

FURTHER TALES OF THE INSTITUTE

The magazine's recent article, "Fictional Caltech" (Summer 2018), which focused on novels that feature the Institute in some manner, elicited many responses from Caltech's community of readers. The article discussed 10 works of fiction, including such well-known titles as *The Hunt for Red October* and *The Martian*. Caltech-connected book sleuths dug up half a dozen more and explained the Institute's connection for each.

The Black Cloud

Fred Hoyle

(William Heinemann Ltd., 1957)

DISCOVERED BY: Wayne Ryback (BS '65)

Yes, that Fred Hoyle. As far as I know, he was the only world-class cosmologist to write science fiction, and his work, though dated now, was pretty good stuff at the time. Caltech is a major setting for the early part of the story, and I always thought that the character of Dave Weichart was based on Richard Feynman.

Instantanés pour Caltech (Natacha #8)

Etienne Borgers, François Walthéry, and Jidéhem

(Dupuis, 1988)

DISCOVERED BY: Bard Cosman (P '14)

It may be obscure, but here's a piece of fiction with Caltech (rendered correctly) in the title! It's the 1981 Belgian comic book *Instantanés pour Caltech* (Snapshots for Caltech), number 8 in the series *Natacha, hôtesse de l'air* (Natasha the Stewardess) by Borgers, Walthéry, and Jidéhem. Originally published in French, it was reprinted in German, Norwegian, and Swedish, but unfortunately never in English. The Caltech connection? Our flight attendant heroine snaps photos of a supposed UFO during an oceanic flight and takes them to the Institute for interpretation. She soon finds herself in the midst of international intrigue, running for her life. Good European comic-book fare.

The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane

Lisa See

(Scribner, 2017)

DISCOVERED BY: Glen Herrmannsfeldt (BS '80)

Not to give away too much of the story, but one character is a Caltech biology professor in 1996. She is supposed to be smart, but that isn't an especially important part of the story. Her adopted daughter does go to Stanford, though.

I tend to like fictional stories where the characters feel real. (Or else completely fake, like *Star Wars* and *Harry Potter*.) In some stories, the characters have too much luck, such that it doesn't feel right. This one felt right to me.

Time Travel for Love and Profit

Jeff Abugov

(J-Stroke Productions, 2017)

DISCOVERED BY: Dave Zobel (BS '84)

A former screenwriter (*Roseanne*, *Cheers*, *Two and a Half Men*) turned novelist, Abugov wanted to get all the nuances of his novel's Caltech setting just right, so he not only toured campus twice but also got technical advice from an instructor, an alumnus, and director of admissions Jarrid Whitney.

Turns out there's more going on in that overlooked maintenance closet in the Sloan Annex than meets the eye.

The Treasure of the Sierra Madre

B. Traven

(Buchergilde Gutenberg, 1927)

DISCOVERED BY: David Lewin (BS '70)

I was rereading B. Traven's *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* some time ago, when I noticed that the mining engineer who joins the three prospectors introduces himself as, so-and-so, "Tech, Pasadena." Since the book was written in the 1920s, I concluded that he was referring to Caltech.

Stopover: Tokyo

John P. Marquand

(Little, Brown and Company, 1957)

DISCOVERED BY: James E. Hanson (PhD '90)

A mention of a Caltech student that made me smile was in John P. Marquand's *Stopover: Tokyo* (reprinted in later editions as *Right You Are, Mr. Moto*), the last Mr. Moto book, from 1957. As the two American spies are preparing to head off to Tokyo for their mission, they meet by chance (or is it?) a young man. He is a "graduate of Cal. Tech," but is he also something more? Just a cameo but very nice. 🍣