

**Anthi-Danaé Spathoni**

**Idyllic, Pastoral and Abstract  
Cy Twombly's Reinvented Arcadia**

Cy Twombly's painting *Arcadia* (1958) refers to the Greek region in the Peloponnese where Theocritus placed his shepherds in his bucolic poems and, Virgil transformed to a symbol, the distant and utopian *locus amoenus* of pleasure and love. In painting, Arcadia became a theme, an ideal and classical landscape in Nicolas Poussin's canvases. Twombly used elements from Virgil's classical Arcadia to construct a new one. As an American, the painter did not share the burden of the cultural heritage that other European artists would feel. Like the Romans, who freely interpreted Greek myths in the past, playing with a cultural heritage that was not their own, Twombly provided a fresh look to classical subjects with the approach of an 'outsider'. From the late 1950s on, he took the liberty of painting a graffiti-like Arcadia, bucolic landscape-like paintings or green monochrome versions of the subject. Through the study of Twombly's *Arcadia*, as an example of a classical subject treated in contemporary painting, this article focuses on the artist's constant dialogue with Antiquity and shows how the painter's balance between *imitatio* of the ancients and *inventio* of his own means achieve a renewal of the subject itself.