

JOEY DE JESUS

self-portrait as queen of adders

you've sighted me among red lechwe
lunging over waterlogged weeds, my snarl
a curl slurring psalms of a mokoro sunday.

I am that claw or that hook in that mouth,
that fullrot hole, that venomous root.
I am metal in the sole

of your durashock boot, a body toggling
after an asp's mass of fiends—heathen
me, lurching low in the lichlands,

slaloming for meat—I am the flintlock,
the longfang, harpooning through air
the snare kept and coiled

on the battlefield a hoplite in scalemail,
this merciless gab, both ghost raid
and drone war, this star-garnet crown,

this whipcord in longhand is me as a snake
the charmer, the wrangler, the rat—those too
are me. and the slipknot. and the bullet—