Methods of Survival

by Grace Westwood.

My friend is getting a divorce,
I am thinking about pain
the reason cited—a loss of love.
I imagine the flame above my hand
But he still loves her.
I pull the thought from the heat
The legal people say run,
consider a tree up in smoke
so he does, for his own protection.
it stays still as Thích Quảng Đức
He pours his panic over me daily,
not a flinch until there is only ash
swimming length after length
why do trees accept the burning
he says, what am I if not a husband,
why do plants not run from pain
a father—she's taking the children away.
how humans run from pain
I comfort him with words
their roots hold tight to the ground
but he is burnt out.
they bloom in flowers and fruit
Time is a healer, I say,
given straight to our hands
but he's convinced he'll die most days.
they live slowly
Says he'll never marry again—
give gently
humans survive because of pain.
and thrive by being loved
And so I love him, invisibly.