

Ugly Publics

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Abstract. This essay takes up a collaboration between Inuk singer Tanya Tagaq and Greenlandic mask dancer Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory to theorize a form of dominant public I call an “ugly public.” Ugly publics rely on the difference between audiences (the people in the room) and publics (which are not quite people and rely on a series of texts) to come into being. Ugly publics result when a dominant public is pinned down and made to feel feelings associated with minoritarian positionings. Crucially, in ugly publics, these feelings do not result from empathizing with minoritarian subjects but rather from confronting their own dominance.

Given the intensity of Tagaq’s performances and the singer’s own affinity for heavy metal . . . I had thought the gig would feature more of a rock ‘n’ roll crowd, but everyone there seemed quite proper and be-scarfed and classy. I’d half expected to be seeing Tagaq tearing up a basement or smoky club, not a beautifully appointed concert hall.

—Kim Kelly, writing for *Noisey*

In 2014 I found myself watching a YouTube video over and over again. It was a clip of a newscaster interviewing Inuk¹ singer Tanya Tagaq on *The National*, a Canadian national television news program (Tagaq 2014b). Four days before, Tagaq had won the Polaris Music Prize, a prize awarded annually for the best, full-length Canadian album of any genre. At the prize gala, Tagaq had dedicated her performance to missing and murdered Indigenous women, over a thousand names scrolling in black and white on a projection behind her. As the Canadian government itself admits, “although Indigenous women make up 4 per cent of Canada’s female population, 16 per cent of all women murdered in Canada between 1980 and 2012 were Indigenous” (Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs 2015). Tagaq (2014a) herself has had experiences—being

called a “sexy little Indian” and propositioned for sex while walking to lunch in Winnipeg—that she has tweeted about with the hashtag #mmiw. However, as Tagaq points out, it was a comment of hers implicating the lives of seals that the media picked up on: “On a quick sidenote,” Tagaq had said in her prize acceptance speech, “people should wear and eat seal as much as possible. If you imagine an Indigenous culture thriving and surviving on a sustainable resource, wearing seal and eating it—it’s delicious and there’s lots of them and fuck PETA” (“Polaris Music Prize Gala 2014” n.d.).²

Four days later, Tagaq is sitting on a white plastic chair directly opposite the stone-faced newscaster and explaining: explaining that the seal hunt is necessary for Inuit survival, explaining the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women, explaining that many Indigenous communities in Canada still do not have clean drinking water, painting an entire world for the unmoved newscaster in front of her.

“You know?” asks Tagaq rhetorically as she concludes the explaining marathon the newscaster requested, “It’s pretty simple human rights stuff. It’s not rocket science. You know, like?” Tagaq breaks into an exasperated laugh, turning her palms upward as if to invite agreement. For a split second it looks as if the newscaster will agree—she suddenly casts off her stoniness, picks up on Tagaq’s laugh and . . . chuckles it into something entirely different, willful lightheartedness, all flirtation as if to smile Tagaq onto a different track.

“I wanna come back to the throat singing, for a second,” the newscaster says, still smiling, perhaps confident that her derailment of Tagaq was successful.

“Oh, please,” Tagaq says, taking the new route.

“Yeah, enough politics. How do you do that?”

“It feels so good. It feels so good,” says Tagaq quickly, almost too quickly, no beats missed.

That was the section I played and replayed. Each time, I felt my insides sinking, body tensing, sense of reality warping. Each time, my suspicions grew: I suspected that not everyone watching had these icky, sticky, unresolved feelings, feelings approaching what literary theorist Sianne Ngai (2005) calls “ugly feelings.” Further, I suspected that those same people—“not everyone watching”—might, if someone different were in Tagaq’s place, be outraged by how the interviewee was being treated.

I began to work with the affective discrepancy. I transcribed the interview, exchanged Tagaq for the well-known Euro-American composer John Adams, and adapted the contexts accordingly: Tagaq saying that she wanted clean drinking water for Indigenous peoples in Canada became John Adams saying that he just wanted Americans to take 9/11 seriously. The “enough politics, what about the music?” bit elicited John Adams saying, “It feels so good. It feels so good,” and then effusing about compositional techniques. The switch—Adams

for Tagaq—was supposed to, once the outrage subsided, evoke icky, sticky, unresolved feelings in dominant settler publics, specifically in those who I suspected would not otherwise feel them.

What I was trying to do with my transcription, then, was not quite a thought experiment, but more an affective experiment: what would it be for a dominant majority to experience these very particular uncomfortable feelings? In using John Adams's name—and at the time I figured that a composer so famous would not be harmed if his name were used in this way—I hoped to evoke not necessarily him but the swath of dense contexts surrounding him.³ What I was trying to get at with John Adams was not a caricature of the real John Adams and not a stereotype either, but a public: a dominant public. These things that were happening to John Adams in my substitution are not supposed to happen to a dominant public; when they do, that public is not a dominant public, but something else. Might John Adams becoming other-than-John-Adams, I wondered, elicit ugly feelings from dominant publics reading the transcription?

Five years later, however, Tanya Tagaq herself, along with Kalaaleq (Greenlandic Inuk) collaborator Laakkuluk Willamson Bathory had created the right conditions to get dominant publics to feel ugly feelings in a concert hall. It is from this concert hall that this article unfolds to describe a social form that I call an “ugly public”: an ugly public is a form of dominant public that relies on the previous formation of a more stable dominant public. Ugly publics are created when a majority is addressed by a minoritized addresser and is confronted with its own power in a way that reveals the ugliness of that power. An ugly public, unlike a merely dominant public, is a form that can pop as easily as a bubble, a form that materializes under the most specific of conditions. It is also one that I suspect is becoming more common, especially as dominant publics increasingly engage with minoritized artists.

The article brings ugly publics into view by taking up minoritarian and ugly feelings, by differentiating between audiences and publics with an emphasis on how a specific dominant settler public is shaped by performance spaces, by showing how the medium of live performance—where publics become audience members in a concert hall—is vital for creating ugly publics, and by tracking the emergence of a specific ugly public in order to show how an ugly public takes form from a dominant public. To clarify: ugly publics emerge when dominant publics feel their *own* ugly feelings, feelings that arise from their social positionings as publics. Ugly publics are *not* formed by dominant publics empathizing their way into feeling the ugly feelings of minoritized publics.

