



UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

The Rebel Yell: On YouTube's Burlesque Traditionalists and Their Alt-Right Audiences

Tuters, M.; Burton, A.G.

DOI

[10.22230/cjc.2021v46n4a3937](https://doi.org/10.22230/cjc.2021v46n4a3937)

Publication date

2021

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

Canadian Journal of Communication

License

CC BY-NC-ND

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Tuters, M., & Burton, A. G. (2021). The Rebel Yell: On YouTube's Burlesque Traditionalists and Their Alt-Right Audiences. *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 46(4), 757-776. <https://doi.org/10.22230/cjc.2021v46n4a3937>

General rights

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

UvA-DARE is a service provided by the library of the University of Amsterdam (<https://dare.uva.nl>)

The Rebel Yell: On YouTube’s Burlesque Traditionalists and their Alt-Right Audiences

Marc Tuters
University of Amsterdam

Anthony G. Burton
Simon Fraser University

ABSTRACT

Background: This article examines how the rhetorical style of the “alt-right” builds a political audience through a study of the Rebel, a Canadian YouTube news channel.

Analysis: This study analyzes the rhetoric of two hosts on the Rebel, Lauren Southern and Gavin McInnes, and finds their style marked by the use of the vernacular slang associated with subcultural communities of the alt-right.

Conclusion and implications: The unique rhetorical style on display points to micro-celebrity culture and techniques as a key to the proliferation of the alt-right.

Keywords: New media; Comment culture; Audience reception; Rhetoric; Alt-right; Micro-celebrity

RÉSUMÉ

Contexte : En étudiant la chaîne canadienne the Rebel, cet article examine comment la rhétorique de la « droite alternative » construit une audience politique.

Analyse : Nous analysons la rhétorique de deux hôtes, Lauren Southern et Gavin McInnes, et trouve que leur style est marquée par l'utilisation de l'argot vernaculaire associé aux communautés du « alt-right ».

Conclusions et implications : Leur style exposé comment la culture et les techniques des micro-célébrités influence la prolifération de l'alt-right.

Mots clés : Nouveau média; Cultures commentaires; Réception du public; Rhétorique; Alt-right; Micro-célébrité

Introduction

An overlooked factor in the literature on YouTube radicalization has been the predominance of Canadian voices. From Steven Crowder and Stefan Molyneux to

Jean-François Gariépy and Andy Warski, many of the platform's most infamous "alternative" political commentators (from the so-called "alt-right" and "alt-lite") are indeed based in Canada. While it has been argued that these YouTube commentators can be understood collectively as forming a loose-knit network (Lewis, 2018), many have also been employed by the Canadian news provider the Rebel, which has done much to repackage the "paleoconservative" culture war for a new generation. Founded by Ezra Levant following the bankruptcy of the populist Canadian right-wing Sun News Network, the Rebel (also known as Rebel Media and Rebel News) quickly built a subscriber base on YouTube—a video-sharing platform with 2 billion worldwide users—that rivalled that of Canada's own public broadcaster (Burton, 2019a). It did so by updating the populist right-wing rhetoric and coverage of Canada's Sun News Network for the sorts of hyper-partisan audiences that YouTube seems to attract and nurture. While the problem of political polarization is not as advanced in Canadian federal politics as it is in the U.S. (Llana, 2021), commentators have noted (Davey & Ebner, 2017) that Levant's venture was a major factor in the "right-wing media ecosystem" that helped swing the 2016 U.S. presidential election in Donald Trump's favour—alongside the hyper-partisan news site Breitbart (Benkler, Faris, Roberts, & Zuckerman, 2017). While the Rebel's influence may have been greater on political currents south of the border, it has nevertheless also had a marked impact on Canadian national politics (Burton, 2019b). In light of the national and international political significance of this Canadian YouTube channel, this article looks at the personas and audiences of two of the Rebel's most popular pundits: Lauren Southern and Gavin McInnes.

The article offers case studies of the Rebel's most engaging content, which is defined as the videos that garnered the most comments. It contains an analysis of Southern and McInnes' rhetorical style and examines how their alt-right audiences engage with them through a reading of video comments. While commentators have persuasively remarked on the challenges of defining the alt-right as a coherent political movement (Hawley, 2017), this work focuses on the rhetorical style and vernacular expressions that appear correlated with high levels of engagement in these videos. Together, the style and expressions on display make-up an alternative argot and parodic attitude at the basis of the alt-right. This alt-right way of speaking and acting is uniquely adapted to the affordances of social media—in particular, the toxic milieu of interconnected social media comment spaces and discussion forums that together can be imagined as a kind of "bottom of the web" (Reagle, 2015). Through this style of speech and reactionary posture, the Rebel's pundits assist in creating a space for an alt-right political community to flourish by presenting Canada to the world through an alt-right lens.

While McInnes and Southern are right-wing media pundits, crucial to their particular success is their status as *social media influencers*. On YouTube, influencers build brands and audiences by fostering an aura of "reliability, authen-

ticity, and accountability” (Lewis, 2019, p. 12), with audiences tending to perceive themselves less as observers and more as participants in a conversation in which their voices matter. Presenting themselves at once as rebels against censorious *liberal political correctness* while at the same time paradoxically portraying themselves as defenders of *conservative common sense*, Southern and McInnes have been identified with an “alternative influence network” on the platform (Lewis, 2018). Beyond this rebellious conservatism, many of these alternative influencers also use coded vernacular to engage with much more radical elements in their alt-right audience, often through racial “dog-whistles” (López, 2015). This article refers to this collection of rhetorical techniques as *burlesque traditionalism*: a style of parasocial interaction that promotes the superiority of traditional values in caustic tones attuned to resonate with the platform’s antagonistic audiences. As the most engaging of the Rebel’s YouTube stars, McInnes and Southern exemplify a roster of candidates that Levant gathered in the mid to late 2010 at the Rebel; they potentially offer more general insight into the relationship between highly visible alternative influencers and their much more obscure pseudonymous audiences.

This article begins by contextualizing Levant’s YouTube channel against the broader political backdrop of what has been called “Trump’s media war” (Happer, 2019). It then briefly introduces a methodological framework drawn from recent debates on YouTube radicalization that recommend focusing attention on the parasocial relationship between alternative influencers and their audiences (Munger & Phillips, 2020). In the context of this hypothesis, this study’s methodology provides a discourse analysis of Southern and McInnes’ videos *directly alongside* the reactions and engagement of their audiences in the comment sections. These case studies discuss Southern and McInnes as alternative influencers who engage in a burlesque traditionalist style of performance and audience interaction. Southern presents free speech as a right-wing issue, and she and McInnes infuse traditional values with transgressive appeal by inflecting their speech with alt-right vernaculars. By performing their personas with an awareness of alt-right audiences, they both use the affordances of the platform as well as shared linguistic frames to perpetuate the idea of an insurgent alt-right culture war.

