



The History of Caliph Vathek

William Beckford

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) ➞

The History of Caliph Vathek

William Beckford

The History of Caliph Vathek William Beckford

The novel chronicles the fall from power of the Caliph Vathek (a fictionalized version of the historical Al-Wathiq), who renounces Islam and engages with his mother, Carathis, in a series of licentious and deplorable activities designed to gain him supernatural powers. At the end of the novel, instead of attaining these powers, Vathek descends into a hell ruled by the demon Eblis where he is doomed to wander endlessly and speechlessly.

The History of Caliph Vathek Details

Date : Published February 6th 2018 by Publisher s24148 (first published 1786)

ISBN :

Author : William Beckford

Format : Kindle Edition 98 pages

Genre : Gothic, Classics, Horror, Fiction, Fantasy, Literature, 18th Century

 [Download The History of Caliph Vathek ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The History of Caliph Vathek ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online The History of Caliph Vathek William Beckford

From Reader Review The History of Caliph Vathek for online ebook

Berfin Kanat says

William Beckford Allah seni n'apmas'n, çok mu dü?ündün bunlar? yazmak için. Kabus görmeme sebep olan nadir kitaplardan birisi herhalde. Her anlamda doyumsuz birisi olan Vathek adl? halifenin türlü saçmal?klar (korkunç türden) yap?p cehenneme bilet kazanmas'n?n hikayesi. Binbir Gece Masallar?'n? okumad'm ama benzedi'i söyleniyor, o zaman masallar? okumayay'm te?ekkürler. ?aka bir yana cehennem tasvirleri, cinler, gulyabaniler, Müslüman cüceler derken baya etkileyici bir kitap olu?mu?. Borges'a göre edebiyattaki ilk hakiki kötücül cehennem Vathek de geçiyor. ?lk mi bilemem ama fazlas?yla gerçekçi oldu?u kesin. Bu arada ön sözü kitab'n kendisinden daha güzel olabilir, Murat Belge'ye te?ekkürler. Gotik edebiyat meraklıs? herkese s?rf ön söz için ?leti'im Yay'nlar? bask?s'n? tavsiye ederim. Okuyunca yazar'n Vathek'teki türlü ç?lg?nl?klar? hangi hissiyatla yazd???n? da anl'yorsunuz.

Kay?p R?ht?m says

“Vay haline, bilmemesi gerekeni bilmek isteyen ve gücünü a?an bir i?e giri?en gözü pek ki?inin.”

William Beckford, yarat?c?s'n?n koydu?u s?n?rlar? karanlık güçlerin pe?ine tak?larak ihlal eden ve Yeralt? Ate?i Saray?'na ula?abilmek için halk?na deh?et saçan Abbasi soyunun dokuzuncu halifesi Vathek'in y?k?ma sürükleni?ini kaleme ald???nda daha yirmi bir ya??ndayd?. Üstelik üç gün iki gece içerisinde Frans?zca olarak yazd??? Vathek, bar?nd?rd??? estetikler aras? ?ölenle nice yazarlara ???k tutan bir kaynak görevi gördü. **Borges, Lovecraft, Mallarmé, Edgar Allan Poe** ve daha niceleri Vathek'in oryantal ??mar?kl???n?n grotesk bir kötülük anlay???na dönü?mesine tan?kl?k ettiler ve içine dald?klar? bu gotik “Arap Masal?”na duyduklar? hayranlı??? her f?rsatta dile getirdiler.

“Beckford, Do?u'ya olan dü?künlü?ünde yaln?z kalm???r. Gotik gelene?e ve genel olarak Avrupai ya?ant?ya daha yak?n olan di?er yazarlar ise Walpole'u daha sad?k bir biçimde takip etmekten ho?nutturlar,” der Lovecraft, “Edebiyatta Do?aüstü Korku” isimli makale serisinde. ??te Vathek'i bu denli büyüleyici ve önemli bir eser yapan da Beckford'un bu yaln?zl??? olmu?tur.

