

CLEARCUT WOUNDS

Yesterday we drove south
along a country road.
We turned a corner, and there,
winding up the hill and over it,
a clearcut stretched like a wound
in the midst of the green forest.
Nothing but stumps and shards
of limbs covered the slope,
ugly reminders of what used to be.

Then I reminded myself that I am
complicit in this ravaging.
I use wood in a hundred ways
in my house. I consume paper
that spews out of my printer.
I create piles of newspaper
and stacks of magazines
beside my chair. I confess to
my share in the devastation.

Today the mail arrived at noon.
The wounded hillside pushed back
into my consciousness,
as I saw the twelve catalogs
that warned me of my need
to decide on Christmas gifts
for those I love. The time is short,
the catalogs insist, act today.
Twelve catalogs! I never heard
of most of the senders, and not one
engages my mind or heart
as I approach the Feast of the
Nativity. The violated hillside
careens back into my awareness,
and I am appalled at the demands
and power of the system that drives me
into buying and buying again.

I'm wounded. Like the hill.

-Bill Maxwell