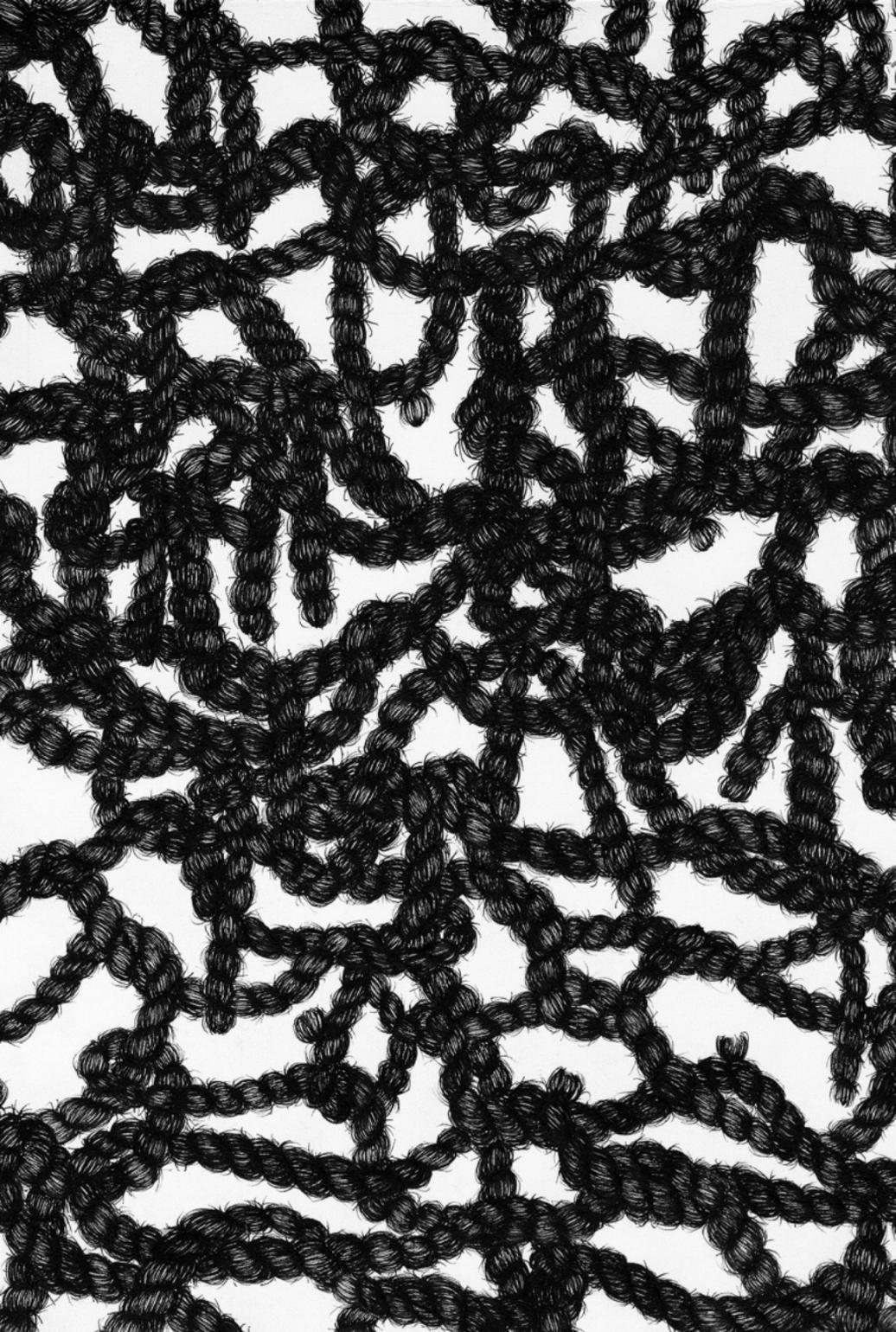


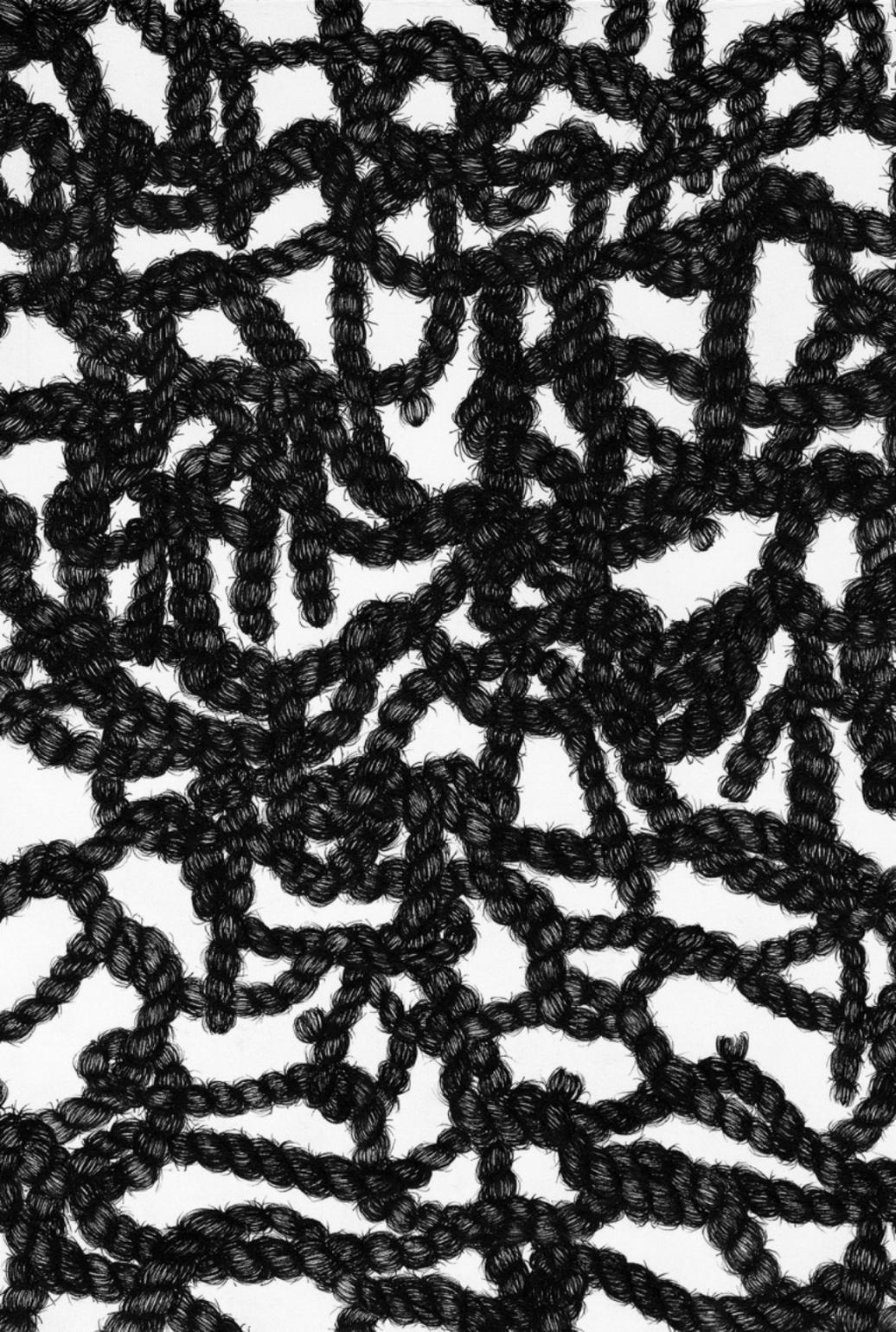
**THE MYTH  
OF THE  
PHRASEMAKER'S PARROT**

