



PAR LES FENÊTRES (THROUGH THE WINDOWS)



A romantic trilogy by Christophe GAUTRY and Arnaud DEMUYNCK

With the voice of Arthur H

LE CONCILE LUNATIQUE (THE LUNATIC COUNCIL)

LA VITA NUOVA

UN SPECTACLE INTERROMPU (AN INTERRUPTED SPECTACLE)

Based on the lives and works of

Jules Laforgue, Gérard de Nerval and Stéphane Mallarmé

## "THROUGH THE WINDOWS": OPENING WINDOWS AS IF TO OPEN ONE'S EYES

*Le Concile féérique*, a play by Jules Laforgue, was published in the magazine *La Vogue* in 1886. It contained excerpts from various poems that he had initially intended publishing as a collection under the name *Des Fleurs de bonne volonté*. By presenting his own poems with the continuity of a dialogue, he gave them a new form. This is an indication of the poet's desire to play around with literary styles and is something that inspired me to try my hand at this somewhat "oulipian" exercise. In order to compose a eulogy to these three great poets, I decided to write three scripts, rearranging some snippets of their works in a different order in the manner of Jules Laforgue. With these kaleidoscopes I wanted to bring together the modernity of the 19<sup>th</sup> century poets with the cinematography of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I followed a schoolboy's path through their writings, wandering freely through the details of their lives and works. Full of references, these cinematographic palimpsests are like a clever yet playful paper chase where the player (viewer) is encouraged both to dream and to seek some meanings.

"Stop looking out of the window!" This is a rebuke many will remember from their schooldays. The window leads to the backroads taken by the schoolboy in his daydreams, it symbolizes the outwards gaze that looks directly onto our souls. The window represents both imprisonment and the desire to take flight, light and dark, a passage and an obstacle. This theme is common in the work of many great poets who have even used it in their titles, as in Baudelaire's *Les Fenêtres*, Lamartine's *La Fenêtre de la maison paternelle* or Mallarmé's *Fenêtres*.





For Laforgue in *The Lunatic Council*, the window is misted up, blurring his vision of the real world, and it opens out onto one of his visions full of anguish (*Les Complaintes*). For Gérard de Nerval, in *La Vita Nuova*, the window is the place where one's last journey is taken, a screen on which one's memories will be projected for the last time. For Mallarmé, in *An interrupted spectacle*, the window is the precursor of the movie, a vehicle for music and nostalgia. It opens onto a spectacle that will be interrupted, as dreams always are...

This booklet aims to reveal a few of the links between the lives of these poets and the three short films that make up this romantic trilogy entitled "Through the windows". There are others that I will leave for you to discover on your own.

Arnaud Demuyne



# THE LUNATIC COUNCIL

After Jules Laforgue



## Synopsis

'Methinks it is time to be reborn mocking', calls the poet to a singing streetlamp that has come up to his window. The poet wanders through 19<sup>th</sup> century Paris, with his joyful melancholy and light-hearted irony.

It was his early poems that attracted me to Jules Laforgue. Far from finding them so "manifestly bad" as he himself qualified them, their youthful perspicacity and literary naivety appealed to my adult self in the making. They reflected my troubled adolescent mind. They were one of my favourite bedtime reads and I would often fall asleep over *Le Sanglot de la Terre* (*The Tears of the Earth*) whose melancholic verses from the past put my contemporary concerns as a troubled young man into perspective. The poet invited me to accompany him into the "Cosmic". Do we ever lose the metaphysical angst that hangs like a shadow over our youths? Inspired by these teenage preoccupations, the poet succeeded in bringing forth an eternal music.







*Je ne puis m'endormir ; je songe au bercement  
De l'averse emplissant la nuit et le silence.  
On dort, on aime, on joue. Oh ! par la Terre immense,  
Est-il quelqu'un qui songe à moi, dans ce moment ?  
(...)  
À quoi bon l'Existence ?  
Si ce globe endormi gelait subitement ?  
Si rien ne s'éveillait demain ! Oh ! quel grand rêve !  
Plus qu'un stupide bloc sans mémoire et sans sève  
(...)  
Les siècles passent. Nul n'est là. Pas d'autre bruit  
Que le vent éternel et l'eau battant les grèves...  
Rien qu'un Cercueil perdu qui flotte dans la Nuit.*

