

## **A Study of Erich Fromm's the Art of Love in Martin Amis's *Lionel Asbo***

**Sadegh Fard<sup>1\*</sup>, Bahman Zarrinjooee<sup>2</sup>, Farzaneh Haratyan<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1,2</sup>Department of Foreign Languages, Central Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

<sup>3</sup>Department of Foreign Languages, West Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

\*Corresponding Author's Email: [fard\\_sadegh@yahoo.com](mailto:fard_sadegh@yahoo.com)

---

### **ABSTRACT**

*Love is a familiar word to everyone. Everybody believes in having a sense of love to his or her belongings, and one of the most fundamental and natural senses of love is parental love, which begins from the day you come to this world. Love in this study illustrates a sense of belonging or to be in need of being loved. Martin Amis's Lionel Asbo goes under scrutiny here in terms of the way love is depicted by Fromm with its psychological mechanisms. Erich Fromm as a psychologist gives technical descriptions and practical applications of love in the widest sense of the word. This study manifests how love as an unconscious feeling shows itself in different codes like sexual desire, motherly passion or love of animals. Characters express their romantic feelings in various forms. Fromm describes the deepest roots of yearnings for love. Understanding these roots makes one's pursuit of loving a persistent effort with a purposeful result rather than temporary fulfillments. The analyses of Amis's characters in terms of the way they fall in love and display their love supports Fromm's perspective regarding art of love.*

**KEYWORD:** sexual desire, motherly passion, art of love

---

### **INTRODUCTION**

The concept of love has been addressed by scholars of different disciplines from a variety of perspectives. Love has been approached by philosophers, psychologists, sociologists, etc. The present study, with love as its focal point, is an attempt to read Martin Louis Amis's *Lionel Asbo* (2012) under Erich Fromm's notions of love as a social psychologist with a focus on his famous book *The Art of Loving* (1956).

Martin Amis (1949) is a British novelist, essayist and short story writer. He is one of the literary giants in the contemporary English literature. His raw material is what he sees as the absurdity of the postmodern condition with its grotesque caricatures. Amis has thus sometimes been described as the undisputed master of the new unpleasantness. Abstaining the savage wit and cool ironic distance that characterize much of his fiction, he invited the reader into his domestic life in all its amplitude, contingency, and suffering. The verbal artistry is the second nature to Amis.

*Lionel Asbo* is a novel written by Amis published in 2012. In this novel, an orphaned boy, Desmond lives with his uncle, Lionel Asbo and despite Lionel's attempts to educate him according to his malicious principles (including having sex with women and watching different TV programs); Desmond meets a kind-hearted girl, who becomes his first actual girlfriend. Lionel wins a lottery and goes into extravagance, but his wealth invokes no sense of charity although many in his family are in extreme need of credit. Amis also has various interviews in different broadcasts such as Australian Broadcasting Corporation by the subject of love, which one of those interviews can be referred to Fiction, is about conflict, but it has no harm. The main reason of selecting this book lies in the fact that Amis recruits love to drive the story from the very beginning of the novel to the end and mentions vary types of romantic relationships (from erotic love to love of family) that are in keeping with what Fromm introduces as types of love in his book *The Art of Loving*. *The Art of Loving* is the most popular book by Erich Fromm (1900-1980) which was first published in 1956.

Fromm tries to show that love is not a sentiment which can be easily indulged in by anyone. Regardless of the level of maturity reached by him and all attempts at love are bound to fail unless he tries most actively to develop his entire personality. So as to achieve a productive orientation; that satisfaction in personal love cannot be attained without the capacity to love one's neighbor, without true humility, faith, courage, and discipline. In *The Art of Loving*, Fromm gives technical descriptions and practical applications of love in the widest sense of the word, reports, and forms, which are anything but shallow and trite. Fromm describes the deepest roots of our yearnings for love.

Understanding these roots makes one's pursuit of loving a persistent effort with a purposeful result, rather than just hoping to win some love lottery. He starts his analysis by defining humanity as one of the most controversial concepts and then makes an argument that the kind of love that can solve our existential problems can be described both by what it is and what it is not. He argues about people's belief that love is something that can be pursued or possessed and that the favorability of love is open to change over time which leads the parties to fall out of love. In short, he believes that love is not a noun or object but a verb or practice. The present authors believe that *The Art of Loving* can give one the tools to get out of the disappointment and pains that comes from his/her previous approach to love.

One of the most important reasons behind selecting Fromm and his notions in the present study is that he gives a general nature of analysis of kinds of love. It enables the authors to apply different classifications put forward by him to read the books under the analysis such as brotherly love, motherly love, erotic love, self-love or love of God, etc. For example, in *Lionel Asbo*, Fromm's notions can be applied to Desmond Lionel's nephew and in a little amount to Lionel himself. To the knowledge of the authors, this is the first reading of Martin Amis's works under Fromm's notions of love, and it is hopeful that the findings of the study will shed more light to reading Amis's works from a socio-psychological perspective.

