

KUNSTMÄRCHEN TO KAFKA: THE METAMORPHOSIS OF FAIRYTALE MOTIFS

by

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A THESIS

Presented to the Robert D. Clark Honors College of the University
of Oregon in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
of
Bachelor of Arts

June 2005

**An Abstract of the
Thesis of
Jennifer Klaudinyi
for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts**

This study examines Franz Kafka's use of fairytale motifs in his short story *The Metamorphosis*. Focusing specifically on transformation tales, it explores some of the classic structures of *Kunstmärchen* (art-tales) written by fairytale pioneers, the brothers Grimm. The tales of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm serve as an influence for Kafka and a basis for his inversion and departure from traditional fairytale motifs. The study also discusses Nikolai Gogol's short story of transformation, "The Nose." The writing of Gogol, another of Kafka's influences, functions as a bridge between the Grimms' tales and Kafka's story. While the Grimms use supernatural events to convey a world of absolute justice, defined by a set system of right and wrong, Gogol and Kafka portray narratives ruled by absurdity. Instead of rewarding good characters and punishing bad, Gogol and Kafka reverse the common happy endings found in the tales of the Grimm brothers, questioning the validity of a single perception of justice. Gogol and Kafka also abandon the symbolic forest setting used by the Grimm brothers, instead depicting unforgiving cityscapes. Both authors allude to classic fairytale motifs but deny the traditional settings and conclusions established by the Grimm brothers, creating a sort of urban fairytale where disorder rules.

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