

MARCIA MENTER

The Secret Saline Society

There is no way to know us
except, perhaps, by the salt:
coarse white grains at the bottom
of our jacket pockets, or scattered
like misshapen hailstones behind us.
Taste one, and watch how your tongue
does the love-hate thing: You need it,
even crave it, but it stings.

Such tangible signs are rare.
The salt encrusting our eyes
gets washed off before you see us;
we present more brain than brine.
The barest slick of a glaze
magnifies our gaze
transmitting our password glance
to those who are likewise made.

Our blood swims as yours
with salt that preserves and cures
but we feel every volt
of current passing through it.
No spark of hope or hurt,
no ghost of shame or glory
flickers undetected
in our electric fluids.

As common and as unseen
as the shaker at every table
but naked to each other
we move undisguised among you
leaving a savor, perhaps,
or a name on your lips as you come,
mouth-searing testament
of our world written in salt.