Asl'nda her ?ey Antoine Galland?'n 18. yüzyıl'n ba??nda yapt??? Binbir Gece Masallar? çevirisiyle ba?lar. Avrupa edebiyat'na girecek oryantal konular ve karakterler aç?s'ndan adeta bir hayat çe?mesi görevi görecek olan bu Do?u masallar'n?n ?????nda Beckford, Vathek'in ana gövdesini olu?turur. Zaten kitap da ba??ndan itibaren masals? özünü belli eder okuyucuya. Vathek'i okurken Binbir Gece Masallar?'n?n biraz uzunca bir k?sm'n? okuyormu? gibi hissetti?imi söyleyebilirim fakat yine de elimdeki kitab'n bir roman oldu?unun da fark'na varmak mümkündü. Beckford, ?ehrazat'a ?ahriyar?'n kar??s'nda bir gün daha hayatta kalabilsin diye hediye etmi?tir sanki Vathek'i, fakat ?ehriyar?'n bu biraz fazla uzat?lm?? masaldan s?k?labilece?ini akl'na getirmemi?tir.

Beckford'un gerçek yetene?inin ortaya ç?kt??? k?sm'n Do?u'ya ait betimlemeler oldu?unu da söylemem gerekir. Kitab'na konu etti?i topraklara hiç ayak basmam?? ve Do?u hakk'nda bildi?i her ?eyi ara?tırmalar? sayesinde ö?renmi? bir yazara göre anlatt??? manzaralar oldukça canl? ve hayal gücünün geni?li?ini yansıtır nitelikte. Bunun en güzel örne?ini ise Do?u ihti'am'n? ve lüksünü -biraz abart?l? olsa da- aktarabilmek için yaratt??? Be? Duyu Saray?'d?r bence.

Bol kepçeden sunulan bütün bu oryantal manzaranın ortasına küçük kara bir leke olarak dü?en Gotik unsurlar ise bana göre bu kitabın tad? tuzu olan k?s?m. Masals? anlat?mın getirdi?i hafif mizahla birle?en ürpertici bazı detaylar bu ilginç kar??tlık sayesinde daha da ön plana ç?k?yor. Bu yüzden de kitaba ak?l kar??t?r?c? ve gerçekten de tuhaf bir atmosferin hakim oldu?unu söylemek mümkün. Bir sayfa önce korkunç çirkinli?ini okuyup hem ürperip hem de tiksindi?iniz Hintli karakterini bir sayfa sonra dertop olup kendini tekmeleterek yuvarlanırken bulunca insan ne hissedece?ini a??rabiliyor pek tabii. Ancak bir kaç sahne sonra Vathek'in güle oynaya onlarca çocu?u kurban etmeye kalk??masın? okuyunca ürpermeye kald??n?z yerden devam edebiliyorsunuz.

Çok ?ey bilmesine rağmen hep daha fazlasın? öğrenmek isteyen Vathek karanlık güçlerin oyunlarına aç?k hale gelecek ve servetiyle sarayından çok daha fazlasın? kaybedecektir. Göklerin s?rrına ermek için yaptırd??? Babil Kulesi benzeri kule de onu dinin çekti?i s?n?rın ötesine götürecektir bir ç?k?? noktas? olur. S?n?rda elinde tutmak için bekleyen provokatör karakter ise Hintli'dir. Hintli'nin Vathek'in aklına girmeye başlad??? andan itibaren kitabın başında gördü?ümüz tüm güzelliklerin yerini yava? yava? çirkinli?in almaya başlad???n? fark ederiz. Ballandıra ballandıra betimlenen do?unun tüm zevk ve gösteri?i, yerini karanlıkta, mide bulandıracak ve ürkütücü sahnelere bırakmaya başlar.

Fakat okuyucunun üzerinde korkunç bir etki bırakan Hintli'den ayrı oranda büyülenir Vathek. Bu çirkin elçinin Vathek'e vaat etti?i Yeraltı Ate?i Saray? ve tüm zenginlikler halihazırda Vathek'in elinde olandan fazlası de?ildir, hatta onun zenginliklerinin yan?nda sönük bile kalan "harikalar"dır. Ama bu vaatler aslında sadece bahanedir. Çünkü genç hükümdar? bu denli yoldan ç?karan iki üç büyülü obje de?il, bilinmeyen ve yasaklı olanın cazibesidir. Kendisine yüklenen sorumluluktan ne pahasına olursa olsun kurtulup başka bir hayat? ya?ama istedi?idir. Bundandır ki Vathek aslında bu masalın içerisindeki gerçek kötü ve gotik karakter de?ildir bence. Başlangıçtan itibaren ?eytani bir kötülük anlay??? yoktur. Arsızlı?? ve yasaklı olana duydu?u ?ehvet onu kitabın sonunda dönü?tü?ü canavar haline getirir.

