

Reincarnation
Ellen Bass 2015

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 lustre.
Dash a dot of Tabasco, pair it
with a dry Martini, not only
will this tender button inspire
an erotic fire in 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.____