**Kathryn Shriver**

IN THE BEGINNING  
(IT IS ALWAYS THE  
BEGINNING)









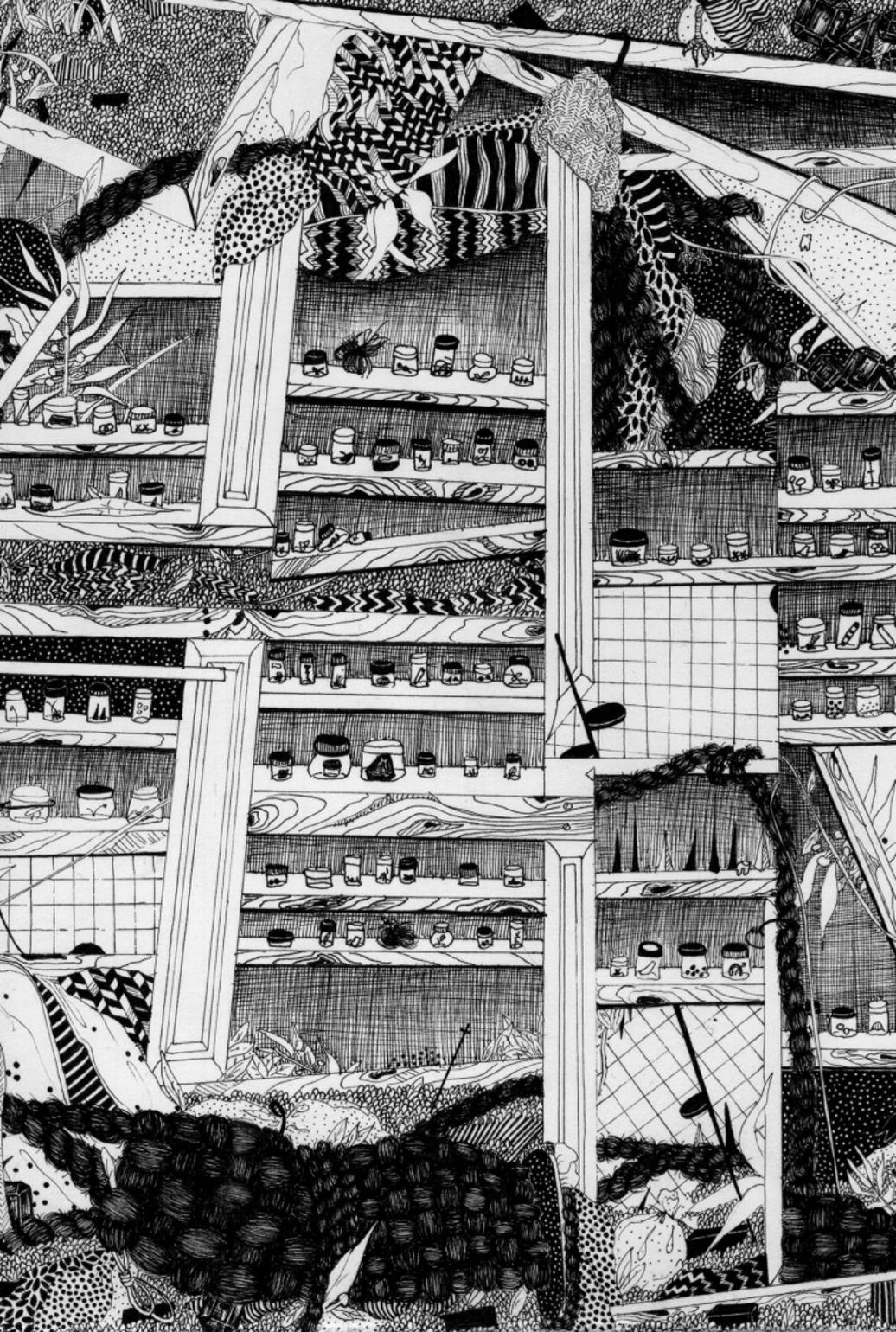
## THE PHRASEMAKER'S WORKSHOP (I)

The phrasemaker's workshop, though highly romantic in character and tradition, was sparse, fresh, and clean. A luminous taupe sat on the walls and a coarse and absorbent burlap spread itself over numerous tables. The rug was made of rough and woven twine, which was heavy, but not insistent enough in its weight to prevent the flowering grasses and brave little spriggets of leafy foliage growing under it from poking through periodically, especially in the early summer.

