



**THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
SOCIAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF ANKARA
INSTITUTE OF
SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL REVERBERATIONS IN YUSUF ISLAM (CAT
STEVENS)' POST CONVERSION LYRICAL COMPOSITIONS: A THEMATIC
STUDY**

Master's Thesis

Azwar Tahir

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

August, 2022



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STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP AND ORIGINALITY

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this M.A. thesis and that no sources other than those listed in the bibliography and identified as references were used. I further certify that I have not submitted this thesis to any other institution to obtain a degree.



Azwar Tahir
(Signature)

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ÖZET

Cat Stevens olarak da bilinen Yusuf İslam hakkında mevcut akademik çalışmalar, zengin ve ilham verici lirik kompozisyonu hakkındaki çalışmalar dışında nadiren yapılmaktadır. Stevens'ın çoğunlukla şarkılarından oluşan mirasını incelerken, dünya çapında tanınmış bir müzisyen olarak otobiyografisini derlemek ciddi ölçüde önerilmektedir. Bu sebeple, Stevens'ın lirik kompozisyonunun kapsamlı bir literatür analizi, otobiyografisi ve özellikle de hayatındaki önemli olaylardan biri olan İslam'a geçiş süreci ile ilişkilendirilmiş olmalıdır.

Bu çalışma, Stevens'ın din değişimi sonrası lirik kompozisyonlarındaki otobiyografik yankılara odaklanmıştır. Asıl amaç, Stevens'ın gerçek hayattaki duygusal, psikolojik ve ruhsal deneyimlerinin İslam'ı seçtikten sonra bestelediği şarkılarına nasıl yansıdığını anlamaktır. Bu çalışma yakın okuma tekniği kullanılarak tematik bir analiz olarak kategorize edilmektedir. Söz konusu çalışma, Stevens'ın din değişimi sonrası şarkılarında bulunan altı ana temayı inceler. Bu temalar İslami kimlikler, Stevens'ın otobiyografik etkisi, çocuklar, hayal, barış yanlılığı/savaş karşıtlığı ve duyarsızlıktır.

Bu araştırma dört ana bulgu ortaya çıkarmaktadır. İlk olarak, Cat Stevens olarak da bilinen Yusuf İslam, diksiyon seçimini İslami diksiyondan genel diksiyona kaydırmıştır. İkincisi, din değişimi sonrası döneminde değişim öncesi şarkı temalarını korumuştur. Üçüncüsü, şarkı sözlerinde Batı medyasının dezenformasyonunu ve önyargısını tasvir etmiştir. Son olarak, dördüncü bulgu sanatçının muhtaç insanlara yönelik duyarsızlığı eleştirdiğini ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeleri; Yusuf İslam, Cat Stevens, Otobiyografi, Din Değiştirme Sonrası, Şarkı Sözleri

ABSTRACT

The academic study on Yusuf Islam also known as Cat Stevens is rare apart from his rich and inspirational lyrical compositions. In examining Stevens' legacy which is predominantly his songs, it is highly recommended to bring together his autobiography as a well-known world-class musician. A comprehensive literary analysis of his lyrical compositions should, therefore, be connected to his autobiography predominantly his conversion to Islam as one of the crucial life events of Stevens.

This study concentrated on the autobiographical reverberations in Stevens' post-conversion lyrical compositions. The main goal is to figure out in what ways Stevens' real-life emotional, psychological, and spiritual experiences reverberated in his songs composed after his conversion to Islam. This study is classified as a thematic analysis by using the close reading technique. It examined six major themes found in Stevens' post-conversion songs. The themes are Islamic identities, Stevens' autobiographical imprint, children, dream, pro-peace/anti-war, and ignorance.

The study revealed four main findings. First, Yusuf Islam also known as Cat Stevens has shifted his diction choice from Islamic diction to general diction. Second, he has maintained his pre-conversion song themes in his post-conversion era. Third, he has portrayed disinformation and bias of Western media in his lyrics. Finally, the fourth finding suggests that the artist has criticized the ignorance toward people in need.

Keywords: Yusuf Islam, Cat Stevens, Autobiography, Post-Conversion, Lyrics

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Area of the Research

This thesis aims at identifying the reverberations of Cat Stevens', also known as Yusuf Islam, real-life emotional, psychological, and spiritual experiences in his lyrical compositions through an in-depth thematic study of his song lyrics. The literary texts that will be analyzed are his post-conversion lyrical compositions. Nevertheless, a reference would also be made to his pre-conversion lyrical compositions in case they are relevant to this research and enable contrasting and also determining the extent of the autobiographical impact on his compositions as well as the range of variations between the two phases. I argue that there are four main autobiographical reverberations in Cat Stevens' post-conversion lyrical compositions. These are the use of both Islamic and general diction, maintenance of the pre-conversion song themes in his post-conversion era, criticism of the bias of the West toward Islam, and the criticism of ignorance to those in need.

Biography of Cat Stevens

Cat Stevens was born on July 21st, 1948, as Demetre Georgiou to a Greek Cypriot father, Stavros Georgiou, and Swedish Baptist mother, Ingrid Wickman. Even though he was brought up in the Greek Orthodox way, his parents sent him to a Roman Catholic school. Musicals had strongly influenced his life since his first school was at Drury Lane, a street where clubs, cinemas, and theatres were all around (Stevens, 2022). The young Cat Stevens was a superstar for his generation in the mid-1960s. "I Love My Dog" and "Matthew and Son" are among the songs that contributed to his early success. He also wrote songs for other artists such as "Here Comes My Baby" and "The First Cut is the Deepest" which became international hits. His songs "Wild World", "Where Do the Children Play?", and "Father and Son" within the 1970 album

“Tea for Tillerman” made a huge success in America. His fame kept growing through 1971’s “Teaser and the Firecat” (Stevens, 2022).

Despite his successful music career as well as his extraordinary fame, Stevens’ soul was not satisfied. The artist was busy with himself, searching for something that would calm his heart down. In his autobiography, “Why I Still Carry A Guitar”, Stevens wrote:

“My records were selling in the millions all over the world; people were queuing up to see me live in concert halls and arenas. I had reached the status of ‘Superstar’. But even with all the adoration, I was still restless and empty inside, blowing here and there – a snowflake, frightened to land in case I melted before reaching the mountain top.” (Islam, 2015).

This never-ending search shows how the peak of fame along with an abundance of wealth failed to satisfy Stevens’ idealism. Furthermore, what was not caught up by media cameras - but very important since it explained the typical character of Stevens’ reflective lyrics - was the artist’s intense interaction with books that offer various paths to their readers in finding a meaningful life. In his search for the truth, Stevens who was brought up as a Christian (and went to a Catholic school) studied numerology, vegetarianism, Zen, Taoism, and Hinduism (Islam, 2015). This longing for a moral guide or a role model leading to goodness, along with a sensitive as well as a reflective character possessed by Stevens, as appeared in many of his lyrics such as “Wild World”, “Peace Train”, and “Where Do The Children Play?”, were demonstrating that the artist was looking for something more fundamental and meaningful instead of worldly materials he had abundantly possessed. Such tendencies or inclinations for values were all contributive to Stevens’ spiritual journey which later led him to Islam. It is evident that Stevens was continually in pursuit of spiritual completion and this is probably the reason why he named his new self Yusuf Islam. At this point, Islam has become not only a religion but also a self-identification for him.

Stevens’ conversion to Islam is frequently discussed in news, interviews, articles, and other publications. Embracing his new faith, he converted to Islam in 1977, later recalling the particular moment as “the most beautiful of times”

and “the happiest year” (Stevens). It is possible to state that Islam has been a rebirth for him. After conversion to Islam, he lived his life peacefully, learned prayers, and grew in knowledge. He later changed his name to Yusuf Islam, even though it is not a requirement in Islam itself unless the old name sounds polytheistic or pagan. Yet, recently, as shown on his actively updated Facebook fan page, he represents himself as “Yusuf / Cat Stevens.” This dropping of the diction “Islam” was done after his return to popular music in 2006 which might be triggered by the need to be more inclusive for his audiences. However, he maintains the name “Yusuf Islam” in his autobiography published in 2015 showing a sort of flexibility when it comes to self-representation in front of his multiple audiences.

In 1975, while Cat Stevens was swimming at Malibu beach, he was almost drowned. Threatened by death with no one to help led him declare a transcendental pledge: “Oh God, if You save me, I will work for You”. A moment later, as he admitted, a wave came and pushed him to the shore as if it was the direct answer to his declaration (Stevens, 2022). After this momentous happening, his brother, David Gordon, gave him a copy of the Qur’an (Islam, 2015) which paved a way for him eventually to convert to Islam in 1977. David Gordon’s interest in Qur’an was raised after he visited the Golden Dome Mosque in Jerusalem. He was fascinated by the pray performed by the Muslims within the mosque particularly because of the simplicity such as the absence of statues and pictures inside the holy site. Although David was not a Muslim, the spiritualism he experienced in the mosque was very impressive to him. Later, in 1976, there was an Islamic festival in London where David Gordon bought a copy of the Qur’an for Stevens as his birthday surprise since he knew Stevens was studying such books and referred to it as “the Holy Bible of the Muslims” (Islam, 2015).

Later, in 1978, Cat Stevens changed his name to become Yusuf Islam inspired by the story of the prophet Joseph (“Yusuf” in Arabic) he read in the Qur’an. It was in this phase of his life that he amazed the public and his fans with his decision to quit music (Islam, 2015). He lost his interest in the music industry. Cat Stevens stated in 2014 that “[he] vaguely knew things like

Madonna, MTV and Michael Jackson were happening, but [he] was not interested at all [...] As far as [he] was concerned, the last great record was Stevie Wonder's 'Songs in the Key of Life'" (Greene, 2015). The singer-songwriter, Yusuf Islam, preferred focusing on his family life. He also founded Islamic schools in England, as well as established a charity organization called 'Small Kindness' to provide support for the victims of war and starvation in Third World countries (Greene, 2015).

In 2006, after nearly three decades, Cat Stevens returned to the commercial music industry by releasing his album "An Other Cup." In this phase, the second part "Islam" was dropped from his Muslim name, Yusuf Islam, and he simply represented himself as "Yusuf" (Fishman, 2017). This identity change reflects his paradigm shift along with his picking up the guitar again, an instrument that he had left before. Stevens started some live online performances. Interestingly, he was firm about not playing certain songs that he thought couldn't be compatible with his new religious outlook (Fishman, 2017). In this phase, as can be found in the marking album "An Other Cup" (2006) the themes of his songs remain about religiosity yet expressed in general words not Islamic ways such as in the song entitled "The Beloved". In addition, the album indicates the notion of the transitional phase Stevens between his past and current life as found in the song "May Be There's A World". He also plays his past songs such as "The Wind" and "Peace Train" for their themes which are about self-reflection and peace campaigns that are still religiously justified.

Concerning the religiously justified song, there should be a highlighted fact related to Stevens' old song entitled Lady D'Arbanville which predominantly becomes a metaphor for the separation of his relationship with that actress. There is no new record of the song currently produced by Stevens as Yusuf. However, he included a rare video of that song which was made in 1970 within his popular album called "Mona Bone Jakon Super Deluxe Box Set" released at the 50th Anniversary of his pre-conversion album, Mona Bone Jakon, in December 2020 (Stevens, 2022). At the same time, he also released another album namely "Tea for the Tillerman Super Deluxe Box Set" to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of another pre-conversion album, Tea for

Tillerman, which was also firstly released in 1970 (Stevens, 2022). These releases of old songs in the half-decade of his music career were supposedly a sort of Stevens' effort to reunite with his past fans who once lost their admired Cat Stevens. He most probably wants to invite them once again to follow his path by using the memories they shared. Commenting upon the release of *Mona Bone Jakon Super Deluxe Box Set* album, Stevens implicitly expresses this notion as follows: "It's their soundtrack and people's memories are so intertwined with the notes of this album and the music of this album. I hope a lot of people will love to grow this new album" (Martoccio, 2020).

The last sentence contains two important dictions; "grow" and "new". The word "grow" here implicitly conveys that the album will take its listeners to further growth or, in other words, to another journey. As for the diction "new" used to refer to old songs, this shows Stevens wants his listeners to come up with a brand new insight while enjoying the reissued old songs. Both notions can be viewed as a new interpretation of the old songs offered by Stevens to his audience with a great possibility of reuniting with old fans, a connection that can be further developed including delivering the message of Islam to wider audiences through his more recent album like "An Other Cup".

Following "An Other Cup", in sequence, Cat Stevens released three other albums; "Roadsinger" in 2009, "Tell 'Em I'm Gone" in 2014, and "The Laughing Apple" in 2017. In an interview with TED Curator, Chris Anderson on his child-friendly album "The Laughing Apple", Cat Stevens emphasized the importance of a good curriculum for children and encouraged people to be contributive to society, be inclusive, and understand each other to avoid antagonism and hostility (TED Archive, 2017).

Cat Stevens' life has been predominantly devoted to the use of the song in addressing contemporary humanitarian issues. In 2004 he released a single entitled "Indian Ocean" to support the life of Tsunami victims in Aceh, Indonesia. Besides, the University of Exeter, England, which awarded Cat Stevens Honorary Doctorate in 2007, portrays him as a pioneer in education and humanitarian support with international recognition. In addition, The University of Exeter also views him as the one who has continuously promoted

mutual understanding among people from different backgrounds through his works. For his consistency in promoting peace, he was honored with the award “Man for Peace” in 2004 by Nobel peace laureates. His critically acclaimed album, “An Other Cup,” released in late 2006 to inspire bridge-building and understanding across cultures and faiths, has attained Gold and Platinum status across Europe (University of Exeter, 2007).

“The Muslim 500: The World’s 500 Most Influential Muslims”, 2020 published by Jordan National Library includes Cat Stevens in their list. He is viewed as one of the most globally influential Muslims as a singer-songwriter. Moreover, in terms of arts and culture within the Muslim world, he is presented to be the single most prominent figure. One of the reasons for this prestigious position is Stevens’ global popularity. He, in addition, is also called “a vocal opponent of terrorism and extremism” (Jordan National Library, 2020). The Muslim 500, furthermore, reveals some awards received by the artist; the Man of Peace award by the Nobel Peace Prize Laureates Committee (2004), inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame (2014), the Global Islamic Economy Award, the Steiger Award, and BBC’s Lifetime Achievement Award. The last three awards were all given to Cat Stevens in 2015.

