terms with Mosher—if indeed there were any—has, to date, not been uncovered. Mosher's business letters which are now at Harvard University's Houghton Library have only one much later 1912 letter from Yeats to Mosher [bMS Am 1096-1635]). Mosher's 1903 catalogue further indicates this reprint was done 'with Mr. Yeats's consent' (see Bishop, Philip R. *Thomas Bird Mosher: Pirate Prince of Publishers...* New Castle, DE & London: Oak Knoll Press & The British Library, 1998, 185, entry 186). George Russell was the intermediary who coaxed Yeats to let Mosher print the revised edition of *The Land of Heart's Desire*: see Gould. *Publishing History* 51, 65-66.

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