Andrew Barrett

Wayne State University

Aj5320@wayne.edu

A New Translation of *Dionysiaca*, Book One

*Dionysiaca, Book One*

*In which Cronion seizes the nymph in a radiance and the hands of Typhon pound the firmament.*

Speak Goddess,

of Cronodies' bright herald,

the thunder rolling amid coital sparks

and the lightning flash,

bridegroom of Semele.

Speak of the line

of twice-born Bacchus,

a child half-formed

and born without midwife.

Zeus lifted him from flames

dripping wet

and carried him in his male womb

as father and sacred mother,

after he cut open his thigh

with flinching hands

and vividly recalled

another birth:

his brow was swollen

and his temples throbbed

with a pain immaculate

yet adulterous

 before Athene sprang forth,

her armor glinting in the light.

Muses,

bring me the fennel stalk,

clash the cymbals

and place in my hand

the thyrsus of Dionysus

infused with song.

For my partner in the cyclic dance,

summon quicksilver Proteus

from the nearby island of Pharos.

May he appear in myriad shapes

as I weave an intricate mercurial hymn.

If he slithers like a serpent

trailing a spiral path

I will celebrate the god's triumph,

how he destroyed with ivy-twined thyrsus

the shuddering race of snake-haired Giants.

If as a lion he shakes his flowing mane,

I will shout *Evoi* to Bacchus

in the arms of voluptuous Rhea,

nursing slyly at the breast

of the lion-rearing goddess.

If as a leopard he springs from his heels,

variegating his form in mid-air,

I will hymn the son of Zeus

who trampled elephants

upon his saddled leopards

when he slaughtered the race of India.

If he likens his body to the shape of a boar,

I will sing of Thyone's son sick at heart

for seductive Aura, boar killer

daughter of Cybele

and mother of the late-born third Bacchus.

If he is the image of water in a mirror

I will intone the name of Dionysus

and tell of how he plunged

beneath the rolling sea

with Lycurgus in armed pursuit.

If he becomes a tree rustling

in the breeze with artificial whispers,

I will remember Icarius,

when he crushed the divine grape

with zealous feet in the wine press.

Mimallons,

bring me the fennel stalk

and instead of the chiton

drape over my shoulders

and cinch about my chest

a mottled fawn-skin

awash in the sweet smell

of Maronian nectar.

Eidothea and Homer

can keep the burden

of Menelaus' sealskins,

grant for another the honeyed song

of the double aulos.

Give me Bacchic drums and goatskins.

For I do not wish to insult

my patron, Phoebus Apollo.

He has spurned the sound

of the humming reeds

ever since he humiliated Marsyas

and his god-combative aulos,

draping the skin of the flayed shepherd

on a tree

to ripple in the breeze.

But now Goddess begin

with wandering Cadmus and his quest.

Once upon the shores of Sidon,

Zeus appeared as a bull

with horns grazing the sky.

Shuddering sweetly,

he mimed a bellow of desire

in his deceptive throat.

Little Eros had plucked a woman.

He wrapped his arms around her waist

and intertwined his fingers.

Zeus, the sea-faring bull,

came near and lowered his curved neck.

He leaned forward, offered his back,

and lifted up Europa.

The bull departed.

His floating silent hoof traced

the water's worn salt path

with skimming steps.

The girl sat motionless and dry,

shaking with fear

as she sailed upon the bull's back.

If you saw her you might say

it was Thetis or Galatea

or the lover of Poseidon

or even Aphrodite upon Triton's neck.

Poseidon, his hair blue as the waves,

marveled at this sea voyage

that ambled with a bull's gait.

When Triton heard Zeus

and his seductive illusory bellow,

he answered in kind with a wedding song

from his spiral shell.

Nereus saw this horned sailor

new to the sea

and pointed out the girl to Doris,

his awe shading into fright.

So, the young girl sailed –

light freight upon the bull-vessel's back.

She shivered at the sea's lofty spray

and clutched the bull,

using a horn as a rudder.

Desire was aboard.