Cat Stevens visited the Syrian refugees in the Turkish/Syrian border area in Gaziantep, Turkey, in April 2016. After the visit, he released another single called “He Was Alone” as a part of a campaign to help the children's refugee. Cat Stevens stated that:

“I hope to open people’s hearts to the sadness experienced by thousands of young souls whose voices are not heard in the clamor created by the politicians and the media amid the refugee crisis, generated by the wars and conflicts blazing through their homelands” (Geslani, 2016).

The quotation shows how he consistently carries out his humanitarian mission with his musical performance. Additionally, responding to the terrorist attack on mosques in New Zealand in 2019, Cat Stevens delivered his emotional speech and presented his legendary song “Peace Train” in front of the crowd at Hagley Park. This particular moment is a part of the National Remembrance Service for the terror victims (Barton, 2019).

Andrekos Varnava divides Cat Stevens' popular music career into three phases: 1966-7, 1970-8, and 2000s-present, respectively which this thesis also accepts. The first phase lasted from his early fame as a teen pop star until he was diagnosed with tuberculosis following his rapid tours. The second phase was signaled by his re-emergence as a singer-songwriter, affected merely by his time away, his spiritual journey, as well as his resenting the music business at that time. The second phase ended with his conversion to Islam in 1977 and the release of his "Back to Earth" album in 1978. The last phase was initiated by his return to re-release his past and new songs uninhibitedly in the early 2000s (Varnava, 2018).

1.2 The Relevance of The Research

Cat Stevens' songs deserve their opportunity to be classified as literature. This is rational because the other musician, Bob Dylan, had paved the way for that notion. Dylan is the first musician who has been awarded Noble Prize in Literature in 2016. Sara Danius, Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy, confirmed that Bob Dylan "can be read and should be read, and is a great poet in the English tradition." (Noble Prize, 2016). In addition to that point, his song "Desolation Row" was included in the 2006 edition of The Oxford Book of American Poetry. Moreover, Cambridge University Press published "The Cambridge Companion to Bob Dylan" in 2009, emphasizing his position as a "brilliant literary stylist.". A United States poet laureate, Billy Collins, further strengthens the argument that Dylan "deserved to be recognized not merely as a songwriter, but as a poet."(Sisario et. al., 2016).

Bob Dylan's Noble Prize in Literature along with the supporting testimonies of reputable institutions like Oxford and Cambridge above is a good indication of how songs, too, deserve literary and critical study. Literary scholars have to enlarge the chances, explore the possibilities, and finally come up with a "new Bob Dylan" in the scope of literary value analysis for songs. This research is attempting to follow that path by proposing Cat Stevens' works to be examined. Concerning that, as noticed by Varnava, Cat Stevens is the same generation as Bob Dylan. They are also similar in terms of singer-

songwriter roles, meaning that they sing the songs they create. Furthermore, both of them have included politics and protest in their songs' themes. Varnava further elaborates that Cat Stevens' pro-peace and anti-war songs belong to the counter culture of the 1960s the same period as Bob Dylan. There are three arguments proposed by Varnava; 1) similarity in their song messages; 2) similarity in their call for substantial religiosity, and 3) challenge for conventions and orthodoxy. Yet, Stevens possesses his uniqueness since his Britishness differs from Dylan's Americana. In addition, the religiosity Stevens refers to is Islam not Christianity (Varnava, 2018). Thus, by using this similarity to the Bob Dylan case, the research on Cat Stevens' song lyrics, is highly relevant.

The similarities between Stevens and Dylan, furthermore, should be a valid reason for the committee of the Noble Prize to honor Stevens with the same honorable literary award. Stevens' series of literary legacy is also deserved to be critically studied because the lyrical compositions have been a means of spreading peace and affecting people across countries to create a better world. Even though Stevens had been very busy and stressed by the media framing upon his being accused of supporting the fatwa of killing Salman Rushdie issued by the Iranian leader, Ali Khomeini, his lyrical compositions did not stop growing and creatively responded to the dispute through the release of his song "Editing Floor Blues". In addition to that point, Stevens also responded to his US entry ban in September 2004 by the time Islamophobia strongly found its echoes following the 2001 9/11 event. He released a song "Boots and Sand" inspired by the misspelling of his Islamic name, Yusuf Islam, by the US immigration officials which led to his being accused of being part of the Non-Fly list. Both disputes were blown up by the Western media which eventually put Stevens in a stressful situation yet was not able to stop his gifted talent for composing meaningful songs. Thus, it is very reasonable as well as challenging for the Noble Prize committee to consider awarding Stevens the Noble Prize of Literature.

1.3 The Specific Scope of The Research

The research is limited to the analysis of Cat Stevens' post-conversion songs to indicate the reverberations of his autobiographies within the lyrics. One of the important themes of Stevens' songs after his conversion to Islam is Islamic identity, for example in the song entitled "A is for Allah" and "Thala Al Badru Alayna". The second important theme is Stevens' autobiographical imprint which can be seen in "Boots and Sand" and "Editing Floor Blues". The third important theme is children which can be found in "Mother, Father, Sister, Brother" and "Indian Ocean" for instance. Next, the fourth important theme is dream as seen in "Maybe There's A World" and "One Day At A Time". The fifth important theme is pro-peace/anti-war such as in "The Little Ones" and "There Is Peace". Lastly, the sixth important theme is ignorance with "World O' Darkness" and "This Glass World" as examples.

It is important to underline that Cat Stevens may include more than one theme in one song. For example, in "The Little Ones" he covers both children and pro-peace/anti-war. The same nuance is found in "Mother, Father, Sister, Brother" where he included these two themes. Furthermore, "All of The Prophets" tells not only about the prophets in Islam sent by God, which can be viewed as part of the theme of Islamic identities but also about the importance of peace. In addition to that point, due to the different items within the theme of Islamic identities, the theme is divided into sub-themes such as Allah as the one and only God of a Muslim and Prophet Muhammad as The Last Prophet and Messenger of Allah. In the same way, one song may cover more than one sub-themes. These can be seen through the parts of the lyrics. The following part shows the list of songs that will be analyzed in this research categorized under six common themes aforementioned:

a. Islamic Identities

i. Allah as the one and only God of a Muslim

Songs: If You Ask Me (In Sa'altum), A is for Allah, The Beloved, All Kinds of Roses

ii. Prophet Muhammad as the last Prophet and Messenger of Allah

Songs: Thala'al Badru Alayna, If You Ask Me (In Sa'altum), Salli Ala Muhammad, A is for Allah, I Look, I See, Seal of The Prophets, In'Nilta, The Beloved

iii. Shahadah or the testimony of faith

Songs: Our Guide Is The Qur'an, All of The Prophets, Other prophets (than Prophet Muhammad), Salli Ala Muhammad, All of The Prophets, Olive Hill

iv. Qur'an as the Holy Book

Songs: If You Ask Me (In Sa'altum), Our Guide is The Qur'an, Editing Floor Blues

v. The Day of Judgement

Songs: Mother, Father, Sister, Brother, The Little Ones, In The End

vi. Submission to God

Mother, Father, Sister, Brother, I Look, I See, Edge of Existence, My People

vii. Pilgrimage

Our Guide is The Qur'an, A is for Allah, Welcome Home

b. Autobiographical Imprints

i. Early career

Songs: What Love Did To Me, Editing Floor Blues, Cat & The Dog Trap

ii. Spiritual journey

Songs: All Kinds of Roses, To Be What You Must, Editing Floor Blues

iii. The near-death experience

Songs: Indian Ocean, Heaven/Where True Love Goes

iv. Media disinformation about Stevens' stance on Salman Rushdie

Songs: Everytime I Dream, Editing Floor Blues

v. US entry ban

Song: Boots and Sand

c. Children

i. Education of Muslim children

Songs: A is for Allah, Our Guide Is The Qur'an, I Look, I See

ii. Sympathy for children hardship

Songs: Mother, Father, Sister, Brother, The Little Ones, Indian Ocean,
He Was Alone

iii. Quality time with children

Song: Grandsons

d. Dream

Songs: Midday/Avoid City After Dark, Green Field and Golden Sands,
Maybe There's A World, One Day At A Time, Dream On (Until...), To Be
What You Must, World O Darkness, Doors

e. Pro-peace/Anti-war

i. Communal peace

Songs: All of The Prophets

ii. Inner peace

Songs: Angel of War, Maybe There's A World, There Is Peace

f. Ignorance

Songs: Mother, Father, Sister, Brother, The Little Ones, World O' Darkness,
This Glass Worlds

At this point, the personal and spiritual shifts Cat Stevens has gone through have been discussed so far. In the following part titled Chapter II Literary Review, I am going to provide the previous writings regarding Cat Stevens and figure out the gap that I intend to fill out.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This research is specifically designed to find out the autobiographical reverberations in Cat Stevens' literary and lyrical compositions, with a special focus on his life after his conversion to Islam. This chapter is designed to review the available critical materials on Cat Stevens and his lyrics and to identify the significant areas which might have escaped the critical attention of scholars, underpinning the justification of the subject of this research. To the best of my observation, Cat Stevens' life finds audible reverberations in his post-conversion lyrical compositions, which are indicative of his enhanced understanding of Islam as his chosen way of life at the end of his ideological search.

Despite considerable literary content in his lyrical compositions, not much critical attention has been paid to the study. Andrekos Varnava's article "Yusuf Islam (aka Cat Stevens) and his anti-war and pro-peace protest songs: from hippy peace to Islamic peace" which was published in 2018 under Contemporary British History study is the only scholarly article that I have found addressing the songs of Cat Stevens comprehensively in terms of approaching Stevens' pre and post-conversion lyrical compositions. Varnava conveys that his article is a part of a long-term project on writing Cat Stevens' biography. He further suggests that the available written sources for studying Cat Stevens are only in the form of sketchy surveys, and interview extracts combined with personal experiences and thoughts of the author.

Varnava, moreover, has cited very important research that discusses Stevens' music and his conversion proposed by Anne Sofie Roaldin 2012 called "The conversion process in stages: new Muslims in the twenty-first century." Roald argues that the four stages converted Muslims go across; are the "zealous stage", "disappointment stage" also called the "confused stage", "acceptance stage", and "secularization stage" (1). Each of these four stages has its characteristics. The zealous stage is indicated by the rigid approach of the converts in referring to Islamic laws. The confusing stage is marked by conflicting views noticed by the converts in terms of their past and new

lifestyle or multiple interpretations among Muslim scholars. The acceptance stage is signaled by the realization of the converts that Muslims are varied in their practicing Islam. At this stage, they also try to find harmony between the various religious interpretations, their practice of Islam, and their past cultural circumstances. Lastly, the secularization stage is indicated by the converts' tendency to practice Islam more privately and/or reunite with their past identity. According to Roald, Stevens had passed the zealous and confusing stage and was undergoing his acceptance stage by the time her article was released in 2012 (Varnava, 2018).

Cat Stevens has himself published some autobiographical works as well as become a contributor to documentaries that connect his personal life to his music, particularly in the scope of his conversion. Furthermore, he published a CD compilation which consists of four CDs including an essay related to his life and some remarks on his songs. In addition to that point, his autobiography entitled "Why I Still Carry A Guitar" which was initially published in 2014 comes up with a brief description of his life and mostly tells about the reason behind his return to popular music. Nevertheless, Varnava argues that no comprehensive or full biography has been written on the singer-songwriter, nor has any academic analysis of his songs appeared. Meanwhile, other singer-songwriters in his era such as Bob Dylan, James Taylor, and Bruce Springsteen have been honored with several publications of biographies and studies of their songs (Varnava, 2018).

"Why I Still Carry A Guitar: The Spiritual Journey of Cat Stevens to Yusuf" was written by Stevens to explain the reasons for returning to music after more than twenty years of break. It also briefly describes the steps of Stevens' conversion to Islam. Stevens cites some lyrics along with his life stories from which the readers can find strong connections. For instance, the lyrics of "The Road to Find Out" (1970) as telling his fascination for knowledge about what lies outside the walls we often choose to hide behind. Moreover, when he describes his period of meditation due to being hospitalized for his tuberculosis, he cites the lyrics of "I Wish, I Wish" (1970). Another citation within the book is taken from the lyrics of "Daytime" (1978) as the artist decided to take a break and concentrate more on practicing Islam (Islam, 2015). These personal stories and citations might lead the readers to find out a sort of reverberations between Stevens' autobiography and post-conversion lyrical compositions. Nevertheless, this

requires another research since the 105-page book itself was not specifically written for that purpose.

Hamzah in his article “Clarifying the Misconceptions about Islamic Restrictions on Entertainment and Performing Arts in Malaysia”, cites Cat Stevens as an example of a Muslim musician who coped with the issue of restrictions on music. He highlights some moments such as Stevens’ conversion to Islam in December 1977, changing his name to Yusuf Islam in July 1978, and his less frequent appearance in music. Furthermore, Hamzah opposed the argument advanced by Evans in “The Boy who looked at the Moon.” The Life and Times of Cat Stevens published in 1995 stated that “Cat Stevens quit singing as Islam is against singing and entertainment” (Hamzah, 2015). This argument is inaccurate because Stevens released a new album in the same year of his conversion entitled “Back to Earth.” Stevens resumed his music two years later by writing “A is for Allah” dedicated to the birth of his first daughter, Hasanah. Furthermore, there was also a cappella of “The End” in 1985. Yet, Stevens was hesitant about the status of music in Islam which was relatively normal in the context of being a new Muslim convert. This is in line with the idea proposed by Roald that it was the “confused phase” as mentioned above. In his confusing times, Stevens had been busy with chary works in addition to serving as the ambassador of the United Nations and some other organizations. As explained by Stevens in an interview with VHI, “until I know how I can express myself better, until I know how music can fit or how I can express myself in a new way, perhaps I better take a break” (VHI, 2000). Stevens himself states his standing point in coping with the issue of restrictions on music later in “Why I Still Carry A Guitar”:

“I concluded that listening to music, attending musical gatherings, or studying the music of all genres and instruments, as far as I gathered from the Qur’anic and prophetic evidence, may be allowed as long as it is not accompanied by immoral and sinful acts, mocking belief in God, or used as a pretext to incite people towards *haram* (prohibited) behavior, and it does not preoccupy a person away from observing the obligatory worship - principle which could of course apply to any other activity from horse riding to cooking or preparing for exams” (Islam, 2015).

