

Is Love a Drug?

New research indicates that early love is not an emotional response.

Writing love letters, cooing pet names, mooning around—these are the well-documented side effects of new love. Contrary to common belief, emotional attachment and sexual attraction may not be responsible.

In a study published in the *Journal of Neurophysiology*, researchers used fMRI technology to scan the brains of participants who were in new relationships and professed to be head-over-heels in love. Researchers mapped participants' brains as they looked at pictures of their beloved. Early love lit up areas in the reward center of the brain, which are associated with elation, energy, craving and addiction. Just as interesting is the fact that three regions of the brain associated with moral judgment were less strongly lit when participants looked at pictures of the people they loved than when they looked at pictures of friends. It appears that romantic love is a drive, like hunger or thirst, that we are compelled to quench. The research gives a whole new meaning to Shakespeare's idea that "Love looks not with the eyes but with the mind."