

## The Shaman of the Shadows



37:38 *Shaman of the Shadows* portrays the conflict between the safety of the hearth fire and family and the dangers of the wilderness and the spirit world that surrounds it. It is the dangerous journey necessary to change this conflict to fertile tension through dealing with the shadow.

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I have been deeply interested in Figure 38 *Gui Diverging/Journey to the Shadow Lands* for a great part of my life. Along with 50 *Ding/Vessel* it represents a theme and a task that both plagues and orients me. At the moment, Change seems to be offering it again and again to a variety of people I care for in what we might call a visionary context directly related to both personal feelings and cultural disorders. So I thought I might offer what I have learned about this very problematic figure.

#### Myths for Change: The Story of the Time

Outside the dwelling, exposed to the night, Diverging points at a bright presence in the night sky, the star mansions of the Ghost Cart (*Yugui*) that presides over punishments, executions and dire fates. It includes others: the Heavenly Horse, The Heavenly Swine, the Man leading the Ox, the Bow and Arrow, the Orphan or Fox. The atmosphere is autumnal, for the rains are here and the gates of winter are closing. This is the sun and moon in opposition and, metaphorically, the minister cut off and exiled from the royal presence. It suggests the *Li Sao*, the Nine Songs, an intense and shamanic lament of the virtuous minister betrayed by

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schemers and cast out by his prince. Diverging is all things outside, *wai*: isolation, danger, foreigners, wilderness, punishments, the Demon Country. It suggests strange visions, alternate realities and chance meetings with important spirit beings: the Primal Father, Yi the Archer and the Dark Lord or Hidden Master. It combines the themes of discord, punishment and exile with the difficult voyage and traveling in alternate realities.

This is the world of the *Wu Gui*, the shamans or Intermediaries who deal with angry ghosts and spirits outside the normal, beyond the frontiers. Phonetically and thematically, the name of the figure links it with the cyclic character marking the last day of the ten-day week, a day on which divinations were performed for ghost signs and demons coming from the Four Hidden Lands, excluded ancestors and angry ghosts who, riding the Hidden Winds, could bring misfortune upon the living. Another related character portrays waters running from the Four Directions or Hidden Lands into the center, the Earth Pit and its Underworld or Ghost River. It represents the yin aspect of water, linked with the ghost world and the appearance of a certain set of star clusters or mansions.

### **The Water-Spirit Disorder: The God in our Disease**

According to contemporary African shamans and healers, when we are separated from the ancestors and the spirits, the Mythological Contexts for what we experience, we fall pray to the “water-spirit disorder.” The symptoms of this disorder include moodiness, lability, stomach problems, a sense of alienation and disconnection from one’s community and the world at large, excruciating empathy, being undone by and afraid of one’s responses to the suffering of the world, a history of tragedy and mishap, bad luck, money troubles, money easily made and lost, vivid dreams and daydreams, extreme visionary activity, dramatic and incomprehensible, social awkwardness, not knowing how to deport oneself in the world. It is a general instability and dislocation caused by disconnection from the spirit world, personal and cultural.

Now, the Pair 37:38 seems to be about a Dwelling, the people within it and all that is *nei*, “inside,” as opposed to the conflicts, crossed purposes, animosity, rage, pain and hidden purpose of those who are excluded from the dwelling as *wai*, outside, foreign, barbarian and “strange” – in a word, the repressed or excluded ghosts (*Gui*) that are haunting the dwelling.

**37:38 Dwelling People and Diverging** shows the connection between the inside, the safety of the family and the outside, the wilderness and the spirit world that surrounds it. It gives you the ability to create security and family feeling and the courage to venture outside it. It is a Heart Theme of Change, the Mission of the stage of life when we struggle to found an individual dwelling, family and career.



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We have a few initial clues to the working of the Pair right here. *Nei*, inside, is traditionally used to designate the place of the inner *zhen* or foundation trigram, while *wai*, outside, is used to designate the place of the outer *hui* or distress trigram. In our Pair, the same trigram occupies both these places: Li, Radiance or the Bright Omens. In 37 it is inner or within, the warm light of the hearth fire; in 38 it is outside, seen as the cold light of the stars shining in the autumn sky as omens of isolation, punishments and dire fates. The word *wai* offers yet another clue, too, for it seems to be connected to a word used in *Shan Hai Jing*, one of my latest interests, to describe the strange and anomalous beings that the shaman encounters on his or her journeys. Now *Shan Hai Jing* offers Guide-ways (*Jing*) to the passages through the strange mountains (*Shan*) and seas (*Hai*) of the shamanic world, and I believe that is what 38 is offering - a way to “circulate the light” or Bright Omens through the strange darkness that lies outside of all that is secure, a task we are called to, without being the victim of what we encounter there.



