

The Homebody During/In Crisis

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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic ushered in a new paradigm of domesticity that manifested in and through the body. The complexities of domestic corporeality, however, predate this particular crisis. The inhabitation of the domestic realm is inherently riddled with contradictions of space, subjectivity, and sociality. In this article, I consider the many paradoxes imbuing the homebody both before and during the onset of the pandemic, arguing that crisis exacerbates the existing tensions that the homebody engenders, but it does not produce them. I examine the case of home dancer Marlee Grace and her Instagram activity prior to and during the quarantines, lockdowns, and stay-at-home orders of 2020. Grace's performed contradictions for her new media audience demonstrate that the homebody—though its complexities are amplified by the pandemic—has always been in crisis.

Keywords: home, homebody, intimacy, Instagram, domestic, new media, social media

Eliza grooves to a pop song in her living room; Miguel jams-out in his bedroom to a new album by his favorite musician; Cam rehearses a piece of choreography in the kitchen. Self-produced home dance videos such as these circulate through new media platforms in abundance. Together, they reflect the extraordinary ordinariness of domestic life, the outward expression of intimacy on new media, and the slippages in private and public space that are now characteristic of contemporary digital culture. At the crux of this phenomenon is the home dancing body. This body—the *homebody*, we might say—straddles worlds of the familiar and unfamiliar, near and far, interior and exterior, personal and social. The home dance videos that appear online not only capture this body, but also exacerbate its inherent paradoxes of space, subjectivity, and sociality.¹ We might imagine, for instance, how Eliza, Miguel, and Cam take care to capture their private selves and express their interior thoughts. Their spaces, too, represent their intimate worlds. A photo of Eliza's grandmother hangs on the wall behind her; Miguel's dog hides under the bed next to him, possibly frightened by the thunderstorm; and Cam's still-damp mop rests against the oven, perhaps from an earlier cleaning spree. Yet, once posted to the internet, these media acquire a new dimension that is often antithetical to their semiotics of intimacy. That is to say, although they typically remain tethered to personal accounts, they are also thrust into public visibility and mass



circulation, accumulating views and likes, inviting reposts and shares, and collecting comments and hashtags.

Home dance videos such as the ones of the fictional Eliza, Miguel, and Cam frame the homebody for innumerable viewers to consume. Of course, this phenomenon is not novel, but may be linked to the rise of new media, and along with it, the cultivation of what I term the “domestic stage”—a phenomenon wherein individuals record their home performances to be shared online. Associated with platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, productions on the domestic stage borrow from genres like autobiography and self-portraiture, and extend the logics of antecedent media like home movies and closed-circuit television.² The homebody may appear through these media, choreographing its interior for the exterior, expressing its privacy for the public, and harnessing the personal for the social.

Despite its genealogies across history, genre, and media, the homebody and the domestic stage upon which it performs have been re-framed by the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. Accompanying the global movement toward quarantining and staying-at-home throughout 2019-2021, home dance videos not only proliferated in number, but also prompted an intensification of the homebody. This article examines the transformations and new offerings of the mediatized homebody during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. By analyzing the Instagram account of dancer Marlee Grace, and the videos she posted before and during quarantine, I argue that this global crisis has exacerbated the existing paradoxes and complexities of the homebody, while also re-charging this figure with an overt criticality. Before I consider the ways in which Grace’s home productions demonstrate this argument, however, it is necessary to first introduce the notion of the homebody and its place in digital culture.

Homebodies on the Domestic Stage

The homebody—more than merely a person who finds pleasure in staying at home—is the product of the dialectical relation between the *habitat* and the *habitus*. That is to say, the home is a space where individuals cultivate and rehearse the habits they inherit from, and carry out into, the world. Subtly, over time and space, the homebody embodies social structures while also ultimately contributing to those structures. This give-and-take process results in a body defined through what Pierre Bourdieu terms the *habitus*, or a “system of durable, transposable dispositions.”³ Drawing on Bourdieu, I define the homebody as a corporeal manifestation of social constructed-ness—the everyday, micro-developments of gender, class, race, sexuality, etc. that are cultivated through domestic space and expressed through the body. However, the homebody also re-imagines itself in the confines of its space, testing its limits and tweaking its habits. This figure moves in and through the home, secured by the familiarity of its surroundings, yet excited by the world beyond its walls. Though it is subject to normative patternings, it is also compelled by the possibility of deviation. In this way,

the homebody is not only public/private, personal/social, but also reiterative/subversive.