With a matrimonial breeze,

the adroit trickster Boreas

spread open her fluttering gown

and whistled with sneaking envy

at her two soft breasts:

As one of the Nereids

who sits on a dolphin

crests the sea

 and cuts the liquid glass,

 her dripping hand a paddle.

Suspended in balance

she is an illusion of fluid motion.

 The glistening traveler half-submerged

carries her dry through the salt-brine,

curving his back

while his fish-like tail

inscribes the surface of its course

as it cleaves the sea.

So the bull as he pressed on,

arching his rear.

Eros acted as cowherd

and whipped his slave's neck

with Aphrodite's charmed girdle.

He lifted his bow,

cattle-crook of Cypris,

like a staff

and drove Hera's husband

into the wet pastures of Poseidon

.

Motherless Athene's virgin cheeks turned red

when she spotted a woman atop Cronion, riding.

But the sea did not satisfy Zeus

as he cut his wet furrow.

For Aphrodite was born from the deep sea

when the blood of Ouranus

mingled with its waters.

And so a girl both cargo and captain

helmed the bull's calm passage.

A wandering Achaean sailor gazed

upon this swift image of a plotting ship

and exclaimed words such as these:

"I can't believe my eyes!

What is this marvel?

Where does this land-grazing bull,

with hooves that cut the barren sea, come from?

Has Cronion created earth that can be sailed?

What's next?

A wagon carving a liquid rut through the salt sea?

"No, I am mistaken.

What I see upon the waves

is some kind of mirage!

Selene has probably gotten hold of a wild bull

and is circling the sea instead of the sky.

Or has deep-sea Thetis

become a chariot driver on a watery track?

This sea-bull is not like a land-bull at all!

It must be a Nereid clothed in long robes

who has changed the shape of her naked body

and now drives a miraculous bull,

a pounder of soil let loose in the water –

for its body is like that of a fish!

"If Demeter, her hair the color of grain,

cuts the grey back of the sea

with a water-tracing hoof,

then you are a deserter, Poseidon!

A ploughman who aims at dry soil

as he cuts Demeter's furrows with a ship!

Carried by the winds of the Earth,

you pad a sea-route upon the ground!

"Wandering bull you have strayed far.

Nereus is no bull-driver,

Proteus, no ploughman

and Glaucus, no gardener.

There are neither marshes

nor meadows upon the waves!

They sail the un-arable sea

and cut the harboring water with a rudder

instead of cleaving it with iron.

Poseidon's companions

don't sow seed in furrows.

Water is the harvest of the sea

and seaweed is its crop.

A sailor is a farmer,

a ship's track upon the water is a furrow

and a barge is a plough-handle.

"What drives you to chase some maiden?

Do love-sick bulls take women by themselves?

Has Poseidon, full of guile,

assumed the shape of a horned bull

and snatched up a girl like a river god?

Has he woven another scheme for Tyro's bed,

like he did yesterday

when he bubbled up to the surface

as a mock Enipeus,

a rippling reflection of seduction?"

The traveling Hellenic sailor

spoke words of wonder such as these.

Then Europa was struck by a vision

of her union with the bull.

She tore at her hair

and broke into shivered notes of sorrow:

"Mute water!

Surf without speech!

Speak to the bull, if cattle can hear.

"Cruel one,

spare this girl!

"Surf,

tell my father who loves his child

that Europa has left her home

and is riding upon some bull:

My seducer, my sailor

and, it seems, my lover.

"Eddying breezes,

save these ringlets of hair

for my mother.

"Boreas,

I beseech you:

take me upon soaring wings,

just as when you seized your Attic bride.

But I should stop talking!

I don't want Boreas

to follow in the bull's hoofprints."

So the girl spoke

as she rode upon the bull's ridged back.

Cadmus was wandering in circles

as he tried to follow the erratic tracks

of a bull in the shape of a bridegroom.

He approached the blood-spattered cave of Arima

when the mountains roved madly

and pounded the gates of inviolate Olympus,

the gods grew wings and sailed

a weird path upon the high winds,

like distant birds above the rainless Nile,

and the seven zones of the firmament

were battered.

