

Translator: **Reginald Gibbons & Charles Segal**

Ode 2

Fortunate are they whose *strophe 1*
Lives do not
Taste of woe; but among
Those whose house the gods
Shake, no ruin is absent
As it creeps over a
Multitude of generations like
A storm tide of the salt
Sea driven by northern
Gales from Thrace—waves
That speed over the ocean
Depths dark as the under-
World and churn
Up black sand from the sea-
Bed and with harsh
Winds hurl it beating
Against headlands
That groan and roar.

From ancient times come *antistrophe 1*
These afflictions of the
House of the Labdakids
That I see falling one
After another on yet
Earlier afflictions of the dead;
Nor does one generation
Release another, but some
God batters them instead; nor
Do they have any
Way to be set free.
The last rootstock of the
House of Oidipous,
In the light that was spreading,
Is reaped by blood-
Red dust of the gods
Under the earth, for foolishness
Of speech and a Fury in the mind.

Zeus, what transgression *strophe 2*
Of men could overcome
Your power? Neither
Sleep that catches
Everyone in its nets
Nor the weariless passing
Of the months named
For Gods can
Overcome it—You,
The Generalissimo immune
To time, hold
The gleaming marble heights
Of Mount Olympus
For what is now and
What comes after and
what came
Before, only one
Law can account,
Which is that into the life
Of mortal beings comes
Nothing great that lies
Beyond the reach of ruin.

It is wide-wandering *antistrophe 2*
Hope that brings
Benefit to many
Men, but it deceives
Many others with desires
Light as air. When
It comes upon
A man, he cannot
See clearly until already
He has burnt his
Foot on live coals.
Wisely someone has
Kept before us the
Famous saying that
A moment will come
When what is bad
Seems good to the
Man whom some
God is driving toward
Ruin. Only a short
Time does he stay
Beyond the reach of ruin.