

There Was A Boy Whose Hands Were A Language

There was a boy whose hands were a language
When he woke mornings he showed them to his mother
And they became two brown wings of a sparrow
Or leaves or even snow falling past his bedroom window

When it was spring his hands were new flowers
Pushing up through the earth
Like bright buttons through the eyes of a dark coat

In summer his hands were wind blowing in the grass
And golden apples burning holes in a green leafy sky

Sometimes the boy's hands brushed across the air
And his mother knew they had become a stone
Or a water spider jumping across the surface of a lake
As easy as a finger flicking a sawdust ring

Sometimes the boy's hands struggled like a wrestler
And his mother knew there was a storm approaching
Or the boy's sister had fallen off her bicycle
And once they became fists
And fell to his sides like tears
And she knew a dog had been struck by a train



Poem For Stephen Foster

I too sing the old songs, Stephen
I do it with my heart against the earth

I sing about horses and rivers and women
Ah, but they are your words and so you should know

But I also sing about the sun,
how it spins around and never stops
I sing while I still have earth under me

How long has it been
since you've sung the old songs?

Sing just one more song, Stephen
The moon is your banjo-head!

