Molloy's true alter ego in the narrative which bears his name is not Moran but fiction, the imagination as presence. Beckett uses Molloy to demonstrate the possibilities for freedom in a text with the indisputable parameters of birth and death. Beckett's display of multiple selves for the title character is a manifestation of the telling and re-telling activity which grasps hold of time rather than acquiescing to be swept along in front of it. The accounts of Molloy and Moran are not direct narratives; they arise from memories and are creative re-tellings. This fleshing out of memory is, in a sense, a re-creation of time itself; it is also the building of a self in all its diversity.

The path away from homogeneous humanity on Death Row is a creative one. Molloy says: "...you either lie or hold your peace." (p. 88); that is, author your life or be prepared to surrender it.

The accounts of both Molloy and Moran present a bleak vision of an end-life, the tale of the undifferentiated human condition. In this world, they are at once impelled on a quest toward human connection and paralyzed by a death sentence which invades present reality. In this context of desperation, human connection or relationship is impossible. The self is bankrupt. The life force, ironically, is an engine driving the self to extinction.

An alternative vision begins with a mature acceptance of death and proceeds to expunge death's looming presence from the here and now. A significant part of the effort to prevent present from becoming merely prologue is a reclamation of the past. "...it is so easy to speak in the present tense, when speaking of the past. It is the mythological present, don't mind it." (p. 26) Memories of the past become myth when called into the present just as the recounting of any true adventure requires fictional elements; the re-creation of any experience always comprises vital new experience. The creative aspect of Molloy's and Moran's tales is plain when they admit to outright lies or announce, "I'll tell you. No, I'll tell you nothing. Nothing." (p. 134) Moran's final words utterly discount his first words. We must understand the intervening narrative to be an imaginative rendering of events, a related but autonomous story of the "truth".

These re-tellings transcend the mundane world of narrative inevitability to attain a sort of floating existence and truth value all their own. The authorship of Molloy and Moran, therefore, transforms a nondescript end-life to a fine life without end of possibility or adventure. The myth of the indivisible self is exploded in Molloy and the truth shown to involve a succession of autonomous selves which are mysteriously connected. Each blazes forth in coherence and then re-enters the wellspring from which the next self will emerge.

From this perspective it is entirely natural to laugh at Death in the same spirit that Moran "crawled out in the evening to have a good laugh at the lights of Bally." (p. 162) Confronted with the text's infinite imaginative worlds of possibility, the significance of the conclusion to the narrative dwindles and approaches nothing. If it is detected at all, death will be only a brief sensation from which nothing will follow. After all, when a child smiles at the conclusion of her bedtime story, is she responding to "The End" or to "And they all lived happily ever after"? And when the book is slapped shut and replaced on the shelf, will the text have been gathered up and collected entirely between the covers or will it, once released, live again in the child's imagination and there transmute and re-collect again and again? Finally, the question of whether Molloy and Moran are in fact a single individual becomes not nearly as important as the question of whether death is sufficient antidote for the multiplicity of any one self.

Lauren — Brilliant essay! I am awed by your ability to see fireworks of jubilation in Beckett, if you are very eloquent, to boot. Incisive, soph;bisticated, eloquent & passionate to fine work, a fine appreciation of the uses of fiction.