

Loock, K. (2018). American TV series revivals: Introduction. *Television & New Media*, 19(4), 299-309.

### Synopsis

Loock discusses revivals of American TV series and the intentions, practices, and processes that come with recreating different TV series and shows. She notes that television texts can transcend their narrative mortality (the end of the original run) through reboots, spin-offs, reruns, reunion shows, and revivals. Loock categorizes a textual afterlife of a series as one of three forms: derivative (reboot, spin-off), repetitive (rerun), and renewed (reunion show, revival). She argues that revivals stand out in a peak TV environment due to their built-in audiences and nostalgic appeal; these shows feel relevant to original audiences and profit from a sense of generational belonging. When discussing reruns, or “undead” or “dormant” texts, she notes that they have to navigate a strange temporal space of past, present, and future all at once. These texts direct viewers’ attention away from the text itself and to “memories associated with the show, the era of its first run, or the viewer’s personal life during that time” (p. 303). Loock argues that if texts can live beyond their original run, it is important to understand the cultural and social consequences of their continued existence.

### Key Concepts

- **Peak TV:** “A time of exploding programming options” (p. 299) both on traditional networks and streaming services. This overabundance of series makes it “difficult for audiences to differentiate great TV, good TV, and bad TV” (p. 301).
- **Televsual Afterlives:** The rebirth of a canceled television series or show in the form of a spin-off, reboot, rerun, reunion, or revival (p. 302).
- **Textual Death:** The cancelation or end of the original run of a series, which might be negated by a revival (p. 300).

### Key Quotes

- “If “the ending is over,” as Zoe Williams (2017) proclaims, if series transcend their textual death and continue to matter, we need to understand how and why this is so and examine the cultural, political, and social implications of their prolonged existence and popularity” (p. 307).
- “Within today’s crowded “peak TV” environment, reboots, spin-offs, “re-imaginings”...and revivals have the ability “to cut through the clutter, to stand out in a sea of shows angling for eyeballs” (Adalian 2015)...They tend to court built-in fan bases and are usually structured around persistent sentimental attachments to fictional characters and the “storyworlds” they inhabit” (p. 301).
- “Revivals must address the historical lapse of time and adjust to changes in prevailing televisual aesthetics and norms of representation, which often involve complex negotiations between the nostalgic reference and its revived counterpart” (p. 304-305).

### Essential Question

- What type of emotions do audiences feel when different rebirths of series and shows occur and how might that add to their desire to want to continue with the new show?