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## Twist of fate meaning

Introduction At first the song seems to be about just one, brief relationship. The narrator and a woman are romantically together sitting in the park or walking by the canal. They spend the night together in a hotel, but she leaves him before he wakes up. He looks for her, fails to find her and ends up accepting it. A second, and more plausible, interpretation requires more detail. It has the narrator's mind moving haphazardly from his time with the woman in the park, to a time either with a prostitute in a brothel, or on a one night stand in particularly sleazy hotel. For simplicity I'll assume the former. While he's attending to his own desires there, the woman he's romantically attached to is acting selflessly, giving money to a blind beggar. At some stage he loses the woman he feels a romantic attachment to, and proceeds to search for her. A major issue of the song is the extent of his commitment to finding her, and the significance of this for his wellbeing. Fate The narrator is a hopelessly inadequate character who deceives himself into thinking he's the victim of fate. He seems to do little to help improve his lot, but simply hopes for something fortuitous to happen. He either waits: '... once more for a simple twist of fate', the 'once more' making it plain that inactive waiting is his approach to life, or he: '... watched out for a simple twist of fate'. Fate is his excuse. He blames fate for his being overcome by lust - 'the heat of the night' - and when he suffers feelings of regret for this, his response is no more than to wish that things had gone differently. He relies on the woman he's looking for in verse five to 'pick him out again', rather than making efforts to join up with her. And in the end he gives in to failure blaming it on something as irrelevant as the time of year he was born. The contrasting behaviour of the woman of verse two provides a foil against which the narrator's inadequacy is made clear. Unlike the narrator she's selfless and active. She gives money to a blind beggar, and doesn't let chance events destroy her life. She: '... forgot about a simple twist of fate'. The twist of fate she forgot about is presumably the narrator's entering her life. Having actively taken the decision to leave him, she puts him out of her mind. In so doing, she's able to lead a more fulfilled life. Seediness The narrator's life is presented as seedy. He remembers going into 'a strange hotel' - presumably a brothel. That he 'stopped' into it reminds us that in Tangled Up In Blue the narrator 'stopped' in for a beer (or so he tries to convince us) at a 'topless place'. To this extent it would seem it's the same narrator describing the same events.1 There's no clear time when the brothel visit occurs. We just know that he's remembering it. But it's made to seem as if it takes place at the same time as the woman he was with in the park selflessly gives money to the beggar. Whether that's before or after they've met doesn't matter - it could be either. What's more important is that the juxtaposing of their contrasting approaches to life helps bring out the worthlessness of the narrator's. We've already been made to feel what he's lost - a happy, romantic relationship, symbolised by the walk along 'the old canal'. What could have been, is contrasted with what is. Had he adopted a more mature outlook, the spark of love which causes his bones to tingle could have been fanned into a deeply loving relationship. Instead his life is characterised by a different sort of fire representing a different sort of love. The 'hotel' - he can't bring himself to admit what it is - has a 'neon burning bright', just as Blake's tyger, also 'burning bright', is a product of hell, so is this place. Its seediness is enhanced by noise - the presumably sleazy sound of a saxophone - and intimations of violence when the light is described as having 'bust' through a 'beat-up' shade. The harsh alliteration emphasises the garishness of the light, creating a contrast with the romantic (though ominous) darkening of the evening sky as he sits with the woman in the park. The contrast helps emphasise the emotionally destructive nature of the narrator's way of life. Waking Up There are a number of ambiguities over the narrator's waking up. There are two references to this, one in verse three: '... where he was waking up' and the other in verse four: 'He woke up ...'