

TEXTURAL POACHING *TWIN PEAKS:* THE AUDREY HORNE SWEATER GIRL GIFS

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to widen the lens of analysis of participatory culture inspired by long-arc serials like *Twin Peaks*. It considers GIF creation as a form of textural poaching, a new reception practice involving skimming off and repurposing top-of-the-mind content: the most

arresting elements of costuming, set design, and dialogue. This behavior has become more popular as more series rely on textural storytelling and are filled with moments of excess that feel separate from the story. After an introduction to GIFs and GIF creation, it contrasts the impression of the character and series conveyed by Audrey Horne GIFs and the actual dynamics in the “Audrey’s Dance” scene. It establishes that Audrey’s look is most visually aligned with the Sweater Girl type, but as an allusive characterization it creates excess and calls attention to itself. Part of the “cool pop” reputation of the series may stem from the wider circulation of iconic moments of excess especially given that the GIFs detach the images from the series’ uneven storytelling and its challenging surrealist sensibility.

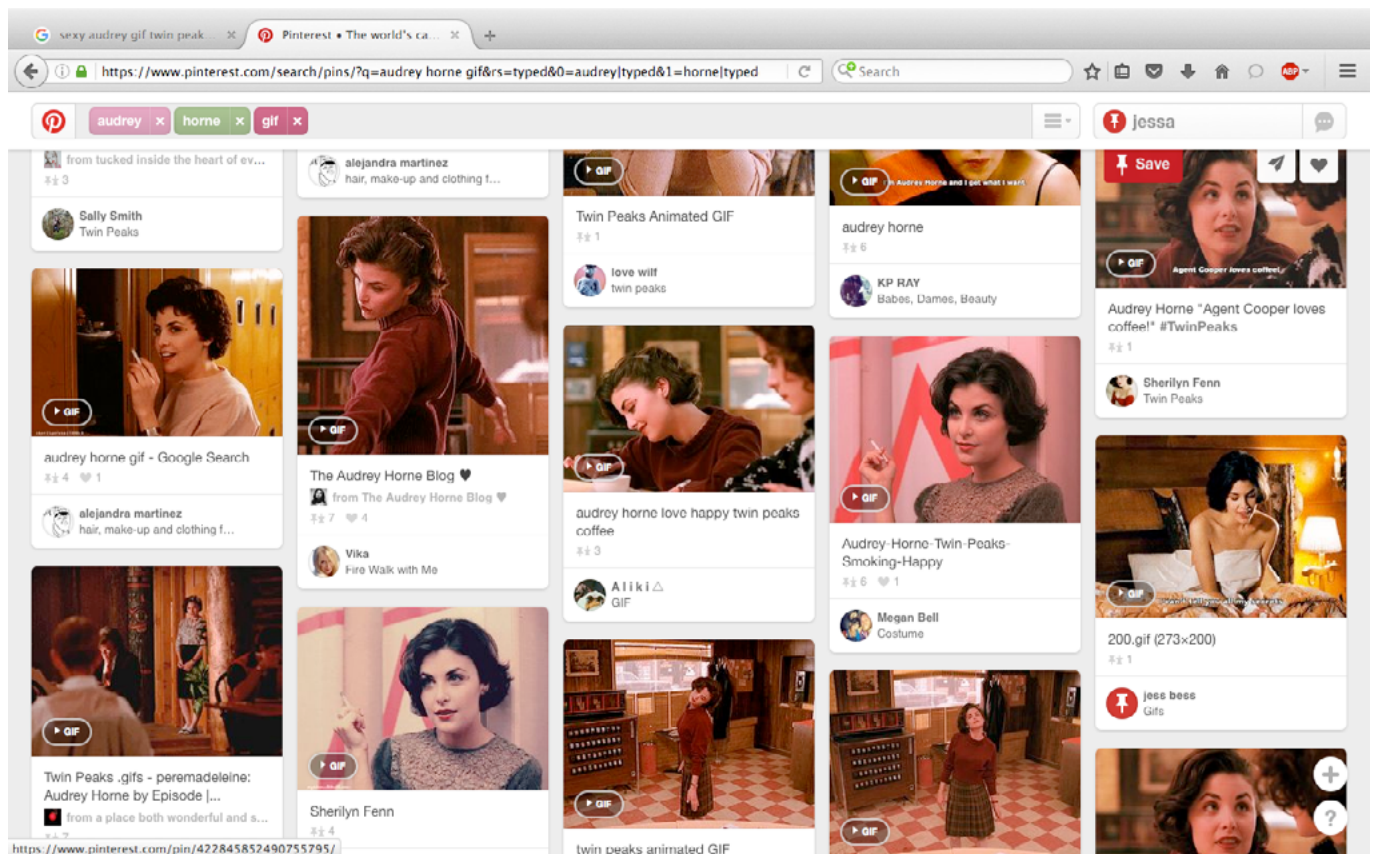


FIGURE 1. AUDREY GIFS RESULTS ON PINTEREST

Conducting a Google search for *Twin Peaks* images returns results that include sultry screen grabs of Audrey Horne in iconic moments from season one. Some of those images are actually Audrey GIFs, animated content created through layering several frames to suggest movement. Looking at the results in aggregate creates the impression that Audrey is the unambiguously sexy and self-assured character that she appears to be in the popular frame grabs. In actual episodes the unevenness in her characterization can erupt minutes after one of those GIF-worthy shots of alluring and audacious Audrey.

I contend that looking at an aggregation of frame grabs transformed into GIFs creates the

false impression that Audrey has a coherent and consistent characterization. Of particular interest are GIFs created out of frame grabs that put on display Audrey's signature costuming and the eye-catching production design—textural

elements that are most apparent when looking at an aggregation of GIFs via Google Images, Tumblr, or Pinterest¹.

