

ROBERT GREENE

Band of Aides

while I held my baby by her shoulders
the vaccination nurse moved towards us like an amoeba

after that first heel stick there was a silent stirring
as she furrowed her brow and poked out her lower lip

then she fought just like I fought
the psychiatric aides years ago

who made me guzzle liquid charcoal
to clear the trunks from my overdosed system

her wails make me think of how I yelled rape
when they forced the catheter

our attempts to comfort her after the “all done”
moved my mind to those months on the veterans’ psychward

head counts every fifteen minutes from the mental health aides
who woke me every odd hour in those odd days

ROBERT IAN GREENE is a first-year MFA poetry student of John Balaban and Dorianne Laux at North Carolina State University. Greene was born on the former Air Force Base in Blytheville, Arkansas and is a veteran of the US Army. His work has appeared in *Tar River Poetry* and *The New York Quarterly*.