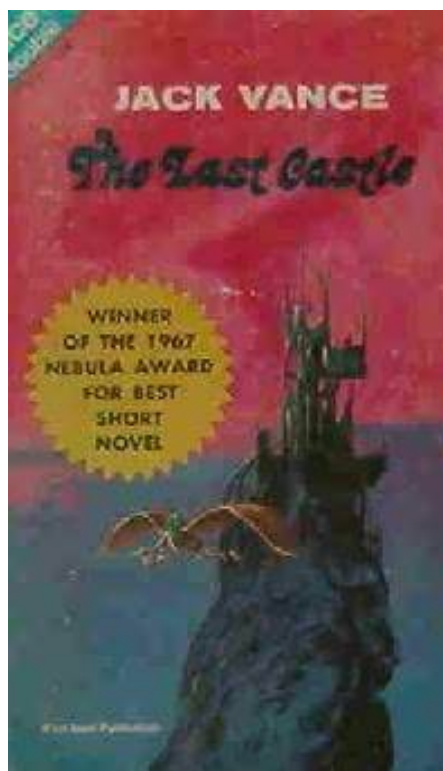




The Last Castle

Jack Vance

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The Last Castle

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The novel is about a group of expatriates who have created a set of castles on an otherwise uninhabited world; they pursue an effete aristocratic lifestyle. Their servants inexplicably revolt; what will gentlemen do? This novel shows Vance's verbal style like no other.

The Last Castle Details

Date : Published January 1st 1986 by Underwood/Miller, Berkley (first published April 1966)

ISBN : 9780425084786

Author : Jack Vance

Format : Paperback 115 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Fantasy, Fiction

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From Reader Review The Last Castle for online ebook

Epichan says

Kitabın hacmi çok küçük olsa da yarattı?? dünya gerçekten hoşuma gitti. Kaleler, köleler, lordlar, kuşlar ve diğer ö?eler ile ufak bir dünya yaratılmı?? ve çok güzel aktarılmı??. Bazı ?eylerin biraz daha derinlemesine inmesini isterdim. Bazı soruların cevapların olması?n ama yazar bizi sanırım bir ?ey üzerinde yo?unla?mamızı istedi?i için bazı olaylar h?zlı ve a?ıklamadan geçiyor. Buna rağmen okuması zevkli bir eser.

Bradley says

This novelle won the Hugo in '67 and the Nebular in '66, and it happens to be my very first reading of Jack Vance.

I expected nothing other than Silver Age SF, under-topics that were very important to the day, and what might seem to be very old tropes. So what did I get?

Silver Age SF, a fairly deeply buried reflection on a topic of "Doing The Job Yourself"... as opposed letting another class, be it race, socioeconomic, or sex, to do it for you. You know, American Work Ethic, and why the hell is everyone hiring maids to do all their housework, damnit? And of course we get the standard SF tropes that all you fans love, such as highly stratified societies and a huge War With Robots. Yeah! And don't forget castles and neat twists that make them seem almost like metaphors for tightly controlled generational ships.

The afterward tells us that he's bringing in some of the surface layers of Japanese Shogunate verbal niceties, too, so definitely keep an eye out in the read for that. :)

There's a ton of great ideas flitting and flying about here, and some of them have 2 foot wingspans even if they're craven cowards and don't want to dominate the text. Which is a shame, because the juxtaposition of all these tropes and a few more I haven't even mentioned is what makes this story a truly cool one.

Jack Vance was one hell of a talesmith, and I am thrilled enough to start building a collection right next to my tiny but growing shelf of Poul Anderson. Sweet!

Oh, and for those purists that hate to read old SF because of all the sexism, prejudice, and other cringeworthy social artifacts, don't worry yourselves with this one. It's pretty damn clean and interesting without being a misanthrope.

