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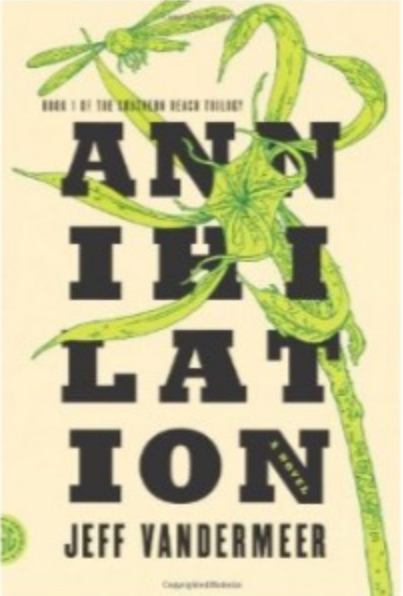
Geeking Out: Sci-Fi, Fantasy, and Horror in 2014

by Robin A. Rothman on January 08, 2014



The Future. This is a concept that rarely fazes the sci-fi/fantasy fan -- reading adventurers who consider each everywhere and all of always in the space-time continuum their home. We were reading about rocket ships and touch screen technology before they were a gleam in scientists' microscope-ringed eyes. We've defeated mystical armies, we've befriended wizards, and we've seen legendary people perform anachronistic feats that would blow an historian's date-riddled mind.

So, yeah... in that context, what's the big deal about the next few measly months? Well, books, of course! We may have to accept that jet packs could hit shelves before we turn the last page in A Song of Ice and Fire. (No pressure, Mr. Martin. We know the time's being put to excellent use.) However, while I'm thoroughly enjoying my current reading (*Red Rising* by Pierce Brown and *The Emperor's Blades* by Brian Staveley), there are tons of amazing science fiction, fantasy, and horror books on the horizon. Here are six that make me wish I had a Tardis of my own.



Annihilation by Jeff VanderMeer (FSG, February 2014)

An anthropologist, a biologist, a psychologist, and a surveyor walk into a mysterious place called Area X. No jokes to be made here. This short (less than 200 pages) tale begins a trilogy with potent description and edge-of-your-seat suspense. I hate to make lazy TV/film analogies, but it won't be the last time you see this book compared to "Lost" and possibly even *Alien*. I'll admit I've started reading this one already and I'm grateful that my wait won't be long to keep going. Subsequent volumes *Authority* and *Acceptance* publish in June and September respectively.



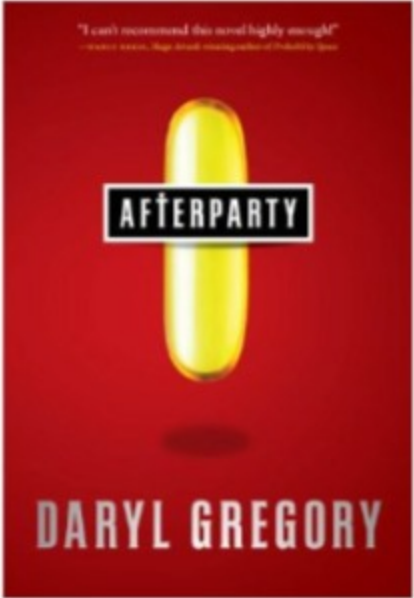
The Barrow by Mark Smylie (Pyr, March 2014)

In this debut novel, Mark Smylie gives the world he created in his "Artesia" comic books, a new life. We start with a band of dangerously endearing rogues, a magical map, and a dangerous search for a wizard's sword. My sense of adventure is at the ready. Bring on the emotional manipulation and unabashed violence. I'm ready for an epic quest!



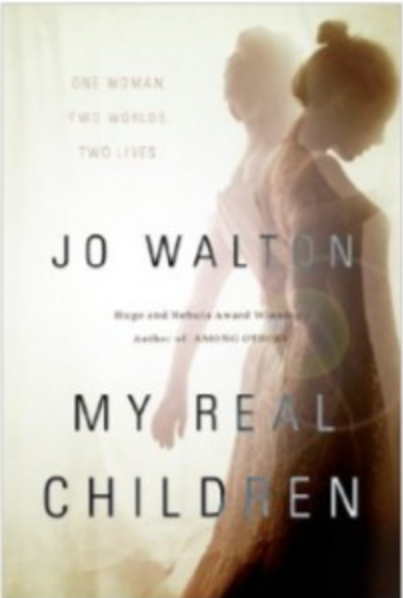
The Detainee by Peter Liney (Jo Fletcher Books, March 2014)

Admittedly, I've developed a bad attitude toward dystopian stories lately. So it's quite meaningful that one of the books I'm most looking forward to this year will find me begging for "punishment satellites" to protect me on a shanty-laden island where mainland residents ship their garbage. And since a massive economic collapse, "garbage" includes the weakest members of society -- like "Big Guy" Clancy, former muscle for a crime boss.



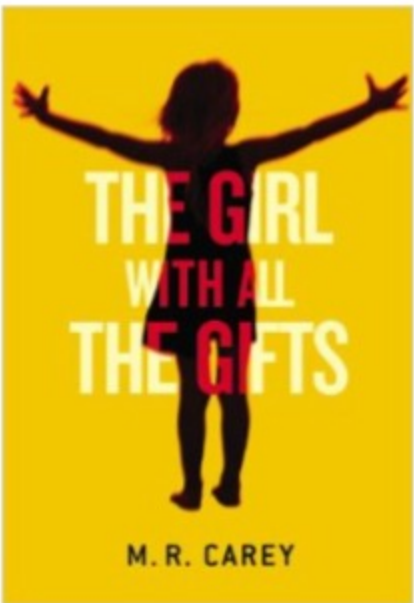
Afterparty by Daryl Gregory (TOR, April 2014)

Before the first chapter even begins, there's religion, drugs, and suicide -- all presented in a crisp, engaging writing style that itself threatens to be addictive. Set in the near-future in a world in which smart drug recipes are opensourced, one church uses dependency on their sacrament, a mind-altering narcotic called "Numinous," to keep followers in line. One of the drug's creators tries to undo the damage. I'm so hooked!



My Real Children by Jo Walton (TOR, May 2014)

This isn't the kind of story I typical gravitate toward, but there's something subtly compelling to me about the setup here. One woman with dementia, two possible realities creating a fork in her life's path just after college. The overlap and divergence intrigue me: in one she's married to a man and they have four children; in the other she's married to a woman with three children. Which, if either, is real?



The Girl With All the Gifts by M.R. Carey (Orbit, June 2014)

Ten-year-old Melanie is surrounded by mysteries, and I know just enough to know that explaining too much will result in spoilers. So, though I tread lightly, let it be known that I am chomping at the bit to truly dig into this story. Here's what I'll share: Melanie sleeps in a cell. She is under strict military protection, just like the rest of the kids in her class. Her favorite teacher seems to know something her students don't know about themselves, and she's emotionally attached to Melanie in a way that could be extremely dangerous for them both.

Abhinav Agarwal's bookshelf pictured above ([Share yours](#))

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