



About the Author



about this author

Full text biography:

Ann Leckie

Birth Date : 1966

Place of Birth : United States, Ohio, Toledo

Nationality: American

Occupation : Novelist

Table of Contents:

[Awards](#)
[Personal Information](#)
[Career](#)
[Writings](#)
[Sidelights](#)
[Related Information](#)

Awards:

Nebula Award for best novel, Hugo Award for best novel, Locus Award for best first novel, Arthur C. Clarke Award, and Sydney J. Bounds Award for best newcomer, all for *Ancillary Justice*; Best Novel, British Science Fiction Association Award for best novel, 2014, and Locus Award for best science fiction novel, 2015, both for *Ancillary Sword*; Locus Award for best science fiction novel, 2016, for *Ancillary Mercy*

Personal Information:

Born March 2, 1966, in Toledo, OH; married David Hare; children: one son, one daughter. **Education:** Graduated from Washington University, 1989. **Memberships:** Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers of America (secretary; vice president, 2012-13). **Addresses:** Home: St. Louis, MO. **E-mail:** ann@annleckie.com.

Career Information:

Writer. *Gigantosaurus* magazine, editor, 2010-13; *PodCastle* (podcast), assistant editor. Has worked as a waitress, receptionist, land surveyor, and recording engineer.

Writings:

"IMPERIAL RADCH" TRILOGY

- *Ancillary Justice*, Orbit (New York, NY), 2013.
- *Ancillary Sword*, Orbit (New York, NY), 2014.
- *Ancillary Mercy*, Orbit (New York, NY), 2015.

Contributor to anthologies, including *Science Fiction: The Best of the Year, 2007*. Contributor of short stories to periodicals, including *Subterranean*, *Strange Horizons*, and *Realms of Fantasy*.

Sidelights:

Science fiction writer Ann Leckie has contributed short stories to the anthology *Science Fiction: The Best of the Year, 2007* and to such periodicals as *Subterranean* magazine, *Strange Horizons*, and *Realms of Fantasy*. Her debut novel, *Ancillary Justice*, was published in 2013 and is the first installment in her "Imperial Radch" trilogy. Discussing her path to

becoming an author in a *Qwillery* Web site interview, Leckie remarked: "I've actually been writing on and off since grade school. In high school I actually got up the courage to send something out--to *Twilight Zone* Magazine--and received my first ever rejection letter. For years I thought (sometimes fondly, sometimes despairingly) about the possibility of being a Real Published Writer, but didn't write very much. College, in particular, seemed to drain a lot of the fiction-writing energy out of me. Though just after college I did send one story out to *True Confessions*--I just wanted to see if I could do it." From there Leckie studied romance novels and tried to replicate them, but soon she switched to science fiction. "I decided it wasn't worth spending what free time I had writing something I didn't really enjoy reading," she told the *Qwillery* interviewer.

Ancillary Justice features an artificial intelligence (AI) named Breq. She served as a commander for the Radch troop ship *Justice of Toren*, but she has since been forced into a human body. Breq wanders the galaxy in search of the weapon that will allow her to exact revenge on the Radch's immortal leader, Anaander Mianaai. As Breq strives to reach her goal, the Radch spread out across the universe, forcing humanity into their genderless form of civilization; the Radch are ultimately a civilizing force, but those who resist are turned into corpse soldiers.

The tale, which has been widely reviewed, has been favorably compared to the work of famed science fiction authors Iain M. Banks and Ursula K. Le Guin. Commenting on the Radch's gender-neutral society in an online *Girls in Capes* interview, Leckie stated: "I initially just wanted to play, in a very simple way, with a society that genuinely didn't care about gender. Partly because I wanted to step away from real world cultural constraints, which can be tiring. And when I first started playing with the ideas that would become the Radch, I had just had my first child, and it was amazing the way so many people just seem to be completely unable to interact with a baby unless they know their gender." Leckie added: "So I was thinking a lot about the way people are pigeonholed by the gender society assigns them. ... And my first attempts to write about that were unsatisfying, because for one thing, I found that I myself had trouble not thinking in gendered terms."