My own initial associations to this are twofold: The most obvious is what happened during the time of the war in Viet Nam, when I literally became an exile and a criminal. The second, earlier, would be when I was about 12 or 13 and I felt the first stirrings of what the African healers call the “water-spirit disease” that completely disordered my connections to the people and the institutions around me.

Let’s set the scene. The Pair 37:38 is located in the Decade of the 30’s which begins the second half of life, focusing on the heroic struggles to found a dwelling, family and career. It is the *Mission* or mandate of this Decade, an ordeal that must be faced, a challenge that must be confronted. And the Dwelling seen in 37 is heroic and deeply threatened. It probably portrays an embattled house set up at the borders of newly won territory by a young nobleman serving in the Zhou campaign of conquest. It is his attempt to establish a family, an identity, and a line of descent. Scott Davis shows that in other ancient texts this number position (38) is concerned with *zi*, self, establishing an independent self identity.

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Looking at the embattled Zhou culture brings out a bit more about these ghosts that are indeed coming from all sides: from the rich old Shang culture the new rulers illegally overthrew and subjugated; from the barbarian cultures they forcefully are expanded into; and from the shadow of their own zeal as carriers of what they called the Mandate of Heaven. Sound familiar? This, I would suggest, is a truly hubristic endeavor that we, too, are somehow a part of, as agents and as victims, when we receive this Pair in answer to a question. The deeper implication of Figure 38, however, is that if these ghosts can be somehow dealt with there is a chance that the culture itself can be freed from its “birth traumas” and enter into a higher level of what we can only call kinship and spiritual awareness. Facilitating this is the job of the *Wugui*, the Shaman of the Shadows, who lurks in the mythic background to the hexagram.

### Trigram Shifts

Most hexagram pairings in Change occur between adjacent hexagrams, the odd numbered figure being the Inspiring Force of the Pair and the even numbered hexagram being the Realizing energy. There is, however, another more irregular way of pairing hexagrams that involves a shift of trigrams: the lower trigram of one figure becomes the upper trigram of the second and the upper trigram of the first hexagram becomes the lower trigram of the second. This kind of pairing is like a free radical; it operates completely outside the usual numerical sequence. It links the two hexagrams involved as stimulus or inner drive and development, unfolding or flowering: The earlier hexagram is the drive that causes the later hexagram to unfold. This mysterious kind of pairing is directly connected to what is called the Sacred Sickness Pathways, hidden energy channels that link personal disorders to cultural change.

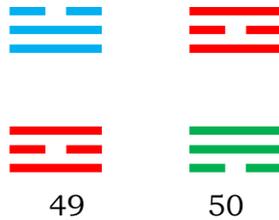
The Pairs 37:38, representing the establishment of the family is directly connected on this Sacred Sickness Pathway with the pair 49:50, representing the rectification of culture.

The pair 49:50 deals with the influence of the family in the renovation of culture and culture’s equally powerful effect on in the renovation of the family:

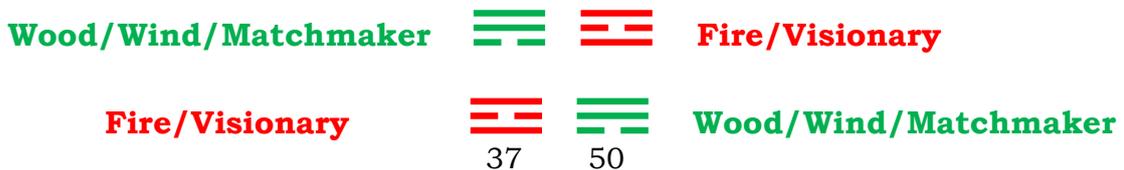


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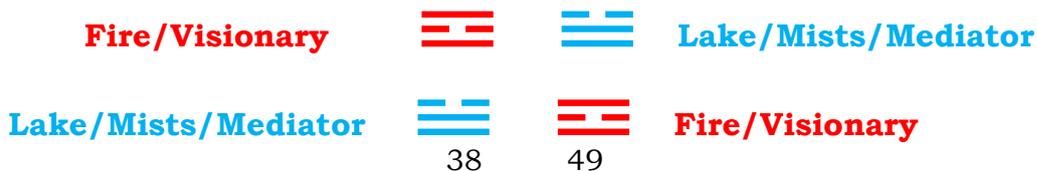
**49:50 Skinning/Revolution and the Vessel** shows a revolution that skins away old cultural forms and creates a new paradigm for collective destiny. It gives you the freedom to let old grief depart and the courage to grasp renewal.



Hexagram 37 Dwelling People is the inspiration, the stimulus or drive that causes the manifestation, the flowering or unfolding of 50 Vessel. Here the hidden spirit works through the offerings (**Wood/Wind/Matchmaker**) to reveal the Bright Omens (**Fire/Illuminator**) of inner change.



And Hexagram 38 Diverging, the realizing partner of the 37:38 pair, is the stimulus or drive that causes the radical flowering of 49 Skinning/Revolution as drive and inspiration of 50 Vessel. Here the hidden spirit reveals the Bright Omens (**Fire/Visionary**) through the **Mediator** who inspires people to take on the difficult task of revolution and cultural renewal.



Now, there is a lot of painful personal work involved in this kind of stance and effort and a great danger of inflation, so let's approach this figure with care. I have certainly learned to, the hard way, having three planets in Scorpio in the Twelfth House. To my mind, when this figure appears in answer to a question, the first thing we must do is to become as aware as possible of our attachment to own inner Furies, our resentments and desperate needs, our sense of betrayal, our addiction to both melancholy violence of feeling and apocalyptic visions. We are entering the realm of the Mothers now, of the fever dreams of an injured Earth that have led to such things as Ethnic Cleansing and Holy Wars. We must not identify with our own complexes or we will be carried away on the wild horses they can so easily become.

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There is a clue to this process of dis-identification in one of the meanings of the term *Gui*, Diverging: “turn conflict into creative tension.” Here we “polarize” the situation, but like astrological opposition, like Sun and Moon 180 degrees apart but very connected. The Other is the Other, with an identity quite different than but equal to our own. We cannot convert it, convince it or annihilate it. We can only begin a dialogue based on mutual recognition, both personal and archetypal or shamanistic. These two aspects are deeply connected but, in the spirit of Diverging, we must see both of them at the same time while not confusing or conflating them. Spirit is speaking through the Intermediaries now, revealing the Bright Omens. Inner self-reflection can lead to finding real directions in life.

### **Encountering the Ghosts and Spirits**

Now, all the lines of figure 38 center on the terms “see” (*jian*) and “meet”, (*yu*) while the figure as a whole is an extended pun on *gui*, “ghost.” So, proceeding from our self-reflection, we can look at the Lines of figure 38 as Guide-ways (*jing*) or “real directions” to follow through a series of strange encounters in the Shadow Land outside our personal and cultural Dwelling.

### **The Inner Way**

In the first three Encounters we are in the submerged world of *Dui*, the Joyous Dancer, whose ability to “express the spirit in the human community” is repressed, thwarted and deeply disturbed. I feel these represent both what we first encounter on our journey and the work it takes us to ready ourselves for our task as facilitators of a change in culture.

Guideway to the First Encounter: 37.6 (63.6 : **64.1**) 38.1



This line represents the crossover from the culmination of the process of stabilizing the Dwelling. It describes the Inner Drive of the Pair, showing the Burning Water, the River of Life and Death (63:64) flowing right through the center of our experience. So this is our first landing on the strange shores of the Other Side. When we look back across the divide to the Dwelling, we see the impressive and shining presence of the powerful head of the house, blessed by what we might call the Good Mothers. Here, however, what we encounter first is the Dark Mother and her Furies. Our horses run away and we are told to let them

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go. We are faced with dangers we do not understand. It is a time to hold back and “cast out faults.”

According to Change, the spirits we meet here are the Hateful People or *e ren*, souls twisted by hatred and anger, caught in their passions. They have been turned into Furies and driven on by the Dark Mother’s deep desire for revenge. At this point we cannot help them and should not succumb to the temptation to try to save them for it is beyond our powers. All we can do is to keep the feelings they carry from poisoning our hearts and gather the power to pass on. “This is not a mistake.”