In this article I use Audrey Horne GIFs as a means through which to examine the disconnect between the textural impressions of excised content circulating as GIFs and the textual implications of the same content when viewed within the series. I demonstrate that in place of straightforward characterization and textual exposition, *Twin Peaks* relies on textural storytelling, a concept I will detail later along with

1 The original uses of GIFs in the art world and fan communities as a form of play with the surface textures of media texts emerged as part of a broader turn toward pastiche and collage associated with postmodernism (See, for example, Jameson, 1991; Lyotard, 1984; Grossberg, 1989; Kellner, 1998; and Featherstone, 2007). The current proliferation of social media platforms has resulted in a greater degree of visibility and potential cultural power for decontextualized GIFs as their use has become a part of everyday communication

my theory of textural poaching. As a means of focus, I analyze the scene in which Audrey dances alone in the diner. In the screenshot capture above (figure 1), the scene provides 6 of the 11 visible GIFs. The diner scene is just one of several that is marked by eye-catching, but excessive costuming and set design; familiar but slightly off-kilter iconic character types and music; and intriguing, but unexplained behavior. Reviewers found these elements to be indicative of why *Twin Peaks* attracted but then could not maintain a general audience during its initial broadcast. Twenty-five years later this storytelling structure makes *Twin Peaks* an ideal content library for GIFs. Posted on platforms like Tumblr and Pinterest, GIFs can showcase *Twin Peaks*' textural delights divorced from its frustrating textual details.



FIGURE 2. AUDREY'S LOOK AND OUTLOOK CAPTURED ON PINTEREST

GIFs are perfectly suited for a mediasphere that values short-form video and other compressed content to circulate across platforms (Gillan, 2015; Grainge and Johnson, 2015). With access to relatively simple digital editing tools, prosumers can splice a television scene into pieces, and an episode into thousands of pieces. Yet, what is the mediating effect of the circulation of all this content detached from its original contexts? As frame grabs get circulated across web and social media platforms as part of GIFs, they become detached from any context offered by the original source and the GIF

creator. While many Audrey Horne GIFs, for example, focus on her retro look and sassy one-liners, they do not necessarily address the function of that look or those lines within the context of the series' narrative logic and its ideological complexities. They focus instead on the appealing textures of Audrey's look: her costuming, hair, facial expressions, and character blocking within a set design with its own textural attractions. The impressions such GIFs convey are compounded when viewed alongside a page of other similar images returned by a search on a Web aggregator platform. As they circulate, GIFs might have a particular impact on how audiences think about these characters if they have never seen the original source or have not seen it in a long time. To consider these issues, I focus less on GIF creation than on what results from GIF circulation, especially through general aggregation of GIFs and their potential collective impact on the public perceptions of a television program.

1. CASE STUDY OVERVIEW

This kind of decontextualized circulation of GIFs deserves closer examination because it has come to occupy a central place in media culture and everyday communication. Applying a media convergence perspective, I examine GIFs in the *Twin Peaks* case study that follows in order to explore how the public perception of the series' characterizations might be impacted by digital distribution of content detached from series. I look at GIFs focused on Audrey Horne, in part, because they rely on images that appear to be depicting a fairly straightforward characterization when isolated in GIFs. Yet, when the frame grabs are placed back in their original episode context, they do not seem as clear-cut.

I begin with a consideration of the impression of the character and series conveyed by Audrey GIFs and then closely examine the actual dynamics in the "Audrey's Dance" scene. I explain how Audrey's look aligns with the Hollywood "Sweater Girl" type, but as I demonstrate later, this allusive characterization exceeds the boundaries of the narrative and calls attention to itself as excess. Building on the theories of Richard Dyer, Henry Jenkins, Justin Wyatt, Jane Gaines, Stella Bruzzi, Barbara Klinger, and Anne Friedberg, I argue that its signature moments of excess work toward making *Twin Peaks* more mainstream by allowing the images to exist and be appreciated outside of the serial narrative. Part of the "cool pop" reputation of the series may stem from the wider circulation of its iconic moments of excess separate from the

series itself, especially given that the GIFs detach the images from the series' uneven storytelling and its challenging surrealist sensibility.

I contend that *Twin Peaks* is intriguing source material for GIF creators, as the series is structured around interpretive gaps. Although its tagline is "full of secrets", its storytelling structure is full of ellipses. As I will demonstrate later, these ellipses might hold the key to interpreting a town "full of secrets", but they also might signal that *Twin Peaks*' real secret is that there are no concrete answers, no easy assessments of character or motivation. The general frustrations with the series can be attributed in part to this structural feature, but the ellipses disappear in GIF form, potentially making GIFs more satisfying versions of *Twin Peaks*' characters. GIFs are efficient, says GIPHY chief operating officer founder Adam Leibsohn, "because they fill in interpretive gaps" (Satariano, 2016: 57). In my reading of the diner scene, I address what happens to the ellipses in characterization and storytelling in *Twin Peaks* (and by extension in other similarly nuanced serial television) when frames are poached from their original open-ended context and put into more static and closed forms.

2. TEXTURAL POACHING THEORY

Throughout this article I point to the ways GIFs capture the allure of the textural complexity of the chosen frames, showcasing the visual appeal of moments that spark enough fascination to circulate more broadly. I highlight that I am using the word textural as a way to introduce my theory that the proliferation of web platforms with visually oriented interfaces has prompted an uptick in a behavior I call textural poaching. The practice involves repurposing top-of-the-mind textural content—a series' most arresting elements of costuming, set design, and dialogue—and posting it to a visual interface. Textural poaching is terminology that builds on Henry Jenkins' (1992) famous theory about fans who poach media content in order to rework it within their own creative productions. My theory builds on this idea, but makes a key distinction. Textural poaching pivots on the appropriation of the textural elements of the look and feel of a shot or sequence of shots whereas textual poaching focuses more on appropriating elements of a story world or a characterization and utilizing them within original content. Although similar to textual poachers who traverse intellectual property that is not their own, textural poachers are more likely to use top-of-the-mind images and dialogue snippets, and in doing so

circulate more of a textural impression of a series, the visual and tactile sense of how it looks and feels.