While most critics praised this approach, a contributor to the *Little Red Reviewer* Web site complained about Leckie's use of strictly feminine pronouns (she, her, hers) to refer to gender-neutral characters: "It felt like a huge, massive, white elephant gimmick to me. ... Using gender signifiers such as she and her as often as possible wasn't the way to make me (that's me, personally) forget or skip over gender signifiers." The contributor went on to assert: "It was a neat language trick, so it's really too bad that my gut response was negative. I get what Leckie was trying to do, really, I do. It was unique and innovative and I'm happy a lot of people liked this book, but it completely and utterly did not work for me." On the other hand, an online *Book Smugglers* columnist declared: "I loved the focus on language and culture in this book. Breq is constantly questioning her use of pronouns and assigning gender to different non-Radch peoples." The columnist pointed out: "At its heart, this is a revenge story. We learn what has happened to Breq, now just a single ancillary body, and damn it's a good reveal. The way the story unfolds, alternating between the then and now, is wholly engaging. I know that the concepts in this book sound both abstract and complicated, but in truth *Ancillary Justice* (though dense) is an easy book to read because it is so immersive and never once stumbles in its telling. Above all else--or, to stick with the theme of collectiveness--*Ancillary Justice* is more than just the sum of its parts. Like Breq, *Ancillary Justice* is utterly memorable, utterly distinct, and utterly original."

Proffering like-minded applause, a *Publishers Weekly* columnist advised: "This impressive debut succeeds in making Breq a protagonist readers will invest in." Genevieve Valentine, in an assessment for *NPR Online*, was also impressed, as she remarked: "A space opera that skillfully handles both choruses and arias, *Ancillary Justice* is an absorbing thousand-year history, a poignant personal journey, and a welcome addition to the genre." A *Kirkus Reviews* contributor announced: "Leckie's novel cast of characters serves her well-plotted story nicely. This is an altogether promising debut."

Breq's adventures continue in *Ancillary Sword*, and news of civil war reaches the Radchaai space network. Breq heads to Athoek, which is rumored to be a paragon of peace, justice, and plenty, but Breq discovers the exact opposite. Law enforcers rule with fear and intimidation, and Breq attempts to understand the corruption in order to fix it. From there, Breq and her crew will establish a new society in the old one's place, and Athoek serves as a test case for the rest of the ailing empire. As the story progresses, Breq struggles to accept her fate as an AI limited to only one body.

"Those familiar with the first book will find that the faith it inspired has not been misplaced," a *Publishers Weekly* critic advised. However, *Sword & Laser* Web site correspondent Daniel Eavenson remarked: "I had expected more intrigue and action. ... I guess I had forgotten the first two thirds of quiet introspection and excellent world building that had proceeded all that fun. Instead, *Ancillary Sword* takes us to new places, but they are small intimate locations that hold none of the galactic level chess game that the end of the first novel had primed me for." A *Book Smugglers* Web site contributor offered both praise and criticism, observing: "On the plotting and overall trilogy arc-moving front, *Ancillary Sword* is, admittedly, a bit weaker than its predecessor. There are plot threads aplenty in this second book, but there's also a bit of heavy-handedness (particularly when it comes to the effects of colonialism in space), and a sense of in-between-ness as there are so many stories to be resolved in the next book." Nevertheless, the contributor concluded: "These quibbles are but footnotes, though, to a truly spectacular sophomore novel. I loved *Ancillary Sword*, truly, madly, deeply. It is absolutely a top Ten pick for me this year, deserving of all the awards, and all of the praise." Valentine, writing again for *NPR Online*, was even more positive, stating: "*Sword* is more directly political than *Justice*, which lends some wonderful breathing room to all the telling details that adorn this military-Rococo empire like a memorial badge, and means that the unsolvable conflicts within the empire get their messy due. ... Breq remains an effortless narrator, both sharply present and emotionally oblique. And many of the best grace notes still lean subtly on the carefully cultivated inner life of the first book."