The homebody is indeed paradoxical. Not only does it embody the structures of its environment, thereby enmeshing itself into social fabrics, but it also interfaces with the public through screens. For the 21st century homebody in particular, screens have become an apparatus of habituation: the homebody maneuvers itself in front of screens, just as it becomes the image on screens. In fact, we may argue that *it is only through screens that the homebody may appear in the first place*—since, once it physically exits its domestic world, it becomes evacuated of its defining characteristics. In other words, the homebody cannot *be* outside of the home. However, by remaining in its habitat, positioning itself in front of a camera, and pressing record, it may mediate and transmit itself and its choreographies. Through screens, then, this figure comes to know the world, just as the world comes to know it. Its production and consumption of screen media then comprise its habitual exercises—voices, bodies, and scenes from afar are drawn into her habitat, and they shape her habitus. Though this figure indeed “stays at home,” she is shaped by, and expressed through the various screens that enable her to interface with the wider world—broadcasting herself out to that world, while also bringing the world to her, in her home.



Donte grooves in his home while eating pizza in a post on May 5, 2018. This video exemplifies the slippages in privacy and publicity, personal and social, and interior and exterior that is characteristic of the homebody. Donte makes external an experience that one might conceive as a private activity. In a casual manner, and while wearing relaxed attire characteristic of that which one might wear in the home, Colley nourishes his body with food while improvising to a pop song, as one might do in front of a mirror while home alone. Credit: @dontecolley

The contemporary homebody’s relationship to screens demonstrates how it is defined by what Wendy Hui Kyong Chun calls “habitual new media,” a paradigm of network society in which the individual is compelled to constantly change, so much so that *updating* becomes the only constant. “Users have become creatures of the update,” writes Chun. “To be is to be updated: to update and to be subjected to the update.”⁴ However oxymoronic it may seem, habitual change, Chun suggests, has come to define how people operate in the age of new media. Perhaps digital culture’s imposition for all is to make a habit of change. Drawing on Chun’s conceptualization, I find that the

homebody is embedded in a landscape of habitual change. This body symbolizes the desire for an impossible stability in the fluid conditions of digital culture. Reaching toward the unfamiliar as a way to reify the familiar, turning toward the exterior as a way to harness the interior, the homebody continually “updates to remain the same.” Its habits, of course, manifest through corporeal movement, through patterns and sequences, through choreographies of both an ordinary and extraordinary variety. In this way, dance enables the homebody to perform its complexities, as its movements are choreographed, framed, captured, circulated, and screened for others—who reside beyond its intimate environs—to see and experience.

The homebody's affinity for screens means that it is also the *subject* of consumption through those screens. Viewers situated in locales across the globe may power-on the homebody, watch it move, and marvel at its quintessential snapshot of intimacy. That is to say, the homebody may not exist outside of its habitat, as discussed above, but it may offer its audience illusions of an interior, unseen authenticity of human form: exclusive access to the seemingly unchoreographed natural body. This manner of aestheticizing intimacy—or engaging in what I call *intimaesthetics*—cultivates a sense of closeness with the viewer through the homebody's choreographies of body, space, and media.⁵ Forging such a connection may satisfy in the viewer a desire to see what is otherwise unseen, exoticize the familiar, and relish in the camera's capturing of what is otherwise not able to be captured—all while reaffirming the existence of some natural, authentic body.⁶



Pradeep doing the moonwalk in his living room in an Instagram post on October 26, 2016. While this dance is indeed a home dance, it demonstrates the screen-oriented quality of the homebody. Michael Jackson's moonwalk has been screened for a global audience: individuals who then learn the dance and screen it for an audience of their own. Credit: @deepu_d_navigator