*Rêve, Les Complaintes*

The dull years spent at boarding school in Tarbes, far away from his parents who were still living in Montevideo in Uruguay where he was born, the early death of his mother and the misery he experienced when only twenty all help us to understand the suffering that underlies Laforgue's writing, even when it is intended to be funny. In the work he produced in less than seven years from 1879 to 1887, when he died at the age of 27, Laforgue attained a poetic freedom unknown until then. Evolving from verse to prose, the poet developed his art very quickly. The irony we can perceive in *Le Sanglot de la Terre* indicates his desire to shed the burden of his existence. "It is time to be reborn mocking" interjects the poet in the film as he shakes himself from his torpor. There then appears at the window his lunar doppelganger in the form of a streetlamp that casts a pale light but has a droll sense of humour. This surrealist "character" takes his monologue on boredom from the poem *Tristesse du réverbère* (*The Streetlamp's Sorrow*) published in *La Vie moderne* in 1881. He flies into the night astride this object that has been liberated from its static and grounded condition. Poetry provides its author with the means to rise up, to shed one's weight and to defy gravity. It is to the verses of *L'Imitation de Notre Dame la Lune* that the poet springs forth into the third part of the film and the last part of his work,

*Lune bénie des insomnies,  
Dame très-lasse de nos terrasses,  
Sois l'Ambulance de nos croyances !  
Sois l'édredon du Grand-Pardon !*

*Litanies des premiers quartiers de la lune*



In 1885, Jules Laforgue spoke of a volume of prose composed of six morality plays that he qualified as legendary. Its protagonists, Perseus and Andromeda, Pan, Salome, Lohengrin and Hamlet, are all taken from mythology and have figured in art for centuries. Now arming himself with irony as a means of overcoming his existential issues, he parodies the attitudes and speech of these characters. Hamlet thus appears less of a Shakespearian character than a reflection of Laforgue himself. Hamlet, "the ill-fated prince" repeats Laforgue obsessively. And he approaches him with an unnerving familiarity. Imitating the poet in his use of parody, the film presents Hamlet as a pathetic clown. Laforgue, appointed French reader for the Empress Augusta, discovered the circus in Berlin and was fascinated by clowns: "Clowns seem to me to have attained true wisdom. I should be a clown, I have missed my vocation". The poet identified himself with the way this imaginary being cloaks drama in humour:

Jules Laforgue suffered from tuberculosis and died on 20 August 1887. His tragic end is represented at the end of the film. Defying gravity, the poet sings the following verses:

*Et la Nature est une épouse  
Qui nous carambole d'extases,  
Et puis, nous occit, peu courtoise,  
Dès qu'on se permet une pause.  
Eh bien ! qu'elle en prenne à son aise,  
Et que tout fonctionne à sa guise !  
Nous, nous entretiendrons les Muses.  
Les neuf immortelles Glaneuses !*

