



Hypnosis Under Erasure: Two *Annihilations*

Gary Genosko

Professor, Communication and Digital Media Studies
Faculty of Social Science and Humanities/
University of Ontario Institute of Technology

Abstract

This article analyzes the important role played by hypnosis in Jeff Vandermeer's novel *Annihilation*. It then asks what becomes of hypnosis in the film adaptation of the novel by director Alex Garland as it appears to play no role. It is maintained that hypnosis appears in the film but it is under erasure in the Derridean sense of having been erased, which leaves it legible but in another form, namely, in the special effect called the shimmer. While in Vandermeer's science fiction hypnotic phenomena serve as synecdoches for passages across the border of Area X into an alien domain, in the film this crossing is a visual trace of the process of induction, hence, walking through the shimmer would be sufficient to induce a hypnotic state. Under erasure, hypnosis looks less and less like itself yet continues to function. Although the history of film contains many examples of hypnosis, the film adaptation is not a counter-example but a robust deployment of hypnosis beyond standard representations.

Key words: hypnosis, induction, deconstruction, erasure, *Annihilation*.

To cite as:

Gary Genosko, 2019, "Hypnosis Under Erasure: Two *Annihilations*," *PsyArt* 23, pp. 229-245.

Introduction

Whither hypnosis? When it comes to public confidence in the benefits of hypnosis in a clinical setting, especially in the non-pharmacological management of pain, hypnotherapy enjoys a confident buoyancy among the public according to recent English literature reviews (Krouwel, Jolly, Greenfield 2017), despite the fact that it still remains in some circles a ‘dirty word’ (Upshaw 2006) for medical practitioners and is tainted by association with spectacularity in certain national traditions, whereas its reception is modulated by controlled licensure, registration and certification in others, including Israel and Canada. When considering the status of hypnosis across legal and clinical regimes of knowledge, one can surmise that it is marked by ambivalence, both inside and outside the professions, despite its long and tangled histories and legitimate claims to various efficacies. There is one domain, however, where hypnosis has thrived, and that is in mass entertainment, even though its effects and messages continue to be quite ambiguous.

Hypnosis does not seek a safe harbour in entertainment’s aesthetic forms. Rather, it found a troubled berth there in the 19th century, especially in the figure of the foreign manipulator, an anti-semitic construction of the powerful and malevolent Svengali in George Du Maurier’s popular novel *Trilby* (1895) who exploits a young artist’s model through the use of hypnosis (Pick 2000). Cinematic examples of a powerful hybrid psychiatrist-mesmerist abound; take for example the *Three Faces of Eve* (1957) in which Dr. Luther uses hypnosis to gain insight into the falsely conflated cure and discovery of

the aetiology of the illness suffered by Eve. Hypnosis, as Glen and Krin Gabbard (1999, 29) describe, is a technique “that is greatly over-represented in the movies in proportion to its actual use by therapists and psychoanalysts,” especially during what the authors calls the Golden Age of Psychiatry in the late 50s and early 60s. Historians of hypnosis point out the popularity of stage or ‘parlour’ hypnosis in the mid-twentieth century American culture, that blossomed alongside its medical acceptance for a variety of ills and pseudo-conditions. Post-hypnotic suggestion fared less well as it was linked to Cold War jitters around mind manipulation by enemy agents (Stroud 2013, 65-7). Today, stage hypnosis acts remain popular, especially on university and college campuses, and it is the recruitment of amateur volunteers whose capacities to follow instructions, or even better to fail at this task, grounds these acts in a comedic format; such acts are also notoriously sexist and homophobic. They cement a contract between the hypnotist and audience about the ‘reality’ of hypnosis itself (Stroud 2013, 245), animated by audience expectations gained from popular culture and other sources about what hypnosis looks like, not to mention what it ‘feels’ like as an experience. Hypnosis’ capacity to persist as a form of entertainment, and to mutate to reach new audiences – triple-XXX hypnosis acts, hypno-porn fetishes for men and women, comedic hypnotists, animal hypnosis acts, etc. – is impressive, but this does not give it a free passage as some doors are closed to it. This paper concerns one of those doors.

