

after John Collier's "Lilith" (1892)

in the hebrew her name translates
as *night-monster night-bag screech-owl*
& first occurs in a list of animals or
not at all. there is no reference

to her husband standing
on her hair. i once caught my hair
in the underbrush & it tore
from my scalp in patches.

i'm waiting for my body
to get sick. it happens
sometimes when i push
the fullness of my stomach.

i read a bestiary about a viper—
she bites the head off the male & chews
& chews until her babies
chew a hole in her side & are born.

sometimes i wish my stomach were full
of vipers. bite me clean. when i push
my stomach rolls like waves. i consider my feet.
when it was time to be born i wanted

to emerge toes first. i felt the closing
like a riptide. the nurses turned
me & i turned back / this garden, i said
is mine. have i mentioned

sometimes i confuse animals:
men look an awful lot
like other men, for example. my father
turned me & i took a clean bite

out of my mother. she almost
died. when her stomach cut open,
they lifted me out like an egg.
i was sick then & now.