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From My Dance Is Mathematics: Poems From a Mathematics Teacher

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from *My Dance Is Mathematics:* *Poems From a Mathematics Teacher*

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GEOMETRY CLASS

Yesterday, some visitors
interrupted geometry class --
angry voices raged around the room,
unwilling to stay caged within my head,
while I spoke pleasantly
of axioms of incidence,
placements of parallels,
numbers of degrees
in the angles of rectangles.

*Wake up. This is not difficult --
no hungry mouths to feed, no
bleeding wounds to heal. Adopt
a polygonal attitude. Examine
an assumption. Abandon the postulate
that says, don't ever question.
You were not born knowing.
Your mind won't get dirty
on a tangent of hyperbolic thought.*

*Open up.
Let one eye watch
the parallels
that meet.
Shift to a point
of perspectivity.
Draw those lines
that cross
at your heart.*

My students
ignored these voices,
so I dismissed them
and went on --
politely coaxing
obtuse angles
to square up
and respond.

FINDING TIME

Points chase points
around the circle,
anti-clockwise,
fighting time.
You know time's a circle,
rather than a line.

Make a line a circle!
Pick a center.
Wrap and wrap and wrap
the line around the rim.
How do the ends
get tucked in?

Cut a circle open,
stretch into a line.
Does the cut destroy
a point or fit
between a pair?
If the cut's midway

from now to Tuesday,
how do I get there?
Do I move on
by going back,
or may I
skip a space?

A square is neither line
nor circle; it's timeless.
Points don't chase around
a square. Firm, steady,
it sits there and knows
its place. A circle
won't be squared.