

A critical appreciation of wallace steven's

[Life](#), [Emotions](#)



The beaker of the poem, a man, is walking down a beach with a friend and hears a woman singing. He muses on how the sounds of the ocean contrast and inspire her voice. He imagines that she is as beautiful as both her song and the ocean. Though he doesn't actually see the woman's face, the speaker knows that she is lovely. As he walks behind her, the speaker notices how her bright, ethereal voice compares to the dark sounding sea. To him it is almost as if the ocean was a spirit whose voice they could not hear, but knew was there. For most of the poem Stevens paints a picture of an ocean that is both enchanting and mysterious at the same time.

In turn, the woman's song is made mystical and alluring because of the setting. Though we, the readers, don't see the woman or hear her song, we experience the transformation that the sea, the city, and the speaker go through. In the fourth stanza the tone of the poem turns darker and the speaker begins to notice things other than the woman, her song, and the ocean. He claims that it was her voice that made the sky clearer and the ocean belonged to her and her song alone. He and his companion realize that the only world for her was the "one she sang and, singing, made. In the seventh stanza we learn the name of the speaker's companion: Ramona Fernando. He (the speaker) asks Ramona why things looked different after the mystery woman finished her song; her song made the city lights brighter and more enchanting than they were before. At this point we realize that the speaker has had an epiphany. Some critics say that the speaker's epiphany was Stevens' way of showing the importance of art. Without it, and in this case without song, we would never be able to see the world clearly. The

woman's song opened up the speaker's eyes to the light of the world around him, and in turn the poem itself opened up our eyes.

The poem focuses on the perception of imagination and reality. In this poem, reality pertains to the totality of all things possessing actuality, existence or essence; imagination, on the other hand, captures and interprets reality so an individual is able to create their own meaning of the given world, and escape the facts of existence through their own sense of creativity and ingenuity. At the beginning of the poem the speaker seeks an answer to whether the song exists through an external reality or within his ability to formulate this into something personal.

Throughout his walk the speaker never truly determines whether the song is an external reality or within his own imagination, Stevens proposes that the song is neither, since one is not able to exist without the other. Near the end of the poem, the speaker muses upon the woman's song and determines that she is both of song and sea, thus his enjoyment is derived out of a fusion of his imagination interpreting the voice along with an external awareness of his surrounding reality.

Above all, Stevens captures and portrays this theme through his understanding of the human condition which perceives the inhuman as human. Throughout "The Idea of Order at Key West" the narrator seemingly attempts to distinguish whether the song he hears is the sea's waves singing to the woman's voice, or if the singer's tune is his imagination's perception of the ocean. To answer this question, Stevens suggest that the narrator must investigate and recognize the difference between imagination and reality.

Since the sea is an external nature which causes a meaningless "constant cry" and cannot be "formed to mind or voice", the orator must distinguish the ocean's image and counterpart through the singer. Likewise, her ability to utter the sound of the waves "word by word" helps to transform the inhuman song of the sea into the entirely human song of the woman. Moreover, as the singer measures and interprets her song; the ocean similarly analyzes and follows the laws of nature.

As the speaker begins to perceive that the song is more than the sea merely singing through the woman's voice, he begins to feel a sense of ineffability which goes beyond the mere language of the tune and experience of his walk. Thus in stanza eight he states: "But it was more than that, more even than her voice, and ours" The narrator begins to accept the mystery behind the songs blissfulness and acquires the tune as the driving spirit of all the external realities in his presence.

This realization of the songs ineffability makes "the sky acutest at its vanishing" (35) and "measured to the hour at its solitude". For Stevens, these acts of interpretation are essentially human acts which help people come in touch with themselves and the world around them in order to experience the joys of being one with both themselves and nature. Within the final lines of the poem, Stevens links the title by connecting with and relating to our desire for ordered experiences and sympathizes among us since we always try to make the inhuman human.

Thus at the ending, the woman's song guides the narrator and helps to clear the vision between the order which humans seek of the natural world: "O!

Blessed rage for order". Likewise this cognizance opens "fragrant portals". The "fragrant portals" are important because they open a new door to an edifying new self-awareness. Moreover, as narrator begins to apprehend the usage of the woman's song, he realizes that the song allowed him to see order in the world.

Additionally, the song produces from within him a desire to create his own song, in order to interact and correspond with the imagination of others just like woman has done to his. Stevens' understanding of the human condition serves a great purpose in "The Idea of Order at Key West". Stevens portrays the narrator's experiences through the reflection of his thoughts. When the voice comes along he begins to change his way of thinking because she helps him understand and become conscious of the illusion of his imagination.

Through the language of "The Idea of Order at Key West" Wallace Stevens expresses his perception of the world. His thoughts and language become his instruments that craft the poem. Through the readers of the poem, Stevens captures and engages them: "It is the spectator and not life, which art really mirrors" (Oscar Wilde). As the spectator mirrors this form of art and interprets meaning into the works allurement, they becoming cultivated and enlightened. As a poet, Wallace Stevens believed that poetry should be similar to a work of art. And like a work of art, Stevens' poetry helps his readers discover order in a chaotic world.