

Pixelated City

(an imagined film made from lost stills/theories of the image)

(an excerpt)

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Ahali: a Journal for Setting a Setting (2016)

Part 1: This is More or Less How the Edits Would Work



1. The wallpaper fish eats the hands stirring up the dizzy light. It knows its way to a pattern – a pattern that stings. Swinging on a diagram, a fuzz of burbling fingers. It gobbles light to try to increase the depth, precision and intelligence of its sting. As it eats, the image drowns.



2. The horizon fractures as it leans into the night, splitting itself into ribbons. The ribbons, having just come loose, flail for a bit. But they soon learn to invigilate their zone of influence. They soon find license to move according to their whim and while, slip and shimmy. They weave themselves into knots and worm their way loose again at will. Pulses of chameleon colour wash over them – and when they turn inside out and flip onto their backs it's the next scene.



3. Carpet-ness dissolves across a garden of its own choosing. Broken into pieces – broken right up to the film still – it spars with the sun. This produces a surface flare, an event in the pattern, which thirstily welcomes it into its weave. (Oh, this thirst for interruptions!) Tracks in the road, a net-ful of bile that pulls the image into itself, sours the image unto itself, in

acid nets of lurking lurking trees.



4. The fisherman dredges up a sheaf of images. Each, in turn, engulfs his image-world. Graffiti ghosts bear witness as a crack appears, and the creek becomes a stealth bomber, clothing itself in someone else's hands, someone else's signs, someone else's stitching. It slips out from underneath appearances. When the fisherman finds his own image, it repels him as if by a like charge, then flees into space like a sting ray. And turns the page.



5. The pixels play chess. (Or something like it.)

First, the two halves of the image separate from one another, imperceptibly. The picture's placid surface remains intact – but as if by some quiet mitotic process, some swarm of sea lice, its pixels have shifted territories, divided themselves into teams.

Next, the game begins. It's like a flea circus of pixels, a game board with thousands of players swapping places in thousands of moves. One pixel inches straight forward, one spot at a time. Another moves forward indefinitely, but can only do so on an angle. One jumps around the board two steps across, one forward, or one step across, two forward.

There is no queen or king.

No pixels are captured – they're only swapped with each other.

Nearby images catch this swapping of pixels by contagion; for one or two have jumped beyond their borders, taking refuge in another country.

6. An eccentric genius – who might have been pictured here except her image is just outside the frame – invents a superstring theory of images. Unlike the pixel-based conception of reproducible images (which atomizes the image), and more complexly than the vector-based model, the superstring image is thought to be made up of one-dimensional strings which oscillate at different speeds to sandwich, cloak, suture and shake the hands of the many twist ties between being and representation. They form little currents of community between the backsides of signs and the sheer screen where their image embeds, flutters, flirts. Alongside these currents there are many other motions – little back-stabbing gestures, circle wipes, and loud cries. These friendly points and dread-points reverberate like water or like music between the images, as if they were the proverbial opera singer who might come along and shatter them.

7. A narrative draws the images together – but in doing so, it partially obliterates them. It is like a long line drawn in soft-serve ice cream, sticky and everywhere.

The images are laid in a cluster on a continuous plane. An ice cream cone that seems strangely like a cursor hovers above them. It turns itself upside-down, descends and begins its journey. It melts its way onto the Plane of Sewn Squiggles, swaddles protest signs, arrows and knots of foliage. It shape-shifts into characters, who grin and bear the weight of its sweetness and erasures. It knows of bears and hunters, who gather at its edges. It swears itself off and leaves an odd top-hat or carrot nose or pylon at its last turn. This is where we take off.



8. The image dons a pair of windshield wipers. For a while, this clears up everything – but as the wipers continue to wipe, they wipe away the surface that contains them, leaving a hole that is bared to the next image, which staggers in as a supplement, an emergency room, a substitute teacher or a scaffold.
9. One image becomes a cheese grater. All these sharp holes open. Another image becomes its “cheese,” and a third acts as the hand that does the grating. The hand tightens its grip. The image shards collect in piles, and then they're combined with other objects and melted.
10. One of the images slips into an envelope, and mails itself to an oyster. The oyster does not enjoy this so much and regularly douses it with pearl-juice, wearing down the sting of its encroaching image-world. But even as it does so, it reads the image like a book. Its aspect and the flavour of its world-view are forever coloured by the coloured pencils of the image – and these changes are reflected in the oil-slick pallor of its secretions.

The oyster reads with no tongue, having no symbols. Because of this, when it reads the image it's an explorer, and it finds peaks and folds that neither you nor I will ever know when we go out looking.

11. Every time you look away, you see something move in the corner of your eye. It's like black blades rush through the image for a second, and then they're gone. These are all the other pictures ringing the doorbell, and swiping their members' cards.



12. When the reasonably healthy, Disney-fied, ad-infused brain sees a group of images, it immediately makes a stock of them. It chucks them into the broth bag, tosses them overboard, lets them boil for hours. It is able to fast-forward this process. It is able to glean minute blends of their atmospheres even before it attends to their structure or textures. It bleeds them of their flavour, and discards them. Once discarded, they lie there like tripe, colourless and spongy. But they have something crystalline about them too; maybe they're more like something halfway between tripe and mildly-scented blue hair gel.
13. Solvents are applied, each of which only interacts with certain kinds of object in each image. One solvent dissolves only images of trees, bleeding out their leaves and branches. Another dissolves only hands, melting them into fleshy bubbles. Another solvent will only interact with anything orange nested in the surface.
14. The images seek refuge in a centrifuge, where their component parts, through spinning, become sedimented into layers of likeness. Tree tree tree tree. Arm arm arm arm. Streak streak streak...
15. Each image grows a beard. Stubble peeks out from its edges. As it grows, it seeks the other beards so it can make something like a rat king of images.

16. The pictures are my hand. I'm holding them close – no one else can see them. It's not my turn, but I'm thinking which way I'll make the sun set.



17. Each image has a centre of gravity; it exerts a minute pull. By repeatedly applying gravity's makeup – exaggerating its features stroke by stroke – its force thickens. Finally, it sinks into its wormholes.
18. I get a prototype pair of pyjamas made, which features all of these photographs printed onto the flannel like magic charms. I sleep with them, take them off, and wad them very tightly into a ball, which I secure with quite a few yards of string. Gravity's makeup. Nestled into the folds, the images cluck with citizenship, and take a sleeping pill. A ripple mill, a pixelated city.