This is how it happened:

Zeus Cronides crept off to Pluto's bed

to father Tantalus, that mad thief of heaven's cups,

sliding his luminous armor deep into a rocky crevice.

Even his lightning bolts were hidden.

His thunder darkened the white cliff face,

bellowing smoke from beneath the crags

while the hidden sparks of his flame-tipped arrow

boiled the underground springs.

Soon mountain-streams came in torrents

and the Mygdonian ravine resounded

as it brimmed with froth and steam.

Then Cilician Typhoeus opened his hands

at a sign from his mother, the Earth

and seized Zeus' tools of rain and fire.

Typhoeus opened wide his row of cavernous throats

and let loose a battle shriek that was every cry

from every creature of the wild sounded at once.

Snakes waved over the faces of leopards

and licked the bristling manes of lions

as they braided their spiraling tails

into a crown around the horns of bulls.

The poison that darted from their long tongues

mingled with the foam on their cheeks.

All were fused and grown together.

Then he placed the tools of Zeus

into the holes of a porous rock

and stretched his bounty of colossal hands

through the shimmering sky.

With the skill of a spider he twisted Ursa Minor

around the very tip of Olympus.

He grabbed Ursa Majorby the scruff

and pulled her from the axis where she rested.

Another hand held Boötesand pushed him back

while yet another dragged away Phosphorus,

his gleaming whip hissing vainly at daybreak

under the rotating celestial pole*.*

After Taurus was restrained,

Typhoeus halted Dawn,

the hour for driving horses,

and set it outside of time.

Brightness was tempered by darkness

within the shaded web

of the monster's head of coiling vipers

as the Moon rose at daybreak

and glowed with the Sun.

The Giant did not rest.

He turned and went from north to south,

leaving one celestial pole to stand at another.

After he grasped Aurigawith far-reaching fingers

he whipped the back of hail-bearing Capricorn.

As he dragged Pisces out of the sky and into the sea

he upended Aries, the navel-center star of Olympus

that evenly balances night and day

high above the luminous sphere of its vernal neighbor.

Typhoeus vaulted up to the clouds

with his feet dragging behind.

Fanning out his multitude of arms,

he shadowed the silvery radiance

of the cloudless upper air.

His tangled army of serpents quivered.

One of his arms climbed upwards

and traced the edge of the celestial pole,

hissing discordant tones

as it jumped along Draco's spine.

Another arm came upon Andromeda,

daughter of Cepheus,

and braided a ring with star-shot hands,

similar to the ones that already bound her,

before cinching her again under her coiled shackles.

Yet another arm, a bristling spiky serpent,

encircled horned Taurusand struck the facing Hylades

with jaws open like the horns of a crescent Moon

as it coiled above the bull's brow.

Strands of venomous serpents

plaited together as one and girded Boötes.

One of these serpents spotted another snake on Olympus,

and darting briskly it slid around the arm of Ophiuchus

which holds onto Serpens.

Then the snake wove a second crown around Ariadne

with his curving throat and coiling belly

while Typhoeus brandished his many arms

and twisted the baldric of Zephyrus and Eurus' wing.

He turned to face both poles

and dragged Phosphorus,

then Hesperus and finally Atlas' peak.

In a bay rich with moss and seaweed,

he pulled Poseidon's chariots from the depths.

After he plucked a horse feeding at the trough

by his floating mane, he again took aim at Olympus

and launched the pony into the vaulted sky.

The Sun's chariot was struck,

and his circling horses whinnied beneath the yoke.

Once more Typhoeus shook in his hostile grip

a bull relaxing from the rustic plough-tree

and tossed him up as a counterfeit Moon

to track Selene's course.

He choked up on the white reins of Selene's bulls

and rushed the goddess as the fatal hiss

of a poisonous viper spewed forth.

But the Moon did not retreat at this advance.

The disk that gleamed between her bull-like horns

was scored as she wrangled with the Giant

and their horns interlocked.

Her brilliant cattle roared in terror

at the abyss of Tyhphoeus' open mouth.

The fearless Seasons armed phalanxes of stars.