Jorge Luis Borges, "*Beckford'ın Yeraltı Ate?i Sarayı, edebiyatın ilk korkunç cehennemidir. Hatırlad???m kadarıyla da Vathek'ten önce yazılm?? hiçbir eserin 'tekinsiz' oldu?u söylenemez,*" diyerek Vathek'in merak ve h?rsin kollarında sürüklendi?i cehennemi lay???yla betimlemi? olur.

Kitabın belki de en çok övgü alan kısm? olan cehennem bölümü anlat?m itibarıyla da kitabın genelinden farklıdır. Vathek giderek hedefine yakla?ırken biz de kitaba bolca yedirilmi? olan kara mizah öğelerinin kademeli olarak azald???n? fark ederiz. Kaç?nılmaz sona yakla?tıkça masalsi?k yava?ça kaybolur ve yerini Batılı anlamda yazılm?? bir romanın kapan?? sahnesine bırakır. Bu sayede okuyucu artık i?lerin ciddile?mekte oldu?unun ayrıntısına varabilir. Artık Vathek için cezalandırılma, okuyucular için de ders alma vakti gelmi?tir.

Velhasıl, ?thaki Yayınlar? etiketiyle elime geçen Vathek, bana üzerine dü?ünecek pek çok ?ey veren zengin bir kitaptır. Hızlı yazılmassının getirdi?i bir takım aksaklıklar ve geçitirmeler olsa da bunların kitaptan alınacak zevki baltalayacak kadar büyük sorunlar oldu?unu düşünmüyorum. Kitabın sonunda yer alan, Selçuk Aylar ve Yankı Enki imzalı sonsözü ise mutlaka okunmasıdır.

Unutmadan, Vathek'i okumaya hala niyetliyseniz tavsiyem tek oturma okumanız olacaktır. Vathek'i Do?u'nun di?er unutulmuş despotların yanına göndermeden önce, umudunuz el verdikçe merakın ve bilginin büyüsünden çekilmamanız dile?iyle.

- **Beyza TA?DELEN**

İncelemenin tamamı için: <http://kayiprihtim.com/inceleme/vathe...>

°°°.°..°-°. _· ????? Ροζουλ? Εωσφ?ρος ·_·°-°.° ·°°° ★·.·^·.·★ ?????? ???????
??????? Ταμετο?ρο Αμ says

«Ο Φ?ουστ της Ανατολ?ς»

?να εξωτικ? ανατολ?τικο παραμ?θι συνδυασμ?νο με τη γοητε?α του γοτθικο? ρομαντισμο?
δημιουργο?ν την
"Ιστορ?α του χαλ?φη Βατ?κ".

Μια υπερφυσικ? μαγε?α υποβλητικ?ς ομορφι?ς,
σχεδ?ν υπνωτιστικ?ς,
που αφιερ?νεται- φορ?ντας το μα?ρο μανδ?α του μεσα?ωνα-
σαν σπ?νιος πολ?τιμος λ?θος,στα αρ?ματα,τους ?χους και τα χρ?ματα της παρ?δοσης,της
φαντασ?ας και της ?παρξης του ανθρ?πινου ε?δους ως θε?κ? δημιουργ?α.

Ο Βατ?κ,ως ηγεμ?νας των μουσουλμ?νων και απ?γονος της φυλ?ς του προφ?τη Μω?μεθ,
ειναι ο ?νατος χαλ?φης της γενι?ς των Αββασιδ?ν και ο νε?τερος στο θρ?νο της Βαγδ?της.

Ζ?ντας ?ντονα π?θη με αχ?ρταγη ακολουσ?α και προκλητικ? χλιδ? χ?νεται μ?σα στην απ?λυτη
ελευθερ?α σκ?ψης,σε μια πνευματικ? επαν?σταση.

Προδ?δει την π?στη του στις παραδ?σεις και
τα θρησκευτικ? του ιδε?δη και τολμ?ει να εναντιωθε? στην πατροπαρ?δοτη μο?ρα της ?γνοιας.

