

Stephen C. Middleton

Brave Angles

Joseph, from Martinique,
A musician (homeless)
Outside La Citie de la Musique, La Villette
“I carn walk”
No more (music)

Evokes French climber Lionel Terry
Snow-blind on Annapurna
“But I’d be able to manage on my own
If I could only *see*”

Deadbeat
A conqueror cruel reduced
To deadweight

Handicap
Pack ice

Dead reckoning
The horizon
To second guess the sky
With miraculous accuracy

A fourth man
And Brocken Spectres on the ridges
Judging a distance
To bridge

And the downside;
Crippled by frostbite
And morphine’s empty shell
A hell beyond pain

Maimed hands
Stuck to ice axe handles
A slip ever a false step away
The mountain graveyard beckons

And yet...
The impulse ripples in
Frail and frayed
At brave angles.

Stephen C. Middleton is a writer working in London, England. He has had five books published, including *A Brave Light* (Stride) and *Worlds of Pain / Shades of Grace* (Poetry Salzburg). He has been in several anthologies, including *Paging Doctor Jazz* (Shoestring), *From Hepworth's Garden Out* (Shearsman, 2010), & *Yesterday's Music Today* (Knives Forks And Spoons, 2015). For several years he was editor of *Ostinato*, a magazine of jazz and jazz related poetry, and The Tenormen Press. He has been in many magazines worldwide. He is currently working on projects (prose and poetry) relating to jazz, blues, politics, outsider (folk) art, mountain environments, and long-term illness.