Heavenly spirals came in revolving columns,

their brightness a call to arms.

A glittering army of screaming fire

filled the aether with ecstatic frenzy.

Some were from the north,

others came on the west wind's back,

some came from the edges of the east

and others from the curving south.

A circling chorus of fixed stars

traveled in a straight line to reach the planets,

their wandering counterparts,

while the celestial pole, ringing with echoes,

endured middle-deep and unbent

In the hollow of the sky.

Orion saw the massed horde of beasts and drew his sword.

The broad polished Tanagraian blade glinted

as it was unsheathed by its carrier.

Canis Major with a blaze kindling on his sweltering muzzle

and his star-choked throat sputtering with a steaming bark,

blasted vapor at Typhoeus' beasts instead of his familiar Lepus.

The firmament resounded.

A shout from the seven throats of the Pleiades

echoed in response to the seven zones of the sky

while the wandering planets harmonized

with pulsing reverberations.

Shimmering Ophiuchos

saw the ominous giant in the form of a snake,

shook the pale spines of the fire-bred serpents

from his talismanic hands

and launched a dappled shaft in an arc

as great storms howled around the flame.

A mad flurry of viper-shot arrows angled through the air.

Then fierce Sagittarius,

who is on the same path as fish-shaped Capricorn

threw a spear

Draco who is radiant in the middle of the Wagon's circuit

and divided between the two Bears,

whirled his incandescent tail in spiraling furrows of light.

Bootes, neighbor of Dawn who drives alongside the Wagon,

flung his shepherd's staff with sparkling arm

alongside Heracles and near Cyngus.

The star-fashioned Lyre of Zeus

shimmered as it foretold victory.

Then Typhoeus shook the peak of Corycios.

He brought Tarsus and Cydnos to the same place

by grasping the current of the Cilician river with a single arm.

He aimed rocks at rows of waves,

trading the aether for the headlands to whip the sea.

The Giant approached.

His footprints were submerged under water

and his loins appeared naked and dry.

The waves echoed loudly

as they pounded against the middle of his thighs

and his hissing serpents swam, calling upon Ares.

Their throats gurgling with salt-water,

they made war on the sea with a rain of poison.

Typhoeus stood in the fish-teeming waters

with the soles of his feet rooted deep in seaweed.

Clouds pressed upon his stomach as it moved through air.

The sea-lion hid in the mud of a bay

when he heard the awful roar from the lions

with bristling manes upon the Giant's head.

Every phalanx of sea-monsters extended through the water

while the one who was larger than the earth which bore him

filled the entire salt sea, his sides untouched by waves.

The seals barked and the dolphins hid in the depths.

The crafty squid stuck to a stone with his myriad feet

and wove an intricate web of intersecting spirals,

his tentacles an image of rivulets.

Everything was full of fear.

The lamprey who is goaded by desire

to seek the passion of the viper's bed,

froze in terror at the god-combative breath

of the floating serpents.

The seas rose and Olympus met high open water.

As the rivers flowed through the sky,

a bird of the air untouched by rain

bathed next to the neighboring deep.

Typhoeus, holding a replica of the deep-sea trident,

broke off an island fragment from the salt-caked edge of the earth

with his immeasurable hand's earth-shaking palm

and spun it around and around

before tossing the entire thing like a ball.

The Giant raged.

His arms shot from the steep headlands up to the stars in the sky

and were shielded by Olympus as they darkened the sun.

This simulacrum of Zeus armed himself

by taking the sparkling thunderbolt in his hand

after he reached the limit of the deep-sea

and the foundation of the nurturing earth.

Monterous Typhoeus struggled with the weight.

He needed two-hundred strong hands

to heft the weapons of Zeus

where Cronion would lift them with only one.

No clouds gathered around the Giant.

The thunder let out a dry thud against his arm –

a song that boomed quietly with an unheard echo.

In the dry air there was hardly a thirsty drop

of rain shed from falling snow.

Lightening flickered into darkness

and a delicate flame shone with an evanescent shimmer

like embers in smoke.

