

**Research Article**

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**Problematics of Unrequited Love in the Modern Javanese Song  
“Klebus” by Ngatmombilung: A Critical Discourse Analysis**

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**Abstract**

Love can be interpreted as a process that occurs in society, and begins with a feeling of happiness, romance, and harmony. However, love can also end in heartbreak, disappointment, unrequited love, suffering, and so on. One of the sad endings to love experienced by many people, especially young people, is unrequited love. This study aims to analyze the problematic nature of unrequited love in the modern Javanese song titled “Klebus”, which was popularized by Ngatmombilung. The research method is descriptive-qualitative with the critical discourse analysis approach of Norman Fairclough to explore the meaning of songs critically and in-depth. Data collection techniques include document studies, content analysis, and interviews. Data analysis techniques are carried out in three dimensions, namely textual dimensions, discursive practice dimensions, and sociocultural practical dimensions, to get appropriate conclusions. This study shows that in the song “Klebus”, there is a representation of the problems of the love story of someone who is not avenged even though they struggled and gave their best. Young people who have an attitude of being too hopeful about the feelings of others can actually cause pain, disappointment, sadness, and suffering. In the end, letting go and accepting reality becomes the right choice.

**Keywords:** critical discourse analysis; heartbreak; love; modern Javanese song; unrequited love.

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**1. Introduction**

Currently, music and songs are a unit that is always new and popular in various circles, especially among the younger generation [1]. Songs can also be interpreted as a communication tool that can be enjoyed and understood by various ages [2]. This also occurs in Javanese culture and society. As part of a culture, songs that develop describe the social identity of today’s society [3]. There are lots of popular Javanese songs that have changed from time to time. This happens because the songs use Javanese, which is easily understood by listeners, both orally and in writing [4]. Song creators can express their feelings of love through the medium of song lyrics, such as when a songwriter feels love failure, betrayal, disappointment, or unrequited love [5]. Of course, romance is one of the themes that people like. One of the modern Javanese songs that contain the meaning of failure in love is the song “Klebus”, popularized by Ngatmombilung in 2022. The word “Klebus”, when interpreted from the title, is a Javanese vocabulary word that means “drenched”. The choice of this song’s title represents the expression of the Javanese people [3]. In general, the meaning of the song “Klebus” tells about the problems of unrequited love.

The problem of unrequited love has actually been studied by several researchers before. Clark et al. [6] conducted research on the effect of commitment, motivation for interpersonal relationships, and motivation for maintaining friendships in cases of unrequited love. The results of this study indicate that these three things can be used as mediation for the mental health of someone who experiences heartache due to unrequited love. Gheaus' research [7] regarding unrequited love shows that the tragedy of unrequited love felt by someone who has sincerely struggled can actually have an impact in the form of hatred. Meanwhile, Namira and Setiasari [5] conducted research on five Billie Eilish songs that contain unrequited love in terms of the imagery aspect of Perrine's theory and Kennedy and Giola's biographical. This research shows that Billie Eilish's background can influence the theme and meaning of the songs she creates.

Some of these studies show that anyone can experience the phenomenon of unrequited love. In addition, the phenomenon of unrequited love can also have an impact on one's mental health. However, no one has examined the problem of unrequited love contained in the Javanese song "Klebus" in previous studies. A song as a literary work is often used to express the author's ideology. Therefore, the researcher is interested in critically and deeply exploring the song's meaning to find the author's ideology through a study, namely critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis seeks to describe and explain a social reality orally or in writing that contains many deep meanings, such as ideology, power, and domination [8]. It is important to conduct this research to find out the creator's ideology behind the phenomenon of unrequited love, which is packaged in the modern Javanese song "Klebus".