My own body—settler and brown—does work in this essay. It is what shores up the difference between audience and publics: I am not white, and I do not become white even when I am in a room full of white people. I *can*, however, become part of white publics even as I remain a brown person in a particular

audience. At the same time, my body also shores up a different difference: between race and Indigeneity. At this moment in my thinking, I apply the term “settler” to myself to name what Amy Fung calls “the complicated complicity that every migrant new and old to Turtle Island holds” (2021:118). In so doing, though, I want to be cautious about the homogenizing effects of applying the heuristic “settler” to every non-Indigenous person of color. As Jodi Byrd attempts to do with the term “arrivant,” I hope also to “make messy the presumed circuits of white supremacist nationalism underlying certain strands of settler colonial studies that relegate Indigenous peoples to elimination, refugees to settlers, and descendants of slaves to settler adjacents” (2019:210) even as I identify myself as a settler audience member and, at this concert, part of a settler public.⁴

In the concert that I describe in this essay, I become part of the dominant public, a public that is characterized as white as well as settler. I join this public by buying a twenty-nine-dollar ticket and sitting down in the seat in the concert hall. I then become part of the ugly public when it materializes out of the dominant public. However, as a member of the audience (rather than public), a collection of individuals, my brownness still mattered (as in, materialized) in my encounters with the performers. In a way, then, this essay provides an opening into the affective dimensions of the difference between audiences and publics. This distinction is important because it allows for a social form—namely, the “public”—that is not about individuals or humans at all, something that we have shied away from in ethnomusicology because it looks like denying the agency of minoritized actors. The essay also does something else very particular: the settler public that I describe has been shaped by things other than our settler-ness and whiteness: we are reading publics, concert-going publics. We have been shaped by and ourselves shape the spaces in which Tagaq’s concerts take place. This essay, then, becomes about these concert-going publics too: what we expect in concert halls, believe about “world music,” and desire from performers, among other things.

Finally, a note on my subject matter: I engage with the work of Tagaq and Laakkuluk here not because I have specialized knowledge or expertise about Inuit expressive culture. Because of the focus on settler publics, understanding the work performed is not the article’s central focus; rather, the focus is on settler publics’ responses. I do not consider my scholarly work to be activism or commensurate with doing the necessary on-the-ground work that settlers are responsible for. However, if the goal here were indeed to dismantle settler colonialism, I believe that it is more effective to delineate ugly publics than to explicate—especially as a settler scholar—Inuit throat singing and Greenlandic mask dancing to mainly settler readers. (Hello, Indigenous readers! I know you are here too.) In this way, my work takes a cue from *Critical Indigenous Studies*, a field “where the object of study is colonizing power in its multiple forms,

whether the gaze is on Indigenous issues or on Western knowledge production” (Moreton-Robinson 2016:4).⁵ That said, while there is much publicly available material especially on Inuit throat singing, there has been less written about *uaajeerneq* or Greenlandic mask dance. Because of this, I have tried to contextualize *uaajeerneq*—not through my own fieldwork but through reading and research. It is important to note that beyond this, I have not been in deep dialogue with the true experts on *uaajeerneq*, those who practice the art form.⁶

From Minoritarian Feelings to Ugly Feelings

When I watched that interview in 2014 with the stony newscaster and explaining marathon, I identified with Tagaq. The visceral sinking feeling that overtook me was familiar. It is what I often feel when I name my reality in a mostly white space and am met with skepticism. In 2022 there is more language for what was happening in the interview with Tagaq: “microaggression” and “racial gaslighting” are terms these feelings could easily attach to. However, even naming the experience that was unfolding does not quite address my identification. Although Indigenous peoples in Canada are racialized, the newscaster’s acts—let’s call them microaggressions—happened along the lines not necessarily of race, but of Indigeneity. To wave away the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, for example, as “politics” is to perpetuate settler colonial violence, specifically. “Settler colonialism,” as Alicia Cox (2017) defines it, “is an ongoing system of power that perpetuates the genocide and repression of indigenous peoples and cultures . . . [and that] normalizes the continuous settler occupation, exploiting lands and resources to which indigenous peoples have genealogical relationships.” In this, there is an important incommensurability between Tagaq and me, an incommensurability that becomes important to the formation of this particular ugly public.

At the same time, the incommensurability between Tagaq and me is different from the incommensurability between Tagaq and white settlers: similarly structured acts along the lines of race are what provided the pedagogy of feeling that attuned me to the dynamics in the 2014 interview. José Muñoz can help here: he posits not only a “brown commons,” but, as Chambers-Letson and Nyong’o point out, “specifically one [that] should not dissolve incommensurability and difference into equivalence” (2020: xxxi). Rather—and Muñoz writes the following thinking specifically about Asians—“a brownness . . . is a co-presence with other modes of difference, a choreography of singularities that touch and contact but do not meld” (2020:138). “Brownness,” he writes, “is coexistent, affiliates, and intermeshes with blackness, Asianness, indigenoussness, and other terms that manifest descriptive force to render the particularities of various modes of striving in the world” (138). What I like about this is that Muñoz is not naming

a coalition necessarily. Rather than a coalition—something I was getting hung up on because I don't know if Tanya Tagaq would feel an affinity with me—brownness via Muñoz gets me to think about “brownness [as a] . . . mode of knowing . . . that correlates with [minoritarian being]” (Chambers-Letson and Nyong'o 2020:xxxii, xxxii). This minoritarian being is what has attuned me to the dynamics of this video, as if out of the corner of my eye. It is what Claudia Rankine identifies in *Citizen*: “You take in things you don't want all the time. The second you hear or see some ordinary moment, all its intended targets, all the meanings behind the retreating seconds, as far as you are able to see, come into focus. Hold up, did you just hear, did, you just say, did you just see, did you just do that?” (2014:55).

By taking up the attenuated, unresolved feelings that come with minoritarian being, I am already approaching, as I mentioned briefly above, what Sianne Ngai (2005) would call “ugly feelings.” Ngai “approaches emotions as unusually knotted or condensed ‘interpretations of predicaments’—that is, signs that not only render visible different registers of problem (formal, ideological, sociohistorical) but conjoin these problems in a distinctive manner” (3). “Ugly feelings” are associated with “a general state of obstructed agency with respect to other human actors or to the social as such” (3). It is important to note that, for Ngai, feelings are not generated solely in racialized or dispossessed people. However, as with the case of racialized or dispossessed people, these feelings do have some relation to power. In my Adams-for-Tagaq switch, then, I was trying to “obstruct the agency” of settler publics in ways that they/we might not be used to feeling. That said, the feelings I attempted to generate in the switch are not specific to settler publics but might also apply to white publics: this is how I felt the “ugly feeling” in the first place. Where I diverge from Ngai is that I focus specifically on obstructions to do with race and settler colonialism, while for Ngai ugly feelings can be “charged with political meaning regardless of whether the obstruction is actual or fantasized, or whether the agency obstructed is individual or collective” (3). To be abundantly clear, “ugly” does not refer to physiognomy—neither the performers' nor the audience members'—or even feelings about physiognomy.