Με τη συμπαρ?σταση και την ενθ?ρρυνση της μητ?ρας του
-μια διαβολογυν?κα με το ?νομα Κ?ραθις-δ?χεται να συμφων?σει με το Σαταν?.
Χ?ρη σε αυτ?ν τη συμφων?α θα οικειοποιηθε? τους θησαυρο?ς των προαδαμια?ων σουλτ?νων που
ε?ναι κρυμμ?νοι στα ?γκατα της γης.
Στα παλ?τια του ζ?φου. Στα σκοτ?δια της κ?λασης.
Στη μα?ρη αν?λπιδη και ασυγχ?ρητη σατανικ? μεγαλοπρ?πεια.

?ταν ερωτε?εται παρ?φορα τη λατρεμ?νη του Νουρονιχ?ρ- η οπο?α συμμετ?χει με ευχαρ?στηση
στο αν?σιο ?ργο κατ? του Ισλαμικο? πλαισ?ου-ξεκινο?ν μαζ? το οδοιπορικ? προς το παλ?τι του
μελαγχολικο? ?ρχοντα του σκ?τους,στην ?ρημη π?λη του Ισταχ?ρ.
Φθ?νοντας εκει,αναφορικ? με τη σατανικ? συμφων?α θα γ?νουν κ?τοχοι πλο?του και δ?ναμης
?λης της Ανατολ?τικης μυθολογ?ας.

Στην ουσ?α το μοναδικ? ?γκλημα που κρ?βεται περ?τεχνα μ?σα στο παραμ?θι και τους ?ρωες του
ε?ναι
η αναζ?τηση και η μετ?δοση γν?σης.

Ε?ναι προδ?της και υβριστ?ς ?ποιος προσπαθ?σει να μ?θει, να ξεφ?γει απο τα
θρησκευτικ?-πολιτικ? απαρχαιωμ?να κατεστημ?να.
Και ?ταν ανακαλ?πτει τους θησαυρο?ς του μεγαλει?δη ζ?φου τον κ?νουν να αναρωτηθε? για την
δημιουργ?α της ?παρξης,τη σοφ?α και τη δ?ναμη της ανθρ?πινης φ?σης και την απ?ραντη γν?ση

σε ?λα τα επ?πεδα,πρ?πει να τιμωρηθε?.

Πρ?πει να ζει αι?νια σε ?ναν εφι?λτη με ανθρωπ?μορφα τ?ρατα και σε τερ?στιες α?θουσες κεν?ς και σκοτειν?ς με μ?νη λ?μψη την πυρ? της κ?λασης.

Αν ε?χε με?νει απαθ?ς,αδραν?ς σε κατ?τερο νοηματικ? επ?πεδο Θα ε?χε συγχωρεθε? απο γ?ινες και θε?κ?ς αρχ?ς απολαμβ?νοντας την ?γνοια των πολλ?ν. Δο?λος του εαυτο? του.

Τ?ρα,ο χαλ?φης Βατ?κ που θε?ρησε δικα?ωμα του να γευτε? τους καρπο?ς της γν?σης θα τιμωρε?ται αι?νια στο τρομακτικ? απεχθ?ς ?πειρο των καταραμ?νων ψυχ?ν.

Ε?ναι ?να διαχρονικ? παραμ?θι με ?ντονες σαγηνευτικ?ς και ηδονιστικ?ς περιγραφ?ς ομορφι?ς, πολυτελε?ας, υπ?ροχου κακο? και θαν?του.

Λ?τρεψα την ειρωνε?α του συγγραφ?α που παρουσι?ζει το κακ? σαν αυτοδ?ναμο καλ? κ?τω απο ?να καρφ? ηθικ?ς.

Κ?τω απο την μαγε?α και τη λαμπρ?τητα εν?ς θρ?λου που ασχολε?ται με τα δυο αντ?παλα μισ? του εαυτο? του.

Ο καθ?νας μας το ερμηνε?ει ?πως το θεωρε? κατ?λληλο.

Καλ? αν?γνωση!!

Πολλο?ς ασπασμο?ς!!

Ahmad Sharabiani says

Vathek, William Beckford, Edited with an introduction by Roger Lonsdale, London: Oxford university press, 1970=1349, 187 Pages

???? ???? ???? : ??? ? ?? ?? ?? ?? 1978 ?????

??? ?? ???? ?? ?? ???? : «???? ???? ???? ?? ???? ???? ????» ?? ???? ???? ???? ???? ?

