

Secret Satan, 2023

By James J. Conway / November 30, 2023



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The Dance of Moon and Sun: Ithell Colquhoun, British Women and Surrealism (eds. Judith Noble, Tilly Craig and Victoria Ferentinou) is apparently “the first critical examination of her diverse legacy” (really? genuinely asking here; I thought there had been at least one but that could be the expired eggnog talking) in which contributors “explore themes of authorship and agency, Colquhoun’s drawing practice, her Celtic motifs, British Surrealism and alchemy.” Her American contemporary Paulina Peavy was a compelling figure and one I’ve been keen to explore further; she claimed her works were guided by a UFO who came to her during a séance, and she would paint wearing special masks for which she patented a face glue. Laura Whitcomb’s *Paulina Peavy: Ethereal Channeler* is the first major work dedicated to this singular creative force, who early on espoused what she called “conscious surrealism”. The environments in which one of the great 20th century Surrealists lived and created in Britain, France, Spain and Mexico are the subject of *Surreal Spaces: The Life and Art of Leonora Carrington*, an intimate view from family member Joanna Moorhead, who previously penned a [biography](#) of Carrington. The artist’s close companion and collaborator Remedios Varo is the subject of a new academic study. *Remedios Varo: Science Fictions* (eds. Caitlin Haskell and Tere Arcq) explores “the integral relationship between Varo’s layered interests—in alchemy, architecture, magic, mysticism, philosophy, and science—and her beguiling technical approach to art making”. If nothing else, Varo is responsible for the [artsiest pharmaceutical ads imaginable](#) – her 1960s images for Bayer are representations of various maladies in an uncompromisingly occult style (please consult your alchemist if symptoms persist). But for some reason Leonora Carrington always forms a double act in my head with Dorothea Tanning; forthcoming book *Exquisite Dreams: The Art and Life of Dorothea Tanning* covers the extraordinary sweep of the American artist’s life. Author Amy Lyford covers not just Tanning’s art but her endeavours in literature and film as well, in a career often filed under “Surrealism”, although she herself said “it disgusts me to be lumped in with all of these so-called Surrealist painters.”