The alt-right’s culture war

In the mid to late 2010s, a substantial segment of internet subculture imagined itself as the avant-garde in a new online culture war with roots tracing back to the conservative tradition it espouses. The alt-right’s concept of waging war on the field of culture is arguably characteristic of conservatism’s theoretical animus to “an enemy from below,” whose demands for “equality” (Robin, 2011, p. 44) are seen as a violation of the natural order of things. In recent years, an extreme traditionalist form of reactionary conservatism has gained popularity thanks to the efforts of self-styled new-right intellectuals such as Steve Bannon (Teitelbaum, 2020). Aspects of *traditionalism*, a political philosophy concerned with reinstating

traditional cultural values “against the modern world” (Sedgwick, 2004), have also found favour among people on sites such as 4chan—many of whom were also early and enthusiastic supporters of Trump’s candidacy in the 2016 U.S. presidential election (Tuters & OILab, 2020). A traditionalist outlook may also be understood as characteristic of the paleoconservative tendency to advocate for a return to traditional values—which is most closely associated with Pat Buchanan, the motivating force in an earlier phase of the U.S. right-wing culture war who is also known for his proto-white nationalist views (Hartman, 2015; Sedgwick, 2018). Although the alt-right has been observed to have direct roots in paleoconservatism (Hawley, 2017), it differs in its embracing of transgressive internet subculture, leading one commentator to refer to alt-right supporters as “paleocons with porn” (Nagle, 2017b).

While not particularly ideologically coherent, the alt-right could be characterized by its anti-immigration stance; its rejection of “mainstream” conservatism’s more liberal and market-based elements; and an openness to, if not outright embrace of, white supremacism. The alt-right’s primary innovation was its methodological focus on co-ordinated action online through the weaponization of memes and slang expressions associated with online trolling subculture (Phillips, 2015). Indeed, prior to his positions as Trump’s campaign chair and chief editor at Breitbart News, Bannon is said to have recognized the “monster power” of “rootless white males” (Green, 2017, p. 235) who congregated on message boards to discuss video games and other digital cultural ephemera. Trump’s rise initially generated cult-like devotion in subcultural trolling milieus such as 4chan (Beran, 2019). Bannon’s canny identification of an audience allowed him to use his media outlet, Breitbart, as a major source of support for Trump’s candidacy and effectively set the broader agenda for the election around issues such as illegal immigration (Benkler, Faris, Roberts, & Zuckerman, 2017).

Alternative news media have a long history in American conservatism: direct mail and AM radio have both been sites of innovation in new media formats for the purpose of conservative political movement building (Hemmer, 2016). What seemed novel in the case of the 2016 election was the reciprocal dynamics of influence between right-wing pundits and their various subcultural audiences. Again and again, alt-right slang found its way from pseudonymous or anonymous discussion forums associated with the far right into mainstream political discussion and its associated milieus, from obscure comment sections to highly visible Twitter feeds. One such example is the word *cuckservative*—a combination of the words *cuckold* and *conservative*—to refer to mainstream conservatism; it perfectly encapsulates the alt-right’s view of itself as “alternative” to the mainstream and succeeded in radically reframing Republican discourse during the election cycle.¹ This type of propagation of politically extreme vernacular vocabulary is among the alt-right’s most significant accomplishments.

In spite of Breitbart's enormous influence under Bannon, its reach was relatively minor in the domain of social media, apart from a quite active Facebook page (Renner, 2017). In contrast, Levant's media enterprise was an extremely significant node in a network of YouTube channels that experts on extremism consider to have been crucial in the rise of the alt-right as an international phenomenon in the mid to late 2010s (Tokmetzis, Bahara, & Kranenberg, 2019), a time when the platform was considered "one of the most powerful radicalizing instruments of the 21st century" (Tufekci, 2018, para 6). Indeed, Levant himself has been quoted as saying that he modelled the Rebel after Breitbart (Warnica, 2017), which Bannon once referred to as the "platform of the alt-right" (Posner, 2016). Levant's insight in building the Rebel was to adapt and combine the reactionary style of talk radio and cable news pundits with comedic news and influencer formats popular on YouTube, presenting them to the antagonistic audiences of the platform's comment section, which is considered "notorious for vicious and mean-spirited exchanges" (Pihlaja, 2014, p. 1).

The burlesque traditionalist

Prior to founding the Rebel, Levant had a model career as an operative in Canadian new-right politics. In addition to early affiliations with the influential conservative think tanks the Cato Institute and the Fraser Institute (Burton, 2019a), Levant began his political career as a member of the Canadian Federal Reform Party in the mid-1990s (Warnica, 2017).² While Canadian conservatism gradually moved toward the centre-right under the 2003 merger of the centre-right Progressive Conservative party and the right-wing Canadian Alliance, Levant would move further to the extreme as a right-wing culture war provocateur. In 2004, he founded the *Western Standard* newspaper, where he once drew complaints to the Alberta Human Rights Commission by the Edmonton Council of Muslim Communities for republishing a cartoon from a Danish newspaper that controversially depicted the prophet Mohammed (CBC Arts, 2008). In 2008, Levant sold the newspaper and worked for a period as a lobbyist for Rothmans Tobacco and the Alberta oil industry. He returned to the public eye as an anchor on the right-wing Sun News Network, which was distributed by most major cable and satellite providers across Canada between 2011 and 2015 (Gerson, 2015). While an anchor at Sun News Network, he was subject to three separate complaints from the Canadian Broadcasting Standards Council for using racial slurs against Romanis and Mexicans, and for accusing participants of an Idle No More gathering of being paid, "professional protestors" (Ish, Bonin, Braun, Niemi, Waksman, & Sephton, 2013a, 2013b; Noël, Reed, Todd, & Wedge, 2012). Immediately following Sun News Network's bankruptcy in February 2015, Levant launched the Rebel.