## **2. Methods**

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with the critical discourse analysis approach of Norman Fairclough. The critical discourse analysis approach was chosen because the researcher wanted to critically and in-depth explore the contents of the song discourse to be studied. The research data is in the form of a Javanese song discourse entitled "Klebus", which was popularized for the first time by Ngatmombilung in 2022, interview results, and documents in the form of comments from song lovers on Youtube. Sources of data in this study were the transcription of the lyrics of the song "Klebus", song connoisseur informants, and the Youtube comments column, which contains comments or responses related to understanding the meaning of the song. Data collection techniques in this study were carried out through content analysis, interviews, and document review. Content analysis is used to explore the content of the song "Klebus" discourse in-depth and critically. Meanwhile, interviews and document reviews were used to support and strengthen the analysis of song discourse from the dimensions of discursive practice. The data were analyzed using a three-dimensional model developed by Norman Fairclough, including textual, discursive, and social practice dimensions descriptively, interpretatively, and explanatorily.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

### *3.1 Analysis of Textual Dimensions*

The lyrics of the song "Klebus" popularized by Ngatmombilung do not have a specific rhyme. This is because the lyrics of the song "Klebus" prioritize the unity of content that the songwriter wants to convey to the public as listeners of the song. The choice of words in the song represents a relationship of contradiction or mutual support between the lines. Meanwhile, the researcher uses semantic and pragmatic perspectives to understand the meaning of each song's lyrics that are created.

***Dalane rame, atiku sepi ‘the road is busy, (but) my heart is lonely’***

The song begins with a description of contradictory or opposite conditions. This contradiction is shown by the choice of the words “crowded” and “quiet”. The character “I” feels that the street conditions that are seen or passed are very crowded, whereas this is contrary to the feelings of the heart that feel lonely. This feeling of loneliness can occur because there are no real friends, do not have closeness to someone, or the heart does not feel that it gets love and affection from someone.

***Angen-angen tresna dibales tresna ‘hope love is reciprocated with love’***

The character “I” is actually in love with someone. The character “I” also hopes to get the same response from loved ones for the feelings of love that are being felt at this time. This feeling is of course a feeling that must be felt by everyone. When someone loves someone who is admired, surely that person will hope to be loved too. Even without realizing it, the feeling of hope that is so strong can lead to the desire to have a loved one.

***Nyatane tresna dibales matur nuwun ‘in fact love is only reciprocated by saying “thank you”’***

This lyric is an answer or fact that contradicts the previous lyrics. In the previous lyrics, the character “I” really hoped to get the same love from the person he loves. However, this lyric shows the fact that it turns out that the love that is felt is only reciprocated by saying thank you. This “thank you” has a negative connotation in the form of polite rejection. Even so, this, of course, still hurts feelings and makes someone desperate because of rejected love.

***Uwis nyaman, sempet sayang, kok malah ngilang ‘it’s comfortable, I loved her, but instead she disappeared’***

These lyrics are a complement to the previous lyrics. Without realizing it, being close to someone can create a comfortable feeling when meeting or communicating together. Not only that, but the feeling of comfort that is felt can also cause feelings of affection. Comfort and affection are two things that are manifestations of feelings of love for someone. However, the character “I” must feel disappointed because it turns out that feelings that are already comfortable and affectionate have to end in a painful situation, namely being abandoned by a loved one.

***Meh lunga angel, bertahan lara ‘It’s hard to leave, but it hurts to hold on’***

The character “I” feels confused and anxious after learning that his love is not reciprocated. This happens because the character “I” is confused in making a decision between two contradictory things, namely, going to let it go or choosing to stay because of the feeling of love that is felt. Every choice that will be made certainly has consequences. If you choose to leave and let it go, there will be feelings that are very difficult to leave because of a greater sense of love and because we are already comfortable. On the other hand, if we choose to endure and continue to be close to the person we admire, we will actually feel more and more heartache that lasts longer.

