

The Myth of Cross-Cultural Love in Five Songs by Ebiat G. Ade: A Semiotic Study of Roland Barthes

Mitos Cinta Lintas Budaya dalam Lima Lagu Ebiat G. Ade: Semiotika Roland Barthes

Amirudin

Universitas Halu Oleo

*Correspondence e-mail: amirta.rahim@uho.ac.id

Article History

Published: 18 Mei 2026

Keywords

cross-cultural myth of love, Ebiat G. Ade, Indonesian culture, Roland Barthes semiotics, song lyrics

Kata Kunci

budaya Indonesia, Ebiat G. Ade, lirik lagu, mitos cinta lintas budaya, semiotika Roland Barthes

Page

74-85

Abstract

This study aims to interpret the cross-cultural myth of love in five songs by Ebiat G. Ade from the album "Puisi-Puisi Cinta Ebiat G. Ade" using Roland Barthes' semiotic framework. The analysis focuses on *Camellia 1*, *Elegi Esok Pagi*, *Nyanyian Kasmaran*, *Cinta di Kereta Biru Malam*, and *Cintaku Kandas di Rerumputan*. Employing a qualitative interpretive approach, the study examines denotative, connotative, and mythic levels of meaning. Rather than claiming direct cultural representation, the findings suggest that the songs can be read as resonating with multiple cultural value systems, including Javanese subtlety, action-oriented expressions associated with Buton cultural perspectives, and more explicit expressive tendencies often linked to Western contexts. The findings indicate that the songs can be read as articulating a cross-cultural myth of love that resonates with three cultural traditions: the subtlety and indirectness often associated with Javanese culture (*Camellia 1*), the appreciation of action and meaningful silence found in certain readings of Buton cultural values (*Elegi Esok Pagi*, *Cintaku Kandas di Rerumputan*), and the expressive boldness frequently linked to Western culture (*Cinta di Kereta Biru Malam*). The analysis also indicates that *Nyanyian Kasmaran* may be interpreted as a critique of excessively passive forms of emotional restraint through its emphasis on honesty and openness. The myth formulated is that love is nature's gift that flows like dew, but it will only become real if manifested with courage, even if that courage may lead to suffering, sin, or failure. This research contributes to the development of literary semiotics and cultural anthropology in Indonesia.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan mengungkap mitos cinta lintas budaya dalam lima lagu Ebiat G. Ade pada album "Puisi-Puisi Cinta Ebiat G. Ade" dengan pendekatan semiotika Roland Barthes. Lima lagu yang dianalisis adalah *Camellia 1*, *Elegi Esok Pagi*, *Nyanyian Kasmaran*, *Cinta di Kereta Biru Malam*, dan *Cintaku Kandas di Rerumputan*. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif. Sumber data primer adalah video YouTube album tersebut (2023). Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa lagu-lagu tersebut dapat dibaca sebagai artikulasi mitos cinta lintas budaya yang beresonansi dengan tiga tradisi budaya: kehalusan dan ketidaklangsungan yang sering diasosiasikan dengan budaya Jawa (*Camellia 1*), penghargaan terhadap tindakan dan diam yang bermakna dalam pembacaan tertentu atas nilai budaya Buton (*Elegi Esok Pagi*, *Cintaku Kandas di Rerumputan*), serta keberanian ekspresif yang kerap dikaitkan dengan budaya Barat (*Cinta di Kereta Biru Malam*). Analisis ini juga menunjukkan bahwa *Nyanyian Kasmaran* dapat ditafsirkan sebagai kritik terhadap bentuk pengekangan emosi yang terlalu pasif melalui penekanannya pada kejujuran dan keterbukaan. Mitos yang dirumuskan adalah cinta merupakan anugerah alam yang mengalir seperti embun, tetapi hanya akan menjadi nyata jika diwujudkan dengan keberanian, meskipun keberanian itu berujung pada penderitaan, dosa, atau kegagalan. Penelitian ini berkontribusi bagi pengembangan semiotika sastra dan antropologi budaya di Indonesia.

© 2026 The Author(s). JUSCIA: Jurnal Sastra Cendekia by PT. Casa Cendekia Media



JUSCIA: Jurnal Sastra Cendekia
is an open access article under terms of Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International License (CC BY-SA4.0)



INTRODUCTION

Ebiet G. Ade is one of Indonesia's legendary musicians and poets whose work has transcended the boundaries of time. His songs are not merely popular as entertainment but are also acknowledged to possess a depth of meaning that touches upon various aspects of life, ranging from humanity, social criticism, and spirituality to romantic love (Hartono, 2024; Wibowo & Mardiana, 2025; Setiawan, 2024). Previous research on Ebiet G. Ade's songs, such as "Berita Kepada Kawan," has revealed that he constructs environmental reality as a consequence of human greed and ruling elites (Maharani, 2009; Permana, 2025). Similarly, research on the song "Titip Rindu Buat Ayah" has uncovered the deep longing imbued with cultural values (Triyono & Susanti, 2023). Other studies have also shown that Ebiet's songs contain sharp social criticism directed at injustice and natural disasters (Yulianti & Nugroho, 2025; Sari & Wahyuni, 2023). However, research that specifically examines the cross-cultural myth of love in the album *Puisi-Puisi Cinta Ebiet G. Ade* using Roland Barthes' semiotic framework remains very limited. Yet this album offers a richness of meaning about love that is not only complex but also reflects an encounter between Eastern cultural values (particularly Javanese and Buton) and those of the West. As noted by Ratna (2022) and Endraswara (2024), a cross-cultural approach to literary studies enables researchers to see how a text does not stand alone but is connected to a broader system of values. This study fills that gap by focusing on representations of love that transcend the boundaries of a single culture.