Tagaq and Laakkuluk in Concert

It was March 2018, and my friend Roísín and I stood in line for a long time to get into the smaller concert hall at the Chan Centre on the University of British Columbia campus in Vancouver. The crowd was well-dressed and quiet, artsy in a way that seemed to me distinctively West Coast. I remember feeling self-conscious about my not-well-curated scruffiness as I left the line to go to the drinking fountain, wishing I had thought to wear lipstick or different shoes. I was still ruminating on this in detail as I turned away from the drinking fountain

and headed back to the line: too scruffy for the Western classical concert crowd, not edgy enough for the hipster crowd—and this audience was both. Moreover, they were drinking wine out of real wine glasses. I found Roísín waiting contentedly for me, looking out at the darkening ferns through the curved wall of floor-to-ceiling windows. I joined her on the rich, clean, yellow strip of carpet, and we wove in and out of silence, reminiscing about our shared undergraduate years at UBC and finally remarking on the wine drinkers. Student tickets were twenty-nine dollars, steep for an early career musician and a then-PhD student, so we decided against the much-discussed wine.

When we filed into the venue, glossy programs in hand, I looked around curiously. When people talk about the Chan Centre, they are usually referring to the main concert hall, the Chan Shun, which houses operas, orchestral performances, and graduation ceremonies. This performance's space, the Telus Studio Theatre, was a smaller and more intimate replica of the main hall: perfect for chamber music. And while Tagaq is not a chamber musician, she runs adjacent to chamber musicians, most famously collaborating with the Kronos Quartet. As the last few people filed into the terraces encircling us and the lights began to dim, I kept thinking about what it meant for Tagaq to be performing at a concert hall like this one. Like other spaces in which the Kronos Quartet might perform, the venue in its association not with chamber music specifically but with Western classical music writ large was consistent for Tagaq: she has performed at New York's Lincoln Center, Stanford's Bing Concert Hall, the Banff Centre's Margaret Greenham Theatre, Calgary's Bella Concert Hall, Toronto's Roy Thomson Hall, and Victoria's Alix Goolden Hall, to name a few. These concert halls, in fact, were how many audience members became acquainted with Tagaq. Accustomed to frequenting these concert halls to hear Western classical music, jazz, and world music, the audience members had read of Tagaq through the advertising of specific venues, perhaps choosing tickets to her concerts as part of a season subscription series after reading a blurb such as the following:

Celebrated Inuit throat singer Tanya Tagaq employs exquisite, unnerving vocal improvisations that bridge traditional roots with contemporary culture. Her music is like nothing you've heard before: a contortion of punk, metal and electronica into a complex and contemporary sound. . . . Prepare to experience a boundary-pushing exploration of tone, timbre, texture, and the powerful outer limits of human expression. (Meany Center, n.d.)

By March 2018, however, most of Tagaq's audiences knew Tagaq and were itching to see her. In fact, the sold-out concert Roísín and I were at was added to the schedule after Tagaq's two originally scheduled concerts had sold out. I knew what to expect from Tanya Tagaq: sounds that music critics often describe as "elemental," sounds that quite literally took my breath away when I heard them for the first time over a decade ago. Tagaq's collaborator, Greenlandic

mask dancer Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory,⁷ was the one whom few seemed to know.

The concert began with Tagaq silent. It was Laakkuluk who crouched low in front of us, her face painted black⁸ with oil and soot, the only light coming from the fire she had lit. She began to tell us a story that happened proximate to uajaerneq when people went into tents in the pitch black, played games, and made love to each other. However, as Laakkuluk began to tell a story that obliquely introduced uajaerneq, we didn't all know that we were being included in the uajaerneq that was already unfolding. Unlike other creation stories, this was not a story that we could observe from a distance. As Laakkuluk spoke, the story of what happens in the tent during events associated with uajaerneq became transposed onto the concert hall, the concert hall becoming the inside of the tent. Tagaq began to breathe, to sing, to sing-breathe. "It feels like I'm a filter . . . I'm siphoning [the audience's energy] through my throat and giving it back" (Everett-Green 2014). Tagaq has said of her singing, "I can feel all the energy from all the people in the audience. It comes into my stomach and then out my mouth. I'm feeding off them to make what I'm making" (Everett-Green 2014). Very soon, Tagaq was doing just that "feeding off the audience," her inhales and exhales finding their way into our own bodies, and Laakkuluk was prowling the concert hall on all its levels.

According to Laakkuluk, uajaerneq is supposed to be very funny, very scary, and very sexual: "Greenlanders see that sexuality is a natural expression of being a human being, so uajaerneq really gets into what your boundaries are and how you can accept what other people's boundaries are" (Bathory 2011b). As Laakkuluk goes on to explain uajaerneq historically had value not only as a way of passing long winter nights but also as a pedagogical tool:

What it did was it created a safe place for children to learn what it meant to be in a state of panic. This child would grow up and he would get a kayak or he would start to hunt a walrus or a polar bear or something like that. He would be sitting in his kayak and the weather would be beautiful and all of a sudden the weather would change, and the waves would get a little bit higher and a little bit higher. If you didn't know how to deal with that overwhelming panic inside yourself and quell it a bit, you would get so tense that your kayak would turn over and you would drown in a matter of seconds. (Bathory 2011b)

Uajaerneq is experiencing a revival—which began in the 1970s—after a long period of dormancy due to "missionary and colonial suppressions of Inuit practices" (Preston 2020:151). In other words, what Laakkuluk is doing is, as V. K. Preston puts it, a "sexually charged reimagining of Greenlandic mask-dancing" (144).