In this single room, there were many planes and many corners and spaces which crossed through each other, but the phrasemaker used and loved all of them. None of them were designated apart from each other for particular tasks, and there was a richness in their many intersecting interactions. Though each had particular qualities, no hierarchy emerged around them and the phrasemaker benefitted from each section and planar fraction individually as well as worked successfully in their various crossfires.

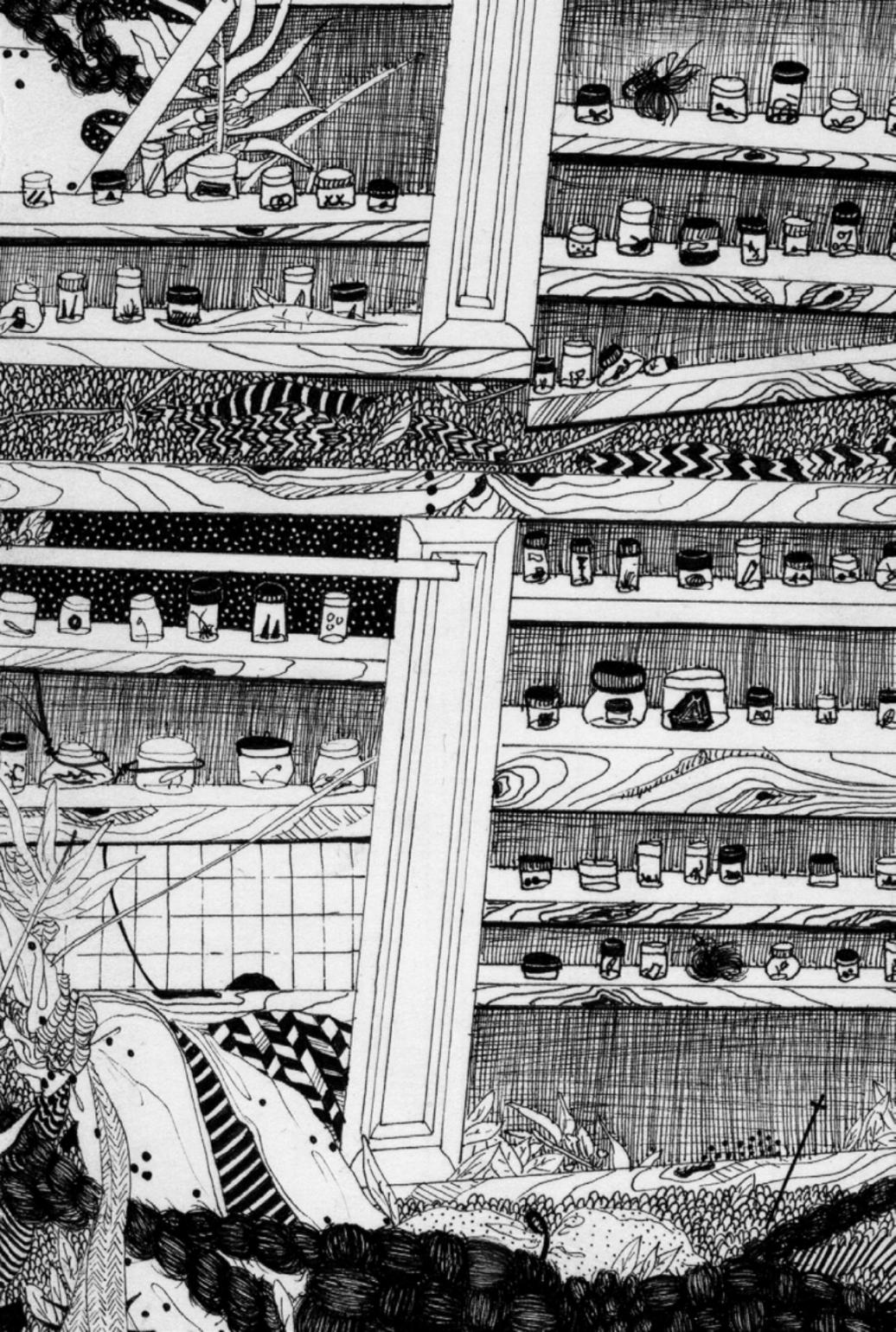
The mainstage matter of this workspace, however, significant as the upholstery and spatial energies are, were the lines and stacks and piles and masses of civilizations of little glass jars communing on the windowsill, sitting on shelves and chairs and tables like small towns or good dogs and cats lazily passing the time until lunch. Each of these little jewels held the various materials employed in the phrasemaker's work.

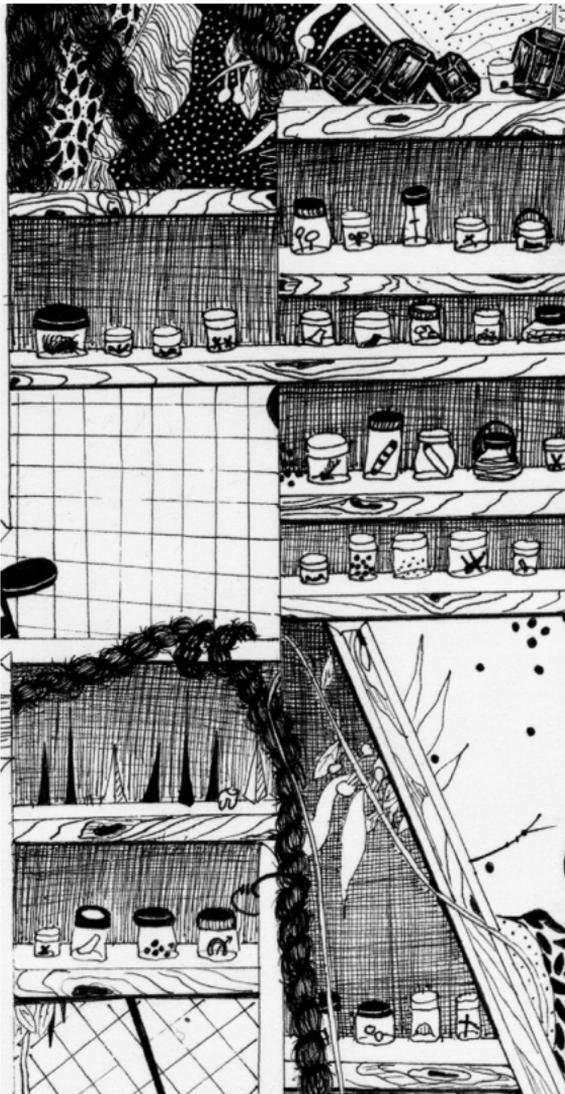
These jars were the moveable and multiple homes of the great collection of raw and worked matter that was the material with which (and through which) the phrasemaker's daily, never ending task was carried out. Each jar held a different bit of something, and thus a different moment and set of ever lingering, rotating, hiding and reviving associations and signs. Chunks of phosphorous, tanglets of small strings, bits of body matter, gray matter, dark matter, heavy matter, mercurial matter, thoughts, glass, thoughts trapped in glass, glass caught in thoughts, silver and litters of glitter and frayed leaves, chapped lips, empty chalk outlines, the loosened and strayed eyebrows that fell from the people of the subway, broken (finger) nails and pearls birthed from the mouth, spirits spat from the forehead, and every other earthly, celestial, and hellish material one might or might not imagine lived in these jars.

