DEAN RADER

The Inscrutability of Influence

Cy Twombly, Ode to Psyche (1960)

Mid-hushed, cool-rooted—

these tuneless numbers of palemouthed prophets, tender-eyed, Aurorean ...

one only adds new ink.

The human heart is a grid

in the midst of this wide quietness—

-this heart-

repository of all writing.

What is language?

Neither form nor usage—

neither urn nor autumn:

bones burn,

leaves light and lay down their matches.

A pencil lifts a hand.



Cy Twombly, Ode to Psyche, 1960, pencil, wax crayon, ballpoint pen, 9 11/16 x 27 15/16 inches. Courtesy Cy Twombly Foundation, photo Giorgio Benni.

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Cy Twombly, Orpheus, 1975, collage (drawing paper, staples), oil paint, wax crayon, pencil, 55 1/2 x 39 3/8 in. Collection Cy Twombly Foundation.

In Advance of All Parting

Cy Twombly, Orpheus (1975)

Another canvas, another blank page more of the same: absence within absence, uncertainty and indeterminacy, those twins language lifts out of. What came first—drawing or writing? Every sign is a symbol of its vanishing, every mark the beginning of its erasure. Among the waning, be the singing glass that shivers as it rings, be both the tracing and the trace be the mark that marks the unmarking.