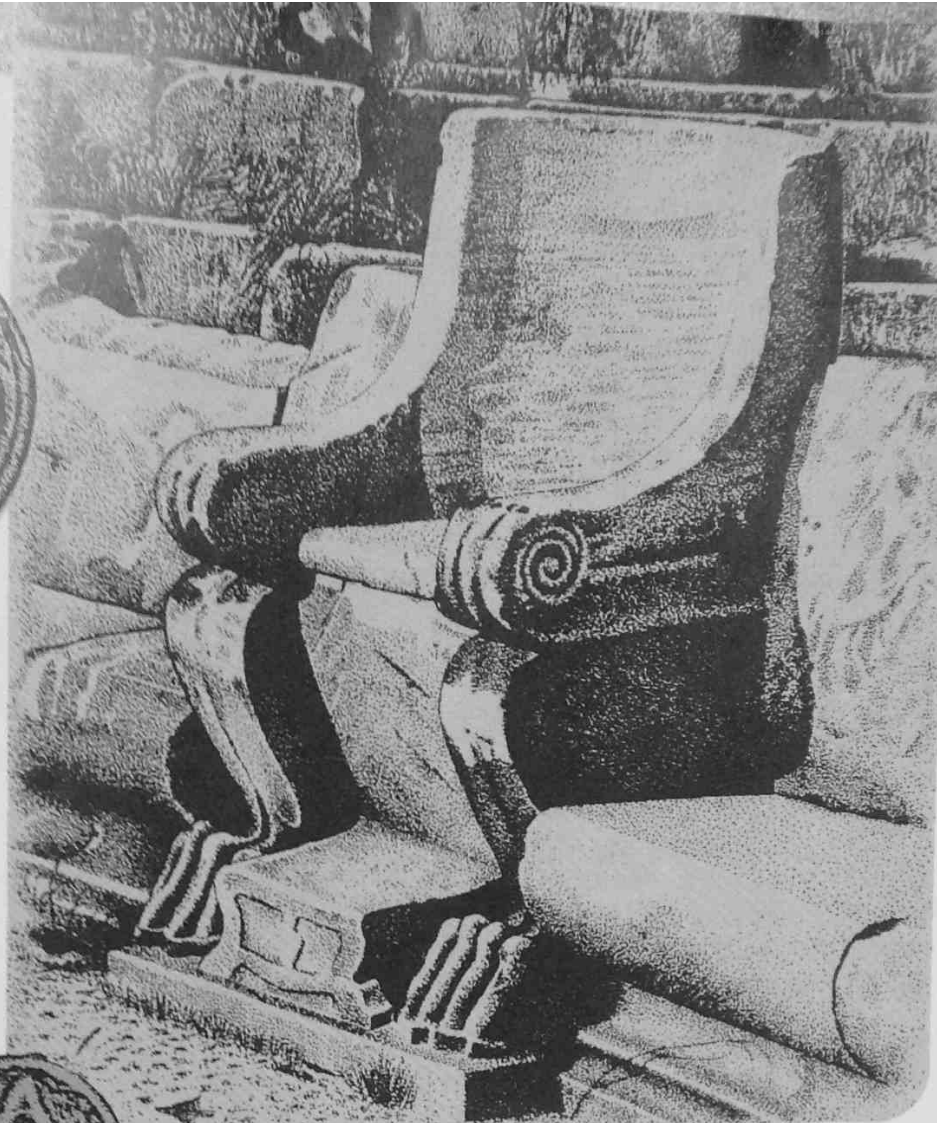




Coins used by Greek citizens to gain admission to the theater. Each letter marks a different section of seats. Andromeda Oxford Ltd.



A seat of honor for a magistrate or important visitor at the theater of Priene, an imitation of the theater at Athens. Andromeda Oxford Ltd.



SCENE 4

Choragus (*as Antigone enters, guarded*). But I can no longer stand
in awe of this,

Nor, seeing what I see, keep back my tears.
Here is Antigone, passing to that chamber
Where all find sleep at last.

5 Antigone. Look upon me, friends, and pity me
Turning back at the night's edge to say
Good-bye to the sun that shines for me no longer;
Now sleepy Death
Summons me down to Acheron, that cold shore:

9 Acheron (ăk'e-rŏn'): in Greek mythology, one of the rivers bordering the underworld, the place inhabited by the souls of the dead.