As the Rebel drew an increasingly massive audience share in the years following its launch, Levant had a canny eye for spotting and promoting talent, establishing the channel as something equivalent to a cable news network composed

entirely of editorials, in which influencers each had their own program. While Bannon imagined Breitbart as a platform for the alt-right, there are questions as to how well he understood the movement (Hawley, 2017). Bannon's conception does, however, seem apt when applied to the Rebel, whose masthead has been a revolving door of alt-right influencers both homegrown and imported, including Lauren Southern, Gavin McInnes, Faith Goldy, Tommy Robinson, Caolan Robertson, Katie Hopkins, Jack Posobiec, Laura Loomer, and Sebastian Gorka. Many of these influencers have their own tenuous relationship with the fringes of the far right. Faith Goldy, for example, is a self-proclaimed white nationalist (Coaston, 2018) who got her start on the channel after a brief run on the Sun News Network. Levant, (Rebel News, 2017b) fired her from the Rebel in 2017 when she appeared on a podcast for the Daily Stormer, a notorious neo-Nazi web platform. Gavin McInnes, the founder of *Vice* magazine, left and has since rejoined the channel after he officially "quit" the Proud Boys, the "fraternal organization" he founded that was designated a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Centre (Goldsbie, 2019) and deemed a terrorist group by the Canadian federal government. Jack Posobiec gained notoriety as a prominent advocate of the #pizzagate conspiracy theory, prompting Levant to defensively retort upon Posobiec's hiring that "the facts of the world are crazy enough—there is never a need to indulge in conspiracy theories" (Markusoff, 2017, para. 10). The controversies erupting from the Rebel's alt-right ties have also impacted Canadian national politics: following the appearance of a government minister at a Rebel-hosted rally where the audience members engaged in offensive chanting (CBC Radio, 2016), Canadian conservatives have actively sought to downplay Levant's influence on their party (CBC News, 2017).

In managing the Rebel, Levant's editorial strategy has been to flirt with the fringes of the alt-right, only letting pundits go when public outrage reaches a high pitch. As will be discussed in the case studies of Southern and McInnes, the Rebel's house style is to marry rebellious posturing with reactionary politics, an amalgam referred to here as burlesque traditionalism. The Rebel's most popular videos typically feature the host mocking the perceived excesses of *politically correct liberalism* (Rebel News, 2016). While Canadian politics often provides an inciting incident, it is typically a proxy for a long-standing Manichean narrative of a culture war between the forces of traditionalism and liberalism. To that end, the burlesque traditionalist performs a sort of provocative pastiche of paleoconservative talking points, which also ventriloquizes aspects of their reactionary audiences' more explicitly offensive views. By peppering their speech with concepts and vocabulary pulled from the ever-changing slang used in discussion forums, comment spaces, and other subcultural spaces associated with ironic humour and trolling, burlesque traditionalists present themselves as spokespeople for a youthful, digitally savvy culture. The political content drawn from historical paleoconservatism is

furthermore spliced with a comedic style popularized in the mid-2000s by the politically progressive Jon Stewart, whose historical import was to reinvent the figure of the political journalist in an era when the field of journalism was entering a period of crisis (Baym, 2005).

Burlesque traditionalism is a reactionary political style adapted to the reciprocal feedback loop between social media influencers and the antagonistic audiences in the comment sections of their posts. They speak directly to their audiences by employing techniques of direct-to-camera address and specific references to comments from previous videos, building “trust with their audiences by stressing their relatability, their authenticity, and their accountability to those audiences” (Lewis, 2019, p. 4). This performative authenticity establishes a dialogic relationship with fans through the “affective” (Papacharissi, 2015) and “relational” (Baym, 2015) labour that the audience and the influencer are engaged in together. Before investigating the phenomenon, it is necessary to introduce the study medium and methods.

Audience radicalization on YouTube: Method and data

Beginning in 2015 and coming to head in 2019, a series of academic and journalistic accounts claimed that YouTube’s algorithm was culpable of ideological radicalization by inferring user preferences from captured data and in turn recommending more “extreme” videos (O’Callaghan, Greene, Conway, Carthy, & Cunningham, 2015; Rieder, Matamoros-Fernández, & Coromina, 2018, Roose 2019; Tokmetzis et al., 2019; Tufekci, 2018). In dialogue with this *algorithmic radicalization hypothesis*, Kevin Munger and Joseph Phillips (2020) propose a methodological alternative that suggests approaching radicalization from the perspective of *radical audience engagement*. From their perspective, YouTube created an entrepreneurial environment for supplying underserved content demands. While there is compelling evidence that YouTube’s algorithm has tended to prioritize controversial content (Rieder et al., 2018), the algorithmic hypothesis suggests a role that, in the words of Rebecca Lewis (2020), may no longer play much relevance: “YouTube could remove its recommendation algorithm entirely tomorrow and it would still be one of the largest sources of far-right propaganda and radicalization online” (para. 5). This study focuses on the reciprocal dynamics between influencers and the comment sections, following Munger and Phillips’ (2020) argument that:

a robust comments section indicates higher communal activity on the part of the viewership. More comments relative to views mean a higher percentage of users wishing to interact with the creator or address other comments. In addition, it can also mean a higher proportion of people are conversing with each other in the comments section. When a user comments, another user replies and they start discussing back and forth; each new message counts as a comment. These interactions, even

if contentious, reinforce parasocial relationships between audience and creator and a sense of community between audience members. (p. 23)

While not intending to dismiss the role of algorithms, Munger and Phillips' (2020) emphasize the significance of factors beyond automated video recommendation in the process of political radicalization on YouTube. While scholars in the field of new media long held a "consensus view" (Kreiss, Finn, & Turner, 2011, p. 248) that social media would have a broadly democratizing effect, radical audience engagement on YouTube channels such as the Rebel has problematized these assumptions with new concepts such as "dark participation" and "reactionary fandom" (Quandt, 2018; Stanfill, 2020). Indeed, posters to comment sections can be seen as "active readers" in the traditional sense of interpreting and reinterpreting themes, incorporating them into the practices of their daily lives, and creating new texts based on these readings (Fiske & Hartley, 1978). As of yet, however, the role of active antagonistic audiences in YouTube radicalization remains relatively under-researched, particularly considering their parasocial relationship with influencers.

In examining the YouTube comment sections, comment count was prioritized over view count or subscriber count as a metric to investigate the ways in which the parasocial relationship established between host and audience plays out through speech and engagement. A non-random sampling of videos exemplified burlesque traditionalism in both the hosts' rhetorical style and the commentariat's reactions. From the videos selected for the case studies, the comments included exemplify the audience taking up the imperatives of burlesque traditionalism's rhetorical and communicative style. This method can best be described as a critical discourse analysis that takes each case's video and accompanying comments as its discursive frame. First, the video metadata of every video available on the Rebel was queried using Bernhard Rieder's (2015) YouTube data tools. Due to the YouTube API's instability when querying for comments, a wrapper was written around Philip Klostermann's (2020) YouTube comment puller, which manually loads and scrapes the comments off a video page. Overall, 1,881,734 comments were pulled from 11,440 videos published at the time data was collected. These comments were placed alongside the video metadata in a relational database for cross-referencing.