This proves the argument mentioned before that Stevens did not quit music. Although there are schools of thought in Islam that forbid music it is a relatively minor opinion in comparison to the vast majority of Muslim scholars who views music as lawful as long it is in line with Islamic teachings such as avoiding profanity, idolatry, and the like. Hamzah's journal thus provides us with an objective view of another phase of Stevens' music; long silence from popular music which is in contrast to Evans' assumption.

Roald's work focuses on the stages of conversion regarding Stevens as one of its objects. Meanwhile, Hamzah's journal seems to support Roald's thesis. Both writers are helpful in objectively viewing Stevens' stance toward music in his early conversion phase. They give a relatively brief description of the psychological aspects of a convert like Stevens and its influences on his music. Apart from these psychological perspectives, adequate literary analysis of Stevens' post-conversion lyrical compositions is conspicuous by its near absence.

Jitka Tomanová (2012) has conducted a study on the translation of Cat Stevens' lyrics from English into Czech. She provides the important aspects of Cat Stevens' life such as his childhood, early music performance, hit songs, the instruments, the influences of music, etc. Even though her focus is basically on the translation of the lyrics yet Tomanová briefly describes the influences of Stevens' religious beliefs and his music. She argues, "Now he is using the sound of Arabian instruments and in lyrics, we can find marks of his belief, but even though the music (his post-conversion songs) is completely different from the music of Cat Stevens, it is worth hearing. Islam is a religion with a different cultural background and also its approach to art is different for believers. This difference could be seen in Stevens' approach to the music and especially to the lyrics (Tomanová, 2012). Tomanová has noticed the difference between the pre and post-conversion lyrical compositions of Stevens. However, the research which was predominantly designed under the context of the translation of lyrics, automatically will not provide any analysis of the lyrics themselves. Thus, the readers will not find any lyrical composition analysis both pre and post-conversion Stevens.

Dave Thompson's book titled "Hearts of Darkness: James Taylor, Jackson Browne, Cat Stevens and the Unlikely Rise of the Singer-Songwriter" published in 2012

has provided brief stories of Stevens' childhood as well as teen ages. For instance, his school location is Drury Lane, the center of a theater in London. Besides, his places of hanging out were Denmark Street, the area in which publishers of music and studios of recording were all around, or Soho, a spot for late-night bars and coffee shops. He found himself surrounded by such spots which had influenced his impressionable teenage years. Thompson, moreover, has come up with the multiple personalities of Cat Stevens. The artist loves simplicity which is derived from complexity. The other character described was his persistence as he tried to demonstrate his talent at every record company in London which none of them was interested in. In addition to that, the book tells Stevens' obsession with success and his being worried about money. Another unique personality of Stevens told by Thompson was Stevens' tendency to write his songs when he felt sad although he ended up writing a happy song (Thompson, 2012).

Cat Stevens' entry into the spiritual journey is also addressed in Thompson's work. It started with his being hospitalized for three months due to tuberculosis. He repeatedly listened to the songs of Bach, composer of the Baroque Era, to refresh his mind. He also read and meditated by using "The Secret Path", a book by Paul Brunton. The hard times of facing tuberculosis had given him a chance to reflect and restart. He stated years after that "It was an archetypal spiritual adventure. And I joined it." Thompson, further, gives his insight into Stevens' conversion to Islam; "In terms of prolonging his career, his conversion to Islam probably wasn't up there with his best ideas. But in terms of personal survival, it was the smartest thing he ever did" (Thompson, 2012).

At this point, Thompson's work has brought his readers to better understand his teenage years, personality, and spiritual journey Stevens with a brief comment on his conversion to Islam. Nevertheless, similar to the previous materials, the readers will not find adequate, let alone deep literary, analysis of the artist's songs and to what extent these biographical details reverberate in Stevens' post-conversion lyrical compositions.

Bartkowiak and Kiuchi in "The Music of Counterculture Cinema; A Critical Study of the 1960s and 1970s Soundtracks" published in 2015 provide another angle; that is, Cat Stevens' songs as soundtracks in counterculture cinema, in this case, a film by Hal Ashby called "Harold and Maude" in 1971. This movie tells about an unconventional relationship between a 20-year-old man and an 80-year-old woman. The

director, Ashby, requested Stevens' songs to be the soundtracks of his film. Bartkowiak and Kiuchi discussed the use of Stevens' songs, such as "If You Want to Sing Out, Sing Out", "Miles from Nowhere", and "Trouble" in this film to direct the audiences in viewing the film, paving the ways for understanding and finally accepting the counterculture notion proposed. In other words, these songs functioned as the narrative of the film which provided its viewers with a sort of frame (Bartkowiak & Kiuchi, 2015).

Even though, as suggested by Stevens, the connections between his songs and Ashby's film, the notion of death, and the character Harold's tendency to search for something he does not understand, did not fully convince Stevens, they both shared the same idea. What can be inferred here is that Stevens' songs being included in counterculture cinema had been a sign that his music possessed the ability to become the trendsetter of his time, establishing its sense of fame among that generation. Bartkowiak and Kiuchi's work indicates that Cat Stevens' songs had been the anthem of its age, particularly in the context of hippie culture.

Bartkowiak and Kiuchi have attempted to show the role of Stevens' songs in counterculture cinema by relating the songs to the trend of that time. To some extent, it describes why Stevens was an important singer-songwriter of his generation. Thus, it justifies the importance of studying his autobiography and analyzing his lyrical compositions, two elements that have not been figured in the main discussions of the book writers. Thus, like all of the materials reviewed earlier in this chapter, the readers will not gain deep literary analysis as well as the reverberations of Stevens' autobiography on his post-conversion lyrical compositions from Bartkowiak and Kiuchi's book.

Mustapha and Abdul Razak in "A Contrastive Analysis of Yusuf Islam and Zakir Naik's Styles of Religious Propagation (or Preaching)" published in 2019 highlight another dimension of Stevens' autobiography; that is in terms of the way Stevens, as a Muslim preacher, uses his life journey and music to preach his audiences or fans towards his idealism which were derived from Islam. In comparison to Naik's style, Stevens has creatively used music as an alternative means to convey the Islamic messages. Additionally, the fact that he had left music for approximately 30 years has attracted media attention, adding another method of his preaching which is storytelling.

Besides, his message to Western audiences has been effectively communicated since the artist is a native speaker of English. Mustapha and Abdul Razak conclude that “Yusuf’s approach in harmoniously sharing his ideas provides enough room for the audience to go back and ponder over his ideas, and perhaps can make them change their lifestyle” (Mustapha & Razak, 2019). In this circumstance, the researchers have added another fruitful perspective when analyzing Cat Stevens’ autobiography and lyrical compositions; that is, the need to consider them as Stevens’ way of preaching his new faith. With all of his unique stories and experiences, Stevens’ approach to delivering the messages of Islam will be effective when dealing with Western audiences that might not be interested in or accustomed to an ideological debate like Dr. Naik’s typical audiences. However, just like the previously exposed materials, the writers on Stevens were not trying to give any literary analysis of his lyrics or trace autobiographical reverberations in his post-conversion lyrical compositions of the artist.

Throughout the review of the available materials above, I do not find any material which provides sufficient academic literary analysis on the autobiographical elements of Cat Stevens’ linked to his post-conversion lyrical compositions. This is the gap that I intend to fill out by conducting a comprehensive literary analysis. Thus, the outcome of this analysis will show in what ways Stevens’ life reverberates in his post-conversion lyrical compositions which are expected to provide more valuable literary references on Cat Stevens and his songs as a part of his literary legacy.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

3.1. The Approach to The Research

This research applied close reading with the following steps:

- a. Reading the passage
- b. Analyzing the passage
- c. Developing a descriptive thesis
- d. Constructing an argument about the passage
- e. Developing an argument based on my thesis

3.2. The Object of The Research

The object of the research is all of the selected songs of the post-conversion era of Cat Stevens. The total number of songs analyzed is 37 which are taken from 16 albums and four singles. One song may be analyzed twice or more under a different theme or sub-theme. The song lyrics are taken from the official website of Cat Stevens (catstevens.com). Meanwhile, autobiographical materials are obtained from books, videos, interviews, official websites, Facebook fanpage, articles, and the news. In terms of the coding of the data, this research uses an inductive approach meaning that it starts with the data collection (song lyrics and autobiographical information), grouping into themes (6 themes aforementioned), then moves following the steps of the close reading shown above.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

This chapter provides a close reading of the selected songs. The five steps of close reading are applied to the six theme-based groups of songs. Therefore, there will be six distinguished results of the analysis. In addition, there will be a comparison to the pre-conversion songs that cover relatively similar themes to see the extent of variations. In the end, the final result of the analysis will show in what ways Cat Steven's autobiographies reverberate in his post-conversion lyrical compositions.

4.1. Reading The Passage

This step includes reading both the selected song's lyrics and the autobiographical data of Cat Stevens. This requires note-taking as well as marking details that are relevant to the scope of the research. In terms of lyrics, diction choice, in particular, become the key element at this step. It also seeks the fundamental idea or message proposed by Cat Stevens within the lyrics. Meanwhile, the reading of autobiographies covers the pivotal elements of Cat Stevens' life such as his early life, music career, conversion to Islam, humanitarian activism, as well as news surrounding his post-conversion life. Last but not least, the reading also covers an understanding of the connection between the song lyrics and the autobiographies to identify the ways of reverberations. The following part will provide a review of Cat Stevens' Post-Conversion albums before moving to the analysis part.

a. Album: The Life of The Last Prophet (April 1995)

Song : "Tala'a Al-Badru 'Alayna"

"The Life of The Last Prophet" is the first album officially released by Cat Stevens after his 17 years of break from the music industry (Dansby, 2000). The album is a biography of Prophet Muhammad and has been approved by an international group of Muslim scholars. The record contains selected Qur'an verses recitation by Egyptian Qur'an reciter, Sheikh Muhammad Al-Minyaoui as well as *Adhan* (call to prayer). The only song in this album is an Islamic

traditional song entitled “Tala’a Al-Badru ‘Alayna”. The lyrics of the song are both in Arabic and English. Meanwhile, *daff* (frame drum; is an age-old word important for the Islamically informed discourse on music. Also spelled *duff* (Otterbeck, 2021) is the only instrument used in the recording. Despite the debates that exist among Muslim scholars regarding the use of instruments, *daff* is relatively accepted. As suggested by Jonas Otterbeck: “Traditionally, Islamic *nasheed* has been sung without ‘instruments’ with the possible exception of percussion accompaniment – sometimes specified as a *daff*, a frame drum mentioned in fiqh [Islamic jurisprudence]” (Otterbeck, 2021). Stevens’ careful approach towards music in his early conversion phase had therefore led him to avoid the grey area and prefer not to take risks while delivering his performance through a widely accepted instrument.

“Tala’a Al-Badru ‘Alayna” means the moon rose over us. The old song has two versions regarding its history. The first version says it was sung by the women and children as a warm welcome when Prophet Muhammad migrated from Mecca to Medina in 622. This story was objected to because as stated in a part of its lyrics: “Min thaniyyat il-Wada” meaning “from the Valley of Wada”, is not appropriate to refer to the migration from Mecca which locates in the south since the Valley of Wada is geographically located in the north of Medina. The second version says the song refers to the Tabuk war expedition. This expedition aimed at confronting Byzantium. Nevertheless, the battle had never taken place since Byzantium showed no presence on the ground. Tabuk itself is a city located 623 km in the north of Medina. According to prominent Muslim scholar, Ibnu Al Qayyim in “Zadul Ma’ad” this is more rationale because the Valley of Wada is located between Tabuk and Syam thus it is more likely to pass by the Prophet Muhammad (Muhkhaer, 2021). Above all, “Tala’a Al-Badru ‘Alayna” is one of the oldest traditional songs in Islamic culture and has been popularized by various Muslim singers including Cat Stevens.

b. Album: I Have No Cannons That Roar (January 1997)

Songs: Mother, Father, Sister, Brother, The Little Ones

“I Have No Cannons That Roar” was released by Cat Stevens’ Jamal Records in 2000. The 1995 Bosnian conflict triggered the artist to collaborate with others to create inspirational songs which aim at collecting financial support as well as raising social awareness of the tragedy. It was Bosnian Foreign Minister, Irfan Ljubijankic who wrote the song “I Have No Cannons That Roar” which became the name of the album. In 1995, Irfan Ljubijankic was murdered as his helicopter was shot down. Cat Stevens had been given a cassette recording of Ljubijankic’s song a few months before his death so that it could lower the burden caused by the war (Stevens, 2022).

On July 7th, 2020, Stevens releases an article through his website catstevens.com entitled “They Will Sit on Tall Thrones” to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Bosnian Genocide. He compares Covid 19, a pandemic that we are dealing with, to another more “diabolic” and “corrosive” pandemic: “wilful prejudice” which refers to the motive behind the Bosnian Genocide also called “The Srebrenica Massacre”. Stevens underlines the lesson of the pandemic that “nations cannot remain independently healthy while ignoring the suffering of others – we just can’t.” to bring a sense of togetherness. He further describes the situation in the Bosnian Genocide when 8.000 Bosnians, predominantly fathers and sons were massacred. Meanwhile, the mothers and babies were coercively displaced. That was apart from the torment and sexual violation. Ironically the United Nations (UN)’s role was absent. Moreover, having learned from the tyrannical ambition of Radovan Karadžić, a Serbian leader who was the very important actor behind the massacre, to gain control over Bosnia, Stevens reminds his audiences to be cautious about such ambition to gain control over the others that might come from West and East. Stevens states:

“When leaders (whether they’re from the West or East) talk-up issues like making their nations first and foremost in the economy and build-up their military preparedness, identifying ‘outsiders’ as the enemy, global imbalance rapidly magnifies and the consequences for peace and shared prosperity amongst the weaker – who are the majority of mankind – dwindles to sub-human levels and bad things happen.” (Stevens, 2022)

Thus, Stevens indirectly invites his audience not to be polarized by the “West” - “East” binary opposition and invites his audience to share a united, peaceful, and prosperous world for mankind as a whole which also adds to his more recent tendency to inclusiveness as well as underlining his important bridging or connecting role as acknowledged by the University of Exeter’s Honorary Graduate upon him in 2007. Such tendency of connections as well as cooperation is in line with the idea proposed by Edward W. Said in his work “Culture and Imperialism” as he concluded:

“Survival is about the connections between things; in Eliot's phrase, reality cannot be deprived of the "other echoes [that] inhabit the garden." It is more rewarding-and more difficult to think concretely and sympathetically, contrapuntally, about others than only about "us." But this also means not trying to rule others, not trying to classify them or put them in hierarchies, above all, not constantly reiterating how "our" culture or country is number one (or not number one, for that matter).” (Said, 1994).