Evident in this understanding of the homebody is how, even without the stresses of a global crisis such as the Covid-19 pandemic, this figure is already imbued with contradictions, ambiguities, and paradoxes. It is the subject of both work and leisure, commerce and craft, social interaction and intimate engagement. Then, in 2020, as millions of people across the world receded from public spaces and closed themselves in at home, the homebody was propelled into a global public consciousness. Everyone, it seemed, was cognizant of, if not experiencing on a personal level, the complexities of

the homebody. This movement, however, not only cast a brighter light on the homebody, but also intensified its already inherent paradoxes. The ways in which this figure stretches across spheres of inside and outside were exacerbated by the nature of the pandemic: concerns for the health of the body; feelings of both confinement and refuge; new rhythms of work, family, and leisure; and desires for, yet an uncertainty around, social engagement. Because these changes compounded on, around, and through the body, testing it beyond its limits and twisting it in new directions, the homebody became the site of much attention and tension. With the turn toward the home during this time, and the concomitant exacerbations of the homebody, came an intensification in cultural production. Domesticity, it turned out, became a prevailing paradigm of 2020; and the homebody became the instrument through which to navigate that paradigm, including myriad forms of cultural activity, artistic expression, and social interaction. In order to express, create, or otherwise communicate with others, individuals across the globe turned toward their screens.

Many used those screens to cope with the social, cultural, economic, and political demands of the time; some used them to cathartically express their frustrations; while others were looking to merely pass the time in quarantine. Regardless of the emotional register of their use, screens filled many voids that developed from the sharp pivot toward the interior, and a sudden, intense engagement with domesticity.



An Instagram post on November 12, 2020 of Nina, a member of German dance collective Female League, dancing in her home as part of a weekly challenge where members choreographed to the same song because, as the post states, they could not meet in person. Credit: posted by @female_league, performed by @nina__rsh

It was within this field that home dance videos began to circulate with greater frequency and fervor. Like the shifts in the homebody during this time, the general character of these videos also shifted. Specifically, they tended to acquire a greater sense of urgency, a marked dissonance, and an express politics. Marlee Grace, whose videos I explore in the following section is no exception to this trend. While Grace was previously recognized for the home dance videos uploaded to her Instagram account, @personalpractice, her homebody in a particular post in April 2020 performs the exaggerated complexities that developed during the pandemic.⁷ An in-depth consideration of this post, followed by a discussion of Grace's pre-pandemic home

dance productions, will demonstrate the shifts in the mediatized homebody and gesture toward the unique role that dance has played during this crisis.

Now and Then with Marlee Grace

The square frame, capturing a nondescript domestic space with white walls and ample natural light, is suddenly broken by two arms thrown into view, fingers landing on the table in front of the camera as if to stand on their own. Marlee Grace then pulls the rest of her body into the space, but only her upper body is in view, as the table in the foreground blocks the rest of her figure. She sways right-left-right-left as she lip-syncs to the 1990s pop song, "Boom Boom Boom Boom, I Want You in My Room" by the Vengaboys. Stepping back away from the camera, Grace does a paddle turn, and tosses her arms up and forward. Now gazing at the camera with a light, contemplative expression, she bounces side-to-side while opening and closing her elbows in front of her face. With the next "boom, boom, boom, boom," Grace moves closer to the camera and strikes her right elbow across her body ("boom"), crosses her forearms in the shape of an "X" toward the camera ("boom"), opens both arms back up to form two sharp right angles ("boom"), and then tosses her right arm across her body ("boom"). This sequence of movements is performed with a calm vigor.

As Grace continues dancing, wisps of hair flutter beneath her denim baseball cap. Her white overalls and black tank top reveal her tattooed arms, which she continues to toss and strike to the rhythm of the music. Mouthing the lyrics, "let's spend the night together, together in my room," Grace moves closer to the camera with her left arm wrapped across her torso. The dance ends with her grinning at the camera as she softly circles her head with her arms raised. Beneath the frame of the video is the caption:

DANCING IS A SPELL - a spell to pay attention to grief, to move it through your body, and that to continue the fight for justice we must dance

i feel sad bernie dropped out of the race

i feel sad that i'm far away from my parents

i feel sad that john prine died

i feel sad that this virus disproportionately affects black folks and communities of color and the media isn't showing us that

i feel sad that people i love aren't been taken care of by their employers

i feel sad that incarcerated folks aren't being treated with the care they deserve, set them free

i feel sad i can't go to the coffee shop

i feel sad i can't hug my neighbors

I ALSO FEEL THAT ACCEPTANCE AND HOPE AND ACTION WILL CARRY US THROUGH.