(???????? ?? ?? ???? ???? ? ???? ???? ? ???? ???? ?...) ??? ?? ?? ???? : ???? ???? ???? ?

?????. ??? ?? ???? ?? 1782 ????? ?? ???? ???? ???? ???? ? ???? ???? ???? ? ???? ???? ?

???. ???? ???? : ???? ???? (???) ?? ???? ?? ???? ???? ???? ???? ???? ???? ???? ?

???? ???? ? ?? ???? ?? ?? ???? ???? ???? (???) ?? ???? ? ???? ?????. ?? ???? ? ???? ???? ?

???? (???? ???? ? ???? ???? ???? ???? ???? ???? ???? ???? ???? ???? ?

???? ?? ?? ???? ???? ???? ???? ???? ???? ???? ???? ???? ???? ?

???? ???? ???? ? ???? ???? ???? ? ???? ? ???? ???? ? ???? ???? ?

?? ? ???? ? ???? ???? (????) ???? (????) ???? ? ???? ? ???? ? ???? ? ???? ?

? ?? ?? ???? ???? ? ???? ? ???? ? ???? ? ???? ? ???? ? ???? ? ???? ?

(???) ? ???? ? ???? ???? ???? ???? ???? : ???? ? ???? ???? ???? ???? ? ???? ?

???? ? ???? ???? ???? . ? . ?

Paul says

There is a story behind my purchasing this book. I occasionally bid on book lots at the local auction house. Recently I bid on a box of books which looked rather interesting. I managed to transpose the numbers and

ended up with a different box of books, most of which I didn't want. However there were seven folio society book from the late 1950s and early 1960s, which I have kept (sending the others back to auction). This was one of the folio society books.

I knew little about Vathek or William Beckford before this. It has been classified as a Gothic novel and was written in the 1780s. Byron cited it as a source and Keats certainly was influenced by Beckford's descriptions of the underworld. Lovecraft and Poe were also influenced as have been other writers in the fantasy genre.

There is a touch of the Arabian Nights about this and it is set somewhere in the Middle East. It concerns wealthy potentate Caliph Vathek and his exceptionally cruel and evil mother Carathis. Vathek is fabulously wealthy, has lots of eunuchs, lots of wives, loves the pleasures of the flesh, has built a Babel like tower and is also thirsty for knowledge. The story is based around Islam and involves genies, djinn and even The Prophet putting in his views from heaven. Vathek desires more wealth and more power and that is where the "fun" begins. We have mysterious strangers, lots of acts of cruelty and immorality, magic artifacts and talismans, sacrifice (of children), pursuit of glory, feasting, pride and a journey to find treasure and fortune. The last twenty pages with the descriptions of hell are quite fun when everyone gets what they deserve.

These days the story is fairly unremarkable, although there are some unusual flourishes; it was originally written in French. It is effectively a pact with the devil novel; just set in an Islamic context. There are also some comic turns. The characters are predictable and rather flat and after a time the descriptions of even more fabulous wealth, debauchery and cruelty just become boring. As a whole it didn't really work for me, but there are also other issues which revolve around Beckford himself.

Beckford was wealthy, very wealthy (inherited) and his income at the time was over£100,000 a year, which was a fabulous amount at the time. In later life he was a bit of a recluse and spent way too much money on pointless building projects. He wrote Vathek in his early twenties whilst in France. The reasons for leaving England are not entirely clear. It seems he was conducting an affair with a boy eight years his junior (William Courtenay, son of an aristocrat) . The boy's uncle found out and advertised it in a newspaper. Beckford and his wife left the country for a while and he wrote Vathek whilst in France. Beckford continued to be noted for eccentricity and there are lots of stories about goings on at his home. All this is of little relevance really. What is of relevance is the source of his wealth; the slave trade and plantations in Jamaica. Byron, whilst appreciating Vathek made some rather acerbic comments about Beckford's wealth. I am left with a picture of a man wasting large amounts of money of ornate buildings whilst the sources of his wealth suffer thousands of miles away. It left a bad taste.

Jack says

Postmodernism has nothing on Vathek. An absolutely bizarre Gothic tale, rich in Orientalism and devilry. You may think that the modern era has corned the market in strange, difficult texts, but there is truly nothing new under the sun. Vathek is stranger than strange.

