

Blue Spruce
Stephen Perry

While teaching creative writing—at Long Beach City College; University of California, Irvine; and the UCLA Extension Writers' Program—Stephen Perry (b. 1950) has published more than sixty-five poems in anthologies and in journals such as the *New Yorker*, *Yale Review*, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, *Kenyon Review*, *Antioch Review*, and *Salmagundi*. Perry has also served as poetry consultant to the Disney Corporation—the only such consultant in the company's history. He is currently seeking a publisher for his collection of poems, *Homecoming*. Perry shares a "co-dependent" Web site with his author wife, Susan Perry, and invites readers to visit and interact with them at www.bunnyape.com.

Referring to "Blue Spruce," Perry reveals, "When I read this poem at poetry readings, I usually tell people that everything in the poem is true, except for the title. There were no blue spruces (that I know of) in the little town in Missouri where I set the poem. I just like the double pun on 'blue' and 'spruce.'" The poem was published in the *New Yorker* in 1991.

My grandfather worked in a barbershop
smelling of lotions he'd slap on your face,
hair and talc. The black razor strop

5 hung like the penis of an ox. He'd draw
the sharp blade in quick strokes over
the smooth-rough hide, and then carefully

over your face. The tiny hairs would gather
on the blade, a congregation singing
under blue spruce in winter,

10 a bandstand in the center of town
bright with instruments, alto sax, tenor
sax, tuba or sousaphone—the bright

oompah-pahs shaving the town somehow,
a bright cloth shaking the air
15 into flakes of silvering hair

floating down past the houses, the horses
pulling carriages past the town fountain,
which had frozen into a coiffure

20 of curly glass. My grandfather had an affair
with the girl who did their nails
bright pink, bright red, never blue,