Based on the authors' findings, the first primary purpose of working on Amis's *Lionel Asbo* is due to the lack of scholarly research on the aforementioned novel under Fromm's theories; moreover, some of Amis's works are not truly exposed to all people's attention. Hence, this article would like to analyze this novel to share new perspectives about the psychological themes of the story, and tries to make it more interesting. The second aspect of choosing this novel is mostly related to Amis's power of breaking taboos through entering private issues about the life of people. The authors aim to shed light on Amis's *Lionel Asbo* with the help of Erich Fromm's psychological theories about romantic relationship to make the subject of love more understandable to English literature students. Amis writes about private relationships while rarely authors let themselves have this much freedom to write about illegal sexual desires and vast mysterious relations.

Amis's capability of writing about various romantic relations in his novels is admirable; most of his novels are sources of various romantic themes, which fit well with the theories of Fromm's. The authors' analysis will illustrate the sexual and romantic tendencies, and the art of loving in modern and post-modern centuries, that are influenced by the lack of real social ties and variety of mass Media. Amis makes his efforts to illustrate the significance of human's different conditions in loving others, and man's social behavior during the early ages of his life until adulthood. So, this thesis aims to find sorts of influential facts that directly and indirectly internalize the related ideologies into the man's psyche, in which most of the people are unaware of them.

Amis expresses that approximately all moments of suffering and torment are due to the lack of proper and legal relations in his novels. He claims that, relations based on desiring of loving someone as the opposite pole, leads us to seek for different dimensions of Fromm's theories of love. However, Amis brings strange forms of social connections, which the present article aims to clarify and discuss different perspectives among the followers of his best novels. The ultimate purpose of this study is to evoke man's mind and views to improve one's personality and social behaviors alongside social norms.

Motivation of selecting Amis's *Lionel Asbo* refers to the author's well-done selecting different codes such as language and costumes for the purpose of creating natural incidents in relation to the contemporary life style, especially romantic relation, and Amis also uses them artistically in a realistic way.

Fromm's theories of love persuade the authors to deal with the subject of social and psychological problems in man's romantic relationships in *Lionel Asbo* which is considered as an important issue in recent centuries. In some cases, Amis's ideas and attitudes disturb the standard pleasure of love and make everyone take an ongoing reformation against it. Within this study, the authors try to enlighten the aspects of love which are not explained or controlled due to the external and internal effects of families and society over man's behavior in both public and private relations. The form of man's treatment and its subsequent psychological reverberation shall be elaborated on. Human's passion is afflicting from deep corruption in recent decades due to global modernization and vast Medias over the countries, and one of the main targets of this article is to create a clear illustration of man's reactions and behaviors over these changes.

### **FROMM'S NOTION OF ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS**

To Fromm, Love is defined as an overcoming of human over separateness and the fulfilment of the longing for unification. Above the universal, existential need for union leaps a more particular, biological aspect: the enthusiasm for union between the masculine and feminine poles. Fromm claims that the same belief of the original unity of the sexes has also been mentioned in the Biblical story of 'Eve being made from Adam's rib. The idea of polarization most strikingly has been indicated in myth, that initially man and woman were one that they were cut in half, and so

since that time each male has been seeking for the female part of himself to unite again with her. The opposite side of this premise is visible between the characters of the two novels that the authors are elaborating on this article. Fromm claims that humans usually think about their isolated condition, a situation in which he defines it the human dilemma. This dilemma or sense of alienation cannot be removed by satisfying our animal needs except by fulfilling our uniquely human demands, an achievement that directs us towards a reunion with the natural world (1956, pp. 33).

Fromm identifies five ordinary people's need or existential factors according to this categorization: A) Relatedness; which is consisted of submission, power, and love. Loving or having the capability of joining with another person while relating one's individuality. B) Transcendence; humans have the desire of transcending their nature by damaging or creating individuals or things to gain what they need according to their interest. Such a feature mostly refers to a Masochistic and Sadistic manner of humans in self-loving or loving others that we will discuss in the further chapters. C) Rootedness or attachment; the sense of belonging to a place or person emerges even before the birth of a child. When we come out from our mother's womb, we do not feel ourselves separated from our mother, and we also need her supports to enables us to grow beyond the security of her being and tie us with the outside world. D) The sense of identity; is an awareness of ourselves as a separated person (1956, pp. 37-41).