Marlee Grace dancing in her home to Vengaboys. Credit: @personalpractice

This 17-second video was uploaded to Instagram on April 8, 2020—the same day that the United States (Grace’s country of residence) reported 200,000 confirmed cases of Coronavirus, and just days after the country announced a record number of filings for unemployment benefits. Upon initial viewing, Grace does not appear to be cognizant of these current events. That is to say, when first considering the video, her homebody seems to be insulated from its social, cultural, and economic context. However, reading into her post reveals the complexities of her homebody and indicates the ways in which dance may be positioned as a critical practice in times of crisis, particularly compared to its “social life” on new media prior to the pandemic.⁸ While Grace’s post does not capture the breadth of home dance videos circulating during the pandemic, it serves as an exemplar of the homebody at this time. Thus, a close analysis of this post alongside her vast repertoire of home dance productions on Instagram will gesture toward the wider representations of the homebody during crisis.

Most notable about this post is its seemingly contradictory semiotics, particularly the mood of the video compared to the message of the caption. As suggested above, Grace’s dancing does not read as solemn, grim, fearful, or angry—sentiments commonly expressed during the height of the pandemic (in the US and in 2020, at least).⁹ Instead, the quality of her movements, her choice in music, and her countenance throughout the dance all suggest effervescence. This characterization may be gleaned in how she jauntily bobs to the upbeat rhythm of the song, sings along to the lyrics with ease, and strikes her arms with an upbeat, light-hearted energy. Specifically, the manner with which Grace enters the frame, as if she’s introducing her hands first, then the rest of her body, expresses playfulness. Her choice in wardrobe—clothes that suggest around-the-house activity—also seems tranquil and bright. Together, these facets of

her performance articulate a light-hearted sensibility that encourages the viewer to dance and sing along.



Grace smiling at the camera as she dances. Credit: @personalpractice

The effervescence and ease of Grace's dancing stand in opposition to the statements she makes in the caption of the post. While the mood of the dancing is lively, that of the caption is melancholic. There are a couple of key features of Grace's language in this text that are worth noting in this regard. First is her use of the lowercase "i" in the list of things that make her sad. The pronoun "I" is not only written in lowercase in the middle of a couple of statements, but also at the beginning of each line. While this aspect of the caption might seem merely stylistic, its juxtaposition with the all-caps text suggests a certain intentionality of its use. To disregard the grammar of capitalization, especially for the first-person voice, conveys a humbled or otherwise diminished sense of self. Perhaps Grace is demonstrating a displacement of her ego during a tumultuous time. Whatever its message, the repeated appearance of the lowercase "i," particularly on a platform that propagates selfie-ism, reflects a more grounded sense of Grace's self.

A second feature worth noting in this caption is the repeated use of "i feel sad that..." The device of repetition here functions not only to underscore Grace's sadness regarding a series of activities that she can no longer engage in, but also to reflect through language the apparent exhaustion that she feels with the state of the world. In other words, she linguistically exhausts this phrase to reflect her physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion with the pandemic and its wider effects—its mandates of social distancing, its exacerbations of systemic racism, and its widening of class disparities, for example. Of course, Grace's dancing does not capture this exhaustion, rather it channels a sense of levity as opposed to gravity.

The contradictions evident in this post are not coincidental, but reflect the complexities of the homebody, exacerbated by the pandemic. Grace's dancing, though it seems to transcend, or otherwise remain ignorant of, the events and sentiments expressed in the caption, is perhaps dealing with those events and sentiments in a non-obvious, non-superficial manner. As she recognizes in the post, dance is a mode through which she may acknowledge and navigate grief, and most of all, to "move it through [her] body." Her experience of grooving to a pop song, then, is perhaps an exercise in moving that grief through her body, so much so that the result does not appear to be grief at all. Considering this view, perhaps the stark contrast of seemingly divergent sentiments turns out to be a co-mingling of those sentiments—the channeling of grief through the body, as a way to recognize it, live with it, and to momentarily transform it into something else. The homebody during crisis, as Grace teaches us, can simultaneously find both pleasure and despair, rhythm and quiet, levity and gravity.

Reading Grace's mid-pandemic homebody as contradictory not only manifests in the post itself, but also in the public comments responding to the post. All comments express support for her performance and/or her message about the role of dance; however, they range from the seemingly flippant to the more contemplative. For instance, one user writes, "I used to hate this song, but you just made me like it 🙌💕", while another says "cried after reading this post because today was such a hard day for good people. It's so unfair ❤️." Though both comments are generally positive and supportive of Grace's performance, they reflect varying sentiments: the first, a more upbeat if not superficial one, and the second, a more somber one. This range of readings is not uncommon in the comment sections of new media content, yet when considered against the already-complex homebody, further demonstrates how this body is imbued with contradiction, and thereby makes those contradictions available to its viewership.