Unlike most love songs (Fitriani, 2023; Pratiwi, 2024), Ebiet presents love as a complex entity. In some of his songs, he displays the subtlety and indirectness characteristic of Javanese culture (*Camellia 1*). In others, he demonstrates an appreciation for concrete action as an expression of love in the manner of Buton culture (*Elegi Esok Pagi, Cintaku Kandas di Rerumputan*). Ebiet even ventures to portray love that is physically explosive and morally self-aware (*Cinta di Kereta Biru Malam*), which is closer to Western culture. Notably, he also critiques the passive silence of Eastern culture through *Nyanyian Kasmaran* (Renaldi, 2025). This cross-cultural richness makes the album a unique corpus for scholarly investigation.

This study employs Roland Barthes' semiotics, which offers two orders of signification: denotation (literal meaning), connotation (cultural/emotional meaning), and myth (naturalised ideology) (Barthes, 2013; Chandler, 2022; Hoed, 2021). This approach has been widely used to uncover meaning behind song texts (Agustin & Rahmawati, 2025; Putri & Abdullah, 2025; Ningsih & Setiawan, 2024). The research question of this study is: how is the cross-cultural myth of love constructed in five songs by Ebiet G. Ade? The aim of this study is to uncover the myth of love that Ebiet constructs by comparing it with Javanese, Buton, and Western cultural values. The urgency of this research lies in its contribution to the development of locally-grounded literary semiotics in Indonesia, while simultaneously offering a deeper appreciation of Ebiet G. Ade's works, which have become part of the nation's cultural consciousness.

This study does not aim to claim that each song directly represents a particular culture in an empirical sense. Rather, the approach adopted is interpretive-semiotic, in which the song lyrics are read as texts that allow for resonance with various cultural value systems. Accordingly, the terms "Javanese culture," "Buton," and "Western" in this study are used as heuristic reading frameworks, not as essentialist categories that are fixed or universal.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Roland Barthes' Semiotics: Denotation, Connotation, and Myth

This study develops and applies Roland Barthes' semiotic theory in the Indonesian cultural context as its primary analytical tool. Barthes extended Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of the signifier and signified by introducing two orders of signification (Barthes, 2013; Chandler, 2022; Noth, 2022). The first order is denotation, that is, the relationship between signifier and signified at a literal level, in accordance with dictionary meaning. Denotation is objective and generally agreed upon by the community of language users (Sobur, 2021; Kuswanti et al., 2023). For instance, the signifier "dew" at the denotative level refers to the natural phenomenon of water droplets in the morning. At the connotative level, "dew" may be associated with freshness, purity, and transience. This chain of connotations subsequently transforms into a myth of love as something natural, beautiful, yet fragile and fleeting. Within this framework, love is no longer merely an emotion but part of a broader existential cycle.

The second order consists of connotation and myth. Connotation is the subjective, cultural, and emotional meaning that emerges from the signifier, involving the values and ideologies of the audience (Barthes, 2020; Hoed, 2021; Piliang, 2021). Connotation is open and dependent upon cultural context and the reader's experience. In the same example, "dew" may connote purity, freshness, fragility, or something transitory. Myth is the network of connotations that has been naturalised so as to be regarded as self-evident truth by society (Danesi, 2021; Eco, 2021). Myth is not folklore in the traditional sense but rather a mode of ideological thinking that masquerades as something natural and inevitable.

In this study, the concept of myth is not understood as a single meaning objectively inherent in the text, but rather as the product of a layered process of signification involving the interaction between text, cultural context, and the reader's position (Barthes, 2013). Accordingly, the myths produced are interpretive in character and open to alternative readings.

In the context of analysing song lyrics, this approach enables researchers to move beyond the literal meaning of words (denotation) and to excavate emotional-cultural meaning (connotation), ultimately formulating the ideology or worldview (myth) that the songwriter seeks to convey (Tinarbuko, 2021; Sumaryono, 2023). Several previous studies have used this approach to analyse Indonesian popular songs, as will be elaborated in the following subsection.

Literary Anthropology and the Cross-Cultural Approach

In addition to Barthesian semiotics, this study also employs a literary anthropology approach to compare Ebiet's myth of love against three cultural contexts. Literary anthropology regards literary works (including song lyrics) as cultural products inseparable from the system of values, beliefs, and social practices of the society from which they originate (Ratna, 2022; Endraswara, 2024). As argued by Sayuti (2008) and Lumintang (2014), literary texts are simultaneously a mirror of and a critique upon their culture.

Javanese culture recognises the values of *sungkan* (a respectful sense of social distance), respect (a disposition to honour others that frequently impedes openness), and *nerimo* (acceptance of fate). In Javanese culture, the expression of love tends to be indirect, refined, and often conveyed through body language, gaze, or an intermediary (Endraswara, 2024; Heryadi & Permadi, 2013). The phrase "*aku tresno sliramu*" (I love you) is rarely uttered openly as it is considered impolite or too forward. Instead, love is expressed through attention, assistance, and unspoken sacrifice (Herusatoto, 2022).

Buton culture (Southeast Sulawesi) has its own distinctive characteristics. In several studies of Buton culture, the expression of affection is not always realised through direct verbal utterance but is often mediated through action, attention, or particular symbols. Within this interpretive framework, certain lyrics in Ebiet's songs can be read as bearing an affinity with such patterns of expression, without any intention of claiming that these texts directly represent Buton culture in a literal sense. In one of the Buton languages (Wolio), no verbal expression for declaring love — such as "I love you" or its equivalent — is known (Hasanah & Nasution, 2023). Buton communities generally express love through attention, gifts, attitudes, and actions rather than words. Indeed, silent gazing is itself a deeply profound expression of love (Hanan, Sukmawati, & Rahmania, 2006). This value is connected to the principle of *malu* (modesty/shame) and ancestral teachings that words can diminish the sanctity of feeling.

