



Sheepdog Trials at Bleinau Ffestiniog

By Deborah Warren
Winner 2002

At the bottom of the field, like woolly boats,
three sheep appear. They're unaware, of course,
that this is a race, and the first one's gently drifting
off to the left, and another bobbles and floats
the other way, when something—a gale? a force—
tears at them—veers—its direction shifting, shifting—

a black and white Hermes, fur and motion spurred
by a single message, a single mission: To herd.
A centrifugal ewe like a prodigal yacht
sails out in a stately and leisured trot
but huffily reconsiders, deterred
by the scouring dog; and the second and third

who are heading off—confronted, stop:
he's there; and the trio slews around,
jibing in unison, parallel. Then,
in a climax of ecstasy—he drops
suddenly, puddle-flat, onto the ground
and sends the flotilla of sheep to the pen.

And the lumbering trainer, rubber-shod,
closes the gate with his crook and slogs
across to the dog who, you could say, ran
because he was told to. You could say the man
created the dog. But no—the dog,
who was made by the wind, is a little god.