(view spoiler) :)

Jaro says

First reading: Read in The Jack Vance Treasury
Second and third: Swedish translation

Manny says

- So what *is* this book about, dwarling?
 - Oh, another of those ghastly little science-fiction novels. The decadent aristocrats sit in their beseiged castle, which is being systematically undermined by the nasty, uncouth Meks. As one tower after another collapses in ruins, they try to decide which bottles of priceless old wine most urgently need to be drunk before the inevitable end.
 - What a frightfully unsubtle metaphor. I presume it's poorly written and stylistically uninventive?
 - Alas, you presume correctly. You must forgive me, I was only a teenager when I read it.
 - I forgive you, dwarling. Anything on the news?
 - More catastrophes in the third world, I believe. I'm afraid I lost interest after a minute and turned it off. Thought I'd go back to Proust.
 - Very sensible, dwarling.
-

Ivan Lutz says

Uh, uh, uh... volim Vance ali ovo mi nije leglo ali uop?e, nikako, ne znam...

Kay?p R?ht?m says

Metis Bilimkurgu dizisinin en k?sa kitaplar?ndan biri olan En Son Kale, bizlere Hugo ve Nebula Ödüllü bir öykü sunuyor.

Temelde bir adaletsizlik öyküsü sunuyor Jack Vance bizlere. Etamin Dokuz adl? gezegene konuk olup, gezegenin yerlileri Mekler'in saf?ndan bu adaletsizli?e seyirci oluyoruz. ?nsanlar, Köylüler, Ku?lar, Feynler ve Meklerden olu?an tüm bu canl?lar farkl? gezegenlerden hizmet amaçl? getirilmi?lerdir. Bu toplulukta e?itsizlik hat safhadad?r ve soylu oldu?unu dü?ünen insan ?rk?, Mekler'e piramitin en alt tabakas?n? reva görmektedir.

Dünya adl? gezegenin en vah?i yarat?klar? olan insano?lu elette Etamin Dokuz'a ayak basm??, kaleler yapm??, klanlara ayr?l?p yerle?mi? ve Mekler'in ya?am alanlar?n? i?gal etmi?tir. Bu da yetmezmi? gibi, hiç kimseye zarar? olmayan bu Mekler'i köle gibi kullanmaya ve en a??r i?leri onlara yapt?rmaya ba?lam??lard?r. Günün birinde, adaletsizli?e maruz kalan her canl?n?n ayaklanmas? sonucu ger?ekle?en devrimde haks?zl???n ortadan kald?r?ld??? gibi, Mekler de ayaklanacak ve insano?lunun in?a etti?i kaleler bir bir dü?meye ba?layacaktır...

En Son Kale'nin geni? kapsaml? bir roman olmad???n?, bir novella oldu?unu hat?rlatmakta yarar var.

Ki?isel fikrim, bu k?sa roman?n ba?ar?l? oldu?u yönünde fakat daha uzun olmas? eseri daha da ba?ar?l? k?labilirdi pek tabii. Eserlerinde fantezi ile bilimkurguyu ustaca harmanlad??? bilinen Vance'in dilimize kazand?r?lan ilk -ve muhtemelen son olan- Hugo ve Nebula Ödülleri'ni kucaklam?? mekanik distopyas?n? okuman?z? öneriyorum.

- *Bahri Do?ukan ?AH?N*

?ncelemenin tamam? için: <http://www.kayiprihtim.org/portal/inc...>

mark monday says

WITH VANCE PEST CONTROL, PESTS DON'T STAND A CHANCE!

In addition to bugging you, the pests known as *Humans* pose serious risks to your health and property – all year long. Humans carry various diseases, so it's important to keep them in their place. No matter what season it is, they will sneak onto your world searching for food, water and a comfortable habitat. Our technicians work to deliver solutions – rooted in science ? that protect every world, including "Earth" - where these pests apparently originate.

IT STARTS WITH AN INSPECTION

Our residential pest control process is simple. Friendly, certified technicians hailing from a range of former slave races will perform a thorough inspection of your world to uncover potential issues. As we were all once enslaved and modified by these pests, we know where humans like to live and lurk, and how they "think". We'll provide you with a fully customized program to treat and eliminate entry points and nests. With award-winning training and advanced technology, your technician will look for conditions that invite human pests, tackle current infestations, and stop the life cycle to prevent future invasions.

