



Shiva's Fly

*"He who knows the god Shiva, hidden in all beings,
is freed from all fetters."* (from the Upanishads)

A fly has landed on the forehead
of the man with criss-cross socks
who cleans the face of his watch
with an off-white handkerchief.

Wrapped in cotton, his finger
circles the glass face, clockwise.
He breathes - *ah* - and polishes again
this wind-up timepiece which was his father's.

He can't get on with digital ; you need in this world
hands and pointers.
Red numbers, like the ones on the wall clock,
are too self-important : executive numbers

that rush you about. Everyone wants
their turn to come, but he's not so bothered
these days. His father used to say : *time's round,
like your bike wheel. Ride the cycle,*

keep your balance and know when to get off.
Since his father's watch stopped, all he can feel
is *more*. This fly, for instance, on his skin,
settled now between his eye-brows.

Fiona Owen

This poem was commissioned by the poet David Hart on behalf of the Arts Council. It is one of a collection of fifty poems by different UK poets - each on the subject of waiting. The poems are for display in waiting rooms.