

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.