

# Paroxysmal Paradox

visualizing vulnerability

Integrative Project Thesis Paper

By Grace Treado

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*cover of postcard advertising the final piece*

“Passion is no longer exactly at the geometrical center of the body-soul complex; it is at the point where their opposition is not yet given, in that region where both their unity and their distinction are established.”

Michel Foucault

The alternative layout is meant to displace the reader physically and visually, as does the final installation.

The experimental language reflects an ambition to abstract and re-define the identity of the final piece, as my own identity has been repeatedly transformed throughout the development of the final piece.

### **Paroxysmal**

1. a sudden recurrence/intensification of symptoms
2. a spasm or seizure

### **Kinesigenic**

caused by movement

### **Choreoathetosis**

irregular involuntary movements  
giving an appearance of restlessness

# “an episode”

## REPORT

### **PRRT2 Mutations Cause Benign Familial Infantile Epilepsy and Infantile Convulsions with Choreoathetosis Syndrome**

Sarah E. Heron,<sup>1</sup> Bronwyn E. Grinton,<sup>2</sup> Sara Kivity,<sup>3</sup> Zaid Afawi,<sup>4</sup> Sameer M. Zulfair Pridmore,<sup>5</sup> Bree L. Hodgson,<sup>1</sup> Xenia Iona,<sup>1</sup> Lynette G. Saddleir,<sup>6</sup> James Pe Eric Herlenius,<sup>10</sup> Hadassa Goldberg-Stern,<sup>3</sup> Halm Bassan,<sup>11</sup> Eric Haan,<sup>12</sup> Amos Alison E. Gardner,<sup>13</sup> Mark A. Corbett,<sup>13</sup> Jozef Géczy,<sup>6,13,14</sup> Paul Q. Thomas,<sup>6</sup> Jo Samuel F. Berkovic,<sup>2,4</sup> Ingrid E. Scheffer,<sup>2,14,17</sup> and Leanne M. Dibbens<sup>1,17</sup>

Benign familial infantile epilepsy (BFIE) is a self-limited seizure disorder that occurs in infancy and has an autosomal recessive inheritance. We have identified heterozygous mutations in *PRRT2*, which encodes proline-rich transmembrane protein affected by BFIE, indicating that *PRRT2* mutations are the most frequent cause of this disorder. We also report six (83%) families affected by infantile convulsions and choreoathetosis (ICCA) syndrome, a familial disorder characterized by seizures and an adolescent-onset movement disorder, paroxysmal kinesigenic choreoathetosis (PKC).

*Human Molecular Genetics*, 2004, Vol. 13, No. 24  
doi:10.1093/hmg/ddk330  
Advance Access published on October 20, 2004

### **The gene for paroxysmal non-kinesigenic dyskinesia encodes an enzyme in a stress response pathway**

Hsien-Yang Lee<sup>1,2</sup>, Ying Xu<sup>1</sup>, Yong Huang<sup>1</sup>, Andrew H. Ahn<sup>1</sup>, Georg W.J. Auburger<sup>3</sup>, Massimo Pandolfo<sup>4</sup>, Hubert Kwiecinski<sup>5</sup>, David A. Grimes<sup>6</sup>, Anthony E. Lang<sup>7</sup>, Jorgen E. Nielsen<sup>8</sup>, Yuri Averyanov<sup>9</sup>, Serenella Servadei<sup>10</sup>, Andrzej Friedman<sup>11</sup>, Patrick Van Bogaert<sup>1</sup>, Marc J. Abramowicz<sup>2</sup>, Michiko K. Bruno<sup>1,11</sup>, Beatrice F. Sorensen<sup>1</sup>, Ling Tang<sup>1</sup>, Ying-Hui Fu<sup>1</sup> and Louis J. Ptáček<sup>1,12,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Neurology, UCSF, San Francisco, CA, USA, <sup>2</sup>Department of Human Genetics, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT, USA, <sup>3</sup>JW Goethe University Hospital, Frankfurt/M, Germany, <sup>4</sup>Erasme Hospital, Brussels, Belgium, <sup>5</sup>Department of Neurology, Medical Academy of Warsaw, Warsaw, Poland, <sup>6</sup>University of Ottawa, Ottawa Hospital, Division of Neurology, D715, Ottawa, Canada, <sup>7</sup>University of Toronto, Toronto Western Hospital, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, <sup>8</sup>Institute of Medical Biochemistry and Genetics, The Panum Institute, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark, <sup>9</sup>Clinic of Nervous Diseases, Moscow Medical Academy, Moscow, Russia, <sup>10</sup>Institute of Neurology, Catholic University, Rome, Italy, <sup>11</sup>National Institutes of Health/National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, Bethesda, MD, USA, and <sup>12</sup>Howard Hughes Medical Institute, San Francisco, USA