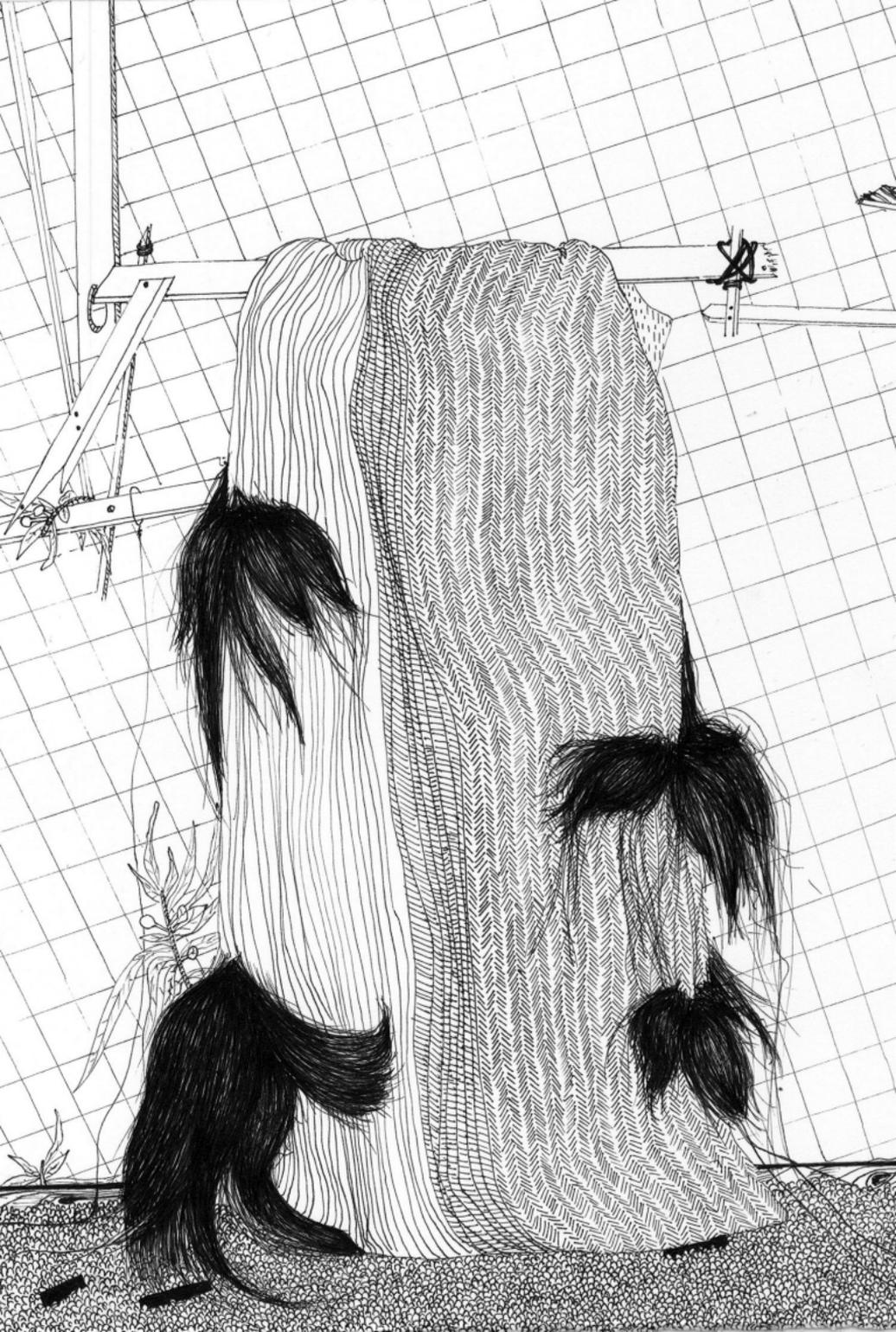


There from the beginning of time, before the phrasemaker, before the workshop, these jars, like inherited reliquaries existed and multiplied themselves, fell back in on themselves, proliferated and generated their materials—baby cosmos preserved and suspended in many jars—and were only added to nominally by the phrasemaker after the workshop had just one day formed around the collection of matter, which happened only after that historical moment when compartmentalization and architectural distinction of space presented itself as somehow necessary to existence and definition.

The matter in the jars was thus of a self-spawning potential. It was all timeless and unregimented, reacting to everything and nothing according to the criteria of the incredible singularity of the particular hello, good bye moment it found itself in. The phrasemaker, like a wanderer coming upon a large and forgotten inheritance of a lineage mysteriously disappeared, at some indeterminate origin had met up with this collection and took up the work most appropriate to this horde of material.



