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Daena J. Goldsmith, Leah Lovett, Jinny Menon, Trina Greene
Brown, Josephine L. Savarese, Tiffany Anderson and many more

“Angry ...and Hurt and ... Just Messed Up” and Still Fighting: Analyzing the Mothering Activism of Vivian Tuccaro, Mother of Amber Tuccaro

Protest ... occupation? We have also understood these actions as presencing ... witnessing. Thinking through these times, encircling their consciousness—ever since receiving the location codes to the cypher. They carry on, glyphed into cosmogonies tracing futures. An embodied slipstream of future kinning.

—Karyn Recollet, “Choreo” 29

This article contributes to the growing body of research on grieving mothers who have turned to activism to publicize the loss of a loved one, to raise awareness, and to advocate for justice (Baydar and Iwegen; Bejarano; Burchianti; Karaman; Savarese). In publicizing their grief, the mothers stressed that their loved ones were persons whose loss was deeply felt. Mothering scholars and advocates have demonstrated how the women effectively used their collective suffering as a basis for social change (e.g., Karaman).

This article analyzes Alberta-based mother, Vivian Tuccaro, who has advocated for justice on behalf of her daughter, Amber Tuccaro, since she disappeared over a decade ago. In this article, Vivian Tuccaro’s advocacy, supported by her son, Paul, and her community, is scrutinized for its lessons on the promotion of justice in the aftermath of a daughter’s disappearance. This article highlights the Tuccaro family’s grief as, tragically, one of many families affected by the loss of a murdered daughter. It also stresses their work to commemorate Amber’s life. As the article discusses, the Tuccaro family’s advocacy has taken many forms, including participating in news conferences and news stories, filing a complaint regarding law enforcement failings, establishing Facebook pages, testifying before national forums, and hosting memorial

round dances, which is a particular focus of this paper. The memorial dances are a demonstration of decolonial grief that remaps mourning into spaces, thereby unsettling some of the dominant ordering and indifference that propels violence. As Karyn Recollet states “Indigenous round dances that produce spatial tags are symbologies of Indigenous motion. As such, they become tremendously meaningful as filling rupturous spaces with love” (“Glyphing” 136).

Article Overview

This article begins by summarizing some of the literature that informed this examination of mothering activism from a geographical perspective. It draws attention to the fact that Amber Tucarro’s death is one of the many disappearances of Indigenous women in the Edmonton region, thereby presenting space and place as central analytical factors that influence safety. The article also investigates the memorial round dances held from 2014 to 2017 as a ceremonial form of bodily, space-claiming activism that steps into what we may label the future present. The article concludes by considering the ways geographies conspire with violence and horror as well as the potential of spatial resistance or “spatial tagging,” as described by Indigenous scholar Karyn Recollet, to aid in land reclamation. Along with other writers, Recollet’s work provides insight into mothering activists, such as Vivian Tucarro, who simultaneously perform the work of outrage, grief, mourning, survivance, and love.

Vivian Tucarro’s anger towards the dominant society’s indifference to Indigenous deaths and the disinterest shown to Amber’s disappearance is presented here as an important example of mothering activism. In the words of Daniel Møller Ølgaard, Vivian Tucarro might be seen as engaging in an “ethics of resistance” (122)—a concept that he develops based on his understanding of various theorists, most notably Foucault, who used the term “games of truth” to describe challenges to power (123). Møller Ølgaard’s claim that advocates resist and recreate dominant truths seems to be realized in Vivian Tucarro’s work. At a press conference in July 2019, for example, Tucarro asserted that persons withholding information had “blood on their hands.” To the assailant, she said: “You will be caught. You will. I don’t care how long it takes.” She also stated “We are not going away. We will keep searching until you are caught” (qtd. in Narine, “Mother”) (Omstead).

Literature Review: The Fast Violence of Homicide

Vivian’s advocacy helps to shed more light on the implications and erasures connected to the utilization of space as well as the importance of securitizing Indigenous land to promote safety for women and marginalized populations. Mothers like Vivian Tucarro demand safety. They seem to protest the

differentiation between “safe and dangerous, legal and illegal, inside and outside,” which made their daughters and loved ones vulnerable to violent victimization to the point of homicide (Amoore and Hall 94). This article is situated within “a wider geographical literature concerning the power relations” inherent in geographical ways to honour the dead or “the spatiality of funerary and memorial practices” (Hunter 259). Geographer Edward Soja is a leading proponent of the view that justice is possessed of a “consequential geography, a spatial expression” that extends beyond merely operating as “a background reflection or set of physical attributes to be descriptively mapped” (1). Soja sees spatial justice primarily as an analytical framework that stresses the role of space—whether actual or ideological—in creating justice and injustice.

