Poetry by Jim Blackburn  
Art by Isabelle Scurry Chapman
Great-tailed Grackle

Through my office window I see
Three male grackles, their iridescent
Green-black-purple feathers puffed out,
Tails spread - wanting to be noticed
By the reticent lady nearby.

The pale blue morning sky provides a background
For the bright and varied greens of the pecan
Whose leaves lift up toward the sun,
Removing carbon, producing oxygen, supporting me.

I walk outside and feel the warmth of the sun,
Affirming to myself that I am alive and
Part of this wonderful planet full of living things
That fit together for the benefit of all.
We fight about whether God created it
Or whether it all came out of the Big Bang
And fail to stop and appreciate that it
And we are what we are -
Alive and inextricably connected.

The grackles fly up to the sweet gum
And continue their courting,
Moving from limb to limb,
Life being lived beside the place where I work.

Peace enters the stoop of my soul,
Gently and softly calming me.
Peace that comes from being connected
To a purple-black bird looking for love.
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OUT OF
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AND URGE.
IN THE INFIN
MOMENT...
The Great-tailed Grackle 3

Jogging around Rice on a hot July day
Preparing to defend the whooping cranes.

Our panel of 5th Circuit appellate judges
Has just been announced -
Three hard jurists for an environmental case
Seeking findings of liability against a state
For harming endangered species.

I feel the heat and the oppression
Of the Houston July, magnified by concern
About our chance to protect that excellent
District Court decision – one offering hope
Of water inflows to San Antonio Bay to avoid
A repeat of the killing of 23 cranes
By Texas officials.

Looking to the side of the trail,
I see a bedraggled male grackle,
Standing with his beak open,
Tongue seemingly dangling,
Feathers askew,
Looking like a man having a bad day
And I smile as I pass and say
“Hello my brother,
I feel your pain”.
On the jogging track at Rice
Before the 5th Circuit argument
On the whooping cranes.