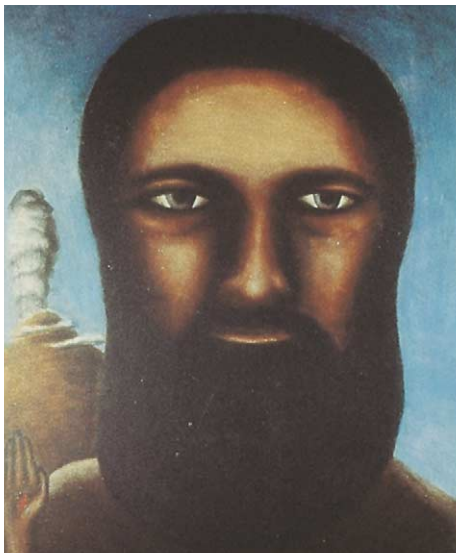




Courtesy of the Tony Fomison estate/Private collection

Tony Fomison, *Untitled (Te Whiti)* (circa 1962)

historical materials; and the catalogue, itself containing existing and commissioned material from writers ranging from historians and art critics to poets and playwrights.

The already existing art includes some of the most important work completed by New Zealand artists. Colin McCahon's *Untitled (Parihaka triptych)* (1972) is perhaps the centre-piece of the whole exhibition. Alongside

it are nine other McCahons that explore the Parihaka theme, the first time these paintings have been exhibited together. Gordon Walters is represented by his *Te Whiti* (1964) and *Tohu* (1973), paintings that are pivotal to our understanding of his use of the traditional Maori koru (fern frond) pattern in his art practice. Again, this is the first time these two paintings have been exhibited together. Tony Fomison is represented by nine paintings, a set dominated by his majestic *Untitled (Te Whiti)* (circa 1962), and Ralph Hotere by his "Te Whiti" series, 20 works that meditate on the connections between the Parihaka settlement and traditional Maori beliefs and practices. Besides the work by these "big four", a great deal of other art produced over the last 30 years that relates to Parihaka has also been gathered together.

The second component is a roomful of works especially commissioned from a range of artists—painters, photographers, sculptors—for the exhibition. These will become the property of the Parihaka Pa (village), where they will join other works collected there over the years, especially those

collected as a result of the *Taranaki saw it all* exhibition organised in 1973.

The third component is a large collection of historical photographs and other artefacts connected with Parihaka. The 60 photographs date from the 1870s and record events surrounding the site for over 100 years. They include portraits of Te Whiti and Tohu displayed in public for the first time. Flags, ornaments, and an original plough fill out the picture.

All this is recorded in the exhibition catalogue, the fourth component of the Parihaka exhibition. Besides several essays, this publication includes specially commissioned work by a range of New Zealand poets. The 240 large-format pages include colour reproductions of the major works in the exhibition, and many illustrations and photographs that augment the essays. Altogether, *Parihaka: the art of passive resistance* succeeds in presenting a multilayered sense of the huge variety of responses that the events of 1881 have provoked in New Zealanders from then until now. It is an invigorating and stimulating experience that demonstrates how well and how usefully art can hold up a mirror to society.

Simon Garrett
simon_g@learningmedia.co.nz

Discarded diagnoses

Phrenitis: what's in a name?

Passions can be inflamed, but can the mind suffer from inflammation? Literally, phrenitis, the origin of our word frenzy, meant just that: for Hippocrates, the patient with phrenitis might exhibit a high fever and chill, void a scanty urine, feel a heaviness of his head and neck, and eventually lapse into delirium and trembling, before death released him. All four of the cases that the Hippocratic author of *Epidemics* carefully recorded died between 17 and 34 days of the onset of their illness.

For the Hippocratics, phrenitis was an affection of the brain, which, as the treatise *On the sacred disease* (epilepsy) insisted, is the seat of our joys and sorrows, laughter and sports, sensations and fears. At the same time, the Hippocratic writers knew that the term "phrenitis" embodied an alternative location of the mental faculties, for "phren" actually described not the brain but the diaphragm (whence, phrenic nerve). It could also mean "heart", "soul", or "intelligence". The heart as the seat of the soul still had an



articulate champion in Hippocrates' slightly younger contemporary, Plato, but the diaphragm had had its moment in the much earlier, Homeric, period. "The diaphragm has obtained its name from accident and usage, and not from reality or nature", the Hippocratics acidly wrote.

The Hippocratics won this particular battle, although the label phrenitis stuck, and later Greek authors added other signs and symptoms to the diagnosis. One in particular was "crocydismos", or "carphology", picking at the bed-clothes, which gave rise to a Victorian subdivision, phrenitis potatorium, the phrenitis of drunkards (also called delirium tremens in 1813 by Thomas Sutton, who distinguished it from phrenitis proper).

The curious etymology of phrenitis did not prevent it from remaining in common usage until the 19th century.

For Thomas Willis (1621–75), phrenitis was inflammation of "the whole sensitive soul and animal spirits". Some modern classicists have preferred to translate the Hippocratic word simply as "brain fever", a common Victorian lay diagnosis. In George Eliot's great medical novel *Middlemarch*, for instance, the reprobate John Raffles suffers from the alcoholic variant of brain fever, recognised by Lydgate from recent descriptions by the American physician John Ware. He dies when the hypocritical, evangelical banker, Bulstode, allows him to be given brandy, against Lydgate's express orders.

Like many diagnoses, phrenitis was reconceptualised and repackaged rather than simply discarded. That the original Greek disease embraced both mental and physical symptoms is a reminder of the perennial psychosomatic nature of medical practice.

Bill Bynum
Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine, UCL, 24 Eversholt Street, London NW1 1AD