By theorizing Vivian Tucarro’s mothering advocacy from a geographical lens, this article contributes to the scholarship on what critical geographer Noam Leshem calls “spatial activism,” or an advocacy related to the use of space (“Profile”). Drawing from Leshem, Tucarro’s efforts are analyzed as “necrogeographical activism,” a term he uses to describe Palestinian activism about retaining their burial spaces (“Over” 42). As Leshem points out, burial grounds have played an important role in affirming communal identity for marginalized, racialized communities who are struggling against land dispossession (35). Although scholarly language may seem clinical in the sorrow-laden context of a mother’s grief, it also provides theoretical insights into the spaces of mothering advocacy. For Leshem, the importance of placing resistance under scrutiny can be partially attributed to the fact that these actions occur in ghostly, unsettled places, or what he labels the “ambiguous position (literally) between the living and the dead” (36). Using explicit language, Leshem invites us to ponder what role “the *dead body*, in its corporeal form [and] through its spatial and material representations” might play in the “everyday order of power” (36). His work helps expose the structures that Vivian Tucarro challenges and disrupts by affirming her daughter’s worthiness.

This discussion of the danger of remote areas highlights “the political role of death *places*,” thereby drawing attention to “extensive patterns of oppression” that undergird their existence (“Over” 42). This article brings attention to the “resilient layers of political and cultural activism that stand against their perpetuation” (42). In contrast to “larger scales of operation,” these contested sites bring into greater focus “the agency of the occupied,” the activism of Indigenous women, as well as “the alliances built through a shared experience of place,” experienced by allies working against violence (42). As Leshem makes clear, the “critical ‘placing’” this article explores may mobilize the “more radical conceptualization of necrogeographical politics and contestation,” which seem to ground women’s and mothers’ activism (42). This article carefully reads Vivian Tucarro’s story to uncover revelations regarding what

Leshem has labelled “the lived experience of deathscapes” (“Over” 36) —the close proximity to sites where deaths have occurred.

Because Leshem underscores the importance of microresistance to geo-, necro- and biopolitical governance and power, his work is particularly helpful to this analysis of mothering activism. Mothers also work to oppose the deathly, macro- and microstructures Leshem discusses. Mothers act by mobilizing public outrage against the political forces that have transformed Indigenous lands into dangerous and deathly spaces. Mothers have helped us see the human consequences of what scholars have labelled the “slow violence” of environmental degradation (Sandlos and Keeling), housing dispossession (Pain), or what I label, the “fast violence of homicide” given the speed in which a criminal fatality may occur.

Overview: Some Aspects of Amber’s Story

The case and Amber Tuccaro’s life story have received considerable news coverage. As a result, it is well known that Amber disappeared and was killed near Edmonton. The young mother of one travelled to Nisku, Alberta, in August 2010 with a friend and with her then infant son, Jacob. She was last seen in the early evening leaving the motel room to travel to Edmonton with an unknown male. Although the family believed Amber would be located alive, their hopes were destroyed when some of her remains were found two years later in a field in rural Leduc Country, thirty-five kilometres south of Edmonton. At the time of this writing, the case remains unsolved.

Given the family’s strong bonds, it is not surprising that Amber was reported missing shortly after she was last seen. Her mother, Vivian, reported she began to worry when her daughter failed to maintain regular contact with her through texting and Facebook. Although Vivian’s fears about her daughter’s safety proved accurate, the RCMP members who answered the original calls doubted Amber was in danger. They informed the family that Amber would return home and that it was policy not to place an individual onto a missing persons list until they were gone for twenty four hours. Eventually, Amber was placed on the list. Her name remained on the list until an informant incorrectly claimed to have seen her in Edmonton.

During the period after Amber’s disappearance, her possessions were taken by law enforcement from the Nisku Inn where she had deposited them prior to her departure. In a complaint regarding the RCMP’s treatment, the family stated that a photograph of Amber’s possessions was emailed to Vivian Tuccaro, in violation of policy and respectful practice. Amber’s mother reported that she felt “disturbed and traumatized” by this approach (“Complaint of Ms. Vivian Tuccaro” qtd. in Moshuk). She described the decision not to present the photographs to her in person as “uncaring”

(“Complaint”). Regardless of their preciousness as remnants of Amber’s life as well as their value as clues, the items were destroyed. This decision might have hampered the investigation by eliminating real evidence regarding Amber’s last moments. Amber’s oldest brother, Paul Tuccaro, informed the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Women and Girls that his mother longed for her daughter’s possessions. The family had personally requested a public apology from the RCMP, but the request was declined (Weber, “Murdered”). No consequences or sanctions resulted from the destruction of the evidence, even though the officers’ actions impeded an investigation into a serious crime.

