With an amputated left foot and fearing the other’s removal, William Ernest Henley in 1873 sought the help of Joseph Lister, who was experimenting with antiseptic surgery at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh. The twenty months Henley spent recovering in the infirmary inspired a twenty-eight-poem sequence, *In Hospital*, which has received surprisingly scant attention from critics. Clear from the outset of the poem sequence—from the Balzac epigraph, which (translated) reads, “One couldn’t say at what point a man, alone on his sick-bed, becomes an individual”—is the poet’s preoccupation with selfhood. Disability theorists such as Arthur W. Frank, Susan Sontag, G. Thomas Couser, and Diane Price Herndl have elucidated the effects of illness upon a patient’s sense of self, which often becomes fragmented as a result of the disease’s interruption of the patient’s life story. My essay traces Henley’s exploration and reconstitution of selfhood. I argue that Henley portrays his disrupted identity as resulting from two forces that work to silence the hospital patient: both the voice of the disease (speaking through the body) and the voice of the doctors usurp the voice of the patient, whose life story becomes fragmented as a result. Yet while Henley’s *In Hospital* probes the negative effects of disease as well as the detrimental effects of the doctor’s voice upon the patient’s voice, it also suggests a means by which a patient may reclaim his voice—namely, by constructing a coherent, communal illness narrative.

Work Cited