

The New Criterion

Poems

November 2009

Back of the hand

by [Dick Allen](#)

There's not much of interest here,
lumina, fingernails,
risen veins, joints, tendons,
skin wrinkles,

but when you give me it,
it's like the slap
of a backhanded compliment,
or a sharp rap

on the knuckles,
and my eyes smart,
bad blood rushes between us,
it becomes evident

there will be no turning
your hand around,
no new grip of friendship,
no open palm,

just that flick of wrist tel ...

Dick Allen's new volume of poems, *Present Vanishing*, has won the 2009 Connecticut Book Award for Poetry.

[more from this author](#)

This article originally appeared in The New Criterion, Volume 28 November 2009, on page 26

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