In my personal experience, this was the journey into the counter-cultures and protest movements after the onset of the “water-spirit disease” and my exile. I feel this deep anger again every time I look at the oppression being imposed on the world by the culture I was born into and identify with its victims. I feel it is one of the great dangers of unconscious activism and therapies that espouse the direct expression of negative feelings.

Guideway to the Second Encounter: 37.5 (22.5 : **21.2**) 38.2



Here we pass to the Inner Center of the Shadow World and encounter a very strange spirit called the Hidden Lord of the Crooked Path (*zhu yu xiang*). “In an unexpected way, in an unexpected place, you meet a spirit power of great importance. This is the meaning of being outside the norms. This influence enters your heart and makes everything clear.”

This is not a ghost entangled in passion (*gui*) but something like a *shen*, a mountain spirit or Lord. *Shan Hai Jing* offers an image of this spirit - *Yuer*, the guide to the mountains and the seas. He is small, about a foot tall, with a human face and he is riding a horse with his right arm raised to point the way, telling us how to ford the rivers we have yet to encounter. When we look back across the divide to the Dwelling, we see an image of the King approaching his Dwelling Altar to ask the blessings of his ancestors. So *Yuer* is pointing the way to the excluded others, the hidden ancestors the King has left out. The encounter is presided over by 21:22, an initiation that can lead to bringing a new bride or anima possibility to our ancestral home, beautifying and renewing it. In the background, subtly

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influencing the encounter, there is a deep transformation at the thresholds of the inner world when the Bright Omens (30) that guide people's lives emerge from the Tiger's Mouth (27). We must gather our energy, strip away our old patterns and follow this strange guide. "This is not a mistake."

In my own experience this is my first encounter with the Classic of Change and a series of other "strange encounters in narrow streets" that followed, each one pointing out another crooked path to be followed, not for what could be gained but for where it led. Differentiating between the two was certainly not always easy, but I very slowly learned that the Hidden Lord of the Crooked Path is a guide, not a destination.

Guideway to the Third Encounter: 37.4 (13.4 : **14.3**) 38.3



At the Threshold, ready to cross over to meet the hidden ancestors, we encounter a spirit described as the Branded or Tattooed Man, driving a cart with crumple-horned and hobbled cattle. His nose has been cut off and he wears a brand or tattoo on his forehead, marking him as a criminal and permanent exile. Attached to this spirit is the omen: "What you initiate will not be completed." When we look back across the divide we see the affluence of the Dwelling that exiled him to this perpetual poverty.

I feel this figure is a sort of nemesis, an implacable spirit of punishments and obstacles in permanent exile who corrects the heroic drive on a fairly deep level. We are enjoined not to identify with him or oppose his work. Here, too, there is a subtle influence at work, a transformation at the centers of the inner world when the creative power of the Dragon (1) releases Bright Omens (30) that guide people's lives. And, strangely enough, the encounter is presided over by 13:14, the Harmonizing of the People (13) that can lead to the emergence of a real guiding idea or Bright Omen (14). We are told to concentrate on our real purpose, offer ourselves to the highest power, be resolute and part from the past.

In my own life the encounter with this spirit was long and quite painful. It emerged as a definite sub-personality that consistently destroyed any great

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project I over-enthusiastically tried to set up in order to get out of the isolation of the “water-spirit disorder”. My encounter with this spirit led to some fairly violent (self) destructive behavior and, in the end, a mental breakdown. To me, he represents the actions of the daimon that Jung called “the disturber.” I would encourage anyone who encounters him to tread with great care and accept the strange corrections of nemesis with as much grace as possible. Identification with this spirit leads to a life of pain, violence and real criminality.

### **The Outer Way**

In the last three Encounters we are in the realm of *Li*, the Radiance or Bright Omens that emerge from the Ghost River, and begin to see how we might work with and express them.

Guideway to the Fourth Encounter: 38.4 (42.3 : **41.4**) 38.4



We are out into the real wilderness now. The night sky opens above us and two star clusters, the Orphan and the Fox, rise to guide our way. Though we are solitary, cut off from family or friends, our isolation becomes a source of real power. The Dream Fox, the shape shifter who leads through the liminal ways, appears to guide us.

