1. Here I heard them. Here the big rocks. Here the place with the tent. Did you cut enough willows for the lines, did you hang them, are they treble are they single, we’ll need the right hooks for the bait. We walked across water so cold here it was burning. It was warm. When you put your slippers on you have to watch your step, the grass is wet the tiles are wet it’s pitched a little down. So here hold the rod. When you don’t know where you are –

2. In Ptolemy’s Geometry the uncharted is not far away. Written in lampblack ink made from soot. Where is she. Never far beyond Serica beyond Sinae nothing the island of Taprobane then nothing and Aurea Cheronesus. Did you hear them first. Did you tie the boat to the willow to a stone. Inscribed on a roll of papyrus cut from plants growing along the Nile Delta. Why have you chosen Ptolemy do you think –

3. Harry T. Kelsh’s patents (1949–55) for the machine he sat at for a decade – my father working the arms, tracing contours with mechanical pencils onto semi-transparent paper – include photogrammetric plotting, gimbaled
diaphragms for optical projection, stereoscopic projection, compensator designs for moving the floating mark of the mapping table, instead of the lenses. Hence the Kelsh machine. He sat me down. To trace a path—

4-
who could find his way
in the woods in the dark
in rainstorm and snow-cover
when he fell the first time
how did they know it
he said he was disoriented
who could tell which weed
which root some manner of knot
starlings in the blue crab
kingfish or jay on a low branch
of bobbing lindens
where were you going but
I don’t remember that
who waited the last night
quietly still through the long night
and holding her hand—

5-
I am seven or eight. He’s about thirty. Keep still now. Only cartography’s general reference map has the hubris to present the world, you know, as it really is, as if to say now and forever. Ground the heel to a stone, rock the rod to get your reading when the hash-mark’s high. Who carries me over water to our fire cicadas star-dots among weeping willows scent of the older herds. Any tree could be the axis mundi around which the universe turns—
6.
Here I heard them singing. Marsh wrens. Her singing.
Let’s chalk a path to the dining room. Let’s put
a piece of tape on the drain on the floor to the north-point.
This way we know where we are. His latitude expressed as
climata, the length of the longest day, not degrees of arc.
It’s where we stood. Furrows in a cornfield.
What Ptolemy called chorography was simply a survey,
it was not the world. He fell from a chair a ladder a tree –

7.
It’s maybe four miles from East Circle to Adams Street Place.
Place being where. Ptolemy’s purpose was not to imagine
the whole of natural existence but account for the known edge,
beyond which. He is eighty-eight. I am sixty. Beyond which
we can’t see. The arms the pencils the 5-D stereo-glasses
on a table stand. Limestone ledge there’s the back way down.
Bring it up slow and check what we caught. Here hold on.
I know where we’re going. She heard. I know. We won’t be back –