At the same, uajaerneq has been associated with something else: a so-called "extinction of the lamps" or *qaminngaarneq* (Sonne 2017:119), and it was this

that Laakkuluk invoked when she told us the story of a brother and sister who, their identities unknown to each other, kept becoming lovers. In the words of someone who immigrated to South Greenland in 1914:

When the lamps are extinguished for this part of the game, a skin curtain is hung in front of the inner end of the house passage and one of those who take no part in the exchanging of wives rattles the curtain in such a way that it drowns the sound of what takes place in the dark. In the meantime, the children remain on the window-platform. When the lamps are lit later on, each man has to be back again with his wife on their common platform place, making pretence that he has not been elsewhere. (Thalbitzer 1914:668 quoted in Sonne 2017:120)

That night in March, like children in kayaks or like monogamous adults finding themselves accidentally at a swingers' party, the audience *did* seem to panic. I could not see Laakkuluk for the first half of the performance. Instead, I heard the audience erupting from different pockets of the hall as Laakkuluk moved, the nervous laughter and scattered gasps signaling that Laakkuluk was likely pressing her breasts close to faces, blowing into ears, gazing into eyes, and perhaps even “mock-ejaculating on [spectators]” (Preston 2020:155).⁹ Laakkuluk has mentioned—primarily on Twitter—performing the first three acts on audience members on other occasions. Close to the end of the concert, I glimpsed movement in the aisle to my left: Laakkuluk approached slowly. By the time she reached my row, she was towering above us, the whites of her eyes glowing in her night-dark face. Coming to rest in front of me, she began to uncoil a scarf from someone's neck. Then another scarf from another neck. And then another and another. We were all seemingly wearing scarves. And Laakkuluk just kept uncoiling them, tying them together slowly and unrelentingly as Tagaq gyrated and moved our breath—in and out, in and out, faster and faster—as if we were panicked. Everyone sat perfectly still, frozen.

Publics, Power, Audiences

This was an intervention on a *public* (not an audience) at the level of the body. Literary theorist Michael Warner classifies audiences as a kind of public, writing, “A public can also be a second thing: a concrete audience, a crowd witnessing itself in visible space, as with a theatrical public. Such a public also has a sense of totality, bounded by the event or by the shared physical space. A performer onstage knows where her public is, how big it is, where its boundaries are, and what the time of its common existence is” (2005:66). However, in considering performance contexts, something that is not at the heart of Warner's project, it is important to make a sharper distinction between audiences and publics.

Audiences, here, are live audiences, or bodies in the room in concert halls. You could count those people, interview them, map their demographics. Publics,

on the other hand, do not lend themselves well to mapping. They are, as Warner would say, “understood to be an ongoing space of encounter for discourse,” and they are created by “the concatenation of texts through time” (2005:90). A text here could be almost anything including a live concert, although you do need more than one live concert to make a public. In other words, a public would not be the total number of individuals who have been to a Tanya Tagaq performance.

So, this intervention transformed the public—it brought another form of public into being: the “ugly public.” Here’s what I mean by this: it can be easy to jump ship when you are described as a member of a public and you don’t like what is being said about that public. I could, for instance, listening to someone onstage address settlers or Canadians, lean back in my seat and think, “But I’m a good settler!” “I’m not *that* kind of Canadian.” Or “They surely are not talking to *me*.” Note that these are all arguably powerful positionings that I’m listing. Of course, this is not so easy in other less powerful positions, for example, when someone has identified you (against your wishes). We know it does no good to tell a police officer, especially if you’re being racially profiled, “I’m not the kind of person you think I am.” What Laakkuluk is doing here, then, is significant: she is not only marking a specific, *dominant* public (a settler audience, a mostly white audience), but also pinning us (or some of us) down at a bodily level (something that does not usually happen along dominant identity lines), not allowing us to jump ship (though perhaps we *are* in danger of flipping our kayaks). I want to suggest that this is important, this holding a dominant majority in place and getting us to confront at a bodily level—by blowing into our ears, tying our scarves together, and so on—our uncomfortable feelings. These feelings are not the pleasurable teary feelings about how we settlers now understand how Indigenous peoples feel in their bodies or how we empathize cathartically with their pain, something Dylan Robinson takes up extensively in *Hungry Listening* (2020). Rather, curiously, these are feelings usually associated with minoritarian subjectivities. They are feelings that do not resolve into blissful catharsis, feelings that are not dramatic or heroically painful, but rather uncomfortably attenuated, feelings that do not resolve. They are ugly feelings. But they are happening to a public that is not supposed to feel those ugly feelings *as* that public.¹⁰

A View from the Chan Centre

Ugly publics are tenuous. Being part of an ugly public means feeling ugly feelings. Without ugly feelings, an ugly public can sink back into merely a dominant public. After shaking off the chill, after turning on the lights and letting the space of the concert hall dissolve into everyday relations, it would be easy (for us, for audiences) to read this concert vis-à-vis other concerts that happen in this venue. Studied through lenses developed for Western classical concerts, this concert

appears simply uncomfortable. It becomes something that was supposed to be avant-garde but failed, or even something disrespectful to audience members who had paid a lot of money to be there. Read as a world music concert—and I use the term “world music” to reference the genre of music marketed to Euro-Western audiences—the concert may appear lacking due to both the absence of a clear explanation of what *uaajeerneq* really was and an absence of literal visibility: we could not see *Laakkuluk* half the time. Or, if we do not read the concert as lacking, we might locate this lack in ourselves: we don’t really understand *uaajeerneq*, and what was happening really was “authentic,” so we just need to develop the “cultural competency” and the correct information with which to read what was going on.

Instead of taking on the lenses that a place like the Chan Centre suggests and instead of delving into *uaajeerneq* in a vacuum, I want to contextualize the audience for which *Laakkuluk*’s version of *uaajeerneq* was meant in that moment. What can we learn about the audience from *uaajeerneq* and the Chan Centre? Clearly this performance was not for Inuit children. *Tagaq* and *Laakkuluk* did not ask us to suspend our disbelief and then perform as if for Inuit children. That kind of performance could read quite differently, as something we could listen in on, somewhat like a lyric address where a poet addresses a poem to a lover even though she intends the poem to be read by a wider audience than just her lover. Or, more sinister for the Inuit in the room: that kind of performance could read quite differently, as something settlers could listen in on, somewhat like interactions between an older Inuk and her child behind the glass of a museum exhibit. If this performance was neither for Inuit children nor for a Euro-Western audience hoping to hear a lyric address of *Laakkuluk* and *Tagaq* to Inuit children, who was it for? It is this “who” that begins to get at publics, yes, but also about the specificity of this particular public. After all, publics are created by some kind of opting in, by investing some form of attention however minimal into a space of discourse (Warner 2005:53).

In the interview I transcribed, *Tagaq* (2014b), explaining the close relationships between Inuit and seal to the newscaster, says, “I find it a little ridiculous that *some people* can take a bite of hamburger from McDonald’s, but if they saw a dead cow on the ground, they’d go, ‘Ewww!’” (emphasis mine). Might the answer to the “Who is it for?” have something to do with *Tagaq*’s “some people”? Or, returning to the epigraph, to Kim Kelly’s (2015) “everyone there,” the “be-scarfed and classy people”?