Amber’s case has been highly publicized, partly due to the flawed investigation (Dykstra). The RCMP’s Project KARE, a unit based in Edmonton that handles cases of murdered or missing people in Alberta, eventually took over the investigation. To aid the homicide investigation, billboards featuring Amber’s picture and name were posted near her home in Alberta. The billboards showed a picture of Amber and asked the public to visit the RCMP’s Project Kare website to see if they recognized a particular voice that can be overheard on it. Amber’s last cell phone conversation was with her brother. The brother was incarcerated at the time of the call, therefore the conversation was recorded by the institution. The audio recording that the police made public highlighted a verbal exchange between Amber Tuccaro and the driver, who is believed to be the perpetrator of the homicide.

Amber’s mother, Vivian Tuccaro has also acknowledged that she will serve as “Amber’s voice” for the duration of her lifetime (Narine, “Final Memorial”). The knowledge that her actions matter to other families is a prime motivation for her continued advocacy. It gives her strength to help another family (Narine, “Final Memorial”). In recent interviews, the family has described their ongoing disappointment that the homicide remains unresolved, especially given the 2018 finding that the police investigation was inadequate. Amber’s family has presented her death as an example of indifference and cruelty, not as a by-product of Amber’s so-called risky lifestyle—since the killer has not been identified and the settler state agents failed to vigorously investigate her disappearance. Emma W. Laurie and Ian G.R. Shaw remind us that “In many instances, death through structural violence is the result of a series of social and political processes that can make life killable *prior* to any act” (9).

An Apology for the Investigation into the Death of Amber Tuccaro

In 2014, the family filed a complaint with the Chair of the Commission for Public Complaints against the RCMP, arguing that the investigation was insensitive and poorly handled (Cook). Following the complaint, the Commission issued a report in August 2018. It concluded that the police force’s investigation was deficient and held that certain officers failed to follow

policies, procedures, and guidelines (Cook). The Commission was also concerned that four months had passed before the RCMP interviewed Tuccaro about the disappearance of her daughter. The Commission recognized that this oversight was “unreasonable and unexplained” (Omstead).

The report also included seventeen recommendations aimed at improving the RCMP’s responsiveness to missing person’s cases. One call was for a public apology to the Tuccaro family for the mistakes made in response to Amber’s disappearance. Amber’s oldest brother, Paul, said the family was relieved when the report was released. The report confirmed in “black and white” that “what should have been done wasn’t done” (qtd. in Narine, “RCMP”). For Paul Tuccaro, an effective law enforcement response might have changed the outcome. It might have meant that his sister would have been “back at home taking her son to school and living out her life as God intended it to be” (qtd. in Narine, “RCMP”).

On July 25, 2019, commanding officers of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) offered a public apology to Vivian Tuccaro and her family for their handling of the investigation into her daughter’s disappearance and murder (Weber, “Not Our”). At the news conference, Alberta RCMP Deputy Commissioner Curtis Zablocki addressed the family on behalf of the RCMP and stated that he was “truly sorry” (Weber, “Not Our”). He affirmed that mistakes were made by law enforcement. Deputy Commissioner Zablocki fully acknowledged that the early days of the “investigation into Amber’s disappearance ... required a better sense of urgency and care” (Martens). In the days leading up to the RCMP’s public statement, Vivian Tuccaro described the apology as an important step, but it needed to be followed by intensified efforts to investigate missing persons cases (Weber, “Not Our”). Although the apology was long anticipated, it was met with disappointment by the Tuccaro family. In fact, Tuccaro was outraged when the officers exited the premises immediately after their statements, citing previous commitments as the reason for their departure. Vivian Tuccaro stated that she rejected the RCMP’s expression of regret because a true apology needed to be “heartfelt, not just words” (qtd. in Narine, “RCMP”). She noted the irony in that even though the RCMP were the “ones apologizing,” the officers could still “get up and walk away” as though they were blameless (qtd. in Narine, “RCMP”).

Regarding the apology, Tuccaro made it clear that she was not willing to accept the apology issued by the RCMP. She described herself as “angry ... and hurt and ... just messed up” (qtd. in Narine, “Mother”). In a post on Facebook, Vivian further described her frustration and disappointment:

Feeling very angry with all the f**k ups with the police and how they mishandled my daughter’s case 🙄 they think that the “APOLOGY” is supposed to justify this???

I did not accept the apology because of the fact that they HAD to do it and not because they wanted to!! I think that the commissioner should have been the one to do the apology but she was busy elsewhere. someone needs to be held accountable for all this but is there going to be ??? 9 f****n years and still no answers as to who killed my baby girl, how the f**k is my family ever going to have peace of mind when he's still out there? ("Justice")

While frustrated, Vivian also expressed her hope to the Indigenous news magazine *Windspeaker* that the public apology and "her continued strength" would offer encouragement to family members of other murdered or missing Indigenous women and girls "to keep fighting to get answers" (qtd. in Narine, "Mother").

