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Introduction:

- State that essay will attempt to demonstrate that love was indeed an important theme in much of his work and how it will be proven.
- Specifically, looking at his pursuit of love and frequent failure to win the heart of the object of his affections, often with comedic consequences.
- Discuss the themes of courtly love and attempt to define the conventions and how they may be applied in the work of Dafydd ap Gwilym.
- Introduce two important characters: Morfudd and Dyddgu and discuss his relationship with them and their connection to themes of courtly love.
- Discuss other genres of his poetic works, and DaG and his contemporaries' contribution to the promotion of the poetic *cywydd* metre, perhaps one of his greatest contributions to Medieval poetic literature.
- Finally, conclusion will show that although love was a very important theme, Dafydd is also worthy of being remembered for much more than courtly love poetry.

Para 1: His Early Life

- D.A.G born c 1350/20 CE, (died c. 1350/70) in Parish Llanbadarn Fawr/Cardiganshire.
- Poems that can be dated with reasonable certainty fall around 1340/50's, so birth and death dates are estimates.
- Family were uchelwyr, member of Welsh nobility, so Dafydd is of noble birth.
- Llewelyn ap Gwilym, Dafydd's uncle and constable of Newcastle Emlyn/uchelwyr.
- Llewelyn educated and cultured/poet/linguist from long line of bards of ancient lineage and influential in Dafydd's poetic/bardic training. Taught him awareness of cultural influences from French and English sources/bringing Welsh poetry/bardic traditions to attention of mainstream European literature and vice versa.
- Dafydd composed emotional elegy to Llewelyn after his murder.

Para 2: His Love Poetry

- No doubt DaG was accomplished love poet.
- Very clear that love is a very important theme in his work as much of his poetry is concerned with it.
- However, much of DaG's love poetry relates to the *lack* of success in pursuit of love and unrequited love/rejection and the emotional torment that accompanies such rejection.
- Cite *Tri Phothor Eiddig* with examples of being foiled and unsuccessful (www.dafyddapgwilym.net).
- Even when successful, he is ever mindful of the transient and fickle nature of women and love.

- Within all the despair is a great deal of humour, much of it self-deprecating.
- Cite episodic poem *Treaffferth Mewn Tarvan* (28-43) for slapstick nature of his clumsiness, and ultimate failure to have his tryst with his potential lover. (www.dafyddapgwilym.net).
- Farcical, comedic nature quite removed from the conventions of 'courtly love', yet his frustrations and despair adhere closely to these conventions.

Para 3 – Courtly Love definition and Rules.

- Helpful at this point to define 'courtly love' and the conventions/expectations associated with it.
- French term *amour courtois*, coined by French philologist Gaston Paris in the late nineteenth century, refers to the *troubadour* poetry of Aquitaine and Provence which began to emerge in the eleventh century.
- The poetry referred to the highly stylized Medieval rituals and conventions observed typically between a knight and usually a married lady, which created an entire literary genre in the Medieval period from the late eleventh to fifteenth centuries.
- The term itself is used today as a catch-all for a different understanding of love which arose in the Middle Ages; a more passionate, revolutionary expression of feeling and emotion, completely at odds with the Christian ideas of marriage and faithfulness (where marriage was a business transaction rather than a love match).
- Courtly love could be viewed as revolutionary as it appears to defy one of the commandments of God: that one must not commit adultery.
- Courtly love represents the expectations and ideals of chivalry and codes of conduct associated with knighthood: courtesy, honour, courage, duty, dignity and worth.
- As much as the knight must demonstrate loyalty to his lord, he must also show similar loyalty to his lady, and attempt to gain her favour according to courtly love conventions.
- DaG was not a knight, but came from a noble family, and as a bard and praise-poet, he was dedicated to his patrons, so from this perspective he fits the role.
- The general 'rules' of courtly love:
- The lover is smitten at the mere sight of the woman, often just from making eye contact, and an overwhelming passion follows which completely consumes the lover's existence.
- The lover serves his lady, and she is the epitome of perfection, often likened to a goddess, so the love he feels is akin to religious devotion.
- The love is a voluntary service which typically causes great suffering to the lover as his love is generally unrequited.
- He exhibits physical torment, grows pale; cannot sleep; trembles at the sight of her; suffers bouts of depression and lovesickness; an equal experience of pain and joy.
- Through suffering comes wisdom; he learns the rules and conventions of chivalry.
- The lover will always be unworthy of the lady, but his love for her makes him less unworthy.

- The lady may or may not bestow her 'favour'; if the affair is consummated then it is done so in secret, and he has the ultimate experience of love required, and if not, the ultimate experience of rejection and cruelty. Rejection was the typical outcome.
- Many of DaG's love poems reflect all these experiences, especially those concerned with two specific women.

Para 4: Morfudd (in prose, with footnotes and quotes).

