

Illinois Wesleyan University

From the Selected Works of Michael Theune

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November Valentine

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November Valentine

Michael Theune

Darkness veins up
Through the fireweed,
evergreen.
A black oak leaf hangs in a sugar maple.

November, What can I offer
That is not already Yours, _____

Setters howl and setters bay.
Already the hunt's proceeding.

Already four candles flash black tongues.

I have been in love for twenty-four years,
And I have learned nothing: a few names,
Some dates,
 what I take to be—woodsmoke
In the break—a fact. Or two.
Little (I am a careless lover)
 of significance.

Briars and nettle cling to my pant legs.
Clouds gather in some old phase of the moon.
I pray for the success of my enemies;

Even my lover's name escapes me.

November,
 What can I offer
 That you don't already possess?
 What trace-arrow, bowstring?
 This cut-out heart? These shadow-wings?

The deadfall sinks its eleventh inch into the year.

A black rib opens, darkling—

I give what I have to give:

I know a shortcut,

and I do not take it.

A black rib (made of rain) opens—