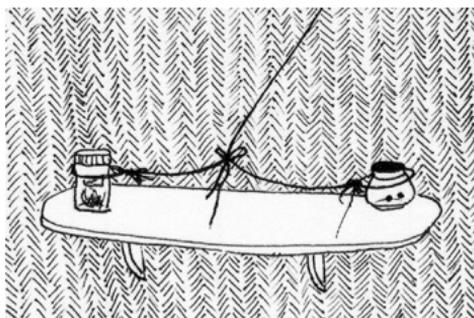




## THE PHRASEMAKER (II)

With this collection of accumulated, emergent, and gathered bits of material—or whatever it is that makes up everything—as the starting point of meaning, the phrasemaker would enter the workshop each morning (or any-time, as time is liquid and pliable and seeps through cracks and moves inward and outward in all directions) and begin, continue to work. Not exactly critically (as authorial claims and intentions are quite impossible and counter-productive when working with such quantities of infinity) but certainly sensitively and deliberately extracting bits out from particular jars that made the most sense that day, paying attention to those which conversed with each other most fervently, the phrasemaker would set to work gathering and brushing these bits of pieces into meaning, spinning meaning into notions, knotting these notions into words, and parceling these words into phrases. These phrases were then uttered by the phrasemaker and the phrasemaker's environment alike in a holistic but disenchanting incantation and then set off through various windows.

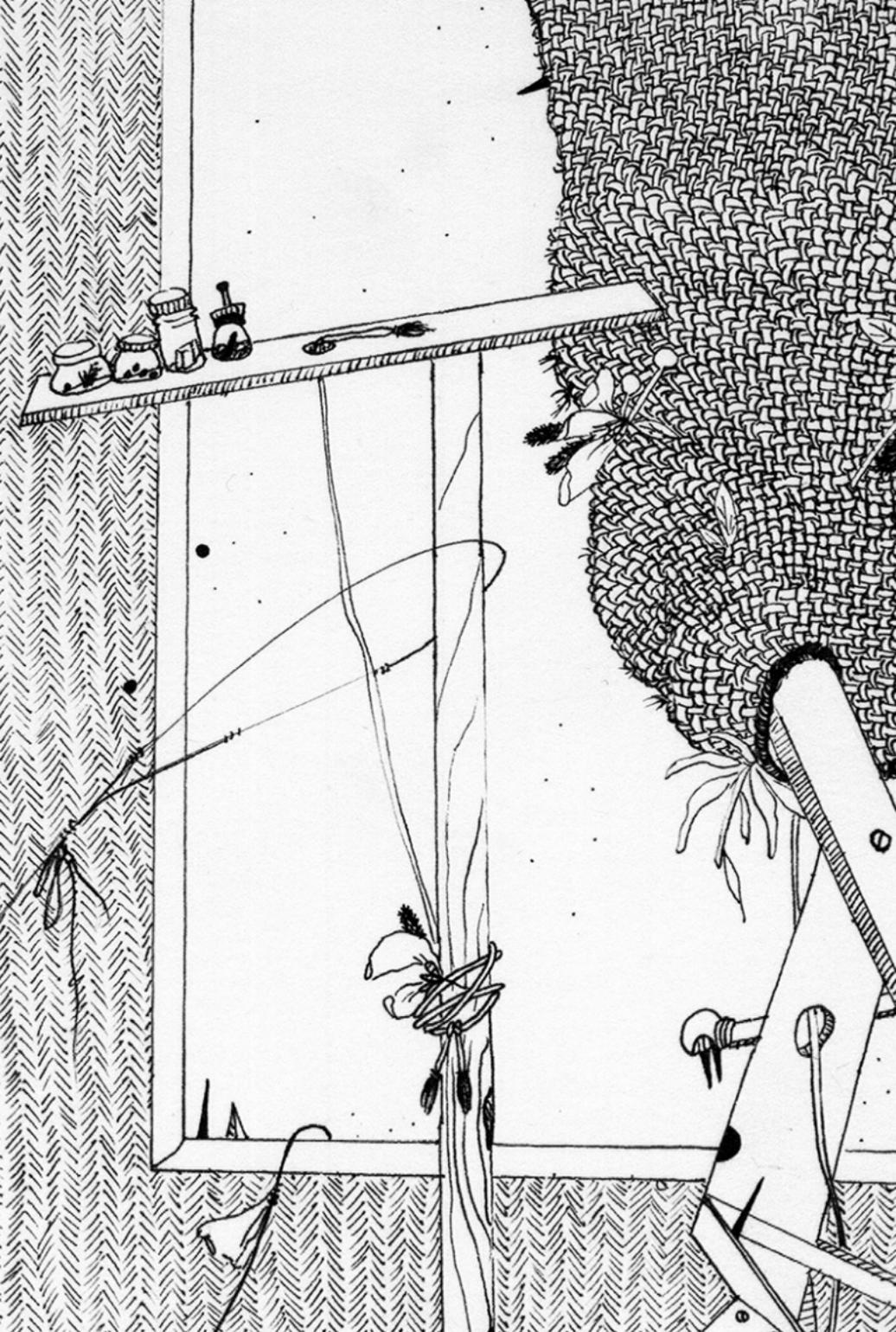
And these phrases—they would fall down to the rest of the earth in droplets and in tablets, in candies and pennies dropped from high enough to kill someone below on impact. They grew up and lived on earth in the dew carried on the backs of leeches, the croaks of frogs, metallic dust coughed up by a stranger's imagination, and the vibrations of moles that died underground. Each phrase was absorbed and all soaked up as sustenance by various things and distributed again as energy into the world that was tenable in different ways through different objects, absorbed and understood by different ways in different humans. They would be processed and embedded as our world of objects—already entangled in our internet of things—accessed, erased, materialized, shifted and padded around in murky waters with meaning.



The phrasemaker, as you may now gather, was thus in no way a workaday craftsman, nor any type of artist, philosopher, god or allegory, but an open-minded, sensitive reactor—a medium between material and meaning—which, at the end of the day, is a series of events, activities, forces, findings, histories and potentials.