*Air de biniou, pièce LVI, Des Fleurs de bonne volonté*



# LA VITA NUOVA

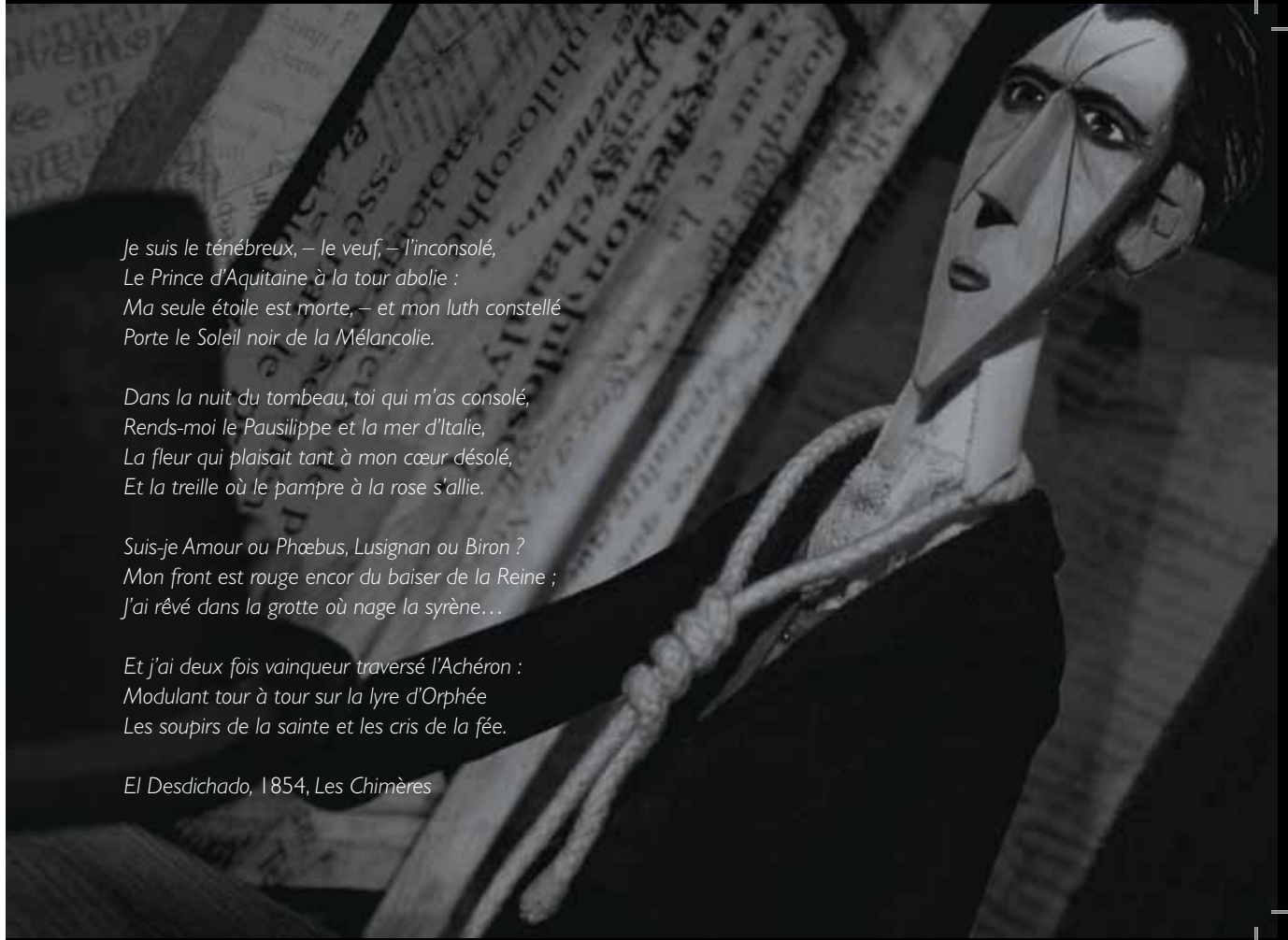
After Gérard de Nerval



## Synopsis

The poet is at his writing desk when a coachman knocks on his window and asks him to follow him. Memories, of the opera, a wonderful diva and so on, flow through the glass door of the coach: it is time for the poet to write his last poem.

He was born in Paris in 1808 as Gérard Labrunie. He changed his name to become the poet who would later take his life. His body was found hanged in the morning of 26 January 1855. As if to deride life one last time, he had kept his hat on. This detail is both funny and sordid, but nevertheless poses the question: Who was this poet who took his last bow without taking off his hat? Was he simply trying to change his life as if moving to another place, leaving his existence as if going through a door, to get some fresh air? It is almost as if he had put his hat on just to go for a walk...



*Je suis le ténébreux, – le veuf, – l'inconsolé,  
Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie :  
Ma seule étoile est morte, – et mon luth constellé  
Porte le Soleil noir de la Mélancolie.*

*Dans la nuit du tombeau, toi qui m'as consolé,  
Rends-moi le Pausilippe et la mer d'Italie,  
La fleur qui plaisait tant à mon cœur désolé,  
Et la treille où le pampre à la rose s'allie.*

*Suis-je Amour ou Phæbus, Lusignan ou Biron ?  
Mon front est rouge encor du baiser de la Reine ;  
J'ai rêvé dans la grotte où nage la syrène...*

*Et j'ai deux fois vainqueur traversé l'Achéron :  
Modulant tour à tour sur la lyre d'Orphée  
Les soupirs de la sainte et les cris de la fée.*

*El Desdichado, 1854, Les Chimères*





At the age of 28, a failed love affair with an actress named Jenny Colon made Gérard de Nerval lose his mind. Throughout his sentimental life, his fear of loss was always dominant and had a paralysing effect on his desire. He idealized his feelings and no longer loved but adored. For him women were "chimera" and all relationships with them were bound to end in failure. The pain caused by this led to a sort of delirium that he interpreted as "the overflowing of dreams into the real world". Fantasy and enchantment are ever-present in the poet's works. Reality is metamorphosed, transfiguring shapes, sizes and faces.

