



# **MYSTÉRIEUSE**

**BY ÉRIC SUCHÈRE • TRANSLATED BY SANDRA DOLLER**

Part of this translation has appeared in *Apartment*, and on Jerome Rothenberg's "Poems and Poetics" blog on *Jacket2*. My gratitude to the editors of the above. Mad appreciation to Éric Suchère for his unprecedented mix of precision, largesse, and fluidity. Huge thanks also to the Tamaas intercultural arts organization for inviting this collaboration. & Enormous thanks go to the radically wonderful and hard-working editors & designers at Anomalous Press, and doubly to Christian Hawkey for his selection of this work for publication.

*Mystérieuse*

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For Leila Brett (my processual)  
-ES

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## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

A sort of theoretical ekphrasis, Éric Suchère's *Mystérieuse* is an image-to-word "translation" of collaged pages from Hergé's Tintin comic books, rendered in painstakingly conceptual detail: each frame of each comic—and even each stroke of each drawing inside each frame—are accounted for linguistically, from Tintin's unforgettable drops of sweat, to Snowy's emoticon-esque reactions, to the broad stroke backgrounds of the comic squares. Following a trajectory of Hergé admirers from Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein to Steven Spielberg, Suchère's text is an important contribution to the pop-art potential of representational language, contemporary conceptual writing, and word-image investigations.

This short selection is a brief extract from the longer 100+ page project; these pages draw their impetus one particular Tintin book, *L'Étoile Mystérieuse*.



# 21.

Night, white stars on black, town in blue relief, facades, roofs, chimneys: the figures walk on the line—observation of a beautiful night, unseasonable warmth.

Night, white stars on black, town in blue relief, facades, roofs, chimneys: the figures walk on the line, a star shoots in a white curve, bursts, the figure points his finger, the animal turns around, drops of sweat splash—a wish, a piece of advice.

Night, white stars on black, one star brighter, town in blue relief, facades, roofs, chimneys: the figures walk on the line to a street lamp in relief, simple strokes, the animal figure hits it head-on, crash and light spiral, ripples emit colored stars around—comment on a constellation.

Large vertical night, white stars on black, one star brighter, town in blue relief, facades, roofs, chimneys: the figure, stopped on the line, points his finger at the brighter star while the animal figure wanders, staggers in a series of scrolls and loops, colored stars around, drops of sweat splash—summons to look, question about the increased shining.

Large vertical night, white stars on black, one star brighter, town in blue relief, facades, roofs, chimneys: the figure, stopped on the line, looks at the star shining more while the animal figure stops, not understanding, small lines around, drops of sweat splash—amazement, and a question about the celestial phenomenon's intensity.

Large vertical night, white stars on black, one star brighter, town in blue relief, facades, roofs, chimneys: the figures walk on the line—growing amazement, relativizing.

Street, sidewalks in straight lines, house, street lamp, long wall, house and leafless tree in relief behind, night above, white stars on black: two figures, jackets in hand, walk in the opposite direction of the two figures who walk into the space defined by the lines, drops of sweat splash—announcement of an action, looking for an answer.

Simple background, telephone wire in loops: the figure telephones, drops of sweat splash—questions about the celestial phenomenon as well as the warming.

Simple background, telephone wire in loops: the figure telephones, drops of sweat splash—question without an answer.





# 22.

Simple background, telephone wire in loops: the figure puts down the handset, mops his brow, drops of sweat splash—questioning and astonishment grow with the heat.

Wall and baseboard, heavy curtains, others sheer, windows onto night, white stars on black, reflections in black and white strokes: the figure opens the window, drops of sweat splash, merge with the stars—questioning.

Ledge, curtains, windows onto night, white stars on black, one star brighter: the figure looks at it, drops of sweat splash into the window he holds open—wonder and observation.

Night, white stars on black, one star brighter, town in blue relief, facades, roofs, chimneys: the figures walk on the line, fast, drops of sweat splash—initiative.

