

Witches Alive

Strange Mexican Sightings

Sketch of Gerardo Garza Carvajal's *bruja* of Monterrey.

by Scott Corrales

A curious story occupied the headlines of a number of Mexican newspapers in 2006 regarding the startling re-emergence of strange entities best described as "witches" in parts of the country, but mainly in the area of Monterrey, Mexico's second most important city. Ac-

cording to Matamoros' *El Mañana* newspaper on September 19, 2006, Gerardo Garza Carvajal (Carbajal, in some newspaper accounts), a policeman from Santa Catarina, claimed to have seen two witches while on a routine patrol near a graveyard months earlier.

With only five years on the Monter-

rey police department, Garza stepped forward with the story of his bizarre experience only because a fellow officer agreed to substantiate his report. The young police officer had a glowing record and had never experienced any mental issues or hallucinations, as substantiated by tests performed on him at the Municipal Clinic.

Gerardo Garza's brush with the supernatural occurred near the Panteon Municipal cemetery, a short distance from the road leading to Villa Garcia. "I was inside the guardhouse when I heard the sound of pebbles being thrown against the door. I went outside to see what was going on, and it was then that I saw two witches with faces like old women, with red eyes and black hats tipped backward; they had feathered wings and claws on the ends of those extremities. They began laughing horribly, and I got back into the guardhouse and saw what they were doing through a peephole. They were flying in circles, so I reported the situation to my fellow officers."

Garza said that he immediately requested backup, and in a matter of minutes was surrounded by several municipal police cars, even some from the Ministerial Police.

"The witches flew off, but the police officers who came to my aid saw what I saw. They can attest to the fact that I didn't imagine anything. What I saw was real. I'd never been so scared before," said the officer. He was subsequently taken to a medical center, since his blood pressure had dropped excessively. He soon recovered from the powerful shock.

Uncanny Precedents

Local media gave the event a humorous twist, saying that law enforcement seemed to have a hard time dealing with organized crime, but oddly capable at dealing with the paranormal. Police spokesmen did their best to play down the report involving the strange "witches," but there already existed an uncomfortable precedent for the case: the January 16, 2004, experience that involved another police officer—Leonardo Samaniego—who had seen an entity similar to the one reported by Garza in the Valles de la Silla neighborhood at 3:15 a.m. near the mountain that dominates the city of Monterrey. The 21-year-old Samaniego reported to his superiors that a "creature resembling a witch" had manifested itself suddenly in the residential area, and even pursued his cruiser in full flight as the terrified officer drove away in reverse, his eyes riveted all the time on the frightening manifestation.

"When the witch began chasing me," he explained, "I requested support from other police units over the radio. At that point, the witch descended between two trees at an elevation of six meters. She stopped and came down slowly. I saw her when she turned around—she was a completely black shape. She made a full turn and the light in her eyes vanished. Her eyes were just black sockets, without eyelids."

As in the very best horror movies, the nightmarish figure's pursuit did not end there. According to Samaniego, the figure flew against the squad car, landing against the windshield and staring at him fixedly.

It seems as if even the gates between the worlds are shy of observation. But I have also long suspected that natural environments promote the flow of supernatural energies, and in places where such energies can gather, the nexuses open.

Conclusion

The Otherworld is neither a superstition nor a bygone relic of elder times. The perseverance of the folklore around it reveals its continuing relevance, and the fact that it continues to be encountered reveals its reality. But it is not a mystery one can approach directly. The search for the Otherworld must go gently, respectfully, remembering the Otherworld is shy of study, and has kept its secrets across the millennia. But tread carefully, and I believe

the seeker will be rewarded with a growing relationship to one of the most profound and beautiful paranormal mysteries. II

Cliff Séruntine is a psychologist, folk-prist, and paranormal researcher. He resides in northern rural Nova Scotia where he spends his leisure time hiking the highlands or playing Celtic harp. Cliff is always interested in hearing of others' encounters with the Otherworld and faeries and welcomes contact by email. Cliff can be reached at harpandlore@yahoo.com.



Inebriated Female Houdini

Police in Chatham-Kent, Ontario, were a little embarrassed when their squad car was stolen by an booze-imbibing woman whom they had just arrested.

Police Staff Sgt. Don Vitek said the woman was apprehended when found with a bottle of alcohol in her car. She was arrested, removed from her vehicle, handcuffed with her hands behind her

back, and placed in the back seat of the patrol car. She somehow managed to get her hands in front of her, get in the front seat, and roar away in the cruiser.