***Nyoba selalu ana meski kowe ra ana rasa ‘try to always be there even though you have no feelings towards me’***

So far, the character “I” has tried to always be there even though he already knows that the person he loves doesn’t have the same feelings (unrequited love). The desire to act is always there is one of the manifestations of feelings of love for others. This attitude is also a sincere sacrifice for the sake of accompanying and making loved ones happy.

***Rasa sing jebul tak rasakne dewe ‘a feeling that I actually felt myself’***

These lyrics are a continuation or complement of the previous lyrics. The character “I” realizes that in fact the feeling of love is only felt by himself. The character “I” experiences romance problems, namely unrequited love.

***Kebacut sayang, ngeki harapan, kowe milih liyane* ‘I already love you, you give hope, but you choose someone else’**

It becomes difficult for the character “I” to accept the reality of unrequited love. Moreover, the character “I” already loves and gives hope to be able to have a beautiful relationship with the person you love. But in reality, the person you love prefers someone else. This incident created a feeling of disappointment and heartbreak. The facts obtained turned out to be contrary to the expected circumstances.

***Langite peteng, udane saya deres klebus tekan atiku* ‘the sky was dark, the rain was getting heavier drenched to my heart’**

This heartache and feeling of being broken abysmally is described by the atmosphere, namely when it rains. The sky was dark because of the overcast sky and the rain that was getting heavier was drenching the earth. This lyric contains a figure of speech hyperbole which likens the rain getting heavier until it wets the heart of the character “I”. This clearly shows that the problems of romance in the form of unrequited love really give grief and pain in the heart that is extraordinary.

***Cedhake karo aku, nanging atimu dinggo wong liya* ‘you are close to me but your heart is for someone else’**

The problems of romance encountered include not only unrequited love, but also betrayal by loved ones. This betrayal is shown by the attitude of loved ones who actually prefer other people to people who try to always be there. The character “I” feels very disappointed because the closeness that is shared with the person he loves doesn’t mean anything.

***Wis dalane dadi pelarian dinggo sliramu sing lagi butuh hiburan* ‘the fate said that I’m just an escape for yourself who is in need of entertainment’**

One of the things that the character “I” chooses is to accept the reality that is happening and assume that this sadness has become fate if the closeness that is established is only for an outlet. Unfortunately, the character “I” already involves feelings of comfort and affection easily and doesn’t consider the bad possibilities that will happen. The character “I” tries to sincerely accept the sadness that has been experienced at this time. Thus, one last resort when unrequited love persists is to choose to accept reality.

***Aku sing sayang, aku sing berjuang* ‘I love you, I fight for you’**

The character “I” just realized that all this time it was only the character “I” who had feelings of affection and had to fight alone. The form of his struggle has been explained in the previous lyrics, such as trying to always be there, creating a comfortable atmosphere, and being willing to do anything to make the people he loves happy. Unfortunately, this will lead to disappointment and heartache.

***Bagianmu kaya biasane, bagian sing nglarani aku wae* ‘your duty as usual, which is only to hurt me’**

This lyric is the last lyric of the song which emphasizes that the person you love always hurts the feelings of the “me” character. This section seems to describe the person who is loved by the character “I” is a bad person because it often hurts the feelings of the character “I” supported by the choice of the word “usually”. This is also reinforced and shown by the use of the word “your duty” which means that it has been done frequently or has become a habit. Besides that, these lyrics also describe the attitude of the character “I” who no longer cares about the pain he is experiencing.

### *3.2 Analysis of Discursive Practice Dimensions*

The dimension of discursive practice in this study focuses on aspects of text consumption. This aspect examines listeners’ understanding and response to the popular Javanese song discourse with the title “Klebus”, which was first popularized by Ngatmombilung via the YouTube channel on June 27,

2022. The song “Klebus” has become popular because the community, as connoisseurs of the song, connects the meaning of the song “Klebus” with their romantic experiences, namely the unrequited love they have experienced.