EACH WORLD IS UNIQUE

When you have a pest problem or want to protect your home world from future invaders, we apply our science-based approach to help identify the root of your problem and implement a solution made expressly for your world. During each visit, you can count on a highly-trained technician to investigate, protect, fortify, keep watch, report, and follow up to maintain our high service standard. Our technicians live to exterminate humans!

YEAR-ROUND PEST CONTROL SERVICE FOR YEAR-ROUND PEACE OF MIND

Humans, like most pests, are often quite persistent. So we are too. Vance Pest Control works around the calendar to maintain a human-free environment. Within 30 days of your first treatment, we'll activate our Pest-Away® program. This includes a thorough inspection of your world to ensure that any newly emerging humans do not re-infest the area. Then we'll administer treatment regularly to protect your property - and your peace of mind. They may run and hide in their fanciful little castles, but we shall administer treatment to every last one of them!

Chazzbot says

This is the first Jack Vance novel that I've read. It is one of those novels in the grand SF tradition, providing a wide view of a particular "historical" moment with all its history and cultural quirks in the midst of an engaging story about the individuals caught up in it.

The story concerns a society living on a future Earth that has "adopted" several alien species for use as workers, servants, and sexual objects. The society is indolent, ignorant, and arrogant (with a few notable exceptions). As the novel begins, rumours are floating around about an uprising of some of the alien species. The pampered humans either dismiss the rumours or are annoyed by what they regard as the impertinence and rudeness of the uprising.

Although I wouldn't call this a heavy-handed novel, it would certainly be difficult to miss the message this novel offers on slavery and complacency. Vance's language is witty and engaging, however, and the novel reads so quickly you won't be bothered by the obviousness of its moral. The characterization of the indolent castle-dwellers alone makes the novel worth reading.

Jim says

Jack Vance's **The Last Castle** won both a Hugo and Nebula Awards for excellence. It tells the story of a human race that has spread out to other planets. Elements of them have returned to earth and enslaved other races to do their work for them, including the talented Meks and the insectlike Phanes.

The returned earthlings mostly live an epicene existence in isolated castles. (Others are spread out in small towns -- these are called expiationists).

The action begins when the Meks rebel and begin conquering the castles one by one until only Castle Hagedorn is left. The hero, Xanten, leader of the clan of the same name, doesn't want to fall prey to the Meks and tries to find some way of mobilizing his reluctant fellows to defend themselves.

This is an excellent read which I recommend to anyone who likes fantasy literature.

Mahmut says

En Son Kale; özünde farklı sınıflar arasındaki çelişkinin farklı sınıflar arasında bir bilimkurgu evreninde ahlak kavramı üzerine farklı fikirlerin ortaya atıldığı, insan olanla olmayan arasındaki ahlak kavramının ne olabileceğine ilişkin farklı okumaların yapıldığı bir kitap.

Kitap; üstün insan sınıfları - kitapta 'bay' ya da 'baylar' diye tanımlanan - köleleri olan Mek sınıfının isyanı karışığında yaşıyanların karamaları konu alıyor.

İsyan bastırılmak için iğücü olarak üstün insanın kullanılması büyük bir onursuzluk, ahlaksızlık olarak tanımlanıyor. Farklı bir kurgusu var. Kurgunun girişi ve finali çok tatsız, basit olmuştur.

Klasik bilimkurgu sevenlere önerebilirim.

Metaphorosis says

While this has all the usual trappings of a Vance story - declining society, strange environment, weird creatures - it's unusual in leaning more toward the macho he-man resolution of its time than toward Vance's usual sardonic onlooker.

Award winner or not, I wouldn't put it in the same category as *The Languages of Pao* or *The Magnificent Showboats Of The Lower Vissel River Lune Xxiii South, Big Planet*.

A good introduction to Vance, and a fun story for fans.

