

"REVOLT"
 A Drama of
 Tobacco
 and
 Man
 RE VISION
 BY
 THEODORE DREISER
 of the
 United States.

Theodore Dreiser Valued a Copyright Registration

JUDITH NIERMAN

Theodore Dreiser, the renowned American author of naturalistic novels, knew the value of a copyright registration when he saw it, and the value to him was not just monetary. It had to do with control over his artistic creation.

Dreiser (1871–1945) was the product of an impoverished working-class upbringing in the Midwest. At sixteen he left Indiana and went to work in Chicago. By 1900 with the publication of *Sister Carrie*, he achieved critical, if not, financial success.

A victim of bouts with the censor—his 1925 novel *An American Tragedy* was banned in Boston—the feisty Dreiser also had troubles with Hollywood, where, lured by the hope of a larger income, he attempted to work as a screenwriter beginning in 1919. He sold the movie rights to *An American Tragedy*, but filed suit to block the release of the 1931 movie version because he disliked the liberties taken with his original work.

In the early 1930s, Dreiser worked extensively on an outline of a story about a 1908–09 revolt of Southern tobacco growers against the Duke Tobacco Trust's control over prices. In 1933 in collaboration with experienced screenwriter and playwright Hyman Kraft, Dreiser wrote *Revolt: A Drama of Tobacco and Man* based upon his research of the events in the South. Dreiser himself planned to direct the movie. He registered the script on March 25, 1933, as an unpublished manuscript (D21497). Ten days later on April 4, he again registered the work, this time as a revised version (D21704). According to Richard Lingeman (*Theodore Dreiser: An American Journey, 1908–1945*), both Dreiser and Kraft, who had quarreled, filed separate copyright claims so each would have to approve if a film were ever made. To date, no film has appeared.

Dreiser's deposit copy of the revised version of *Revolt*, which includes his handwritten notes and changes, was discovered by the 2006 Junior Fellows interns and displayed in the Jefferson Building on August 8. ©

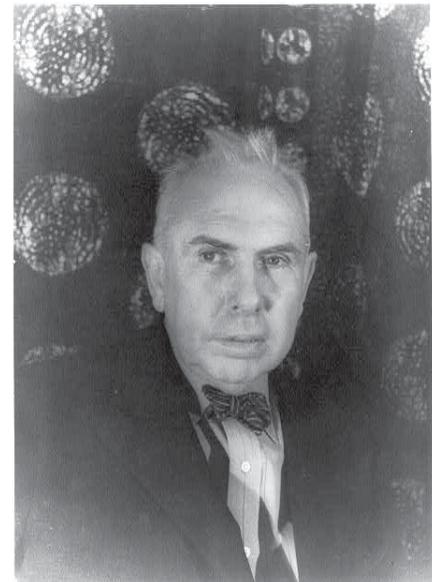


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