

Zoom Chat Box—Week 12.2 (Thursday)
VanderMeer, *Annihilation*, Chap 3-5

Kailani Sparrow : 1. I was wondering if there is any point from a literary perspective for why they call this the 12th expedition. When the biologist stumbles upon the notebooks, it's obvious there have been far more than 12 expeditions. and 2. There's a lot of symbolism throughout the story including the writing on the wall. What do you think the lighthouse and area X itself represent? (I'm a biology major with no history of writing or story telling, so sorry if this sounds dumb)

Amber Massie : I'm a little confused, they keep referring to the biologist's husband coming back, but it seems like he wasn't supposed to? That and they insinuate that those that come back from expeditions really don't?

yaseen : why don't the accounts of the previous expeditions match up?

Jared Compaleo : Does the lighthouse keeper control the crawler or does the crawler control him? Or have they formed some sort of symbiotic relationship?

Alexis Voisard : The following quotation from the Crawler's writing is what I believe summarizes the biologist's decision to stay in Area X: "That which dies shall still know life in death for all that decays is not forgotten and reanimated shall walk the world in a bliss of not-knowing..." (132). She has accepted what she knows and what she doesn't know, and ultimately refuses to give the Southern Reach the answers it's looking for. Is this "bliss of not-knowing" the essence of humanity that Area X is trying to dismantle and recreate, especially related to the human tendencies to dominate or control an environment?

McKenzie Stefanoff : On page 138, the biologist says "Behind me lay the increasingly solemn silhouette of what was no longer really a lighthouse but instead a kind of reliquary". What does this mean? I guess I am unsure of what "reliquary" really is.

Carissa : "There were thousands of 'dead' spaces like the lot I had observed, thousands of transitional environments that no one saw, that had been rendered invisible because they were not 'of use.' (p157) It seems like there are two settings of this book, the relatable "real world" of the flashbacks and then Area X. In this quote, the author is tying those two settings together, is this an attempt to make a statement about/relate to the world we live in today and what exactly is this statement saying about said world?

Noah Berner : Obviously the psychologist was in on the experiment, but why would she be so invested in the mission that she would give the suicide command even as she died?

Paige Dunham : In the husband's journal he witnessed their bodies walking into the tower, is it implied that these bodies went into the light that was at the bottom of the tower that the biologist had witnessed?

brandon butler : At the end of the book the biologist says she will continue in Area X to see what her husband saw. I felt she may be staying for other reasons. Earlier in the book the biologist talks about the pool in her backyard growing up and how she wanted to learn everything on her own first. I thought

that by staying in Area X she is returning to that pool in a way. And unlike the pool and her other research projects she won't have to go through the pain of leaving them.

Sarah Clouse : Why tell the team they are the 12th expedition when there have actually been many more? Why 12 specifically and not another number? It seems like the Southern Reach could have told them anything they wanted, so was there a reason for picking 12?

Amanda Wibel : In the last section, the biologist talks about how she sees her "brightness" and how the Crawler interacts with that. Sort of like bees, is this maybe infrared? Or another light spectrum that humans don't normally see?

Nicole Wallace : I'm still just curious about why the biologist had always thought of it as the "tower" when we see that no one else has. From what I recall of the start of the book, she thought of it this way from even before she got hit with the spores. I guess I'm just trying to figure out what made her uniquely suited to view it this way instead of as a tunnel.

Paige Dunham : How do all the journals end up in the lighthouse trapdoor? Is the lighthouse keeper/crawler putting them there? or is something else the cause?

Drew Gillum : Why do you think there were no medics on this trip, when there were two on her husband's mission? Was it an attempt to learn more about the relationship between being injured and the brightness?

Alexis Voisard : The biologist also decides to give up being human, mentioning that "the thought of continually doing harm to myself to remain human seems somehow pathetic" (148). Could the energy it takes for the biologist to "remain human" in this new environment relate to the human struggle against disease and viruses that we cannot cure or even fates that nature has already decided that are somewhat related to self-destruction?

Tiffinnie Reed : I thought it interesting the reference to the journals in the lighthouse as a 'midden' because I thought that word mainly suggested or referred to waste left by animals? So, I didn't know if there was a significance to that?

Alspaugh, Cassidy : I didn't really understand the full role of the lighthouse keeper, was he supposed to play some sort of symbolic role, or tie something together? It seems obvious he is very important, with the picture with the circle, and then him being seen in the tower. I think I am just confused about him.

Reynold : Is there any significance in the crawler choosing to write those words on the 'left-hand' wall in the tower?

Kendra Fields : When I think about lighthouses, I naturally think about light and brightness, and yet the biologist is now described having a brightness with her. Is she now part of the lighthouse? and if so, why? What does the lighthouse mean, and why would the biologist be the only one to "become" the lighthouse?

Samantha Baxter : I think I am most confused about what they are choosing to tell the group and what they choose not to -- like the 12th expedition ; I am also confused about the status of the husband, is he alive or dead?

Kylie King : I agree with Samantha because I too was confused about whether the husband was alive somewhere else based off of the whole doppelgänger idea or if he was dead

Alexandria Robertson : 1. Is the crawler the creator and keeper of Area X?

Alexis Voisard : I like that passage too, makes me wonder if the border is just a construct to limit the mind of the possibility that there is obstruction beyond the border. I think Southern Reach wants subjects to believe that it is self-contained when indeed it isn't

Drew Gillum : @Reynold I thought about that a lot too! If I'm picturing this in my head correctly, if the tower is going down clockwise it has to be on the left side to be readable from top to bottom

Kylie King : I also find it interesting that throughout the book, the biologist gives the idea of her becoming one with nature. More specifically it says, "I had gotten sidetracked, like I always did, because I melted into my surroundings, could not remain separate from, apart from, objectivity a foreign land to me". I think this is important because she ultimately becomes part of Area X in the end

Alexis Voisard : Melted is a unique word choice too

Yasel Rosado : ^^

Drew Gillum : The husband is DEFINITELY the dolphin

Drew Gillum : maybe the crawler is literally the light from the lighthouse?

Tiffinnie Reed : beacon, to warn of danger

Amanda Wibel : Tower tarot card maybe?

Tiffinnie Reed : she never seemed very connected to him.....

Alexis Voisard : I thought the husband factor of the decision made me roll my eyes a little bit lol, but I like returning to the pool idea too

Amanda Wibel : what about the Annihilation as the psych's suicide command?

Tiffinnie Reed : No, I like the point about how different people can read it in a different lens and take away different points from it.