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The Spectrum of Love in Classical Arabic

The word for "love" appears throughout Arabic literature in many forms. Arabic views love as a complex spectrum, containing several various stages. These stages begin with inclination and infatuation, and in the final stages, end with losing one's mind. While some of these words imply tenderness, others denote a love sometimes so strong it hurts. This graphic displays 14 increasingly strong stages of how the Arabic language expresses the idea of love.

هوى . ود . حبت . شغف . صباب

ṣabbāb

the act of spilling the
blood of one's heart

shaghaf

whole hearted love

hub

growing love similar to a
hidden seed that proliferates

wudd

expressing love

hawā

showing an inclination
towards somebody

عشق . ولع . غرام . هميام

huyyām

mystified love resembling the psychological
state similar to extreme thirstiness

gharām

preoccupied by loving
someone at all times

wala'

burning passion

'ishq

being inseparable
from the beloved

تيم . وله . جوى . فتنة . توق

tawq

longing love involving an internal
struggle leading to personal sacrifice

fitna

smoldering love
resembling smelting metal

jawā

burning love similar to a
stomach ache or heartburn

walah

passionate love resembling
losing one's mind

taym

infatuating love resembling a psychological
state similar to losing one's way in the desert

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In The Beloved in Middle Eastern Literatures (pp. 300-323). New York, I.B Tauris