

ANTHONY HOWELL

CORPORATE STOP

There is something not quite fresh about the trees.
That's why they can't be anything but young
On the forecourts of our malls, or when they flank
The lobbies of our newly-built motels. If they threaten

To get full-grown we chop them down, to plant saplings
Dedicated to the bright cars of morning. We know
It's Christian to mingle and even to talk dirty,
But casual romances, the sort that get started sometimes

In the smokers' oasis, they get rained off by detectors.
We pride ourselves on the width of our roads,
Our lawns grown from ready-mown seed
And the length of our aisles, which vanish into a distance

That may eventually open on refrigerated rooms
Where we keep our beer and our corpses.
The stiffs we honour as the pioneers
Of planned urban chaos cast on an ocean of trees.