Any reader of Jeff Vandermeer’s Southern Reach Trilogy – *Annihilation*, *Authority* and *Acceptance* – will have noticed that hypnosis plays an important role in preparing members of the expeditions that are launched by the Southern Reach government research station into the strange Area X. Viewers of the adaptation of the

science fiction novel to film will note the overt omission of hypnosis by screenwriter and director Alex Garland in his film adaptation *Annihilation* (2018). Of course, this is not an unusual move, and should not raise any hackles unless one is committed to an untenable fidelity position grounded in an exhaustive faithfulness between source and film. Rather, the question is a positive one or perhaps with Jacques Derrida's emphasis, it is not "merely negative" (1976, 23). Today, which cultural pathways remain open to hypnosis? What happens to hypnosis when it is diverted?

Despite its lengthy lineage in cinema, indeed, in some respects as the very nature of cinema (Guérade 2009, 166-67), hypnosis doesn't always make the transition from print to screen. I consider the example of *Annihilation* to be less a matter of erasing and more a putting under erasure of hypnosis, that is, it is a marked erasure that leaves it legible, effacing while retaining. Without hypostatizing it, the X of Area X is the crossing-out of hypnosis whose necessity survives in a visual translation of the induction process or, passing through what is called in the film, the shimmer. The effects of entering the shimmer describe textbook anomalous experiences from the hypnosis literature. Whereas in the novel the border of Area X is invisible, in the film it is a visible, bubbling, psychedelic, gas-stained, vertical curtain. This is the only vestige of hypnosis in the film. This putting under erasure is both a positive gesture and translation into visual discourse, in which strangeness is not sacrificed. Canonical figures of hypnosis are not invoked in the film, but its cinematic legacy is hard to dissipate. The characters must pass or, better, are *induced* into a strange universe in a manner akin to entering a hypnotic state by means of an induction process, sometimes long, sometimes short, involving instructions, various actions, and even commands. Two tricks, then: the

“trick of writing” with a deletion that Derrida mentions (1976, 24) and the trick of hypnosis, and the longstanding concern about its verisimilitude and the meaning of suggestibility, both equally necessary to pass through.

The first part of this paper will address the role of hypnosis in *Annihilation*, the novel, before turning briefly to the film version.

Under Hypnosis

Generally, in VanderMeer’s novel, entries and exits into and out of Area X are called, pseudo-psychoanalytically, transference phenomena (known as ‘rapport’ between hypnotist and subject). *Annihilation* is built around one such expedition, and it is led by a character known as ‘the psychologist’, who routinely deploys hypnosis on her fellow researchers, all of whom represent various disciplines (‘the anthropologist’, ‘the biologist’, etc.):

After a moment, the psychologist said, ‘Now clear your minds.’ This meant she would begin the process of hypnotizing us so we could cross the border. She would then put herself under a kind of self-hypnosis. It had been explained that we would need to cross the border with precautions to protect against our minds tricking us. (7)

Hypnosis is used to protect researchers against the allegedly powerful hallucinations, hence trickery, induced by border-crossing. It is first characterized as a prophylactic, and

when it reappears in the narrative, it is wielded by the psychologist almost as a shield against external threat, but with limitations on its deployment due to the preparatory steps required to set it up, that is, the ritual of induction (11). But hypnosis cuts both ways when it comes to trickery: it may shield one from it, but it is also intimately linked to it, usually in the form of an unscrupulous operator using increased suggestibility to elicit ridiculous acts for entertainment purposes, a practice long-denounced by self-styled debunkers (Eysenck 1957, 34). Or, for that matter, as something other than it appears, as in a stage hypnosis act that draws mostly upon misdirection and mentalist skills around managing volunteers and massaging audience expectations.

In *Annihilation*, the narrator of the above observations is a character known as ‘the biologist’ who, not incidentally, claims not only a special sensitivity to the use of hypnotic suggestion on her (‘it was only later that I realized the psychologist had tried to bind me with a hypnotic suggestion meant for me and me alone’, 19), but of resistance to hypnosis in general. At times she mimics the effects of falling under hypnotic suggestion, triggered by certain phrases, displayed by her colleagues (‘I felt no compulsion whatsoever, but clearly we had been preprogrammed to enter a hypnotic state ...’, 22). The anxiety that she feels about the secret of her non-susceptibility and/or of her resistance is a recurring theme, and she attributes this power to a bio-agent she accidentally ingested in Area X (23). But she objects to the abuse of hypnosis, too (28). Hypnosis is routinely used and officially sanctioned by the administration of the Southern Reach, and by its head office known as Central. The character known as Control, the newly installed director of the Southern Reach, regularly reports to his handler at Central, called the Voice. Control knows that the Voice uses hypnosis – ‘control had seen the