As indicated by Table 1, Southern and McInnes are by far the Rebel's most "engaging" hosts; together, over 27 percent of the channel's comments accrue to their videos. McInnes received the most comments on his videos, while Southern's videos garnered the most individual engagement, with 1,500 comments apiece. These two hosts also stand out for their cult-like status among alt-right audiences, who at times have viewed them as points of entry into white supremacist politics. In the words of one such notorious extremist figure, referring to McInnes' influence: "a lot of our guys started their journeys by finding one of those shows" (Enoch quoted in Marantz, 2019, p. 297).³ The case studies delve further into this

idolization, offering an analysis of Southern and McInnes' most-commented videos alongside the comments. Comment sampling was purposive, designed to illustrate how burlesque traditionalism is taken up in the parasocial frame in order to construct a shared front in the culture war.

Table 1: Selected Rebel hosts and their comments as of June 2020

Rebel hosts	Comments per video appearance	Percentage of all comments	Total comments	Video appearances
Lauren Southern	1,504.056	8.56%	160,934	107
Gavin McInnes (and Miles)	1,169.627	19.02%	357,906	306
Tommy Robinson	1,125.465	9.39%	176,698	157
Faith Goldy	957.2045	8.95%	168,468	176
Caolan Robertson	955.867	0.76%	14,338	15
Jay Fayza	864.286	2.89%	54,450	63
Lucy Brown	819.571	0.304%	5,737	7
Laura Loomer	649.1428	0.241%	4,544	7
Jessica Swietonowski	589.356	0.626%	11,787	20
Ezra Levant	146.3257	11.603%	218,318	1,492

Cases

Lauren Southern

Despite her departure in 2017, Lauren Southern remains the Rebel host with the most engagement from commenters (see Table 1). Her video “Transgender Protesters in Toronto: ‘Gender is Over’” (Rebel News, 2016) remains the channel’s most-popular video, with four and half million views at the time of writing. Attending a protest against University of Toronto Professor Jordan Peterson’s stated refusal to acknowledge transgender people by their preferred pronouns, Southern confronts attendees and interrogates them on the free speech implications of legislating gender identity as prohibited grounds of discrimination. The impetus for the protest where Southern filmed her commentary was Peterson’s notorious characterization of the Ontario Liberal government’s C-16 legislation—which proposed to add gender identity and gender orientation to the *Canadian Human Rights Act*—as “compelled speech” (CBC News, 2016). Peterson positioned himself as a traditionalist defender of a conception of free speech that many liberal Canadians saw as tacitly condoning *the marginalization of less visible minorities*,

ultimately emerging from this local controversy as a global celebrity. Although Southern, as all Rebel commentators, is a vocal critic of the Liberal Party of Canada, this video demonstrates how the channel's most engaged content is addressed to a much broader cross-national liberal project, whose imagined goal is the legislation of correct speech.

Such an absolutist conception of free speech is central to Southern's persona, informing her mocking antagonism of liberal "social justice warriors" as well as her traditionalist advocacy of a reverse victimization politics of "white identity." Southern typically argues for traditional gender roles, claiming that women should focus on becoming "trad wives" (traditional spouses). What sets Southern apart from an earlier generation of paleoconservative culture warriors is the way she frames serious issues through a mocking tone, illustrating a canny attunement to a younger reactionary audience. As captured in Southern's (2016) self-published manifesto, *Barbarians: How Baby Boomers, Immigrants, and Islam Screwed My Generation*, she positions herself as the voice of a generation, fluent in the transgressive vernacular and tactics of the alt-right. Published on her own YouTube channel during her tenure at the Rebel, though later removed by the platform (Southern, 2017), a video entitled "Ad Friendly Makeup Tutorial" is especially representative of Southern's approach. In the video, Southern lampoons the popular YouTube genre of make-up tutorials by scrawling the words "F**K ISLAM" (see Figure 1) across her face in lipstick. The video subverts tropes of YouTube influencers, recontextualizing the generic techniques of "mainstream" YouTube culture to express far-right views in a seemingly transgressive vernacular style.

Figure 1: Southern's "Ad Friendly Makeup Tutorial"



Source: Lauren Southern, 2017

Commenters on Southern's videos on the Rebel resonate with her framing of the "social justice warrior" (SJW) as the antagonist who is "brainwashed" by liberalism, a state from which they can awaken by "taking the red pill." One commenter claims that Southern's parody reflects the alt-right political awakening, where taking up the alt-right happens "[w]henver you realize that people keep repeating the same clichés like these sjw do." Another commenter notes that her mockery reflects clichés, "because you are observing a case of brainwashed people." This brainwashing is furthermore seen as the project of the (Liberal) government that, in the words of one commenter "literally POUND[S] all that SJW bullshit in your heads from day 1, whether it's in school or on tv etc!! I am gonna tell you ONE thing from the bottom of my heart: ALL THE SOCIAL JUSTICE BULLSHIT IS LIES and DAMN LIES!!!"

Southern's influence also extends beyond YouTube to other audiences within the alt-right that are engaged by Southern's burlesque traditionalism, for example, on 4chan's "politically incorrect" discussion board "/pol/," a threaded forum with some similar affordances to YouTube's comment space, which commentators have repeatedly identified with the alt-right (Hawley, 2017; Marantz, 2019). Found on /pol/, Figure 2 is a fan art pastiche of a women-marketed lifestyle magazine, such as *Cosmopolitan*, in which Southern is discussed as a potential "tradthot" (alt-right slang for an attractive woman with traditional values) and Jordan Peterson is discussed as possibly being "redpilled."

Consulting publicly accessible archives of this forum (Peeters & Hagen, 2019) reveals that "Lauren Southern" was very frequently mentioned in discussions on 4chan/pol/ during the period that coincided with her tenure at the Rebel.

While it would be a mistake to assume these discussions to be consistently supportive, just as it would be a mistake to take Figure 2 at face value, it is nevertheless possible to induce that Southern's public persona seems to have had the effect of

Figure 2: Lauren Southern general on 4chan/pol/



Source: Anonymous, 2017

energizing alt-right audiences—“energize” being the word that Trump himself used to refer to his own effect on the alt-right (Gajanan, 2016). Southern’s YouTube presence thus provides a platform (in the political sense) for a political community that is not limited to a single platform (in the media sense): instead of being tied together as a community through the infrastructures that facilitate discussion, the discussion itself is what ties the community together.