Jenkins developed his range of initial observations about textual poaching and other participatory culture activities which he observed as he participated in an early Web community that emerged in response to *Twin Peaks*' initial broadcast airing in 1990-91. Jenkins later complicated and augmented the theory (2006, 2012, 2013). Scholars (see, for example, Coppa, 2008; Hanmer, 2014; Russo, 2009; Stein & Busse, 2009; Gray, 2010) have broadly built on Jenkins' theories and studied audiences who reposition elements of mainstream television series so that they better serve their unmet needs and desires. These prosumers take ownership of poached television content for use in their own creative production and/or media commentary. Some stick closely to the story and characterization, but extend it. Others create alternate universes to flesh out themes or characterization only hinted at or left unexplored in the original. Most know the original well, in some cases better than the series' writers. They see their creative productions as acts of reclamation of the embedded potential in the characterization or story world, and purposely offer negotiated or oppositional readings. Through textual poaching these viewers "transform the experience of watching television into a rich and complex participatory culture" (Jenkins, 1992: 23). Such behavior has been a popular site of academic study because it typically involves the "transformative use of existing source material" (Jenkins, 2012).

Jenkins' original textual poacher paradigm depicts textual poaching to be a response to some frustrating element of the original work. It could be motivated by fandom or anti-fandom and could take the form of homage or critique (Gray, 2010). As Jenkins (1992: 23) puts it, "because the texts continue to fascinate, fans cannot dismiss them from their attention but rather must find ways to salvage them for their interests".

3. FORENSIC FANDOM

This article's consideration of Audrey GIFs as textural poaching and of *Twin Peaks* as reliant on textural storytelling aims to complement the existing academic commentary focused on the textual engagement of viewers who dedicate an extensive amount of time and creative energy to watching for and analyzing the nuances of a television series (see, for example, Mittell, 2009; Ross, 2009; Jenkins, 2006; Gillan, 2010; and Hills, 2015). Jason Mittell (2015) uses the term forensic fandom to describe, "a mode of television engagement en-

couraging research, collaboration, analysis, and interpretation". Discussing *Lost* and the new *Battlestar Galactica* (BSG), Mittell (2015) argues that these types of complex "programs create magnets for engagement", encouraging "fans to drill into the mythology" and post commentary on an official Wiki or on "countless blogs or online forums". Mittell notes that this behavior is confined to "the most dedicated" viewers, but their voices carry: "their intensity rises in positing theories and interpretations about the story world and its potential outcomes, or debating the show's representational politics or social commentary". While he frames their engagement in textual terms, his comments imply that fan interpretations have power because of the broad circulation they have online.

Assessing the motivations for viewers of *BSG* and *Sherlock* to engage in time-consuming reception behaviors, Bertha Chin (2014) describes how fans accrue status within their communities for their deep understanding of series as evidenced on their wikis and websites. Jenkins (1995), David Lavery (1995), and David Bianculli (1992) make similar claims about the intensity and dedication of viewers of *Twin Peaks* who came together online to dissect the textual nuances of the series during the early 1990s before the Web became a global platform for spreading content and commentary. As one of these fans, Jenkins (1995) closely observed how the web community worked toward a collective interpretation, commenting via the text-based interface of Usenet. Fast forward twenty-five years and the web interfaces of Tumblr, Pinterest, and YouTube, among others, not only allow, but also encourage visual commentary. These user-friendly interfaces and the broad availability of simple digital editing tools have led to an increase in textural poaching of visually arresting frames from television and film. The content spreads further and further as GIFs posted to Tumblr get captured by other aggregator platforms like Google Images and reposted on viewers' social media spaces and web sites.

Mittell (2015) focuses on differentiating spreading and drilling into media content, noting that *BSG* inspired "spreadable offshoots", including a spoof video "requiring no depth of story-world knowledge". GIFs fall somewhere in the middle as they can reflect deep knowledge of the source text and target other loyal viewers of the original series. GIFs can also attract and entertain general viewers who have only a passing knowledge of the series, either from actually watching it at some point in the past or from secondhand exposure to it through the commentary and content circulated by others.

While Tumblr and other sites have popularized GIFs, they have been utilized by artists for decades (Saidon and Sitharan,

2004; Kac, 1995; Eppink, 2014; Walker, 2014), and their work has come to more general attention in recent years with press coverage of gallery shows like the one in London in 2014 (Wainwright, 2014). GIF art also plays a role in fan communities. In a post to *Flow*, Louisa Stein (2016) addressed how Tumblr's interface helped mainstream the circulation of fan created GIF sets, or "sets of images, sometimes animated, sometimes not, arranged in a grid of sorts to communicate as a whole". Tumblr, which utilizes "infinite scroll" rather than next buttons, is a platform made for GIF sets, she says, as "the interface allows for easy juxtaposition" (Stein, 2016). Writing about GIFs that set images to lyrics, Stein argues that they parallel early fan vids (Stein, 2015). These GIF sets rely on a loyal viewer's memory of the scene and song "rather than reproducing extensive lyrics and a complex play of associations" (Stein, 2016). In this way, interpreting these kinds of GIFs aligns with what Paul Booth (2012) says of the reception requirements for mashups: "we as audiences must be knowledgeable about both sources, as well as the convergence of them, in order to make sense of the final product". Writing specifically about "GIF fic", the combination of multiple GIFs to create a storyline, Booth (2015: 26) says that a pastiche is created "based both on semantic reproduction of textual elements and syntactic appropriation of ideological moments from a media text". The resulting GIF fic reproduces "the specific textual moments from the original text" and relies on the audience's understanding of the dominant messages associated with those moments (2015: 27). GIF creators may intentionally appropriate ideological moments, but general users recirculating those GIFs are not necessarily aware of the underpinnings of the images. Whereas Booth and Stein offer significant insights into the creative motivations and goals of GIF creators and their role within fan communities, my interest is in the mediating effect of the general circulation of the content they create.

Stein and Booth look at how GIF sets and GIF fic work toward "telling an extended story", but GIF users who grab the GIFs made by others are typically focused on "crafting a moment" (Walker, 2016). The moment crafted may have little to do with engaging the ideological complexity of the original, especially if the GIF is utilized as part of a breezy commentary or a social media communication strategy.

