

Michael Dennis Browne

For James Wright

. . . I have been jogging,
and this is the halfway spot
on the dirt road.
Before I turn for home
I stop to look at the pines
and hear the wind in them.

There are ten—three groups
of three and four and three—
and behind, a slope, the north
end of Jerry Jones' pasture.

Ahead, behind, the dry reeds rustle.
Weeks from now there will be
mud and redwing blackbirds here,
a trickling, a whistling.
There over my shoulder is
Roger Hadley's place, he's working
inside my house, finishing it
with pine.

Now close, my eyes. Now hear the wind,
hissing a little with the needles.
Ten trees. Slowly the branches stir.
My fingers go into the *mudra*,
thumb and forefinger joined,
the other three fingers of each hand
loose, lying open.

So now I make offering,
as, when children, we would make
the morning offering for the day—
but this is an evening one.
Since I can't begin to imagine your agony,
I offer my own to come.
I think of you lying there,
and all you have shown me with your poems,
of how you were up here

in these same woods, oh, years ago,
how close my new house is
to the source of those words I first loved
sixteen or more years ago,
from over an ocean.

Now open, my eyes. There are the pines.
Now open, my hands
from the *mudra*,
let the ten fingers
flutter a moment in front of me,
then up, up—
over my head I see the butterflies—
a moment, then they are gone.
And turn then, and begin to run
back down the road,
into the last of the great light . . .