. In neither verse are we told where he is, or who he's been with. We don't even know whether the verses are alluding to the same or different occasions. Nevertheless, in verse three he's most likely to be in the brothel while the woman from the park is up and about, leading a more purposeful life. In verse four, the emptiness which the narrator feels could be because he realises, on finding the prostitute gone, that his debauched lifestyle is worthless. At the same time it could be because he misses the woman from the park who has just left him.2 Since either interpretation is plausible we can accept both. This ambiguity over which woman is being referred to is developed in verse five. The narrator seems to be confusing the two women in his mind. We're told that: 'He hunts her down by the waterfront docks where the sailors all come in' But who is he hunting? It seems unlikely to be the prostitute, since his concern is for the woman he was with in the park. But if it's the woman from the park, it seems odd that he goes to the docks. That's where prostitutes are likely to be found. The ambiguity over which woman he's searching for suggests that the narrator is unable to separate the two women in his mind. He wants to focus on one, but ends up focusing on the other. He wants the woman from the park and sets about searching for her, but ends up going where he'll find the prostitute. Time Passing The fifth verse expresses the narrator's subconscious realisation that his life is going nowhere. Time is passing and nothing is being achieved: 'He hears the ticking of the clocks' - 'clocks', not just 'clock'. While 'clock' would have implied his awareness of time passing, the plural 'clocks' confirms that it has passed. For him to have heard clocks, he must have gone from place to place, so hearing different clocks. That time is passing is further made apparent in the next two lines: 'He walks along with a parrot that talks Hunts her down by the waterfront docks ...'. The 'parrot' is presumably another woman in whom he has no real interest. He hears her voice but has no more interest in what she's saying than if he were hearing a parrot. On some occasions he walks aimlessly with this woman beside him. On others he attempts to find the woman from the park, but ends up among the prostitutes at the docks. Since it's unlikely he'd be hunting for one woman with another at his side, we can assume these incidents take place over a period of time. That time is passing is further implied in the line: 'Maybe she'll pick him out again, how long must he wait' He's hanging about, hoping to be recognised, depressed by the interminable waiting during which nothing happens. Third Person v First Person That the narrator is looking back on his past self as if he's a different person is made apparent by the use of the third person almost throughout. Exceptions, which all involve a change to the present tense, include the second line of the second verse: 'A little confused, I remember well' This establishes that the preceding lines are memories. The phrase 'I remember well' is ironic. He doesn't remember well. Memories flow confusedly into each other so that it's often not clear which of the song's two women he's referring to. He even confusedly seems to remember entering the 'strange hotel' with the woman he'd been sitting in the park with. If the hotel is a brothel, as suggested by the garish descriptions, it seems unlikely he'd be with her. In any case, from the woman's perspective, the saxophone is 'far off'. And the phrase 'A little confused' is itself ironic in that it's intended to refer to his past state of mind, but seems equally to apply to his present one. A further exception to the use of the third person is the final verse in which the first person is used throughout. In using the first person, the narrator seems to want to give the impression he can look back critically on his past self. The use of the present tense tells us that it's his current, not his past, outlook which we're being informed about. So when he says: 'People tell me it's a sin To know and feel too much within', we know that he's now endorsing a certain attitude. He'd have us believe he's now different, wiser, than his former self. On one level this is wishful thinking. How can it be a sin to feel too much, especially when those feelings are tempered by knowledge? It might seem as if he's trying merely to accept, rather than get rid of, the 'emptiness inside' he feels in verse four. On another level, though, he is wiser now. If 'knowing and feeling' is a matter of purely sexual knowledge and feelings, then in accepting that they're sinful, he's accepting that he needs to change. The use of the first person in 'I lost the ring' at first does little to convince us that he's any the wiser now. He didn't lose it. If the ring represents his chance of marriage, he effectively threw it away. Nevertheless the phrase has a self-recriminatory air, in which there's a hint of maturity. Furthermore, it follows the phrase: 'I still believe she was my twin' which is itself upbeat, hopeful - suggesting a mature endorsement of an earlier, tentative belief. There's a similar ambivalence about: 'She was born in spring, but I was born too late' At first the narrator might seem just to be finding an excuse for his own failings. Since he's aware of 'the ticking of the clocks' - time passing - he knows his problem is not so much having been born late, but having squandered the time he's had. Nevertheless, the beginning of the line suggests a more mature outlook. Spring is the time of rebirth. If she was born in spring, and he is indeed (albeit metaphorically) her twin, then it follows that he too was born in spring. In recognising this, he's acknowledging the present reality of his spiritual rebirth. Redemption Spring, as a representation of spiritual rebirth, is not the only use of a