Finally, Stevens ends his commemoration by providing his video singing “The Little Ones” to whom he attributes the pronoun “They” in the article’s title.

c. Album: Prayers of the Last Prophet (September 1999)

Songs: If You Ask Me (In Sa’altum), Salli Ala Muhammad

“Prayers of the Last Prophet” is a collection of *duas* or prayers. Yet on his website, Stevens includes two songs listed above within the album. The album acts as the continuity of the “1995’s The Life of the Last Prophet” (Stevens, 2022). The prayers in the album were used by the Prophet Muhammad. The album consists of 40 tracks starting with “Introduction” followed by surah Al-Baqarah verse 186. The following is the English translation of the verse:

“When My servants ask you ‘O Prophet’ about Me: I am truly near. I respond to one’s prayer when they call upon Me. So let them respond ‘with obedience’ to Me and believe in Me, perhaps they will be guided ‘to the Right Way’. (The Holy Qur’an surah Al-Baqarah verse 186)

Furthermore, one of the tracks is called “The Chief of Prayer” which the English translation is available in the description of the album on Stevens’ website as follows:

“O Allah, you are my Lord, there is no God but You
You created me and I am Your servant
And I will keep my covenant and promise to you as much as I can
I seek refuge with You from all the evil I have done
I admit before You Your blessings upon me
And I admit to You all my sins
So forgive me; certainly, none can forgive sins except You”

d. Album: A is for Allah (July 2000)

Songs: A is for Allah, Seal of The Prophets

“A is for Allah” is the first song written by Cat Stevens after his conversion to Islam. The song was written after the birth of his first child, Hasanah in 1980. Nevertheless, the song is included in the album which is released in 2000. The title of the track indicates a sense of a new path for the artist. His conversion in 1977 paved a way for his brand new spiritual horizons which led to a fundamental change in life as well as perspective. Stevens realized the need to base his work based on Allah’s commands including educating and entertaining the Muslim children through inspirational songs. The use of the 28 letters in the Arabic alphabet instead of the general 26 alphabet is a strong sign of his affiliated mind with Islam. In this album, he featured other international Muslim prominent figures both the scholars and musicians such as Hamza Yusuf and Sheikh Muhammad Gibreel, Zain Bhikha, and Raihan (Stevens, 2022).

e. Album: In Search of the Centre of the Universe (October 2001)

Song: God is The Light

On the 20th Anniversary of Islamia Schools UK, schools founded by Stevens, Cat Stevens held a live performance in which he sang “God Is The Light” with backing vocals and *duff* as the only instrument. The event took place

at the Royal Albert Hall through a concert named The Night of Remembrance. The song is a part of his series of Islamic songs.

f. Album: In Praise of The Last Prophet (March 2002)

Songs: Tala'a Al-Badru 'Alayna, In'Nilta

“In Praise of The Last Prophet” is a compilation of songs and poetry that tells about Prophet Muhammad PBUH. In this album, Stevens also collaborated with other Muslim artists including the converted Muslim from Canada, Dawud Wharnsby. Other artists are Aashiq Al Rasul, Raihan, and Zain Bikha. The first song, “Talaal Badru Alayna” has been included in the 1995 album “The Life of The Last Prophet”.

g. Album: I Look I See (January 2003)

Songs: I Look, I See, Your Mother, Our Guide is The Qur'an

The album “ I Look, I See” was the initial product by Stevens' Jamal Records in its production series of nasheed albums for children. The idea laid on the need for Muslim parents to educate and entertain their children with Islamic content. Thus, the album is still under the same umbrella as his previous works.

h. Album: Peace Train & Angel of War

Song: Angel of War

Cat Stevens has been an iconic peace promoter, especially from his popular track, “Peace Train” released in 1971. The song once was at the top of the American Adult Chart. Furthermore, it attained number 3 in Canada and Australia. This was showing his popularity in three different states which use English as their first language. In 2003, the artist made a new version of his Furthermore, Stevens made a new version of this masterpiece in Johannesburg along with another track carrying the similar message “Angel of War”.

i. Single: Indian Ocean

“Indian Ocean” was recorded in 2005. This charity single release aimed at raising public awareness as well as funds for the victims of the December 2004

Tsunami in Aceh, Indonesia (Stevens, 2022). The artist has also described the inspiration behind the song in his autobiography, “Why I Still Carry A Guitar”. Having watched the TV broadcast showing the people panic running for lives as they avoided the vigorous wave, Stevens was deeply touched. Together with his wife, Stevens traveled to Indonesia in the following month where they witnessed the tragic impact of the natural disaster and provided help for those affected. The recording of “Indian Ocean” involved a Swedish producer, Martin Terefe, and a famous Indian composer, A. R. Rahman. This is the moment where Stevens restarted using the instrument after 25 years of break (Islam, 2015).

“Indian Ocean”, which narrates the story of a family who adopts an orphan affected by a tsunami, was performed by Stevens along with “The Little Ones” in his 2006 US tour (Pareles, 2006). The Indian Ocean, additionally, has its connection to Stevens' unforgettable experience as he was saved from drowning on the coast of Malibu, California which he pledged “Oh God! If you save me I will work for you”. Stevens' self-reflection of the moment brings another insight that is to work for or serve Islam by singing and songwriting in the light of evoking awareness of people to play their roles in dealing with the catastrophe. Even though “Indian Ocean” did not become a wide-scale hit song, Stevens realized that his songwriting was still active. Moreover, a lot of testimonies came confirming that his voice remains the same along with identical music and melodies (Islam, 2015).

j. Single: Heaven / Where True Love Goes

The single was released as a promotional track for the 2006 *An Other Cup* album. This song brings back the listeners to Stevens' past work “The Foreigner Suite” in 1973 from which the song takes parts of its lyrical compositions. This single has been creatively composed by using the parts of The Foreigner Suite’s lyrics as the beginning: “The moment you walked inside my door. I knew that I need not look no more”.

Yet, the lyrics change in the third line from “I've seen many other girls before” to “I've seen many other souls before”. This diction change clearly shows the transformation that Stevens possesses as well as the perspective he now

carries on. As a superstar, Stevens supposedly had many girlfriends. According to celebsinsights.com a website that tracks the dating of celebrities, Cat Stevens had relationships with at least (note: not all relationships of Cat Stevens before marriage can be archived) five women before his marriage with Fawziah Ali. They are Louise Wightman (1979), Linda Lewis (1970 – 1977), Carly Simon (1970), and Patti D'Arbanville (1968 – 1970) (Celeb Insights, 2022). Since there is a prohibition of having an extramarital relationship in Islam, Cat Stevens felt the necessity to ensure that all of the dictions in his lyrics are suited to his belief. Thus, that is the reason behind his decision to modify the diction “girls” to “souls”.

Stevens additionally puts a repetitive line “I go where true love goes” inviting his audiences to figure out his present view on what “true love” is as they listen to the whole lyrics of “Heaven/Where True Love Goes”. The official video of the song, furthermore, started by repeatedly showing a scene of a wave in the ocean which strongly reverberates with the artist's monumental life experience in coast of Malibu, California which is frequently addressed in the stories of his conversion to Islam. In addition, there is also a scene of a little boy who finally meets his mother on the seashore from which the “true love” can also be interpreted in that way. Stevens admits that there is a probability of multiple interpretations that may be derived from the song.

k. Album: An Other Cup (November 2006)

Songs: Midday (Avoid City After Dark), In The End, Maybe There's A World, One Day At A Time, There Is Peace, The Beloved, When Butterflies Leave (musicalized poetry), Whispers From A Spiritual Garden (musicalized poetry)

Since the release of “Back to Earth” in 1978, An Other Cup album is the first major album released by Cat Stevens under the name “Yusuf” in the context of his return to the popular music industry. National Public Radio (NPR) publishes a story with the title “Yusuf Islam: From Cat Stevens to 'An Other Cup”” stating that: “Yusuf Islam, formerly known as Cat Stevens, recently returned to the world of popular music with An Other Cup, his first secular studio album in 28 years.” (Dye, 2007).

The artist's various life experiences within years of break ultimately contribute to his music style including its lyrical compositions. In his return to popular music, Stevens offers a new approach to his work that integrates both Islamic values and popular music. The inspiration for the album name, *An Other Cup*, came from the moment when he saw illustrations of a Turkish coffee house in the 15th Century. Stevens' reference to Turkish coffee, which dates back to the 15th-century Ottoman culture, which is an Islamic culture, is purposeful rather than coincidental. It also offers a sense of an alternative rich civilization in contrast to the view that the Orient lacks a culture as orientalist claim. There is, for instance, a rich atmosphere of friendship within Turkish coffee as stated by Beşir Ayvazoğlu. Ayvazoğlu conveys that "the famous proverb, 'A cup of coffee commits one to forty years of friendship' is an exaggerated expression of gratitude and also points to the prominent place of coffee in welcoming guests." (Ayvazoğlu, 2011). All of these variables creatively contribute to the representation of one of the important aspects of Stevens' *An Other Cup* album, which is building connections or making friends.

In addition to that point, when he looked at the cover of his old album "Tea For Tillerman," Stevens started to make a sort of connection with "An Other Cup". Furthermore, he views this album as a kind of "selection" of types of music he loves to listen to since the album represents his long varied musical tastes since the beginning of his musical career. Stevens stated that he does not like to stick to a particular type of music.

Stevens delivers some reviews of his songs of the album in the interview conducted in Victoria and Albert Museum, London. For instance, "Mid Day / Avoid City After Dark" is thought to be one of Stevens' favorite songs in the album which talks about the powerful nature in the middle of the metropolitan referring back to his teenage time in the city of London. He furthermore emphasized the song as the "great opener".

The next review goes to the previously unpublished song called "Green Fields, Golden Sand" which was written by Stevens in 1968 (for this reason, it is not included in the post-conversion songs). One special part of it is at that moment Stevens wrote the line "I am not the only one" referring to him as a

dreamer of a better world. Then three years later, interestingly, John Lennon said the same in his legendary song “Imagine” emphasizing a sort of resonance between the two musicians and other people who possess the same dreams.

l. Album: Footsteps In The Light

Song: The White Moon

Continuing the series of Islamic songs by Cat Stevens, in terms of lyrical content, “The White Moon” is the same as “Talaal Badru Alayna” in most of their parts except for the difference in the language title and additional stanza composed in the Zulu language. In addition, the lyrics of “The White Moon” are shorter than “Talaal Badru Alayna”.

m. Album: Bruce Parry Presents Amazon Tribe - Songs for Survival

Song: Edge of Existence

Based on the review of Kensaltown Records, Bruce Parry, the star of the BBC series “Tribe” and “Amazon”, personal experiences and understanding of the tribe issues after spending years with them had inspired him to help. This led Parry to invite his fellow musicians to cooperate in his charity project. In this album, Cat Stevens is one of the featured artists such as KT Tunstall, Johnny Borrell, Jason Mraz, etc. who collaborated with Bruce Parry. It was a fundraising album that supported Survival International, a human rights organization that helps tribal people (Kensaltown Records, 2018).

n. Album: I Look, I See 2 (November 2008)

Songs: All of the Prophets, Ramadan Moon

Adding new songs listed above, the album attempts to continue the success of its predecessor, I Look, I See (1). It aims at providing vibrant inspirational songs for children. The two tracks address two basic beliefs in Islam that the young Muslim generation ought to be familiar with; prophets and the month of Ramadan. As stated before, Cat Stevens is very sensitive toward children’s education and attaches great significance to the upbringing of children in an Islamic way; that is why he is also known as a great educator. Both as the

founder of a school and songwriter of Islamic songs for children, Stevens' personality as an educator should not be neglected. Since educating children is a prophetic deed, also known as *sunnah* (following what Prophet Muhammad PBUH did), Stevens is very sensitive towards the education of children.

o. Album: Roadsinger (May 2009)

Songs: Welcome Home, All Kind of Roses, Dream On (Until...), Every time I Dream, This Glass World, To Be What You Must, World O' Darkness, Shamsia, Roadsinger, Thinking 'Bout You

The album Roadsinger was released by Stevens after An Other Cup, strengthened his return to popular music. The album is considered to reverberate Stevens' autobiographical journey from Cat Stevens to Yusuf Islam. Although all of the tracks are musically affected by Western-like folk/pop of the 70's era (Melis, 2009) yet, thematically the majority of the tracks are in the sense of adherence to Allah, particularly the opening song "Welcome Home" (Hart, 2009).

Stevens also added a track he originally recorded in 1968 - similar to what he did in "An Other Cup" - called "The Rain" (not included in the post-conversion songs) which is still relevant to the current situation. This revisit to past works gives a sign that there were songs of Cat Stevens that share relatively similar notions to what he composes as Yusuf Islam. The themes of the songs in the "Roadsinger" are relatively sharing the same nuances as Stevens' past works. They are circulated in travel, the search of the soul, and pursuit of happiness" within the framework of Stevens' current spiritual path (Hart, 2009).

p. Album: Roadsinger/Boots & Sand

Song: Boots & Sand

"Boots & Sand" is a bonus track of the album "Roadsinger". The inspiration came after the artist was denied to enter the US on September 21, 2004, presumably because his name was inaccurately identified as included in the no-fly terrorist list. As stated by Stevens: "The man who wrote, "Peace

Train” was being recast by the US Administration to look like he was associated with terrorism; what news!”(Islam, 2015).

Such contradiction supposedly creates a negative image of Islam for the public. Let alone that the news was found on the front page of worldwide media such as BBC, Reuters, and CNN (Islam, 2015). Note that the annually commemorated 9/11 event was happening around 3 years before and Stevens’ visit to the US was in the month of it; September. In addition, the reason behind the incident was very technical that is a misspelling of the name (Islam, 2015) confirming that the US officials, in this case, were acting upon inaccurate facts. Nevertheless, Stevens preferred to view it as God’s will, and he had no further worries over it, and write “Boots & Sand” to express his perspective on the case. I am going to provide a lyrical analysis of the song in the coming part.