The phrasemaker so recycled, cycled, and situated matter, notions, substrate, and the entire realm of the virtual, into digestible, ephemeral-solid, intellectual-intuitive, and mobile bites. The nature of this work was to process and re-present, to reclaim, to take on meaning of any kind, to march it forward, disrupt it and push it back, to send it out before it's over-ready, to let it seep through cracks after it's over-processed, to proliferate it before it has a leg to stand on, and to offer up material as material. The phrasemaker's work happened, and it just so happened that this work embedded in the world mysteries to audit, problems to work out, memories that might resurface and latch on to other things. All wrapped up in this work were the potent interactions

that still today occur so that logic might be complex and creative and so that ideas may be difficult or simple and in the end reach a convoluted coherence. Phrases fallen down started networks forming around pressure points and moments of dense concentration or around, within, and between small objects under rocks marinating in magic from the 9th or the 36th century. The forward, revolving, diagonal, backward, upside down movement of comprehension and our old ability to vibrate around like air were all in great debt to the brushed, spun, woven and dropped material that made these phrases that were plunked down to earth. The wandering of words like find, wonder, form, relate, connect, figure, and especially apophenia into various places in our vocabulary has been quite familiarly related to the work once done by this peculiar worker in this particular workshop with this unparticular material.







### THE PHRASEMAKER'S PARROT (III)

In the same, aforementioned workshop—where the bur-lap sat with the absorbent, grand silence of very old forests and soaked up the significance of the place sweating off of the walls in a misty residue which mingled with oxygen given off by the plants—there watched over a parrot with a recording mind and a decisive eye.

This parrot was innocent and governed very much by the stories that Victorian scientists tell of nature and circumstance. The parrot had no name for it needed none, as it meant and was everything it saw and did. It absorbed and contributed to its small world of the workshop, and had this to its credit instead of a name. It had landed in our story both by simple consequence of the workshop itself and (and this is perhaps only hearsay) by the fact that it had one day, intensely inquisitive as it was, followed up a phrase that was falling from the workshop on a Thursday when time was running circular (as it sometimes does) and when gravity had flopped sideways for half of the third side of the afternoon. Not knowing that the so-called laws of nature were sometimes so playful, the parrot had never imagined that it had followed the phrase so far from its original home, and thus met no panic at finding itself in the workshop and adopting this new dwelling, always assuming it was a short flight away from everything it held familiar. In many ways in many moments the parrot was not wrong about this.

During the timeframe with which our story is concerned, the parrot had been for so long living so closely with the phrasemaker and so engagedly within the workshop, that it had developed a critical mind and a conscious receptivity, (but to which it is only fair to say it was already quite predisposed). Our parrot, enthusiastic and curious as it was, spent its days carefully attentive to the phrasemaker, but even more so to the phrases that were grown and uttered in the workshop, in which it had a great intellectual interest. However, the parrot's eye and beak were somewhat unfortunately procedural and its vocal cords governed by debossing repetition, consistency, and the illusion thereby created of a hardened path of sameness in our world.



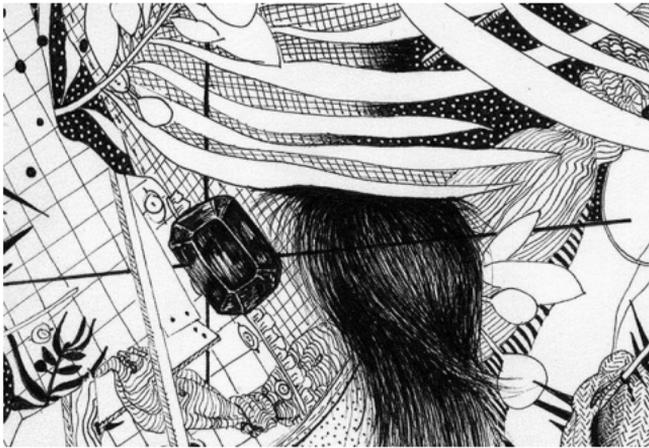
So it filled its moments letting each phrase that passed through and out of that growing, multi-planar, absorbent room imprint itself on its mnemonic mind. But due to the fragile specificity of a moment, the complexity of our world and the hard fact that everything is everything, however, the phrasemaker's parts and pieces, materials and processes would never add up to phrases that could be recognized as repeated; there were too many contexts, clauses, transfluences and cadences in a phrase and all its raw materials and specificities of reception to ever reoccur in a way that would allow it to really overlap exactly with a previous path stamped in the parrot's memory. However, so many of these infinite, subtle varieties were too minute, transient and contingent to be picked up by the parrot's brain functions. Consequentially, like mixed metaphors piled onto multiple allusions and allegories, like the same book read out loud and out of sync by fifty different people at once, hazy, best-fit lines were stamped into refrains in the parrot's mind and the parrot, not registering the differences, was only able to garble out the cheerfully, fruitfully incoherent sound of many nearly-overlapped

phrases overlaid one on top of the other, revealing their infinite and subtle varieties, which became more evident in the multiple and simultaneous syllables shoved out from the parrot's proud and chipper beak.

Our clawed and feathered friend thus lived—nesting among the leafy walls of the workshop, clumsily disturbing the contents of various jars, curiously chewing up leftover phrases, helping the phrasemaker with the choosing of materials, and trying to understand, all the while burbling and hiccupping phrases.

This vocal rendering of the innumerable phrases that it had presumed to have memorized and pinned down and was attempting to resolutely understand was, among many other things, a desperately generous and joyful attempt to communicate with everything it lived near.

The workshop, the rich matter in the jars, and the phrasemaker too for that matter, all gently and calmly smiled at the bird, occasionally gathering bits of the creative and complex sounds sent out by its vocal chords, each quietly pleased with the fortunately generative nature of this noisy song which the poor parrot conceivably practiced as something akin to an academic recitation.