Voice execute hypnotic commands, seen himself become unfocused, head floating a bit on his neck, eyelids fluttering, while the Voice ... gave him orders and suggestions' (285). And he also comes to grasp why his predecessor, the psychologist, as well as one of the early expedition's survivors, championed hypnosis (304) to overcome fear of the unknown and paranormal. When Control seems to enter Area X himself, he strongly desires to be hypnotized by his mother, a famous spook with ties to both the Southern Reach and Central (329, 332). Yet he also resents having been conditioned and hypnotized (334). When inside, Control comically tries to trigger a hypnotic state in the biologist, while simultaneously recognizing she is 'impervious to the suggestion' (362).

That hypnotic phenomena serve as synecdoches for the passage across the border of Area X is made evident in *Acceptance*. When Control launches his own expedition, he brings a scientist, named Whitby, who is hypnotized and 'shuffles along, eyes closed, his face a twitching mass of tics as if he's having an intense dream' (393). Still, Control considers hypnotism to be 'shoddy' when he practices it (396). When Area X's border suddenly expands, engulfing the Southern Reach research station itself, we know that many of the persons caught in this shift will be susceptible to intense and transformative mental and physical changes, as if Area X itself had put them under hypnosis. Here, the question of Area X's agency inverts the synecdoche as the expansion of its territory is akin to a kind of hypnosis induced by some aggressive mechanical method together with mass delusion. The invisible border that marked Area X's boundary is a veil of sorts, a technique of hypnotic induction in its own right, aimed at groups, a magical sort of induction apparatus not so removed from the experimental uses of television made in hypnosis experiments at the BBC (Marcuse 1959, 62). Nevertheless, the general question

is how did what was once called, during the 1950s, a ‘shining instrument of modern psychiatry’ (Magonet 1952, 101), reappear in a highly lauded work of contemporary science fiction? Of course, for those who know of *Annihilation* only through its film adaptation, this line of investigation may appear strange. It is not that a viewer would remember nothing, but that one would not have known about it in the first place, and would not discover it, until reading the book. Even then, VanderMeer’s presentation of hypnosis as a technique of verbal suggestion rehearses a few core and somewhat dualistic facets of its discussion: susceptibility vs. non-susceptibility; the character traits of hypnotists and hypnotized subjects, and resistant subjects, too (apparent degrees of intelligence and/or submissiveness); the possibility of self-hypnosis; the heightening of certain abilities (perceptual) under hypnosis; its therapeutic uses (inducing calm) in overcoming obstacles (fear, inhibition), and hallucinatory misrecognition (only a hypnotized person might fail to register that the ‘geographic anomaly’ explored in the novel is alive, breathing and growing). Still, the choice of hypnosis conveys the complexity of troubled entries and mysterious exits to and from altered states and a series of psycho-geographic metonymic displacements.

By the time we reach *Acceptance*, hypnosis seems benign. It is characterized as a ‘light’ application, a bit like lite beer, of the kind one doesn’t really want, anyway, finding it too anodyne. The offer of this form of hypnosis is hard to even reject. (560) According to Lowry at Central, addressing the psychologist when she was expedition leader, the biologist was not meddled with, her will was too strong; her attunement to Area X so intense that hypnosis would have added nothing. The psychologist eschews understanding the full significance of hypnotic suggestion in this respect. (574)

From Anomaly to Transmutation

Erasure does not omit as the crossed-out word persists on the page. A word under erasure has a heightened visibility. Yet this does not introduce a hierarchy (visual/written) into the relationship. Rather, in the example under discussion there is a shift from one medium to another: writing to cinema. Hypnosis under erasure leaves intact the induction of entering the shimmer. Hypnosis is not named, yet it persists ritually, and acquires a renewed force, entailing that the entire team passing through the shimmer is subject to it. Instead of the intense dual relationship between the hypnotist and hypnotized subject that in a sense brackets the exterior world in an intense transferential relationship, Area X assumes the role of hypnotist and it works with and on each member of the expedition in different ways.

