

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

Synopsis

Loock discusses American TV series revivals, noting that these revivals are able to cut through the noise of Peak TV by creating meaningful content based on nostalgia and the show's televisual heritage. She notes that television in our current era can surpass its textual mortality (i.e. – the ending of its original run), creating a textual afterlife in the form of spin-offs, reboots, reruns, reunion shows, and revivals. One way that revivals attract original audiences is through a sense of generational belonging grounded in the origins of the show, while simultaneously attracting new audiences through addressing changing cultural and televisual norms and through imagining a new present and future for a series. When discussing reruns (or “undead” or “dormant” texts) specifically, she notes that when experiencing a show as a rerun, the show shifts viewers' focus from the text itself to “memories associated with the show, the era of its first run, or the viewer's personal life during that time” (p. 303). In this way, she notes, reruns create temporal suspension, complicating a viewer's experience of that series, and of the past, present, and future. She also notes that because TV no longer has an ending, we need to better understand the implications of this idea.

Key Concepts:

- **Peak TV** – A current time of exploding programming options on streaming and traditional networks. This ample amount of content makes it difficult for viewers to differentiate between good and bad TV (p.301).
- **Spinoffs**– Highly future oriented extensions of already established stories/characters. They are not the same as the original story but maintain a familiar narrative with a twist to prolong the cultural significance and lifetime of the story (p. 303).
- **Reunion Shows** – Reunions are one-off specials where the original cast comes together, typically, after a significant time has passed. This type of program strives to secure relevance in changing media and cultural environments and rely on consumers being already aware and attached to characters and “story worlds” in which they live in (p. 303).

Key Quotes:

- “TV series revivals form part of this larger industry trend in which a show's ending is no longer equivalent to textual death but automatically anticipates some sort of televisual after- life that trades in the brand value and cultural currency of the canceled series” (p. 302).
- “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).
- “Revivals, therefore, invite discussions of overarching questions of temporality—as textual and extra-textual feature of the reactivated series and within larger media-historical and media-ecological contexts” (p.302).

Essential Question:

- What new and current shows might serve as potentially highly lucrative revivals/reboots/spin-offs in the future and why would they work well in that format?