Night, white stars on black, one star brighter, bare trees in black relief above rotunda with white rectangle, window: no action—contemplation.

Doorstep, stair: the animal figure sits and rests, drops of sweat splash, the figure rings, ripples emanate from a rectangle with a black circle—exhaustion and a determined gesture.

Night, white stars on black, one star brighter: the figure looks at it—observation.



Door in vertical lines: a doorman figure half-opens it suspiciously, answers very aggressively—request and refusal.

Door in vertical and horizontal lines: it closes, banging, ripples emanate from the double rectangle, the figures watch without reacting, drops of sweat splash, vibrant strokes shoot from the animal's tail, burst into black stars around—real surprise at such rudeness.

Simple background: the figures stand on the line—annoyance.

Simple background: the figure rings, ripples emanate from the rectangle with the black circle—awaiting an answer.

Door in vertical lines ajar: the doorman figure answers very aggressively, while the other figure pretends—a trick in action.

Door in vertical and horizontal lines: the figure stands on the sidewalk line, leads the other figure on the step away by the arm—the trick in action.

Door in vertical and horizontal lines: the doorman figure stands speechless, drops of sweat splash, as the other two figures enter, spiral of movement, door closes, banging, ripples emanate from the double rectangle—the trick is pulled.

# 23.

Empty corridor with black windows and paneled ceiling, reflected strokes on gleaming floor: the figures approach the staircase slowly—ominous calm and silence.

Steps and banister shaped like a planet, reflected strokes on gleaming floor: the figures stop, drops of sweat splash, and another figure all dressed in black comes down, leaning on a wavy wooden cane—surprise and a reprimand.

Steps and banister, reflected strokes on gleaming floor: the figure outlines a question, drops of sweat splash, while the other figure walks past, a paper in his pocket, his right arm raised, spiral of movement—a request and a prediction.

Corridor: the figure all dressed in black walks out and the other figures watch him, drops of sweat splash—questioning.

Staircase and banister, at the top a door with a do-not-enter sign: the figure climbs slowly, drops of sweat splash, while the animal figure watches him climb—waiting for an event, a careful advance.

Blank wall and closed door  
in embedded rectangles: the  
figure knocks on the door  
three times, ripples ema-  
nate—anxiety and waiting  
for a reply.

Blank wall and closed door in  
rectangle shapes: the figure  
knocks on the door six times,  
drops of sweat splash, rip-  
ples emanate—anxiety and  
waiting for a reply.

Observatory  
dome, vertical and horizon-  
tal curves, circular footbridge, un-  
derneath a mobile staircase leading to a  
large telescope, wheels, cranks, large gyration  
systems, eyepieces, lens towards an opening to the  
sky, white stars on black: the figure sees and stands  
stopped, small splintered lines—amazement.

# 24.

Observatory dome, vertical and horizontal curves, mobile staircase leading to a large telescope, wheels, cranks, large gyration systems, eye-pieces, lens, and in front, table and chair: two figures seated at the table, scholars leaning over their calculations in puzzlement, drops of sweat splash, the figure comes towards them—concentration.

Simple background, table and chair: the figure approaches one of the scholar figures who indicates silence, drops of sweat splash—imperative gesture.

Simple background, table and chairs: whilst one of the scholar figures sits and calculates, symbols all around, drops of sweat splash, the other scholar justifies or tries to explain—invitation to go and look.

Mobile staircase leading to a large telescope: the figure climbs up—impending explanation.

Simple background, telescope, lens: the figure looks in and cries out in terror, drops of sweat splash—horror.

Simple background: two concentric circles in which the silhouette of a hairy spider shines out among the stars—an unlikely vision.

Simple background, chair: the figure comes back all excited by what he has seen, drops of sweat splash, addresses the scholar figure sitting at the table: falling on deaf ears.

Simple background, chair: the figure, all excited, tries to explain what he has just seen to the scholar figure sitting at the table, drops of sweat splash: falling on deaf ears.