Paul McCartney (The Beatles) and Dolly Parton featured Stevens in this single. The other figure involved in the production as the music video director was Jesse Dylan, the son of Bob Dylan. Parton who has been a colleague for Stevens defended him during the entry ban and firmly states, as quoted by Irish Examiner: “He's a precious man. He's got a lot of bad press lately but I think he's out to try to save the world, not destroy it” (Parton, 2005). These strange practices of the United States are related to the event of 9/11. Although security concerns are understandable, such exaggerated practices lead to xenophobia and Islamophobia. As Erden El states, “in the period which is called the post-9/11 period, xenophobia, which was already evident in a part of the society, re-emerged and xenophobia combined with hostility to Islam”¹ (El, 2022). El adds that xenophobia reemerged and an “antipathy has developed against foreigners, but mostly against foreigners who are Muslims” (El, 2022).

q. Single: My People

The single was recorded in Berlin, Germany, specifically at Hansa Studios which locates 100 yards from the location where the Berlin Wall fell. It was released in 2011 following the political revolution in Egypt in particular and

¹ The translation from Turkish to English was made by Azwar Tahir.

in the Arab world in general. These selections of place and time settings deliver Stevens' message within the song which strongly deals with the idea of freedom.

In a 2011 interview called “The Music of Revolution” lasting around 25 minutes with the Al Jazeera channel, Stevens admitted that the song was a sort of support from free people who wish to be equally liberated. He also posted the song on Facebook to get more engagement from the public since the artist believed that the internet can be a powerful device to share his idealism. Moreover, in responding to the question regarding the ability of music as a tool for change, Stevens positively answered by referring to his past era where music became a sort of inspiration for change which gives a connection to what he did in his early career. Later, in 2020, as the world was watching what happened in Xinjiang, namely, China’s attitude towards the Uyghur people, Stevens showed his solidarity by re-releasing the single through a video with a specific image of Uyghur men under detention in Xinjiang.

r. Album: Tell ‘Em I’m Gone

Songs: I Was Raised in Babylon, Cat & The Dog Trap, Doors, Editing Floor Blues, Gold Digger

“Tell ‘Em I’m Gone” is the third major release of Cat Stevens following “An Other Cup” and “The Road Singer” after he decides to reenter the popular music industry. In a short film made by Danny Clinch which contains the interview regarding the album, Stevens stated that:

“This record is really my talking about a lot of things I have experienced, being misunderstood, and how people want to tend to misunderstand you often in order to fit their own picture of what you are to them.” (Stevens, 2018)

In his review, Melis views that in this album, Stevens maintains his identical themes such as identity search, being misconceived, and a longing for freedom (Melis, 2004). The autobiographical reverberations are seen through a song entitled “Editing Floor Blues” referring to the bias of news by the Western media, particularly regarding the issue of *fatwa* toward Salman Rushdie. Furthermore, Stevens puts a cover song called “Dying to Live” which is a cover

song of Edgar Winter back in 1971. On this cover, different from Winter, he added a final line that frames the entire cover song to be religiously written, that is “until God takes me” confirming Stevens’ current persona as a religious man. For this additional diction, he firmly states that the end of the song was positive for him (Stevens, 2018). Meanwhile, “Gold Digger” is a song dedicated to Nelson Mandella and addresses the apartheid in Africa (Stevens, 2022).

s. Single: He Was Alone

The single basically addresses the refugee crisis in general. Specifically, the song was composed after Stevens visited the refugee camps and witnessed the lonely children at the Turkish/Syrian border in Southern Turkey. The song tells about a boy who died as he tried to migrate for a better life (Breihan, 2016). It is a part of his charity campaign for child refugees with the hashtag #YouAreNotAlone. For this campaign, he released the single at Central Hall Westminster, London in June 2016. The artist invited all people to maintain caring and assistance to the refugees, particularly the children.

“He Was Alone” is considered a very rare song by Stevens indicated by its unhappy ending since as an optimist he has been writing optimistic songs such as “Peace Train” and “Moonshadow”. This is due to the reality seen by Stevens that the crisis showed no end at that moment. To help decrease the huge burden, Stevens had been attempting to raise funds through his charity organization, Small Kindness (Elgot, 2016).

t. Album: The Laughing Apple

Songs: Marry And The Little Lamb, Olive Hill, Grandsons, Don’t Blame Them, See What Love Did To Me

“The Laughing Apple” is a blend of the rerecordings of Cat Stevens’ earlier songs and the new ones. Stevens invited Paul Samwell-Smith his producer for his past albums “Tea for Tillerman” and “The Firecat”. The reunion is not only with Paul but also with the production house Decca Records which released his songs 50 years ago. Stevens wants to hear the old songs differently particularly avoiding the noises caused by the big band arrangements (Stevens,

2022). As a result, the record is purer as well as less crowded in its arrangement (Mongredian, 2017).

The atmosphere that “The Laughing Apple” comes up with is the joy of the young souls no matter how old a person is including Cat Stevens who turns older. Through the album illustration, the fans are brought into a journey where the young iconic Tillerman (the character in the Tea for Tillerman album) was doing his job as an apple-picker in a small garden. Interestingly, the album still possesses one of Stevens’ trademark themes, spiritual quests. Commenting upon the new tracks in the album, Folk Radio UK states:

“The Laughing Apple’s newest songs - ‘See What Love Did to Me’, ‘Olive Hill’ and ‘Don’t Blame Them’ - possess the reflective insight of a spiritual seeker and the melodic charm that made Yusuf beloved by millions during the ‘60s and ‘70s and still speak to a younger, wide-eyed generation.” (Folk Radio UK, 2017).

In an interview with TED (Technology, Entertainment, and Design) Curator, Chris Anderson, Stevens states “The Laughing Apple” is a record of very simple songs he had in his early career. He views the songs possess simple and child-friendly characters which lead to fun and optimistic life such as “The Laughing Apple” and “Marry and The Little Lamb” (both songs were previously recorded). He emphasized to the audience in TED that children are the future generation. Responding to question of Anderson about what he might leave as a legacy, Stevens who has been involved in education particularly in The Islamic Schools in the UK, underlined the importance of an inclusive curriculum and the need for everyone to know the other. Strengthening his message of inclusion, Stevens ends the interview by quoting a part of a verse in the Qur’an (Al Hujurat; 13). Stevens states:

“...It (the verse) says we created you in nations and tribes that you may know one another (not despise one another). The best of you in God’s sight is most righteous, Fullstop!” (TED Archive, 2018).

Righteousness (*taqwa* as it is originally stated in the verse) is the only attribute that makes a human superior according to the surah Al Hujurat (and as

stated continually in the Holy Qur'an). Therefore, inclusion is in the core of Islam, despite the false claim of Islamophobes that Islam is not peaceful.

4.2. Analyzing The Passage

a. Theme 1: Islamic Identities

It is important to start this analysis by knowing the foundations of Islamic belief as a religion. This particularly needs the understanding of what is called "The Five Pillars of Islam" and "The Six Pillars of Faith". The Five Pillars of Islam consist of: *Shahadah* or Testimony of Faith, *Salah* (Prayer), *Zakat* (Almsgiving), *Sawm* (Fasting), and *Hajj* (Pilgrimage). Meanwhile, The Six Pillars of Faith consists of belief in Allah, belief in His Angels, belief in His Books, belief in His Messengers, belief in The Day of Judgement, and belief in the *Qadhaa'* and *Qadr* (Doom and Divine Decree). Stevens' conversion to Islam consequently changes his entire worldview merely the fundamental aspects of his ideology. This is not only confirmed by the exploration of themes in his post-conversion lyrical compositions which turn Islamically but also his personal and public life. For instance his changing name to "Yusuf Islam", marrying a Muslim woman (Fauzia Mubarak Ali), naming his children using Islamic names (Hasanah, Muhammad a. k. a. Yoriyos, Amina, Asmaa, Maymanah, Hasanah, and Abd al- Ahad) (Ceves, 2020), establishing Islamic organization in education (Islamia Primary School), and charity (Muslim Aid), and contributing as a well-known philanthropist across the Muslim world. Bosnia, Indonesia, and Turkey to mention a few. Stevens' being very attached to Islam as his final choice is also strongly supported by the fact that he had previously interacted with various kinds of belief systems such as Catholicism, Buddhism, and Numerology.

i. Allah as the one and only God of a Muslim

As a Muslim, belief in Allah as the one and only God is a very fundamental aspect. Its position as a core element of Islamic identity has encouraged Stevens to compose various songs of which the themes reflect his own identity as a believer of Islam. In "If You Ask Me (*In Sa'altum*)", Stevens uses both Arabic and English dictions. Interestingly, the English lyrics appear as

the translation of the Arabic ones. The song covers four basic Islamic teachings. Those are regarding God (*Ilaahi*), Book (*kitaabi*), Prophet (*nabiyyi*), and enemy (*'aduwwi*). Stevens places the concept of God at the very first of the lyrics followed by the other three concepts giving a clear indication that this principle is very essential for him as a Muslim.

This is strengthened in the other song “A is for Allah” where he begins the Arabic-based alphabet songs with the line “A is for Allah” followed by the rest of 28 letters along with the words started by each of the letters. He also puts the line “Allah there's only one God and Muhammad is his Messenger Allah, La ilaha illa'allah” as a refrain in the lyrics. The long lyrics, since it covers 29 Arabic letters, are ended by repeating the line “Allah, there's only one God and ...” along with the names of prophets in Islam.

In “The Beloved”, Stevens does not use the word “Allah” but the word “God” through the lines:

“He taught the people to worship

Bowing to One God, bowing to One God”

The concept of “bowing to One God” is put along with the other personality descriptions of The Prophet such as “His wisdom flowed from Heaven's Book”, “He was born to be the beloved”, and “He prayed all his nights alone”. This indicates an ultimate message that The Prophet who has such noble characters was sent with a core mission that is teaching or directing mankind to bow themselves to One God. A similar diction choice is found in “All Kinds of Roses” through the lines:

“But there's only One God, only One God

Has a place in my heart”

In this composition, Stevens is trying to describe himself as a man with various life experiences. Moreover, he uses the symbol “lanterns” to represent different paths of ideologies that can “light up the dark”. These symbols pave the way for the above lines. It, thus, functions as a sort of personal conclusion. For Stevens, “bowing to One God” is the best way. This is concluded by him at the end of his spiritual journey.

The difference in diction choice here can be well understood for two main reasons. First, the first two songs were composed specifically for Muslim listeners while the other two songs were for the public in general. Second, both “The Beloved” and “All Kinds of Roses” were released after Stevens decides to return to popular music in 2006 through the release of *An Other Cup* album. In this sense, there is a need to choose general diction to address more listeners. Nevertheless, all of the four songs are justified by Stevens’ beliefs including the idealism of Allah as The One and Only God which is highly fundamental.

ii. Prophet Muhammad as The Last Prophet and Messenger of Allah

Belief in Muhammad as the Prophet and Messenger of Allah is integrated into a Muslim belief system as stated in the *shahadah* or the testimony of faith. Similar to the previous analysis, Stevens also explores the theme of Prophet Muhammad PBUH in his songs. The first album published by Stevens after his conversion is entitled “The Life of The Last Prophet” which contains the single track which is also the historical song “Thala’al Badru Alayna”. The other songs composed for these prophetic themes are “Salli Ala Muhammad”, “Seal of The Prophets”, “In’Nilta”, and “I Look, I See”.

As stated earlier, in “If You Ask Me (In Sa’altum)”, Stevens mentions four basic or fundamental teaching in Islam. One of these teachings is the Prophet Muhammad as The Last Prophet and Messenger of Allah narrated through the line “His name is Muhammad (salla Allahu ‘alayhi wa sallam)”. In “Salli Ala Muhammad”, Stevens prays to Allah to send His “peace” and grant His “ceaseless mercy” to Prophet Muhammad. In “A is for Allah”, also stated earlier, Stevens mentions “Muhammad” in the refrain of the track. Meanwhile, in “I Look, I See”, which is released for Muslim children's educational entertainment, the name “Muhammad” is not stated. The emphasis seems on the mission of “the Prophet” which is to “show us the way”. At this point, Stevens invites his young listeners to follow the way of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH.

A longing of a follower is briefly shown in the line “O Messenger of Allah, (o Messenger of Allah)” from the song “In’Nilta”. Probably more artistic composition can be found in “Seal of The Prophets” through the use of the

analogy “last brick in the house of prophethood”. The Prophet Muhammad as the last prophet sent by God is like the “last brick” that completes the building of a house. Yet, this analogy is not from Stevens’ composition style, but used by the Prophet Muhammad himself as narrated by Abu Huraira in the following *hadith*:

“Allah's Messenger said, “My similitude in comparison with the other prophets before me, is that of a man who has built a house nicely and beautifully, except for a place of one brick in a corner. The people go about it and wonder at its beauty, but say: 'Would that this brick is put in its place!' So I am that brick, and I am the last of the Prophets” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*).

In “The Beloved”, neither the diction “Prophet”, “Muhammad”, nor “Messenger” is used. Yet, the concept of prophecy is seen at least through the line “His wisdom flowed from Heaven’s Book” and “God sent him back to us”. Stevens uses the third pronoun “He” repeatedly along with the nobility of his admired figure such as “He prayed all his nights alone”, “He taught the people to worship” and “He was a mercy to the worlds and unto the universe”. It seemed that Stevens attempts to invite his audience to follow his position in the sense of admiring and following “He” here.

iii. ***Shahadah* or the testimony of faith**

The two fundamental elements analyzed earlier, Allah as the God and Muhammad PBUH as the Prophet are united within the term *shahadah* or testimony of faith. It becomes the first pillar within The Five Pillars of Islam (*Shahadah, Salat, Zakat, Shaum, and Hajj*). Examples of a song that correspond to these themes are “A is for Allah” and “Our Guide is The Qur’an”. In “Our Guide Is The Qur’an” the word *shahadah* appears in a form of a dialog between a teacher and children that opens the song as seen below:

“(Teacher): “All Muslims have to do five things. Who knows what they are?”

(Children): “Shahadah, Salah, Zakat, Sawm, Hajj.”

