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An interdisciplinary
journal dedicated to
advancing the art,
science and practice
of hypnosis



Australian Society of Clinical
Hypnotherapists
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James Braid (III): Braid's Boundary-Work,
M'Neile's Personal Attack, and
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James Braid (V): Chemical and Hypnotic
Anaesthesia, Psycho-Physiology, and
Braid's Final Theories

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James Braid (IV): Braid's Further
Boundary-Work, and the Publication
of *Neurypnology*

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James Braid (VI): Exhuming the
Authentic Braid—Priority, Prestige,
Status, and Significance

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Editorial

In my Volume 40 #1 editorial of *The Australian Journal of Clinical Hypnotherapy & Hypnosis*, which along with this issue marks the 40th anniversary of its publication, I mentioned I had two takeaways from Lindsay Yeates' research on James Braid. This time, with the addition of the final four articles to the suite, I draw your attention to another two.

I'll start with a personal story from my university days in Canberra, ACT, when I befriended a wonderful young woman who also happened to be a devout Christian. Although we had different belief systems we got along incredibly well. After I completed my Arts Degree, I gravitated towards studying Clinical Hypnotherapy in Sydney, NSW, and subsequently took on four years of study before opening up a therapy practice. When I mentioned this undertaking to my friend, she suddenly grew serious and began warning me about the perils of hypnosis and hypnotherapy, mentioning they were tools of the devil. I was completely taken aback by her perspective, especially since she had modern values, and I gently pointed out that I could not fathom how hypnotherapy could be a force of evil when its underpinnings were focused on doing good in the community, namely helping people heal their themselves from within. I soon learned she knew nothing about hypnosis and when I asked her where she had come across such a notion of devilry in the rank and file of therapists around the globe, she mumbled something about this philosophy being a teaching of her church. I soon learned she had accepted this dogma without questioning it or indeed educating herself, as I'm sure many others have done. We never spoke of it again and remained friends for a few more years until we drifted apart, but for over 25 years I wondered where this false belief had emanated from and from whom. I finally received my answer when I read Lindsay Yeates' article, which delves into the Reverend M'Neile's personal attack from the pulpit in 1842 on James Braid and hypnotism whereupon the superstitious M'Neile had declared without any corroborating evidence that "all mesmeric phenomena were due to 'satanic agency'". Although James Braid responded to this diatribe from the podium and in print, M'Neile's toxic seeds were sown—his sermon was published and distributed

to tens of thousands of people in the UK and around the world for many years and where even to this day, 150+ years later, they are still inflicting damage on a noble and positive-outcome oriented humanistic therapeutic modality by being repeated (dare I say!) by thousands of supposed “modern” thinkers, living in a “modern” time but still hampered by out-dated views and a lack of critical thinking.

I can't help but think how exhausting it must have been for James Braid to have kept defending himself and his breakthrough scientific work during his lifetime. Again, I state that Lindsay Yeates' masterwork hopefully will redress the unjust, unfair, and ignorant views about Braid that have been perpetuated through the ages.

There is a lot more I could write about my deconstruction of and relationship to Yeates' masterwork but I will leave you with my final takeaway and that is about the profession of hypnotherapy itself, which has on occasion been politicised over the years by various stakeholders who wish to claim dominion over the practise of it. As Lindsay Yeates so eloquently explains, “despite the fact that hypnotic practices are still to be satisfactorily explained (or theoretically justified) today”, there is a science and an art to clinical hypnotherapy practise that is not the unique property of one particular professional group or another.

As a parting comment I wish to state that it has been a long and arduous journey for Lindsay Yeates to complete his six articles on James Braid. He pursued and uncovered thousands of obscure references, chasing up every lead like a private detective to give us an accurate picture as he could of Braid and his contribution to the field of hypnotism. Lindsay's attention to detail is extraordinary. These articles reflect his passion for his subject and his need to right a wrong and return Braid to his rightful place in hypnotherapy history. It was an honour to work with Lindsay and to lose myself in Braid's world, Lindsay's extraordinary scholarship and his beautiful command of the English language. I believe these articles need to be compulsory reading for any lay or established hypnotherapist to understand the roots of our present-day practise.

This issue of the journal marks the end of my five year term as journal editor, and I am most proud and grateful to the contributors who have brought their unique knowledge to the journal's pages. I thank the ASCH Board for their trust in appointing me to this position, and I now pass you over to the capable new editor Ann Moir-Bussy to cement her own voice and style in these pages and to bring you more wonderful articles from Australian and international hypnotherapy experts.

Farewell.

Julie Ditrich

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