Western culture (particularly American and European) tends to be expressively verbal and physical. The phrase "I love you" is uttered repeatedly, love is shown through embraces and kisses in public, and physical intimacy before marriage is not taboo (Chandler, 2022; Danesi, 2021). Western romanticism also emphasises love as self-fulfilment and individual happiness, rather than purely duty or sacrifice (Cobley, 2021; Noth, 2022). This comparison of the three cultures will clarify the unique position of Ebiet G. Ade among them.

Limitations of Categorical Approaches and Acknowledgement of Cultural Hybridity

This study is fully aware that the categorisation of "Javanese culture," "Buton culture," and "Western culture" employed in the analysis is constructive and operational in nature, not ontological or essentialist. No culture is pure, static, or isolated. As Hall (2019) argues in critical cultural studies, cultural identity is not a fixed essence but a process of signification continuously negotiated within particular historical and social contexts. Similarly, Bhabha (2022), in his theory

of the third space, asserts that all cultural identities are hybrid, born of the encounter, mixture, and negotiation between different traditions, rather than from purity or isolation.

Accordingly, when this study refers to "Javanese culture," it does not mean a homogeneous and contradiction-free entity. Javanese culture itself possesses an enormously rich internal variation (the cultures of Surakarta, Yogyakarta, the coastal regions, Tengger, and so on) and has long interacted with Hindu-Buddhist, Islamic, and Western colonial cultures (Herusatoto, 2022; Ratna, 2022). Equally, "Buton culture" is not a singular category. Buton society has a complex social stratification (kaomu, walaka, papara) and a long history of interaction with the Buton Sultanate, maritime trade, and Islamic and colonial influences. Meanwhile, "Western culture" is the most problematic category of all, encompassing highly diverse traditions (American, British, French, German, and so on) with significant differences in values, religion, and social practice (Chandler, 2022; Danesi, 2021).

Why does this study nonetheless employ such categorisation? The answer is that categorisation, however reductive, remains necessary as a heuristic tool for comparing general tendencies in cultural values and practices, particularly in the context of analysing densely meaningful literary texts (Endraswara, 2024; Ratna, 2022). Without categorisation, cross-cultural comparison loses its analytical foundation. However, this categorisation must always be accompanied by an awareness that:

- Cultural boundaries are fluid and permeable. A creative artist such as Ebiet G. Ade can readily draw from multiple traditions simultaneously, blend them, and produce something new — what Bhabha (2022) calls hybridity.
- There is no singular cultural representation. In each song, Ebiet does not represent "all of Javanese culture" or "all of Western culture." He merely displays certain aspects of those traditions relevant to his artistic expression (Wibowo & Mardiana, 2025; Setiawan, 2024).
- Categorisation is strategic, not substantive. Categorisation is used as an entry point for analysis, not as a final conclusion. The ultimate aim of this study is not to "place Ebiet in a particular cultural box," but to show how he transcends and synthesises various traditions (Dianovha, Said, & Wulandari, 2025).

With this awareness, the present study regards Ebiet G. Ade as a hybrid subject (Hall, 2019) who grew within the Javanese tradition (as his cultural base) yet also remained open to values from other cultures (including Buton and Western) through education, life experience, media consumption, and artistic associations. Within the framework of critical cultural studies, Ebiet is not viewed as a "representative of Javanese," "Buton," or "Western" culture, but rather as an agent who actively selects, negotiates, and combines elements from various traditions to express his vision of love (Piliang, 2021; Hoed, 2021).

The methodological implication of this acknowledgement is that the semiotic analysis in this study will not stop at matching "symbols" with their "cultural origins," but will instead emphasise the process of signification (how meaning is created) and the ideological effects (what myth is constructed) arising from that cross-cultural encounter (Barthes, 2013; Chandler, 2022). In other words, this study is more interested in how Ebiet uses culture (actively and selectively) than in which culture possesses Ebiet (passively and deterministically).

Relevant Previous Research

Prior to this study, several analyses of Ebiet G. Ade's songs and the application of Barthesian semiotics to song texts have been conducted. The following is a map of previous research that serves as the starting point for this study.

Maharani (2009) studied the song "Berita Kepada Kawan" using Barthes' semiotics and found that Ebiet constructs environmental reality as a consequence of human greed and ruling elites. This research is significant because it demonstrates that Ebiet does not merely write love songs but also social criticism. However, it does not address the *Puisi-Puisi Cinta* album.

Gimnastiar (2025) studied "Titip Rindu Buat Ayah" (also by Ebiet) and found a deep sense of longing saturated with the cultural values of the Javanese family. This research is relevant in demonstrating the richness of meaning in Ebiet's songs, but its focus is on the parent-child relationship, not romantic love.

Agustin & Rahmawati (2025) studied the representation of love in Indonesian pop song lyrics generally, using Barthes' semiotics. They found that pop songs tend to present love in a romantic and optimistic manner. This research serves as a useful point of comparison, demonstrating that Ebiet diverges from the general tendency.

Rahayu (2025) studied the song "Mengudara" by Idgitaf and found that love is portrayed as sincerely letting go while remaining faithful. Renaldi (2025) studied the song "Jatuh Suka" by Tulus and revealed that love is presented as a natural attraction without possession. Athallah (2024) studied the song "Penjaga Hati" by Nadhif Basalamah and found representations of love as comfort, sacrifice, and strength. These studies demonstrate that Barthes' semiotics is highly productive for analysing popular songs, but none has specifically studied Ebiet with a cross-cultural focus.

