

if the chaos of the past two years overwhelms
my chaotic mind, the antidote is to write.

to filter the wild thoughts, ask them to wait their turn to
be made visible, letter upon letter on the page. the line of
ink, the gaze anticipating its trail, the scritch of the nib on
the tooth of the paper, this is thought made physical.

like a meditative breath, the single point of pen and ink
finds stillness.

having written my way through any number of mad crazy
days in the decade before our eldest was born, i knew
the solace in a page. i wrote in tiny letters that could surf
bumpy streets on crowded buses, standing crushed in
corners, endlessly waiting, hunched over to keep rain off
the page.

i kept a sketchbook where i thought the real work was
done. writing was clarifying, strengthening, a dancer at
the gym, a pianist running scales.

writing is getting out of my own way.

only it isn't just that.

i read about morning pages after i became a mother and
lost my idea of myself, until the midwife and my sweet-
heart steered me firmly back to art. the pages brought
me around. by the time the babe was two i'd received an
artist's grant for a project.

morning pages didn't happen in the morning. i tucked
them in as all the women before me, between lunch and
naptime and washing up. before i ever balanced a cat on
my lap, with a toddler i practiced lefthanded play-dough
while righthanded scribbling. notebook and pen burned in
my pocket like a smoker shelters cigarettes.

i wrote,
freezing at playgrounds, cuddling a sleeping child,
catching the moment.

the worst is to reach the last page with nothing more to
write on. as a student i'd backtrack through margins,
insert extra papers, stitch up signatures to get by.

then the years of unfaithful, disposable pens. holding so
little of substance, wasting away with every line,
unceremoniously drying up.

my sweetheart's devotion is visible in my fountain pen, ink
pots, notebooks. my patron.
the pen, my steady companion, the bottle of ink, a bank
of health. to lose that pen is to lose my mind. in all these
years i never have.

writing my weight in pages led
to the journal
of small
work.*