

## A Defence of Humour

*Too dark*, you say. *Don't take it so seriously*.  
And common sense is on your side, I guess.  
*Lighten up*, you say. *There's a funny side to everything*. And I agree with you, I really do.  
Most of my days are circus, edged with irony,  
at ease with postmodern multiplicities.  
Like the rest, I can detach, hold competing  
views, know we construct our own worlds.  
And, as you say, *humour is tolerance, brings balance*. No, I haven't lost it, honest. Why,  
today at the temple gate I walked past two  
children begging – and afterwards went  
somewhere nice for a drink, knowing  
its price would have fed them for a week.  
I sat in a cool pub with jokey tourists  
and expats, listening to anecdotes, jotting  
parodic lines to entertain the crowd at  
future readings. Believe me, my days  
are loaded with humour. In fact I laugh  
more than most. Look – I have evidence –  
a note to me from Thùy: *I love your laf*.

Yesterday, riding my bicycle at dusk  
through Hanoi's old quarter – those busy  
winding streets full of amusing incident –  
I came upon a traffic hazard in the form  
of a paralysed young man, dragging himself  
along the road with his elbows, clutching  
a small plastic container empty of money.  
The dust choked him. People ignored him.  
Or refused to see him. But – unfortunately –  
he wasn't invisible to me because my front  
wheel almost ran onto his poor dead feet.  
I thought, since there are no services here  
to help him, I'd stop and tell him a good  
joke but then reminded myself there are  
many millions like him in the world  
and just not enough jokes to go around.

Sandy Fitts