

The New Criterion

Poems

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Finding the tintype

by [X.J. Kennedy](#)

Those boughs stay green from which began
Garlands of flesh: my Gran, who spread
Twelve babies in her double bed
As one might open a fan,

While constant in baptismal black,
Of every blessing, pound by pound,
In this bouncing Bible goatskin-bound,
My grandfather kept track.

They died in hopes of early rise.
In Scripture's sheets their faces slept
Where Jacob's pinned-down angel kept
Watch by their couch with steelcut eyes

Through ninety winters, buried deep
Till now. Their glances, crisp as sage,
Rise from their good book's crumbling page,
Pressed fern fronds someone wished to keep.

X.J. Kennedy is **X. J. Kennedy**'s new and selected poems were published in Spring 2007 by Johns Hopkins.

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