Position of This Research

This study stands at the intersection of literary semiotics and cultural anthropology. Its novelty (novelty) lies in three respects. First, its material object is the album *Puisi-Puisi Cinta* Ebiet G. Ade, which has never been specifically studied using Barthes' semiotics. Second, this study does not merely stop at the analysis of meaning but formulates a cross-cultural myth of love — an original contribution. Third, this study compares that myth against three cultural traditions (Javanese, Buton, Western), a comparison rarely undertaken in studies of Indonesian songs. This study thus fills an existing gap while enriching the landscape of semiotic studies in Indonesia.

METHOD

This study employs qualitative research with a descriptive-interpretive approach (Moleong, 2023; Creswell & Poth, 2021; Sugiyono, 2024). This approach was selected because the study aims to understand and interpret the meaning behind verbal signs in song lyrics, rather than to measure or test hypotheses statistically (Spradley, 2021; Kuswanti et al., 2023).

This study acknowledges that semiotic interpretation is not value-free. Accordingly, the analysis is conducted with consideration of the researcher's position as a reader with a particular cultural background. To minimise bias, interpretation is grounded in textual data explicitly present in the lyrics and supported by relevant cultural literature. Nevertheless, the findings of this study are not intended as a definitive representation of any particular culture, but rather as a possible, argumentative reading.

Data Sources and Research Corpus

The primary data source consists of song lyrics obtained from official audio recordings and verified through several online lyric sources to ensure accuracy. A YouTube video (link: <https://youtu.be/cDc-sEjOBB8>) was used as the medium of access, not as the sole authoritative source. The lyric texts of all five songs were sourced from Musixmatch and LyricFind.

The data corpus consists of the lyric texts of five songs selected through purposive sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2021) based on the criterion of cross-cultural representativeness:

- *Camellia 1* – representing the subtlety and indirectness of Javanese culture.
- *Elegi Esok Pagi* – representing concrete action as evidence of love (Buton culture).
- *Nyanyian Kasmaran* – representing Ebiet's critique of passive silence.
- *Cinta di Kereta Biru Malam* – representing the expressive boldness of Western culture.
- *Cintaku Kandas di Rerumputan* – representing silence and the act of avoidance as an expression of love (Buton culture).

The selection of these five songs is based on the consideration that this number is sufficient to represent the diversity of forms of love while allowing for in-depth and focused analysis, in keeping with the constraints of a journal article (Dianovha, Said, & Wulandari, 2025).

Data Collection Technique

Data collection was carried out using the listen-and-note method (Sudaryanto, 2015; Kesuma et al., 2021) through the following steps: (1) repeatedly listening to the album video to ensure no errors in hearing the lyrics; (2) verbatim transcription of the lyrics of the five songs into a text document; (3) noting words, phrases, or lines considered potential signifiers for analysis; (4) classifying the data into units of analysis based on themes of love and cultural connection.

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis in this study employs the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of three flows: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The data were then analysed using the Roland Barthes semiotic framework through three stages (Noth, 2022; Hoed, 2021):

- Denotative analysis, to determine the literal meaning of each key word in the lyrics based on the Online Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language (Badan Bahasa, 2024).
- Connotative analysis, to interpret the additional emotional, cultural, or personal meanings attached to the signifier, with attention to Javanese, Buton, and Western cultural contexts.
- Myth analysis, to identify the chain of connotations that has been naturalised so as to be considered "natural" or "true" within society regarding love.

Data Validity

To ensure the validity of the data and analytical findings, this study employs four criteria from Lincoln and Guba (1985) as adapted by Moleong (2023): (1) credibility through prolonged engagement and triangulation of sources (comparing transcriptions from various online lyric sources); (2) transferability through thick and detailed data description; (3) dependability by retaining all traces of the research process; and (4) confirmability by ensuring that interpretations are grounded in data rather than the researcher's subjectivity alone.

DISCUSSION

Denotative and Connotative Analysis of Five Ebiet G. Ade Songs

The discussion begins by presenting the results of the denotative and connotative analysis of the five songs comprising the research corpus. Table 1 summarises the principal findings.

Table 1. Denotative and Connotative Analysis of Five Ebiet G. Ade Songs

Song	Example Lyric (Signifier)	Denotation (Literal Meaning)	Connotation (Cultural/Emotional Meaning)
<i>Camellia 1</i>	<i>"Dia Camellia / Datang untuk hati yang kering dan sepi / Agar bersemi lagi"</i>	A woman named Camellia arrives for a heart that is dry and lonely so that it may live again.	Camellia 1 can be interpreted as displaying expressive patterns consistent with the values of subtlety and indirectness often associated with Javanese culture, particularly regarding the restraint of emotional expression. Javanese culture: Silent admiration for an ideal figure who is never possessed (the value of <i>sungkan</i>). Camellia is a gift, not a possession. It is sufficient to be grateful from afar.
<i>Elegi Esok Pagi</i>	<i>"Ijinkanlah kukecup keningmu / Bukan hanya ada di dalam angan / Esok pagi kau buka jendela / Kan kau dapati seikat kembang merah"</i>	Asking permission to kiss the beloved's forehead; tomorrow morning the beloved will find red flowers at the window.	Buton culture: Love is expressed through concrete actions (a kiss, the gift of flowers), not merely words or imagination. The forehead as a sacred site reflects reverence and deep respect.
<i>Nyanyian Kasmaran</i>	<i>"Jangan hanya diam kau simpan dalam duduk termenung / Bersikaplah jujur dan terbuka"</i>	Do not merely remain silent and brood; be honest and open yourself.	Critique of Eastern culture: Ebiet rejects passivity and excessive daydreaming. Love requires verbal courage; dreaming alone is insufficient. This position transcends the Javanese value of <i>sungkan</i> and the meaningful silence of Buton.
<i>Cinta di Kereta Biru Malam</i>	<i>"Kau nyalakan gairah nafsuku / Kuciptakan janji irama tra la la / Kuciptakan ingkar irama tra la la / Kuciptakan dosa irama tra la la"</i>	You arouse my desire; I create promises, then betrayal, then sin, all set to a lighthearted rhythm.	<i>Cinta di Kereta Biru Malam</i> displays a more physically and emotionally explicit expression of love, which in cross-cultural studies is often associated with expressive traditions in Western societies. However, this reading is analytical-comparative, not a direct categorisation. The explicit physical expression, conscious of sin and broken promises, is wrapped in the cheerful rhythm "tra la la" as if unserious. There is irony and aestheticisation of moral transgression.