His work is punctuated by hallucinations, both spatial and temporal. Nerval thus opened a window onto surrealist poetry; for him writing was a direct product of real experience. He was unable to overcome the power of dreams, but to protect himself, would write them down with the illusion that he was thereby attaining a new form of knowledge. A century ahead of his time, the experiences he was subjected to foreshadowed those of another poet, Henri Michaux in his *Connaissances par les gouffres*. During his periods of lucidity, on waking from these destructive dreams that he hoped would save him, Nerval wrote some of his masterpieces. "Our dreams are a second life", in which "the spirit world opens its doors to us". *Aurélia* relates his tragic descent into hell which ends in the hope of redemption. Dreams are played out on the stage of insanity, generating myths and the sensation of a mystical experience.

*Tout m'était expliqué par ce souvenir à demi rêvé. Cet amour vague et sans espoir, conçu pour une femme de théâtre, qui tous les soirs me prenait à l'heure du spectacle, pour ne me quitter qu'à l'heure du sommeil (...). Aimer une religieuse sous la forme d'une actrice ! et si c'était la même ! – Il y a de quoi devenir fou. C'est un entraînement fatal où l'inconnu vous attire comme le feu follet fuyant sur les joncs d'une eau morte... Reprenons pied sur le réel.*

*Sylvie, Souvenirs du Valois, III. Résolution*



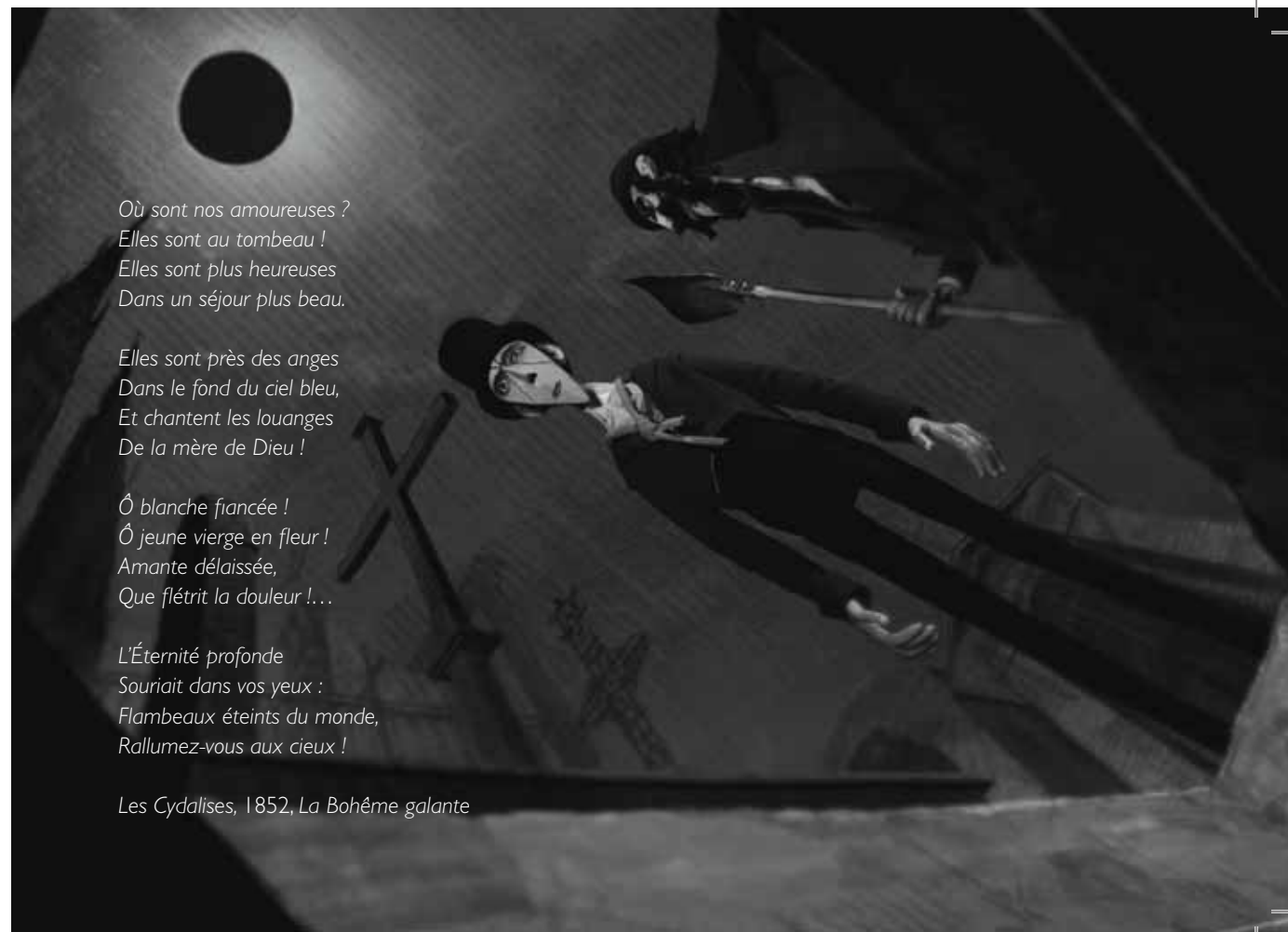
*Où sont nos amoureuses ?  
Elles sont au tombeau !  
Elles sont plus heureuses  
Dans un séjour plus beau.*

