



**EISTEDDFOD – 2022 North American Festival of Wales – Philadelphia, PA**  
**Competition: ENGLISH LANGUAGE RECITATION**

*On Clevedon Pier, June 2020 - by Robert Walton\**

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On days like this, when clouds graze the blue hills  
of the skies and the islands lounge on the horizon like cattle  
in the sun, you feel so near to Wales you could reach  
across the Severn and tickle the Transporter Bridge,  
jog your knuckles across the Barrage, or pinch the cones  
of Castell Coch's towers and hurl them over the mountain.

Last time I was here, taking the air, couples and families  
hurried past, their footsteps echoing on the planks  
as they bustled towards the *Balmoral*, ready to depart  
for Cardiff Bay. And as I watched the ship ease  
its way out into the waves, its wake braided an arc  
of rope unravelling from the capstan of the heart.

When I was a child, we made that excursion in reverse,  
queueing at the quay in Butetown where the steamer  
docks. Smoke billows from its funnels. Cables groan  
against the paddles' propulsion. The horn blasts and away  
we sail, beyond Penarth and out into the Estuary  
in a breeze that will blow forever in my recollection.

I've come as far as I'm allowed, as close as I can,  
locked behind these railings at the pierhead. Penned in,  
I want to spread my fingers across the channel  
and slip them into the mouth of each tributary – Usk  
Rhymni, Ely, Taff: to sink the tips deep into the mud  
and haul them up, dredging silt under the nails.

*\* - Grand Prize winner, English Language Poem, 2021 NAFOW Poetry Composition Competition.*

**Note:** *This copy is only to be used in conjunction with the 2022 NAFOW Eisteddfod.*