

## Making Love to Leopard Man

Tom Leppard [...] has approximately 99.9%  
of his body covered in tattoos [...,]  
a leopard-skin design [...He] now lives  
as a hermit on the Isle of Skye.  
—*Guinness World Records*

Trust me, you are not the first man I've known  
who thought he was an animal, who's sharpened  
his claws without knowing what to do with them.

Like continents your bruise-green spots drift apart.  
Lying beside you, I watch the ink bleed slowly  
into the tiny channels of skin, edges blurring

into your yellow sea. One-hundred-six islands  
I've counted so far: that one looks like a storm cloud,  
that one at your hip like the head of a woman.

You're not the only one who knows how to make  
the body an elaborate disguise. How I wish  
the children who torment you would throw stones

at the ugly hut of my life and scatter like birds  
when I glare at them. I want to bathe my scars  
in the isle's dirty river. I want fangs.

Though I'm not a needle, let me touch you.  
Let me look into the pink secret of your ear.  
Let me part, one by one, your reclusive, unmarked toes.

Let me show you how hermit crabs do it: tap  
my borrowed shell until I uncurl like a raw finger,  
exposing myself to salt. Out there, I could be eaten,

I could be carried by the current into the mouth  
of prey. Hold me closer with your human claws.  
For now, let's pretend we have nothing to hide.