"We couldn't believe it," said Vitek.

The culprit drove a few miles before landing in the river, where she tried unsuccessfully to escape by swimming before being caught by poifice. II

"That's when I lifted my hands, screamed and passed out." One can hardly blame him.

Police dispatcher Angelina Guerrero's version of the event was only slightly different. "The officer reported that the woman approached him and gave him a nasty look, that she stuck to the windshield of the cruiser, pulled back and then rose into the night sky until she vanished."

It was suggested at the time that the unholy apparition had not hurt Samaniego Gallegos because he had an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe hanging from the rearview mirror. Another interesting note was that the vehicle's windows were fully lowered at the time.

The reader can imagine the teasing and practical jokes that the young law enforcement officer probably had to endure at the hands of his fellow policemen, but his experience prompted residents of Colonia La Playa—a residential district adjacent to Valles de la Silla—to come forward with their own accounts of high strangeness.

Norma Hernandez, 22, claimed having seen a black figure similar to a human being flying through the air two weeks prior to the policeman's hair-raising experience. Mrs. Hernández told the press that she had been doing laundry and hanging clothes out to dry when she became aware of the "black form" flying near her house. Frightened, the young housewife set aside her chores to run into the house and alert her husband, who scoffed at the suggestion. By the time Norma went out again, the entity

was gone. "It was the size of a person," she said. "That's what frightened me the most."

The Hernandez experience was in turn corroborated by Seferino Gutiérrez, another resident of Colonia La Playa, who remarked that several years earlier he had seen a black-colored shape with clearly animal characteristics flying over their street.

Mexico's tradition of "witches" goes back into the Aztec past, and small communities have always maintained traditions that are an amalgamation of European Christian belief and native lore in this regard. Many *regiomontano* farmers and ranchers have the same fear of owls that the Aztecs felt for Tlacotal, the great horned owl, an evil far more terrible than the dreaded Tezcatlipoca. Nineteenth-century beliefs maintained that witches would adopt owl form to disturb the inhabitants of lonely farmsteads and would engage in curious animal mutilations—killing cats and stealing their eyes in order to see in the dark. It was also believed that witches in owl-shape could be made to fall out of the sky by reciting the Lord's Prayer backward.

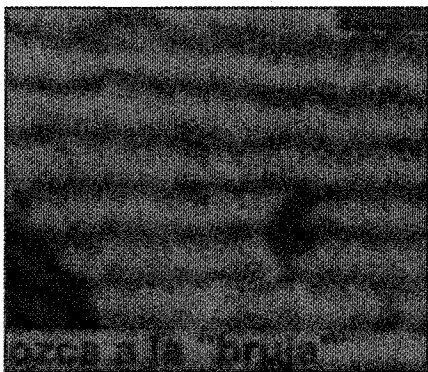
The Witch Caught on Videotape?

Stories involving the "witches of Monterrey" captured the public's imagination and the media's as a result of Officer Garza's experience at the cemetery. A video dated May 17, 2006, was received by a Monter-

rey TV station, allegedly showing the flight of a "black shape" like the one described, only this time on a broomstick. The intriguing recording had been taken in the vicinity of Cerro de la Silla, unleashing a firestorm of controversy, and it remains to this day on YouTube (www.youtube.com/watch?v=5oVPWvKmkXI).

The video begins with Garza providing a description of the attacking entity to an illustrator, who prepares a drawing based on his eyewitness account. "[Her] height was a meter, meter and a half, at most... [she] was dressed like a bird, with feathers, you know, she had feathers... seeing her face, it was an old lady's face, wrinkled, red eyes, black hair. What I really noticed were her black claws... and the hair. In other words, that's what shocked me the most. It was a bird's body and a face like a human's."

The news broadcast then cuts to the footage provided by Tomás Amador of the OVNIclub organization, showing the date and time stamp on the lower right hand corner. The "witch" can be seen as a small speck over a ridge at a considerable distance from the camera, but the camera manages to zoom in on the object, which remarkably looks like a classic Halloween witch on a broom, or at least a human moving across the air at considerable speed in a crouching position. The object flies across a wooded hillside and the video clip comes to an end. The voiceover corresponds to the two television reporters, remarking on the fact that the footage shows no sign of



Strange "witch" on Mexican television.

having been made with, or altered by, a computer, and the time sequence shown is uninterrupted.

It must be a hoax, one thinks automatically, since witches don't exist, or at least not in that particular form. Or do they? As the old Spanish saying goes: *las brujas no existen, pero las hay*—witches don't exist, but they're there.

