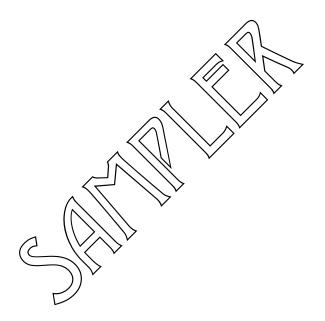
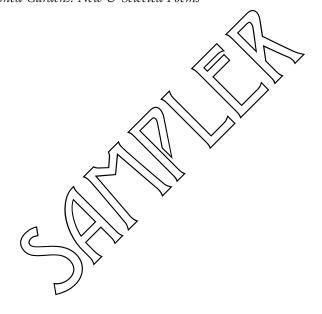
## One Step at a Time



## Also by Alice Kavounas

The Invited
Ornament of Asia
Thin Ice
Abandoned Gardens: New & Selected Poems



# Alice Kavounas



# First published in the United Kingdom in 2023 by Shearsman Books PO Box 4239 SWINDON SN3 9FN

Shearsman Books Ltd Registered Office 30–31 St. James Place, Mangotsfield, Bristol BS16 9JB (this address not for correspondence)

www.shearsman.com

ISBN 978-1-84861-894-7

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The author thanks the editors of the following publications in which several of these poems have initially appeared:

Artemis, Long Island Quarrerly (USA),

Poetry Bay (USA), The Poetry Review

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## Questions of Travel

## Elizabeth Bishop

'Continent, city, country, society:

the choice is never wide and rever free

And here or there ... No. Should we have stayed home,

wherever that may be?'

Final quatrain of the title poem of Elizabeth Bishop's collection, Questions of Travel, included in Complete Poems,

London: Spatto & Windus, 2004)



## For my brother





## I FOLLOW THE FOOTPATH

as narrow as my boot knee deep in brome's green waves.

Across five fields, snaking from home to Saint Keverne I follow the footpath

my eye on the steeple a daymark for sailors as they battle the waves.

Coming from Coverack turn left at Trevalsoe then follow the footpath

to Saint Kevernes grave and. Retrieved from ship weeks, souls rest here, placked from the waves.

What these exacestones reveal you might like to discern.
Learn who walked this footpath.
Who was swallowed by waves.

## PRETEND IT'S YOUR LIFE

Pluck an apple pretend it's your life

quarter it cleanly here's a sharp knife.

Devour the first juicy and white.

Savour the second such flavour, such bite.

Admit you're older take time with the third

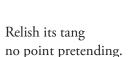
reserving the seeds observing its core.

Prepare yourself for life's lates wrin

and face up to the over-ripe quarter

alone on your plate small boat rocking

responding at once to the merest touch.



## ANOTHER MIDNIGHT

On my watch

the sweeping second hand

unstoppable no matter what

circling the numbered face

taking me closer

to yet another midnight

an end to today

racing into tomorrow

the sweep second han

oblivious to events

which might momentary

derail or indeed permanently

stop me in my tracks

urge me to hesitate sufficiently

to retreat reward.

This continuously sweeping second hand circling smoothly reverpausing

no end in sight

its measured meticulous count down

no more than a figment.

#### WHETHER WAKING GENTLY

as if to the whisper of an artist's brush across my face the caress of a horse's muzzle

its velvety invitation to pay closer attention or, surfacing suddenly, a wide-eyed deep sea diver

whose ocean floor exploratory has yielded ancient wrecks, glittering treasures Either way, as I slide between deep sleep

and consciousness, crossing that divide,
I can't at first recall a single detail of where I've been,
for a long moment not even street

what to do with this day nor, frankly, rock solid on what day of the week this is and although I'm fully awake

right now, honing every line, I'd be so much more precise if I could write otherently while fast asleep

expressing just how lost to this world I am inhabiting a parallel universe, full of vivid utterly unforgettable people

who insist on vanishing before my waking eye leaving more than a mere trace each morning, a tantalising sideways glance scraps of intriguing conversation the image of the door to a place I once knew well. Tell me

is all this a good thing? A bad thing? Or just a thing.



#### **BRONZE MANNIKIN**

(African Finch, Lonchura cuccullata)

Observe the precise pattern of scalloping edging the roof tiles of an undistinguished shed.

Consider the timeless welcome of a wingback chair, raucous yet homely in its orange and grey hairy-legged design. Note the sign signalling dangerous road ahead punctuating that gloomy landscape.

Humphrey Ocean's benign scrutiny seeing the world as if from a great height, in penetrating detail beguiled by the ordinary, sensing a significance in traffic signs, a characy yellow.

He captures an image, is captured by it, re-creating reality, adding to his palette of the world as only he sees it, widening the field of vision with every flick of his brush, each strake of colour illuminating a clump of trees, singling out a half timbered house revealing the mysterious poetry of rain.

And what has lately become my talisman is not a stone, nor a magic ring, but a singular bird, his majestic image of an African Finch, the Bronze Mannikin, tiny, gregarious, an eye keen as his own, watching me from the top of the stairs, reminding me, silently, how imperfectly I see.