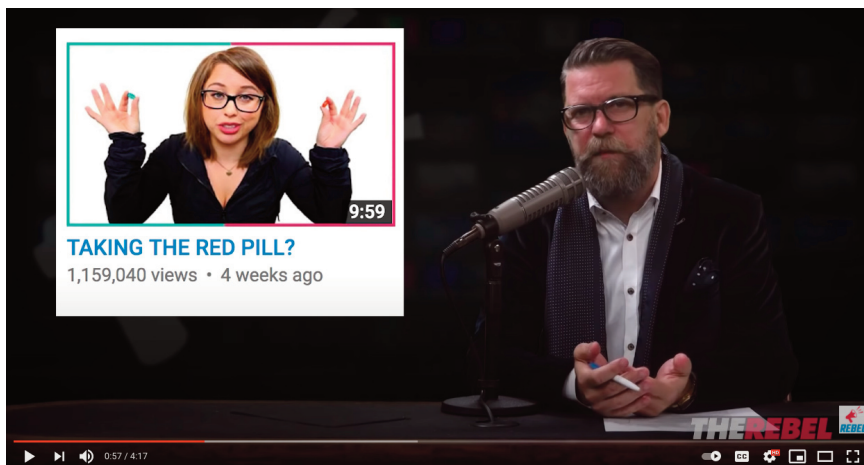
Gavin McInnes

No Rebel pundit embodies the “red pill” ethos quite like McInnes, the most commented on of all the Rebel’s hosts. McInnes is the co-founder of Vice Media. He left acrimoniously in 2008, starting an advertising agency that he was soon asked to leave after publishing a defense of transphobia (Monllos, 2017). By 2015, he was already a member of the Rebel’s masthead, and in 2016 he founded the “Proud Boys,” a fraternal organization that advocates a number of traditionalist conservative values such as “venerating housewives” and “anti-racial guilt,” a political philosophy that McInnes refers to as “Western chauvinism” (Elders, 2017). Since 2016, the Proud Boys and their signature uniform of Fred Perry polo shirts have been a frequent sight at right-wing protests, including 2017’s “Unite the Right” rally. The ritual initiation for inductees into McInnes’ Proud Boys fraternal organization “usually consists of drinking, fighting, and reading aloud from the paleo-conservative Pat Buchanan’s *Death of the West*” (Marantz, 2019, p. 29). Their pastiche of hardcore punk dress and politically incorrect internet slang embodies what Dale Beran (2019) identifies as McInnes’ savvy in “independently anticipating the migration of youth counterculture that had occurred on 4chan” from “unyielding consumerist nihilism” to “fundamentalist traditionalism” (p. 212). In 2018, when McInnes abdicated leadership of the Proud Boys, he continued to make videos for the Rebel as “millennial researcher Miles McInnes,” a persona concocted to mock the stereotype of the millennial “hipster” figure that he himself had been so central in promoting in his former capacity as a style commentator at *Vice* magazine—where McInnes used “casual racism and porn” (Greif, 2010, para. 14) to sell fashion to young men. The description of one such video captures McInnes’ burlesque traditionalist style well: “Our intrepid host gives us a DOs & DON’Ts of pride parades and ends this informative LGBTQSJW segment by showing gay love for a person of color” (Rebel News, 2019).

Part of McInnes’ alt-right credibility stems from his use of subcultural vernacular phrases such as “red pilling”—a shorthand for a traditionalist political awakening that refers to a scene from *The Matrix* (Wachowski & Wachowski, 1999), in which the protagonist is offered the choice to see the painful truth under the veil of illusion. In a video titled, “When Feminists Get Red Pilled” (Rebel Edge, 2017), McInnes describes the red pill as what happens when “you’re curious enough to end up at the truth.” The video is commentary on the relationship between two

other YouTube influencers, Laci Green and Chris Ray Gun, whom he describes as a “far left-liberal vlogger” and an “alt-right kinda guy,” respectively. In the video, he draws a parallel between Green and a “hot” feminist from his “punk rock days” who would attend anarchist meetings only to return home to hypermasculine partners. McInnes presents Green’s relationship as illustrating that feminism is just another brainwashing tactic by the liberal elite. Such discussions of “drama” are common fare on YouTube (Pihlaja, 2014), but McInnes takes this one step further by using it as a pretext for discussing a culture war wedge issue. Seated behind a newsreader’s desk railing against the excesses of “left-liberals,” McInnes resembles Fox News pundits (who he was once a frequent guest of), yet his punk rock style stands in marked contrast to the stereotype of the self-righteous bloviating right-wing pundit.

Figure 3: McInnes on getting red pill



Source: Rebel Edge, 2017

McInnes’ performances are intended to signal that his videos comment sections are a safe space for discussing issues of concern to alt-right audiences. Indeed, in the aforementioned video, McInnes (Rebel Edge, 2017) invites commenters to share their own “red pill stories.” One commenter responds: “i have a socialist roommate who slowly but surely is making progress towards the red pill ... gavin hit it on the nose, they are all just seeking discipline.” Others pick up McInnes’ argument and extend it, with one stating: “Young women who are feminist either get red pilld the older they get, or they become ridiculously crazy maniacs.” However, McInnes’ light-hearted tone is not necessarily reflected in the comments, which tend toward venom. For his part, McInnes recognizes and operationalizes the language that reflects the alt-right’s reactionary politics and worldview. In turn, this provides a platform for these very views to both express and publicize themselves.

Discussion

What distinguishes the most engaging content on the Rebel is a style of political punditry attuned to the antagonistic affordances of the platform's comment section. YouTube's affordances enable users to engage in direct dialogue with videos and their content producers, which in turn encourages producers to directly address the audience, soliciting engagement from their commenters in a type of vernacular that clearly energizes the alt-right. In comment spaces, where "social cues are filtered out, social presence is attenuated, and people do not appreciate their effects on others" (Reagle, 2015, p. 97), YouTube affords an ideal platform for alternative influencers to traffic in the reactionary spectacle of burlesque traditionalism.

Presenting themselves as the defenders of traditional values, they develop a new front in the ongoing paleoconservative culture war, inscribing new and younger audiences who also see themselves in a generational conflict. While their juvenile antics present them as innocuous compared with committed alt-right "white nationalists," this comedic aspect of their style does not diminish their significance as entry points to political radicalization. In fact, it is reasonable to consider them as "strategic mouthpieces" (Davey & Ebner, 2017, p. 6) for more extreme ideologies. Whether they are fully conscious of it, the Rebel's burlesque traditionalists are key players in the online "affective economies of white rage and pride" (Ganesh, 2020, p. 894).

The Rebel's style, as epitomized by Southern and McInnes, is deeply imbricated in the reproduction of a particular form of parasociality in which their status as alternative influencers is entangled with the issues and language of their audience. By constructing their personas in dialogue with these affordances and the language and concerns of an alt-right audience, McInnes and Southern indeed appear to be its strategic mouthpieces—as previous research had already claimed (Roose, 2019). Distinct from much of the previous research concerned largely with the role of YouTube's algorithms in the process of radicalization, these cases underline the relationship between the performers and their audience as shaped by the platform's affordances.

