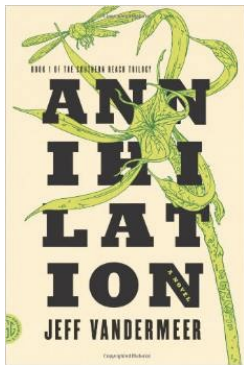


***Annihilation* (Southern Reach Trilogy) by Jeff VanderMeer**
FSG Originals (February 4, 2014)



There is a comfort in familiarity, a foundation from which to definitively identify and label. But Jeff VanderMeer is not interested in putting his readers at ease. With *Annihilation*--the first volume of *The Southern Reach Trilogy*--he carefully creates a yearning for answers, then boldly denies them, reminding us that being too eager to know too much can be dangerous. The story follows an expedition of four women who are known only by their professions: the Psychologist, the Surveyor, the Anthropologist, and the Biologist--nameless pawns tasked with exploring, discovering, and (hopefully) delivering data about a portentous coastal territory called Area X. We are a bit like fifth members of that team (perhaps "the Reader"), learning at the same pace, guided by the observations of our narrator, the Biologist. Still the context remains blurry as VanderMeer twists each discovery into a deeper mystery. Through potent description and unrelenting tension, he achieves a level of emotional manipulation that should appeal to anyone who embraced the paranormal phenomena and maddening uncertainties of *Lost*. --[Robin A. Rothman](#)