5. AGGREGATORS AND LISTORIALS

Let's return to the aggregate impressions conveyed by Google image search results. Clicking through the images reveals that



FIGURE 3. AUDREY HORNE SMOKING IN THE GIRLS' ROOM:
SEXY AND CONFIDENT

many have been grabbed for use in various hybrids of creative work crossed with commentary. Frame grabs from the diner and bathroom scenes are popular visuals in *Twin Peaks*-themed listorials, on-line commentary broken into list form and illustrated with video snippets, frame grabs, or GIFs. *The Huffington Post* has three GIFs of a sweater-clad Audrey looking very retro in its “11 Reasons to (Re)Watch *Twin Peaks*”. The purpose of this kind of listorial is to offer commentary, but make it more appealing by breaking it into a cheeky list. The web-only magazine *Paste* placed Audrey and her signature saddle shoes in its number two slot in “The Looks that Made *Twin Peaks*”. Their Audrey is characterized by “wit, allure and smarts to back it up”. The title image is one of the most popular GIFs: Audrey smoking in the girls’ room, while talking to high school classmate Donna Hayward.

A quick web search reveals that the most common Audrey images have her outfitted in one of her signature sweaters, and the captions offered in *New York* magazine’s tribute to *Twin Peaks*’ sweaters capture the kinds of characterizations associated with Audrey: sexy, sassy, sultry, seductive, and passionate (Lange, 2014)..Many blog posts use these terms and echo Angela Bayout’s assessment (2013: 22, 26, 27) that Audrey, with her “voluptuous bob and twinkling eyes”, is a “saucy”, “unapologetic”, “agent provocateur in schoolgirl garb” (See, for example, Miranda, 2016; 18 Reasons, 2016; Van Schlit, 2013; Inspirado, 2014; Jane, 2014; Brandes, 2007). Similar descriptions proliferate on style sites like Polyvore and blogs posted to Esty offering curated looks that capture Audrey’s “schoolgirl-meets-vixen charm” (Bayout 2013: 22).

This combination comes across in a glance she gives when dancing alone in the Double R Diner. The look is typically taken to signify what Tim Gunn (2012: 234) calls the “faux innocence” of Classic Hollywood’s “Sweater Girl”: tight mock-necked sweater, plaid skirt, and saddle shoes. Adding to the retro effect in the episode, Audrey dances alone to music supposedly emanating from a diner jukebox. The music in the episode is actually Angelo Badalamenti’s contrapuntal instrumental composition, “Audrey’s Dance”.

As still frames or GIFs circulate as part of listorials or on image-driven sites such as Tumblr, how does their broad circulation re-shape the memory of past TV or impact general public perceptions of a character, especially if consuming GIFs is not accompanied by watching or re-watching the original source text? Note, for example, that Donna is just outside the frames of Audrey dancing in the diner, although that significant detail is not typically captured in GIFs made out of Audrey dancing or sitting at the diner counter. These omissions indicate that GIFs and other snippets of online content convey the textural feel of a series, but not necessarily the textual position of a chosen shot, costume, or line of dialogue.

6. EVERYDAY USES OF GIFS

Before detailing the differences between Audrey as GIF and Audrey in the diner scene, let me clarify a bit more about how GIFs work in general and why they appeal. Jesse Walker (2016) explains, “the most popular GIFs are tiny snippets from movies and TV, ripped from one context and plugged into another” so that they function as “a disposable little gag to stick in a Tumblr post or a BuzzFeed article”. The fact that GIFs are detached from the original context from which they take their textual meaning matters less in fan spaces where everyone has a deep familiarity with the source, but is more significant when the images get scooped up and re-circulated by interfaces like Google Images. Aggregate searches that return a proliferation of very similar frames create the impression that GIFs are accurate reflections of the original’s characterizations and thematics. This effect has the potential to create misleading, but hard-to-dislodge impressions of a series among potential viewers or audiences with vague recollections of the original.

Twin Peaks, like many of today’s self-proclaimed quality television serials, provides great source material for GIFs. It gives extra attention to textural details within shots that linger long enough to invite admiration of the artful compo-

sition and speculation about the implications of the visual storytelling. It is filled with moments of excess in which the shot composition, costuming, or music feels separate from the story, drawing audience attention to the texture of these elements and keeping the focus there rather than moving the story forward. *Twin Peaks* relies heavily on such textural excess, thereby making it an especially appealing content library for “breezy, image-driven sites such as BuzzFeed” (Satariano, 2015: 57). The Audrey GIFs in ‘18 Reasons Why Audrey Horne Was the Best Part of *Twin Peaks*’ (2016), for example, enable the chosen snippets of shot sequences and dialogue to embody Audrey’s ability to “sass with ease in any situation”, “to command attention just by standing still” (see figure 6) and to be “more clued up” than her friends (see figure 4).

Facebook only added GIF sharing capabilities in May 2015, signaling that it is only in the past few years that GIFs began to be broadly circulated. GIFs now sit alongside emojis in the content library that comes standard in the text-messaging interface of recent iPhone operating systems. A GIF cycles through a series of stills (and sometimes static text) to suggest animation, making it a more advanced form of communication than an emoji. Like emojis and memes, GIFs “[swap] out text for visuals” and, in some cases, add a caption or subtitle (Johnson, 2015). *Business Week*’s Adam Satariano (2016: 56) describes GIFs as “seconds-long, looping video clips that people text when words are too hard to conjure or quick shots of a shivering Leonardo DiCaprio in *The Revenant* better convey how cold you are”. He adds that it has become “a mostly wordless way to emote via text, snapchat, Gchat, or email” (57). This example indicates that users of GIFs do not need to recall characters’ names or even see source texts to incorporate them into their social media communication strategies. A typical everyday use of GIFs is to click on one provided by one’s phone interface or an aggregator like GIPHY and employ it as a cool shortcut for signaling a mood, a state of mind, or a look. Selecting a GIF in this way to express a response (*Wow!*, *Really?*, *Yes!*, *What?*) requires no knowledge of the textual source.