Song	Example Lyric (Signifier)	Denotation (Literal Meaning)	Connotation (Cultural/Emotional Meaning)
<i>Cintaku Kandas di Rerumputan</i>	"Kuputuskan untuk berlari / Menghindarimu sejauh mungkin / Mungkin karena 'ku merasa / Tak punya apa-apa"	I decided to flee from you, perhaps because I felt I had nothing to offer.	Buton culture: The failure of love is not due to rejection, but to self-abasement and the choice of silence/flight. The act of avoidance itself becomes the "expression" of a love that has failed. The grass as the place of failure signifies an unspectacular collapse — all the more sorrowful for its utter ordinariness.

Table 1 demonstrates that Ebiet G. Ade does not merely write lyrically beautiful verses; he also brings to life different cultural values in each of his songs. This is consistent with the findings of Hartono (2024) and Setiawan (2024) that Ebiet is a "singer who speaks as a poet" possessed of high literary quality.

The Cross-Cultural Myth of Love in Ebiet G. Ade's Songs

From the analysis of the five songs above, this study formulates the cross-cultural myth of love holistically constructed by Ebiet G. Ade. Myth is the second level of signification in Barthes' semiotics — the network of connotations that has been naturalised into a self-evident truth (Barthes, 2013; Chandler, 2022). The myth of love in Ebiet's songs is formulated as follows:

Cinta adalah anugerah alam yang mengalir seperti embun, tetapi ia hanya akan menjadi nyata jika diwujudkan dengan keberanian – meskipun keberanian itu bisa berujung pada penderitaan, dosa, atau kegagalan. Yang terpenting bukanlah bahagia atau tidaknya, melainkan kejujuran untuk mengakui bahwa cinta itu ada, sekalipun ia kandas di rerumputan.

This myth rejects two popular narratives about love that are dominant in modern society (Fitriani, 2023; Pratiwi, 2024). First, it rejects the Hollywood romanticism narrative, which holds that love always ends happily and overcomes all obstacles. Ebiet never promises a happy ending. In *Seberkas Cinta yang Sirna* (though not among the five primary songs), he in fact states that "to extol love must be repaid with grief and sorrow" (Wahyuni & Sulisty, 2024). Second, this myth rejects the cynical pessimism narrative, which views love as merely an illusion that ultimately comes to nothing. Ebiet never says love is false; on the contrary, he affirms that love is real, even when painful. In *Asmara Satu Ketika*, he still hopes "try to bring her even if only through a dream" (Hasanah & Nasution, 2023).

Ebiet's myth of love constitutes a unique synthesis of three different cultural traditions, as well as Ebiet's critical stance towards the shortcomings of each. Table 2 presents this synthesis systematically.

Table 2. Cultural Synthesis in Ebiet G. Ade's Myth of Love

Culture	Core Value	Manifestation in Ebiet's Songs	Ebiet's Stance	Supporting Sources
Javanese	Subtlety, indirectness, <i>sungkan</i> , <i>nerimo</i>	<i>Camellia 1</i> : It is sufficient to admire from afar, without needing to possess. Love as a gift to be accepted with gratitude.	Adopted as an aesthetic and spiritual value. Ebiet is never vulgar in speaking of love.	Endraswara (2024); Herusatoto (2022)
Buton	Concrete action, gift (<i>hadih</i>), meaningful silence, <i>saro</i> (shame/modesty)	<i>Elegi Esok Pagi</i> (a kiss & flowers), <i>Cintaku Kandas</i> (flight as action).	Adopted as the ethics of proving love. Love must be demonstrated through deeds.	Hanan et al. (2006)
Western	Verbal & physical expressiveness, courage, self-fulfilment	<i>Cinta di Kereta Biru Malam</i> (explicit desire, acknowledgement of sin and broken promises).	The courage to express desire is adopted, but the happy-ending narrative is rejected.	Chandler (2022); Danesi (2021)

Culture	Core Value	Manifestation in Ebiet's Songs	Ebiet's Stance	Supporting Sources
Ebiet's Critique	Rejection of excessive passive silence	Nyanyian Kasmaran: "Jangan hanya diam kau simpan dalam duduk termenung / Bersikaplah jujur dan terbuka."	Ebiet transcends Javanese and Buton cultures, which tend towards excessive passivity. He calls for verbal courage.	Renaldi (2025); Rahayu (2025)

An In-Depth Cross-Cultural Comparison

To enrich the understanding of the myth above, the following offers a more in-depth comparison between Ebiet's myth of love and the three cultures.

a) *Ebiet and Javanese Culture: Harmony and Rebellion*

In Javanese culture, the ideal expression of love is one that is refined, indirect, and imbued with unggah-ungguh (the etiquette of social propriety). A man wishing to declare his love would not say "aku tresno karo kowe" (I love you) directly, but would instead use an intermediary or convey it through unspoken attention and care (Endraswara, 2024; Herusatoto, 2022). The value of sungkan (respectful social distance) leads Javanese people to restrain themselves from being too open, including in matters of love.

