

ZOË SKOULDING

Through Trees 1

circled by gull
shrieks slicks of
mud sucking at
feet banded sky
black trees this
shaking palm of
ruffled grey-blue
water jolts foot
steps closer you
have to go with
what's coming
in a flutter of
oyster catchers
over water and
blood flowering
under skin tuned
to concert pitch
then wavering
slowly off-key
in frequencies
your ears will
never catch as
bones pile up
problems for the
future muscles
waste chances &
fat builds up for
nothing but to
bulk this column
raised in honour
of human futility

Through Trees 2

trees print on
skin a birch kiss
bums shadow on
your epidermis
flushed by wind
or sun peeling
slightly scratch
off to reveal the
winning answers
all correct but
the prize out of
your grasp like
the whole ethical
trouble involved
in wearing some-
one else's face
rather than heart
a light wind rises
& a momentary
shiver raises new
knots a second
scars you change
scores a surface
wrinkle trunks
lean into others
for safety in
likeness to build
a paper tower
everyone must
agree quickly on
the best method

Through Trees 3

a sharp frost in
Pentraeth wood
each leaf edged
in white in your
memory of 1987
Duisburg in the
snow you set out
without knowing
how far from
one lost street to
another through
such trees how
far from there to
here & now you
are a pillar of salt
a slow erosion
in rain a bitter
crumbling of
your bones a
series of wooden
poses held in
wired anatomies
the head tilted to
look back frozen
to a pose dried
out in deserts
parched seabeds
snow that never
comes any more
the trees' harsh
angles falter fall

Through Trees 4

each breath sifts
air for salt soft
rot to heave a
blush of oxygen
into its hollows
on Llanddwyn
beach a red
balloon is rooted
in dune grasses
its taut string
pulls air tight
against air you
gulp at the sky
vaulted vapour
in this movement
perpetual over
the globe fiery
mobile & lucid
it haunts you at
the core a deep
gap shot through
with fizz white
foam seethes at
the waves' edge
breath traverses
you as if words
come puffed out
forced panting
from these gaps
in the self & its
very own stink