Connecting Mothering Activism and Human Geography

In this article, the family's resistant actions and activism are showcased from the perspectives of critical geographies and spatially related justice. Acting in a way that seems to correspond with Sarah Hagedorn VanSlette and Josh Boyd's description of the outlaw/trickster, Vivian Tuccaro has effectively undermined the discourses that minimized Amber's value (591-602). Tuccaro's work has challenged settler preoccupations with Indigenous blameworthiness. As a mother-activist, Tuccaro occupies a "unique social and historical persona" that parallels the trickster activist; as such, this figure has been granted the authority to "speak truth to power—even under domination" (Møller Ølgaard 132). In a 2017 news conference, for example, Tuccaro asserted that the families of missing and murdered women deserved respect (Narine, "Final Memorial"). She reminded readers that the persons lost to violence were "someone's daughter, someone's mother"; she ended by stating "We need answers" (qtd. in Narine, "Final Memorial").

This article focuses on mothering activism by examining recent literature on the geographies of violence (Bagelman and Wiebe; Leeuw; Laurie and Shaw; Leshem; Pain). Writing in 2016 in a special issue of *Political Geography*, Simon Springer and Phillippe Le Billon describe the difficulties making "sense of violence" because the idea "remains one of the most complex concepts that human beings have ever held" (1). At the same time, their assertion that views on violence are "necessarily spatial" is an insight of value to this article (1). Springer and Le Billon point out that geographers are "bringing greater attention to the constitution of violence through space" (1). Specifically, this article places mothering activism on behalf of missing and murdered Indigenous women in conversation with socio-legal, decolonial, and feminist writing that touches on justice as geographical and spatial, what Leshem refers to as "the study of space, memory and power" ("Staff").

Leshem's thought-provoking work seems to invite further studies like this one, especially given its dual focus on Indigenous women's precarious existence along with this article's curiosity about the ways activism and resistance are spatialized or empowered by lands and land use ("Over" 36). Leshem recognizes that "the physical and symbolic acts" by "powerful actors" that allow "matter and meaning" to be demarcated are central to human struggles ("Over" 36). However, he asserts that the actions of those "seeking to challenge their authority," including mothers, are equally important ("Over" 36).

Indigenous scholars, including Karyn Recollet, also theorize spatial considerations in the ongoing quest for decolonized justice ("Glyphing" 129-45). In "Glyphing Decolonial Love through Urban Flash Mobbing and Walking with Our Sisters," Recollet explores spatial tagging in the context of the two initiatives mentioned in the title of her work. She explains that this term "describes the function of visual and aural symbols actuated within Indigenous hip-hop culture and round dance revolutions" (130). Although her work on flash dances and urban protests has a somewhat lighter tone than Leshem's work on a cemetery, Recollet takes on the equally weighty ways that resistant actions spatially oppose the destruction of Indigenous life through settler occupation. Recollet's interest in the ways that spatial glyphing shapes patterns of "Indigenous resistance and Indigenous futurity" is inspiring to this text (130).

Portals into an Otherwise

For Recollet, the two movement-based actions she explores are forms of "symbolic, moving [critique]" ("Glyphing" 129). As such, the spatial tagging she examines disrupts "normative structures of settler colonialism" and creates openings for the emergence of what Recollet labels "radical decolonial love" (129). In the context of this article, about a mother's loss of her daughter, this tender state is accompanied by what I call "radical decolonial grief." Recollet's analysis of movement and the reclamation of space as forms of justice is an aid to theorizing Vivan's activism, especially in relation to the four memorial round dances held to honour Amber. In her 2018 work of science fiction, "Steel Trees, Fish Skins, and Futurity Cyphers," Recollet describes what activist mothers collectively imagine and strive for, even though the piece is creative: "It was the alleyways, the dark corners—and the lighting up of dark spaces through the technologies of coded colours—that created these portal spaces. Red ochres, indigos, coppers; spray cans by the dozen, ceremonial masking; contouring, resisting, and resurging precious moments—creating portals into an Otherwise" (26-27).

In *Everyday Exposure: Indigenous Mobilization and Environmental Justice in Canada's Chemical Valley*, Sarah Marie Wiebe highlights the importance of

understanding Indigenous mobilizations against environmental degradation. She supports the “feminist geopolitical lens” that allows us to scale from the “global to the intimate” (30). This lens permits us to link an examination of what has been labelled a genocide, given the high numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada, to a mother’s grief at her kitchen table. Wiebe suggests that we explore the “impact of macro-level policy assemblages on individual bodies as they encounter these situated, places ensembles of political forces” (30)—a directive taken up in this article.