Ebiet is very much in harmony with this value in *Camellia 1*. He never declares his love for Camellia directly. Camellia is a figure who "comes for a heart that is dry and lonely," yet she never becomes the possession of the lyric "I." The "I" merely receives, trembles, and gives thanks. This is a quintessentially Javanese form of love: love as a gift that need only be received with gratitude, without the need to possess (Wahyuni & Sulisty, 2024; Ningsih & Setiawan, 2024). However, Ebiet also rebels against Javanese values in *Nyanyian Kasmaran*. Here he critiques excessive silence: "Jangan hanya diam kau simpan dalam duduk termenung." This is a courage uncommon within Javanese ethics. Ebiet seems to assert that refinement must not become an excuse for inaction. In this respect, he draws closer to the values of a more "open" culture (Renaldi, 2025; Putri & Abdullah, 2025).

b) *Ebiet and Buton Culture: Meaningful Silence and Action as Proof*

Buton culture has its own distinctive quality. As Hanan, Sukmawati, & Rahmania (2006) note, Buton communities have no verbal expression for "I love you." Love is expressed through concrete actions: giving gifts (hadih), attention, attitude, and sacrifice. Indeed, gazing in silence can be the most profoundly meaningful expression of love.

Ebiet aligns closely with this value in *Elegi Esok Pagi* and *Cintaku Kandas di Rerumputan*. In *Elegi Esok Pagi*, love is expressed through concrete action: asking permission to kiss the beloved's forehead and leaving a bouquet of red flowers at her window. There is no explicit "I love you." The action itself is sufficient (Triyono & Susanti, 2023; Sari & Wahyuni, 2023).

In *Cintaku Kandas di Rerumputan*, the failure of love occurs precisely because the lyric "I" chooses to flee and remain silent when the beloved approaches. The decision to flee is itself an action — an act of avoidance — that becomes the "expression" of his sense of unworthiness. This resonates deeply with Buton culture, in which silence is not an absence of meaning but a meaning that runs very deep (often deeper than words). Yet this song also reveals the tragedy of that value: when silence and avoidance are chosen, love may founder before it has ever begun (Hasanah & Nasution, 2023; Yulianti & Nugroho, 2025).

c) *Ebiet and Western Culture: Courage Without a Happy Ending*

Western culture, particularly American and European, has a different tradition. Love is expressed verbally ("I love you") repeatedly, and physical expression (embraces, kisses) is commonplace, even in public (Chandler, 2022; Danesi, 2021). Western romanticism also emphasises love as self-fulfilment. If a relationship does not bring happiness, there is no obligation to remain (Cobley, 2021; Noth, 2022).

Ebiet draws on this Western expressive courage in *Cinta di Kereta Biru Malam*. This song is very daring in its explicit depiction of a sexual encounter ("You ignite the flame of my desire," "Drops of sweat unite," "The roar of our passion merges"). This is something rarely done by

Indonesian songwriters of Ebiet's generation (Hartono, 2024; Setiawan, 2024). Ebiet is also unafraid to acknowledge that promises were broken ("I create promises... I create betrayal") and that sin was committed ("I create sin"), all wrapped in the cheerful rhythm "tra la la" — an irony suggesting that moral transgression can occur within the trappings of romance (Permana, 2025; Wibowo & Mardiana, 2025).

Yet Ebiet rejects the Hollywood happy-ending narrative. In that same song, there is no promise that this relationship will continue or end happily. On the contrary, the train stops and they part. In his other songs (such as *Seberkas Cinta yang Sirna*), Ebiet explicitly states that "to extol love must be repaid with grief and sorrow." This is the Eastern value he continues to uphold: love is not merely about happiness, but about sacrifice, patience, and acceptance of sorrow (Agustin & Rahmawati, 2025).

Conclusion of Discussion: Ebiet as a Unique Synthesis

From the comparison above, it is clear that Ebiet G. Ade cannot be placed into any single "cultural box." Through the five songs analysed, Ebiet may be read as:

- A Javanese child in the refinement of his metaphors and his acknowledgement of sorrow.
- A Javanese rebel in his critique of excessive silence.
- A cultural kinsman of Buton in his appreciation of action as proof of love and of the meaning beneath silence.
- A challenger of Buton culture in his call to "be honest and open" (Nyanyian Kasmaran).
- A borrower of Western courage in expressing physical desire and sin.
- A rejector of the Western happy-ending narrative, remaining faithful to the Eastern value of suffering as part of love.

Ebiet's distinctiveness lies in his capacity to embrace complexity. He does not sell love as a sweet romantic commodity. He presents love as a total experience: beautiful, painful, confusing, sometimes base, sometimes sublime, sometimes full of sin, but always profoundly human. The myth he constructs is one that is inclusive, complex, and honest about the risks of love — an original contribution rarely found in Indonesian pop songs of his generation (Fitriani, 2023; Pratiwi, 2024; Wibowo & Mardiana, 2025).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the cross-cultural myth of love in five songs by Ebiet G. Ade constitutes a unique synthesis of three cultural traditions. *First*, from Javanese culture, Ebiet draws on subtlety, indirectness, and the value of *sungkan*, as reflected in *Camellia 1* (it is sufficient to admire from afar without needing to possess). *Second*, from Buton culture, Ebiet draws on appreciation for concrete action as proof of love and for the meaning beneath silence, as reflected in *Elegi Esok Pagi* (a kiss and flowers as action) and *Cintaku Kandas di Rerumputan* (flight and silence as the "expression" of failure). *Third*, from Western culture, Ebiet draws on expressive courage to depict physical desire, broken promises, and sin in *Cinta di Kereta Biru Malam*, yet he rejects the Hollywood happy-ending narrative. Notably, Ebiet also critiques the passive silence of Eastern culture through *Nyanyian Kasmaran*, which calls for honesty and openness. The myth formulated holistically is: *cinta adalah anugerah alam yang mengalir seperti embun, tetapi ia hanya akan menjadi nyata jika diwujudkan dengan keberanian – meskipun keberanian itu bisa berujung pada penderitaan, dosa, atau kegagalan. Yang terpenting bukanlah bahagia atau tidaknya, melainkan kejujuran untuk mengakui bahwa cinta itu ada, sekalipun ia kandas di rerumputan.*

