

Writings of 1746–1748

(II)

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Volume Editors:

Katherine Astbury, Michael Cardy and Haydn T. Mason

Author:

Voltaire

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Written substantially in the late 1740s and published between 1747 and 1749, the three *contes* which are collected in this volume are among the best known of Voltaire's works. They were composed at a time when Voltaire had abandoned the tranquillity of Cirey for the tumult of Paris and Versailles, and was enjoying new recognition from members of the court and the learned societies. The three *contes* in the present volume, *Zadig*, *Memnon* and *Le Monde comme il va*, mark a new departure for Voltaire. They are the first of his fictional writings to be composed especially for the general reading public. Secure in his official prestige by the late 1740s, Voltaire felt free to publish these fictional experiments which adapt the popular mode of oriental fiction, parodying and pastiching the works of other writers – while at the same time offering serious criticisms of French society and his reflections on the nature of human happiness and the problem of evil.

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Modern Language Review

In this essential work, the editors broadly follow the principles established in earlier volumes of the *Œuvres complètes*, and in particular those devoted to Voltaire's prose fiction.