Over the Dead Bodies of Indigenous Women

Leshem’s concepts help to expose the importance of the mother advocate who brings attention to the existence of the deathly space and to the destruction of human life within spatial confines. He analyzes territorial conflicts between Israeli authorities and Palestinian campaigners and explores the intersections between “the particularities of conflict in late modernity and the challenges they pose for political and geo-political action” and what he labels the “nuanced assemblages of death-places” (“Over” 34). Leshem describes his goal as providing a “more complete analysis of spatial power and politics”—an aim that aligns with this analysis of a mother’s activism (“Over” 34). With Nesham and other writers, I explore the ways that mother-activists draw from fierce grief to resist settler sovereignty and its bio- and necropolitical reach.

This analysis of a mother’s outrage and grief seems to align with the call by Sarah de Leeuw. Her view that sites of “ongoing colonial violence” need further analysis along with more theorizing on “Indigenous resistance” informs this article (21). Leeuw, along with mothering advocates, are demanding that settler societies acknowledge that violence is not something that exists ‘out there’ rather it is “an ever-present presence that all settler colonists are implicated in” (14). To avoid furthering “Indigenous erasure,” Leeuw recommends that “geographic theorizations of violence,” such as the one this article attempts, integrate “the messy, the everyday, and the lived nature of colonialism,” thereby ending the more traditional focus on maps, treaty negotiations, and legal proceedings (21-22). The seemingly mundane sites she identifies as worthy of scholarly attention are the town halls, community centres, and family homes, where women activists and their supporters are most likely to congregate.

In the words of Leshem, this article is also dedicated to “realizing emancipatory spatial practices” by showcasing advocacy strategies that seek safety for Indigenous women and girls (“Over”, Leshem, Abstract 34). This article focuses on one form of a place-based commemoration, namely the four memorial dances held to commemorate Amber Tuccaro, an annual event that ended on February 11, 2017. Leshem’s assertion, albeit in the context of

Palestinian resistance, that there is a need for a “critical necropolitical agenda” that avoids the predominant “politics of despair” seems to capture some of what Vivian and other mothers are offering to the world through ceremonial dancing and by celebrating their loved one’s value (“Over” 35). Jen Bagelman and Sarah Marie Wiebe share Leshem’s interest in undermining a preoccupation with hopelessness. Their text, “Intimacies of Global Toxins: Exposure & Resistance in ‘Chemical Valley,’” on the geopolitics associated with the Ontario Aamjiwnaang First Nation’s reserve, a site of toxic contamination, is a case in point (76–85). In findings that parallel the plight of missing and murdered Indigenous women, Bagelman and Wiebe describe it as troubling that “the intimate and everyday affects of toxic exposure” are both “largely invisibilized” and “rendered highly spectacular” (76). Inspired by their text, this article’s focus on struggle and celebration works to trouble against their finding—that the efforts by Indigenous women to “creatively [respond]” to the concentration of “toxic landscapes” in their homelands were often “overshadowed by stories of suffering” (76).

Embodied Acts of Resistance

In the context of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, the struggle for justice has been simultaneously minimized and sensationalized. Over the last decades, advocates have challenged the tendency to view Indigenous women with a damage-centred lens that amplifies risky lifestyles and dysfunction. Propelled by this logic, Bagelman and Wiebe offer tools to “challenge dangerously limited dualistic framings” of Indigenous spaces, such as the Ontario reserve they examined as an example of toxic injustice (76). Their aim is to make plain the “layered processes” that ensure that the reserve space of Aamjiwnaang and, by inference, the dangerous spaces of northern Alberta, are deadly and “toxic” (76). At the same time, it is important to see how these spaces create openings for the “creative solidarity movements” that defy narrow categorization (76).

While exploring environmental injustice, Bagelman and Wiebe affirm the importance of “embodied acts of resistance,” which could include the memorial round dances held to commemorate Amber Tuccaro (77). The dances are expressive as well as fully engaged, wholistic efforts that have significant impact as expressive acts that are “oriented towards solidarity and political change” (77). In seeming support of the article’s position on memorial round dances, Bagelman and Wiebe reference the 2011 work of Indigenous scholar, poet, and activist Leanne Simpson. As a settler scholar, I am interested in her emphasis on the importance of research methods that “completely employ our bodies” (qtd. in Bagelman and Wiebe, 79). Through “feminist geographical literature,” which emphasizes “situated knowledges” and through a Nishnaabeg

worldview, Leanne Simpson explains that embodied knowledge draws from awareness of "our physical beings, our emotional I, spiritual energy and our intellect" (qtd. in Bagelman and Wiebe 79). With my best effort to follow her guidance, I have sought to show some of the Tuccaros' story and to touch the magnitude of their loss in the small ways available to me. While I write without intimate closeness, I am affected by their grief and inspired by their activism. I am particularly moved by a video of the round dance shown on Facebook and by a recent picture of Amber's son seen fishing.