Ancillary Mercy is the final installment in Leckie's "Imperial Radch" series. In this volume, Breq must fight off forces connected to the Radch's multibodied lord, Anaander Mianaai. A group of Anaander's is set to invade the already-damaged Athoek Station, which Breq commands. Meanwhile, a mysterious figure that should have been dead for centuries appears on the station, adding more complications for Breq.

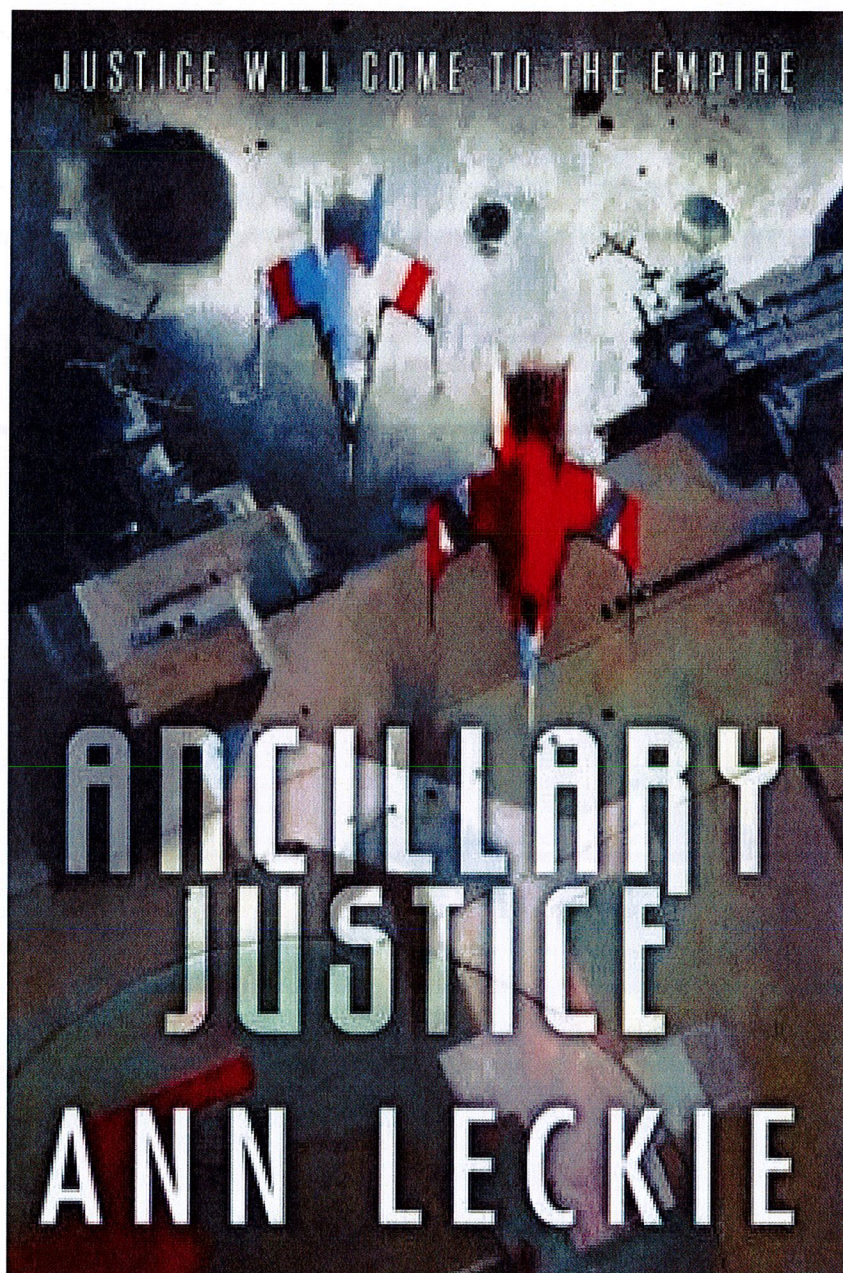
Ancillary Mercy received favorable reviews. Valentine, again writing for *NPR Online*, commented: "In trying to wrap a tale of revenge and revolution somewhere between twenty and a thousand years old, *Ancillary Mercy* does have its inevitable moments of glossing-over. ... But it earns the credit it's received: As a capstone to a series that shook genre expectations, as our closing installment of an immersively realized world, and as the poignant story of a ship that learned to sing." Writing on *Tor.com*, Liz Bourke suggested: "This is generous book, and a hopeful one. It doesn't handwave away the problems of imperialism and colonisation, but neither does it close down the possibility for the future to be better than the past. ... And it's a bloody fun ride. It has a sense of humour that made me laugh out loud more than once. It's good. It's more than good, it's brilliant: a shining light in the space opera firmament." "*Ancillary Mercy* delivered a compelling story full of action and emotional complexity," asserted Anthony Vicino on the *SF Signal* Web site. Vicino added: "Despite some hiccups along the way, *Ancillary Mercy* actually delivered quite well on the promises made in *Ancillary Justice*. Leckie returns her attention to the civil war between Anaander's rivaling selves, the galactic consequences of that war, while also tying in all the little plot threads from *Ancillary Sword* to tell a very compelling story." A critic on the *Speculative Herald* Web site remarked: "How does a series with galaxy spanning implications draw to a close without leaving a small, singular section of space? More importantly how does it do so in a satisfying manner when dealing with an opponent that has unlimited bodies spread all over space? Pay attention friends, this is how a series is done right. ... Not every loose end is taken care of, to be honest any more would have probably killed the wonder, and so a satisfying conclusion to this tale has been given." A *Publishers Weekly* reviewer noted: "This glorious series summit is suffused with the wit and the skillful eye for character that fans ... expect from Leckie." "Leckie's delivery is deft and meaningful," wrote a contributor to *Kirkus Reviews*. The same critic stated that the book "wraps up the story arc with plenty of room to tell many more tales in this universe. Let's hope Leckie does."