The thunderbolts became feminine

as the neophyte's inexperienced hands

fumbled with their masculine spark.

The fire brands wandered in longing

for the familiar hands of the sky's master

while they slipped constantly between those myriad fingers

and jumped around by all on their own.

*As a man who flogs a horse*

*that spits out the bit*

*A stranger unschooled*

*who suffers constant and pointless toil*

*when it comes to prodding a stubborn colt.*

*The daring animal instinctively knows*

*the deceitful hand of the untried driver*

*And goaded by anger, rears straight up,*

*firmly planting his two back hooves.*

*Leaping, he kicks out at the knee his two front legs*

*and lifts his neck, shaking out his mane in every direction*

*so it spreads over both of his shoulders.*

So he struggled with alternating hands

to lift the quicksilver gleam of the thunderbolt.

Meanwhile wandering Cadmus was visiting Arima

when the sea-faring bull set the girl down

upon the shore near Dicte.

When Hera saw Cronides shuddering with desire,

she was stung by jealousy

and spoke words that mingled with a bitter laugh:

"Phoebus, make sure some ploughman doesn't catch your father

and drag him to an earth-shaking plough-tree.

If only he were caught and dragged away!

Then I could yell this at Zeus:

'Put up with two sharp prods -- one erotic, the other rustic!'

"As Nomius put your father to pasture, Archer

or else Selene the cattle-driver may yoke Cronides

or line his back with a free-handed whipping

in her rush to Endymion's bed.

Lordly Zeus!

It's a shame Io when she was a horned calf

couldn't see you for what you are

or maybe she'd have bore a bull the same size

with horns just like her lover's.

"Be careful that Hermes

who is well-versed in cattle rustling,

Doesn't – since you're a bull – steal his parent

and give the kithara again to your son Phoebus,

as compensation for the abductor turned abducted.

"But what can I do?

If Argos were still alive, he'd help

with his body illuminated by sleepless eyes.

As Hera's cowherd, he'd beat Zeus' ribs with a crook

after dragging him off to some out of the way field!"

The bull's visage faded from Cronides as Hera spoke

and he ran around Europa with the body of a youth.

He touched her limbs

and unfastened the sash around her chest.

Then acting as if he were reluctant,

he pinched the erect nipple of a firm breast

and kissed her upper lip.

In silence he untied the sacred knot

of her guarded virgin youth

and plucked the fresh grapes of the Cypriot,

the fruit of Eros.

Her belly swelled full to bursting with two babes.

Husband Zeus abandoned his bride

who was filled with a numinous pregnancy,

to Asterion, a lover with extravagant wealth.

The Olympian bull-groom rose near the ankle of Auriga

and glittered with the stars.

He guards his dew-loving back for the spring-time Sun

and ascends at a right angle in a crouch.

Appearing half underwater,

he extends his right foot to Orion in the evening.

And makes it to the rim faster than Auriga

who rises on the same path.

And so he was fixed in sky.

But Typhoeus was no longer meant to wield Zeus' weapons.

Zeus Cronides and Eros the archer left the curved firmament

and caught up to Cadmus wandering in his roving quest.

Together they devised an intricate plot,

a weaving of dire Moira's fated threads for Typhon.

Pan the goatherd who was traveling with Omnipotent Zeus

Gave Cadmus cattle, sheep and rows of horned goats

and built a cabin made from plaited bands of reeds.

He dressed the illusionary herdsman in deceptive clothes,

throwing a shepherd's cloak over Cadmus' body

so he would be unrecognizable.

Then gave to skilled Cadmus the misleading syrinx,

the pilot of Typhaon's death.

Zeus summoned with winged words

Cadmus the pseudo-herdsman and Eros the Driver of Life

to share with them this single plan:

"Cadmus my friend,

play the syrinx and the heavens will be calm,

dawdle and Olympus will be scourged.

Typhoeus is armed with my weapons and I have only the Aegis.

And what can my Aegis do in a contest with Typhon's thunderbolt?

"I fear Old Cronus will chuckle

as I look in awe upon the haughty neck

of my adversary: courageous, arrogant Iapetos.