*excerpt from medical journal publications about Paroxysmal Kinesigenic Choreoathetosis*

“Its not real...I cannot go back to the hospital...  
Not again...I’ll be alright. Just hold on...”

Nervous. Shaky, frail, and hollow.  
Too numb to focus,  
My skin hovers above me,  
riddled with indecision.  
I barely recognize the ache of my own breath.  
My veins pump acid, for want of warmth.  
Wrists rub together,  
like kindling for fire  
salvaged loosely from some absent forrest floor.

Is this my reality? My identity?  
Only a thin veil of sanity convinces me otherwise.  
I cry because I ache to heal.  
I ache because I cannot.

Each episode begets anxious anticipation,  
anticipation of fear, fear of the knowledge  
that this time will only beget another.

Defined as a movement disorder,  
a neurological condition,  
I define it as hell on wheels  
that diagnostic authority depends  
on the severity of my lucidity.

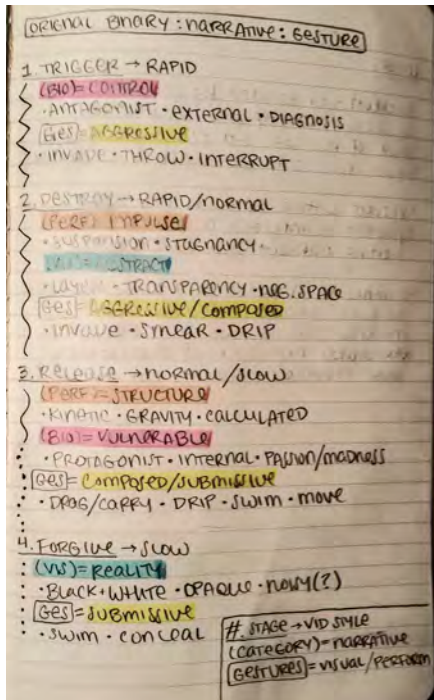
Paroxysmal. Kinesigenic. Choreoathetosis.

Incapacitate the nervous system,  
Spasms, migraines, panic attacks.  
along with something undefined, psychologically.

The psychological consequences  
they creep and leak through the cracks in my sanity  
left behind  
after each “episode”.

And so begets my inspiration.

# intro a narrative emerges



excerpt from notes taken in preparation for the piece

I am exploring the psychological consequences of losing control over my own body through performative painting.

Using the painted canvas as an extension of my body, and the subsequent documentation/installation as an extension of my psychology, the symptoms of my neurological condition will be abstracted into painterly metaphors that repeatedly define and obscure the complex dichotomy between my biology and my identity.

**Canvas as body. Body as brush. Brush as memory.**

*The paint*, thrust and dripped upon the canvas, transitory by nature from wet to dry, as it leaves a scar of past motions upon the surface, my body heals its own scars from the memory of each fleeting “episode”.

*The performance*, impulsive and aggressive, or calm and repetitive, is an interpretation of the condition acting upon my body, acting upon itself.

*The video*, a process of self-reflection, I record myself expressing the paint and the performance. Only video can compose and repeatedly project the cyclical nature of this condition.

*The installation*, projected video on framed canvas, the memories of my performance, and the condition as I experience it, are repeatedly captured and concealed in this final physical manifestation.