Related Information:

PERIODICALS

- *Kirkus Reviews*, September 1, 2013, review of *Ancillary Justice*; September 15, 2014, review of *Ancillary Sword*; August 1, 2015, review of *Ancillary Mercy*.
- *Publishers Weekly*, August 5, 2013, review of *Ancillary Justice*, p. 52; August 11, 2014, review of *Ancillary Sword*, p. 47; September 7, 2015, review of *Ancillary Mercy*, p. 50.

A Balanced Shelf



THOUGHTS

BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR ANN LECKIE'S ANCILLARY JUSTICE

JUNE 5, 2015 | JENN | [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

This month, it's my turn to choose a book for my only in-real-life (as opposed to the online) book club. Probably to absolutely no one's surprise, I chose *Ancillary Justice*, which you may have noticed I am **rather fond of**.

With most books I can nab a set of questions already online somewhere, but nothing came up during a cursory search this time... So I came up with some of my own. I know many of you have read *Ancillary Justice* as well, so I thought I would put them up here first to solicit some feedback – are there any changes you would make to what I've come up with? Did I ask something silly? Are there questions you would add, or quotes you think are particularly discussion-worthy? I would love any input!

Spoilers ahoy if you haven't finished *AJ* yet. Go read it now!

Discussion Questions: *Ancillary Justice*, Ann Leckie

The Radch Empire

- No one is speaking English in *Ancillary Justice*; how do the observations Breq makes about the Radch language convey information to the reader on Radchaai philosophy, religion, and politics?
- Throughout the novel, what do we learn about the Radch Empire's military, imperialist agenda, and colonization techniques? How do Radchaai view and interact with humans vs alien species?
- Leckie uses vague descriptors for movement, such as "made a gesture of acknowledgement" or "a gesture of denial". Why do you think she does this?
- What are some examples of hierarchy in Radchaai society? How do we see class differences and conflict play out during the novel?
- Quote for discussion: "Luxury always comes at someone else's expense. One of the many advantages of civilization is that one doesn't generally have to see that, if one doesn't wish. You're free to enjoy its benefits without troubling your conscience." Do you agree with this statement? Is it true of our own society?