Southern and McInnes are the most popular spokespeople of the most prominent social media news outlet in a right-wing media sphere that helped to elect Trump. While other members of YouTube's "alternative influence network" (Lewis, 2018) tend to speak *at* their audience, Southern and McInnes' style is more dialogical. By drawing their language from their audience, McInnes and Southern attempt to locate themselves *within it*. Through Southern's vox-pop reportage and McInnes' subcultural commentaries, they thus present themselves as populist influencers representing the people at "the bottom of the web" (Reagle, 2015).

Conclusion

While attention to Youtube's alternative influencers (Lewis, 2018) is an important

counterweight to an overemphasis on the role of algorithms in the process of radicalization platform (Tufekci, 2018), it is crucial for analyses to consider the comments through which influencers are in constant dialogue with their audiences (Munger & Phillips, 2020). By this overlooked measure, consider the very top comments on the Rebel’s video featuring Faith Goldy’s accidental capture of the vehicular attack and killing of protesters at the notorious Charlottesville “Unite the Right” rally, in which Goldy’s audience expresses its concern for the well-being of the car (see Figure 4). As “the most visible uses of anonymity online,” the McGill anthropologist of 4chan culture Gabriella Coleman (2000) has observed that “comments forums tend towards the toxic” (p. 200); nowhere is this more visible than here.

Figure 4: Comments posted on Goldy’s video capturing the death of protester Heather Heyer during the Charlottesville “Unite the Right” rally



Source: Rebel News, 2017a

While the above-mentioned video remains online at the time of writing, Charlottesville was a pivotal moment for the Rebel. Goldy’s appearance on an anti-

Semitic podcast that same day was the impetus for Levant letting her go in May 2017 (Rebel News, 2017b). McInnes left around the same time, as public outcry against the Proud Boys heightened. Beginning in 2018, YouTube radically overhauled its governance policies regarding “harmful and supremacist content” and has stopped paying channels that violate this policy (OILab, 2019). On June 29, 2020, under pressure from the Black Lives Matter movement and facing the prospect of advertisers withdrawing revenue, YouTube removed a staggering 25,000 channels from the platform (Alexander, 2020). The Rebel was not, however, touched by this purge, nor has its momentum necessarily lessened particularly, although most of its most famous alternative influencers have left.⁴

As mediated through the YouTube comment section, the participatory relationship between audiences and influencers illustrates the role that digital media has played in the growth of reactionary politics within the last decade. While this is only one way that digital media enables alt-right recruitment, as Munger and Phillips (2020) observe, it has been relatively understudied in previous research on the topic. Importantly however, this radicalization potential is not somehow determined by YouTube’s comment space, nor for that matter are all commenters reactionaries—though antagonism is often the norm on YouTube (Pihlaja, 2014).

In the late 2010s then, the Rebel provided a home base for an insurgent alt-right in Canada. While many influencers have since been “deplatformed” by corporate social media platforms looking to clean their image (Rogers, 2020) and alt-right vernaculars have been reappropriated by other movements (Ellis, 2019; Tiffany, 2021), Canadians should recognize the historically significant role of Ezra Levant’s the Rebel to the rise of alt-right.

Notes

1. The expression *cuckservative* emerged in early 2015 on (now deplatformed) alt-right websites such as My Posting Career and The Right Stuff as well as on 4chan’s notorious “/pol/” forum (Bernstein, 2015). In its original far-right subcultural usage, the term referred to a genre of often racialized pornography, thereby connecting a critique of establishment republicanism with the far-right’s longstanding preoccupation with masculinity and miscegenation. By the end of the year, the prolific alt-right author Vox Day had self-published a tract titled, “Cuckservative: How ‘Conservatives’ Betrayed America” (Day & Red Eagle, 2015), and this alt-right meme had effectively worked its way into political discussion among mainstream Trump voters.
2. Characterized by a populist-nativist style, the federal Reform Party of Canada mounted a remarkably successful third-party challenge on the right flank of the governing federal Progressive Conservative party in the early 1990s, which did not recover until merging with the former under former Reform Party leader and future Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper.
3. George Hawley (2017) has labelled Southern and McInnes as “alt-lite,” a term that appeared in 2016 to distinguishing “people whose views on immigration and race relations partially overlap with those on the Alt-Right yet do not cross the line into open white nationalism” (p. 110). In spite of these ideological differences, Southern and McInnes have been identified as entry points on the path to alt-right radicalization on YouTube (Roose, 2019).
4. Despite YouTube’s dramatic efforts at house cleaning, the Rebel still had over 1.3 million subscribers as of June 2020, and its viewership grew every week since July 2017, save for one (SocialBlade, 2020).

Marc Tutors is Senior Lecturer at the University of Amsterdam's New Media and Digital Culture program. Email: arspjc@gmail.com . **Anthony G. Burton** is a Doctoral Candidate at Simon Fraser University's School of Communication. Email: arspjc@gmail.com .