Jayaprakash Satyamurthy says

I seem to have embarked on a re-exploration of the gothic genre. After finishing a re-read of The Castle Of Otranto by Horace Walpole a couple of days back, Last night I finished Vathek by William Beckford, a novel which also stems from the trend for Orientalist fiction which played upon the exoticism of an imagined Arabic setting, largely inspired by translations of The Thousand And One Nights.

It's the story of the Caliph Vathek, a sensualist and seeker of knowledge whose quest for novelty leads him into the snares of a diabolical plot. Promised the jewels and talismans of the pre-Adamic kings, he embarks on an inverted pilgrim's progress with a suitable ending.

Vathek was written in a burst of inspiration over the course of roughly three days. It shows. There are many holes in the plot, which is episodic and frequently seems to lose itself in byways. Vathek is depicted as having the power to strike down his foes with a look from one of his eyes when angered; yet he never uses this power at any point in this book. As mentioned above, he is portrayed as a seeker of knowledge; yet, his chief motivations in the course of the novel are greed and lust. We are suddenly informed that he has a brother more than two-thirds of the way through the story. At a certain point, as if realising he could meander about forever, Beckford visibly reins in his plot and forces a conclusion.

But these cavils are beside the point; style is the measure of Beckford's success here, and this novel has style in excess, weaving a sustained cavalcade of visions that must also be the result of its rapid, intense composition. The lush, sybaritic Palaces of the Senses, the many depictions of lavish banquets, the darkly comedic scenes of sorcerous doings by Vathek's mother Carathis and her minions, various scenes of Vathek's villainy and blasphemy and finally the portrayal of the devil and hell itself are all rendered with a fine eye for arresting, original detail. A vein of dark humour, occasionally tending to farce, runs through the story, giving us permission not take it all much more seriously than Beckford seems to have.

Stela says

I used to recall, with appalled amusement, the words of a former colleague of mine, who was slyly intrigued (and very proud of his cleverness) that anyone could read dead writers. What can I say? You don't usually argue with fools, whose minds are relaxed. Moreover, ignorance has many faces, and some of them are really funny even if in an involuntary way.

On the other hand though, maybe because there are strange points where ineptitude and intelligence seem to cross (not always clear whether for the benefit of one or for the decline of the other), Eugene Ionesco was convinced that literature of the past is already unreadable, because time dusts it irremediably.

This may be untrue for masterpieces (even if I have to ask myself who still reads Cervantes, Dante, Homer, etc., since I know many a so-called intellectual who didn't and who won't) but it definitely holds some truth for less illustrious works, like "Vathek".

It goes without saying that Beckford is a gifted writer. His imagination is glorious, his descriptions powerful. For the 17th century, I mean. For a modern reader, it is not always easy to trust his plot with the tension he undoubtedly intended, to overlook his naive representation of good and evil, his too loaded imagination, his too conceptual characters, his too evident morale.

Overall, "The History of Caliph Vathek" looks like an oversized "1001 Nights" story - interesting in the beginning but increasingly boring towards the end (and I have to confess I browsed the final pages). A curiosity for gothic literature lovers and for philologists. Never an essential reading, however.

Matthieu says

Underground palaces! Concealed didacticism! Homosexual indiscretions!