The question of “some people” (or “everyone there”) may masquerade tantalizingly as one exclusively of identity, suggesting various disciplinary methods. A mission to understand “some people” might provoke a quick flurry of activity to map all these people, to think about them as audience members. Another impulse might be to zoom in on individuals: I might, for example, follow Tanya

Tagaq on her tours and interview audience members at her concerts. I could bolster this method by finding out what Tagaq herself thinks of her audiences, by putting this in dialogue with what her two close collaborators say, and by meticulously combing through concert reviews. While this approach, familiar to ethnomusicologists and anthropologists, addresses concerns about audience stereotypes and creates understandings that may allow individuals nonreductive representation (or a kind of agency), it misses something else that is going on, something that Tagaq's and Laakkuluk's rhetoric points to, by insisting on a particular scale, and, with it, a particular form. To make this more concrete via an image: paintings whose figures we can make out from far away do not always become more meaningful when we step closer and watch recognizable forms disappear into smears of color.

When we stay at a distance from the painting, taking seriously "some people" and "everyone there," Michael Warner (2005) becomes again very helpful. "Dominant publics," he writes, "are by definition those that can take their discourse pragmatics and their lifeworlds for granted, misrecognizing the indefinite scope of their expansive address as universality or normalcy" (122). Counterpublics, in contrast, address "strangers as being not just anybody. They are socially marked by their participation in this kind of discourse; ordinary people are presumed not to want to be mistaken for the kind of person who would participate in this kind of talk or be present in this kind of scene" (120). But at this particular concert another kind of public is emerging: a marked dominant public or an "ugly public" that both relies on histories of address—by Tagaq herself and also by venues like the Chan Centre—and is called into being by an unexpected intervention (like Laakkuluk's) at the somatic level.

I want to argue that it is a dominant public and that public's understandings of and sometimes proclivities for Björk, Indigeneity, multiculturalism, and Canadianness, and for what they deem "authentic" voices that allowed Laakkuluk and Tagaq to mark them, to transform them into ugly publics. It is to these expectations and proclivities that I turn to now.

Legibility as Relation

Any artist must be somewhat legible to be commercially viable. "Legibility," of course, is not a quality that inheres. Derived from the Latin *legere*, to read, legibility depends on who is doing the reading. It is a relational quality. Tagaq's rise to national and international popularity began when she appeared on Björk's *Medúlla*, and that context circumscribes what was initially legible to Tagaq's publics. "Ancestors," the eleventh track, begins with a close-miked sigh of pleasure. Tagaq and Björk use their voices in equal amounts, at equal volumes, and with similar timbres in this song. Their melodic lines sometimes weave in and

out of each other in a way reminiscent of songs like “Unravel,” in which Björk sings both lines herself.

Tagaq, then, is positioned as a kind of fraternal twin of Björk, who is distinguishable from—she is throat singing—but clearly related to Björk. Tagaq can also be read, as a sibling might, as having influence over Björk. Not only is she herself an equal collaborator in “Ancestors,” but her recognizable sound world also seeps into other pieces. “Mouth’s Cradle,” for example, which follows “Ancestors,” incorporates throat singing. Through the powerful ways in which she is associated with Björk, Tagaq becomes another Northern, wild, breathing, individualist feminist. Tagaq is Tagaq the way Björk is Björk. And yet what makes Tagaq Tagaq and not a Björk imitator is her throat singing—not throat singing as a vocal technique, but throat singing as an unmistakable sign and sound of Indigeneity. This is the key difference that holds Tagaq apart from Björk. The sound of throat singing is not a sound that Björk could make by herself. It is Tagaq’s alone. At the same time as Indigeneity (via throat singing) distinguishes Tagaq from Björk and Björk wannabes, allowing Tagaq to stand as “herself,” it brings another heavy demand for legibility. Tagaq must make her Indigeneity legible. “Legible” here means what it usually means: legible to a dominant public. In other words, the key question here is not something like “How does Tagaq’s identity as an Inuk woman show up in her music?” Instead, it is rather something like “What do dominant settler publics think ‘authentic’ Indigeneity is?” In other words, we simply cannot read Tagaq and her performances without knowing with whom she is in relationship and to whom she must make herself legible.

Throat Singing, Patron Discourse, and Essential Voices

“There was no question,” writes ethnomusicologist Beverley Diamond, “that, when I first studied this Inuit music 30 years ago, my imagination, and that of fellow scholars and musicians alike, was drawn to the fact that it was radically different from any type of popular or classical Western vocal production that we knew. We bought and became part of the exoticizing patron discourse” (2007:174). “Patron discourse,” Penny van Toorn’s (1990) term, is in Dunbar-Hall’s and Gibson’s words, “a set of normative expectations and ways of listening in non-Aboriginal society, within which minority voices must struggle for audience” (2004:25). Patron discourse, then, acts like a robust filter: for a song, academic article, painting, or book to make it into what van Toorn calls “the public domain,” patrons must recognize it somehow.

According to Diamond, the “‘patron discourse’ of indigenous music emphasizes ‘unusual’ timbres, spiritual beliefs, or distinctive social practices” (2007:173). In other words, an Indigenous person performing what a dominant

public deems “authentic” Indigenous music is much more attractive to that dominant public than an Indigenous person performing music that does not overtly read as Indigenous. This, argues Diamond, is what allows a form like Inuit throat singing to become globalized while Native American rock music has not been. Thinking about Indigenous musics through an identity studies lens runs the risk of reproducing the logics of patron discourse by focusing on modes of Indigeneity that have become legible to patrons. Instead, Diamond suggests that we look at the feedback loop between Indigenous music production and non-Indigenous expectations: “Expectations feed practice: indigenous musicians, themselves, now often try to combine exoticisms” (173). The question of what Indigeneity and Indigenous musics are is far from straightforward (and not for me to decide!), but, for mainstream publics or patrons, throat singing becomes one of the strongest and surest sounds of Indigeneity.

