



The Way Of Story By Catherine Ann Jones

We are taught many things in school, but all too often, this is linear learning, textbook learning. I can remember sitting in classrooms as a child staring aimlessly out of the window at passing clouds. The teacher's verdict was I was wasting my time, yet who is to say that daydreaming is less valuable than memorizing a list of facts? Thomas Edison was a daydreamer. He pondered, "What if there could be light in a small bulb powered by electricity?"

Non-creatives often forget how important unscheduled time is for a writer. This seems particularly true of those who hire writers. In the early Hollywood days when writers were kept at the motion picture studios in offices, they were supposed to be writing all day long. In fact, there is a story of Louis B. Mayer - then head of MGM - routinely walking by the doors of the writers' wing, his ear to the door to see if the typewriters were clicking!

Sometimes the best writing occurs when the writer is not physically writing. Once I was stumped while writing an original comedy feature for Universal Studios. I knew the what but not the how. So I did what has become my process: stopped writing. I went swimming instead. About the eleventh lap with my mind utterly blank, the solution appeared. My conscious mind could not find the solution to the story, so I let go, and allowed the mind to drift and dream. The solution appeared as a gift from the invisibles, allowing me to go back to the desk and make my deadline for the Studio.

Like dreams, creativity arises from the unconscious. We have to create an empty space in our conscious minds for the unconscious to emerge with its gifts. Our



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conditioning prods us to rush in with interpretative meaning, learned meanings, which may serve only to flatten the true value of what arises naturally from within. Mental understanding won't necessarily change us. To be transformed requires something more than rational thinking or sentimentality. The conditioned way of mental knowing often strengthens the ego at the expense of soul. In fact, mere mental understanding may be overrated today.

Andy Warhol, who began as a graphic designer for advertising, focused his art on American icons or images that have become signposts for an era. Images as Marilyn Monroe, John F. Kennedy, and Campbell Soup Cans all bespeak America. What makes them work as art is that the audience identifies with these images.

The soul of writing comes through the image - what Keats called "soul-making." Images are indeed the language of soul. They integrate mind, body, and spirit, and thereby serve a healing function. When Shakespeare writes, "Out, out brief candle," he is using the language of metaphor or imaging. He does not say, "Out, out brief life." The metaphorical or symbolic image lifts the reader above the gross level to a realm of poetry where image and soul reign. This is where transformation occurs.

Metaphor is the language of the soul. Look for metaphors in both waking and dream states. Awaken that part of the mind that generates images. Dare to explore the unknown regions of the psyche, for therein lie creative gold. Well-chosen images can help us integrate mind and feeling which in today's culture has been split asunder. Write with your senses, feelings, and invisible wonderings. Write stories that serve the soul. There is no greater path than the path to wholeness.

Even before there are stories, there are images. Each life is formed by its unique image, an image that is the essence of that life and that calls it to destiny. To discover the image of our theme or main character, we must enter the invisible world and allow it to carry us. Intuitive images occur, we cannot make them. All we can do is get out of the way, thereby inviting them to come through.



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Catherine Ann Jones is an award-winning writer whose films include *The Christmas Wife*, *Unlikely Angel*, and the popular TV series, *Touched by an Angel*. Ten of her plays, including *Calamity Jane*, have been produced. Winner of the National Endowment for the Arts Award, Ms. Jones, a Fulbright Scholar, has served on the writing faculties of The New School University (NYC), University of Southern California (L.A.), Pacifica Graduate Institute, and the Esalen Institute.

http://www.moviesoutline.com/articles/story_inspiration.html



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