Erich Fromm believes that we are individual people, and we enter into our immature lovely relation both participants have to keep each identity and keep I-ness through their unification. E) The frame of Orientation; in this section, we find our procedure in the world we are living. This need is known both nonproductively as striving for irrational goals and productively as deviating toward rational goals. For this step, the research can give the example of human's perspectives about sexual compatibility in the presence of both opposite poles in sex through finding faith in his human powers and consequently its reflection on his or her behavior in family and the society (1956, pp.79-81).

Sense of love or showing kindness to people or even need of being loved by others is in everyone's mind. To love a person, to respect someone is not feasible without knowing him or her. Caring and responsibility will be ignored if they are not improved by the knowledge which is an important aspect of love that sticks to the core. Care and concern indicate other features of love; that is responsibility, but in some conditions responsibility is aimed to designate obligation, something urged upon one from the outside. Fromm asserted that "liability in the case of a mother and her infant mainly refers to the care for physical needs." On the other hand, "in a condition of love between adults mostly relates to the intellectual requirements of the other fellow, one should be aware of this fact that responsibility could easily retrograde into covetousness and sense of domination, in this case, it could not be one of the components of love"(1956,pp.26-29). The theories mentioned above are a brief amount of information about Fromm's view based on psychology and social behavior in groups such as families and relatives in parallel with its reflection on society.

### CRITICAL AREAS IN ROMANTIC LOVE

As stated in the Journal of Personality about Romantic attraction and sex role orientation by Critelli, Joseph, Myers, and Loos, (2017) there are three theoretically critical sections in a romantic love. First, it should be acclaimed that the concept of "romantic love" has historical background that connects it to the phenomenon of romantic idealization, and then differentiate it from other positive heterosexual attitudes and affects. Those features are defined below.

Regardless of literal belief in any certain romantic ideal, it must be realized that contemporary romantic love has been influenced by beliefs and expectancies. For instance, that true love continues forever, that people are all looking for (or have already found) their one, "predetermined" partner and mate; that falling in love is provided by great passion, rapid mood shifts, and other physiological features; and that people all want to be loved for themselves rather than for our position or accomplishments. So statements such as, "As long as I'm with you, happiness will be inevitable" were generated for this section.

The second part involves the relationship quality and communicational importance of Fromm's genuine love. An interesting feature of this realm is its characterization as a psychologically favorable form of love. Since existing measures of love have not tried to remove this domain, items in relation to this literature were generated: for example, "I have a very pure relationship," as said by those people who are the follower of this sort of love (Critelli, et al., 2017, p. 356).

The third dimension of the process deals with partner-induced physical or sexual arousal (e.g., "I get very sexually aroused when kissing"); nearly all conceptualizations identify extreme emotionality and physical arousal as central aspects of "young love" (Critelli, et al., 2017, p. 357). "Attractive" usually means a nice package of qualities which are popular and sought after on the personality market. What specifically makes a person attractive depends on the fashion of the time, physically as well as mentally. A person with such personalities may have various packages in every moment of his life, and this package changes through aging. To explain human biological evolution and existential anxious allegorically through a simple condemnation of authoritarian value systems, Fromm asserts that when Adam and the Eve ate from the tree of knowledge, they were aware of themselves as being separate from nature

while still being part of it. This is why they felt ashamed, and from that time on they evolved into human beings, they got aware of themselves and being powerless in forces of nature and society appears on them and not any longer combined with the universe as they were in their instinctive, pre-human extant as animals. From that time on man tries to make his or her appearance different with other tools in nature.

Human beings always follow beauties of nature and they want this beauty on other creatures the same. Fromm has different ideas about this human tendency in absorbing or exporting attraction to others. Men and women have different attitudes in attracting others, for men to be successful, to be powerful and being as rich as the social margin of one's position permits. The other feature that is especially used by women is to improve one's attraction by cultivating one's physical shapes, dress, etc. Other ways of making oneself attractive, is used both by men and women, are to develop pleasant manners, interesting conversation, to be helpful, modest, and inoffensive. Many of the ways to make one lovable person are the same as those used in order to make one successful, to win friends and influence people. As a matter of fact, what most people in our culture mean by being lovable is essentially a mixture of being popular and having sexual appeal.

In relation to love, an American psychologist Robert Sternberg claims that, there are three elements in love that make a triangular theory, and each component illustrates a different aspect of love. The first aspect is Intimacy, and this refers to senses of wanting and connectedness in loving relationships. This statement is matched with Fromm's opinion about man's attraction and appearance in absorbing other pole. Both poles need warmth, happiness, emotional supports and they have to value their relationship. The second one is Passion; this dimension appoints the romance, sexual attraction, consummation and other forms of arousal that cause the experience of passion in a loving relationship. In addition to what Sternberg said, Fromm also asserts that the early and uncontrolled sexual relations during this period lead to an unreal sense of satisfaction that brings about disappointment in both participants. The third and the last component is Decision/Commitment Decision, in short period it performs as a decision of choosing someone to love, and in long time of friendship, commitment to maintain that love would be possible (Sternberg 1997:15-16).