7. WHY *TWIN PEAKS*?

What is it about the look, sensibility, set design, costuming, and storytelling of *Twin Peaks* that makes it both so tempting and so elusive for the GIF creator poaching its images and lines and the GIF user keeping it in circulation? GIFs are about “crafting a moment”, which makes *Twin Peaks* ideal source

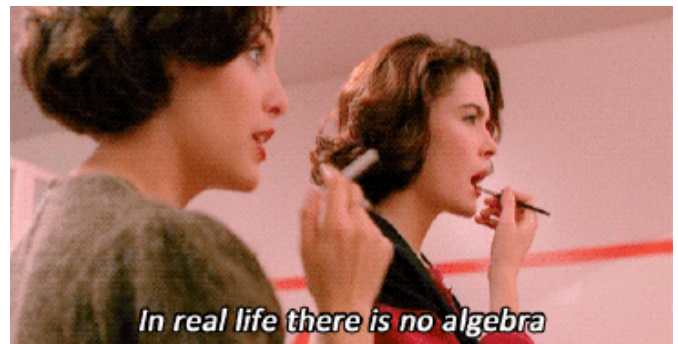


FIGURE 4. GIF QUIPS: AUDREY AND DONNA AS ‘GOOD GIRLS GONE BAD?’



FIGURE 5. AUDREY “TRANCE DANCING” IN THE DOUBLE R DINER.

material as it often plays like a series of crafted moments, many of which create excess that stops the story instead of seamlessly moving it forward. For me, Audrey Horne embodies those moments, but perhaps only because like many of these GIF creators, my memory bank of *Twin Peaks* moments all seem to involve Audrey: dancing in the retro diner, smoking in the girls’ room, and sidling up to the handsome FBI agent. While this article focuses only on Audrey’s Dance, *Twin Peaks* is filled with plenty of other out of context sequences, dialogue, and music cues. It is not always clear how this series of moments adds up to a coherent story, but it is clear that it is hard to forget the series’ moments of excess.

Excess occurs when moments or scenes can be easily extracted from the narrative because they feel like separate

modules. As Justin Wyatt (1994: 40, 60) explains, these moments create a rupture that “distances the viewer from the traditional task of reading the [film’s] narrative”. As a result, “the viewer becomes sewn into the ‘surface’ of the film, contemplating the style of the narrative and the production (60). On a textural level, the shot composition in the dancing in the diner scene relies on several appealing textures—the nubby sweaters worn by Audrey and Donna, their blunt, but bouncy short haircuts, the punctuated music, and the oversaturated lighting. Overall, the scene offers a series of very appealing elements perfect for use in GIFs. As Audrey dances dreamily, the shot is framed to call attention to the contrasting tiles on the floor and the jukebox in the background. The minute-long dance translates well to a GIF because it is wordless and because of the vagueness of what the dance means and of the significance of Audrey’s outfit, pose, and behavior. Some GIFs imply that Audrey’s “trance dancing” is the epitome of self-possession and sexual confidence and see her as unconcerned with making a spectacle of herself while she dances for her own pleasure.

This kind of attention to textural details is a feature of the work of David Lynch, who came to TV presold from his films, which established his prestige reputation as surrealist artist attracted to stylistic excess (Nochimson, 1997; McGowan, 2007; Corliss, 1990; Leonard, 1990; Weinstock, 2015). Creating subtle slippages between textural impression and textual implications is part of Lynch’s storytelling strategy, which relies heavily on beautiful, but ambiguous shots and sequences. Lynch is known for using playful, allusive, or intentionally ambivalent images that entice viewers (Richardson, 2004; Dolan, 1995; Telotte, 1995; Mactaggart, 2010), but the more challenging textual implications prove more elusive and are often only available to those willing to engage in forensic fandom (Holt 2008; Bianculli, 1992; Dolan, 1995; Savoy, 2015).

Scholarship has taken the forensic approach to the series and addressed the textual complexities of *Twin Peaks* and its uses of postmodernism (Richardson, 2004; Collins, 1992; Reeves et al., 1995; Blake, 2015). There has been little discussion of how its textual density might be linked to its textural complexity, or why its arresting visuals ask us to stop and look at them as intriguing images in their own right.

My assessment of *Twin Peaks* is that its moments of excess are more significant than its nods to narrative logic. Comparing the GIF content excerpted from Lynch’s careful shot sequences with in-series characterizations, as I do in the diner scene, indicates that Lynch adds an odd undercurrent of dimensionality to seemingly one-dimensional characters

in *Twin Peaks*. Those undercurrents become clearer over the course of the series, but are not readily apparent from GIFs made out of frame grabs. I contend that Lynch’s allusive characterizations are especially GIF-worthy but that GIFs are not always worthy of *Twin Peaks* because they do not clearly convey that Lynch employs iconic types who exceed the boundaries of their typecasting. Audrey’s look is often reminiscent of Classic Hollywood’s Sweater Girl, for instance, but her characterization is more complex than this or any of the other types into which she is slotted in GIFs. This textural storytelling structure emerges in part from the choices made by Lynch’s longtime collaborator, Hollywood costume designer Patricia Norris, who helped establish Audrey’s initial “storytelling wardrobe” (Gaines, 1990)—retro, demure, out of time.



FIGURE 6. AUDREY PLAYS THE NYMPHET, PURPOSEFULLY MANIPULATING MIDDLE-AGED MEN

8. AUDREY HORNE, SWEATER GIRL

Audrey's costuming functions as excess in *Twin Peaks* because elements of it call to mind another era. In her typical outfit of a fitted sweater and skirt worn with saddle shoes, Audrey is the "Sweater Girl" embodying "the sexy-ordinary combination". As Richard Dyer (1992: 81) puts it, "a sweater is not a glamour garment", but it could become "blatantly erotic, showing off the breasts, clinging to the waist". Tim Gunn (2012: 233) explains that fitted sweaters show off curves but not the flesh itself, a position that allowed the Sweater Girl to "play the girl next door and be sexy at the same time". Dyer (1992: 81) says, "The girl next door was that never-never sex bombshell, plain-knit and voyeur's delight were one". This duality is picked up in many GIFs and becomes the focus of countless *Twin Peaks*' themed posts on fashion blogs and Pinterest curations. Broadly representative, the posts by Stephanie Van Schlit (2013) depict Audrey as "an innocent femme fatale in vintage inspired garb" and describe her trees cardigan as "encapsulating the feminine glamour of a bygone era". Her overall assessment of Audrey's "sultry swagger and confidence" aligns with the caption: "I'm Audrey Horne, I Get What I Want". The sentiment is left implicit in many of the GIFs using Audrey's most blatant Sweater Girl moment, when she purposefully stands in a corner and distracts a room full of her father's potential investors, who all turn to gape at her.