References

- Alexander, Julia. (2020, June 29). YouTube bans Stefan Molyneux, David Duke, Richard Spencer, and more for hate speech. *The Verge*. URL: <https://www.theverge.com/2020/6/29/21307303/youtube-bans-molyneux-duke-richard-spencer-conduct-hate-speech> [July 21, 2020].
- Baym, Geoffrey. (2005). *The Daily Show*: Discursive integration and the reinvention of political journalism. *Political Communication*, 22(3), 259–276. doi:10.1080/10584600591006492
- Baym, Nancy K. (2015, April–June). Social media and the struggle for society. *Social Media + Society*, 1, 1–2. doi:10.1177/2056305115580477
- Benkler, Yochai, Faris, Robert, Roberts, Hal, & Zuckerman, Ethan. (2017, March 3). Study: Breitbart-led right-wing media ecosystem altered broader media agenda. *Columbia Journalism Review*. URL: <https://www.cjr.org/analysis/breitbart-media-trump-harvard-study.php> [June 13, 2020].
- Beran, Dale. (2019). *It came from something awful: How a toxic troll army accidentally memed Donald Trump into office*. New York, NY: All Points Books.
- Bernstein, Joshua. (2015, July 27). Behind the racist hashtag that is blowing up Twitter. *Buzzfeed*. URL: <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/josephbernstein/behind-the-racist-hashtag-some-donald-trump-fans-love> [June 13, 2020].
- Burton, Anthony. (2019a). The rebel yell: Who, what, when, where, why, and how did we get here? *Digital Citizenship Cultures*. URL: <https://dcc.infoscapelab.ca/projects/ecosystem/the-rebel-yell/> [March 4, 2020].
- Burton, Anthony. (2019b). This is how it starts. *Digital Citizenship Cultures*. URL: <https://dcc.infoscapelab.ca/projects/ecosystem/this-is-how-it-starts/> [March 4, 2020].
- CBC Arts. (2008, August 7). Human rights panel dismisses complaint against Ezra Levant. *CBC*. URL: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/entertainment/human-rights-panel-dismisses-complaint-against-ezra-levant-1.747538> [May 29, 2020].
- CBC News. (2016, October 30). Heated debate on gender pronouns and free speech in Toronto. *CBC News YouTube Channel*. URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SijS_ghPKM [May 22, 2021].
- CBC News. (2017, August 19). Andrew Scheer shuns Rebel Media. *CBC News YouTube Channel*. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jCSfe5OKb1U> [May 29, 2020].
- CBC Radio. (2016, December 05). When “lock her up” came to Canada: Why Chris Alexander says he’s “mortified.” *As It Happens*. URL: <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/as-it-happens-monday-edition-1.3881829/when-lock-her-up-came-to-canada-why-chris-alexander-says-he-s-mortified-1.3881836> [May 29, 2020].
- Coaston, Jane. (2018, October 18). Steve King endorses a bona-fide white supremacist for Toronto mayor. *Vox*. URL: <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/10/18/17990718/steve-king-faith-goldy-white-supremacist-canada-iowa-republicans> [March 20, 2020].
- Coleman, Gabriella. (2018). Reconsidering anonymity in the age of narcissism. In McSweeney's et al., *The end of trust* (pp. 195–217). San Francisco, CA: McSweeney's. URL: <https://www.eff.org/the-end-of-trust> [May 31, 2021].
- Davey, Jacob, & Ebner, Julia. (2017). *The fringe insurgency: Connectivity, convergence and mainstreaming of the extreme right*. London, UK: Institute for Strategic Dialogue.
- Day, Vox, & Red Eagle, John. (2015). *Cuckservative: How “conservatives” betrayed America*. Kouvola, FI: Castalia House.
- Elders, The. (2017). Proud boys: Who are they? *Official Proud Boys*. URL: <https://officialproudboys.com/proud-boys/whoaretheproudboys/> [April 12, 2019].
- Ellis, Emma Grey. (2019, August 23). Pepe the Frog means something different in Hong Kong—right? *Wired*. URL: <https://www.wired.com/story/pepe-the-frog-meme-hong-kong/> [March 5, 2020].
- Fiske, John, & Hartley, John. (1978). *Reading television*. New York, NY: Routledge.

- Gajanan, Mahita. (2016, November 22). Donald Trump on the alt-right movement: "It's not a group I want to energize." *Fortune*. URL: <https://fortune.com/2016/11/22/trump-new-york-times-meeting/> [March 5, 2020].
- Ganesh, Bharath. (2020). Weaponizing white thymos: Flows of rage in the online audiences of the alt-right. *Cultural Studies* 58(3), 1–33. doi:10.1080/09502386.2020.1714687
- Gerson, Jen. (2015, February 18). Former Sun News host Ezra Levant launching his own conservative website following network's demise. *National Post*. URL: <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/former-sun-news-host-ezra-levant-launching-his-own-conservative-website-following-networks-demise> [March 5, 2020].
- Goldsbie, Jonathan. (2019, February 5). Founder of SPLC-designated hate group rejoins Rebel Media. *Canadaland*. URL: <https://www.canadalandshow.com/proud-boys-founder-gavin-mcinnis-rejoins-rebel-media/> [June 16, 2020].
- Green, Joshua. (2017). *Devil's bargain: Steve Bannon, Donald Trump, and the storming of the presidency*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.
- Greif, Mark. (2010, October 22). "What Was the Hipster?" *New York Magazine*. URL: <https://nymag.com/news/features/69129/> [May 22, 2021].
- Happer, Catherine. (2019). *Trump's media war*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hartman, Andrew. (2015). *A war for the soul of America: A history of the culture wars*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Hawley, George. (2017). *Making sense of the Alt-Right*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Hemmer, Nicole. (2016). *Messengers of the right: Conservative media and the transformation of American politics*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Ish, D., Bonin, G., Braun, D., Niemi, F., Waksman, R., & Sephton, C. (2013a). Sun News Network re the source (theft ring). *CBSC Decision 12/13-0069+*. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Broadcasting Standards Council.
- Ish, D., Bonin, G., Braun, D., Niemi, F., Waksman, R., & Sephton, C. (2013b). Sun News Network re the source (Idle No More). *CBSC Decision 12/13-0985*. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Broadcasting Standards Council.
- Klostermann, Philip. (2020). *Philbot9/youtube-comment-scraper-cli* [JavaScript]. URL: <https://github.com/philbot9/youtube-comment-scraper-cli> [2017] [May 20, 2020].
- Kreiss, Daniel, Finn, Megan, & Turner, Fred. (2011). The limits of peer production: Some reminders from Max Weber for the network society. *New Media & Society*, 13(2), 243–59. doi:10.1177/1461444810370951
- Lewis, Rebecca. (2018). *Alternative influence: Broadcasting the reactionary right on Youtube*. New York, NY: Data and Society Research Institution.
- Lewis, Rebecca. (2019). "This is what the news won't show you": YouTube creators and the reactionary politics of micro-celebrity. *Television and New Media*, 2019(October), 1–17. doi: <https://doi.org/10/ggcccj>
- Lewis, Rebecca. (2020, January 8). All of YouTube, not just the algorithm, is a far-right propaganda machine. *FFWD*. URL: <https://ffwd.medium.com/all-of-youtube-not-just-the-algorithm-is-a-far-right-propaganda-machine-29b07b12430> [March 5, 2020].
- Llana, Sara Miller. (2021, September 17). Why Canadian elections aren't following the polarized US example. *Christian Science Monitor*. URL: <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Americas/2021/0917/Why-Canadian-elections-aren-t-following-the-polarized-US-example> [June 15, 2020].
- López, Ian Haney. (2015). *Dog whistle politics: How coded racial appeals have reinvented racism and wrecked the middle class*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Marantz, Andrew. (2019). *Antisocial: Online extremists, techno-utopians, and the hijacking of the American conversation*. New York, NY: Viking.
- Markusoff, Jason. (2017, May 19). Canada's Rebel is joining the global class of paranoid, far-right media. *Maclean's*. URL: <https://www.macleans.ca/politics/canadas-rebel-is-joining-the-global-class-of-paranoid-far-right-media/> [July 24, 2019].
- Monllos, Kristina. (2017). Rooster CCO Gavin McInnes asked to take leave of absence. *Adweek*. URL: <https://www.adweek.com/brand-marketing/rooster-cco-gavin-mcinnis-asked-take-leave-absence-159536/> [December 4, 2019].