CVIE vol IV

TJ says

"The Last Castle" was first published in *Galaxy Magazine* in 1966. It won the Hugo Award for Best Novelette in 1967 and the Nebula Award for Best Novella in 1966. It was also nominated for a Nebula Award for Best Novel. Technically it is a novella. The setting is in the far future where an elite clans of humans on Earth live in castles as a special class of ruling aristocrats. Under them are the peasants and slaves. Most of the work, even the most technical, is performed by enslaved aliens called Meks. The humans think the docile Meks are happy being slaves, so are taken by surprise when there is an uprising and all of the Meks begin fighting to eliminate humans. The Meks defeat all castles except the largest and best defended one called Castle Hagedorn. One of the clan leaders there, Xanten, organizes a final stand against the Meks. Using lively dialog and interesting alien creatures, Vance presents humanitarian and ethical issues in a well written and interesting story. It is one of his better writings, although not one his very finest. It is a pity that more of Vance's novellas and novels did not receive awards. My rating: 4.

Lyn says

Very good.

Jack Vance's 1966 thin novel was thought well enough of to garner the 1967 Hugo for Best Novelette and the 1966 Nebula for Best Novella. High praise and well deserved, this is a special work.

An observant reader will see the obvious allegory against aristocratic prerogatives gone awry, will concede the superficial message decrying slavery, class consciousness and xenophobia (an SF euphemism for real world racism).

But Vance gives us more. The character of Xanten demonstrates a dynamic evolution from aristocratic discontent to a pragmatic, if still prideful, survivability. Among the ruling class, Vance shows an understanding of what changes must be made.

Vance also portrays the dark underside of class distinction that provides only a pencil thin distinction between outright slavery. his depiction of the alien Meks and their eventual rebellion is well played and enacted with a simplicity akin to fable.

“Since we have no future, to our glorious past!”

Vance’s “gentlemen” and the privileged class was inspired, according to the author, by Japanese feudalism, but I thought of the stereotypical British imperialist cast in B movies and TV: the pompous and condescendingly elite absentee landlord and the insensitive royal blithely dismissing the working class. To be sure, Vance’s illustration of this group approaches caricature but it is also powerfully, if not too subtly drawn and Vance’s talent is evident.

The tone and structure of the tale was somewhat reminiscent of Michael Moorcock’s Corum series.

A must read for a fan and probably not a bad choice for a new reader of this SF/F Grandmaster.

TK421 says

A prescient novella with themes that could be taken from today's headlines.

THE LAST CASTLE should be read and discussed by all today. To say more of this brief (115 page) story would only ruin the impact of its message.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

Antonio says

A 2.5 stars rating would make more justice to my impression of this book. It's short but it took me a long time to read because I didn't find it interesting. Some passages have an admirable style, but, thematically, this is just another formulaic parable of white guilt on slavery.

Chris says

This novella won Vance his second Hugo Award and his first Nebula after it appeared in *Galaxy* in 1966. Vance’s specialty was a unique blend of science-fantasy riddled with exotic locales, star-faring feudalisms, and rich alien cultures, something that a Hard SF purist might blanch at. But without those motifs we wouldn’t have Jack Vance, and he’s got a sizable fanbase for a reason: what he creates is unique, and Vance is good at what he does.

In the future, part of a super-cultured mankind has returned to Earth after exploring and colonizing distant galaxies; displacing the scattered humans still living on Earth, they build huge Castles as dwelling-places. They bring with them a menagerie of alien beings, modified to become servant races: Power-Wagons and irascible Birds for transport, slow and simple Peasants for daily labor, beautiful elfin Phanes to be viewed as works of art, and the Meks, a strange hive-minded race used to repair and operate mechanical devices. Now, after decades of service, the Meks revolt, slaughtering each Castle of humans one by one.

We follow, off and on, a series of aristocratic gentleman within Hagedorn Castle, struggling to operate the

machinery the Meks abandoned, much less come up with a plan for defense before they're exterminated. Their detached arrogance is their major hindrance—using machinery or performing any kind of labor is unbecoming of a gentleman. Vance settles on Xanten for protagonist, a young aristocrat who's sent out to determine the fate of their old spaceships, and to try and rally the original human inhabitants of Earth against the Meks. Meanwhile, the other Castles are sacked each in turn, save for Joneil and Hagedorn. Joneil faces its doomed fate in a powerful first chapter, leaving Hagedorn the titular last Castle.