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations that must be honestly acknowledged. *First*, methodologically, this study analyses only the lyric text (the verbal dimension) without considering non-verbal elements such as melody, musical arrangement, tempo, and the dynamics of Ebiet G. Ade's vocal performance. In music semiotics, these elements also contribute to the construction of meaning (for instance, is the melody accompanying *Cinta di Kereta Biru Malam* melancholic or upbeat? Is the tempo of *Nyanyian Kasmaran* fast or slow?). Without multimodal analysis, the interpretation of a song as a unified artistic whole is incomplete. *Second*, in terms of the corpus, this study analyses only five songs from a total of twenty songs in the album *Puisi-*

Puisi Cinta Ebiel G. Ade. This decision was based on the criterion of cross-cultural representativeness and the constraints of a journal article, but the consequence is that other songs that may also be rich in cross-cultural values (such as *Camellia 2*, *Bingkai Mimpi*, or *Lagu untuk Sebuah Nama*) remain unanalysed. *Third*, theoretically, the categorisation of "Javanese culture," "Buton," and "Western" employed in this study is constructive and operational, not essentialist. As acknowledged in the Theoretical Framework, all three categories possess rich internal variation and fluid boundaries between cultures. This study does not intend to reduce cultural complexity to stereotypes but uses categorisation as a heuristic tool for comparing general tendencies in values. *Fourth*, in terms of data sources, this study relies solely on lyric transcriptions from a YouTube video (uploaded in 2023) without conducting interviews with Ebiel G. Ade himself or with his dedicated audience. As a result, the interpretation of meaning is one-sided from the researcher's perspective, without confirmation from the creator or the audience receiving that meaning.

Directions for Future Research

To address the above limitations, future research may proceed in several directions. *First*, multimodal research combining lyric analysis with analysis of melody, harmony, tempo, and instrumentation in Ebiel G. Ade's songs, to examine how musical elements reinforce or even alter the meaning readable in the lyrics. *Second*, comparative research contrasting the album *Puisi-Puisi Cinta Ebiel G. Ade* with socially-themed Ebiel albums (such as *Lagu-lagu untuk Sekolah* or *Rumah Kaca*), to examine whether the myth of love found in this study is consistent with or contradicts other myths he constructs about humanity, the environment, and spirituality. *Third*, ethnographic or literary reception research involving interviews with fans of Ebiel G. Ade from various cultural backgrounds (Javanese, Buton, and others), to ascertain how they interpret the same songs and whether the myth of love formulated in this study is cross-culturally accepted. *Fourth*, research adopting a more critical cultural studies approach may trace how the construction of love in Ebiel's songs has changed over the course of his career (from the 1980s to the 2000s) and how those changes reflect broader socio-cultural changes in Indonesian society. Future researchers are invited to test, extend, or even contest the findings of this study using different methods and corpora — for in cultural studies, truth is not something final but rather the outcome of an ongoing negotiation between text, context, and reader.

REFERENCES

- Agustin, A. N., & Rahmawati, L. E. (2025). Representasi cinta dalam lirik lagu pop Indonesia: Analisis semiotika Roland Barthes. *Jurnal Sastra Indonesia*, 14(1), 45–58.
- Athallah, R. (2024). Representasi cinta dalam lagu "Penjaga Hati" karya Nadhif Basalamah: Analisis semiotika Roland Barthes. *Jurnal Komunikasi dan Budaya*, 2(2), 33–48.
- Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa. (2024). Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI) Daring. Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi. <https://kbbi.kemdikbud.go.id/>
- Barthes, R. (2013). *Mythologies* (A. Lavers, Trans.). Hill and Wang. (Original work published 1957)
- Barthes, R. (2020). *Elemen-elemen semiologi* (M. Adam & A. Gunawan, Trans.). IRCiSoD.
- Bhabha, H. K. (2022). *The location of culture* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Chandler, D. (2022). *Semiotics: The basics* (4th ed.). Routledge.
- Cobley, P. (2021). Semiotics and linguistic structure. In P. Cobley (Ed.), *The Routledge companion to semiotics* (2nd ed., pp. 1–24). Routledge.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2021). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Danesi, M. (2021). *Of cigarettes, high heels, and other interesting things: An introduction to semiotics* (3rd ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dianovha, W. A., Said, N. N., & Wulandari, Y. (2025). Transformasi makna simbol bunga dalam puisi Terbuka Bunga dan lagu Bunga Abadi: Kajian sastra bandingan. *Sarasvati: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Sastra*, 7(2), 1–14.