That Tagaq’s throat singing is what makes her undeniably “authentic”—“authenticity itself being a problematic concept” (Weiss 2014:507)—and specifically “authentically” Indigenous hooks into what I would argue is many dominant patrons’ ideas of what voices are. From the advertisements of voice teachers to writings like Adriana Cavarero’s *For More Than One Voice* (2005), the pairing of the words “unique” and “authentic” with voices is ubiquitous and does much unseen work on our conceptions of voice. But for mainstream publics, when uniqueness and authenticity meet difference, there are problems. For example, in a situation in which we believe in racialized voices, “authentic” often ends up meaning that someone’s voice matches our conception of what we think they *should* sound like. If it does, again and again and again, that sound becomes naturalized.¹¹

My point is not to say that Tagaq is not a “real” throat singer or that anyone take up throat singing willy-nilly but rather that being an Inuk is not enough to be able to throat sing just as being white is not enough to be able to sing operatically. Again, the processes that get Tagaq to throat singing seem to be collapsed for her publics. Intuitive, instinctive, primordial—the words that journalists use over and over to describe her singing—those words seem to obscure an understanding of how throat singing works.¹² Tagaq’s throat singing, then, anchors her in her publics’ eyes as unquestionably Indigenous: Tagaq is not an experimental singer who just “happens to be” an Inuk; her *voice* is an Inuk voice.

Tagaq as Canadian

Perhaps counterintuitively, especially since many Indigenous peoples living in the settler state that dispossessed them of their lands do not identify as Canadian, Tagaq’s specifically Northern Indigeneity positions her perfectly to be read by settlers as Canadian in particular. Northernness is deeply important to Canada’s

identity, especially in distinguishing it from the United States. As literary scholar Sherrill Grace puts it, “To celebrate the North as a symbol of national unity and Canadian identity is to make a virtue of geographical reality and socio-economic necessity, to differentiate us from the United States” (2002:67). In the national anthem and on the T-shirts I have noticed proliferating in the past few years, Canada is “the truth North, strong and free.” Canadian children ridicule Americans, thus differentiating themselves from Americans, for not understanding the North: “They think Canadians live in igloos.” By these logics, Tagaq’s Inukness places her squarely within Canada. Also, under these logics, settler colonialism conveniently disappears from view.

We see this conflation of Canadianness and Inuitness, specifically, at work in the Inukshuk logo chosen in 2005 for the 2010 Vancouver Olympics. An inuksuk, as it is known in Inuktitut, is a kind of cairn used by First Peoples in the Arctic. Northernness in general, and specifically Tagaq’s Northernness, work in other ways too: in a sleight of hand, Tagaq becomes to Canada what Björk is to Iceland. False equivalence as this is, Tagaq can similarly be used to link Canada to European countries that extend north into boreal territory: Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark. These are the countries that have particular cultural capital for liberal Canadians: they’re nice; they have healthcare; they get along (but are mostly white). If, as Philip Bohlman argues in “Musical Borealism,” “the Nordic and the European enter into a common selfness that is modulated through related dialectics of otherness,” the Canadian is able to enter a common selfness with the European aided by its own dialectics of otherness with its own North, as well as its status as a commonwealth country (2017:40). We do sing “God Save the King” at some of our most ceremonial of ceremonial events.

It is crucial to note that when Tagaq gets read as “Canada’s Björk” (Ladouceur 2014) or “polar punk” (Khaleeli 2015) by journalists, she avoids being positioned, as she could easily be, as “multicultural performer.”¹³ This identity would cast her as one more in a perceived-to-be faceless and interchangeable lineup of musicians who represent the diverse mosaic that Canada values as a decorative periphery to a strong core of whiteness. She also, at least initially, avoided being positioned as one in a community of Indigenous performers. As Byron Dueck, writing about genres like country music, gospel, and fiddle music, asserts: “Mainstream musicians and audiences often perceive infelicities in the music that fills indigenous public spaces. Many hear an absence of professionalism or a failure to live up to dominant aesthetic standards” (2013:11). Reading this perception as a problem to do with “the broader public,” Dueck argues that “these [musical] failures are sometimes understood to index a broader, racialized abjection” (11), a sentiment echoed so often in public forums that the comments for stories in the “Indigenous” section of CBC News’s website remain closed.

Inuit throat singing, which is traditionally not a song performance but rather a game for two women played until one player succeeds in dislodging the other player from her groove, runs the risk of appearing amateurish to the “broader public.” While mainstream Western musicians are taught to disguise errors for the sake of a performance, throat singing is supposed to end with an “error,” often resulting in peals of laughter from the players.

In other words, Tagaq cannot be changed either for the position of other nonwhite people or of other Indigenous peoples. Note that talking about Indigenous peoples runs the risk of laying bare the violence of settler colonialism, something that must remain occluded for a celebratory Canadian nationalism to flourish. One slip and the national anthem’s “our home and native land” becomes “our home *on* native land.” Tagaq is still an “other,” but, unlike other “others,” she is the nation state’s “other.” All of this gives dominant Canadian publics reasons to like Tagaq without having Tagaq threaten their Canadian national identity.

Retribution

At that concert in March 2018, I remember feeling thrilled by and a little afraid of the idea of Laakkuluk—tall and commanding, face blackened with paint—stalking around in the dark, ready to pounce on us as if the fourth wall had never really existed. Suddenly people who I suspected would ordinarily feel at home in concert hall spaces seemed deeply uncomfortable. I, conversely, felt something I had never felt in this space or any like it: whether or not this was justified, even as I understood my nonwhite self to be very much a part of the ugly public, I felt protected by my liminality. I watched Laakkuluk approach a woman who I guessed was Japanese Canadian and begin to rock back and forth in front of her. The woman did not shrink. Instead, she gazed back, intensely but not aggressively, listening intently, rocking back and forth in complement, Tagaq’s panting, grunting, writhing, and singing directing the room’s breath. I found myself wondering whether it was years of being marked and maybe even histories of violence that had taught this racialized woman how not to shrink, how to stay upright in her kayak when the waves became rough.

The next week, Laakkuluk posted on Twitter about a performance she and Tagaq gave in Toronto a few days later: “Last night, during our concert, I stared at an elderly be-pearled woman until she covered her face with a scarf and whispered, ‘This is dangerous.’ I felt flanked by the music and a thousand Inuit souls” (Bathory 2018b). Likely expecting to be a spectator, the “elderly be-pearled woman,” presumably white, was instead unsettled in a bodily way against her will and without warning—this in a space designed for the entertainment of white settlers like herself, this by an Indigenous woman who knows that her

own body reflects those that settlers have routinely denied, ignored, sterilized, experimented upon, and murdered.