Simple background, chair: the figure, all excited, explains what he has just seen to the scholar figure sitting at the table who understands none of it, drops of sweat splash—lack of understanding.

Simple background: the figure, all excited, explains what he has just seen to the scholar figure who gets up, drops of sweat splash—lack of understanding.

Simple background: the figure invites the scholar figure who gets up to go have a look, follows him to go see, drops of sweat splash—verification.

Simple background, telescope, lens: the scholar figure looks in, drops of sweat splash, agrees and comments to the other standing by his side—barely surprised.

Simple background, telescope, lens: the scholar figure looks in and describes precisely what he is seeing, drops of sweat splash—truly scientific.

Simple background, telescope, lens: the scholar figure looks in, drops of sweat splash, while the other thinks, formulates a hypothesis—a guess.

# 25.

Observatory dome, vertical and horizontal curves, spiral staircase to the telescope pointed at a sky of white stars on black: the figure climbs up briskly, spiral of movement, drops of sweat splash—intuition to follow quickly.

Telescope, guardrail: the figure calls to the scholar figure, small splintered lines, pointing his finger at something in the darkened lens—key to the mystery.

Simple background: the animal figure hops in front of another animal suspended on its thread, drops of sweat splash—something coming.

Simple background: the animal figure jumps at the suspended animal, spiral of movement, lines of speed scroll, drops of sweat splash—a funny fright.

Observatory dome, vertical and horizontal curves, mobile staircase leading to a large telescope, lens: the scholar figure on the steps calls the figure to see—moment before a discovery.



Simple background, telescope, lens: the figure looks in, drops of sweat splash, while the scholar figure questions—crucial moment.

Simple background: two concentric circles wherein a bright shining star in relief fills all the space—an intensity.

Simple background, telescope, lens: the figure confides his impression to the scholar figure next to him, drops of sweat splash—doubt about the object.

Simple background: the scholar figure raises his arms, drops of sweat splash, in front of the other who is afraid, drops of sweat splash—emphatic announcement.

Telescope, base: the two figures discuss, while the animal figure cannot take any more heat, drops of sweat splash—explanations.

Simple background: the scholar figure explains the facts, while the figure listens—more and more accurate understanding.

Simple background: the scholar figure formulates a hypothesis while knocking his fists, small splintered lines, as the figure understands or just begins to understand—a thing is coming and will take place.

Simple background: the scholar figure pronounces a merciless fateful sentence to the figure, who holds his head, drops of sweat splash—apocalypse.

# 26.

Simple background: a scholar figure carrying a stack of notes comes towards the three figures stopped on the line, drops of sweat splash—precise prediction.

Simple background: the scholar figure rejoices at this finding, anticipates the joy of future fame, drops of sweat splash, while the figure sways, spirals of alarm, drops of sweat splash—attempt to understand the sequence.

Simple background: the figure asks the scholar figures if it's possible they made an error, at which they protest—hope despite.

Simple background: the figure is swamped under stacks of papers, notes and equations, drops of sweat splash—science provides undeniable proof.

Simple background: the figure returns the papers to the scholar figure to be done with them—in a rush to leave.

Night, white stars on black, long wall, house, street corner, sidewalk in lines: two figures watch and one designates a point in the sky with a cane, long shadows projected, as the figures walk in the rising heat, their shadows projected on the wall, drops of sweat splash—ever more alarm in the face of what is brewing.

Simple background: the animal figure runs off with an alarmed look, lines of speed scroll, spirals of movement, drops of sweat splash, while the figure looks at him, drops of sweat splash—alarm and incomprehension.

Simple background: the figure on the line turns back alarmed, drops of sweat splash—understanding the cause of alarm.

Angled wall, ground:  
the figure, his shadow projected on the wall, runs as fast as he can, lines of speed scroll, spiral of movement, drops of sweat splash—on the lookout for danger.

Simple background, streetlamp base: the figure climbs it in one jump, lines of speed scroll, spiral of movement, drops of sweat splash—on the lookout for danger.

