

MIND TO MIND

*Creative writing that explores the abstract side
of our profession and our lives*

Stephen T. Harvey, M.D., Editor

Ogbúnàbàlì and Hypnos, 1949

Uche Ogbuji

Ogbúnàbàlì, god of death at still night
Completed his journey from the deep delta
Under the city's seven gold-flung hills.
Here was a complex of zinc-roofed shelter,
A sign: Ibadan College Hospital.

To the initiated eye here also rose
A cave mouth of roots wormed from Mokola hill,
Trimmed with broken marble. Here lounged Hypnos,
Fanning himself with a titan peacock quill
Until Ogbú's rasping voice held him.

*You returned with our sons from your white tribelands,
With medicine that's neither sleep nor death,
That moulders in between. You would come
To my delta realm next; The urgent breath
Of my brother Ikú peals this alarm.*

*You salt Ikú's mouth with forbidden yam flour
When he comes to his farm for rightful crop.
Àgbìgbò, coffin maker now squats with you.
You should dread the coffin on your rooftop
Where he placed it. Leave us be, and our world.*

This poem is one of the finalists of ANESTHESIOLOGY's first annual creative writing competition, The Letheon.

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Hypnos shifted on his dank clay couch and spoke.
*You end your long trek by accusing the wrong
 Party; Not long ago my own Lethe
 Was abstracted away. They do grow strong,
 Our charges. Every god becomes their victim.*

Ogbúnàbàlì smells truth like forest rain.
 These humans are climate, shifting the plots
 Of divine farms. But they can yet no more steal
 His cutlass than relieve the sun of its spots.
 Ikú still swings his cudgel to doom's effect.

Ogbú went with Hypnos touring the ward.
 One patient swooned to the masked doctor's blade,
 The specter of yam flour sprinkled on his eyes,
 The Lethe ghost-lined into his veins
 By a gloved hand attentive to his pulse.

The tour over, Hypnos produced kolanut.
*Is this fruit not the local seal of bonds,
 And so where you come from as well? Let us break
 Into its bitterness, as man breaks with rods
 Of invention all old nuances of gods.*