The Sweater Girl "image itself becomes in part the subject matter" of the long-arc storytelling, as does Audrey's pleasure in her outfit (Dyer, 1992: 92). Applying Dyer's theory (1992: 88), we can see that the Sweater Girl's "play on badness and the sexy-ordinary configuration" is a readable characterization, but one that also "courts incoherence in its construction" of Audrey who is more complex and empowered than her eroticized appearance implies (Spooner, 2016). Her outfits sometimes become what Stella Bruzzi (1997: xv) calls "spectacular interventions that interfere with the scenes in which they appear". *Bustle* captures the contradiction of the "things aren't what they seem" look of Audrey, describing her as "born at the intersection of 1940's femme fatale and schoolgirl [...] or rather schoolgirl trying to be a 1940's femme fatale" and enjoying the performance. Jason Holt (2008: 249) comments on how many of the series' female characters display the "tell-tale trappings, allure, poses, and behaviors, in fashionable fashion, of the true noir bad girl". Yet, these noirish elements are only a surface overlay because, as Holt (2008: 250) explains, "the femme fatale mystique seems less intrinsic to the female characters in *Twin Peaks* than a stylized



FIGURE 7. AUDREY'S ROMANTIC CLICHÉS AND INVESTIGATIVE PLANS

aesthetic veneer. Yet, GIFs often poach images (like any of the smoking shots) that emphasize this veneer as if it is a full characterization rather than a commentary on the manufacture of iconic types in Hollywood. Dyer (1992: 80) explains that the point of most Hollywood representations is to "disguise the manufacturing so that they simply appear to be what their images proclaim them to be", although sometimes it's "beguiling to see the strings being pulled". Along those lines, the oddity of the beguiling costuming in *Twin Peaks* makes us wonder if Audrey is the character depicted by GIFs showcasing those outfits. Close attention to her behavior and her conversations always suggest her sexual immaturity, even as her outfits make her seem more the sexy schoolgirl seeking out sexual experiences than one prone to romantic fantasies.

Gunn's (2012: 234) assessment of "the faux innocence of the sweater girl" may apply to the campy scene in which



FIGURE 8. BEN AND AUDREY HORNE: CAN'T SEE THE FOREST FOR THE TREES CARDIGAN?

Audrey distracts the Norwegian investors, but there is more of a slippage between the textural appeal and textual inaccuracy of such an assessment in the diner scene. Audrey shows a complex side of the Sweater Girl, which Dyer (1992: 80) says is a type that can “speak to dominant contradictions in social life—experienced as conflicting demands, contrary expectations, irreconcilable but equally held values”. Audrey’s fundamental contradiction is that she is unable to sexually mature and to remain “daddy’s little girl”. As she does not seem fully conscious of that dynamic, she seems mystified by her father’s rejection and dismissal: “I lost you years ago”.

Audrey still yearns to be close to her father, later confessing: “All I ever really wanted was for him to love me”. Did that loss occur when now eighteen-year-old Audrey became an adolescent? Does distancing himself enable him to repress his uncomfortable awareness of her sexuality or of the sexual interest she arouses in other men his age? Having this overt father daughter tension in the Ben and Audrey relationship might be a way to point subtly to the hidden father daughter incest in the Leland and Laura relationship. This troubling revelation is also a plausible explanation for Leland’s murder of his daughter and it contextualizes Laura’s secret sexual life including her work at a brothel, which Audrey discovers is owned by her father. None of these troubling textual details find their way into Audrey GIFs, which circulate outside the context of the long-arc story.

9. AUDREY AS AGENT PROVOCATEUR

Choosing images for GIFs works by associational recall. To create one you don’t necessarily have to remember the textual implications of the poached content. In its simplest form, a GIF associates a mood, look, sensibility, sense of humor or irony with a remembered shot, costume, pose, facial expression, memorable line. Using a decontextualized Audrey GIF in this way relies on the assertion of fellow feeling, of implying that this character’s look, or mood resembles or exaggerates the user’s own. This process of identification relies on disavowal: a denial of the difference between GIFs’ deployment of iconic Audrey and the more layered characterization that evolves over the initial episodes of the series. This disavowal allows Audrey to function, to borrow from Anne Friedberg’s spectatorship theory, as “a possible suit for the substitution/misrecognition of self” (1990: 42). Putting on the suit is literal for some viewers who outfit themselves as Audrey, the Sweater Girl, and post the images along with commentary on Audrey (see Inspirado, 2014; and Jane, 2014). The behavior would not surprise Friedberg (1990: 41) who says, “the ego-ideal represented is not unified or whole, but a synecdochal signifier”. Read through this model Audrey’s sweater and her saddle shoes function metonymically as they are her “most highly commoditized part(s)”.

The saddle shoes appear in most of the web-curated outfits inspired by Audrey and several GIFs poach the staged shot in which Audrey changes in front of her high school locker from saddle shoes to red heels. In the episode the shoes are showcased in a campy way as if to point to the false dichotomies often set up between good girl and bad girls.

The too easy characterizations, costume changes, and character contrasts do not hold up under analysis. The sweaters are used more subtly in the episodes to create as well as undercut Audrey’s contrast with Donna, thereby calling attention to both the artificiality of the good girl / bad girl binary and the small-town labeling of any sexually active teen as a “good girl gone bad”. Perhaps the purpose of the interplay between the two young women is not intended to reinforce the binary, but to offer metacommentary on the effects of a good girl-bad girl spectrum on the way young women are perceived and the way they perceive of themselves. These perceptions are at play in the dancing in the diner scene.

