

Clear Lake Fire Song

Fire has come to this wilderness lake
Twice since I first stopped here.
In '87 it took the fir stand on the high southwest slope.
They called that one "The Yellow Complex".

In '04 the Hancock Fire snaked closer to the lake.
Slipping around wet meadows it took some ancient trees.
Charred skeletons remain, standing and fallen.
Around them flowers gladly bloom.

I can remember my children at play
'Round the knobby knees of those ancients -
The shaggy bark and dappled light:
It seems strange that they are gone.

Still strong red firs remain
Along with younger cedar, white pine
And the graceful weeping spruce.
They will be the ancients here.

Fire has altered this place;
New forms confirm an ancient balance.
It is a comfort to know that all large things
Shall not perish from the Earth.

July 10, 2009
Clear Lake
Salmon Mountain Wilderness
Northwest California