Hypnosis under erasure is not a wild procedure, to use the Freudian sense of wild analysis as amateurism. Rather, on the screen it poses anomalousness as the experience proper to it, an experience that is always improper as far as time consciousness, memory, body image, self-perception, and inner life are concerned. Anomalies abound: moving fingerprints; space and time disorientation; sleep and waking imbalances; video evidence of organic possession of a member of a previous mission is reduced to a 'trick of the light'; resonant mutations across species seem beautiful and terrifying, and could be hallucinations, or scientifically verifiable, or both. One by one the travelers succumb to the ambient but total refractions of the shimmer. They are either eaten by hybrid beasts, like anthropologist Cass Shepard played by actress Tuva Novotny, and hallucination

prone paramedic Anya Thorensen, played by actress Gina Rodriguez, or mutate into a flowering shrub, as physicist Josie Radek played by actress Tess Thompson. The group's leader, psychologist Dr. Ventress, played by actress Jennifer Jason Leigh, disintegrates; and only biologist Lena, played by actress Natalie Portman, survives the mission in some sense although she carries elements of her doppelgänger, created in a magical and alien process explained in the film by accelerated cell division and proliferation based on extracted small blood samples (i.e., a drop of blood from a cut on Lena's face). Under erasure, the shimmer and its effects do not affirm the link between deep hypnosis and reports of psi experiences (Pekala et al 1995), despite all attempts to limit the intrusion of paranormality in the history of the field because the story is (Cardena et al 2000), after all, horror science fiction, and the extravagant flora and fauna are special effects. Rather, under erasure as the shimmer, hypnosis crossed out is a cinematic experience of the paranormal that is designed to frighten and disturb. So, in this sense the paranormal, alien hypothesis of what happened at the lighthouse, hinted at in the crash of an alien entity at the beginning of the film, is given in the narrative and not testable or researchable, even if it runs parallel to a historical (in mesmerism, for instance) and testable deep hypnosis-paranormal reporting linkage in sample test groups. Putting hypnosis under erasure breaks up standard definitions of the procedure, even contesting the contestations so that any definition 'hypnosis is this and that' becomes, in the erasure of the copula, 'hypnosis and', the conjunction serving to open it to other minor explanations and extravagant usages. The entire exploratory team that enters the shimmer is subject to hypnosis in its otherness, without having to assert or prove that there is a link between paranormal experience and deep hypnotic states, which would be to reinscribe the copula.

Induction can be undertaken either by physical or psychological methods or a combination of the two. Walking through the shimmer would be sufficient to induce a hypnotic state. However, medical practitioners have traditionally emphasized that “the essence of successful hypnotic induction lies, to a great extent, in the ability of the operator to manipulate the imagination of his subject.” (Ambrose and Newbold 1968, 55) But when the operator is the entire strange ecology of Area X, the emphasis shifts, as the ability to manipulate subjects is a property of the environment itself. The strangeness of Area X is precisely its powerful ecological and ethological influence, to the degree that human subjects are either transfigured vegetally, semio-chemically, or absorbed metabolically by its hybrid creatures. There are two points here. The first is that the classic dual relation of hypnosis is displaced onto Area X; the relationship of the hypnotized subject to the world is traditionally minimized. The second is that this displacement of the operator onto the environment and the subsequent transmutations that take place are the source of horror in the film. As operator, Area X’s influence is maximized and comes to dominate the experience of the expedition. Under erasure hypnosis persists in a form that theorists of hypnosis recognize in the form of a contrast between an intra-psychic event or state (sleep, trance, etc.), as opposed to “a disturbance of the relations of a subject with the environment.” (Rausky 1993, 215) The range of so-called ‘disturbances’ is impressively rendered in the outcomes and encounters of the main characters. They experience variances with regard to their relations with the environment.