The home dance videos that Grace posted prior to the pandemic tend to express a more cohesive, non-contradictory homebody. Captions of videos contextualized the dancing in the video, or explained a sensibility that was already available in the dance. While numerous home dance videos that Grace posted across several years demonstrate this pre-pandemic homebody, we might consider just a few. On June 21, 2019, for example, Grace posted a video in which she attempts to do "the floss"—a "viral choreography" that emerged in 2016 and became popular among school-aged children and teens.¹⁰ The caption under this video reads: "really just trying to figure out the moves everyone is into i know i'm late i'm doing my best." Earlier that year, on February 16, 2019, Grace posted a video of her softly, casually doing floor exercises. The caption reads "just laying on the ground listening to camila cabello a normal saturday night." In a post on February 9, 2019, she is dancing to a Selena Gomez song, bathed in natural light from a nearby window. The caption reads "good sun today." About a month earlier, on January 3, she posted a video of her jamming out in the living room to a Taylor Swift song, with the caption, "home alone." And then in a post from October 28, 2018, Grace grooves to The Flying Lizards wearing Carhartt overalls and a matching cap. Below the video, she

writes, “what’s with today, today?” While these posts are not bereft of meaning or criticality, they channel a homebody that is more at ease—at ease with the world, at ease with the interior, at ease with domesticity. Grace often remarks on her impression of a particular musical artist, song, or album. She will also occasionally reflect on the weather or an item of clothing. Dissonance, however, is not a theme available in these posts, and dance does not need to be deployed to cast any “spells,” or otherwise cope with the events of the outside world. Instead, dance functions as a pastime, a leisure activity, and a pop culture currency; and the homebody presents itself as in balance and at peace.

Digging a bit deeper into Grace’s archive of home dance videos, however, reveals a slight antecedent to her pandemic post that is worth considering. On September 27, 2018, Grace posted a video of her casually improvising to the outro of Whitney Houston’s “I Wanna Dance With Somebody” in the bedroom. The video begins with Grace, her eyes down, fidgeting with her shirt while rocking side-to-side. Her hands, already gathered at her waistband, softly rise toward her chest in alternating ascension, matching the rhythm of the repeated lyrics “Don’t-cha wanna dance?” Her palms lift and arms open as if to perform a “welcome” gesture, though her face is without expression. All in one fluid motion, she draws her hips back and to the right as her arms move forward, and then she softly thrusts her pelvis forward as her arms pass back. She repeats this gesture to the right. Then, lightly rocking on her balls of her feet, Grace rotates her torso from side to side as her arms follow, flailing with the weight of their own movement—her eyes now closed. She remains in the same spot throughout the video: just behind a bed that has been stripped of its sheets and comforter. Pillows are stacked on the floor next to Grace, and another pile of clothes sits on the other side of her. The video ends with Grace, situated amongst her laundry, in mid-twist, and face still expressionless. The caption below reads #cancelkavanaugh #dancingisaspell.

Like her pandemic post, the dancing in this video does not allude to any strife. Instead, it seemingly captures a young woman taking a break from laundry to meditate to the sounds of Whitney Houston, perhaps in hopes of gathering the energy required to fold the piles of clean clothes on the floor. Despite this illustration, the caption of the video indicates a separate message, thereby framing the dance in a different, more politically charged light. Specifically, Grace’s use of #cancelkavanaugh points to her disappointment with a particular political event: the nomination of Judge Brett Kavanaugh to the United States Supreme Court. The incorporation of this hashtag effectively aligns Grace’s interests with a protest movement to prevent Kavanaugh’s confirmation due to evidence of sexual harassment. In addition to this information that Grace offers, she also suggests the role of dance in participating in that protest. By including the hashtag #dancingisaspell—which, unlike #cancelkavanaugh, was *not* a viral movement—Grace suggests that dance allows her to transform her state, or perhaps the situation at large, and to “move it through her body.”

