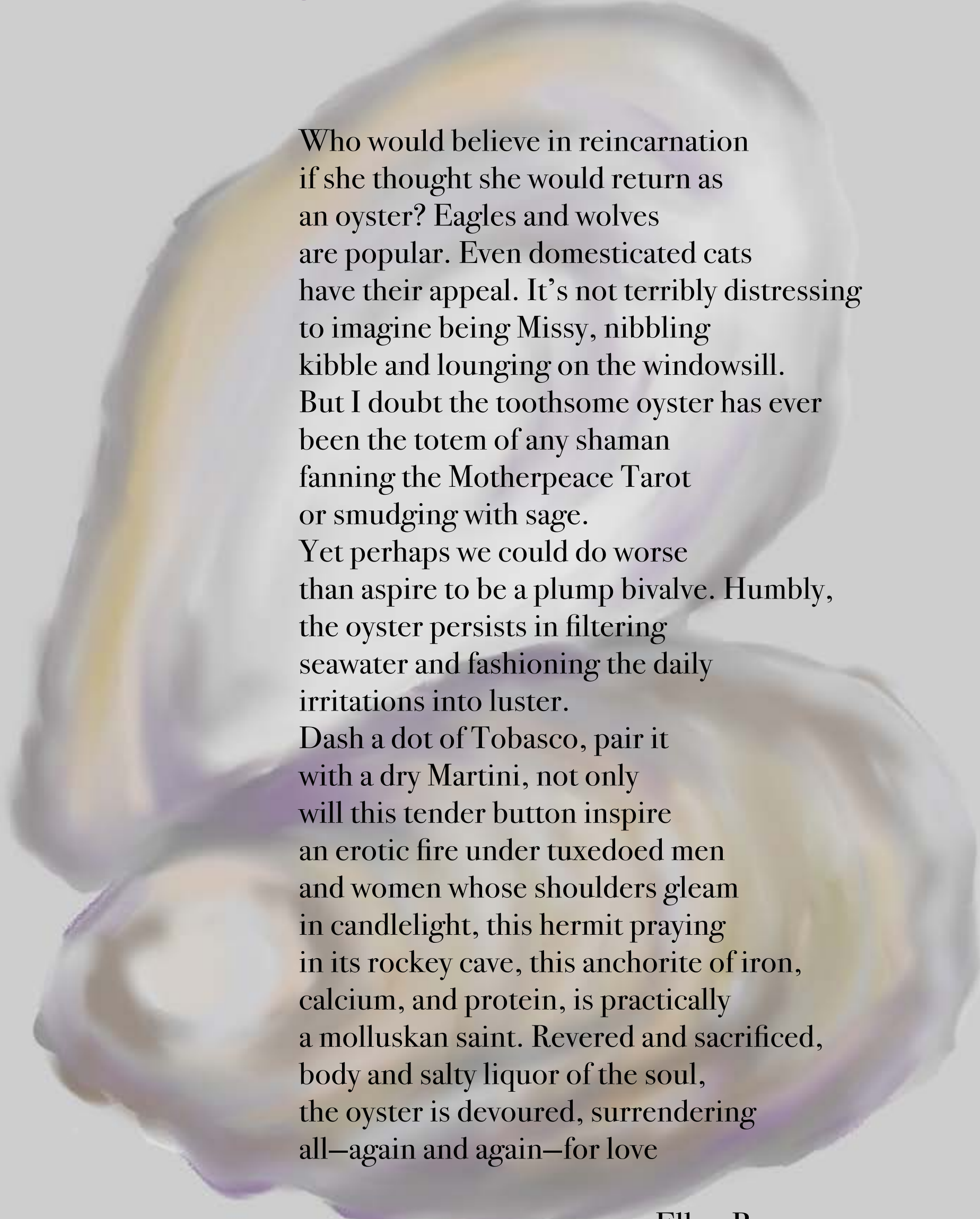


# Spring for Poetry in Takoma Park

## *Reincarnation*



Who would believe in reincarnation  
if she thought she would return as  
an oyster? Eagles and wolves  
are popular. Even domesticated cats  
have their appeal. It's not terribly distressing  
to imagine being Missy, nibbling  
kibble and lounging on the windowsill.  
But I doubt the toothsome oyster has ever  
been the totem of any shaman  
fanning the Motherpeace Tarot  
or smudging with sage.  
Yet perhaps we could do worse  
than aspire to be a plump bivalve. Humbly,  
the oyster persists in filtering  
seawater and fashioning the daily  
irritations into luster.  
Dash a dot of Tobasco, pair it  
with a dry Martini, not only  
will this tender button inspire  
an erotic fire under tuxedoed men  
and women whose shoulders gleam  
in candlelight, this hermit praying  
in its rocky cave, this anchorite of iron,  
calcium, and protein, is practically  
a molluskan saint. Revered and sacrificed,  
body and salty liquor of the soul,  
the oyster is devoured, surrendering  
all—again and again—for love

Ellen Bass

*Spring for Poetry in Takoma Park, an urban poetry walk, is sponsored by the Friends of the Takoma Park Maryland Library with assistance from the Takoma Park Department of Public Works. Designs of the poetry are by students at the School of Art and Design at Montgomery College. For more information about the Friends, visit [www.FTPML.org](http://www.FTPML.org).*

*Matthew Wagner, designer*