While Audre Lorde ([1984] 2007) would say that “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house,” Eve Tuck and C. Ree (2013) point us in different and disturbing directions, and it is their “A Glossary on Haunting” that I turn to here. The writers compare American horror films to Japanese ones in order to discuss the concept of haunting, eventually theorizing settler horror. In American horror films, the heroes are supposed to be innocent. In Japanese horror, however, “because the depth of injustice that begat the monster or ghost is acknowledged, the hero does not think herself to be innocent, or try to achieve reconciliation or healing, only mercy” (641). Settler horror, then, for Tuck and Ree involves a particular kind of ugly feeling: “the looming but never arriving guilt, the impossibility of forgiveness, the inescapability of retribution” (642). Following Tuck and Ree, Laakkuluk seems to be haunting us, the ugly public. “[Haunting] is the price paid for violence, for genocide” (643). “Revenge requires symmetry with the crime” (644). Therefore, Laakkuluk is making settlers, especially Euro-Canadians, feel uncomfortable in their skins, without explicit consent, making them feel uncomfortable because of sexual acts, putting them on edge knowing that she might come around but not knowing when. This she does in classical concert halls, venues that feel clearly their territory although these venues sit on Indigenous lands.

The behavior required in concert halls reinforces Tagaq’s and Laakkuluk’s work, especially since “total silence and as nearly as possible total immobility are enjoined,” and since audience members are to be “non-active participants in the event” (Small 1987:10). Tagaq, who in previous performances seemed settler-facing but alone in her Inukness, now had a partner—not a throat singing companion but almost. The rhetoric of this performance is not the same rhetoric that she used in her 2014 interview, the “*all* Canadians need clean drinking water,” type of enlightenment-esque logic.

“Revenge,” write Tuck and Ree, “is wronging wrongs, a form of double-wronging. You [and the ‘you’ is an Indigenous ‘you’], like me, have been guided/god-girled away from considering revenge as a strategy of justice” (2013:654). Suddenly, Tagaq had a playmate, and anything could happen. She provided the sonic space and container for Laakkuluk’s dance and she seemed as ecstatic as Laakkuluk, perhaps also “flanked by the music and a thousand Inuit souls” (Bathory 2018b).

In 2014, on *The National* and elsewhere, Tagaq had talked about reconciliation. Broadly speaking, reconciliation refers to the reparation of relationships between First Peoples and Canadian settlers. As promising as it sounds, many are skeptical about the project of reconciliation, especially since it is the Canadian government that has been framing, defining, and advertising reconciliation. The

Walking Eagle News, a satirical Indigenous news site, parodies the Canadian government's mobilization of reconciliation for its own aims:

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau marked the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples by saying something about "meaningful reconciliation."

"Something something something meaningful reconciliation," Trudeau said. "Something something something Indigenous rights legislation, something something something vote Liberal."

Trudeau told a reporter he didn't understand the question when asked whether "meaningful reconciliation" meant giving at least some land back to First Nations. ("Trudeau Marks World People's Indigenous Day" 2018)

Similarly, Yellowknives Dene scholar Glen Coulthard argues that the "host of rights specific to Indigenous communities" that Canada has "[recognized] over the last forty years" function as "evidence of [the Canadian nation state's] ultimately just relationship with Indigenous communities, even though this recognition continues to be structured with the colonial power interests in mind" (2014:155). Métis scholar David Garneau observes that even the "choice of the word 'reconciliation' over 'conciliation,'" the "re" suggesting the existence of a "previously existing harmonious relationship," "[imposes] the fiction that equanimity was the status quo between Indigenous people and Canada" (2016:30). By March 2018, then, Tagaq had produced an album called not "reconciliation," but *Retribution*. And why retribution, she was asked. "Because reconciliation is too slow, because it's not happening" (Tagaq 2017). Laakkuluk said something similar. When asked about her and Tanya's "tackling themes of reconciliation and retribution," Laakkuluk skirts the question saying, "Tanya and I talk and talk and talk" (Bathory 2018a). By March 2018, Tagaq and Laakkuluk are speaking to publics shaped by the goal of reconciliation and the ideal of Canadian multiculturalism. However, Tagaq and Laakkuluk are not necessarily addressing them within that framework of reconciliation or Canadian multiculturalism. Perhaps they show mercy to some settlers, but it is mercy rather than "all getting along."

Yet it is dominant publics' conceptions of Indigeneity and multiculturalism that makes possible Tagaq's and Laakkuluk's intervention. Under Canadian multiculturalism, Laakkuluk should be able to practice *uaajeernej*, an Indigenous cultural practice. That *uaajeernej* is a Kalaaleq cultural practice supports Laakkuluk's painting her face black.¹⁴ Because of anti-Black violence, Euro-Canadians would likely not (with good reason) be able to do this, although Black people and non-Black people of color who can trace their performance practices to something other than minstrelsy *would* likely be able to paint their faces black. *Uaajeernej* as culture is also what allows the not-verbally-consented-upon sexual acts, especially since these acts characterize *uaajeernej* as an art form. A Euro-Canadian experimental or avant-garde performance could not do this without

more explicit consent. It is Euro-Canadian conceptions of Indigeneity and the multicultural ideal that cultural practices should be respected, then, coupled with concert hall spaces and histories, that allow a performance like this to happen. Yet while this performance may be cultural, it is not “cultural” in the sense of Canadian multicultural, curated for appreciation by Euro-Canadian publics. It draws attention to Canadian settler-colonial history by making those histories apparent via the marking of every body in the room and the eliciting of ugly feelings from specific, non-Indigenous bodies.

It is worth pointing out here that publics—and counterpublics, too—seem to have a particular affect attached to them, a positive valence for those who belong to them. Warner, in differentiating a public from persons, writes, “To address a public, we don’t go around saying the same thing to all these people. We say it in a venue of indefinite address and hope that people will find themselves in it” (2005:86). But what if people can’t find themselves in it? The ugly public, crucially, will not find itself until pinned down as an audience. But let me continue with Warner.

Crucially, Warner (2005) identifies a specific kind of public who are used to reading in a Western tradition. There is a stance that we have learned *as* these publics: “Individual readers who participate in this discourse learn to place themselves, as characterized types, in a world of urbane social knowledge, while also ethically detaching themselves from the particular interests that typify them, turning themselves into the reading subjects of a widely circulating form” (105). These are the reading publics, the ones who also go to concert halls and art galleries. Warner also writes that these reading publics come with a naturalized “critical reading” stance. In the case at hand, the focus is on a public who understands a particular mode of address. They are coming to concert halls to be addressed in a way that allows them to find themselves in the address. Only, in Tagaq’s and Laakkuluk’s performance, they are not addressed this way. Tagaq, along with Laakkuluk, pins them down and makes them visible to themselves. She addresses the people in the public. And she can do this because of a history of public address, because this concert hall is this public’s home, because Tanya Tagaq is part of the subscription, and even because Tagaq herself used to address this public differently, for example, in her earliest collaboration with Björk. It is precisely all of the other contexts and texts and discourses—those things that a public needs in order to take shape—that allow this concert to happen. They allow a transmutation of a dominant public, via their bodies in the room as an audience, into a different kind of public, an ugly public.