religious idea in the song. Religious imagery is used to reflect the pointlessness of the narrator's earlier outlook. The woman, we're told: '... dropped a coin into the cup of a blind man at the gate' The line seems to conflate at least three gospel stories - Jesus healing a blind man, the poor widow contributing her mite, and Jesus' reference to himself as the gate to redemption (Mark 8:14-21 and 12:41-44, and John 10:1-10 respectively). Accordingly, the woman provides a contrast with the narrator. By sacrificing her money, and in being kind to the blind man, she not only redeems herself but takes on a Christ-like role. Her act of kindness, like Christ's, becomes an example to the blind man, so that he might redeem himself. And just as she represents Christ, so the blind man can be taken as representing the narrator whose eyes, metaphorically, need opening. The woman is the narrator's redeemer. The woman's Christ-like role is in evidence again in verse five, just as Jesus hand-picked his disciples at the edge of the sea of Galilee, so the narrator is hoping the woman will 'pick him out again' at the docks. The suggestion seems to be that there's some spiritual hope for the narrator. Again, in saving him from his dissolute lifestyle, the woman will be his redeemer. Conclusion The narrator thinks he's fated. There's little sign of his taking control of his life, or of his even being able to. He regrets his current dissolute ways, but his attempt at reviving a loving relationship seems to lead him back to the same starting place. Time is moving on and he's getting nowhere. He's only partially right, however, and he seems to be dimly aware of this. The woman he really wants can save him from himself. As such she plays a Christ-like role in his life. His mere desire for her is already his salvation. In wanting her, and what she stands for, he sees himself as just like her, his 'twin', so that the similarity he brings about between them makes him as much his own saviour as she is. Time passing with nothing being achieved is, then, only half the story. The narrator's life can be viewed as much from an eternal as from a temporal perspective, as indicated by events not being assigned a clear time or order. From this eternal perspective, what the narrator wants he has already succeeded in bringing about. Another reason for associating the narrator of this song with that of Tangled Up In Blue is his feeling a spark 'tingle to his bones'. The association of tingle and tangle suggests that this song is providing a reason for the narrator's state of mind in the earlier song. It's pertinent that on finding himself alone the narrator 'told himself he didn't care'. This can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, if it's the woman he was with in the park who's gone, it seems consistent with his character - he'd rather deceive himself than admit that he's suffered loss, even if it means refusing to accept that he feels empty as a result. On the other hand, if it's the prostitute who's gone, his not caring might be seen as genuine and thus represent a step towards salvation. EnglishBy a twist of fate, Mr Watson is seated beside Mr Poettering. L'ironie du sort veut que M. Watson soit assis à côté de M. Poettering. Englishwhat twist of fate had brought him to Paris? par quelle fatalité se trouvait-il à Paris ? EnglishBy an ironic twist of fate, this bad agreement was rejected by the United States, which wanted to reduce its scope even further. Ironie du sort, ce mauvais accord a été rejeté par les États-Unis qui voulaient encore en réduire la portée. Englishand if by some extraordinary twist of fate... et si par extraordinaire... EnglishThe twist of fate, therefore, will be that it will be the poor who will be paying for the excess consumption and carefree attitude of the rich. L'ironie du sort voudra donc que ce soit les pauvres qui paient pour les excès de consommation et l'insouciance des riches. Englisha strange twist of fate un étrange coup du sort Englishit's a twist of fate c'est un coup du destin Englishtwist of fate Englishit is a cruel twist of fate that the first free black republic in this hemisphere has had such a long and difficult history of struggle to protect that very freedom. Par un cruel caprice du destin, la première république noire de cet hémisphère a eu à mener une longue et difficile lutte pour protéger cette même liberté. EnglishTheir primary target was, by a vicious twist of fate, located in the very city which is home to the world's foremost institution dedicated to promoting world peace. Leur cible principale a été, par un terrible concours de circonstances, la ville même qui accueille l'institution la plus importante du monde, et qui oeuvre à la promotion de la paix mondiale. EnglishIn a cruel twist of fate for one who was a physical fitness devotee for over 50 years, Peter was diagnosed in 2006 with an untreatable neurological condition known as Fragile X. Ironie du destin, cet homme qui, pendant 50 ans, a voué un culte à la bonne forme physique reçut en 2006 un diagnostic de la maladie neurologique incurable appelée syndrome de l'X fragile.

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