#### **USAGE, ENVIRONMENT AND ROMANTIC RELATIONS IN LIONEL ASBO**

In Lionel Asbo, romantic relationships are connected with language usage and environmental features in a very twisted and complicated way. In this novel, playing with language is indeed an obvious element among characters and Amis technically does it well. Moreover, he tampers in the orders to produce an idiolect form of talking between the characters which imitate the reduction of the symbolic connection through which Amis associates with the postmodern society. The outcome is a savage funny novel, and a comically cruel one to boot. It is no surprise that some reviewers strike it in accordance to excessive cruelty or some of them say 'bitterness' with which it hit out at "The State of Britain". In fact Amis's critical portrayal of British classes mostly refers to the underclass, but does not deny allusions to the middle and the upper classes. Lionel Asbo is both funny and at the same time a dark tragedy indeed; it ends with a combination of loss and pleasure. It presents dystopian perception of England as seen in the sight of a mostly imaginary London.

As mentioned above, the language usage of main characters during time in the whole parts of the novel shows a process of change in character's perceptions of life and their intuitions in finding true romantic relation. One typical example of such development relates to the main person of this novel named Lionel, who has been called a BASBO, or Baby ASBO who stood for Anti-Social Behavior Order. Amis shows Lionel as a great rule breaker and anti-dad for his orphaned nephew Desmond Pepperdine. On the other hand, the writer also reports sorts of positive and admirable changes in both characters 'Lionel Asbo' and his nephew. The way Lionel uses the language and pronounces the words and calls names clarify their family backgrounds and their social level, but this form of behaving no longer changes for both guys during the process of their maturity.

The plot opens out in a region called Diston, where, even it echoes the real London district of Diston around London Fields and gives it threatening overtones, moreover; its privative prefix makes it sound disordered. In fact, Diston reflects sorts of social disorders through focusing on its teenage pregnancy, crime and kidnapping rates, incest, amorality affairs, cultural invasion and beliefs besides its harsh violence. Urban illness and crime define Diston in a way that for all its impossible gathering of deviants and social troubles palpitates with vitality, and 'background radiation and background music', transported to the followers as a kind of symbolic excess.

#### **SYMBOLIC ROMANTIC COMMUNICATION**

In order to understand the romantic relations between the characters based on Fromm's theories, one must be familiar with Amis's symbolism in this novel. Two most important Diston's male protagonists, Lionel Asbo and Desmond

Pepperdine, are perfect representation of the type of modern urban dystopia that Amis enjoys creating, which he coincidentally associates with “the state of England” in Lionel Asbo. Lionel, the Lotto lout, with an aptitude for being hostile, stingy and stupid person based on different reasons. He has also profound effect on his nephew’s attitudes as a counter father, and known as foil characters in comparison with their personalities, however they are mixed in blood and room. A good-natured, smart and sensitive orphaned teenage boy is brought up under Diston’s improper condition with plenty of crime which all effectively come up with lawlessness and generalized economy of brutality.

Mass media mentioned in novels such as *Morning Lark* and other unethical channels and websites were the symbol of freedom and corruption in an industrial society. The other example of character’s communication is writing and sending letters. Writing itself could be a symbolic passion and purification. So in relation to this idea, Des always tries to release himself through writing letters to his aunt in order to announce her about the sin he has committed over his Gran. Family is the main field of learning and behaving, thus what uncle Li is transferring to Des, is exactly what he desires for himself in which mostly were against Man’s ethical norms during childhood.

Another significant symbolic issue is presenting dogs in the story and the companionship of them with the members in the novel. Compatibility of living for both family members and the dogs are various, and this relationship changes through the periods. It should be mentioned that the presence of the dogs and their actions in the story are not irrelevant with the sequences of the events among the fellows. For example, in a part of the novel stated that two dogs named Jack and Jek that are brothers, and have sex. They are queer for each other, so that is incestuous behavior (Lionel Asbo 155). This action is not irrelevant with the illegal and sinful relationship of Des and Gran, which is definitely incest according to Fromm. The function of the dogs represents the wrong deeds of characters; some of them such as Des and Gran intensively are involved with a great sin they have done before. What Des and Gran did before was according to Fromm an incest, and the sexual relations of the dogs were not irrelevant with Des and his grandmother. In relation to what has been said about the symbolic love relationship, there will be a consequence for the reason of Gran having affairs with her grandson and her various marriage results in having different children from several spouses.