Here we meet a spirit or *shen* called the Primal Father or Husbandman (Yuan Fu) and are told specifically to connect and mingle with him. The encounter is presided over by 41:42, the great paradigm of a personal sacrifice that brings a flow of blessings for all and it is subtly influenced by a transformation at the centers of the inner world, when we pass through the Tiger's Mouth (27) to Open the Heart anew (61).

*Shan Hai Jing* seems to portray this spirit as a winged and bird-footed *shen* or Mountain Lord, the one who unlocks the treasures of the mountain and give us permission to enter. I have seen him as a Black Father who holds the keys to the old ways or a figure like Yu the Great who clears the channels so that the water can flow once more. In any case, he is a strange, powerful and beneficent male spirit whom we are encouraged to let into our hearts. “Though there may seem to

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be danger, have no fear. Joining with this force will put you in touch with the spirits.”

We are further told that the danger associated with him actually comes from a flock of “hungry souls and angry ghosts” and, if we look back across the divide to the Dwelling, we might see where they originate: all the experiences we have had of “bad fathers” and their wounding punishments, indeed their abuse. These ghosts must be confronted and eliminated, for entertaining them will cut us off from the ability to experience and express this spirit. We must go back into our personal lives and accept the challenge of letting all this go, for “something significant is returning now.”

Guideway to the Fifth Encounter: 38.5 (9.2 : **10.5**) 38.5



Here we experience the Ancestors called up by our encounter with the Primal Father “eating their way through our flesh” to remove the “causes of sorrow” (*wang*). This experience is both personal and greater than personal, in fact represents a balancing of the two in the primary myth in Chinese culture, the sacred meal in which spirits and humans share. Traditionally this is where the *de*, the power and virtue of the ancestors, is transmitted to us. I experienced this in dreams after an initiation in Africa, seeing a great Elephant emerge from a mountain, sending a swirl of book-shaped objects through the air that lodged in my body and, over time, ate their way into the way I think, feel, express myself and practice divination.

The encounter is presided over by 9:10, Gathering in the Ghosts who are ready to re-enter the human world (9) and Treading out to meet the Tiger and accept a new destiny (10), a mission that ensures the fertility of the fields of earth and of culture. It is subtly influenced by a transformation at the thresholds of the inner world when the creative power of the Dragon (1) manifests in the Opened Heart (61).

When we look back across the divide to the Dwelling, we see not a dissonance or disparity but a real re-connection between this Sacred Meal and the Hearth Fire

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at the Dwelling's inner center. Directions here might have something to do with the equalization of the male and female powers, particularly in light of the temptations of the heroic identity as savior that plague all of us no matter what our gender. This is where we begin to step out into our real function. "Forget glory and achievement now. Help and nourish others. Do not impose yourself, but give open-handedly. Be decisive and part from the past."

Guideway to the Sixth Encounter: 38.6 (53.1 : **54.6**) 38.6



The last encounter is about emergence. The landscape is late autumn, when the swine are turned out into the fields to feed on the stubble drenched by the autumn rains. Over our heads is the star cluster called the Ghost Cart, the Chariot of Dead Souls, a vision of a world headed towards disaster, hurtling towards oblivion. It is all too easy to be swept away by this vision and the apocalyptic fervor it is all too easy to be swept up in, given the great disparity between the "old ways" we have experienced and what seems to be going on all around us.

Here we meet a last spirit, the strange and violent hero Yi the Archer, a kind of Hercules stretching his bow to shoot down whatever threatens. He is the hero who shot down the Ten Suns that were threatening to destroy the world by fire. Here the advice is to "loosen the bow", not to see what looks like dire events as the end of the world, but to welcome what is coming as, perhaps, something that can make us kin once more.

This encounter is presided over by 53:54, the Great Marriages that can change the time. Taking the first steps on the path to union, we are advised, we will encounter the ghosts of the past once more, but need have no fear. The old way is an empty womb, no substance, no blood, no passion. We can speak out now, for we lack nothing and, if we let ourselves be led by this new spirit, we can realize this hidden potential. Use these Wise Words, Change says, and the Way will open once more for all.

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53 *Gradual Advance/Marrying Woman* portrays the journey of the soul to completion in the great world of the symbols on the great water ways of Change.