Analyzing the Edmonton Region as a Site of Injustice

In this section, the remote fields south and east of Edmonton, Alberta, where the remains of many Indigenous women, including Amber Tuccaro, were found are analyzed as sites where injustice is linked to geography and space (Pain). The fields have been described as possibly "a lone killer's dumping ground" (Morin). In addition to Amber Tuccaro, the remains of three Indigenous women have been found near Leduc, Alberta: Edna Bernard, Katie Sylvia Ballantyne, and Delores Brower. It is important to this scholarship, and its focus on geography, that the Edmonton-based Stolen Sisters and Brothers Awareness Movement (SSBAM) has identified links between the cases. This organization has supported the victims' families and has worked to raise awareness to help resolve the murders. One of the SSBAM's concerns is that these women were devalued on racial lines. According to SSBAM organizer April Wiberg, there was a "racial element" involved in the killings (Morin). Wiberg questioned whether the women would still be alive if they had not been "visibly . . . Aboriginal" (Morin).

The joint advocacy by Tuccaro and the SSBAM has drawn attention to the racialized and spatialized factors that seemed to have propelled the homicides. In theoretical terms, their efforts seem to be an example of what Leshem calls "emancipatory tactics borne out of but not condemned by the place of death" (36). These tactics have the potential to illuminate a "broader conceptualization of necropolitics" (36). Following Leshem and other scholars, it is possible to argue that the remote fields where the women were possibly killed and then deposited are part of the chain of dangerous spaces that mother-activists work to resist and dismantle. Amber Tuccaro's death reminds us that like the mistreatment of asylum seekers, Indigenous women and girls are positioned as outcasts who exist at the limits of sovereign power. In their forlorn displays of grief, mothers vigorously oppose the "suspension" of their loved ones' political lives and "the reduction of their existence to the bare life", the figure Agamben refers to as *homo sacer* (Amoore and Hall 95). Mothers' protests reveal the absurdity of contemporary biopolitical formations, even while their actions are propelled by shattering losses rather than jest.

Rachel Pain's work helps us see how spaces become corroded and permeated by the steady onslaught of violent interactions. Her research was done in collaboration with local activists and artists in a small village in northeast England on the former East Durham coalfield (387). She connects scholarship on "slow violence" with trauma studies to expand on ways that "chronic urban trauma" becomes fixed and entrenched in place, facilitating "retraumatisation" (385). While threaded with violence, the spaces retain elements that allow for healing and transformation. One of Pain's central findings is that studying trauma brings further awareness to the "place-based as well as temporal aspects of slow violence" (397). She further explains that "cycles of fast and slow violence" are "practiced and legitimated in specific locales" (397). Although she explores housing dispossession rather than homicide, Pain's work helps us see the significance of the spot where Amber disappeared. This location is connected to the loss of many, largely Indigenous women in the Edmonton region, possibly due to a serial killer. Pain's work helps us see the blood and trauma embedded in the fields.

Even though a potential serial killer was at large, the mainstream Canadian press suggested that the women's assumption of risk were key factors in the disappearances in the Edmonton region. An example is the August 2015, the *Toronto Sun* article, titled "Serial Killer Fears Grow after Another Body Found Near Edmonton" (Postmedia Network). The article states that the human remains of Connie Ottenbreit were found on a property south of Edmonton in late July 2015. It reports that Connie Ottenbreit was last seen in Edmonton in May 2004. The article describes her as twenty-seven years old and as "a sex worker" who left her "husband and child to work the streets" on the evening of her last sighting. (Postmedia Network) The article explains that the RCMP identified Ottenbreit's remains with the aid of a hair sample she provided to the database created by the Edmonton-based KARE Unit. Ottenbreit was one of the over one thousand women in Alberta who registered their name, address, DNA sample, and a photograph with the police to ensure speedier detection if they ever went missing. The article describes the women who registered as persons with "high-risk lifestyles" (Postmedia Network) and states that law enforcement officials were pondering whether Connie's death was the work of a serial killer, given the number of bodies that had been found in the Edmonton region.