Shahadah is put at the very first of five things that all Muslims have to do indicating its ultimate and foundational position. In addition to that point, Stevens includes the English translation of the *shahadah* sentence, “Allah there’s only one God and Muhammad is His Messenger” in “All of The Prophets”.

iv. **Other prophets in Islam (than Prophet Muhammad)**

Islam views all of the prophets as brothers who possess the same vision that is to invite mankind to obey Allah. The prophecy, however, has ended as Prophet Muhammad PBUH is sent. Stevens addresses this notion within the lyrics of “Salli Ala Muhammad”, and “All of the Prophets”. Moreover, it can be identified in his popular song, “Olive Hill” although the names are not mentioned. Instead, the phrase “All the prophets” is used in the lyrics.

The mention of another prophet, Ibrahim, is found in “Salli Ala Muhammad” as found in the line “As You sent Your peace upon Nabi Ibrahim and his house”. However, the more complete mention of prophets’ names in Islam can be found in a song entitled “All of The Prophets” where Stevens includes 25 well-known names of prophets within the lyrics as seen below:

“Adam, Idris (Enoch), Nuh (Noah), Hud, Salih, Ibrahim (Abraham), Ismail (Ishmael), Ishaac (Isaac), Lut (Lot), Ya’qub (Jacob/Israel), Yusuf (Joseph), Shuaib, Ayyub (Job), Musa (Moses), Haroon (Aaron), Dhul-Kifl, Dawud (David), Sulaiman (Solomon), Ilyas (Elias), Al-Yasa’, Yunus (Jonah), Zakariyyah, Yahya (John), Isa (Jesus/Christ), Muhammad”

Furthermore, Stevens emphasizes that all of The Prophets were brothers who possessed the same faith. Here, Stevens tries to show that there is a unity of mission among the Prophets sent by God and this series of prophecies is ended in Prophet Muhammad PBUH. Meanwhile, in “Olive Hill”, prophets’ names are not given. Instead, Stevens shows the sense of unity they belong to through their praying together. This can be seen in the line “Thereupon a Golden Square All the Prophets joined in prayer”

v. Qur'an as the Holy Book

The Qur'an is the Holy Book of Muslims revealed by God to Prophet Muhammad PBUH as The Last Messenger. This is also a very fundamental belief in Islam that integrates with the previous elements discussed. Stevens himself has referred to his life and works following the Qur'anic view. He refers to Qur'an as "the guidance" in his songs "If You Ask Me (In Sa'altum)" and "Our Guide s The Qur'an". The clear mention of the Qur'an as the Holy Book can be found in "If You Ask Me (In Sa'altum)":

"If you ask me what my Book is: 'It's the Holy Qur'an
The Holy Qur'an"

Similar to the previous sub-themes, Allah and Prophet Muhammad, Stevens has been straightforward in his diction choice. Moreover, in a song entitled "Our Guide Is The Qur'an", he directly states the idea from its title and includes the concept in the lyrics through the line "Our guide is the Qur'an". Nevertheless, a shift is found in Stevens' popular song "Editing Floor Blues". Instead of using the diction "Qur'an", he uses "the Word" with capital W as found in the line "Then the Word came down". The lyrics are based on Stevens' receiving a copy of the Holy Qur'an from his brother, David. I will cover this further in the Autobiographical Imprint theme.

vi. The Day of Judgement

Stevens brings another Islamic sub-theme, The Day of Judgement, in "Mother, Father, Sister, Brother". This can be found in the line "and we would win on Judgement Day". "The song itself tells about war in Bosnia. Here, Stevens tries to motivate those who become the victims of war to believe that there will be a time for them "to win". This win is not in this world but later in the hereafter on The Day of Judgement. The speaker is not the winner of the war since his or her mother, father, sister, and brother are gone. But the concept of The Day of Judgment comes as a promising winning time for the speaker. A similar notion is brought by Stevens in "The Little Ones". Here, a sense of promise can be seen in the following lines:

"When that day comes?

When the angels drag them out
To face The Little Ones”

Those soldiers will face the children they have killed when The Day of Judgement comes. Stevens also uses the imagery in “When the angels drag them out” to show how horrible the situation that the killers of children will face is in The Day of Judgement.

At this point, we may identify the sense of justice that Stevens tries to explore through both lyrics. He also brings this notion to his song “In The End”. Again, we see Stevens’ being indirect in his popular lyrics. It is well understood that in the concept of The Day of Judgement, no one can hide the truth and everything that has been done by anyone will be finally revealed. Furthermore, another example of being indirect, instead of using “day” to refer to The Day of Judgement, Stevens uses “in the end”. Stevens also uses “where you belong” to replace “heaven” or “hell”. The exploration of these atmospheres of The Day of Judgement can be seen in the following lines:

“You can’t bargain with the truth
‘Cause whether you’re right or you’re wrong
We’re gonna know what you’ve done
We’re gonna see where you belong – in the end”

vii. Submission to God

The sub-theme of submission to God can be identified at least in four songs. First, “Mother, Father, Sister Brother” where Stevens proposes the idea of mental strength by relying on God who judges everything with justice. He shows that despite the calamities of war, the children who lost their beloved ones, still possess faith where they feel comfortable to lean on. Having belief in God beside them has been a source of eternal energy in facing the hardship of life. This can be identified in the following line:

“Now I pray every day
the way my father taught me to
Now I’ve made this faith my home
till my Lord, he rescues me

... God would still be with us”

Second, in “I Look, I See”, where Stevens uses the point of view of a child, the concept of submission to God is found in the sense that He is the only One to dedicate the good deeds to. That every single thing a Muslim does should always be in line with God’s will. This is because humankind has been created by Him. The following lines show this notion:

“And everything I do
I dedicate to You
‘Cause You made me
I am for You”

The fact that the song was composed for the Muslim young generation further strengthens that Stevens does not only apply the concept to himself but also wants it applied to other fellows Muslims, especially the children.

Third, another form of submission to God can be identified in the song “Edge of Existence”. After telling the threat faced by the remote tribe, which seemed ignored by the public or media, Stevens invites his listeners to relay everything and ask for help from God in the line “Only God cares for us now”. Fourth, putting himself as a spectator of pressure felt by the people in Egypt along with the political turmoil in the Arab region, Stevens voices a prayer to defend their rights through the line “God show them the way”. Stevens, therefore, has delivered an important element of Islamic teaching, that is the concept of submission to God, in multiple situations across different communities.

viii. Pilgrimage

“Pilgrimage” is mentioned along with “fast”, “prayer”, and “charity” in the song “Our Guide Is The Qur’an” to show its fundamental position in the belief system. Stevens includes the Arabic word *hajj* which means pilgrimage in the opening of the lyrics as seen in the line “And the Fast, and the Prayer, the Pilgrimage and Charity”. The same form is found in the alphabet song “A is for Allah” where he mentions “Ha is for Hajj, the blessed pilgrimage”. Nevertheless, in his popular song “Welcome Home”, instead of mentioning

both “*haji*” and “*pilgrimage*”, he uses the phrase “Sacred Stone” and “Holy Domain” to refer to The Holy City, Mecca, the city where pilgrimage is conducted. This can be seen in the following lines:

“Upon the Sacred Stone
There it stood in the middle
Of the Holy Domain”

b. Theme 2: Autobiographical Imprint

i. Early Career

Stevens’ early career was very important for him. This period of life has been a sort of means for connecting him with his fans particularly after having a long break from the music industry. The imprints of his early career have been explored in his post-conversion lyrical compositions, interestingly, after his return to popular music where he tends to articulate more themes. At least three songs tell about this sub-theme. They are “What Love Did To Me”, “Editing Floor Blues”, and “Cat & The Dog Trap”. In the first song, “What Love Did To Me”, he uses the symbol “broken arrow” that is “missing the mark” to indicate a sort of struggle he faced in the past as well as how he had failed to reach his ambition. In addition, he employs the symbol “blindfolded bumblebee” to indicate that he had gone through confusion or moved without any clear direction. However, as the title suggests, the story has a happy ending particularly because of God’s love.

In “Editing Floor Blues”, Stevens directly mentions his birthplace, West-End, and the season along with the year, in the summer of 1948, as well as the place of birth, a small family cafe where he used to serve. These details are covered in the following lines:

“I was born in the West-End
In the summer of ’48
Above a small Cafe
Some people liked to come there and call it night
But for me it was all day”

Meanwhile, in “Cat & The Dog Trap”, in addition, Stevens recalls himself as a brave youth in the line “I’d chase the tail of any danger” and “I’d chase the heels of any stranger”. Stevens adds the repetitive line “about to learn” to give a frame for the entire story in the lyrics that is a time for him to understand life deeper.

ii. Spiritual Journey

Stevens’ trajectories of spiritual journey are a vital element of his autobiography. He has been an avid searcher of defined truth. He was born from a Christian family but was sent to a Catholic school. During his being hospitalized due to Tuberculosis he started to seek guidance through Buddhism. He had also ventured into Tao, Astrology, and Numerology.

In “All Kinds of Roses” taken from the “Roadsinger” album (2009), Stevens seemed to reflect on the varied life experiences as well as various types of paths he had examined during his intense identity search. Yet, he as the truth seeker ended up as a Muslim who believes in Allah as the one and only God. The following line shows the metaphor of a lantern in the dark:

“All kinds of lanterns, all kinds of lanterns

All kinds of lanterns light up the dark

But there's only one God, only one God has a place in my heart”

The other trace of a spiritual journey is also discovered in “To Be What You Must”. Here, Stevens starts and ends his composition with signs of a spiritual journey. The phrase “endless miles”, “many harbors” and “many roads” are all referred to the different belief systems he once encountered. Nevertheless, similar to what he firmly stands in “All Kinds of Roses”, Stevens lastly embraces distinguished one way. In the track “Roadsinger” the theme of spiritual journey for the sake of finding true happiness, he repeatedly mentions the line: “Where do you go? Where do you go?”. However, in a stanza within the entire lyrics, Stevens indirectly refers to Islam as he stated that the roadsinger “rode on, to another land through the people spoke a different tongue” and these people then “showed him the path to Heaven, through the desert sand”.

In the context of Stevens' truth-seeking, it was Stevens' brother, David, who paved his way to his final destination, Islam. In 1975, David visited Jerusalem where he was exposed to the atmosphere of Islamic spirituality within the Golden-domed Mosque. This contact personally impressed David. Later, during an Islamic festival in London, David bought and gave a copy of the Qur'an - through the diction "Word" (I discussed this in the previous sub-theme) - to Stevens as a birthday gift (Islam, 2015). This key moment of finding the truth is told in "Editing Floor Blues" with the other autobiographical trajectories as seen in the following lines:

"Big brother took a trip
As bold as he could be
To the place, he heard,
Where the good Prophets used to walk
High above this dark world
Then the Word came down
And the little brother saw
How the Truth was buried on the editing floor"

iii. The near-death experience in the ocean

Stevens' unforgettable moment in Malibu, Pacific Ocean inspired him to write "Indian Ocean". There was a connection between the people who run for their lives to avoid the Aceh's Tsunami attack as seen in the line:

"No one even dared to turn their head
Just one slip and you're dead"

to his attempt to save his life from the ocean wave in his near-death experience (Islam, 2015). In addition, in "Heaven/Where True Love Goes", he reflects on the story of being saved from the wave and then restarting his new life further as follows:

"And if you face a wave
That may be the chance for you to be saved"

iv. Media disinformation about Stevens' stance on Salman Rushdie

“Every Time I Dream” and “Editing Floor Blues” are two songs that tell the story of media disinformation regarding Stevens’ stance on the writer of *Satanic Verses*, Salman Rushdie. The former tells about his being unsecured due to the news distortion all around, accusing him of supporting the *fatwa* of Iranian leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, who issued the order to kill Rushdie. This insecurity, for instance, is expressed in the lines:

“Find me a’runnin
From a wild pack o’ lies”

Meanwhile, the latter is a sort of criticism of Yusuf towards the media, the editor’s office, in particular, that hides the real truth through the following lines:

“One day the papers rang us up
T’check if I said this?
I said, "Oh boy!
I’d never say that!"
Then we got down to the truth of it
But they never printed that!”

According to Stevens, he had never supported the *fatwa*. As he stated in his autobiography:

“... in fact, I firmly believe it (the *fatwah*) went against the basic injunction in Islam which forbids the taking of life without just right – lawfully – part of due process in maintaining law and order within the society. Never did I say, ‘Kill Rushdie’ or believe that Muslims were morally or duty bound to take the law into their hands or support vigilantism of any kind” (Islam, 2015).