GIFs using images from Audrey’s Dance often make it seem as if Audrey is alone, her eyes closed as she “trance dances” to the music. The actual sequence intercuts the shots of Audrey with reaction shots from Donna Hayward and her

parents. This reveals that Audrey is not just dancing for her own pleasure, but she is also being watched. Does the scene represent the disavowed pleasures of dancing for herself because for a teenager who looks like Audrey, everything she does is sexualized, mediated both through her preconceived notions of sexy dancing and through spectators' ideas of sexual signaling and posturing? She is certainly attracting the attention of Mrs. Hayward who gestures with her head to get her husband to turn around and look at Audrey making a spectacle of herself. Their reactions are a bit vague beyond some level of negative judgment—whether it is of Audrey the manipulative rich girl, Audrey the unstable kook, or Audrey the threat to their daughter. Donna is staring at Audrey who seems lost in the music until she looks up suggestively and directly at Donna. In GIFs, the look is often interpreted as something like, “join me in being a good girl gone bad”.

In binary depictions Donna is the good girl next door. In other interpretations Donna and Audrey are both good girls gone bad or badass girls, bucking the small-town expectations of young women. After all, Donna was the best friend of the sexually adventurous Laura, who was selling sex at an underground brothel and cheating on her quarterback boyfriend with numerous older men and James Hurley, an unthreatening teenage James Dean type. After Laura's death it is Donna not Audrey who starts dating James.

Some GIFs imply that Audrey is an “agent provocateur”, deliberately behaving controversially in order to provoke a reaction. She definitely has the potential to inspire sexual thoughts, occupying the position both as an object of desire and as the “ego ideal” for the way she seems to assert herself as a desiring subject despite those who try to control or limit her. In *Twin Peaks*' larger surrealist structure Audrey is a more nuanced kind of agent provocateur who may be provoking Donna to acknowledge things she has been repressing. Just before she began dancing, Audrey asks Donna in a seemingly nonchalant way, “Did Laura ever talk about my father?”. Audrey knows there is something to be investigated about the relationship between her father Ben and Laura, and she believes it is of a sexual nature.

Has Audrey's “casual remark” about her father followed up by her uncomfortably long dance rattled Donna and made her start putting together details about Laura's secret life? Does the troubled expression that displaces Donna's earlier wry smile register her realization and desire to disavow that Laura's fate is entwined with male attitudes toward young female sexuality, and the corollary that this attitude might extend to some fathers in relation to their daughters? As she



FIGURE 9. THE DIFFERING INTERPRETATIONS OF THE TEXTURAL AND TEXTUAL GAZE



FIGURE 10. ENJOYING THE SENSUAL MUSIC AND SIGN-POSTING THE SURREAL STORY FOR DONNA AND US?

considers the implications of Laura's secret sex life, is Donna also beginning to acknowledge oddities she's noticed in the Laura and Leland relationship? Donna (and the viewer of the episode) may be challenged here to pursue a solution to the narrative enigma, which is not simply who killed Laura Palmer. It is also: why did Laura evolve into someone who found a mix of sex and violence attractive and why did she enter into sexual relationships that mixed the two?

Audrey is already pursuing this line of thought, considering the broader implications of her father's relationship with Laura and its connection to his sexual attitudes. In several

scenes Audrey plays “agent provocateur” in relation to her father, trying to force him to reveal himself. Audrey poses as a call girl-in-training at his brothel and narrowly avoids a sexual encounter with him, which creates excess around the topic of incest. It opens the door to narrativize the incest in the Palmer family, but it is only momentarily acknowledged before the unsatisfying supernatural possession plot is tacked on as an unlikely explanation. When Sheriff Truman points out how hard it is to accept that outcome, Agent Cooper counters, “Is it easier to believe that a father raped and murdered his daughter. Is that that any more comforting?” The exchange illustrates how complex socio-sexual concerns are acknowledged and disavowed in *Twin Peaks*. Like other commentators, I am not sure what to make of *Twin Peaks*’ treatment of young female sexuality and incest, (Stevenson, 1995; George, 1995; and Bainbridge and Delaney, 2012, 2016, among others). I raise the issues as a means of demonstrating that close analyses of *Twin Peaks* make it more difficult to revel in the textural appeal of the frame grabs poached for GIFs when one realizes they encode within them much more troubling thematic concerns such as sexualized father daughter relations.

10. SURREALISM AND SIRKIAN CONTAINMENT

While some GIFs call attention to Audrey’s reference to dreamy music in the diner scene, they do not provide the larger context of Lynch’s interest in dream states. Mikhail Skoptsov (2015) demonstrates that Lynch often plays with how repressed knowledge erupts in dreams. It is a topic other scholars address in their commentaries on Lynch and surrealism (Nochimson, 1997; McGowan, 2007 & 2016). When Audrey makes the GIF-worthy comment, “isn’t it dreamy”, and a few minutes later dances alone as if in a dream-state, these textural elements signal that we need to interpret Audrey’s dance in a more surreal way. Following Skoptsov’s theories about Lynch’s surreal storytelling, we can interpret the excessive music and dance as provocations for us to acknowledge something repressed. McGowan (2016: 145) claims, “moments of excess” expose “the obscene underside of the social reality” that “we aren’t used to seeing”. The diner scene, in a more subtle way than the brothel scene, is part of the textural storytelling of *Twin Peaks*, whose excesses force us to acknowledge the obscene, and the desire to do forbidden things.