The names of several other women are listed at the end of the article to support the *Sun's* argument that a serial killer is at work. The list is prefaced by a statement that the names are those of "some of the missing and murdered sex workers" that might be connected to the suspected serial killer operating in the Edmonton area (Postmedia Network). The last name on the list is Georgette Flint, whose remains were located on September 13, 1988. She is described as twenty years old and a prostitute (Postmedia Network). The

reader is informed that her "half-naked body" was found "just west of Elk Island Park" (Postmedia Network). Prurient details like these are used to describe many of the fifteen women listed, including twenty-year-old Melissa Munch, whose body was found in January 2003. The article describes her as a prostitute who "was known to steal from her johns" (Postmedia Network). Though never connected to sex work, Amber Tuccaro's name is the first one on the chronological list reprinted in the article. Her remains were the last to be found before Connie Ottenbreit was located.

The mistaken links made between Amber Tuccaro and sex work in the *Sun* article assign her a denigrated status. These grim intersections illustrate the importance of the grieving parent, Vivian Tuccaro. She is a vocal advocate who challenges the boundaries that cut off these spaces and who opposes the worthless stature assigned to a much loved daughter whose last living moments were spent in the fields. Given her insistence on state redress and remedy, Vivian Tuccaro may be said to inhabit the "uneasy and frequently dangerous position" regarding sovereign power, which Amoore and Hall link to trickster advocates who similarly challenge the sovereign power exercised at border points by calling into question exclusions and spatialized restrictions (102).

With these thoughts in mind, this article offers lessons on the ways that Vivian's advocacy work might lead to "ground-level necropolitical action." ("Over" 36) With Leshem's "place based approach," it seems possible to bring insight to what he calls "petty sovereign" acts while also focusing on examples in which "the blunt operation of necropolitics" is "exposed to the contingencies of lived space," which is interpreted to include ceremonial spaces where commemorations like round dances have been held ("Over" 34). Following Bagelman and Wiebe, we might see the ways that deathly spaces act "as a mirror, reflecting the vulnerability of all citizens" (83). Based on their logic, the "embodied acts of resistance" analyzed throughout this article through the story of Vivian Tuccaro denote "important openings to unsettle the intimate impacts of toxic exposure and perhaps also the settler imaginations that have been a part in producing such toxicity" (83).

In the next section, the memorial dances held to honour Amber Tuccaro are discussed as examples of the resistance Bagelman and Wiebe encourage.

Mothering Activist Reclaimers: Interrogating the Memorial Round Dances

In this section, the four memorial round dances organized to commemorate the death of Amber Tuccaro are examined to determine how they exemplify the ways that justice connects to space. Following Leshem, I suggest that the memorial round dances held in Amber's honour exemplify the "minor spatial practices that utilize geopolitical, material and cultural-discursive sensitivities" as a means to "reclaim necropolitical agency" in this period of "late modern

conflict” (“Over” 34). According to news articles, the dances showcased Amber as a young woman who was loved, honoured, and cherished and who will be forever missed; the dances commemorated and publicized Amber’s death. The round dances spatially challenge colonial frames by undermining narrow settler narratives of feminized, Indigenous risk. Applying Leshem, the community spaces within an Indigenous nation hold importance as one of the “limited places still accessible and available for contesting political interventions” (“Over” 34).

The first Annual Amber Alyssa Tuccaro Memorial Round Dance was held in Fort Chipewyan, Alberta, on January 4, 2014. Amber’s mother, Vivian Tuccaro, explained the significance of the round dances, stating that it was “important to celebrate Amber’s life, share stories, memories, just to get together with family and friends” (qtd. in Narine, “Final Memorial”). Though theorized here with the aid of varied texts and arts-based scholarship, the purpose of the round dances is clearly not to satisfy academic aims. Commentators stated they were organized to offer places to grieve for and commemorate Amber. The family described the gatherings as a way to remember Amber as well as “a healing ceremony for family and friends” (qtd. in Wilson). The round dance was a reminder Amber was loved. The crowds that attended confirmed that her death affected many in her remote community. Details on the fourth and final commemorative round dance held in the winter of 2017 show that the interest remained steady over the four years since her disappearance. According to community traditions, four ceremonial dances is the right number. On February 11, 2017, the last gathering among family, friends, and the community was held at the Memorial Hall in Fort Chipewyan to rejoice in the memories of Amber’s life. A pipe ceremony, a traditional feast and a prayer chain for justice were planned for the event (Narine, “Final Memorial”). Although the family has commemorated and celebrated Amber’s life, their sorrow remains inconsolable.