*Elles sont près des anges  
Dans le fond du ciel bleu,  
Et chantent les louanges  
De la mère de Dieu !*

*Ô blanche fiancée !  
Ô jeune vierge en fleur !  
Amante délaissée,  
Que flétrit la douleur !...*

*L'Éternité profonde  
Souriait dans vos yeux :  
Flambeaux éteints du monde,  
Rallumez-vous aux cieux !*

*Les Cydalises, 1852, La Bohême galante*



# AN INTERRUPTED SPECTACLE

After Stéphane Mallarmé



## Synopsis

Mesmerized by the droning sounds of a Barbary organ and the purring of his cat, the poet closes his eyes and drifts into a mysterious dream.

Mallarmé's poetry is disarming. It has a surprising use of syntax which, for example, separates the verb from the subject, lays ellipses like traps one after another and diverts the reader in all its circumlocutions. The uninitiated can find this religion of words difficult to enter. There are nevertheless some ways in. At the very start of his career, when still under the influence of Baudelaire like all the young poets of his generation, Mallarmé discovered the new genre of prose poetry that does not tell a particular story but is rather based on anecdote. It is this inroad that we have used in the film to facilitate access to the poet's work. The first essays by Stéphane Mallarmé in prose poetry are full of autobiographical details. We need to go back to his youth, when at the age of 21 he was appointed a teacher of English in Tournon in the Ardèche. It is here that the action, or rather the inaction, of the film takes place.



While in Tournon, Mallarmé wrote his poems in verse and prose dedicated to Charles Baudelaire, *La Tête* (later entitled *Pauvre Enfant pâle*) and *L'Orgue de barbarie* (later called *Plainte d'automne*). The script is based on these two texts as well as on other fragments of Mallarmé's work in which he "notices events under a dreamlike light". The narration is punctuated by sonnets that he wrote later, such as *Toute l'âme résumée*.

As well as Baudelaire, Mallarmé considered Edgar Allan Poe as his mentor. The last part of *An interrupted spectacle* is full of allusions to the famous American author who was born at the dawn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In this short film, Mallarmé is presented as a bridge between two centuries: Inspired by Poe, the romantic early 19<sup>th</sup> century poet, and tending towards modernity with his innovative language that penetrates into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Mallarmé died just as the motion picture camera was being invented. There is an allusion (illusion) to this in the film which is both comical and tragic, as the poet falls from his window that has transformed into a cinema screen.