The most unique thing about the Youtube comments column is that the comments conveyed by the heart are dominated by men. This dominance shows that the problem of unrequited love is more often experienced by men than women. In addition, the unrequited love problem tends to be experienced by the younger generation who are not yet married. The song’s ideology portrays men as characters who are sincere in love, while women only use the man’s sincerity as a source of relief from loneliness. Like Hariyana et al’s research [9], men are portrayed with a good image as characters who always fight, love sincerely, and are patient. On the other hand, women are portrayed with a bad image as characters who always hurt men and are selfish.

Comments from connoisseurs of songs with the initials RZ reveal that all this time they have dared to love someone they admire but finally realized that RZ is only a way to relieve loneliness. Of course, this hurts. The feeling of hopelessness is also experienced by connoisseurs of the song with the initials KE. KE expressed his annoyance because he couldn’t stand having his feelings toyed with by the woman he loved. This feeling of disappointment causes a person to have no enthusiasm to fight anymore, choose to give up, and try to find someone who can love and accept them sincerely. Connoisseurs of songs with the initials AS also realize that currently his position is only that of a clown who can entertain the woman he loves. AS believes he has never felt happiness until he wonders how long this heartbreak will last.

Nonetheless, AS advised other music fans to remain cheerful despite their feelings of pain and heartbreak. Meanwhile, connoisseurs of the song with the initials SN stated that it turned out that fighting was hard and not easy. Therefore, when there is someone who is struggling, it should be appreciated by giving the same reply, namely, loving each other. If you don’t get a reply, the struggle will feel half-hearted. Some of these views are different from those of connoisseurs of songs with the initials AM. Even though AM has currently let go of the woman he loves, he will still remain faithful and wait for and accept the presence of the woman he loves again. This shows that AM still has a strong sense of hope, even though it has been disappointed.

The same thing was conveyed by a male informant with the initials AN: that the song “Klebus” implies a deep meaning about love failure due to unrequited love. This problem is a common one that must be felt by most of the younger generation. AN’s informants often experience failure in love because, when they are in an intense relationship with a woman, it turns out that the woman’s heart is not for him. This is not only something I’ve experienced once. Therefore, AN feels tired if it has to experience the same incident again. The existence of the song “Klebus” can really describe the experience of love without thickness. This is in contrast to the opinion of the MR informant, who has an opinion contrary to the ideology conveyed by the creator through the song. The MR informant did not agree that a man must accept and surrender if he is only used as an outlet for women. According to him, if a man has realized that the woman he loves does not give the same return, the man must be firm in leaving the woman. The MR informant also highlighted the position of women who like to give false hopes to men by establishing artificial closeness. Of course, this action means that men are only used as entertainment. The MR informant emphasized that if a woman is not serious about having a relationship with a man, it is better not to give hope from the start. Thus, several expressions of the heart based on the meaning of the song “Klebus” show the ideology that men can be weak humans because of romantic problems in the form of unrequited love. The attitude of expecting too much to get the same love from the women we admire can actually cause disappointment, suffering, and heartache that we can feel for ourselves.

### *3.3 Analysis of Social Practice Dimensions*

The third stage of analysis is the dimension of social practice. This dimension seeks to find a relationship between the creation of songs and the context outside the discourse related to the problem of unrequited love. This modern Javanese song with the title “Klebus”, since its first broadcast, has

received an extraordinary response from the public. The problem of romance failure due to unrequited love is actually not a new thing in society. However, this phenomenon is embodied in modern Javanese songs by Andry Priyanta and Ngatmombilung.

The phenomenon of unrequited love can indeed be experienced by both men and women. Songs about the failure of this romance have also become popular in the music world, particularly those written in Indonesian and Javanese. Songs with the theme of romance, both positive and negative, are easier to popularize in society. This is because the subject of love must be experienced by every human being. Previously, several modern Javanese songs with the theme of romance that were popular in the community were titled “*Satru*”, “*Mendung Tanpa Udan*”, “*Pingal*”, “*Kok Iso Yo*”, and “*Teteg Ati*”. Meanwhile, the song that is currently popular is “*Klebus*”.