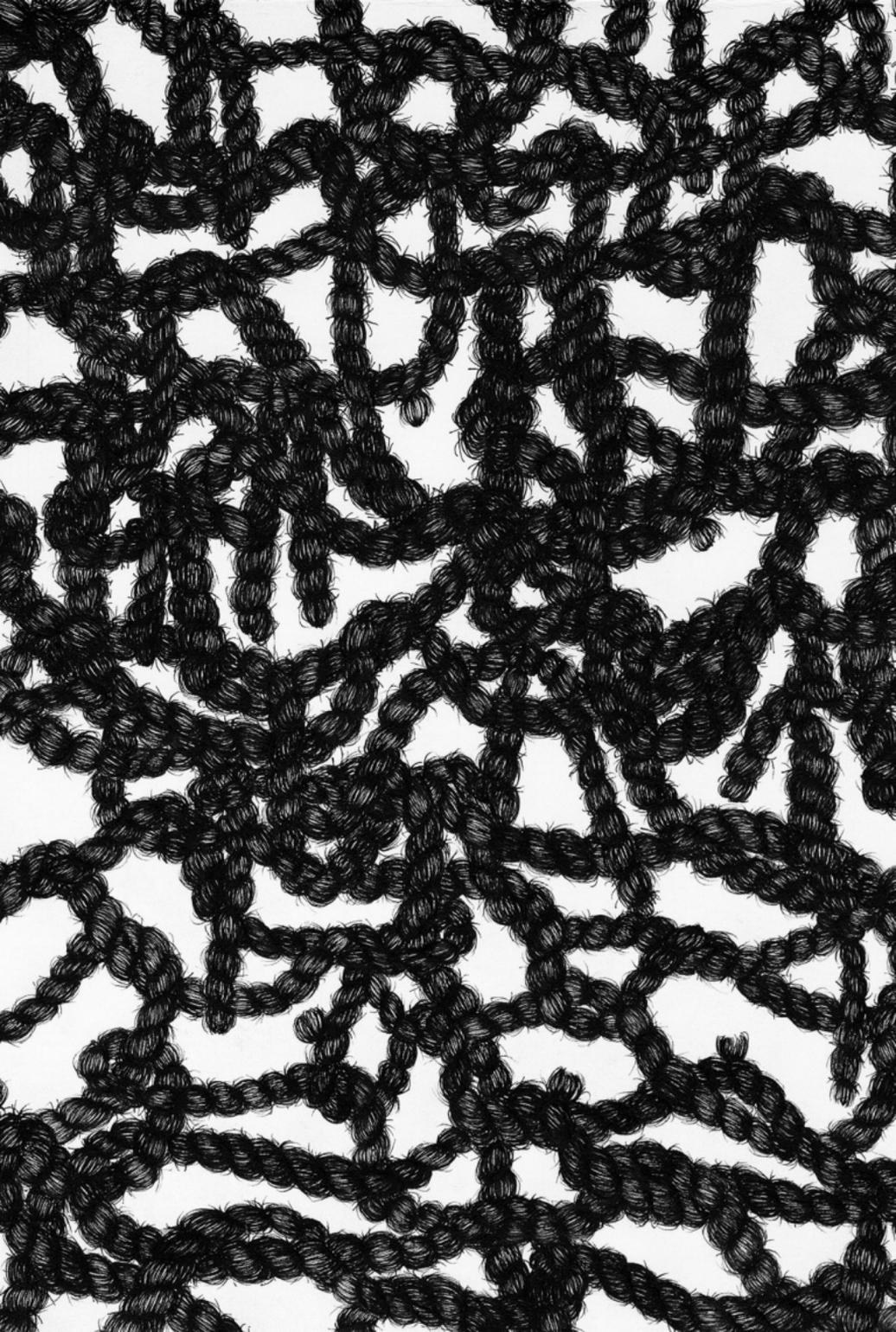
And so, the parrot—the hero and the villain of our tale—caught between a mechanical brain and empathy to spare, spent its days soaking up infinite subtleties while its brain condensed multiplicity into sameness, only for its voice to betray the utter myth of congruency and to foster the generation of new material altogether.

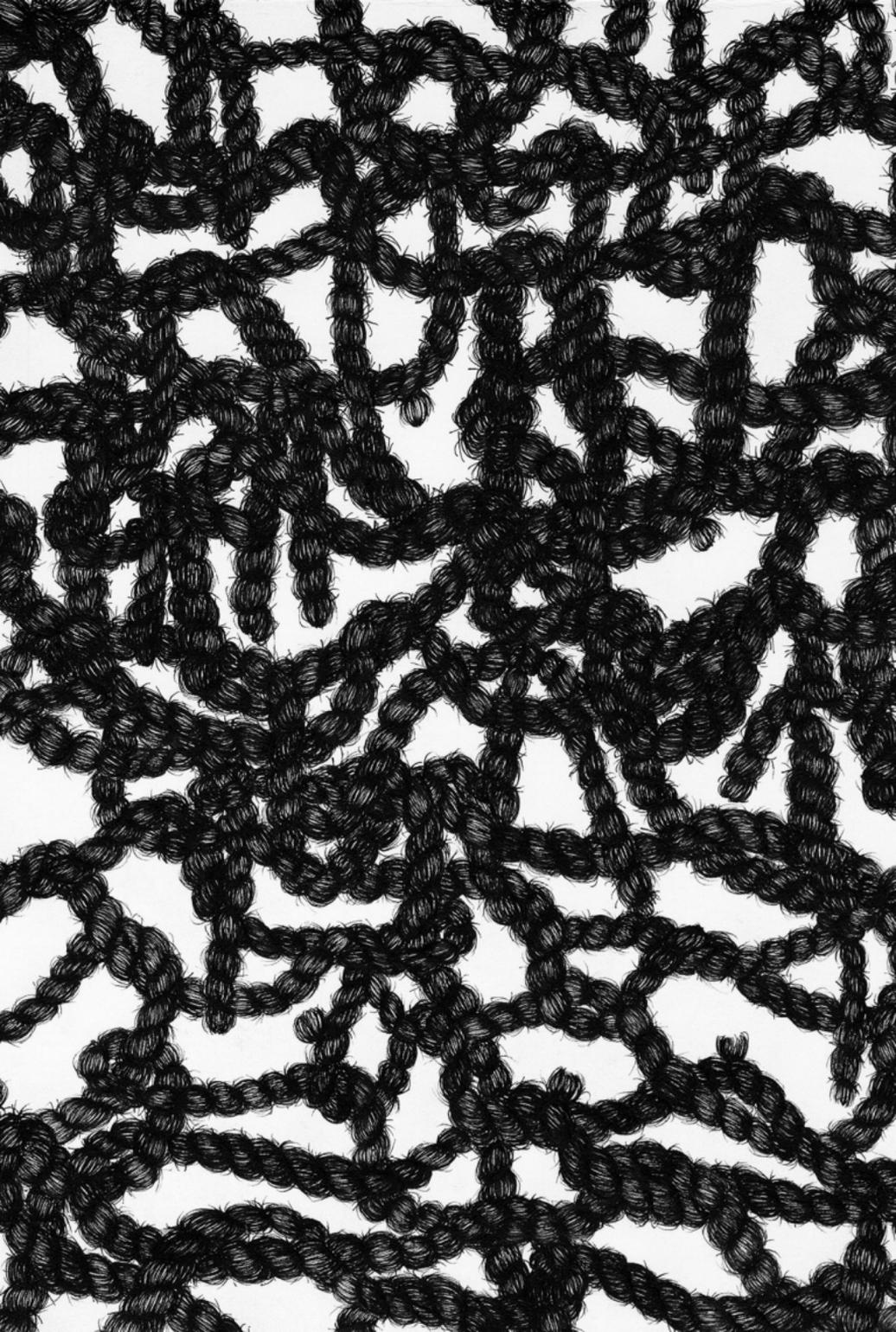
Just like the 24th of February comes every year, but only between certain centuries in certain cities and certain minds...

