

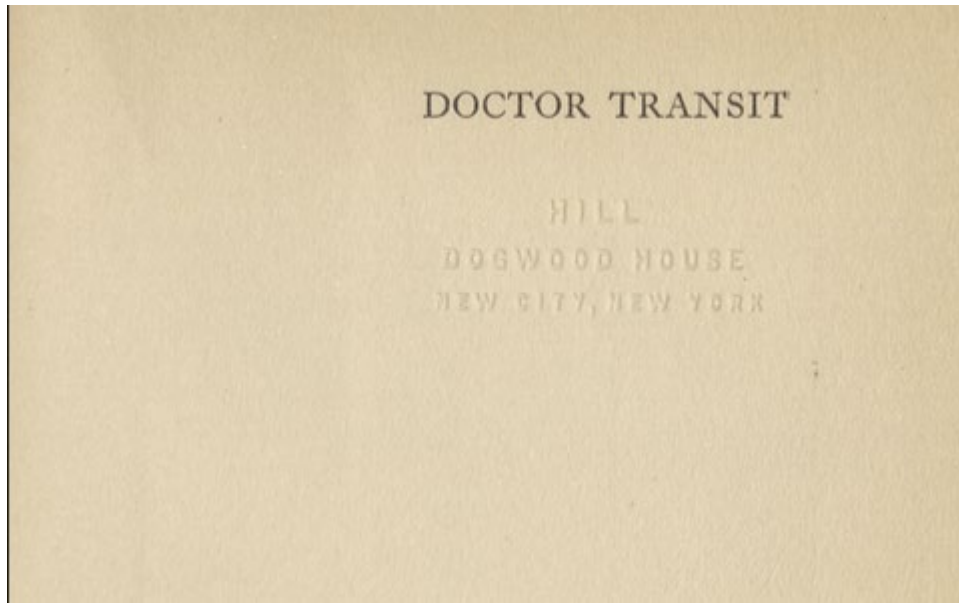
Doctor Transit

Tuesday, June 11, 2024 by Catherine Cassels

SCA is excited to announce the recent acquisition of a rare, signed copy of Doctor Transit by Isidor Schneider. The first-print copy is inscribed by the author, reading "For Frank Hill from his friend Isidor Schneider." There is also Frank Hill's embossed stamp of ownership in the book, reading, "Hill, Dogwood House, New City, New York." Despite my best efforts, I have not been able to find more information on Mr. Hill and his connection to Schneider. SCA's copy also lacks a dust jacket.



For
Frank Hill
from his friend
Isidor Schneider.



Published in 1925, *Doctor Transit* was the first novel written by author Isidor Schneider. The book follows the story of John and Mary, a newlywed couple looking to swap genders. Looking to make this a reality, the two visit Doctor Transit, who has been known to provide treatment for those looking to change their gender. The two complete their transition and live happily until John, now Joan, longs for his previous gender. Joan transitions once more to Jeremiah, a “prophet” who keeps up the work of Doctor Transit following his death and hopes to conquer death himself, amassing a small following of believers on his journey.

The story does not look at transition fondly. John’s character becomes increasingly volatile, suggesting that the transition leads to an unfavourable mental state. The characters are quite misogynistic, blaming women for their unhappiness and the death of Doctor Transit. However, the novel is still one of the earliest works of transgender science fiction. Transness was rarely heard of or spoken about in society, and transition procedures were very uncommon, with some of the earliest doctors, like [Doctor Magnus Hirschfeld](#), beginning research into medical transition in the late 1910s. The book is even published under the pseudonym I.S. attests to the fact that Schneider knew these topics to be risqué.

While the book is unique at the time, with the idea of transition being uncommon, the science fiction novel is also unique in Schneider’s career. After this debut novel, Schneider pursued a career as a Communist political writer for leftist magazines and journals, publishing several other books and

poetry. His other works are more personal and fall less into the “science fiction” category that Doctor Transit would have been considered at the time of publication.

In addition to fitting the collection specialty of Gender, Sexuality and Social Justice, SCA also collects many science fiction and pulp novels with which Doctor Transit fits nicely. Some notable collections to check out if you are interested in similar themes include the [B.P. Nichol Library of Science Fiction](#), with over 500 books from the author’s private collection, as well as the [Lesbian Literature Collection](#) and the [Erotic Prospectus Collection](#), which connects themes of sexuality.

The novel was published by [Boni & Liveright](#), a New York publishing house known for taking risks and being one of the leading publishers of literature at the time. Around the same time as Doctor Transit, the publishing house also released books from others like Ezra Pound, John Reed, and T.S. Elliot, most notably publishing The Wasteland. They were also the first American publishers of authors like Faulker, Freud, and Hemmingway. Their penchant for publishing avant-garde or challenging literature is likely why they were able to publish something like Doctor Transit, which would not have been picked up by one of the more traditional or conservative publishers of the time.

While Doctor Transit reflects the transphobic societal attitude that was common at the time of publishing, it is interesting to see how attitudes have changed based on scientific discoveries and political changes, allowing for increased acceptance of trans folx in society. While we still have a long way to go in protecting trans rights, Doctor Transit can help reflect on how far our society has come. Happy Pride Month and stay tuned for next week’s Pride blog post!