

DEAN RADER

*Meditation on Apophysis*

*nada nada nada y en el monte nada*

– St John of the Cross

Every day I remind myself this  
life is nothing, but I always forget:

All things are arguments  
for their importance, signifiers

of their own presence.  
Think of all the rain

your skin has seen  
over its life –

where did it go? Am I  
asking about your skin

or your life? After  
a while, the dead

grow weary of leading  
by example. Living is nothing

but limitation. At some  
point we need to stop

stopping. From my window,  
I can see the ocean lean

back into nothingness –  
perhaps the way St John

of the Cross sunk into  
God, which he called

*Nada* – that place where  
language runs out –

the nothing that is not  
there. Night lights the sky

with its blackness,  
the ocean now invisible,

the waves, soundless birds,  
the distant boats – all things

defined by what they are not.  
Every day I remind myself

this life is something, but I  
always forget. What are memories

but that which we have not  
forgotten? What is our life

but the unmetness of our death?  
Absence is not the opposite

of presence, just as language  
is not the opposite of silence.

Feel free to sit in the quiet  
as long as you like.

The poem may stop,  
but it will not end.