Gender

- As you were reading, what conclusions did you draw about the role of gender in Radchaai society?
- Why do you think Leckie chose to use female pronouns over male ones? Would you have preferred truly gender neutral pronouns (they, or ze/hir)?
- There are a couple of characters – Breq, Seivarden – who we know present as male or female, at least on the first planet/culture we find them in. Did you find this impacted the way you imagined them? For characters whose gender is never referenced, did you find yourself imagining certain people as certain genders, or trying to fit characters into traditional concepts of gender?
- Reactions to this book's treatment of gender have been somewhat varied; how did you react to Breq's pronoun use? Did you find the pronouns to be challenging or confusing? And ultimately, how

did you end up conceptualizing gender in *Ancillary Justice*?

Characters

- In the first chapter, Breq thinks that “You have to be human to be Radchaai.” How true is this, in Breq/*Justice of Toren*’s case? In what ways does she echo Radchaai views, and in what ways does she diverge? And now that she occupies a single human body, just how human/not human is she?
- Relevant to gender as well: do you think Breq’s struggles to correctly gender people are due to her Radch linguistic and cultural background, or because of a post-human identity?
- The two major relationships we see in *Ancillary Justice* are Breq and Seivarden, and Breq (One Esk) and Awn. How are these relationships similar or different?
- Seivarden is someone who has been transplanted out of her own time, place, and culture; how does she express/negotiate her identity in her new surroundings?

Identity*

- Other major themes are unity, disunity, and identity: what examples are there throughout the book of people’s identities becoming fractured or confused?
- How unified do you feel *Justice of Toren*’s identity is? For example – do you think that the story would have unfolded the same way if another ancillary had escaped the destruction of *Justice of Toren* instead of One Esk Nineteen? For that matter – is the Breq of the later timeline the same person as *Justice of Toren*?
- Similarly: are the two versions of the Lord of the Radch the same person?
- The ancillaries are not reanimated dead people, as the label ‘corpse soldiers’ might suggest they are, but are essentially people whose brains have been rewired. So – are the original people these bodies belonged to dead or alive? Do you think there is anything left of their original owners in the ancillaries they become?

Free Will, Choice, and Self-Determination

- *Ancillary Justice* is concerned with pivotal moments in people’s lives: moments of decision between action and inaction, and how, why, and when people make them. What are the moments where our protagonist chooses to take action? What other characters do we see making similar decisions?
- Quote for discussion: “Without feelings insignificant decisions become excruciating attempts to compare endless arrays of inconsequential things. It’s just easier to handle those with emotions.” What role do *Justice of Toren*’s and Anaander Mianaai’s feelings play in their decision making?
- During the book Breq is making her own decisions, rather than following orders, for the first time in her very long life. Are there any common themes or threads in her decision-making process?
- Do we see examples of *Justice of Toren* exercising free will before the destruction of *Justice of Toren*? Or does she only begin self-determining when she first disobeys Anaander Mianaai?

Music**





- How does Breq's interest in music serve her characterization, as well as the book's overall plot and thematic content?
- Of *Justice of Toren's* units, only One Esk has a preoccupation with singing. How does this add to – or more likely, complicate – our understanding of *Justice of Toren's* identity?
- What do you make of Anaander Mianaai singing “L’homme Armé” to Breq? (“The armed man should be feared / Everywhere it has been proclaimed / That each man shall arm himself / With a coat of iron mail./ The armed man should be feared.”)

What questions or topics related to *Ancillary Justice* would you be most interested in discussing?


*Discussing the questions in this section is probably going to make my head explode.

**If it seems unusual that music has a whole section to itself, it's because my book club happens to be composed of musicians, so I thought I should make a point of discussing it specially!





SHARE THIS:

 Twitter  Facebook  Google  Tumblr

LIKE THIS:

★ Like 

One blogger likes this.

 ANCILLARY JUSTICE  ANN LECKIE  DISCUSSION QUESTIONS  IMPERIAL RADCH