#### PSYCHOLOGICAL ROOTS IN CHARACTERS’ PERVERTED BEHAVIOR

Amis’s illustration of the state of England is inevitably transgressive and vicious. Through excessive reading of the text with the help of Fromm’s theories, one realizes a kind of enthusiasm which needs critical attention and psychoanalytical perspectives to find various psychological disorders. Amis depicts Lionel and the other characters based on the condition of urban cities like England, and he vividly defines the psychological effects of environment over the fellows; improper conditions like amorality, violent and sexual disorders among people. This study attempts to search the causes of deviations in various aspects of loving in Pepperdine’s family.

There are various entrances to open the story and define each character’s role in accordance with the theoretical notions. Des opens the story by bringing up a memorial commitment of his illegal relations with his thirty nine-year-old Gran. “I’m having an affair with an older woman. The sex is fantastic and I think I’m in love, but there is one serious complication and it’s this; she is my Gran” (Lionel Asbo 9). An unethical relation that is not considered bad in Diston. The second main character, Lionel, based on his role is both an anti-dad for his nephew and a sadistic offender who passes half of his life in prison. Lionel is a person who is not properly trained in loving and he is not able to show his passion to others through his heart and the only criteria in his mind is to satisfy his sexual desire with non-sensational things such as watching pornography channels or raping others. This form of artificial and sexual satisfaction, while being immature, makes him disabled in finding his true love as his mother could not find her real in loved husband and results in her six marriages.

Sexual abuse, violation and immorality are the major elements that are combined in the story to make the best echo of social and psychological problems in a society. In most sections of the novel, transference subjects among the characters are related to passion and love, and in some cases for illegal relationships. Some of their commitments were as the consequence of immaturity and only for temporary satisfaction, and other relations were based on self-knowledge and human’s need for the continuation of his or her generation. For instance, Lionel’s version of having fun is all about sexual satisfaction, and he tries to put his nephew in the situation of experiencing sexual issues and pushes him to enjoy his moments rather than following his school subjects. It seems Lionel’s view toward sex is as a mischievous temper and psychological disorder or something as a failure in one’s life; for example, a woman is being done in front of his husband’s sight. Certainly, Lionel’s unethical behavior is the representation of the condition of his living country and the psychological problems of himself.

On the other hand, there are some other incidents the same as Lionel’s action on Gina in front of her husband’s presence, such as the illegal sexual relations between Des and Gran. Moreover; it happens for several times and changes into a habitual action. As Fromm says, this could be the outcome of regularity of the temporary need for

unifying as the result of sexual satisfaction. Surely, the Gran and Des understand their wrong intercourse, however Des knows what they are committing is sin and dangerous for them in case of his uncle's understanding about the relations. In fact, the problems above have fundamental aspects that are related to the society and the life style of family members.

According to Fromm's psychological theories, what Lionel is enjoying from and transferring it to his nephew is some sort of sadistic love or addiction to temporary and non-sense relation and artificial ways of sexual relief. He always thinks of raping and finding ways for having sexual connection even by interfering in other's life such as his childhood friend Marlon. In fact, Lionel as an adult and mature person is teaching brutal sorts of love to an immature orphaned boy who is experiencing his childhood period, while Des himself is challenging with the violent event that has been happening to him. Based on various relations and reliance on the analysis of superficial romantic aims between the main characters of the story, the very beginning of the novel appears a sort of romantic relation what Fromm calls it "genuine love" (1956: 59), which involves partner's temporary sexual need and preferences to experience the other fellow through a close extent of relation without using any masks and changing roles, just to relief one's inner need.

Excessive illegal relationships lead Amis to represent Diston as a gallery of social misfits and freaks that the habitants are not capable with monitoring themselves or keeping tab on their lowest impulses. There are many examples of those relations in the novel which present the erotic forms of love and in according to Fromm those are uncontrolled needs, which should be satisfied by unifying opposite poles in the process of using genital organs in order to reply one's need of sex and this form of combination does not last for a long period and it is only for one's calmness. In relation to man's libido, Lionel answers his nephew's question about his mood in sexual performances by stating his plan about raping Gina, he mentions:

The mood to do a tart. Hre, up in me room." [...] "See, Des, with me sexuality being what it is—there has to be pain... . This is it. Don't know why. But there has to be pain' [...] 'so the Gina relationship's obviously ideal. For now. You know, I'm doing her in the normal way. And with every thrust,' [...] 'I'm causing pain... (Lionel Asbo 206)

In relation to above statement, based on Lionel's sadistic behavior in causing pain through his sexual relations, not only does he rape, but also tries to show his violation by using force and his sense of jealousy towards his old rival, he rapes Marlon's wife and makes him to look on as his wife is being "done". This problematic action will cause betrayal condition, so Marlon will take his revenge not on Lionel himself, but on his own wife, whose face suffers irremediable damage as a result:

There's been a development. Gina. Yeah, mate, she's been done. Acid. Jupes Lanes [...] Broad daylight. Seen what it does—acid? Des tried to feel skeptical (how true was this?). But for twenty years he had been a fully conscious resident for Diston Town, where calamity made its sounds like a postman. Gina, he thought—with that smile, those eyes. He took a mouthful of cold coffee and let it drop back into the cup through his teeth. (Lionel Asbo 251)

The information above shows the effects of each society on people, and the reflection of this quality on families and their behavior toward each other. For example, in most parts of this novel, uncle Li has a significant role for teaching his nephew to act like him in society, a person who himself does not have any proper condition of growing. As mentioned before, just through having brief information about the background of this uncle, it will prove that, not only is he known as a criminal and a vandal, but also as a savage pattern for others. Lionel's lack of father's care and passion makes him an anti-dad for his nephew. Lionel's mother's several marriages prove that they have no senses of passion and love in their family, as Fromm says, "The relationship to father is quite different. Mother is home we come from, she is nature, soil, the ocean; father does not represent any such natural home" (1956, p. 57). He believes that father has less importance for the child in the early years of birth. On the other hand, he states that if father does not represent the natural world, he reflects the other pole of human existence; such as the world of thought, of man-made things, of law and order, of discipline, of travel and adventure.

Fromm shows father as a teacher who teaches the child, a person who directs the child the road into the world. But here one can see Lionel and Des do not have such sources above. They are free to do what they like without any guidance of parents. Lionel and Des suffer from the lack of parental protection and passion. No one helps them to find the correct ways of behaving in the family and other people in the society. In relation to those lacks, they are attracted by temporary and artificial amusements; such as physical and sexual bothering after making friendship with other females or using pornography channels. This deviation for Lionel is more tangible than for Des, and it causes him

spending half of his life in prison and losing his real love in his life. Having being amused with artificial objects, the valueless performances made him blind to find the realistic and romantic part of his relationships with his partners. In fact, the only thing he thinks about his connections with an opposite gender is having sex and getting oneself rid of sexual needs.

The way Amis illustrates Diston prepares the authors' mind to find the main clues of different sorts of illegal relationships. For instance, Diston has a high rank of teenage pregnancies which avoids it from thinning out. One of the main goals of Amis in explaining the environmental condition is to show the ethical corruption among people in a society in which men are mostly busy with war and outer activities and at the same time women are looking for kindness and attention, and most of the time they are suffering from the lack of realistic romantic unification. In fact, love is not exactly using in its correct function. For example, Lionel's mother has her first baby when she turns twelve, and Lionel also has six different brothers and sister from different mother's husbands.

Obviously the novel starts with the introduction of family members, such as the age and characteristics of each of them. The authors believe that the introductory information within the novel points to the contemporary situation of the society and families. Desmond Pepperdine is a vivid sample of an orphaned boy who is one of the members of this family that is observing and obtaining what his uncle and his Gran act inside, and at the same time he is reacting to those events happening to him. There are various proofs which show the improper environmental situation of living and learning how to express one's interest in Lionel Asbo:

Go home, boy. Go home and watch some decent porn. Des picked up the Mac and got smartly to his feet. "Here. I'm off out anyway."

"Yeah? Where? Seeing that Alektra?"

"Nah. Meet up with me mates."

"Well do something useful. Steal a car." (Lionel Asbo 12)

The sentences show the lack of knowledge in understanding life and maturity among the people of this city, to prove this supposition, Amis brings some statistic results about people's expectations in marriage and having child in Diston. He comes to an understanding through the following sentences:

In dusty Diston (also known as Diston town or, more simply, Town), nothing, and no one was over sixty years old. On an international chart for life expectancy, Diston would appear between Benin and Djibouti (fifty-four for men and fifty-seven for women). And that wasn't all. (Lionel Asbo 12)

About women's common pregnancies, Amis says: "On an international chart for fertility rates, Diston would appear between Malawi and Yemen (six children per couple or per single mother). Thus the age structure in Diston was strangely shaped." (Lionel Asbo 12) The quoted sentences manifest paradoxical condition in which people of this city are challenging with a lack of knowledge in coping their age of marriage and birth rate, not only do they marry in early ages of their lives, but also give birth to children more than a number expected.

Grace's several marriages from the early ages of her life and having children as the result of those marriages prove that a kind of erotic love causes those relations; relationships based on sexual sensation. But on the other hand, Des's marriage with Dawni is a sample of realistic and mature romantic love. They have a child who is not only the fruit of being in love with each other, but also this daughter whose name is as the same as of his mother, 'Cilla'. Cilla's name causes Des to remember his dead mother, whom he did not have the experience of motherly passion and love; as a result, he began his youth with the experience of incestuous relationship with his grandmother. However, Des knows enough about his wrong deeds with the Gran, his childish mind needs to experience repeatedly side by side of his Grand's need of mature erotic relationships and this is untamed for both of them.

