

Why else

by [Capers Limehouse](#) in the [November 16, 2010](#) issue

It may be that we are the mockingbirds
of the universe.

 No bee studies to imitate
the bower bird and build
postmodern hives of sticks and debris,

no bear hibernates in a tree
on a platform of bent branches,
exploring the experience of gorillas,
 no walking
or crawling creature spends its life desperate
to build wings;

 no other creature here sees
a meteor streak across space and thinks—
I could do that.

 Or watches army ants destroy
everything in their path and forms ranks.

Or maybe we are this small locus of the universe
watching itself,
 thinking itself through.

Why else would some of us study
ancient stone
 bones our whole lives,
arguing passionately
 over how they ran,
what kind of mothers they were,
how anything that size had sex,

much less the frozen moons
of far distant planets

where nothing
will ever buy or sell us anything;

why else the Sistine Chapel,
or *Guernica*, why else poems, why else prayers,
why else words at all?