But I fear Hellas more -- that land where myths are born --

since one of the Achaeans may besmirch my name

by calling upon Stormy Typhoeus, or Supreme Typhoeus

Or Typhoeus Who Rules From Above.

"Become a cowherd for one twilit morning!

Play a limpid song for softening the mind on your rustic pipes

and save the Shepherd of the cosmos.

Otherwise I might hear an echo from Typhoeus the Gatherer of Clouds

and the thunder of another illusionary Zeus.

"But I can still stop his assault with lightening and thunder!

If fate has put the blood of Zeus is in your veins

and you can trace your line through Inachian Io,

then enchant the mind of Typhon

with a talismanic song from your cunning syrinx.

"I will give you two gifts --

each a form of initiation equal to your task:

you will become the savior of Cosmic Harmony

and a husband to Harmonia.

"And you, primordial Eros the First Seed,

draw your bow and the cosmos no longer drifts apart!

If all things flow from you -- loving shepherd of life --

Draw another arrow and save all things which are one.

Become fire and defend against Typhoeus!

Let the fire-bearing thunderbolts return to my hands from yours.

Seducer of all shoot once with your fire

and strike him -- the one Cronion did not defeat --

with an enchanted arrow and let his goaded madness

at the mind-charming song of Cadmus

be as strong as my desire for a hymn promising Europa's bed."

After saying this,

Zeus sped away in the complete form of the horned bull

from which Mount Taurus takes its name.

Cadmus reclined beneath a nearby tree in a pasturing grove

while he tested the beguiling notes of his clear harmonious reeds.

Then wearing the authentic dress of a rustic herd,

He sent a wile-woven tune within earshot of Typhaon,

puffing out his cheeks as he blew with delicate breath.

When the Giant who was a lover of music, heard the deceptive melody

he jumped up, trailing his snaky feet behind him.

He searched in delight for the close song of the lovely syrinx

and left the fiery weapons of Zeus inside a cave with Mother Earth.

Cadmus saw him next to the grove

and hid in the cleft of a rock, trembling with fear.

With his towering head, Monstrous Typhoeus saw him hiding

and beckoned to him with silent nods.

he failed to see another meaning in the tuneful murmur

and was unaware of the deadly net

as he extended one of his right hands.

A torrent of vainglorious speech came from his middle head,

a human's visage dripping with blood:

"Why are you trembling before me?

Why do you hide your eyes behind your hand?

What a lovely thing it would be

to chase a mortal after Cronion

and seize a syrinx along with lightning!

Why marry reeds to sparking thunderbolts?

"Keep your pipes for yourself alone.

It is Typhoeus' lot to have another,

Olympian instrument which bellows on its own.

Cloudless Zeus, who sits with silent hands

and lacks his usual thundering echoes, could use your pipes.

Let him have the sound of your puny reeds.

I don't twist together rows of plaited reeds!

I roll clouds into clouds and when they're fused,

I discharge a single sound that crashes around the sky!

"I propose a friendly contest – if you're interested:

You whistle a melodic tune with your reeds

and I will crash with pounding thunder.

You blow with your lips

and fill up your cheeks with your breath.

But Boreas will be my blower

and my thunderbolts crack with his whip.

"Cowherd you will be paid for your pipes.

When I steer the cosmos from the starry throne

and hold the scepter instead of Zeus,

I will lead you and your syrinx from the earth to the aether

and -- if you wish -- your flock as well.

If you don't want to abandon your herd

I will establish your goats

over the spine of similarly shaped Capricorn

or near Auriga who drives luminous Olenian Aiga

on Olympus with his glimmering arm.

I will fix your cattle as stars rising the sky

by the broad neck of Taurus which heralds rain

or near the watery axis where the cattle of Selene

let out blustery moos from their throats

and bring warmth to life.

"You don't need your little hut!

Let your flock trade in the thicket for the aether

and shimmer alongside the Eriphoisi.

I will fashion another manger

which will be the same shape as theirs

to shine beside the manger of the neighboring Onon.

"Clothe yourself in stars where Bootes appears

Instead of dressing like a cowherd.

