

# The New Criterion

## Poems

September 2006

### 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

[more from this author](#)

This article originally appeared in The New Criterion, Volume 25 September 2006, on page 72

Copyright © 2009 The New Criterion | [www.newcriterion.com](http://www.newcriterion.com)

<http://www.newcriterion.com/articles.cfm/finding-tintype-2459>