

Abstract

Ludwig Wittgenstein and G. E. Moore Hidden in *Transparent Things*

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This paper discusses how Ludwig Wittgenstein and G. E. Moore can be found hidden in *Transparent Things* (1972). Nabokov and these two analytic philosophers graduated from Trinity College, Cambridge, but in different years and in different fields. Nabokov's only published comment on Wittgenstein was in answer to an interview question in 1966, when he confessed complete ignorance of the philosopher's works, and there is no record of Nabokov ever referencing Moore. While Nabokov was a Tripos student who majored in modern and medieval languages, Moore was a lecturer who taught at the college: psychology and metaphysics for the Tripos, as well as the philosophy of nature. However, there are no records of Nabokov attending Moore's lectures, and Brian Boyd thinks that it is a vanishingly small possibility.

Two decades ago, I wrote a note entitled "Wittgenstein Echoes in *Transparent Things*" (*The Nabokovian* 45, 2000), which presumed that Nabokov had read Wittgenstein's works after the 1966 interview. The note points out similarities between the text of *Transparent Things* and some of the lines in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, *Philosophical Investigations* and *On Certainty* regarding several themes, including the inexplicable; survival after death; recurrent misremembering of colors and the interest in delicate differences of shades; and using rain for the problem of information.

This paper is a kind of continuation of that note. I will add some details I have newly found related to Wittgenstein and indicate how Moore can be also found in the text without being referred to as a philosopher, unlike in the case of Wittgenstein. The main section of this paper will clarify that the joke "Raining in Wittenberg, but not in Wittgenstein" and the paragraph in which it is found present a unique, multi-layered design for the novella, in which Wittgenstein and Moore have key roles. Finally, I would like to consider the possibility that these philosophers, hidden in a wholly spiritual novella narrated by ghosts from the hereafter, should have had an interest in spiritualism in their real lives.



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