

2018

## Dirty Old Man Talks to Himself Behind His Back

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### Recommended Citation

Firmat, Gustavo Pérez (2018) "Dirty Old Man Talks to Himself Behind His Back," *Birmingham Poetry Review*. Vol. 45, Article 42.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.library.uab.edu/bpr/vol45/iss2018/42>

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*Gustavo Pérez Firmat*

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For several minutes he has been watching three squirrels chasing one another up and down the scaly trunk of a pine tree. They jump to the sweetgum and start all over, spiraling around. Are the first two chasing the third, or is the second one pursuing the first and the third the second?

All of a sudden, the order is reversed: the third chases the second chasing the first. What's this? Desire? Pique? Nuttiness?

D.O.M. gets up, opens the sash window. The creaking scatters the squirrels into the woods. He sits down again, places the heating pad against the back of the chair. The room is still buzzing. Nothing to do.

Moments later he looks up from the book. There they are, leaping like gymnasts, one after the other, from the trunk of the pine tree. Destination: birdfeeder. They lunge, barely miss, crash land on the azaleas. Then begin again.