In order to reflect the cyclical nature of my relationship with this condition, I articulate a cycle in four parts. This cycle is interpreted in the performance, the painting methods, the video composition, and the final installation.

## context a narrative emerges



*Barnet Newman, Stations of the Cross, 1958-1966*

In preparation, I divide and conquer my visual and conceptual references by medium. Each artist has informed some dimension of the piece.

### *the painters*

*Robert Motherwell:* he captured the full spectrum of emotions in a single color.

*Franz Kline:* paint and sentiment were thrust unto the canvas, simultaneously, and with great conviction

*Barnett Newman:* every mark, or lack thereof, exposed his own insecurities, his own identity



*Ana Mendieta, Body Tracks, 1974*

### *the performers*

*Yves Klein:* he used his body as canvas as his canvas became it's own body

*Stuart Brisley:* he used his body as brush, the world was his canvas

*Ana Mendieta:* a female in motion, she presents her body to the world raw and unflinching

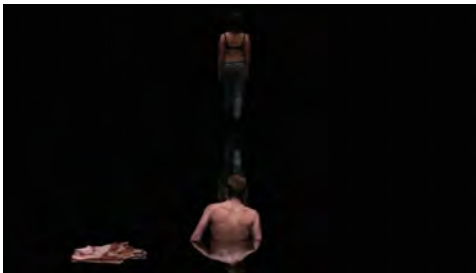
*Fluxus Movement:* inter-disciplinary beliefs, no rules, everything in fluxus. Because art/life/performance deserves neither distinction nor division.

### *the filmmakers*

*Jonathan Glazer:* he sees tension. he creates tension. yet he chooses not to define it.

*Brad Kunkle:* delicate paintings and bold video projection seamlessly collide in abstract narration

*Kahlil Joseph:* the performing female body is ripped from traditional sexual stereotypes, leaving only intimate expression



*Jonathan Glazer, still from Under the Skin, 2013*

# 1 trigger



scene from final film piece

## *the stage: an external force triggers the cycle*

Insignificant explosions release insignificant sensations. This consistent penetration into the sub terrain of physical compulsion throws me head-first into a non-linear abyss. There is a liminality to this neurological battlefield.

I construct a psychosomatic relationship between fear and safety, madness and sanity, pain and relief, antagonist and protagonist.

This battle is a cycle.

This cycle is internal, and therefore internalized.

## *the source: those external forces which beget an episode*

A disease of the body is far more accessible, or acceptable, than a disease of the mind.

But what of both? Stress begets a chemical reaction, unseen and all-consuming. Despite the internal familiarity between my anxieties and my symptoms, I struggle to distinguish which begets which.

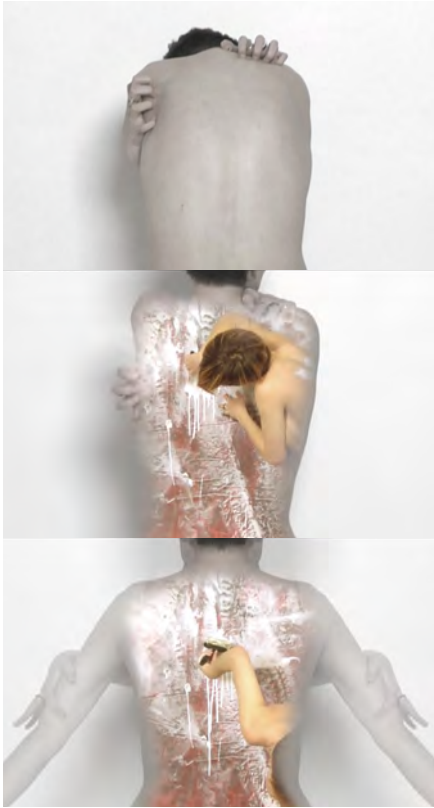
Hence, I repeatedly perform the motions in a new context, to discern which is the source.