Afterward

What happens to the relations set up in the concert hall when the concert is over? Do they disappear? The audience, of course, flows out of the concert hall when

the concert ends. The ugly public, without being actively addressed by Tagaq and Laakkuluk, also dissolves. Who are we, those audience members who were addressed together as an ugly public, now? Who do we become when we leave?

The “we,” no longer held together by an address, is tricky. “We” are mostly white and mostly settler. However, “we” may also be—among other things—brown, Black, and Indigenous, refugee and migrant, descendants of those who were enslaved. I suspect that some audience members, Inuit or otherwise, might easily shake off an address that they were never meant to absorb, might even emerge glowing with the kind of elation that seemed to suffuse Tagaq and Laakkuluk. And the rest of us? It is hard to say, to speak about everyone. But I’ll speak here about a “we” that prompted the address from Tagaq and Laakkuluk in the first place.

After we leave the concert hall, something may have shifted at a somatic level, even just slightly. Maybe inside us a small grotto is being carved. If we stay with that opening, something felt but not yet named might begin to grow. Thoughts and actions—like mosses, ferns, lichens—might slowly take root here, from our bodies, from our felt experience, from our shared ugliness. But this is a choice.

There are other things that could happen. Some of us might, the order of things returned to their everyday hierarchies, turn sharply away from what we glimpsed. We might insist that we were wronged, our bodily sovereignty intruded upon. We may even feel justified in an intensifying vitriol toward Indigenous peoples. A few of us might not currently feel safe enough in our everyday lives to take the experience into ourselves, might store it untouched until we are ready to process it, if ever. In some of us perhaps an appetite for fear—a feeling that can oscillate between thrill and horror—has begun to grow: shock rock concerts are where we might go next. Or perhaps a desire for erotic performance: we might seek this out at a strip club or, in a turn toward exoticism, develop a desire to engage in the dimming of the lights, old-time Greenlandic style. Most of these responses involve a turning away, however slight, from the discomfort and fear of those moments when Laakkuluk approached. What would it be, for those of us who are able, to stay there? What would it be to remain ugly? To sit with the ugliness? To breathe into the ugliness? To leave the concert hall *as if* part of an ugly public, not *just* an ugly public—we do contain multitudes—but ugly nonetheless, our ugliness a somatic reminder of power we have yet to transmute, release, turn over.

Acknowledgments

My deepest thanks to Philip V. Bohlman, Peter McDonald, and Kaley Mason for key support early on; to Lee Veeraraghavan, Dan Wang, and Yun Emily Wang for long, fruitful discussions about these ideas; to writing group members Kristina Huang, Juliet Hyunh, LiLi Johnson, Eileen Lagman, James McMaster, and Jennifer Nelson for critical, encouraging feedback; to Susan Cook,

Anaar Desai-Stephens, two anonymous peer reviewers, and journal editor Kate Brucher for invaluable suggestions at the later stages; to Jessica Swanston Baker, Twila Bakker, Danielle Roper, and Lindsay Wright for writing companionship; and to John Walsh for support in all ways. Versions of this article were presented at the School of Music at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, the EthNoise! Workshop at the University of Chicago, the Department of Music at Northwestern University, the Department of Music at the University of Pittsburgh, and as an Irna Priore Music and Culture Lecture at the University of North Carolina–Greensboro. Thank you to the organizers and attendees.

Notes

1. “Inuk” is the singular of “Inuit.”
2. For more about Tagaq’s defense of the seal hunt and her Polaris Prize win, see Woloshyn (2017).
3. Ultimately, I abandoned this transcription and substitution, deciding that there was a kind of violence (however subtle) to asking John Adams to become a stand-in for a public.
4. This stands in contrast with what Tuck and Yang (2012) would call a “settler move to innocence.”
5. It is important to note that Critical Indigenous Studies in Moreton-Robinson’s definition is a field of knowledge produced by Indigenous peoples. In other words, I am not writing from within Critical Indigenous Studies but rather from a place of attunement *to* Critical Indigenous Studies.
6. When I began working on this material in 2017, both Tagaq and Laakkuluk had agreed to do interviews with me, but, I suspect due to busy schedules, these never took place.
7. From here on, I call Laakkuluk by her first name because this is how she refers to herself on her promotional materials.
8. According to Bathory, “The dancer covers his or her face with black and red paint . . . the black in the mask symbolizes the limits of human experience in the unknowable immensity of the universe. Red is a symbol of female sexuality” (2011a:10). Because this performance is not a caricature of Blackness, nor is it “[restaging] the seizure and possession of the black body for the other’s use and enjoyment” (Hartman [1997] 2022:47), nor “a game of artifice whereby blackness is made present as racial distortion” (Roper 2019:387), following scholars of blackface, I do not view this as blackface and do not use the term here.
9. Laakkuluk does talk elsewhere about nonverbal consent: “Of course, when you’re dealing with themes of sexuality and fear and humour, you’re breaking boundaries,” she says. “I make sure I move through an audience in a way that they accept and consent. It’s very much not a verbal thing, but it happens once we make eye contact. It’s scary for everybody. A lot of mask dance is the reaction of the audience as I work with them” (Smith 2018).
10. Of course, they might experience those ugly feelings as individuals or in other situations.
11. See Eidsheim (2019). See also T. Carlis Roberts for his theorization of “sono-racialization,” “a process of racial definition that sutures sound to racial meaning within a larger system” (2016:34).
12. For more on journalists’ uptake of Tanya Tagaq, see Taylor-Neu (2018) and Woloshyn (2017).
13. In fact, Sophie Stévançe argues that “artists such as Tagaq represent the emergence of a new genre: ethno-pop,” a term that “refers to cultural practices of individuals from isolated communities who are granted access to an international artistic movement and network that presents a new balance between the values of their communities of origin and those that are transnational” (2017:55–56).
14. Incidentally, recent photos of Laakkuluk show that she has been adding more red to her uaaajeernejq mask and scraping out more lines, perhaps to avoid having photos of her circulate out of context and be taken as blackface.

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