Conclusion

Although I have emphasized the transfer between media (book/cinema), it is the incompleteness of *rature* that warrants some further attention. Erasure alters hypnosis, even beyond its ambiguities, yet retains something of the familiar. By putting sociology under erasure, George Pavlich (2001, 222-23), for example, forced a refusal of the “ontological consecration” (of limits) and explanations of social reality. He identified “exits that dissociate particular and familiar con-texts ... [and] critical negotiation of passages from familiar and unfamiliar apparatuses of thought, preventing closure by *relentlessly* pursuing new forms of textual and procedural authority.” (2001, 227) This is not a programmatic statement, but a commitment to potentiality. A few familiar features of hypnosis persist – new perceptual capacities, in extreme degrees, to be sure. In fact, in the novel, the biologist is sensitive to attempts to hypnotize her. But in the film, she (Lena) is accused by Anya of “bullshit tactics” in convincing the others to continue to the lighthouse instead of turning back, especially after the violent death of Shepard; Lena later admits that she was lying, not only about her husband, who was the sole survivor of a previous mission, and seen on the aforementioned video, but that Ventress has cancer and was not going to return, and insisted on soldiering onward. The highly charged hostage taking of the group by Anya and the popular claim against “tactics” akin to hypnotic manipulation – ‘fakery’, ‘bullshit’ and the like – marks manipulation in a familiar way. At the same time such “tactics” are also akin to tricks of the mind, a problem mooted earlier with regard to the problem of interpreting the surviving videotape, but referenced to the role originally played by hypnosis in the novel as a prophylactic device against unintentional self-deception. Here we get closer to the enigma of hypnosis under erasure in the mingling of familiar and unfamiliar.

Garland and his team of special effects technicians carry viewers into unfamiliar territory by avoiding cinema's long attachment to representations of hypnosis and, instead, choose an abstract route: the shimmer as an induction process is rendered like an art projection not out of place in a psychedelic performance inspired by LSD. Visual effects supervisor Andrew Whitehurst has explained how his team achieved the petrol slick effect of the shifting vertical wall, additionally likening it to the shimmer given off by special autobody paint (pearlescent finish). His approach utilized a vintage camera lens and shooting the passage of light from theatrical lamps through a variety of different pieces of glass. (Failes 2018) While there has long been a familiar connection between hypnosis and psychedelic experience (Krippner 1968), with an emphasis on disinhibition and creation, in *Annihilation* the out-of-body experience of Lena is literally manifested in a doppelgänger rapidly formed from her own cells with whom she battles, and appears to destroy. Recovered memories of alien contact while under hypnosis are one of the many reasons why it is considered unreliable (despite inspiring confidence in so many believers), but also one of the cornerstones of the science fiction narrative itself. The problem with hypnosis, as Isabelle Stengers has pointed out, is that its power is hard to disqualify because many people choose to be influenced for bad reasons, despite science's insistence otherwise. (Stengers 2000, 23-4) A bad object like hypnosis is, however, an attractive object for science fiction when it draws on altered states of consciousness, and it is even more efficacious when it is erased but not hidden – it may be anecdotal, non-reproducible bullshit, but its capacity to produce unease in non-believers and believers alike gives to it a remarkable plasticity.

Finally, under erasure hypnosis looks less and less like itself yet continues to function. Taken together, the shimmer as the visual trace of induction, and the disturbed relations between subjects and their environment, work to conduct a hypnosis without hypnotization proper, but perhaps as a sun fully eclipsed by a moon: cinema-hypnosis, as Raymond Bellour (Bergstrom 1979, 101) would have it, citing the “fundamental relationship” between two disparate apparatuses, whose power is concentrated in a shimmering screen, and whose fascination is exercised by its constraints (i.e., time distortion). Whereas in the argument presented here, the displaced hypnotist, in the power accorded to Area X itself, is not an anthropomorphized reassignment, but recognition of hypnosis’ productive processuality that emerges if considered across media and through the action of erasure. It is almost as if hypnosis gradually becomes benign in Vandermeer’s trilogy so that it can without being overtly represented assume a place in the filmic version of influence and grandeur that inspires recognition of its horrible power, a fear made more visceral by the absence of any of the trappings of the hypnotist and hypnotized subject abundantly available in the history and theory of cinema.