Be a driver of Ursa Major's Lycaonian Wagon,

and brandish a star-shimmering staff.

Happy shepherd pipe melodies on earth today

...and on Olympus tomorrow!

"There will be gifts equal to your performance:

I will make your face Olympian

and set it in a circle of burning stars.

I will join your mellifluous syrinx to the celestial Lyre.

If you desire, I will grant you a hallowed marriage with Athene.

If you are not pleased with her flashing eyes,

Take Leto or Charis or Cytheraia or Artemis or Hebe as a bride.

But don't ask for Hera's bed – that is all mine!

If you have a brother who is a horseman

and is skilled with chariots,

let him take Helios' flaming chariot with its four yokes.

If you want to handle Zeus' aegis since you are a goatherd,

then I will also offer you that as a gift.

"I am going to Olympus untroubled by a defenseless Zeus.

What can Athene -- who is only a woman -- do with her armor?

Begin playing Typhaon's victory hymn, cowherd!

Praise me as the new sovereign of Olympus,

who carries the scepter of Zeus and his cloak of lightning!"

He spoke and Adrasteia wrote down what he had said up to that point.

When Cadmus understood that the son of the tilled Earth,

was drawn willingly into his net by Moira's spun thread,

pricked by the sweet goad of his entrancing reeds,

he uttered without expression these sly words:

"You were astounded

when you heard the meager echo of my pipes,

But tell me -- how will you react when I hymn your authority

after weaving victory song on the seven-stringed kithara?

I once matched Phoebus's celestial plectrums with my phorminx

but Cronides incinerated my melodious strings with a thunderbolt

to bring joy to his defeated son.

"But if I should find those vital sinews once again,

I will enchant with a cascading melody from my fingers

the hearts of wild animals and the trees and mountains.

I will stop the self-woven crown of Ocean

which surges in spirals around the earth of the same age

and drive that circling water back around the same axis.

I will halt the rotating planets, the array of stars

the Sun and Selene's plough-tree.

"But when you attack Zeus and the gods with a fiery spear,

spare the famed Archer, so Apollo and I can compete

and sing of great Typhon in a bid to outdo one another

when Typhon himself sits to feast at his dinner table.

"And don't kill the dancing Pierides,

so they can weave feminine harmonies

around our masculine song as Phoebus Apollo,

-- or your shepherd -- leads the revelry."

He spoke and then Typhoeus raised his eyebrows in joy,

shaking his hair so viperous poison rained down

from his head to soak the hills.

He hurried to his cave and carried out the sinews of Zeus

and offered them as a token of guest-friendship to deceitful Cadmus.

The sinews which fell on the ground as Typhaon warred.

The wily shepherd thanked him for the ambrosial gift.

He carefully inspected them with his fingers,

as if they were strings for the phorminx,

and then slid them deep into a rocky crevice

to keep them safe for Zeus, killer of Giants.

He pursed his lips, exhaled a soft breath

and coaxed a musical mode from beneath vibrating reeds

to give voice to a melody more beautiful.

Typhoeus' numerous ears quivered as he listened

in complete ignorance to the harmonious sounds.

Next to the enchanted Giant, the false shepherd played

as if the liquid sound of his pipes heralded a rout of the immortal gods

He actually played to the impending victory of Zeus.

As he sang of Typhon's fate with Typhon himself sitting near,

Cadmus stirred the Giant's goaded passion all the more.

*As a handsome youth*

*under the spell of a gentle sting,*

*is infatuated with a girl his age,*

*and lingers first on the shimmer*

*of her oval face,*

*and then on the loose strands*

*of her thick hair.*

*For a moment he gazes*

*upon the pink tint of her hands,*

*then he notices a circle*

*of flushed skin on her breast*

*from the pinch of her sash*

*and stares at her naked throat,*

*enchanted as his eye wanders*

*over her body unsatisfied.*

*He does not want to leave*

*the virgin's side for one second.*

So Typhoeus gave Cadmus his entire mind entranced by melody.

*Translated from the ancient Greek by Andrew Barrett*