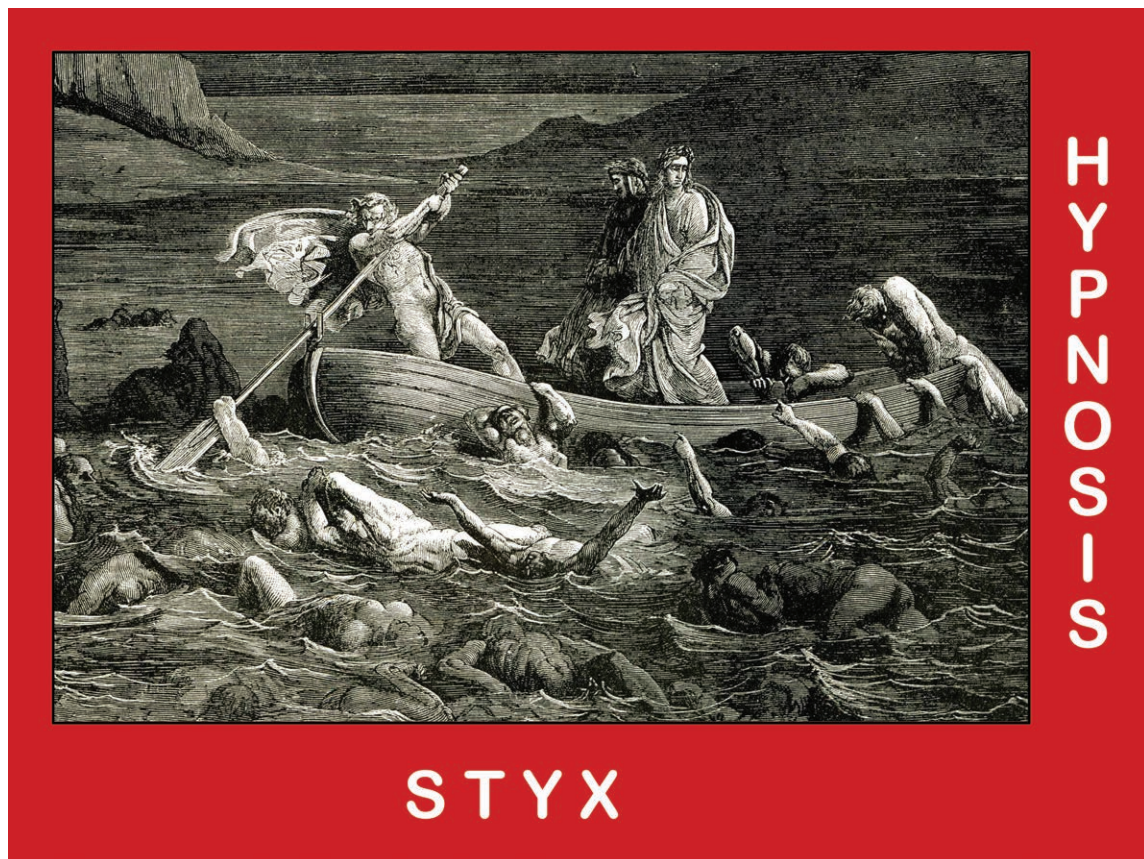


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## ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS FROM THE WOOD LIBRARY-MUSEUM

### Streams of Unconsciousness II: Hypnosis Reflected in the Styx



Besides the amnesia associated with the underworld's River Lethe, Greco-Roman mythology reflected the hypnosis or heavy trance induced by a different plutonic river, the Styx. The invulnerability conferred by Stygian waters—which famously had missed shielding Achilles's heel—ensured that Wrathful souls could flail into each other eternally while swimming in a ceaseless daze through the Styx. As illustrated by Gustave Doré for Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Phlegyas is ferrying Dante and the poet Virgil (all standing, left to right, above) through the thrashing Wrathful and across this shadowy "River of Hate." And stewing beneath the gloom of Stygian waters were the sinking souls of the Sullen, the dead whose anger was repressed. Submerging excitement into trance or even blacking out consciousness, the dark hypnotic power of the Styx was eclipsed by the river's fabled role as "the great Oath-witness of the gods." This honor was bestowed by a grateful Zeus for Styx's swift support during the Battle of the Titans. According to the Greek poet Hesiod, the "heavy trance" of Styx could even overshadow any of the immortal gods who violated an oath sworn in the name or with the water of the Styx. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists' Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology.)

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