This introductory text avoids having to explain in more detail the references to Mallarmé's work. As we set out humbly to follow in the footsteps of the poet, it is essential to preserve an element of mystery and questioning in keeping with his style. The pleasure of the quest is enhanced by the Mallarmean fog! *Un spectacle interrompu* is the title of one of his prose poems. The interrupted spectacle par excellence is a dream, interrupted by awakening. Mallarmé lauded the fact that "Action was not the sister of Dreams". He added: "If the Dream were thus debased and deflowered, where would be retreat to, we unlucky ones whom the earth repels and for whom the Dream alone offers refuge?" The rest of the film then takes on a melancholy, lethargic mood, akin to a dream, where the spectator is invited on a journey that has a pure dream-like quality. It is like a symbolic tale, such as only our deepest dreams can offer us. A dream full of captivating mystery, a truth that escapes us, a meaning that by being hard to perceive is all the more attractive to us.



## CAN ANIMATED OBJECTS HAVE A SOUL?

### Three poets and one puppet incarnated by Arthur H

The same puppet represents the three poets in turn. This "actor" played by the singer Arthur H, represents either the authors themselves or a man (the reader?) experiencing the poetic force of their work. The musician and composer, whose music and performances combine a mix of styles, groove, rock and jazz, together with poetry, story-telling and humour, was all too happy to go along with this and lend his warm, gravelly voice to the poets.

To give credit to those who are often central to the preoccupations of the romantic poets, women are omnipresent as the ghosts and manipulators of the hearts of these men.



### The union of the real and the imaginary

The "Through the Windows" collection comprises three films with puppets that move around in a two-dimensional world. The sets are either made of drawings (*La Vita Nuova*), watercolours (*The Lunatic Council*) or photographs (*An interrupted spectacle*). The characters are filmed using the stop-motion technique against a green background which is then deleted. Once isolated, they are then introduced into the sets. This is the "compositing" stage.

The composition of the image does not end here. The three films also contain video or CGI images such as the coach in *La Vita Nuova*, the streetlamp in *Lunatic Council*, or the woman in *An interrupted spectacle*. Then there are the special digital effects, such as smoke, rain, fog, lights and materials, to be added.

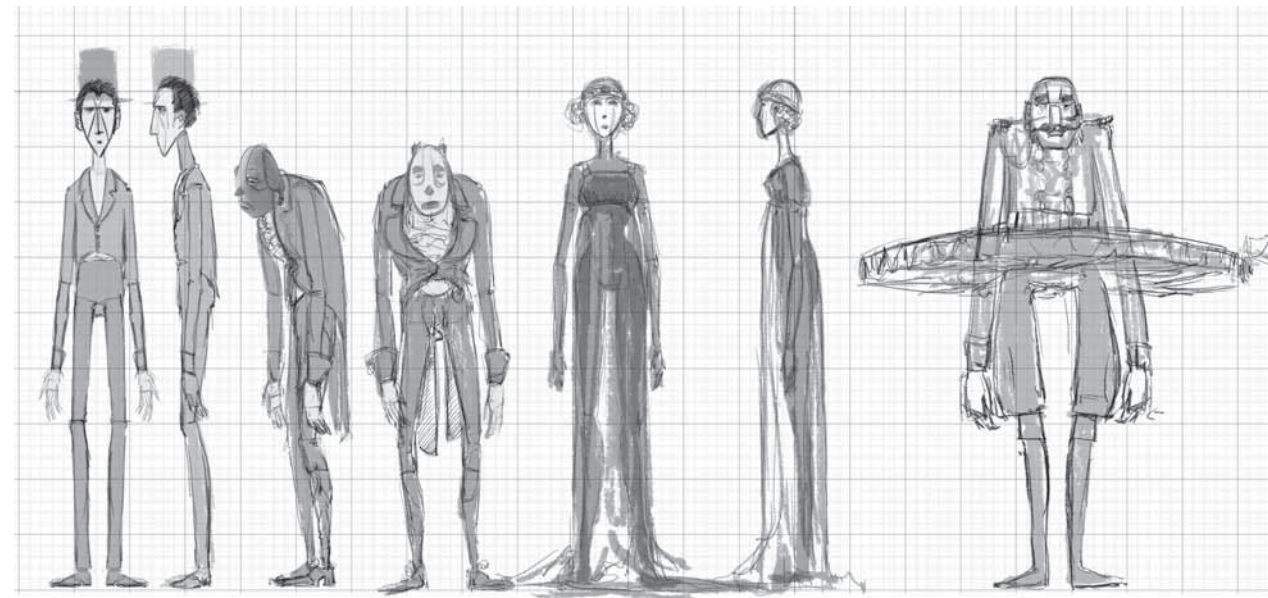
The complexity of this operation lies in bringing together in a coherent manner a great number of items of various origins to create a credible scene in which they are all supposed to exist together. The creative process is completed by a calibration phase in which the materials, lights and contrasts are harmonized within the "composited" image.

