



What is This Thing Called Love?

(2011)

Davide Cali, ill. *Anna Laura Cantone*, trans. *Justine Werner*, Wilkins Farago, 28pp. 978 0 9806070 7 9 **\$24.99** Hb

It is fittingly apt that a book on the nature of love was initially published in French. Young Emma is curious about the true meaning of 'love', an amorphous sounding concept, and so she sets out to ask members of her family. All reply with inflections of their own world view—her romanticist mother, her soccer-mad father, her gastronome grandmother and her car enthusiast grandfather.

Ultimately, after more questions and much humorous confusion, it becomes clear that love is to be found in the quotidian; in moments of kindness and sharing.

Anna Laura Cantone's style is whimsical. Her mixed media is layered with richly textured colours and populated by cartoon-like characters. Employing a sense of playfulness, her illustrations ground these grand quandaries and also register the impossibility of ever finding an objective truth in questions like *Okay, so what does it mean to be in love, then?*

My one reservation lies in the book's translation, as any reference to its former life as a French book has disappeared. I would have preferred names and small details appearing unchanged so that its sense of place was preserved. This story is both for fans of the inventive Davide Cali and readers who will be charmed by its quirkiness.

Tali Lavi