Two aspects of this video align it with Grace's pandemic homebody: the seeming dissonance between her dance and the caption that frames the dance; and her suggestion of dance as a transformational practice that allows her to navigate some outside conflict. The character with which she conveys both of these messages, however, lacks the fervor of her post on April 8, 2020. Instead of articulating a number of personal, social, and political blows that affected her, the semiotics of this post suggest a casual, if not convenient, participation in a wider movement. Ostensibly, #cancelkavanaugh could be replaced with some other social justice movement circulating new media, and the meaning of the post would remain virtually the same. Nonetheless, its inclusion in a post that frames Grace's laundry-break jam articulates a subtle dissonance in Grace's homebody. Here, we see how Grace has captured the complexities of the homebody prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, but does not necessarily demonstrate the degree of intensifications that occurred as the world turned toward the home in 2020.

Analyzing Marlee Grace's Instagram activity both during and before the Covid-19 pandemic illustrates the complexities of the homebody, and how the pandemic both reveals and exacerbates those complexities. Although her case exemplifies this point, it does not exhaust the myriad twists, turns, and protractions that the homebody exercises on new media. In fact, the complexity of this figure acquires a meta status (a complexity of complexity) when considering how identity plays into its choreographies—how race, class, gender, sexuality, age, ability, nationality, and other social categories define its dealings across the private/public, personal/social, and interior/exterior. The nuances of the homebody during the pandemic may be gleaned, for instance, by sifting through hashtags like #quarantinedance, #socialdisdancing, and #danceathome. Aggregated by hashtags such as these are videos of individuals dancing in their bedrooms, living rooms, and kitchens, in homes across continents, in a variety of dance styles, and with a range of sentiments: a twenty-something Latinx woman dances salsa in her bedroom in Brazil; a tall white guy performs hip hop in a dimly lit corridor of his home in Russia; a South Asian adult man wearing a "US Air Force" shirt does Bharat "popping" in the living room of a home in Pakistan; and a Black teenage girl performs to an American pop song in front of her bathroom mirror in South Africa. Indeed, the homebody is not universal, rather it reflects the particularities of its environment and the identity position of the dancer. Then, with the pandemic, each individual may have experienced shifts in their homebody—shifts that are also unique to that dancer's situation and identity position. The complexities of Grace's homebody are thus situational and may not be isolated from her gender, age, race, class, sexuality, nationality, and education, along many other factors. In other words, her example demonstrates the complexities of the homebody during crisis, but it does not suggest a universal homebody. Instead, Grace is merely one pixel in a larger moving portrait.

Conclusion

Although an analysis of Grace's homebody during and before the pandemic indicates the homebody's intensifications during the Covid-19 pandemic, it is important to reiterate how this body is already paradoxical, already complex, already contradictory—even outside of the social, cultural, economic, and political constraints of the pandemic in 2020. As discussed throughout this article, the homebody may be defined through its embodiment of paradoxes like private/public, personal/social, and interior/exterior. Its habits are structured by the social codes that govern the world outside its walls; so, its characterization as private, personal, and interior is thus determined by the public, social, and exterior. In other words, the homebody deceptively represents interiority, yet its habitual make-up is cultivated through and defined by its engagement with its social surroundings.¹¹ Moreover, this figure embodies dualities of a more corporeal nature as well: it works and plays, moves and pauses, laughs and cries—all within the confines of the domestic environment. These traits characterize the homebody with or without a crisis, with or without a camera capturing its image.

If the homebody is already defined by its own complexities, then neither its mediatized image nor its stresses during a crisis can completely redefine its contours. These developments may illuminate or intensify those contours, but not redraw them. So, while the widespread pivot toward the home in 2020 indeed placed added stress on the homebody, prompting individuals across the globe to experience domesticity in a new, amplified way, we might also argue that, to some extent, *the homebody has always been in crisis*. As I have shown, this figure deceptively represents interiority, yet its habitual makeup is cultivated through and defined by its engagements with its social surroundings. Then, once it leaves the home, it can no longer exist, further complicating its ontology. Its mediatizations subsequently exacerbate these qualities, since the reproduction and circulation of its likeness catapults it into the public imaginary, thereby betraying its ethos. In her home dance videos on Instagram, Marlee Grace performs these paradoxes of the homebody. Although her April 2020 post indicates her homebody *during* crisis, a wider perspective indicates the more fundamental complexities of this body. Indeed, the homebody has always been in crisis.