### Alchemy of forms and material

The bodies and hands of the puppets are made of silicon, the head and feet are made of resin and the clothing is made of fabric and leather. The hair and beards are taken from a piece of dyed sheepskin. The frames of the main characters are composed of metal rods joined together with ball joints. The secondary characters are built around hardened aluminium wire.



The faces are modelled in plasticine then cast in resin. The shape of the skull is then cut and the eye sockets are hollowed out from the back. This results in a sort of mask with a set expression, in which the eyes are then installed.



The design of these characters is quite angular in order to produce strong shadows. It is these shadows and the way the frames are shot that give the characters their expressions. Their eyes are made of beads, painted and varnished with several coats, which are installed in the sockets after the face has been painted. The head is then stuck onto the puppet's body, the joint being hidden by the hair and the mouths are made of small pieces of magnetized resin. The costumes and accessories are made of real materials such as fabric, wood and cardboard.

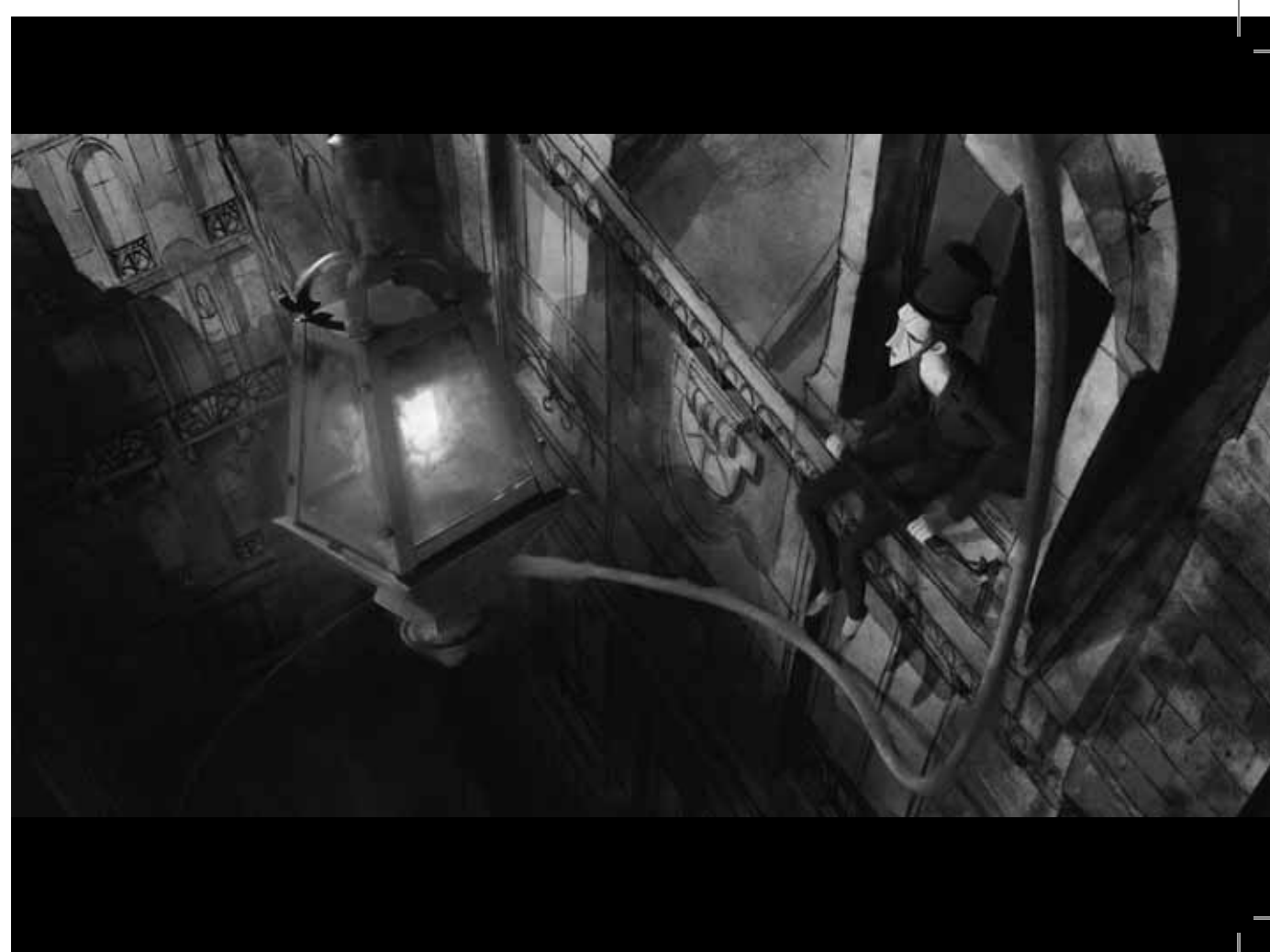
## THE AUTHORS

### **Arnaud Demuyck,** storyboard, co-director

Arnaud Demuyck studied the literature of cinema at the ULB university in Brussels. He is a director, scriptwriter and producer of short films. Director of the French film production company Les Films du Nord and the Belgian La Boîte,... Productions, he has produced over sixty films since 1992. He started directing films in 2000 with his *Signes de vie*, *À l'ombre du voile* and *L'Évasion*, after immersing himself in the world of the 19<sup>th</sup> century romantic poets with this trilogy that he co-directed with Christophe Gautry. He continues to write the screenplays for short films such as (*Sous un coin de ciel bleu*, *Mémoire fossile*) and more recently for medium-length films designed for a young audience (*Le Parfum de la carotte*, *Éliette...*).