For me, the most interesting thing about this book was its metaphoric use of some rather prejudiced humans as protagonists: think antebellum plantation owners or "White Man's Burden" colonizers, who adapt other races as servitors and thus forget how to perform manual labor. For all their super-cultured culture and high ideals, they're kind of unlikable, which makes the book a lot more interesting when they're the recognizable humans, and their enemies are brutal and alien killing machines. In the end, the book becomes about adaptation: a very human theme.

I only have two real complaints. First and most damning is that the resolution felt weak and unsatisfying: things that happen because that's where the story needed to go, not because the characters developed that way. It's implied that they did, but such development wasn't shown, so it felt like *deus ex machina*. Second: for some reason Vance decided to integrate a lot of world-building into the text—cultural-societal and ancestry details—in the form of clinical footnotes or dry exposition. Which was very off-putting, since after a thrilling first chapter they dominated the story for several chapters. And this was after editor Frederik Pohl cut them down by about half.

Some minor narrative flaws bring the book down, but they don't ruin an excellent story. I think *The Last Castle* is a solid tale, worthy of its awards and acclaim. Vance combines his signature style with an intricate world and interesting concept, and it all works out very well. Piecemeal, the flaws are problematic—too slow after a great first chapter, too contrived at the end—but overall the novel follows an interesting arc, riddled with cool concepts and set in a breathtaking ornate world that only Vance could have designed. The story's failings bugged me because they tarnished a fantastic little story. This is much closer to being Vance's best, despite its contrived conclusion, with his prose and creativity firing on all cylinders.

(Full review found [here](#).)

Bob says

A fascinating story that is applicable even today, 47 years after it was written. Indeed it might even be more relevant today than when was written. The story centers around a small group of aristocratic "gentleman" who treat all beneath them as slaves fit only for subjugation and basic tasks. When comes the inevitable revolt, they are ill prepared physically, mentally, and socially to deal with such a thing, because they never believed it could happen. One imagines the French aristocracy having thought the same way.

Peter Carrier says

The messages here are thinly veiled, but effectively imparted: slavery is bad and survival entails risk but requires work. "The Last Castle" is Vance doing what he does best: telling a great story in a profoundly entertaining way. This novella serves as a 'greatest hits' of sorts for things this grandmaster of sf/f is known for:

- strong prose;
- tight pacing;
- not-so-subtle message;
- wildly imaginative setting/world;
- characters which are distinct, easily-identifiable or associative (not necessarily relatable, likable or sympathetic);
- ridiculous vocabulary;
- humor;
- great observations/quotes

"Survival is good morality; I have this from the mouth of a noted savant."

"The moon reached the zenith. The landscape spread away in a hundred tones of silver, black and gray."

"In the end death came uniformly to all; and all extracted as much satisfaction in their dying as this essentially graceless process could afford."

"Flight by definition entails a certain diminution of dignity," he went on to say. "If O.Z. Garr can propound an elegant manner of taking to one's heels, I will be glad to learn it, and everyone else should likewise heed, because in the days to come the capability may be comfort to all."

"The act itself is not astounding," said Claghorn shortly. "It has occurred a thousand times in human history."

Recommended for: fans of science fiction; fans of science fantasy; fans of Jack Vance; fans of a story with a message; anyone looking for a book to help kill a couple hours.

Mohammed says

This story was one of the best I have read by Jack Vance short story, novella or novel.

This is a story that deserves its highly rating as vintage Vance. Even by Jack Vance standards I was surprised by the great writing, story.

Nicholas Whyte says

<https://nwhyte.livejournal.com/2909813.html>

I don't think *The Last Castle* has aged particularly well. The story is about a decadent aristocratic race of humans at the end of time, whose oppressed non-human slaves have risen and destroyed all but one of the humans' castles. Our hero (there are no notable female characters) makes an alliance with the barbarian humans outside the castle gates, crushes the slave revolt and sends them back where they came from. The racial undertones are rather difficult to ignore.

On the other hand, it's a triumph of world-building, even if the world is an unequal and racist one. The social order of the aristocrats is mapped out in loving detail, perhaps far too much of it, and the descriptions of the

different environments of the far-future earth are vivid and distinct.

However, it's not really Vance at his best; apart from anything else, it isn't very funny.