According to Fromm in *The Art of Loving*, if love is an art, then it needs knowledge and effort, but if it is merely a pleasant sensation, no one thinks about the fate of that, and they watch plenty of films about love stories and many songs related to love. In fact no one thinks that there is something to be learned about love. He believes that knowledge is an important aspect of love; one which does not stay periphery, but penetrates to the core. Amis depicts a devastated society in which there is no knowledge of understanding a pure romantic connection that lasts for a long period. As Fromm says, knowledge has more fundamental relation to the problem of love. In another statement he says, "to respect a person is not possible without knowing him; care and responsibility would be blind if they are not motivated by concern" (1965, p. 44).

In Lionel Asbo, Des's behavior leads the present authors to identify the differential characteristics of him in comparison with his uncle and other fellows, and makes Lionel's brutishness look even more extravagant. So, Des's quiet enthusiasm for knowledge and social improvement is deeply in contrast with Lionel's specific description of a healthy life and smooth socializing:

'What you doing there with that pen? What's that you writing? Guiss it.' Des thought fast.

'Uh, it's about poetry, Uncle Li.'

'Poetry?' said Lionel and started back.

‘Yeah. Poem called The Faerie Queen.’

‘The what?... I despair of you sometimes, Des. Why aren’t you out smashing windows? It’s not healthy. (Lionel Asbo 6-7)

In the quotation above, Des is not actually writing any poem at all, but a letter to Diston Gazzette’s Agony Aunt to relief himself with the heavy heart of its fearful secret. In fact, Des is carrying an indigested event that has happened to him by force or temptation. He is always complaining to himself about his Gran’s affair. He is a child and an immature boy for refusing or accepting illegal romantic issues, and at the same time he is also impressed by Gran’s deceptive description in response to Des’s curiosity of that incest:

Ten minutes later, on the low divan, she said, as long as no one knows. Ever. Where’s the harm? Yea. And round here, I mean, it’s not considered that bad.

No, it’s not. Uncle and nieces. Fathers and daughters all over the places.

And at the Tower there’s that pair of twins living in sin ... But you and me. Gran, d’you think it’s legal?

Don’t call me Gran!... Maybe a misdemeanor. Because you’re not sixteen. (Lionel Asbo 15)

And the main part of his letter regards the acknowledgment of his unwanted experience:

Dear Jennaveive, I’m having an affair with an older woman. She is a lady of some sophistication, and makes a refreshing change from the teen agers I know (like Alektra for example, or Chanel.) The sex if fantastic and I think I’m in love. But there is one very serious complication and it’s this: she is my Gran! (Lionel Asbo 3)

Through what has been said above there would be a kind of dilemma in Des’s mind and as a teenage boy he cannot differentiate the righteous way of expressing his interest. He did something wrong and breaks the taboos of the society, but this commitment is actually the outcome of lack of different elements such as the absence of parental attention or temporary joyous feeling that brings to his stormy mind through having sex even passionless with his own Gran. Parallel with the inner disaster, corrupted society also duplicates its negative effects on the main problem.

Amis’s satirical illustration of Diston as accelerating all social evils and its entire weak educated fellows that scarcely pronounce the spelling of English words, finds a telling manifestation in this report made by Des about the sexual relation he is having with his grand-mother in the agony columns of Diston Gazette. Therefore, to answer one of the research questions in reference to the environmental effects on man’s behavior and feelings, based on Fromm’s ideas, evidence shows that there are many influential issues such as prostitution among people living outside, and the unethical pattern in one’s family is known as the main reasons of man’s deviation in his true romantic relationships.

## CONCLUSION

In Lionel Asbo Amis’s most attention is on the relationships of the three main characters namely Uncle Lionel, the Gran and Des. He depicts the process of their romantic development based on their ethical and unethical relationships and intercourses. It is understood that the theme of this novel is retrieved from Charles Dickens’s novel *The Great Expectations*. Amis illustrates the different sorts of love between the characters during a dark and the bitterest condition of life. He shows disorganized family members who are not familiar with ethical norms and regular rules of a society, so they are against social behaviors. Certainly, the members of this family do not know how to present their emotional feelings to each other and to the people who are in contact with them. As the authors noticed in the sequences of this novel, there were various failures for the family members’ romantic relationships such as Lionel and his young hood girlfriend named Synthia, and his relationship with Threnody in his mature period of his life, which was not successful, and he was not able to show his adoration to her. Moreover; it appears that not only Lionel was not enough trained about the social affairs and family rules, but also he was training his teenage resident nephew according to his crude and malicious principles, such as preferring porn over women. However Des’s behavior and his interests define him entirely different among the other characters. So, there are various people who do not know how to find and how to learn the knowledge of this romantic art through all their lives.

