

# Writing and the Creative Life: Dark Places

[Scott Myers](#)

*"One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious."*

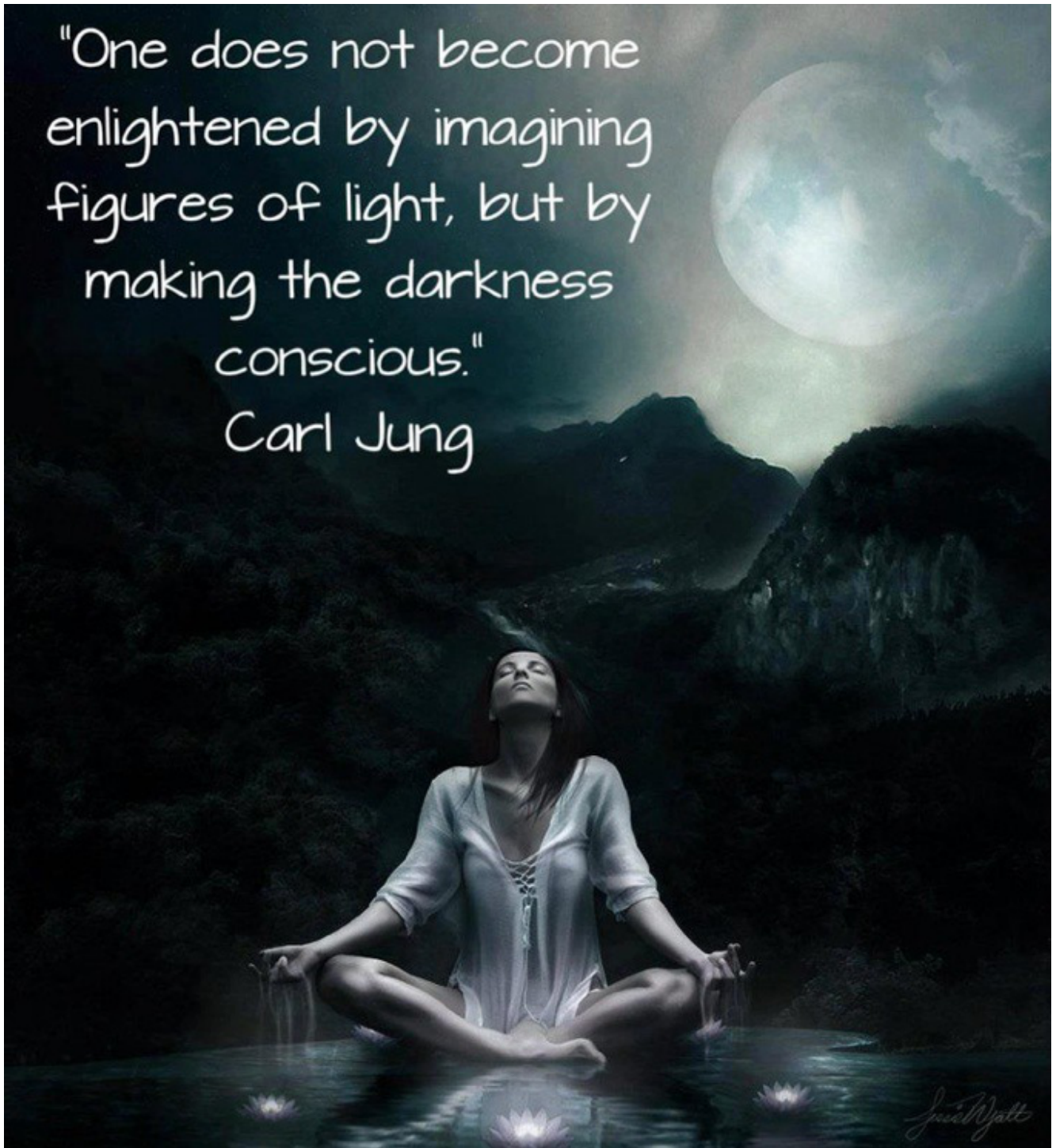
This is a quote from [Carl Jung](#), founder of analytical psychology, and it speaks to a fundamental truth not only about life, but also creativity. For in order to write stories that are authentic and compelling, we need to be willing to visit our dark places.

Allow me to indulge in some psycho-babble.

The *psyche* is the totality of all aspects of the *self*. According to Jung, our chief psychological task is what he called *individuation* whereby these various components become integrated over time, moving the individual toward a state of wholeness.

One powerful aspect of the psyche is the *shadow*, an unconscious complex comprised of repressed or suppressed qualities of the conscious self. Although the Shadow may have both constructive and destructive aspects, it is the latter which often needs the most attention because it reflects that which we fear, pain we want to avoid, emotional and psychological dynamics we prefer to shroud in darkness. Jung advocated the importance of not

only becoming aware of one's Shadow, but also embracing it into our conscious life.



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Carl Jung

Here are some Jung quotes that echo this sensibility:

*"A man who has not passed through the inferno of his passions has never overcome them."*

*"Man's task is to become conscious of the contents that press upward from the unconscious."*

*"Our heart glows, and secret unrest gnaws at the root of our being. Dealing with the unconscious has become a question of life for us."*

*"There is no coming to consciousness without pain."*

*"To confront a person with their own shadow is to show them their own light."*

*"Your vision will become clear only when you can look into your own heart. Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes."*

Why this post? Two reasons:

- Almost without exception, the stories we write involve a character or characters who, along with whatever else happens to them along the way, experience a **psychological journey**. It is that interweaving of what transpires in the Plotline and how that impacts the attitudes of a character in their Internal World, reflected in their metamorphosis (Themeline), that gives our stories richness, depth, and meaning. It makes dramas, comedies, thrillers, action movies and all the rest better stories.
- We ourselves as writers go on our own psychological journey in the telling of our tales. And oftentimes in order to find gold, we must plumb the depths of our own psyches including the deep, dark corners of our Shadow.

So much of what we are told about screenwriting has a tendency to reduce creativity to filling in blanks on this template or that paradigm. Where is the life in that? Where is the heart, soul, and humanity? It is only through giving ourselves completely over to our stories and creative self — and yes, sometimes going into Dark Places — and engaging the process as an organic one where we discover magic, mystery, and treasure.

What makes the  
human depends on  
the ability to own  
their own shadow.

CARL JUNG

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