

Research Assessment # 12

Date: 1/20/2021

Subject: A Lyrical Study Coldplay's "Sparks"

APA Citation:

Martin, C. Champion, W. Berryman, G. Buckland, J. (2000). Sparks [Recorded by Coldplay]. On *Parachutes* [MP3 File]. Studland Bay, Dorset, United Kingdom: Parlophone.

Assessment:

Among Coldplay fans, "Sparks" is widely regarded as one of their most emotionally impactful songs. Chris Martin's gentle vocals over acoustic guitar, light drums, a walking bass line and bells are almost heartbreaking. However, in my opinion, it is the lyrics which make "Sparks" so bittersweet and beautiful. While short and simple, the song's lyrics portray a lost love so well it hurts.

The piece begins with the following stanza, exhibiting Chris Martin's reminiscent and broken tone;

“Did I drive you away?
I know what you'll say
You say, "Oh, sing one we know"
But I promise you this
I'll always look out for you
Yeah, that's what I'll do”

(Martin, 2000, track 4). From my perspective, this stanza first questions Martin's actions in his relationship with whoever this song is about. Was it his fault? The choice to start the song with this line shows that Martin is still struggling with coming to terms with the end of the relationship; he is not over this person. It is a very raw and personal opening lyric. With the following two lines, the writer shows that he is very reminiscent of this person. It seems as if he

is imagining the person next to him, prompting him to play a song for the group. In portraying not only the love interest, but the people around them, Martin shows how truly lonely he is without this person in his life; they symbolized friends and social gatherings. As the stanza ends, the writer admits that this person still means a great deal to him. He *promises* that he'll always look out for them, always be there for them, despite the end of the relationship. I feel that this is the most impactful part of the stanza. He shows that this person still has such a hold on him after their breakup that he is willing to come running back to save them.

Following the first stanza there is a chorus, which is followed by another verse with more beautiful lyrics. It reads,

“My heart is yours
It's you that I hold on to
That's what I do
And I know I was wrong
But I won't let you down
(Oh yeah, I will, yeah, I will, yes, I will)”

(Martin, 2000, track 4). This stanza repeats some of the motifs established in the previous stanza, but re-words them in an effective way. Like the beginning of the song, Martin admits that this relationship is still in his heart with the lines, “My heart is yours, It's you that I hold on to” (Martin, 2000, track 4). This stanza changes, however, in that the second lyric is admitting that he is dependent on this person, rather than being *there* for that person. In changing the internal meaning of these words, the writer performs two functions; First, they are demonstrating the growth of the separation that they are experiencing. Along with this, Martin draws the listener in by maintaining the same tone but changing the meaning of the lyrics, making the listening experience more dynamic and interesting.

This song portrays a lot of crucial elements to lyric writing. Primarily, I was able to learn from Martin that showing a progression within the song, specifically the progression of a

relationship, adds a great deal of emotional impact and interest to a song. I will use this in the lyric-writing process of this year's Final Product.