Sidewalk, exposed brick wall: thirty-one rats tumble out in a stream which the figure, perched high out of reach, watches amazed, drops of sweat splash, his shadow projected on the wall—a sign of panic.

Simple background: the figure comes down from the streetlamp, drops of sweat splash—a relief and another worry.

Night, white stars on black, street, fence, exposed brick wall: the figure, his shadow projected on the wall, calls his animal, drops of sweat splash—another worry.



# 27.

Simple background and two shots: ripples emanate, the figure jumps, lines of speed scroll, spiral of movement, drops of sweat splash—questioning.

Wall, sidewalk and street with some cobblestones, projected shadow of chimneys on the ground: parked car with very liquid reflections and flat tires that the figure looks at, his shadow projected on the ground, drops of sweat splash—a real relief.

Simple background: the figure walks on the line, spiral of movement, drops of sweat splash—a call in vain.

Street corner: the figure, his shadow projected on the ground and wall, drops of sweat splash, advances towards the animal who is petrified in the middle of the street, his shadow projected on the ground, drops of sweat splash—a series of questions.

Street corner: the figure is stopped, petrified, his shadow projected on the ground, drops of sweat splash towards the animal figure in the middle of the street, his shadow on the ground, drops of sweat splash—a call for help.

Sidewalk and wall: the figure crosses, his shadow projected on the ground, lines of speed scroll, spiral of movement, drops of sweat splash—true compassion.

Sidewalk and wall: the figure stops in the middle of the street, his shadow projected on the ground, drops of sweat splash, raises his left foot stuck in the asphalt—comprehension.

Street, buildings: some figures are stopped with jackets in hand, in pajamas or nightgowns, all just out of bed, their shadows projected on the ground, looking at the sky, pointing, discussing or mopping their brows like the figures crossing and watching in passing, their shadows projected on the ground, drops of sweat splash—true compassion.

Street, buildings: some figures, jackets in hand, in pajamas, nightgowns, all just out of bed, are stopped, their shadows projected on the ground, looking at the sky, pointing, discussing or wiping their brows, like the figures, their shadows projected on the ground, crossing, drops of sweat splash, and the figure watches all passing—true compassion.

Simple background: sound of bells, ripples emanate, the figures jump on the line, drops of sweat splash—questioning.

Street: the figure turns around, some passersby look on in amazement at a draped figure who bangs a gong and utters a litany, his shadow projected on the ground—a prophesy.

Night, white stars on black, one  
star brighter, more and more so,  
wall: the figure and a crowd listen  
to the prophecies and other curses  
from the draped figure, gong and  
hammer in hand—announcement of  
the end.

# 28.

Simple background: some passersby look on at the figure who tries to calm the prophet figure, gong and hammer in hand, drops of sweat splash—trying to restore reason.

Simple background: the prophet figure, gong and hammer in hand, drops of sweat splash, vehemently up in arms—raging madness.

Street: the figures going away, their shadows projected on the ground and wall, spiral of movement, drops of sweat splash, followed by the prophet figure, gong and hammer in hand, his shadow projected on the ground—series of curses.

Street: the figure leaves, followed by the prophet figure, gong and hammer in hand, his shadow projected on the ground—even more prophecies and real vexation.

Door:  
the figures come  
out of the shadow  
spot, enter the room,  
drops of sweat  
splash—slight relief.



Night, open window with reflected strokes, white stars on black, one star brighter, more and more so: the figure looks at it, drops of sweat splash—real amazement.

Night, empty room, curtain, open window with reflected strokes: the figures jump, small splintered lines, drops of sweat splash—very sharp pain.

Night, wall, curtain, open window with reflected strokes: the figure rubs his hand from a contact burn, small splintered lines—real amazement.

Room, coffee table with a flowerpot on it, wall, curtain: the figure looks at the wilted flower and the animal on the ground, prostrate, drops of sweat splash—recognition of induced phenomena.