Two characters who feature prominently in the poetry of Dafydd ap Gwilym are the high-born women Morfudd and Dyddgu. Morfudd appears in around thirty poems; Dafydd himself tells us that he has composed 'seven and seven score' *cywyddau* to her, and she is likely to be the un-named subject of numerous others.¹ She seems to remain his single, constant love interest. The beautiful poem 'Morfudd like the Sun' highlights the depth of feeling he has for her whilst simultaneously referencing his frustrations:

Lovely Morfudd, woe to the weak idle poet who loves her – handsome, gracious, gentle girl – a web of gold [her hair] – alas for anyone in the shape of man, comely of form, who cries out in his woe. Skilled is she in deception, and her whiles exceed all measure – yet she is my dear.²

The same work references her status: 'The people's princess, in cloak of fine fur (she knows how to deride [her] ugly husband.'³ Both quotes are interesting as they clearly correlate to the conventions of courtly love as outlined in the previous paragraph; Morfudd is a woman of obvious noble birth and is married, so Dafydd may only ever love her from afar. He is suffering in his love of her, full of woe because she deceives him terribly. Dafydd often references frustrating or unhappy encounters with other women, but the most frustrating centre around Morfudd and her unpredictable behaviour and fluctuating affections for him. Much of his poetry dwells on the less appealing aspects of her behaviour; her flightiness and inconsistent attention, her inability to remain faithful, and his subsequent jealousy over her marriage to *Y Bwa Bach*. True to the conventions of courtly love, Dafydd is hopelessly devoted to her: 'she has sown in my breast (it will be shattered) a seed of love, a mad enchantment' and he feels like he may die if he does not have her.⁴ He claims to have been in love with her for nine years; that he follows her to church and weeps for her; that without her love his life would be lived in vain. As previously noted, although Dafydd is not a knight, he is of noble blood, and from that perspective, he fits the profile of courtly lover to the object of his fascination, the noblewoman Morfudd.

Para 6: Dyddgu

- There are no great rivals to Morfudd, but Dyddgu, although mentioned less frequently, is important.
- Contrasts Morfudd in many ways: appearance, class, beauty, and education and is *always* distant, unattainable.

¹ Rachel Bromwich, *Writers of Wales, Dafydd ap Gwilym*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1974), p. 37.

² Rachel Bromwich, *Dafydd ap Gwilym, A Selection of Poems*, (Dyfed: Gomer Press, 1982), p. 26.

³ Ibid, p. 26.

⁴ Rachel Bromwich, *Writers of Wales*, p. 38.

- In the poem, 'Morfudd and Dyddgu', Dafydd makes comparisons between the two women; Morfudd he refers to as a 'glowing red ember', stubborn and exasperating; of Dyddgu he says she is 'worthy and gentle', highlighting the personality differences between them.
- On the last line of the poem he states that if he is able, he will choose Dyddgu (Book of Poems, p.42), but it seems this is a futile fantasy because she will not entertain his affections.
- He loves her, but knows he will never have her, and this creates the longing of unrequited love, so much so that he states: 'sickness wastes me, for she loves me not' ('Dyddgu (an address to her father)' Book of Poems p.38).
- This poem highlights the motifs of hopelessness/rejection/emotional torment, which so accurately mirror the themes of courtly love.
- In some ways Dyddgu reflects these conventions more than Morfudd; she is high-born, and he is in emotional torment because she will *never* entertain his advances, whereas Morfudd occasionally does.

Paragraph 7 – Other Genres

- Although the issues of love featured predominantly in his work, DaG should be remembered for much more than this.
- He was a poet who excelled in many different genres: praise poetry for his patrons ('If for the Generous', Book of Poems, p. 166).
- Musicianship – his skills as a harpist ('The Melody', www.dafyddapgwilym.net).
- Religion and elegy (Elegy for Gruffudd ab Adda, his contemporary, Poems, p. 172)
- Episodic poetry which often had a comedic element, frequently at his own expense (quote from 'The Girls of Llanbadarn', Book of Poems p.136) 'That grey-faced flirt of a boy' etc.
- Nature poetry: references to nature are exquisite and use of nature imagery is extensive. Several poems were dedicated to the month of May and the praise of summer. His nature poetry often includes religious references in the praising of God for his creation.
- Although often appearing as a backdrop to his love poetry, the imagery of nature often surpasses it so much that the theme of love appears secondary.
- Sumptuous imagery reflects themes of love, beauty of nature, God's creation, emphasis on the image of birds, the 'woodland poets' for whom he seems to have great fondness. ('The Leafy Hut' Book of Poems, p.10).
- DaG is arguably most famous, along with some contemporaries, for popularising the poetic *cywydd* metre (cite some works of Iolo Goch, Llewelyn Goch ap Meurig Hen, Gruffudd Gryg, Madog Benfras and Gruffudd ab Adda, Bromwich Collected Papers, p. 153 – 171).
- Add description and examples of *cywydd* from Bromwich 'Collected Papers' p. 8).

Conclusion

- State that although DaG was very gifted in many genres of poetry, there is no doubt that love was a very important theme, as much of his poetry was concerned with the varied, sometimes frustrating aspects of the pursuit of it.
- His experiences of love, or the lack of success in attaining it, follow the conventions of courtly love accurately, particularly the relationships between himself and Morfudd and Dyddgu.
- Courtly love was certainly a feature of his work, but he was prolific in many other genres.
- Therefore, important to recognise the full spectrum of his work: his love of nature, his praise poetry, his skills as a musician, his humour and his elegy and religious poetry.
- His promotion of the *cywydd* is extremely important and this contribution is arguably one of the greatest innovations to Welsh Medieval poetic literature, so from this point alone it would be unfair to remember him *primarily* as a courtly love poet.

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