At the end of the film, only a few visual cues suggest the permanence of the impact of the shimmer on the lives of Lena and her husband Kane, both rare survivors of Area X expeditions. Their final encounter suggests that hypnosis under erasure has an enduring impact on both their lives in exercising a kind of inability of a subject to recognize itself as real. It is as if the displacement of the hypnotist onto the environment is transposed from fraught external encounter into fraught internal blockage that makes self-understanding difficult, maybe impossible. Freud’s attitude to hypnosis early in his career, which led him to discontinue using the technique because he believed he lacked

the dexterity to carry out successful inductions, was a stumbling block that might have been “slightly attenuated” had he accepted that significant variance exists in the susceptibility of patients. (Bachner-Melman and Lichtenberg 2001, 45) In the film, the encounters between characters and the environment of Area X are highly differentiated, with the survivors appearing as extreme examples of those who were able to come out of hypnosis under erasure yet were subject to something greater than post-hypnotic suggestion on the level of a potential metaphysical transfiguration.

References

Ambrose, Gordon and Newbold, George. *A Handbook of Medical Hypnosis*. London: Bailliere, Tindall and Cassell, 1968.

Bachner-Melman, Rachel and Lichtenberg, Pesach, “Freud’s Relevance to Hypnosis: A Reevaluation,” *American Journal of Clinical Hypnosis* 44/1 (July 2001): 37-50.

Bergstrom, Janet. “Alternation, Segmentation, Hypnosis: Interview with Raymond Bellour,” *Camera Obscura* 3/4 (1979): 70-103.

Cardena, Etzel, Lynn, Steven Jay and Krippner, Stanley. Eds. *Varieties of Anomalous Experience: Examining the Scientific Evidence*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2000.

- Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Trans. Gayatri Spivak. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.
- Eysenck, H. J. *Sense and Nonsense in Psychology*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957.
- Failes, Ian. "Mandelbulbs, Mutations and Motion Capture: The Visual Effects of *Annihilation*," *vfxblog.com* (12 March 2018).
<https://vfxblog.com/2018/03/12/mandelbulbs-mutations-and-motion-capture-the-visual-effects-of-annihilation/>
- Gabbard, Glen O. and Krin. *Psychiatry and the Cinema*, second edition. Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Press, 1999.
- Garland, Alex. Director, *Annihilation*, 2018. Paramount Pictures.
- Guérade, Irma. "L'ombre, l'image, la peste: notes sur le cinéma allemand de l'entre-deux guerres." In *Hypnos: Images et inconscients en Europe 1900-1949*. Liège: Musée de l'Hospice Comtesse à Lille, 2009, pp 174-84.
- Krippner, Stanley. "The Psychedelic State, The Hypnotic Trance, and the Creative Act," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 8/1 (1968): 49-67.
- Krouwel, M, Jolly, K, Greenfield, S. "What the public thinks about hypnosis and hypnotherapy: A narrative review of literature covering opinions and attitudes of the general public 1996-2016," *Complementary Therapies in Medicine* 32 (2017): 75-84.
- Magonet, A. Philip. *Hypnosis in Medicine*. London: William Heinemann Medical Books, 1952.
- Marcuse, F. L. *Hypnosis: Fact and Fiction*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959.
- Pavlich, George. "Sociological Promise: Departures, or Negotiating Dissociation." In *Derrida Downunder*. Eds. L. Simmons and H. Worth, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 2001, pp. 216-32.
- Pekala, R. J., Kumar, V. K., & Marcano, G. "Anomalous/paranormal experiences, hypnotic susceptibility, and dissociation," *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* 89/4 (1995): 313-332.
- Rausky, Franklin. "Le quatrième état organismique: réflexions théoriques et cliniques sur une hypothèse chertokienne." In *Importance de l'hypnose*. Ed. Isabelle Stengers. Paris: Les empêcheurs de penser en rond, 1993, pp. 203-17.
- Stengers, Isabelle. *The Invention of Modern Science*. Trans. Daniel W. Smith. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

Stroud, Cynthia. *Stage Hypnosis in the Shadow of Svengali: Historical Influences, Public Perceptions, and Contemporary Practices*. Doctoral Dissertation, Dept. of Film and Theatre, Bowling Green State University, 2013.

https://etd.ohiolink.edu/rws_etd/document/get/bgsu1363090445/inline

Upshaw, William M. "Hypnosis: Medicine's Dirty Word," *American Journal of Clinical Hypnosis* 49/2 (2006): 113-22.

VanderMeer, Jeff. *Area X: The Southern Reach Trilogy: Annihilation, Authority & Acceptance*, New York: Harper Collins, 2014.