
Your tenth blog entry, which you will post on www.NetflixStudies.com, is due before **5:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 4**. Before posting your comments (which should be at approximately **600 words**), you should [1] watch the first episode of *Stranger Things* (season one), [2] watch the *Black Mirror* episode “USS Callister” (season 4, episode 1); and [3] read the following online articles:

- **Dee Lockett, “Here’s Why *Stranger Things* Star Finn Wolfhard Was Forced to Speak Out Against Inappropriate Fans,” *Vulture* (November 9, 2017):** <http://www.vulture.com/2017/11/why-a-stranger-things-star-spoke-out-against-fans.html>
- **Jenna Scherer, “*Black Mirror*: How the New Season’s Breakout Episode Guts Toxic Fandom,” *Rolling Stone* (January 3, 2018):** <https://www.rollingstone.com/tv/news/how-instant-black-mirror-classic-uss-callister-guts-toxic-fandom-w514853>

Many of the first media studies researchers and communication scholars treated audiences as passive dupes, easily manipulated by the producers of films, radio programs, and television series. Moreover, many contemporary cultural critics have likewise diagnosed *Star Trek* fandom as “a regressive pleasure, taking developmentally immature adults back to a time when, much like the lost boys of Peter Pan, they did not have to face the uncertainties of change and the impending challenges of adulthood” (to borrow the words of scholar Ilsa Bick). However, a number of media scholars (most notably Henry Jenkins, Matt Hills, and Jonathan Gray) have begun framing **fandom as an important cultural activity**, one that reveals a compulsion to *actively create* rather than *passively consume*. Fans are *not* infantile victims of consumer culture, according to them, but rather intelligent preservationists archiving media texts and acting as “textual poachers” who tap into the unrealized possibilities of a television series through the writing of fan fiction. Despite the advancements made by these scholars, binaristic thinking and denigrating insults still plague audience studies, and many people (perhaps even yourself) often revert to stereotypical representations of fans as mindless geeks or social misfits overly invested in media.

After watching the assigned episodes from *Stranger Things* and *Black Mirror*, and drawing upon your weekend viewing of Netflix original series based on comic books (either *The End of the F***ing World*, *Daredevil*, *Iron Fist*, or *Punisher*), explain why these programs might attract a cult fan following. What is it about these shows that might encourage fans go “beyond the text” to seek out various incarnations of them in other forms (books, clothing/costumes, posters, toys, games, etc.). A casual viewer becomes a hardcore fan when he or she steadfastly pursues the object of his or her obsession and visibly performs that seemingly irrational dedication in public. Where (in which social contexts) might fans of these programs demonstrate their passion? What is your general view of fandom, and do you agree with the aforementioned media scholars who argue that it is a positive or progressive, rather than negative or regressive, form of cultural engagement?

What kind of message does “USS Callister,” the season four episode of *Black Mirror*, communicate regarding the issue of “toxic fandom”? Is toxic fandom related in any way to “toxic masculinity”? Here you should draw upon Jenna Scherer’s *Rolling Stones* article. Finally, which (if any) television series are YOU a hardcore fan of, and have you ever been circumspect or self-conscious about the potentially debilitating effects of your commitment to those texts? Could you see yourself committing a significant portion of your time and energy being invested in the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) that *Daredevil*, *Iron Fist*, and *Punisher* are part of.