

Evaluate the use of forces, structure and tonality in 'Hounds of Love' by Kate Bush

Kate Bush is a British singer and composer who released the album 'Hounds of Love' in 1985. The style which she sang and wrote music was very unique and avant-garde, providing a distinctive concept with her music compared to other musicians around the same time. Most of Kate's works were inspired by novels and historical sources as well as being influenced by genres such as folk, electronic and classical music which allowed her to create something diverse. In this essay, I will be exploring the ways that Kate Bush created the unique style that she was known for by evaluating the uses of instrumentation, structure and tonality in the songs 'Cloud busting', 'And Dream of Sheep' and 'Under Ice' to understand how she achieved a sense of individuality and broke new ground.

One of the most prominent features of Kate Bush's works was the choice of instrumentation that she used. Instead of focusing on the standard pop instrumentation, she experimented with new technological advances and also instruments associated with different genres and styles. In the song 'Cloudbusting', a string sextet provides the main accompaniment and was not considered as a typical instrument in the pop genre, this was due mainly due to its inability to be performed live. Another example of a song which uses strings as a main accompaniment is 'Eleanor Rigby' by the Beatles, who were also known to have broken new ground due to their instrumentation choices which were not able to support a live performance. In addition to this, Kate experimented with a wide range of synthesised instrumentation such as those produced through a Fairlight CMI. Not only did it create an electric sound, Kate also used this to edit and create sampled sounds which she used in her music. For example, in 'Cloudbusting', 'And dream of sheep' and 'Under Ice', samples were inserted at various points of the songs such as a steam engine sound at the end of 'Cloudbusting', a radio shipping forecast in 'And dream of sheep' and sustained vocal samples at the end of 'Under rice'. Kate was one of the first artists to use sampling in her music as these technological advances were new and difficult to create due to the complexity of using the fairlight CMI. Other artists who used the Fairlight CMI in their music included Brian Wilson (the founder of the American boy band the Beach Boys), who used this extensively on the album 'Pet Sounds' and also Stevie Wonder. Another unique feature of Bush's instrumentation style was her distinctive voice. Her vocal style consisted of a light and airy tone which almost sounded like it was being held back. This can be heard in the song 'And Dream of Sheep'. Another vocalist who had a distinct voice was Bjork, who was around after the time when this album was released, but interestingly wrote alternative music similar and almost influenced by Kate's unique style. This was a huge comparison to the other artists who were also around at the same time as her, as many focused on belting and providing the full extent of their vocal range. This provided a memorable feature to a lot of her music as it was not the typical style of other vocalists.

The structure of the three songs also show how Kate Bush differs from the other artists. In the song 'Cloudbusting', there is a lack of introduction but has an extended outro which is unlike the common structure of a standard pop song at the same time. An introduction typically lets listener know what the song is and almost prepares them for the actual song. However Kate Bush, starts the song without the introduction therefore does not prepare the audience. Another song which doesn't contain an introduction is 'All Star' by Smash Mouth. An additional distinctive feature about the structure of the song 'Cloudbusting' is that it has a long outro. Long outros did not feature in many pop songs as they would have not been appropriate to play live as it would have disturbed the setting which it would be played in. 'Layla' by Eric Clapton is another example of a song which has a long outro which sounds completely different to the rest of it, and due to this, when it is played on the radio, the outro is usually cut out. On top of this, the structure in 'Under Ice' is through composed, meaning the song is continuous with little structure. This is seen as an unconventional

feature of song writing as standard pop songs would feature different sections therefore will be easy to follow rather than having a continuous song which would not lead to any contrasting parts. 'It's a kind of magic' written by Queen, is also through composed and has no chorus. By adapting her music structure, Kate made her songs in the way she wanted to instead of following the popular, conventional styles of other music during that time. This showed her diversity, uniqueness and individuality which led her to become successful because she was memorable and exclusive.

In terms of tonality, Kate Bush's songs were tonal but not necessarily always diatonic and functional. Whilst the tonality is always clear, Kate's music is based on modes which is demonstrated in 'Cloudbusting', 'And Dream of Sheep' and 'Under Ice'. With 'Cloudbusting' and 'And Dream of Sheep' being based on modal C# minor and 'Under Ice' based on modal A minor. Modes typically present a mood, each of the modes have a slightly different feel and they can depict moods and feeling when melodies are based on them. 'Eleanor Rigby' by the Beatles is a song which is based on the Dorian mode which had a sad and almost depressing feel to it, which relates to the theme of the song. This is similar to the case in the song 'Under Ice'. Because the themes are dark and written about being trapped in ice the mode which it is based on (Aeolian) also has the same feel to it. Therefore by the use of modes, creates a setting for the themes of the music and emphasises the emotions which are displayed within the music.

In conclusion, the avant-gard approach to her songwriting and singing allowed her to stand out among other artist in that period of time. From the unconventional use of the fairlight CM and string sextet to the unusual structure of her music, Kate progressively showed a sense of individuality and innovative ways of writing, producing and performing her music which has influenced likes of Bjork and Tori Amos and also brought an idea which allows musicians to experiment and bring a sense of individuality to their songs.