

DEAN RADER

This Is No Time for Poetry,

after *Untitled (Hang iambics)*, Cy Twombly, 1994

so why not ask that halo
of dark whisper for anything, everything:
why not write the litany of wax and ash
on the first page of the book of
All My Shortcomings?
Haven't I lived long enough
in the bone hollow, long enough in bonebreak and brakelight?
When do I not hear the high hum of desire
along the ringing rails of the heart's train?
O Absent One,
hasn't the stillness of your voice broken my blood's black bells,
hasn't its knife sliced the candlewick of my tongue?
What haven't I asked for? What haven't I stolen?
Give me sun spoor and moon melt,
give me grief's profusion,
give me heaven's crevice call—
let me gaze into what I shall not see,
let the questions,
small as seeds,
drop into the dark garden of the mind.
To silence your voice is to hear your voice:
I am listening:

Is the word *want*, is the word *breath*, is the word *no*?

Where are you, earliest annihilator?

First fist, first first, first bruise—

I feel your shunt:

Mouth, who will you cry out to? Heart, who will hang your noose?

I am trying to stretch out into the nothingness that is this life,

trying to untie the rope and drift,

unmoored, into what I have lost:

to listen to the song the Angels of Infinite Distance

might be singing:

But where is the shape to hold my hearing?

I wait, will wait. I try, am trying

to listen.