Furthermore, Stevens said “I said, "Oh boy! I’d never say that!" which is in line with his refusal to have said supporting the *fatwa* of killing Rushdie. Note that, when it comes to answering the media regarding the case, Stevens had always refused to have supported the *fatwa*. For instance, as published by Daily News he stated: “I did not support the *fatwa*” (Farber, 2014). He repeated the same statement as published by The Guardian: “I was certainly not prepared or equipped to deal with sharp-toothed journalists,” he said. “I was cleverly framed

by certain questions. I never supported the fatwa. I had to live through that” (Thorpe, 2020).

v. US entry ban

“Boots and Sand” is a flection of Stevens’ terrible experience as he traveled to the US from London with his daughter, Maymanah. He was previously invited to make an album in Nashville, US in September 2004. Unexpectedly, his Islamic name was decided to sound a bit radical which led to his being put on a “no-fly list”. This incident soon attracted the media attention for the singer of the well-known song, “Peace Train”, was attributed to terrorism. Considering the time, September 2004, it was easy to connect it with the 9/11 incident. Stevens recorded “Boots and Sand” which was collaboratively done with Paul McCartney and Dolly Parton - who defended Stevens’ integrity in this case - to provide a different angle of the entire story (Islam, 2015). In this song, Stevens recalls the moment as “strange” and implies that whoever you are, there are always people who like and dislike you. He also satirically change the massively broadcasted phrase regarding the case: “no-fly” list to “no-song list” as seen below:

“Is your name this?”
I guess it is
“You’re on our no-song list!”
Oh no, sir, no! This can’t be so”

c. Theme 3: Children

i. Education of Muslim children

The theme of children is frequently found in Stevens’ post-conversion songs. It started with the composition of “A is for Allah” as his first daughter, Hasanah, was born. As described earlier, the song is an Arabic alphabet song that tells about Islamic identities to introduce children, particularly in the West, to basic concepts of their religion. As an example, the following are the first three lines of the lyrics:

“A’ is for Allah, nothing but Allah

Ba is the beginning of Bismillah

Ta is for Taqwa, beware of Allah”

The urgency of entertaining learning materials for children, in line with his establishing Islamic school in London, furthermore, has led Stevens to create the album “I Look, I See” (which later be followed by the second volume, “I Look, I See 2”. Similar to the previous song, the lyrics are composed to provide a strong religious foundation for the Muslim children as shown below:

“And everything we do

We dedicate to You”

ii. Sympathy for children's hardship

The other songs that tell about children are two songs included in the album “I Have No Cannons That Roar”. They are “Mother, Father, Sister, Brother” and “The Little Ones”. Both songs show Stevens’ sympathy for the children who become victims of the conflict in Bosnia. The charity singles like “Indian Ocean” - in response to the Tsunami in Aceh, Indonesia - and “He Was Alone” - in response to the Syrian refugee crisis - are also parts of Stevens’ special attention in this matter. The last song mentioned in this regard reflects the death of an unidentified boy as he migrated as seen in the following lines:

“He was just one,

Who never grew old,

On a list of names, upon the road”

iii. Quality time with children

Another dimension of Stevens’ attention to children is found in his song “Grandsons”. The context is regarding quality time with his children. This can be seen in the lines:

“Wish I could see them now

And even join in their games”

Yet, as he further said:

“But I've got no time

For silly chitty chatter”

This is because he has to do something else, that is, spending time and seeing his grandsons grow. The song also shows how Stevens appreciates simple activities done by the children such as “jumping 'round”, “calling names”, and “kicking cans”. In addition, Stevens’ emphasis on quality time is highly important at this time when business and other activities might reduce our time with family. In addition, spending quality time with children, especially grandchildren, and educating them is seen as a duty in Islam. Yusuf Islam seems to wish to be a good role model for children to educate them in the right way.

d. Theme 4: Dream

In “Midday/Avoid City After Dark”, Stevens emphasizes the role of the “park” among the city’s glitter. Somehow, the park acts as a light in the dark articulating sense of optimism in facing calamities. Additionally, in “Green Field and Golden Sands”, a song composed yet not released in his pre-conversion era, Stevens expresses his simple dream of a better place where people are all happy. Moreover, another dream is shown in “Maybe There’s A World” in the context of looking for a “new life to begin”. In “One Day At A Time”, he invites his audience to “leave the past behind” and “look the future in the eye”. He further encourages people to dream “through the dark night” in “Dream On (Until...)”. Meanwhile, in “To Be What You Must”, he seems to have beautifully placed the “hope” as the reason for his “heart sailed”. Meanwhile, in “World O Darkness”, he uses the word “light” in the lines:

“But somewhere in the shadows
Someone’s seeking light”

The other one is the song “Doors”, which is a part of the “Roadsinger” album, apparently presents the solid optimism possessed by Stevens like what he tells in the lyrics of the track as follows:

“When a door is closed
Somewhere, there's a door that's opening
When a light goes out
Somewhere, there’s a light that’s shining”

e. Theme 5: Pro-peace/Anti-war

Stevens frequently uses the term peace in his spiritual recordings particularly when it is related to Prophet Muhammad PBUH such as in “Salli Ala Muhammad” and “I Look, I See”. This cannot be separated from the duty of a pious Muslim which is to pray to Allah for peace and blessing to the Last Prophet. I categorize this spectrum under the theme of Islamic identities.

The pro-peace/anti-war song here has two spectrums or layers. At a personal level or inner peace, the theme of peace can be found in “Maybe There’s A World” and particularly in “There Is Peace” from the beginning of the lyrics as seen in the following lines:

“There is peace
You can taste it if you try
You can embrace it if you try”

The word “peace” above can also be interpreted as “Islam” for the meaning of “Islam” is “peace”. This is strengthened by the use the word “embrace” in the next line.

On the outer level or peace as demand for communal living, this theme is addressed in “All of The Prophets”. Here, he indirectly tells that all believers of a different faith should live in harmony since the religions teach their followers to love each other instead of fighting. This can be found below:

“All the Religions taught how to love each other;
but some people changed
And started fighting other”

In addition, the track “Angel of War” reflects and challenges the motives of war through an imaginary dialog between the characters in the track; soldier boy and the angel of war. The soldier is in doubt about his participation in the war and keeps on asking about his intention as seen in the line “O Angel Of War! What am I fighting for?” and “O Angel Of War! What makes me want to fight?”. It is also possible to say that the angel metaphor stands for the conscience of the warrior. Stevens’ address in pro-peace/anti-war songs has also been underlined by Varnava who believes that Stevens has maintained the theme

yet with a different foundation is Islamic perspective of peace instead of the hippy peace movement (Varnava, 2018).

f. Theme 6: Ignorance

Stevens criticizes the people's ignorance or passivity towards the tragedy of Bosnia in “Mother, Father, Sister, Brother” and “The Little Ones”. Moreover, in “World O’ Darkness”, Stevens distinctly notices the ignorance or selfishness among people through the following line:

“No one loves their neighbor here;
Nobody has the time,
No one cares for anyone else”

Criticism of passivity is also shown in “This Glass World” where he expresses how some people enjoy their comfort zone selfishly whilst desperation is seen everywhere since we live in a “glass world”. This furthermore shows the hypocrisy of the West because they do not react unless the danger threatens them but ironically when they are threatened with violence just like on 9/11, they raise hell.

4.3. Developing A Descriptive Thesis

Stevens uses both Arabic and English language in his post-conversion songs when he tells about Islamic identities. For instance, in his Muslim children's songs “A is for Allah” and “If You Ask Me (In Sa’altum). He brings some foundational Islamic terminologies to his lyrical composition such as *shahadah* or testimony of faith, praying, fasting, and pilgrimage with the use of simple and direct language. The songs, although cover many sub-themes, are under one big umbrella of Islamic identities and therefore are all justified within the Islamic teaching framework.

In addressing the public in general, not specifically addressing the Muslim communities, Stevens intentionally adjusts his diction. In this context, he uses a sort of neutral diction such as “God” to refer to Allah in the song “All Kinds of Roses” or “Word” to refer to Qur’an in the song “Editing Floor Blues”. This is particularly found as Stevens returned to popular music marked by the release of *An Other Cup* album in 2006 and albums that follow it like *Roadsinger* and *Tell ‘Em I’m Gone*.

Stevens takes benefits from his past. He composes songs that directly tell about the details of his life such as “Editing Floor Blues” where he includes “West End”, “summer of 48”, and “Cafe”. In addition, he created songs that indirectly reflect his near-death experience like in “Heaven/Where True Love Goes” where he uses the diction “wave” and “saved”. Furthermore, he has used his lyrics to sort of criticizing the Western media's disinformation regarding himself regarding the *fatwa* on Rushdie’s case in Every Time I Dream and Editing Floor Blues. Besides, he makes fun of the US migration officer that problematized his Islamic name in the lyrics of “Boots and Sand”.

Regarding the theme of children, Stevens does not only show his care for the future of the Muslim generation through his Muslim children albums such as “A is for Allah” and “I Look, I See”. He, also shows his sympathy and advocacy to the children, particularly those who are living under conflict or war such as in Bosnia and Syria as he releases of “I Have No Cannons That Roar” album which has two songs for children “The Little Ones” and “Mother, Father, Sister, Brother”. In addition, Stevens creates a song to deliver the importance of spending time with children or having quality time with them entitled “Grandsons”.

The next theme is the dream. Stevens has been an optimistic songwriter as seen in many of his lyrics. His songs spread the message of hope for a better world. He does realize the hardships of life faced by people across various places yet he keeps inviting people to have a dream for a better tomorrow. Songs such as “Maybe There’s A World”, “One Day At A Time”, and “Dream On (Until...)” show his articulation of the theme of dream.

Stevens’ consistency in advocating peace both in his pre and post-conversion shows how the musician has paid big attention to this theme. It is well-known that “Peace Train” is one of his popular songs of Stevens in his pre-conversion era. In his post-conversion, as suggested by Varnava this theme is maintained yet with having a different basis that is shifting from hippy peace movement to Islamic peace (Varnava, 2018). There are three spectrums of peace promoted by Stevens in his post-conversion phase. First, he includes the diction “peace” in the context of sending “peace and blessings” to Prophet Muhammad for instance in Salli Ala Muhammad” and “I Look I See”. Second, the promotion of

inner peace can be found in his popular post-conversion songs such as “Maybe There’s A World” and “There Is Peace”. Third, the promotion of peace in the light of anti-war idea can be found in “Angel of War” and “There Is Peace”.

His humanitarian activism might influence Stevens to compose songs about ignorance. He criticizes the public ignorance of the Genocide in Bosnia which significantly affected the lives of innocent children there through the lyrics of “Mother, Father, Sister, Brother” and “The Little Ones”. Moreover, “This Glass World” and “World O’ Darkness” criticizes selfishness among people. His lyrics are powerful in this context since Stevens himself does not live in an ivory tower. Instead, he has been working to help those in need for decades through his charity organizations such as Muslim Aid and Small Kindness. This was apart from the charity concerts he had performed.

4.4. Constructing An Argument about The Passage

Stevens has shown two approaches in his diction choice depending on the audience niche he addresses. There are two audience niches targeted by Stevens’ post-conversion lyrical compositions. They are the Muslim communities and people in general. The former covers Muslim children. The latter includes the fans who used to admire him as Cat Stevens in his pre-conversion phase. These two segmentations consequently need their distinguished diction choice and Stevens does realize this as well as works within this frame.

Islam as a way of life that Stevens believed at the end of his spiritual searching has been the foundational ideology of his artistry. This means that all of his post-conversion lyrics are justified by Islam including his songs released as popular albums “An Other Cup”, “Roadsinger”, “Tell ‘Em I’m Gone”, and “The Laughing Apple”. Thus, the songs included in these four albums are compatible both with Muslim communities and people in general including non-Muslims.

4.5. Developing An Argument Based on My Thesis

Stevens’ real-life emotional, psychological, and spiritual experiences have reverberated in the themes of his post-conversion lyrical compositions. The reverberations are found in the six major themes of his post-conversion songs:

Islamic identities, autobiographical imprints, children, dream, pro-peace/anti-war, and ignorance. Stevens' early post-conversion songs were predominantly about Islamic identities with explicit references to Islamic teachings. Spiritual recordings dedicated to creating entertaining educational materials for Muslim children are part of it which was highly related to Stevens' starting a family and raising his children. In addition to that point, several songs at this phase are composed in a combination of English and Arabic language.

A significant shift is found started from the release of *An Other Cup* album in 2006 which marked the return of Stevens to popular music. This release is followed by *Roadsinger* in 2009, *Tell 'Em I'm Gone* in 2014, and *The Laughing Apple* in 2017. The shift is particularly found in the diction choice both in the titles and the lyrics of the songs. This cannot be separated from his living as a Muslim figure in Western society which ultimately requires inclusion. His return to the spotlight also witnesses the reexploration of his pre-conversion themes such as children, dream, and pro-peace/anti-war. For example, the theme of children is found in "Where Do The Children Play?" (pre-conversion) and "He Was Alone" (post-conversion), about dream and optimism is found in "Morning Has Broken" (pre-conversion) and "Doors" (post-conversion), about pro-peace/anti-war in the legendary iconic track "Peace Train" (pre-conversion) and "Maybe There's A World" (post-conversion).

Stevens' involvement in humanitarian acts is also another important aspect that influences his lyrical composition. Several singles were released as a response to multiple crises across various countries such as "The Little Ones" for the Bosnian genocide, "Indian Ocean" for Aceh's Tsunami, "My People" for Arab Spring, and "He Was Alone" for the Syrian refugee crisis. As a philanthropist, it is highly essential to invite as many people as possible to show their sympathy and give support. This led to Stevens' composing songs that fight ignorance.

"Boots and Sand" and "Editing Floor Blues" are examples of popular songs inspired by Stevens' autobiographical imprints. The former records Stevens' unfair immigration treatment in the US that banned his entry to the country because his name was wrongly accused part of the no-fly list. That moment happened around the 9/11 event. The latter reflects the Western media disinformation on his stance

about the *fatwa* issued by Iranian spiritual leader, Ali Khomeini, to author Salman Rushdie. His status as one of the most famous Muslim converts seemed to be a key element here because his popularity might easily create stormy news which eventually paved the way to blame Muslims as the community that Stevens represents.



CHAPTER V

FINDINGS

This research focuses on the topic of autobiographical reverberations of Yusuf Islam also known as Cat Stevens' in his post-conversion lyrical compositions. It is a thematic study that uses the close reading to answer the research question "in what ways Cat Stevens' real-life emotional, psychological, and spiritual experiences reverberate in his post-conversion lyrical compositions?". The use of the close reading here is expected to come up with a more comprehensive literary analysis of Cat Stevens' lyrical composition legacy, a gap that I tend to fill out. As stated by Varnava the number of academic writing on Cat Stevens is still low in comparison to research on the artists who are considered the same generation as him such as Bob Dylan, James Taylor, and Bruce Springsteen (Varnava, 2018).

Having applied the close reading to 37 songs taken from 16 distinguished albums as well as four singles, I found that there are 6 common themes in Cat Stevens' post-conversion lyrical compositions. Those are Islamic identities, Stevens' autobiographical imprint, children, dream, pro-peace/anti-war, and ignorance. The theme of Islamic identities is predominantly addressing the basic or fundamental beliefs of a Muslim (also named Pillars of Faith) such as Allah as God, Muhammad PBUH as a prophet, and the Qur'an as the Holy Book. Furthermore, Stevens includes other fundamental Islamic teachings such as declaring *shahadah* or The Testimony of Faith and pilgrimage. Yet, more lyrical compositions in this major theme are found to explore the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. Meanwhile, the second theme, autobiographical imprint, addresses the sub-themes like Stevens' early career, spiritual journey, near-death experience in Malibu, Western media disinformation, and the US entry ban. The third theme, children, covers education for children, sympathy for the children's hardship (especially those affected by crisis), and quality time with children. The fourth theme, dream, is mainly about optimism as well as hope for a better world to live in. The fifth theme, pro-peace/anti-war, which is also the focus of Varnava's important

study, can be divided into two dimensions; inner peace felt by individuals and peace as a need for harmonious communal living. Lastly, in the sixth theme, ignorance, Stevens criticizes the public ignorance towards those who live in crises as well as selfishness among people who enjoy their comfort zone while others need their help or support.