Almost all young people must have experienced falling in love with the opposite sex. This is a natural thing because it is related to biological and psychological hormone maturity. Young people who fall in love will definitely experience a significant change in attitude. They will express these feelings of love through mutual understanding, caring, mutual respect, responsibility, shared desires, and trying to comply with the wishes of loved ones [10]. However, in reality, falling in love is not only about happiness. When someone dares to fall in love, then that person must also have the courage to accept the consequences of falling in love, both positively and negatively, such as a breakup [11].

The experience of unrequited love is not the image of a good love experience. This is the condition of someone who has a gap between available opportunities and desired ideals and expectations [12]. The phenomenon of unrequited love often occurs because of feelings of love that are felt unilaterally. One will feel a sense of comfort, interest, and intimacy when two people spend time together for a long duration. One party may believe that other people who are considered partners also feel the same way. In fact, this is not necessarily the case. This imbalance of feelings causes rejection, so that one party feels hurt [6]. It really hurts when the desires and needs to be loved cannot be fulfilled or even get rejected by others. This unrequited love can be categorized as a form of social rejection that can be experienced by humans in a narrower scope, because it relates from one person to another. Of course, this rejection can have a negative impact on a person’s mental and psychological health [13].

The response to dealing with the experience of unrequited love is determined by one’s emotional maturity. If a person does not have good emotional intelligence, the phenomenon of unrequited love can cause other problems, namely hatred [7]. Usually, people who are still in the zone of denial about rejection, especially the rejection of love, will act very hatefully towards those who have rejected them. In addition, this attitude of denial can also cause a person to be unable to think logically and thus choose to commit suicide. Young people who have experienced a breakup or unrequited love certainly feel such deep sadness that they choose to commit suicide. This choice is also based on an attitude that makes it difficult to accept reality—the feeling that you are the one who suffers the most, is unhappy, depressed, and so on [11]. Therefore, every individual must have a standard of happiness that can support them in living life with optimism and more positive thoughts in order to make the right decisions about the rejection they experience.

Indeed, it is natural for someone to feel sad when an intimate relationship that has been lived must end in rejection. However, excessive sadness, showing denial of reality, or blaming circumstances or other people can certainly have a bad impact on oneself. Therefore, it is necessary to have proper emotional management so that someone can create happiness and a good mood [14]. One attitude that can be adopted is one of acceptance and forgiveness. This is an effort to save oneself from the nature of hatred or wrongness in taking action. Young people who have a higher attitude toward forgiveness can certainly support the healing process of heart wounds more quickly [15]. In addition, an attitude of acceptance of the existing reality (even though the reality is bitter) can make one happier and more peaceful. This acceptance also encourages an understanding that self-peace is the most important thing, so it becomes wiser not to demand that other people do the same thing or to repay something that has been given [16]. Thus, accepting reality and letting go of someone you love is the right choice in dealing with the phenomenon of unrequited love.

#### 4. Conclusions

The Javanese song “Klebus” uses contradictory and mutually supportive word choices to describe the suffering experienced. This song represents that sincerity in loving someone does not always get beautiful and appropriate results. The existence of overconfidence and too much hope in someone’s love, which young people practice, actually cause feelings of hurt, disappointment, rejection, sadness, and suffering because of experiencing unrequited love. This phenomenon can have a negative impact on the mental and emotional aspects of someone who experiences rejection. Therefore, the attitude of accepting reality and letting go of the decisions of loved ones is the right choice so that we can still feel happy and be at peace with ourselves. In addition, this research has the limitation that it only examines the phenomenon of unrequited love in a modern Javanese song. Future research is expected to be able to examine other romantic phenomena found in modern Javanese songs. In addition, future research can also compare the same theme in several songs by different composers to find out the ideology, power, and dominance carried out by each of the modern Javanese songwriters.

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