A Fascinating Coincidence

When we approached our colleague Ing. Marco Reynoso of the Monterrey-based Fundación Cosmos A.C. for his comments, he attested to the factual nature of the video presented on the evening news and reported an even stranger wrinkle in this mind-bending sequents of events.

"In this case," says Reynoso, referring to the Samaniego encounter of 2004, "I was contacted by a person professing to be a white witch or sorceress for my opinion on the case, as she had cast a spell to bring down a witch who was about to cause phys-

of time." Escamilla expressed his willingness to look into this "shadow people" case from the standpoint of paranormal research, but adding that a religious approach could be a way of solving these situations.

Cases involving "shadow people" have become increasingly common not only in the United States but around the world. Contemporary researchers, while classifying them as ghosts, still consider them to belong to a rather unique category. As far back as 1969, Oscar Gonzalez Quevedo had placed them under a separate classification in his landmark book *Las Fuerzas Físicas de la Mente* (Spain: Editorial Sal Terrae, 1969). Quevedo's classification of ghosts broke the restless apparitions into three categories: Group A, which included phantoms of human origin and nature, manifestations of the unconscious and human desire, along the lines of the "tulpas" of the Tibetan tradition; Group B, fraudulent ghost reports or misidentifications; and Group C, containing manifestations of the undead. The "shadow people" reported

in the 21st century would correspond to the third set of insubstantial beings.

"Shadows," writes Quevedo, "have the peculiar characteristic of altering the temperature at the site of their materialization and feed on human fear. They are practically a silhouette or cutout image, rarely showing their features or traveling in groups. They appear in places where a death is about to occur and frequently remind the living of deceased relatives or those who are about to die. Animals react to their presence with tearful, frightened reactions. Shadows have the capacity of darkening the environment, and even if people cannot see them, it is unusual that they cannot feel them or sense their coming." II

Scott Corrales is a frequent contributor to FATE. He is the editor of *Inexplicata: The Journal of Hispanic Ufology*.



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ical harm to the grandchildren of one of her clients."

The magic-user explained the situation to the grandparents; continues Reynoso in his message to *Inexplicata*, but they rejected her advice. However, they eventually embraced her recommendations to perform certain rituals under the sorceress's guidance, including a series of prayers. As events turned out, the very same evening that these rituals were performed to "bring down the witch," a strange creature fell out of a tree—the same bizarre entity that plastered itself against the windshield of Officer Samaniego's small patrol car.

At this point one wonders whether, rather than the hook-nosed crone of Hansel and Gretel, the so-called witches of Monterrey correspond more to an elemental order of beings, perhaps even the *lamias* of ancient mythology, who were greatly feared by the peasantry of the Roman Empire. Curiously enough, tradition concerning the witches of Spain's Basque country holds that the evil associated with Mt. Azpilicueta in the valley of Baztán is related not to the area's extensive witch lore, but to the corpses of two *lamias* buried in the valley at some point in antiquity. Even more suggestive is the consideration that *lamias* were allowed to remove their eyes from their sockets at will; the witch seen by Samaniego had nothing but empty black eye sockets. The vampiric tendencies of the classical *lamias* dovetail with the northern Mexican belief that witches drain newborns of their blood.

Not Just Witches, Either...

Residents of a house in the municipality of Apodaca, also located in the state of Nuevo Leon, informed the Archivo Insolito website in 2006 of a problem they had been having for a while with an unwanted guest: the black, shadowy form of a child. The grim shade would unexpectedly appear in different parts of the house, oftentimes weeping. Concepción Arreola, who owns the property, reported that a female lodger had once reported seeing the shadow entity appear under the staircase, crying, and that her own son had seen it materialize out of thin air in his bedroom.

Fearful that the shadow entity might harbor unwholesome intentions, Mrs. Arreola contacted Father Hilario Gonzalez of the Monterrey Seminary for his expert opinion. The priest remarked that it was necessary to determine the possibility of a natural origin to the phenomenon. Otherwise, he counseled, it would be best to study religious teachings to find a measure of peace.

When this answer did not satisfy, the homeowner approached Ricardo Escamilla, a researcher of the paranormal, who informed her that ghostly phenomena do not involve things that have suddenly presented themselves but rather something that has been there all along. "There have been cases," he added, "in which ghosts appear to choose a home at random, in some way. However, one usually deals with a situation that has occurred beforehand and manifestations begin to take place after a certain length