Henry Avila says

Caliph Vathek is the ruler in Baghdad and its large Empire, in the Middle East and Africa...Grandson of the illustrious Harun al -Rashid.Of the Arabian Nights fame(this is fiction, folks , with only a very vague resemblance to a real man, so don't bother to look him up on Wikipedia). Being the 9th century,the Caliph has absolute power.Also an evil eye, deadly when angered.As a lot of his poor victims discovered too late. Nobody looks at Vathek's fearsome eye, when the Caliph is in a very bad mood,for long... ..Five palaces he has built for his many amusements.Full of his toys.A tower to reach the heavens is erected.Just for Vathek ,so he can study the distant stars.Tallest in the world,at great expense.Most nights looking up at the mysterious dark sky and becomes a capable astronomer, the royal man.The people suffer because of the very high taxes.Still the Caliph spends money at a tremendous rate.His subjects hate him but keep their tongues quiet.Too many have been butchered not to.The easily bored Vathek has a new bright city,Samarah, on the desert,also built.His numerous wives fail to make him happy.Things change when a stranger arrives. This man maybe the ugliest on Earth ! But he has unknown, great, demonic powers.Given a fabulous saber,with carved words on it,that are different every day, by the stranger from India,Giaour(infidel).But can't be read,by the tyrant, the languages are unintelligible .Vathek mother,Princess Carathis practices black magic.She has committed worst crimes than her spoiled son,yes that's possible.Trouble begins when they can't locate the eerie Indian.At last the stranger,Giaour, appears,and tells Caliph Vathek, to kill a few of his people,fifty children(he survives the riots). The Sovereign of the World, will be richly rewarded with unlimited wealth, in the ruins of the mournful city, Istakar,(Persepolis)destroyed by Alexander the Great,in 330 B.C.Everyone feels relief as the Ruler leaves for the dead, ancient Persian capital.Wishing he'd never come back.Picking up an Emir's willing young daughter,Nouronihar, on the way.His nature demands it.With an enchanting moon shining down on his caravan. A Genie materializes and strongly advises the evil one. Not to go further as Vathek nears the deserted, lonely city and to flee.The Caliph makes his decision. I've read a lot of weird books, but this is one of the... weirdest.....you've been warned.....

Bill Kerwin says

An odd book, and not a completely successful one. I cannot deny it a wealth of ironic observation and an elegant style, but I believe the author indulges his hobbies and obsessions--his Orientalism, his ephebophilia, his loathing of his mother and other termagants--to an extent that distorts this tale of sensuality, pride and and destruction instead of informing and enriching it.

The last twenty pages or so, however, that relate Prince Vathek's damnation in the underground realm of the angel Eblis, are powerful and memorable, and very influential on the development of the gothic sensibility in writers as different as Poe and Hawthorne. All readers who care about the development of literature should read these last twenty pages, but in my opinion they could just as well skip most of the rest.

[illegible]

Οι χ?λιες και μια ν?χτες σε συνδυασμ? με τον Φαο?στ. Αρκετ? παρ?ξενο βιβλ?ο...

Paul says

Vathek was Caliph in the area of approximately present-day Iraq, at some unknown time in the past. He was generally a fair person, but woe unto him who got Vathek angry. He lived in an immense castle, with the absolute finest of everything. One day, a very strange, and very ugly, man stood before his throne. He had a hideous laugh, but didn't speak. He showed Vathek all manner of rare and exotic items, including sabers

inscribed in an unknown language, inscriptions which kept changing from day to day. The stranger was thrown in prison for his unwillingness to speak. The next morning, finding the stranger gone, Vathek totally blows his top.

Finding himself outside the castle, at the foot of the nearby mountains, Vathek hears a voice coming out of a huge crevasse. It is the stranger, called a giaour, who promises Vathek all the powers of heaven in exchange for the blood of fifty young boys. Vathek provides the boys, through the guise of a sporting competition, then the giaour reneges on its part of the deal. When the people, especially the parents, understand what's happened, Vathek has to get back to the castle and lock the doors, until the anger subsides.

Later, Vathek commands the creation of a great caravan to a place called Rocnabad, home of famous springs. For various reasons, he needs to get away from the castle for a while. This is going to be the biggest, and grandest, caravan ever. On the journey, the caravan is attacked by wild animals, with a number of casualties. Vathek, his wives and senior advisers, can no longer be carried the rest of the way, because of lack of personnel, but actually have to walk to Rocnabad.

At Rocnabad, there is a castle as big or bigger than the one that Vathek left behind. He meets a young woman named Nouronihar, who he wants as one of his wives (as Caliph, what Vathek wants, Vathek gets). She is promised to a man named Gulchenrouz. The lovers drink a potion that will make them look dead for several days, then, the idea is that they go and live somewhere else, away from Vathek.

This is one of the very few novels set in the world of the Arabian Nights, a world of eunuchs, slaves and harem girls. It was first published over 200 years ago (in the 1780s), so the style of writing is very different than what is normal for a modern reader. Therefore, it will take some patience on the part of the reader. If you can find a copy, it is time, and money, very well spent.

Duane says

This is an 18th century Gothic novel written by an English author, but written in the French language. It's about an Arabian sultan who makes a deal with the devil, which almost never ends well. That's an odd mix of tags, but this is an odd story. It reminds me a bit of Castle Otranto, but more violent. Just not my cup of tea.