## *the media: the body performs in response to the trigger*

I perform this trigger to know which I cannot accept. To see which I fear. To submit to that blackness, which appears ever darker, more consuming, with each arc of a new cycle.

In the midst of the onset of an episode, a migraine, a muscle spasm, an anxiety attack, I perceive the color black to invade my whole body.

## 2 destroy



scene from final film piece

*the stage: the symptoms destroy, physically & mentally*

Weakness: a friend to fear, it fears itself.

Submission begets acceptance: the pouring of paint, the writhing of wet on wet pigment, these layers dance with tension. This pain gives way to sensations, sensations succumb to experience, I generate revelations in this abstract reality; neither reason nor madness. But first, pain.

The pupil must first be broken in order to be enlightened by such bliss within corporeal submission.

*the source: symptoms of pain, my greatest fear*

In these moments of vulnerable paralysis, of both mind and body, I expand in spectral wavelengths.

The transitory nature of pain, no matter how permanent in the heat of a moment, will continue along this spectrum of relative consciousness.

Like the wet paint on the canvas, fleeting in substance but permanent in memory, the symptoms paint my body in the full spectrum of unrest.

*the media: the body is painted and used to paint*

As a subject, as a brush, as a host, as a spectator: my body is my soul, the paint is my condition. Like the blood pumping too quickly, or the nerves firing incorrectly, paint is unpredictable when thrust, beautiful in its destruction. The corporeal properties of this paint are fully realized in red. The moment in which red paint coats my arm, my face, my neck, I recall precise instances of faulty chemicals and secret spasms. I host this paint, as this paint hosts my innermost destructive properties.

### 3 release



scene from final film piece

#### *the stage: self-awareness shifts the cycle*

I float cyclically within, between destruction and healing. I exist two-fold as antagonist and protagonist. Performing this cycle, absorbing the paint, stimulating this duality: only some visual recording of this psychological duress can capture, can reflect, the moment of expression, the moment of release.

I stimulate to express in creative authenticity.  
I express to heal. At this stage, I heal to progress.

#### *the source: the protagonist conquers the antagonist*

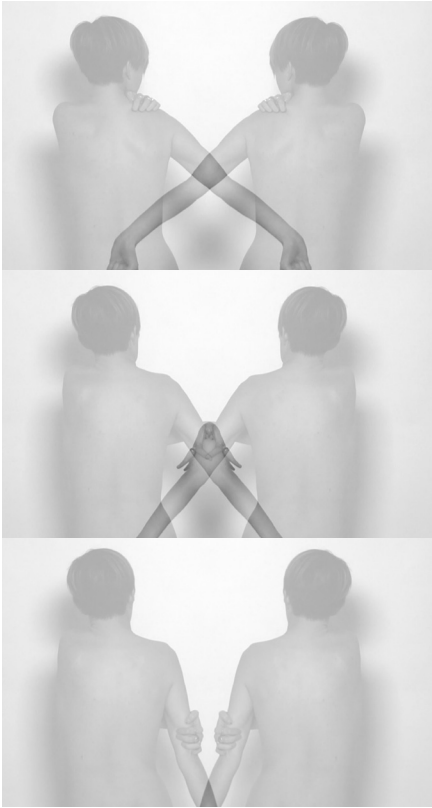
The personal touch of my own private madness appeals ten-fold over some faceless clipboard, describing in complex ambiguity: what I am is not who I am. In diagnostic form, my disorder is an alien antagonist, acting under no authority of my own. But through creative expression, self-reflection witnessed calmly through the camera lens, I discover my inverse anew. I am my own antagonist, but I am also my own savior.

#### *the media: video illuminates the duality of my identity*

No longer will I assume this diagnostic authority over my own medical irregularity. The absence of color, absence of identity, white manifests as the haunting presence of my medical diagnosis; which reduces my personal history to a series of syllables. Then again, I find a new duality in the blankness of a white video screen. The white light is naked, the blank screen is bare. White is the inverse to itself, and thus reflects my own inversion of this medical definition. The very ambiguity of this state drives my desire to express it.



