

GARY SNYDER

Turtle Island (1969)

CONTROL BURN

What the Indians
here
used to do, was,
to burn out the brush every year.
in the woods, up the gorges
keeping the oak and pine stands
tall and clear
and kitkitdizzie under them,
never enough fuel there
that a fire could crown.

Now, manzanita,
(a fine bush in its right)
crowds up under the new trees
mixed up with the logging slash
and a fire can wipe out all.

Fire is the old story.
I would like,
with a sense of helpful order,
with respect for laws
of nature
to help my land
with a burn. a hot clean
burn
(manzanita seeds will only open
after a fire passes over
or once passed through a bear)

And then it would be more
like,
when it belonged to the Indians

Before.