Writing in Time
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Writing in Time: Emily Dickinson's Master Hours.

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**Dear Master / I am ill – (A 827)**

**Date:** Composed, or possibly copied from an earlier (initial or intermediate) draft (not extant), and probably revised on the same occasion, in ink, ca. spring 1858.

**Material:** One sheet, folded vertically into two leaves (each leaf = 187 × 123 mm) of wove, cream, blue-ruled stationery, later hand-folded horizontally into quarters.

**Provenance:** Discovered among Dickinson’s papers after her death.

**Initial custody:** Unsent in Dickinson’s lifetime; no evidence of circulation of a copy of or similar to this document has been found.

**Secondary custody:** MS likely passed from Lavinia Norcross Dickinson to Mabel Loomis Todd, ca. 1891; from Todd to Millicent Todd Bingham, ca. 1952; and from Bingham to Amherst College, 1956, where it was catalogued by Jay Leyda as A 827.

**Current custody:** Amherst College Archives & Special Collections.


**Summary of authorial interventions in the text:**
Leaf 1, verso, line 7: ED added the second “e” (closed form) in ink to “Indeed”.

Leaf 2, recto, lines 17–18: After first writing, “I cannot talk any more / tonight” ED struck through “talk” and “more” in favor of the variants “stay” and “longer”—both written above the line and slightly to the right of the words they replace. At this time, ED seems also to have proposed “now” as a possible variant for “tonight” but she rejected this alternate, canceling “now” and proposing that the lines read “I cannot stay any longer / tonight”.

**Authorial changes to the document:** Leaf 2, recto, header: ED spilled a drop of ink.
Dear Master
I am ill —
but grieving more
that you are ill, I
make my stronger hand
work long eno' to tell
you - I thought perhaps
you were in Heaven,
and when you spoke
again, it seemed
quite sweet, and
wonderful, and surprised
me so — I wish that
you were well.
I would that all I
The load was on the mountain. The water was
up high. The river was
rising. The sky was
cloudy. The sun was
setting. It is flooding.
And there are fields
of ocean and 10
and for his anguish
I went into those
prisons. I need that
I am free. The
Mothers Charlie and
Charlie Robert for you
You made what
My Father Ever
Then they were
his children. I gave
them messages.

They said what this
was in the black sea
when the three goes
down, and so on.
The train went again, I made
I was not all for that.
They had been the
Villa in the
Carly Callahan on the
hill, making sure time
the Callahan, into the
train on their way.
Whether he was in the
lodge, like Mr.
I can’t think that
it was, for Mr.
Please me
Here thing when next
it would, and say.
Write to me. This son.
love, should be weak no more. The Violets are by my side - the Robin very near - and “Spring” - they say, Who is she - going by the door - Indeed it is God’s house - and these are gates of Heaven, and to and fro, the angels go, with their sweet postillions – I wish that I were great, like Mr - Michael Angelo, and could paint for you. You ask me what my flowers said - then they were disobedient – I gave them messages –

They said what the lips in the West, say, when the sun goes down, and so says the Dawn –

Listen again, Master.

I did not tell you that today had been the Sabbath Day .

Each Sabbath on the sea, makes me count the Sabbaths, till we will meet on shore – and whether the hills will look as blue as the sailors say –

I cannot talk any more tonight, for this pain denies me –

How strong when weak to recollect, and easy quite, to love . Will you
Tell me, please to tell me, soon as you are well —

Dear Master / I am ill — (A 827)