Just like an erasure is a violence against the future rather than the past...

And in exactly the same way that pacing back and forth will eventually erode one's bones...

The parrot, until the end of its days (if it ever reached them), forever understood the world through reoccurrence, but continued unknowingly and triumphantly to celebrate the inescapability of difference.

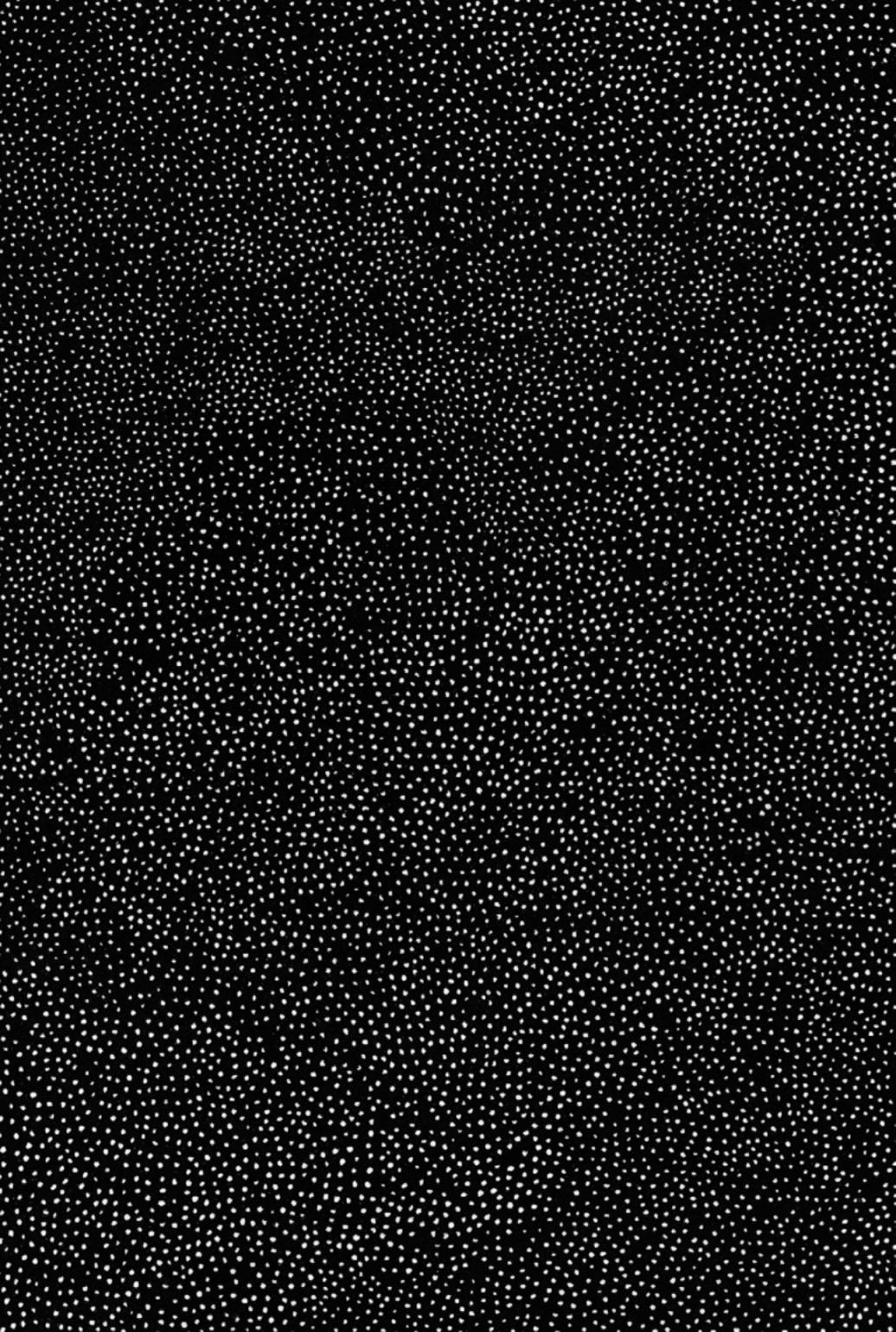




IN THE END

(IT IS ALWAYS THE BEGINNING)





**THE END**



THEY SEARCHED FOR TRANSPARENCY IN SPECKLED FURS  
AND ROUGH-CUT BURLAP,

BUT IT WAS GRACE AND ETYMOLOGIES  
THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN CHASED INSTEAD

I WAS BORN OF DEN-SOAKED BURLAP, WANTING  
SO BADLY TO BE A PROPHET, TO LEARN  
FROM THE ORACLE IN THE MOVIE





THOSE WERE DEEP AND  
TROUBLED OCEANS, WERENT THEY

ALL RESEARCH IS NOW APOPHENIA





IT GOT COLD IN THE TROPICS AND I GOT HOT IN MY FACE

**THE END,  
AGAIN**

