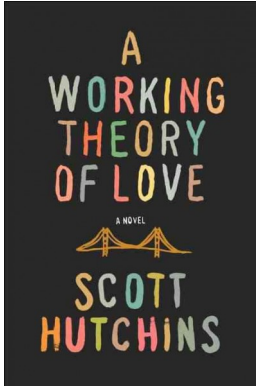


A Working Theory of Love

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Scott Hutchins' first novel *A Working Theory of Love* is a wonderful spoof of California's trendiness. It also pokes fun at its computer geek population, but more importantly it's also a tender love story. In my experience few novels by men focus on love and relationships, so it's especially nice to explore this landscape from a male writer's perspective.

Recently divorced Neill Bassett just barely copes after his wife Erin leaves him shortly after their honeymoon (at least he can keep their charming San Francisco apartment). Each day begins with the same breakfast taco. Also boring and routine are his homemade dinners. He allows himself a glass of wine several times a week. The mission of Neill's day job at Amiante Systems is to give voice to his dead father who left thousands of pages of journals when he committed suicide. A non-geek himself, Neill has become the family representative at this small business working to perfect artificial intelligence and give voice to a dead man.

Why did the techies choose Neill's Dad? For years, Neill's father wrote long and extremely detailed journal entries about his life. This gave the engineers a large amount of material to parse and code into computer memory.

Hutchins knows enough about artificial intelligence to portray life at a small tech company. He also succeeds at exploring the weirdness of a character asking his own dead father questions and then having him both listen and analyze the simulated answers. Talk about father and son issues!

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