Though many people may have influence in one’s life, but one may find in this article that there are some features in the life of human beings which make people characteristically different from each other, such as knowledge. For example, this item refers to Des’s knowledge of reading and writing, in contrast his uncle could not academically communicate with the people around him, or even huge amount of money he had won in a lottery did not bring him honor. Therefore, in this case the authors came to this conclusion that knowledge has an important role in human’s life, and not entirely, but a prominent part of man’s treat is based on literacy and skills. Here, the authors cannot posit that Des was enough qualified in his understandings, thus; in relation to what the authors said in chapter two, care and responsibility are ones which Des as an orphaned was banned of having them. No one helps him and no one cares about him in his infantile. So, he did absorb what he had received from his Gran and his uncle. Although Des was conducted to the wrong ways of life, his sense of guilt and sin make him aware of what he was committing. On the other hand, he was continuing his wrong affairs merely as the result of having wrong patterns. So, the present authors

found out that members of this family have influential impact on each other's behavior in the house. In fact, the only different point in comparison with Des and his uncle is the way they express their romantic feeling, what Lionel presents is based on his sexual desire and his irrational attitude, but what Des aims to have romantic relationship is to receive kindly attention in the absence of his parents. On the other hand, both Lionel and Des were trying to have their own reason of loving; Lionel followed the erotic form of love and temporary joy of intercourses or raping others in order to fulfill his need, and his nephew was looking for his lost motherly love and attention in his relation with his grandma.

Amis's artistically use of language for the characters in his stories makes his books realistically and effective in introducing his character's personality. For instance, the way Lionel pronounces his name and people's name in the book *Lionel Asbo*, or the style of Doll's talking to Hannah and the language he uses to define her, profoundly affect their perspectives over their relationships. In these novels, Amis also uses important features and techniques to describe the characterization of his novel according to the personality of his characters, and one of the techniques is the language usage.

Through this study, the authors also faced the other forms of passionate feelings and relationships in accordance to Erich Fromm's notion of love, such as the sense of fatherly love between Des and his little daughter or the sense of responsibility of Des's wife to her sick father, that makes her protect him during his sickness moments of life, and the authors came to an understanding that this form of love between them is unconditional and merely pure of adoration and ethical due to whom they belong to as a child and a father, and Lionel was deeply in the lack of that. In another section of this article, the authors were attracted to the sense of jealousy between the male characters of both novels, and this sense truly expresses itself through the erotic feeling among them, such as Lionel's raping his old friend's wife 'Gina', and his sense of envy to his nephew's wife's pregnancy, and his own simple romantic relation with Threnody does not last fruitfully and leads to his failure. Therefore, it is hard for Lionel to control his harsh sense to whom he thinks belong to him, so; he prefers to conquer his rivals through sexual affairs and raping. In fact, he cannot control himself, sexual participation is his habitual activity, and through the story one understands that he is too much addicted to pornography channels and movies; so, he could not control himself about sex.

Therefore, the authors noticed that the main characters of the novel could not easily and properly communicate with the people who are in contact with them, and lack of knowledge was one of the main reasons of the dark relationship between the members. In relation to the previous sentences, it is also obvious in the story that the character's job position has direct effect on their relationships with others.

The other important factor in a healthy romantic relationship revealed itself in the presence of care and responsibility which appear with little strength between the characters of the story. For example in *Lionel Asbo*, the lack of caring and responsibility of members in the family to Des, who does not have father and mother and he is supposed to receive special attention, but one may understand that there was not any proper attention to him since he was a little child to his adulthood. The authors came to an intuition through this study that, life is founded by different sort of needs which sexual need is the fundamental feature of starting a new romantic relationship, and this is called erotic love, but this kind of love described itself with different acquisitions, it means that, this erotic form of love can be temporary and only sexual need fulfillment or to be a reason of a new life and the fruit of that life. Erotic love also has relation with motherly love as the result of unifications between two poles. When this unification takes place, the result of it causes the birth of a child, so the content of love automatically changes from one form to another form. One may not comprehend the exact outcome of it, but the authors know what happened. Today, studying about immense passionate relationships is studying the representation of the events in our present-day society: in our cities, parks and memorials; in our culture, through literature, film, arts and books.

### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

### **REFERENCES**

- Amis, M. (2013). *Lionel Asbo: State of Englang*. London: Vintage.
- Critelli, J. W., Myers, E. J., & Victor E. (2017). The components of love: a. *Journal of Personality*, 54 (2), 354-370.
- Fromm, E. (1965). *The art of loving*, Primary Sources and Research, Pdf. 117-124.
- Sternberg, R. J. (1997). Construct validation of a triangular love scale. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 27(3), 313-335.