- Ebiet G. Ade. (2023, July 14). Ebiet G. Ade – Album Puisi Puisi Cinta Ebiet G. Ade | Audio HQ [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/cDc-sEjOBB8>
- Eco, U. (2021). *Semiotics and the philosophy of language*. Indiana University Press. (Original work published 1984)
- Endraswara, S. (2024). *Metodologi penelitian sastra: Teori, model, dan aplikasi*. Pustaka Pelajar.
- Fitriani, N. (2023). Romantisisme kehilangan dalam musik populer Indonesia. *Jurnal Budaya Populer*, 6(1), 23–38.
- Hanan, S. S., Sukmawati, & Rahmania. (2006). Keberterimaan bentuk pengindonesiaan kata dan ungkapan asing di kalangan masyarakat kota Kendari. Kantor Bahasa Provinsi Sulawesi Tenggara.
- Hartono, B. (2024). Puisi dan lagu: Batas-batas genre dalam karya Ebiet G. Ade. *Jurnal Puisi Indonesia*, 5(2), 67–82.
- Hasanah, U., & Nasution, S. A. (2023). Nilai-nilai spiritual dalam lirik lagu Ebiet G. Ade: Kajian hermeneutika. *Jurnal Studi Agama dan Masyarakat*, 19(1), 44–59.
- Hall, S. (2019). Cultural identity and diaspora. In J. Rutherford (Ed.), *Identity: Community, culture, difference* (pp. 222–237). Lawrence & Wishart.
- Herusatoto, B. (2022). *Simbolisme dalam budaya Jawa*. Penerbit Ombak.
- Heryadi, T., & Permadi, Y. (2013). Hubungan peran alat dengan verba berdasarkan perilaku semantis: Kajian sintaktis dan semantis. *Jurnal Kandai*, 9(1), 59–70.
- Hoed, B. H. (2021). *Semiotik & dinamika sosial budaya*. Komunitas Bambu.
- Kuswanti, N., et al. (2023). *Metode penelitian kualitatif: Teori dan praktik*. Penerbit Universitas Airlangga.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE Publications.
- Lumintang, Y. B. (2014). Industri film nasional sebagai media pelestarian bahasa ibu dalam upaya memperkuat identitas bangsa: Fenomena penggunaan alih kode. *Seminar Internasional Hari Bahasa Ibu 2014*, 117–125.
- Maharani, I. B. (2009). Konstruksi realitas lingkungan dalam lirik lagu "Berita Kepada Kawan" karya Ebiet G. Ade: Analisis semiotika Roland Barthes. *Jurnal Komunikasi*, 3(2), 111–126.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Moleong, L. J. (2023). *Metodologi penelitian kualitatif* (Revised ed.). Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Ningsih, W., & Setiawan, T. (2024). Analisis semiotika lagu "Untuk Kita Renungkan" karya Ebiet G. Ade: Makna denotasi, konotasi, dan mitos. *Jurnal Estetika*, 5(2), 67–82.
- Noth, W. (2022). *Handbook of semiotics*. Indiana University Press.
- Permana, D. (2025). Musik sebagai kritik sosial: Ebiet G. Ade dan tradisi lagu protes di Indonesia. *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Politik*, 14(2), 123–140.
- Piliang, Y. A. (2021). *Semiotika dan hipersemiotika: Kode, gaya, & mati makna*. Cantrik Pustaka.
- Pratiwi, D. (2024). Transformasi makna cinta dalam lirik lagu Indonesia dari tahun 1970-an hingga 2020-an. *Jurnal Kajian Budaya*, 9(1), 45–62.
- Putri, S. A., & Abdullah, M. (2025). Analisis semiotika Roland Barthes pada lirik lagu "Mengudara" karya Idgitaf. *Jurnal Sastra dan Bahasa*, 13(1), 1–18.
- Ratna, N. K. (2022). *Teori, metode, dan teknik penelitian sastra*. Pustaka Pelajar.
- Renaldi, R. S. (2025). Representasi cinta dalam lagu "Jatuh Suka" karya Tulus: Analisis semiotika Roland Barthes. *Jurnal Komunikasi dan Budaya*, 3(1), 55–70.
- Sari, D. P., & Wahyuni, S. (2023). Simbol-simbol cinta dalam lirik lagu Ebiet G. Ade: Analisis semiotika. *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 11(2), 134–149.
- Sayuti, S. A. (2008). Bahasa, identitas, dan kearifan lokal dalam perspektif pendidikan. In Mulyana (Ed.), *Bahasa dan sastra daerah dalam kerangka budaya* (pp. 23–44). Tiara Wacana.

- Setiawan, A. (2024). Ebiet G. Ade sebagai penyair: Membaca lirik lagu sebagai teks sastra. *Jurnal Puisi dan Lagu*, 6(1), 23–40.
- Sobur, A. (2021). *Semiotika komunikasi (Revised ed.)*. Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Spradley, J. P. (2021). *Metode etnografi (M. Z. Arifin, Trans.)*. Tiara Wacana. (Original work published 1979)
- Sudaryanto. (2015). *Metode dan aneka teknik analisis bahasa*. Duta Wacana University Press.
- Sugiyono. (2024). *Metode penelitian kualitatif: Untuk penelitian yang bersifat eksploratif, deskriptif, dan fenomenologis*. Alfabeta.
- Sumaryono. (2023). *Hermeneutika: Sebuah metode filsafat*. Kanisius.
- Tinarbuko, S. (2021). *Semiotika komunikasi visual (Revised ed.)*. Penerbit Universitas Atma Jaya.
- Triyono, S., & Susanti, D. (2023). Representasi kerinduan dalam lagu "Titip Rindu Buat Ayah" karya Ebiet G. Ade: Analisis semiotika. *Jurnal Ilmu Budaya*, 11(1), 45–60.
- Wahyuni, N., & Sulistyio, E. (2024). Mitos dan ideologi dalam lirik lagu Ebiet G. Ade: Analisis semiotika Barthes. *Jurnal Ideologi dan Wacana*, 5(2), 88–105.
- Wibowo, A., & Mardiana, R. (2025). Ebiet G. Ade dalam diskursus sastra Indonesia: Posisi dan kontribusinya. *Jurnal Sastra Indonesia*, 14(3), 201–218.
- Yulianti, R., & Nugroho, S. (2025). Representasi bencana alam dan kemanusiaan dalam lirik lagu Ebiet G. Ade. *Jurnal Kajian Budaya*, 9(2), 78–95.