- Munger, Kevin, & Phillips, Joseph. (2020). Right-wing YouTube: A supply and demand perspective. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 21(2), 1-30. doi:10.1177/1940161220964767
- Nagle, Angela. (2017a). *Kill all normies: The online culture wars from Tumblr and 4chan to the alt-right and Trump*. Winchester, UK, & Washington, DC: Zero Books.
- Nagle, Angela. (2017b). Paleocons for porn. *Jacobin*. URL: <https://jacobinmag.com/2017/02/paleocons-for-porn> [March 25, 2020].
- Noël, A., Reeb, T., Todd, L., & Wedge, P. (2012). Sun News network re the source (Chiquita Banana). *CBCS Decision 11/12-0847+*. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Broadcasting Standards Council.
- O'Callaghan, Derek, Greene, Derek, Conway, Maura, Carthy, Joe, & Cunningham, Pádraig. (2015). Down the (white) rabbit hole: The extreme right and online recommender systems. *Social Science Computer Review*, 33(4), 459-748. doi:10.1177/0894439314555329
- OILab. (2019). 4chan's YouTube: A fringe perspective on YouTube's great purge of 2019. *Open Intelligence Lab*. URL: <https://oilab.eu/4chans-youtube-a-fringe-perspective-on-youtubes-great-purge-of-2019/> [July 19, 2019].
- Papacharissi, Zizi. (2015). We have always been social. *Social Media + Society*, 1(1), 1-2. doi:10.1177/2056305115581185
- Peeters, Stijn, Sal Hagen. (2019). 4CAT: Capture and Analysis Toolkit [computer software]. *Open Intelligence Lab*. URL: <https://4cat.oilab.nl/> [July 19, 2019].
- Pihlaja, Stephen. (2014). *Antagonism on Youtube: Metaphor in online discourse*. London, UK: Bloomsbury.
- Phillips, Whitney. (2015). *This is why we can't have nice things: Mapping the relationship between online trolling and mainstream culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Posner, Sarah. (2016, October 22). How Donald Trump's new campaign chief created an online haven for white nationalists. *Mother Jones*. URL: <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2016/08/stephen-bannon-donald-trump-alt-right-breitbart-news/> [May 31, 2021].
- Quandt, Thorsten. (2018). Dark participation. *Media and Communication*, 6(4), 36-48. doi:10.17645/mac.v6i4.1519
- Reagle, Joseph M. (2015). *Reading the comments: Likers, haters, and manipulators at the bottom of the web*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press.
- Rebel Edge. (2017, June 13). Gavin McInnes: When feminists get red-pilled. *YouTube*. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O7l8uFT8TzA> [May 22, 2021].
- Rebel News. (2016, October 8). Transgender protesters in Toronto: "Gender is over." *YouTube*. URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M9_cAtfyhec [May 22, 2021].
- Rebel News. (2017a, August 12). RAW: Driver mows down Antifa, BLM at Unite the Right Charlottesville. *YouTube*. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2USZRUFx33k&t=5s> [May 22, 2021].
- Rebel News (2017b, August 18). Ezra Levant: Why we had to say goodbye to Faith Goldy. *YouTube*. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzO27kdYClS> [December 4, 2019].
- Rebel News. (2019, June 21). Miles McInnes: Celebrate pride month by going gay! *YouTube*. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iKkrIwQs5IM> [May 22, 2021].
- Renner, Nausicca. (2017, January 30). Memes Trump articles on Breitbart's Facebook page. *Columbia Journalism Review*. URL: https://www.cjr.org/tow_center/memes-trump-articles-on-breitbart-facebook-page.php [May 22, 2021].
- Rieder, Bernhard, Matamoros-Fernández, Ariadna, & Coromina, Óscar. (2018). From ranking algorithms to "ranking cultures": Investigating the modulation of visibility in YouTube search results. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 24(1), 50-68. doi:10.1177/1354856517736982
- Rieder, Bernhard. (2015). YouTube data tools (version 1.10) [Computer software]. *The Politics of Systems*. URL: <https://tools.digitalmethods.net/netvizz/youtube/> [July 19, 2019].
- Robin, Corey. (2011). *The reactionary mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Sarah Palin*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Rogers, Richard. (2020) Deplatforming: Following extreme Internet celebrities to Telegram and alternative social media. *European Journal of Communication*, 35(3), 213-229. doi:10.1177/0267323120922066

- Roose, Kevin. (2019, 8 June). The making of a YouTube radical. *New York Times*. URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/06/08/technology/youtube-radical.html> [March 29, 2020].
- Sedgwick, Mark. (2004). *Against the modern world: Traditionalism and the secret intellectual history of the twentieth century*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Sedgwick, Mark. (2018). *Key thinkers of the radical right*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- SocialBlade. (2021, May 20). *Rebel News's YouTube stats*. URL: <https://socialblade.com/youtube/channel/UCCy6uV7yqGWDeUWTZzT3ZEg> [May 31, 2021].
- Southern, Lauren. (2016). *Barbarians: How baby boomers, immigrants, and Islam screwed my generation*. Toronto, ON: Rebel News Network.
- Southern, Lauren. (2017, June 14). Lauren Southern's makeup tutorial for infidels. *YouTube*. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCMpIA4QEVo> [January 20, 2019].
- Stanfill, Mel. (2020) Introduction: The reactionary in the fan and the fan in the reactionary. *Television & New Media*, 21(2), 123–134. doi:10.1177/1527476419879912
- Teitelbaum, Benjamin R. (2020). *War for eternity: Inside Bannon's far-right circle of global power brokers*. New York, NY: Dey Street Books.
- Tiffany, Kaitlyn. (2021, April 13). The alt-right has lost control of redpill. *The Atlantic*. URL: <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2021/04/red-pill-meme-alt-right-twitter/618577/> [June 5, 2021].
- Tokmetzis, Dimitri, Bahara, Hassan, & Kranenberg, Annieke. (2019, February 8). Aanbevolen voor jou op YouTube: Racisme, vrouwenhaat en antisemitisme. *De Correspondent*. URL: <https://decorrespondent.nl/9149/aanbevolen-voor-jou-op-youtube-racisme-vrouwenhaat-en-antisemitisme/445528853-of710148> [March 5, 2020].
- Tufekci, Zeynep. (2018, March 10). YouTube, the great radicalizer. *New York Times*. URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/10/opinion/sunday/youtube-politics-radical.html> [January 20, 2019].
- Tuters, Marc, OILab. (2020). Esoteric fascism online 4chan and the Kali Yuga. In L.D. Valencia-Garcia (Ed.), *Far-right revisionism and the end of history* (pp. 287–303). London, UK: Routledge.
- Wachowski, Lana, & Wachowski, Lilly (Directors). (1999). *The matrix*. Hollywood, LA: Warner Bros.
- Warnica, Richard. (2017, August 18). Inside Rebel Media: How Ezra Levant built an extreme media juggernaut. *National Post*. URL: <https://nationalpost.com/features/inside-ezra-levants-rebel-media> [January 20, 2019].