### **Christophe Gautry,** graphic designer, co-director

After studying animation at the ECMA, Christophe Gautry first worked as an animator for the 2D/3D Animations and Alphanim Digital studios. On graduating from La Poudrière in 2005, he met the team of Folimage who took him on as an animator for the pilot film for the *Auriol* series. They continued to work together on the special TV version of *Le Noël de Léon*, for which he was in charge of compositing and special effects. In 2006 he met Arnaud Demuyck who offered him the position of co-director and creative director for his poetic trilogy.





## Dans la même collection, livrets-DVD



« Mémoire fossile » – Un film d'Anne-Laure Totaro et Arnaud Demuyck

« Sous un coin de ciel bleu » – Une comédie musicale animée d'Arnaud Demuyck et Cecilia Marreiros Marum

« L'Histoire du Petit Paolo » – Un film de Nicolas Liguori d'après un conte musical de Marc Perrone

« Bisclavret » – Un film d'Émilie Mercier d'après le « Lai » de Marie de France, traduction Françoise Morvan

### Les partenaires de « Par les fenêtres »

« Par les fenêtres » a été produit par Les Films du Nord, La Boîte,... Productions et Digit Anima • en association avec le CRRAV, Région Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Folimage, Région Rhône-Alpes, Vivement Lundi !, Région Bretagne, Digital Graphics, Région wallonne (Promimage) • avec le soutien de MEDIA, du Centre du cinéma et de l'image animée CNC, de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, de VOO, de la Procirep, Angoa Agicoa et de France Télévisions – Histoires courtes.

### Livret

Conception graphique : Nadia Anémiche, Lille – Coordination : Laurence Deydier; Studio Suivez mon regard

Impression : Proost, Turnhout (Belgique) – Tous nos remerciements à Annemie Degryse, Lumière Publishing (Gand)

Une coédition Suivez mon regard, Les Films du Nord

27 avenue Jean-Lebas – 59100 Roubaix – Tél. 33 (0)3 20 11 11 30 – lesfilmsdunord.com

Septembre 2012 – Éditeur vidéo n° EDV 2138 – Contact : ademuyck@euroanima.net – www.euroanima.net