Audrey’s knowing glance at Donna is also directed at view-

ers, acting as a textural clue to the more surreal story structure. The glance gestures to the unresolvable tension around young female sexuality for older men, for fathers, and for the girls themselves. This tension is not present in isolated frames or GIFs, which typically cut Donna out of the frames that signal she is watching Audrey dance. When those frames are viewed within *Twin Peaks* episodes, they contribute to the way the series gestures to these tensions before it reveals a real world motive for Laura’s behavior and for her murder by her father. Viewers do not need to dwell in this unpleasant reality for long as the incest motive is quickly displaced by the story of Leland’s possessed state when he committed the violent acts. This storytelling structure shares similarities with the strategies of Douglas Sirk, whose films raise social anxieties only to resolve them with an artificial conclusion. The containment fails because the ending feels tacked on and the midpoint problems still trouble the viewer, a description that could easily apply to *Twin Peaks*. Barbara Klinger (1994: 23) explains that Sirk’s typical 1950s family melodrama “elicits a stylistic exhibition of neurosis linked to the sexual malaise of society”. This parallels the *Twin Peaks* assertion, “the problems of our entire society are of a sexual nature”, a line that is left hanging when it is spoken, but haunts the story even after the unlikely “Leland was possessed” plot twist overwrites the initial incest story and his realistic motivation for murdering his daughter. The structure is similar to a Sirkian film in which “narrative structure does not serve its usual function of laying to rest difficult ideological conflicts” (Klinger, 1994: 23). Instead, the structure and the stylistic excesses of *Twin Peaks* allow its unmanaged problems to continue to trouble viewers precisely because of the unlikely ending.

Twin Peaks follows a Sirkian dynamic in that its excesses triumph over its containment narrative. It puts on display and then disavows something known to be true (incest is more prevalent than popularly perceived), but if acknowledged (especially on broadcast television) would invite social breakdown. If *Twin Peaks* registers the strain of keeping the general social unconscious repressed, GIFs in general circulation contribute to this repression when their users do not understand the troubling textual implications of the textural content on offer. As I indicated above, the frames borrowed from Audrey’s Dance do not convey how the costuming and set design, along with the dance itself (McClean, 1993; Dyer, 1978), create excesses which destabilize the action and offer a contrapuntal discursive strategy—an injection of surrealist commentary into what might seem like a linear long-arc mystery.

GIFs tap into the real strength of *Twin Peaks*: it is most fascinating as a series of crafted images. Audrey's Dance is one of those crafted moments of excess because it creates a halting or freezing of the narrative, which Wyatt (1991: 41-47) says is likely to happen when a scene becomes self-conscious and seems to be referring to other films and aspects of popular culture. The diner scene feels allusive to some public perception about midcentury American life, but its intended meaning is illusive. Typically, a film or television show is sequentially structured and any moments of excess will work against that structure (Wyatt 1994: 40). This technically seems the case in certain iconic scenes in *Twin Peaks*, but upon closer examination, the moments of coherence are more likely the disruption of the surrealist structure of the series. *Twin Peaks* offers two registers: narrative logic and impressionistic affect. It is carefully structured to make us look at the image and affectively connect with it detached from the story, even as the image has a role to play within the long-arc surrealist structure of the story.

11. CONCLUSION

This article has identified and detailed a current participatory culture trend that I call textural poaching, and it has considered the potential mediating effect of the aggregation of still images and animated GIFs created out of television still frames and circulated through microblogging and social media platforms. Its examination of the circulation of stills and GIFs of Audrey Horne from *Twin Peaks* aimed to demonstrate the particular appeal of GIFs created out of content from texturally rich series that are known for their moments of excess. The popularity of Audrey Horne GIFs suggests that the iconic status of *Twin Peaks* stems from its ability to engage viewers on two levels—1) through the surrealism-laced social commentary of the long-arc storytelling, which can prompt viewers to mine the show's episodes for narrative clues and philosophical meaning, and, 2) through the “cool pop” allure of the look and feel of the series, which can inspire viewers to mine the iconic shots, scenes, and dialogue for textural elements to co-opt for their own creative expressions or modes of engagement. This case study proposes that textural poaching is an aspect of participatory culture that aligns with new visual interfaces and communication platforms. Focusing on the potential impact of the broad circulation of television character GIFs on general public perceptions of series characterizations broadens the scope of television studies during a period of expansion of the num-

ber and reach of platforms on which to access, comment on, poach, and re-circulate television content. Much has been written about how viewers now access television on their own schedules, but we also need to consider how the broad circulation of frames grabbed from media works and bent to align with individual users' interests might impact public perception of the original series content.

This article has addressed the charged emotional valence surrounding a GIF's poached images, especially when they are divorced from the actual story from which they came. As part of a larger consideration of web-enabled textural poaching, we might offer similar analyses of other decontextualized top-of-the-mind images of characters from *Twin Peaks* or from other illusive long-arc serial mysteries such as *True Detective* (2014-). As more communication platforms develop, there will be a need for more theorization of the decontextualized images and of the mediating effect of the circulation of media content divorced from its original context. Describing the GIF as a form that combines brevity and eternity, Walker (2016) notes that the video content utilized by GIFs is compressed (into a few seconds) and infinite (a GIF endlessly loops). GIFs are understood to be lighthearted forms of communication rather than series abridgements; yet, as forms that endlessly loop, popular GIFs can become culturally embedded as the iconic moments that stand in for a series. It may become hard to dislodge the ideas and characterizations that such GIFs circulate.

The GIFs of Audrey dancing in the diner function like the sound bites described in Joan Didion's (1984: 52) surreal novel *Democracy*: “Things that might or might not be true get repeated in the clips until you can't tell the difference”. I mention the novel here in this disconnected manner because *Twin Peaks* works on me in the way *Democracy* does: as a story composed “of fitful glimpses” (1994: 232). These glimpses comment on the impulse to impose a linear narrative “upon disparate images” and the impact of the “ideas with which we have learned to freeze the shifting phantasmagoria which is our actual experience” (Didion 1979: 11). One of the characters in *Democracy* offers the list, “Colors, moisture, heat, enough blue in the air”, as the fullest explanation of why she stayed in Kuala Lumpur after the United States pulled out of Vietnam (Didion 1984: 16). I stick with *Twin Peaks*, despite my uncertainty about the implications of its long-arc narrative, for the textural allure and the textual allusiveness of its GIF-worthy elements: a checkerboard floor; a zigzag line; a red room, homemade “saddle shoes”; and a cardigan sweater covered in trees.

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