



WELCOME TO THE NOVEMBER MEETING OF ALIEN WORLDS!

This month we are reading *Ancillary Justice* by Ann Leckie. Published in 2013, Leckie's debut novel swept the science fiction awards, winning the Hugo, Nebula, Arthur C. Clarke, and Locus awards. As importantly, science fiction readers and critics alike were hailing the book as a truly unique voice. If you have started reading, you know why. But I think the most important thing to know about *Ancillary Justice* is that it is space opera at its best and it is fun!

Our narrator is Breq who, as we learn, is both part of a collective mind of Ancillaries (reanimated corpse soldiers) and the mind of the warship Justice of Toren. Breq, or ancillary Esk 19, is a truly alien mind as she tells her story in first person, no matter who the narrator is. And because the Radch are a socially genderless society, everyone is called she. What is amazing about this book is the way that these two choices by the author create for the reader a sense of seeing through alien eyes. For example, it is very difficult to visualize the characters. Just about the time that you decide that a character must be female, the character interacts with a society that recognizes gender distinctions, and the character is addressed as he.

Add to that cognitive disconnect the difficulty in narration depending on which Breq you are hearing. The ship, the Justice of Toren, thinks in terms of centuries, while Breq is telling her story in her present. Yet Breq also remembers distinctly the losses of the recent past to her entire collective mind. I know it sounds confusing, but you should simply go along for the ride, and did I mention that this is fun?

Ancillary Justice is a mystery, a political thriller, and a rollicking space opera. It is also a thoughtful consideration of what it means to be an individual and to be alien, even in your own world. You see, Breq is separated from all her other selves by a cataclysmic event, and she is struggling to understand what "I" means. She is also struggling to understand emotions. Is she the ship wanting justice for an empire? Or is she a person wanting vengeance for the death of someone she loved? And how does an AI love anyway?

These are among the fascinating questions that we will explore together when we meet on Tuesday, November 28 to discuss *Ancillary Justice* by Ann Leckie. It is a book that, as one critic notes, is "both intellectually rewarding and full of a true sense of wonder." Enjoy!

Donna McBride