

Typhon and Apollodorus

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James Wynn — 01 Jul 2002, 17:57

The following is the story of Typhon's war with Zeus and the Olympians as told by Apollodorus. It is a story that seems rife with potential background for Wolfe's Typhon. Unfortunately, I can't seem to find anyone to take Zeus's role. The bit about Typhon's head brushing the stars and his reach extending to the west and east is certainly applicable. Also, when Severian finds Typhon, he can be thought of as entombed in a mountain.

Can anyone find a stand-in for Zeus in the Sun books? Surely not Severian, he's Apollo (who according to Apollonius Rhodius killed Delphyne) or Hercules. Nor Ymar since, if I'm right about Typhon being entombed in a mountain ala Mt Etna, the end of Typhon's war with Zeus occurs shortly after the prophecy of the Conciliator in the Urth of the New Sun. Perhaps Tzadkiel? But I'm not aware of any evidence that the Hieros ever so completely fleeing before Typhon. Perhaps the war is personified in the dying red Sun that Severian must rejuvenate. Whadya say?

-- Crush

Apollodorus, Book 1, Chapter 6, Section 3

When the gods had overcome the giants, Earth, still more enraged, had intercourse with Tartarus and brought forth Typhon in Cilicia, a hybrid between man and beast. In size and strength he surpassed all the offspring of Earth. As far as the thighs he was of human shape and of such prodigious bulk that he out-topped all the mountains, and his head often brushed the stars. One of his hands reached out to the west and the other to the east, and from them projected a hundred dragons' heads. From the thighs downward he had huge coils of vipers, which when drawn out, reached to his very head and emitted a loud hissing. His body was all winged, unkempt hair streamed on the wind from his head and cheeks; and fire flashed from his eyes. Such and so great was Typhon when, hurling kindled rocks, he made for the very heaven with hissings and shouts, spouting a great jet of fire from his mouth. But when the gods saw him rushing at heaven, they fled to Egypt, and being pursued they changed their forms into those of animals. However Zeus pelted Typhon at a distance with thunderbolts, and at close quarters struck him down with an adamant sickle.

Note from Crush: This is, of course, the same sickle that Cronus used to castrate Ouranos—that is, to cut the link between Earth and the Heavens ala the Hittite myth of Ullikummi. The connection between Typhon and Ullikummi is drawn credulously by Robert Graves as well as Hittite mythology scholars. Ullikummi was the child of the obscure god, Kum-arbis, who precisely parallels Cronus. It was Kum-arbis who separated Earth from Heaven with the knife used against Ullikummi.

Apollodorus continues:

and as Typhon fled, Zeus pursued him closely as far as Mount Casius, which overhangs

Syria. There, seeing the monster sore wounded, he grappled with him. But Typhon twined about him and gripped him in his coils, and wresting the sickle from him severed the sinews of his hands and feet, and lifting him on his shoulders carried him through the sea to Cilicia and deposited him on arrival in the Corycian cave. Likewise he put away the sinews there also, hidden in a bearskin, and he set to guard them the she-dragon Delphyne, who was a half-bestial maiden. But Hermes and Aegipan stole the sinews and fitted them unobserved to Zeus. And having recovered his strength Zeus suddenly from heaven, riding in a chariot of winged horses, pelted Typhon with thunderbolts and pursued him to the mountain called Nysa, where the Fates beguiled the Typhon; for he tasted of the ephemeral fruits believing that he would be strengthened by them. So being again pursued he came to Thrace, and in fighting at Mount Haemus he heaved whole mountains. But when these recoiled on him through the force of the thunderbolt, a stream of blood gushed out on the mountain, and they say that from that circumstance the mountain was called Haemus. And when he started to flee through the Sicilian sea, Zeus cast Mount Etna in Sicily upon him. That is a huge mountain, from which down to this day they say that blasts of fire issue from the thunderbolts that were thrown. So much for that subject.â