

In this paper I demonstrate that the defeat of Typhon in Hesiod’s *Theogony* (820-80) represents not only the elimination of a dangerous physical threat to Zeus, but also the differentiation and ordering of sound under the god’s rule. The passage has posed critical difficulty because it appears to be a mere doublet of the Titanomachy, which immediately precedes the introduction of Typhon (cf. West 1966 for history of this criticism). In response to this problem some have suggested (Bonnafé 1984, Blaise 1992) that the Typhonomachy demonstrates Zeus’ fitness to rule because he defeats the monster without the kind of outside intervention that he receives in the Titanomachy; still others have argued (Detienne and Vernant 1974, Clay 2003) that Typhon’s multiform nature makes him an apt opponent of Zeus’ hierarchical *cosmos*. My argument suggests a new line of interpretation, however, by drawing attention to the uniquely sonic nature of the contest and to the placement of this episode at the conclusion of Zeus’ battles for succession. It is significant that the sounds produced by Typhon (who is described as a “wonder to hear” (*thaumat’ akousai*) at *Th.* 834), while hybrid in nature, make use of the same aural vocabulary that characterizes the Muses’ singing (Ford 1992). This point is even more noteworthy given that Hesiod uses the hymn to the Muses and the Typhonomachy to bookend his account of Zeus’ succession. This ring-composition, I argue, suggests that the defeat of the sonically hybrid Typhon is necessary for the later emergence of the Muses and their hymns to Zeus.

In his description of Typhon Hesiod devotes more lines to the sounds produced by the monster (829-35) than to his other physical characteristics. I investigate the significance of these sounds in depth, and in particular Typhon’s numerous voices (*phônai*) which are said to “produce a boundless and manifold voice” (*pantoiên op’ ieisai athesphaton*, 830). Within the context of the *Theogony* the words \**ops* and *ossa* (which Chantraine notes share a common derivation) are used almost exclusively for the voice of the Muses. As Collins 1999 has argued, the Muses’ *ossa* designates a divine voice that remains unintelligible to mortals unless it is transformed into *audê*; only then does it become intelligible and ready material for the human singer’s production of *kleos*. The possibility that Typhon will defeat Zeus, then, contains the unique threat that divine voice will remain trapped within Typhon’s chaotic figure, inaccessible to singers such as Hesiod.

Although he possesses the same divine voice as the Muses, Typhon’s inability to produce song is a sign of his undifferentiated nature and of his place outside of Zeus’ carefully structured order. By using the vocabulary of divine voice to describe Typhon’s awe-inspiring sounds Hesiod is able to imagine an alternate world in which sound and physical might are combined chaotically, and song is unable to be fully realized. Song comes into being only after the final battle for succession when Zeus entrusts this function to the Muses. The defeat of Typhon, then, is an affirmation of the singer’s discipline within the hierarchized order of Zeus.

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