## 4 forgive



scene from final film piece

### *the stage: with acceptance comes healing*

There is a liminality to this neurological battlefield. Construct a psychosomatic relationship between fear and safety, madness and sanity, pain and relief, antagonist and protagonist. This battle is a cycle. This cycle is internal, and therefore internalized. I begin again, by ending at the beginning.

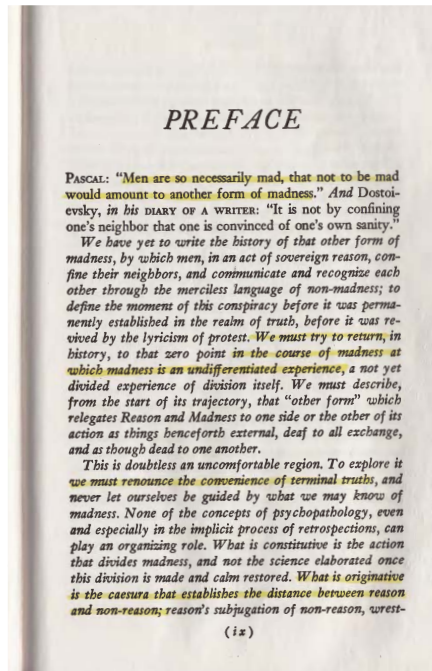
### *the source: relief in expression, I heal through awareness*

From release comes salvation. I save myself from myself, by accepting all parts of my self. Every stage has led to this, expression of each stage accumulates to more than the sum of its parts. As the episode subsides, as I accept the madness and the reality in equal parts, I emerge in wisdom, wisdom that this will return.

### *the media: culminate in one final installation*

The canvas bears my body's memories. The pain applies the wounds. The video remembers my experience. But their installation implies something more. I exhalt this knowledge, I unveil my body in vulnerable submission. By repetitively screening the history of the cycle upon the very subject of its wrath, I come full circle in acceptance of my condition. I am no healer, but I will heal, I relinquish control in order to regain it again.

# the depths of madness



excerpt from *Madness and Civilization*  
by Michel Foucault

There exists a distance, foggy and dense, between reality and madness. The very rarity and ambiguity of this state drives my desire to express it. The appropriated language of the “reasonable” can be deconstructed through the act of submitting to insanity. However, I attempt to stretch this distance, in my choice to welcome madness. Madness gives way to lucidity, when sovereignty is thrust in the cavernous depths that stretch between my two realities.

Foucault argues, “passion is no longer exactly at the geometrical center of the body-soul complex; it is at the point where their opposition is not yet given, in that region where both their unity and their distinction are established.”

I have researched Foucault, and other philosophers interested in the history of civilization’s treatment of “madness”. I identify not only with his fascination for the subject, but his passionate defense that madness, disorder, and irregularity, are nothing more than a contemporary cultural perspective. I do not intend to redefine my “disorder.” Foucault’s attempts to nullify any one definition or another resonates with my own exploration into a single “disorder,” because I fully accept that it can never truly be defined.

## conclude a narrative re-emerges



*the final piece installed*

To conclude this exploration, to exalt my experience and my understanding, I dedicate this piece to fear. Fear of a rare diagnosis, fear of vulnerability, fear of losing control, fear of taking those bold steps to regain control again.

vulnerability is not easily seen  
or shown  
it comes in sparks, waves  
in the darkest hours of the mind  
and in direct sunlight  
to isolate these moments  
to seek them and show its face to the world  
either internal or external  
could be mistaken as a sign of weakness  
I chose to believe that this is not the case

I chose to show my vulnerability  
I chose to transgress its diagnostic hold  
I chose to relinquish my fear of this grip  
and stand in the light of it's stare

this deduction, this analysis, this objective scope  
saves me in the wake  
of physical isolation  
but only after  
when prompted to identify my attacker  
do I lose sight of my antagonist

who among us has not considered the risk  
of losing control over our own mortality  
the human body is mystery  
particularly to those who explore it  
and I, like so many before me,  
revel in the possibility  
of being thrown into uncharted territory