Biography

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aestheticization of intimacy, the choreographies of gender, and the performance of self in home dance videos that circulate through new media. Porter's work has been presented internationally and published in a range of scholarly journals including *Performance Research*, *Dance Research Journal*, *TDR*, and *Etudes*, as well as in the anthology *Bloomsbury Handbook of Dance and Philosophy*.

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Notes

¹ Notably, Kathrin Peters and Andrea Seier analyze home dance videos on YouTube as technologies of the self in "Home Dance."

² This concept of re-fashioning antecedent media is a form of what Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin call "remediation." Defining this concept, Bolter and Grusin write, "New digital media are not external agents that come to disrupt an unsuspecting culture. They emerge from within cultural context, and they re-fashion other media, which are embedded in the same or similar contexts." *Remediation*, 16.

³ Bourdieu, "Structures and the Habitus," 72.

⁴ Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same*, 2.

⁵ My conceptualization of intimaesthetics relies on Lauren Berlant's call to reframe intimacy. Specifically, Berlant wants us to disabuse ourselves of a diffuse, amorphous sense of intimacy, as it is typically deployed without criticality. "Rethinking intimacy," Berlant writes, "calls out not only for redescription but for transformative analyses of the rhetorical and material conditions that enable hegemonic fantasies to thrive in the minds and on the bodies of subjects." "Intimacy: A Special Issue," 286. Following Berlant, I deploy intimacy as a way to uncover the mechanisms through which it is produced and rendered into an image.

⁶ The mechanisms by which domestic intimacy is aestheticized, via the homebody's imaging, rely on the power of the camera to illuminate existing and produce new paradoxes. Susan Sontag aptly reflects this characteristic when writing, "Like a pair of binoculars with no right or wrong end, the camera makes exotic things near, intimate; and familiar things small, abstract, strange, much farther away. It offers, in one easy, habit-forming activity, both participation and alienation in our own lives and those of others—allowing us to participate, while confirming alienation." *On Photography*, 131. The homebody gets caught in this bind with the camera and the screens to which it

links. Even its self-produced image blurs sensibilities of near and far, close and distant, familiar and unfamiliar, effectively assuring its own alienation.

⁷ Siobhan Burke discusses the personal dimension to Marlee's practice in "A Graveyard?"

⁸ My use of "social life" borrows from Arjun Appadurai's generative work on the "social life of things" in *The Social Life of Things*. Notably, scholars Anthea Kraut and Susan Leigh Foster apply Appadurai's thinking to the circulation of dance "in and out of the commodity state." Most relevant to my concerns here, Harmony Bench conceptualizes *digital dance* in terms of its circulation through new media. In *Perpetual Motion*, Bench addresses how digital dance "[becomes] positioned within a corporeal common that ostensibly can be mined by anyone" (142). This notion of the commons qualifies my understanding of dance's "social life on new media prior to the pandemic," as it emphasizes how dance on new media is susceptible to commodification and, what Bench terms, "infelicitious acts of transfer" (142-156). In these terms, the pandemic then prompted a sense of urgency and a desire for digital belonging among denizens of new media that initiated more gift-like exchanges of dance. See Kraut, *Choreographing Copyright*; Foster, *Valuing Dance*; and Bench, *Perpetual Motion*.

⁹ A report published in the *Journal of Medical Internet Research* analyzed global sentiments expressed on Twitter and detected a range of emotions and identified a shift from fear to anger over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. Along similar lines, an article in *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* investigated news headlines concerning the COVID-19 disease and reported that 52% of headlines evoked negative sentiments, 30% positive, and 18% neutral. The primary emotions found in these headlines were fear, anticipation, sadness, trust, and anger.

¹⁰ I borrow the term "viral choreography" from Harmony Bench, who defines this concept as a that which "requires ongoing performance in order to sustain itself as a shared cultural object." "'Single Ladies' is Gay," 133.

¹¹ Such a deceit is anchored to popular conceptions of the home as diametrically opposed to the world outside, and thus the figure occupying that space is characterized in a similar manner. Writers like Gaston Bachelard propagate this conception, arguing that the home protects its inhabitants and, in turn, fosters their imaginative wanderings. As Bachelard writes, "the house shelters daydreaming, the house protects the dream, the house allows one to dream in peace." *The Poetics of Space*, 6. The subtext of Bachelard's statement here is that the public does not protect one's imagination, and the public does not promote daydreaming. Instead, the world outside the home betrays the homebody's natural inclination to dream, create, and express.

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