In her ongoing quest for justice, Vivian Tuccaro looks towards a future space of safety and care. The round dances for Amber Tuccaro have performative elements that shadow the serious play of the clown or the trickster figure (Higgins 51-72). In his examination of survivance in Indigenous science fiction writings of Gerald Vizenor, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Dianne Glancy, David M. Higgins states that the apocalypse has already come about for Indigenous peoples because “[aliens] have invaded, conquered, and irreparably shattered the landscape” (70). For Higgins: “Survivance narratives in Indigenous science fictions thus imagine the future as a space of presence rather than as a landscape of destruction, and this intervention offers a desperately needed counterweight to the science fictional (and social) imaginings that dominate our present-day world” (70).

Higgins’ work eliminates the literal/figurative binary, as it is described by Indigenous scholar and science fiction author, Gerald Vizenor. Collapsing rigid structures prompts readers to reflect on the possibility of a “very real resurrection” to result from the “reproduction of ideological values within bodies, minds, and institutions” (55). With these science fiction writers, Vivian Tuccaro’s activism may be viewed as an important counterbalance to contemporary dystopian thinking that normalizes violence, particularly towards racialized and gendered bodies.

The Memorial Dances as “a Radical Pedagogy of Decolonial Love”

The 2015 text by Karyn Recollet, referred to in the introduction, is particularly instructive to this discussion even though the dances she studies were public performances that were organized as protests rather than for ceremonial reasons. Recollet explores the role of “spatial glyphing” in forming “patterns of Indigenous resistance and Indigenous futurity” (“Glyphing” 130). Notably, Recollet analyzes how the Idle No More urban flash mob round dance and the commemorative art installation *Walking with our Sisters* demonstrated “a radical pedagogy of decolonial love” that seems to find a parallel in Vivian Tuccaro’s advocacy, which we might describe as teachings on decolonial love as well as grief (“Glyphing” 142). Thinking with Recollet, it seems possible to assert that the gathering and dancing were ways to similarly strain colonial order. The dancers worked against the violence that occurred on settler lands more generally as well as in the remote fields near Leduc, Alberta, where the remains of many Indigenous women, including Amber Tuccaro, were found. Paralleling some of the activism against the deathscapes described by Leshem and others, Recollet argues that spatial tagging relies on “wedging”—a practice that is regenerative because it works to “shift, unsettle and generate new futurisms for Indigenous peoples” (“Glyphing” 142).

The mother-activist figure of Vivian Tuccaro, occupies an “ambiguous position” that is simultaneously “celebrated and feared” (Amoore and Hall 102). As an advocate, Vivian Tuccaro reveals and jeers at sovereignty’s dangerous excesses. Through her protests, she gestures towards a futurity that might realize greater justice for her daughter. She seems to offer transformative narratives that favour “survivance and *biskaabiiyang*” (Higgins 52). As Higgins states in his 2016 article, Grace Dillon explains that “*biskaabiiyang*,” an Anishinaabemowin term, describes the process of Indigenous people’s “returning to [themselves]” to manage in the “post-Native Apocalypse world” (qtd. in Higgins 53). The round dances transform the site of her home reserve into a space “where Indigenous peoples are not sitting idly by, but performing alternative futures” (Bagelman and Wiebe 82)

Conclusions: “They Danced for Us All, All of Our Ruptures, Our Love, Our Pain ... Our Desires” (Recollet “Choreo Glyph” 30)

This article has argued that like the Palestinian activists Leshem studied, Vivian Tuccaro and her family are also involved in a struggle over the securitization of space. With other advocates, Vivian’s family has worked to bring attention to the Indigenous women, including Amber, who were killed and abandoned in remote fields around Edmonton, Alberta. They have asserted claims to territory by protesting the ways that the spatial aspects of injustice and Indigenous displacement from traditional lands led to Amber’s disappearance. Their outrage led to various actions, including the billboards calling for help to find Amber’s killer. The memorial dances were a form of spatial tagging that grounds the family’s grieving and activism on Indigenous land.

While acknowledging their ceremonial significance, I see the commemorative round dances as a creative example of mothering activism that gestures towards the creation of lifescapes. In her imaginings of this future, Karyn Recollet writes as follows:

I will try to describe what I saw but you won’t believe me. They were a being—a tall one, an ancient one. They were beautiful, tender, caring, love, compassion, courage, gentle, strong, angry, hungry, thoughtful, intelligence. They were calling, we were responding . . . hands were held like precious touch . . . songs were sung like they had never been sung before. They were the seer, the Celestial . . . mother, grandmother, uncle, water, fire, wind. And they danced for us all, all of our ruptures, our love, our pain . . . our desires . . . IDLE NO MORE—that was them. (Recollet, “Choreo Glyph” 30)

With Recollet and other writers, I assert that mother-activists, notably Vivian Tuccaro, resist settler sovereignty and its bio and necropolitical reach by speaking out and dancing new formulations that defy deathscapes and that lean into safer, more just, more decolonial, more lively, and more loving futurities.

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