Room, coffee table with a flowerpot on it, tin bowl on the ground, wall: the figure gives a drink to his dear animal, drops of sweat splash, drops of water splash—a sentence repeated for comprehension.

Room, coffee table, flowerpot, and open window: the figure waters the very wilted flower, drops of sweat splash, drops of water splash, and the water flows on the table as cracks of the gong sound through the window, ripples emanate—another surprise.

Street seen from on high, windows and streetlamp, its shadow projected on the ground: the figure, drops of sweat splashing, looks at the prophet figure who stands below, gong and hammer in hand, his shadow projected on the ground, drops of sweat splash, further invective—a nasty surprise.



Simple background: some water falls on the prophet figure, who says nothing at the blow, gong and hammer in hand, lines of speed scroll, drops of water splash—a radical gesture against all forms of nuisance.

Night, window, curtain: the figure closes the window, drops of sweat splash, ripples emanate—nervousness.

Corner,  
armchair:  
the figure  
moves towards  
it, drops of sweat  
splash—the beginning  
of exhaustion.

Corner,  
armchair:  
the figure  
settles in,  
drops of sweat  
splash—real  
exhaustion.

# 29.

Simple background, armchair, and spot of shadow: crack of the gong, ripples emanate, the figure jumps, drops of sweat splash—a rude awakening.

Wall, baseboard, floor, armchair, and spot of shadow: the figure looks about to jump again, spiral of surprise, drops of sweat splash, the prophet figure just stands there, drops of sweat splash, gong and hammer in hand, ripples emanate—impossible to believe.

Simple background, armchair: the two figures discuss, drops of sweat splash—a question and a mysterious answer.

Simple background, armchair: the figure stands on the line, asks the prophet figure to get out right away—nervousness and another question.

Simple background, armchair: the prophet figure stands on the line, a large scroll in his hand, hits the figure with the hammer, small moving lines, the figure falls into the armchair, a little dizzy, black stars all around—an order and demand for attention.

Simple background, armchair: the figure looks at a large drawing of a garden spider, drops of sweat splash, while the prophet figure bangs the gong with multiple little hits, ripples emanate—joy in the face of his own prophesy realized.

Corner,  
armchair:  
seated in his  
    armchair, the  
figure flails, drops  
    of sweat splash,  
while echoes sound like  
cracks of the gong, ripples  
    emanate, and the animal  
figure looks on concerned, drops  
    of sweat splash—in fact,  
                    all a dream.

Corner,  
    armchair,  
mantel, lamp and  
clock which rings two  
    times: the figure hears  
    it, ripples emanate, drops  
of sweat splash, as the animal  
    figure keeps looking on with  
concern—comprehension of sounds  
                            in sleep.

Mantel, lamp and clock:  
the figure, standing, looks  
at the time with concern,  
drops of sweat splash—  
an explanation.

Simple background, telephone with wire  
in loops: the figure quickly  
dials a number, drops  
of sweat splash—life-  
threatening emergency.

Room, fireplace, clock,  
lamp, armchair, door,  
coffee table, telephone,  
chandelier, flowerpot, two  
frames, curtains, window,  
pitcher and dish: shaking,  
wobbling, moving, falling,  
all cracks around the two  
figures, drops of sweat  
splash—the moment of  
the end.

Simple background: the figure on the tele-  
phone hears the sound of  
seconds passing, drops  
of sweat splash—doubt-  
ful waiting.

Éric Suchère is a poet, writer, art critic, and art historian. Based in Paris, he is the author of many books of conceptual prose and poetry and a major player in contemporary French letters. His works have been translated into English by Lisa Robertson and Carrie Noland.

Sandra Doller's books are *Oriflamme* (Ahsahta, 2005), *Chora* (Ahsahta, 2010), and *Man Years* (Subito, 2011). Newer projects include a forthcoming prose chapbook from CutBank called *Memory of the Prose Machine* (2013), part of a longer book-length and performance piece. The founder & editrice of *19/3*, Doller lives in San Diego with man & dogs.

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