The following 5 steps have been applied to figure out the answer to the research questions:

- a. Reading the passage
- b. Analyzing the passage
- c. Developing a descriptive thesis
- d. Constructing an argument about the passage
- e. Developing an argument based on my thesis

Having followed those steps, I can conclude that the autobiographical reverberations of Cat Stevens' post-conversion lyrical compositions can be found in the following ways:

1. Cat Stevens tent to use Islamic diction in his post-conversion lyrical compositions, particularly in the early phase of his conversion then changed to the use of general diction after he decided to return to popular music indicated by the release of *An Other Cup* album in 2006.

Generally known that in his early phase of conversion, Stevens was exposed to various Islamic knowledge which was highly important for him as a new Muslim convert. As he found that there were different schools of thought in Islam regarding music - whether it is permissible, permissible under certain restrictions, or forbidden -, he first decided to avoid this "grey area" and focused more on his humanitarian activism as well as education for Muslim children. Consequently, the artist adopted a strict approach toward music which further influenced his works. With this temporary religious understanding in mind, Stevens produced spiritual recordings with a tendency to use Islamic diction including the combination of Arabic and English within a song. For instance, he released "The Life of The Last Prophet" (April 1995) which contains a traditional Islamic song entitled "*Tala'al Badru Alayna*" and "Prayers of the Last Prophet" a collection of prayers with two songs within the album namely "If You Ask Me (*In Sa'altum*)" and "Salli Ala Muhammad".

Stevens started to adopt a more inclusive approach towards music as he decided to return to popular music once again in 2006 through the release of *An Other Cup* album. Similar to the previous situation, this can not also be separated from the religious understanding of the artist. Having intensively studied music as a subject within the Islamic discourse, Stevens finally decides to get out of “the grey area” and started to revisit his pre-conversion musical style yet carefully ensuring that his works do not contradict his current subjective Islamic understanding which has been developed far better and solid than his Islamic religiosity knowledge and understanding in his early phase of conversion.

An Other Cup album was later followed by other popular albums such as *The Roadsinger* (2009), *Tell ‘Em I’m Gone* (2014), and *The Laughing Apple* (2017). In addition, Stevens started using only “Yusuf” instead of “Yusuf Islam” in his *An Other Cup* album cover which was supposedly motivated by his more recent inclusive stance. There is a very fundamental change in his diction choice by the time he started to publicly represented himself as only “Yusuf”. However, it is important to note that he has not entirely left his self-representative as “Yusuf Islam”. For instance, in his autobiography, “Why I Still Carry A Guitar” published in 2015 (9 years after the release of *An Other Cup* in 2006), he keeps the name “Yusuf Islam” on the book cover. It is because this autobiography merely talks about the reason for his decision to return to popular music after nearly three decades of absence. This mean that all of these names remained used depending on the main target audiences. He needsto adjust his diction to his non-Muslim listeners in order that the messages he delivers can be more acceptable and are not blocked by Islamic terms that might be a sort of emotional barrier for most of his past fans who used to listen to the songs of “Cat Stevens”.

Stevens has decided to maintain audience which is very essential considering that Stevens’ involvement in preaching Islam and humanitarian acts requiresmuch participations from his listeners, fans, and everyone who wants to get involved in his activism. At this point, the use of general diction can be an effective means for him to gain the attention of both Muslim and non-Muslim listeners or audiences. Most importantly he keeps maintaining the substantial messages of Islam such as the issue of peace and education for children in particular within his lyrical compositions.

Note that similar to Bob Dylan, Stevens is promoting substantial religiosity (Varnava, 2018). Apart from that audience-based diction choice, Stevens' diction remains Islamic on specific occasions such as Ramadan when he can comfortably sing his Islamic song such as "Ramadan Moon". The such specific circumstances of Ramadan will automatically create an understanding of Islamic diction choice by anyone who listens to him. It is also a moment for him to show substantial lessons of the Holy Month to his non-Muslim listeners. For example, in April 2022, he posted a Facebook status stating that "Ramadan is a wonderful time to share the practices, meaning and excitement of the special month with younger people." followed by the two hashtags "#Ramadan" and "#RamadanMoon".

2. Cat Stevens has maintained the themes of his pre-conversion songs in his post-conversion lyrical compositions such as the theme of children, dream, and pro-peace/anti-war.

In this case, I support the argument proposed by Varnava that Cat Stevens has maintained the theme of pro-peace/anti-war in his post-conversion songs yet no longer uses the hippy movement as his ideological basis but Islam. Therefore, Stevens has married his pre-conversion phase by returning to the peace theme. He includes a song that was written in 1968 - yet not published at that time - called "Green Field and Golden Sands" in his *An Other Cup* album (2006) as he return to popular (also referred to as "secular") music. In this song, Stevens wrote the line "I am not the only one" to convey that there are many people beside him who possess the same dream of a better world. Interestingly, the same line "I am not the only one" is found in the song "Imagine" by another famous artist John Lennon released in 1971 showing a sort of resonance between the two famous artists.

Stevens' maintenance of pre-conversion themes whether pro-peace/anti-war as suggested by Varnava, the theme of dream as well as children can also be interpreted as his emphasis on the promotion of substantial religiosity. All of these themes are very well justified in Islam as the idealism that Stevens is strongly attached to while carrying on his artistry. The nature of Islam itself encourages Muslims to live in peace with others, to have positive dreams, as well as to take responsibility for educating children as Muslim generation. Moreover, exploring these themes in his post-conversion era, importantly, allows his past fans to

reconnect with him since these are more suitable themes for them instead of the Islamic ones. The long-term effect of this pre-conversion theme maintenance will eventually reduce the rate of Islamophobic backlash subjected to Stevens because Western audiences will find a common ground or emotional connection with Stevens' lyrics considering that those themes are generally found in Western societies as well. As the result, there is a consistency found in Stevens' attempts to promote peace, encourage positive dreams, and care about children's future apart from his conversion.

3. Cat Stevens has used his personal experiences to portray the bias of the West towards Islam in general, particularly in *Boots and Sand* (2009) and *Editing Floor Blues* (2014).

The former is related to his entry ban to the US because he thought to belong on the no-fly list due to terrorism. As the result, his popularity as the singer of "Peace Train" was ruined. The news of his entry ban was widely spread before finally it was proven to be caused by the wrong suspicion which was a matter of misspelling names by the US immigration officials. Note that the no-fly list incident was happened in September 2004 which was around three years before the public remembrance of the 2001 9/11 event. In terms of historical context, the 2000s had a distinguished position since it was colored by the rise of Islamophobia. According to Clair Chambers in his book "British Muslim Fictions: Interviews with Contemporary Writers", several of the Muslim authors with multiple backgrounds he had interviewed "indicated that the 2000s have both been marked by, and have given further impetus to, a rise in Islamophobia and violence towards Muslims." (Chambers, 2011).

The latter was related to Salman Rushdie's case where he was thought to support the Iranian leader's *fatwa* to kill Rushdie for his *Satanic Verse* book. Similar to the first case, his image as the peace promotor was ruined due to massive publications that framed him to support the *fatwa*, something that he had never done. The abundant publications that framed Stevens' to support the *fatwa* towards Rushdie were already enough to portray Stevens as an "extremist" who intended to kill someone. What happened here was in line with the previous incident. Both cases were attacking his personality and integrity. The fact that Stevens is one of the

important Muslim figures who delivered the messages of Islam to Western society had been an effective medium in the sense that Stevens would invite massive media attention which finally ruined the image of him and his idealism that is Islam.

The two cases that notably happened after Stevens' conversion to Islam, were similar in their patterns because they involved the significant roles of the Western media, particularly in the widespread publications regarding Stevens' linkage to extremism. Both of the incidents, furthermore, were putting Stevens in a negative spotlight in front of wide audiences including his fans who acknowledge him as the singer of the popular song, "Peace Train". Without giving clear and firm clarifications to the press through various interviews, Stevens most probably would be publicly misunderstood. In addition, the two incidents were related to Islamic discourses. In the case of Salman Rushdie, it was about his position regarding the *fatwa* of the Iranian leader as a response to the Satanic Verse which was publicly condemned by many Muslim countries. Meanwhile, the second case was about the misspelling of his Islamic name, Yusuf Islam. All of these discourses lead to strong signs of Islamophobia that were subjected to Stevens as one of the central Western Convert Muslim figures that represents many Muslim communities.

Despite these two pieces of disinformation, along with its social and historical context, that predominantly attacks Stevens' personality, particularly after his conversion to Islam which led him to be one of the leading Muslim figures, Stevens seemed to avoid further disputes. He prefers to express his feeling through his lyrical compositions. For instance, he satirically uses the phrase "no-song list" in "Boots and Sand" to criticize the status of the "no-fly list". Moreover, Stevens wrote "Editing Floor Blues" to express his stance regarding Khomeini's *fatwa* on Salman Rushdie. In this song, he criticizes the media for the disinformation he encountered. For instance, he puts the line "Oh boy! I'd never say that!" which is in line with his repeated statements of never supporting the *fatwa*. Having these satirical diction choices, thus, can be interpreted as a part of Stevens' creative "counter-attack" upon the Islamophobic reactions he encountered which eventually contributes in elevating his reputation as a smart as well as a philosophical song writer.

When examining Cat Stevens' involvement in such disputes it is essential to involve the other relatively neutral Western educational institution's stance regarding

the discourse. I believe that the University of Exeter's Honorary Graduate Award on Cat Stevens in 2007 (which happened after both Rushdie in 1989 and the US entry ban case in 2004) acknowledges his 2006 *An Other Cup* album's "aim of inspiring bridge-building and understanding across cultures and faiths (University of Exeter, 2007)" as proof of Stevens' inclusive preference. Thus, it is inaccurate to view him as an extremist, terrorist, and the like.

The disputes that ruined Stevens' image in front of the public, who acknowledge him as a peace promotor through songs, should also be linked to what had been faced by the other famous Muslim converts. For instance, Roger Garaudy, a French well-known philosopher, former member of Senate in French parliament, who used to be the "darling of French media and intellectual milieu for his philosophical work and his political courage" tragically ended that good reputation in the public after "his conversion to Islam in 1982 and subsequent criticism of Zionism, which turned him into a pariah." (France24, 2012). The other well-known figure that encountered the similar treatment after his conversion was William Henry Abdullah Quilliam, a 19th Century British well-known solicitor who used to lead the fight against alcohol consumption in Britain. Like Stevens and Garaudy, Quilliam's reputation was ruined as "many Britishers dubbed him a traitor, for his argument that Muslims should not fight Muslims on behalf of European powers and his denouncement of British foreign policy in Sudan." (Zorlu, 2020).

At this point, we may identify a similar pattern among Stevens, Garaudy, and Quilliam in terms of the treatment these figures received in their pre and post-conversion period. The positive image of these three famous figures within Western society was suddenly changed into a negative portrayal after they converted to Islam and started playing their roles and contributions to their societies. Such a pattern of treatment can be interpreted as an Islamophobic reaction that keeps happening. The media plays a significant role in exposing the negative image as pointed out by Stevens in his autobiography:

"..., back in the 'wild world' I had to deal with the harsh response of the media and the journalists' noticeable distaste at my choosing Islam. It was extremely hurtful and derogatory. "The Cat Sat on The Mat" was the

headline on one particularly cynical article, showing an unflattering picture of me gnawing a tomato.” (Islam, 2015).

4. Cat Stevens has criticized the ignorance of people towards those in need or in times of crisis in his post-conversion lyrical compositions.

This criticism is in line with his humanitarian activism which was predominantly started after his conversion to Islam. Stevens’ return to composing music after a long break was triggered by his motivation to invite people to care about Bosnian tragedy through the album “I Have No Cannon That Roars” album which contains the song “Mother, Father, Sister, Brother” and “The Little Ones”. Stevens’ criticism of ignorance continues in his return to popular music such as through the release of “Glass World” where he shows that it is as clear as “glass” to see those who are in need and those who do not care about them and keeps on living their comfort life.

Stevens’ involvement in humanitarian aid paves the way for his more sensitive lyrical compositions toward those in need or those living in crises. Due to the nature of crises that require immediate action, Stevens plays his role fast by composing single songs instead of an album that consists of many tracks within. The time aspect is crucial in this circumstance. For instance, in 2004, in response to the Tsunami in Aceh, Indonesia, he not only visited as well as distributed aid to the victims' but also composed a song named “Indian Ocean” as a charity single. In 2011, as the world was watching the political turmoil in the Middle East, he released the single “My People” to show his support for Egyptians who were struggling to gain their freedom. He intentionally posted the song on his social media to broaden the support for the freedom campaign. Adding to the freedom notion, the song was composed nearby the place where the Berlin wall fell. “My People” was also dedicated to the Muslims of Kashmir, Myanmar (Rohingya Muslim communities), and what he calls “once enlightened cities of Europe” who suffered from oppression. Furthermore, emphasizing Stevens’ consistency in voicing those in crisis, he composed “He Was Alone” as a charity single. The single is dedicated to the children refugee on the border of Turkey and Syria. It was written in 2014 after Stevens visited the refugee camp and met the children there. Most importantly, Stevens’ criticism over the ignorance of those in need through his post-conversion lyrical

compositions resonates vibrantly because he has shown concrete participation in the fields through his direct visit and charities through his various humanitarian organizations.

Having conducted an intensive literary study on Cat Stevens, life and his post-conversion lyrical compositions with comparative reference to his pre-conversion life and works, at this point, I have mentioned and elaborated on the autobiographical reverberations that exist. The four main findings that I have pointed out are: the use of Islamic diction that shifted to general diction, the maintenance of the pre-conversion song theme, the portrayal of Western media disinformation and bias, as well as the criticism over the ignorance among people of those in need. These are expected to significantly contribute to the academic research on Cat Stevens' literary legacy, a gap that I intended to fill out.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Name : Azwar Tahir

Nationality : Indonesia

Education : English Department, Faculty of Language and Art, The State
University of Makassar, Indonesia
(Bachelor Degree, 2006 - 2010)

Working Experience : English Teacher of Yayasan Pendidikan Sorowako (YPS), East
Luwu, South Sulawesi, Indonesia
(2011 – 2019)

Scholarship Award : Awardee of NAMA Foundation, Malaysia in cooperation with
Uluslararası Öğrenci Dernekleri Federasyonu (UDEP), Turkey