10 There is no bride song there, nor any music.

Chorus. Yet not unpraised, not without a kind of honor,
You walk at last into the underworld;
Untouched by sickness, broken by no sword.
What woman has ever found your way to death?

15 **Antigone.** How often I have heard the story of Niobe,
Tantalus' wretched daughter, how the stone
Clung fast about her, ivy-close: and they say
The rain falls endlessly
And sifting soft snow; her tears are never done.
20 I feel the loneliness of her death in mine.

Chorus. But she was born of heaven, and you
Are woman, woman-born. If her death is yours,
A mortal woman's, is this not for you
Glory in our world and in the world beyond?

25 **Antigone.** You laugh at me. Ah, friends, friends,
Can you not wait until I am dead? O Thebes,
O men many-charioted, in love with Fortune,
Dear springs of Dirce, sacred Theban grove,
Be witnesses for me, denied all pity,
30 Unjustly judged! and think a word of love
For her whose path turns
Under dark earth, where there are no more tears.

Chorus. You have passed beyond human daring and come at last
Into a place of stone where Justice sits.

35 I cannot tell
What shape of your father's guilt appears in this.

Antigone. You have touched it at last: that bridal bed
Unspeakable, horror of son and mother mingling:
Their crime, infection of all our family!
40 O Oedipus, father and brother!
Your marriage strikes from the grave to murder mine.
I have been a stranger here in my own land:
All my life
The blasphemy of my birth has followed me.

45 **Chorus.** Reverence is a virtue, but strength
Lives in established law: that must prevail.
You have made your choice;
Your death is the doing of your conscious hand.

Antigone. Then let me go, since all your words are bitter,
50 And the very light of the sun is cold to me.

15-20 Niobe (nī'ə-bē) was a queen of Thebes whose children were killed by the gods because she had boasted that she was greater than a goddess. After their deaths, she was turned to stone but continued to shed tears. Why might Antigone compare herself to Niobe?

44 blasphemy of my birth: Antigone is referring to her father's marriage to his own mother, an incestuous relationship that resulted in her birth. This type of relationship was considered a sin against the gods.

Irene Papas playing the title role in the 1960 movie. Culver Pictures.

Lead me to my vigil, where I must have
Neither love nor lamentation; no song, but silence.

(Creon *interrupts impatiently*.)

Creon. If dirges and planned lamentations could put off death,
Men would be singing forever.

(*to the servants*) Take her, go!

55 You know your orders: take her to the vault
And leave her alone there. And if she lives or dies,
That's her affair, not ours: our hands are clean.

Antigone. O tomb, vaulted bride-bed in eternal rock,
Soon I shall be with my own again

60 Where Persephone welcomes the thin ghosts underground:
And I shall see my father again, and you, Mother,
And dearest Polyneices—

dearest indeed

To me, since it was my hand
That washed him clean and poured the ritual wine:
65 And my reward is death before my time!

And yet, as men's hearts know, I have done no wrong;
I have not sinned before God. Or if I have,
I shall know the truth in death. But if the guilt
Lies upon Creon who judged me, then, I pray,
70 May his punishment equal my own.

Choragus. O passionate heart,
Unyielding, tormented still by the same winds!

Creon. Her guards shall have good cause to regret their delaying.

Antigone. Ah! That voice is like the voice of death!

Creon. I can give you no reason to think you are mistaken.

75 **Antigone.** Thebes, and you my fathers' gods,
And rulers of Thebes, you see me now, the last
Unhappy daughter of a line of kings,
Your kings, led away to death. You will remember
What things I suffer, and at what men's hands,
80 Because I would not transgress the laws of heaven.
(*to the guards, simply*) Come: let us wait no longer.

(Exit Antigone, left, guarded.)

60 **Persephone** (pər-sěf'ə-nē): wife of Hades (hā'dēz) and queen of the underworld.

75–80 What do these lines suggest about what Antigone values most?

WORDS
TO
KNOW

lamentation (lām'ən-tā'shən) *n.* an expression of grief
dirge (dūrj) *n.* a slow, mournful piece of music; a funeral hymn
transgress (trāns-grēs') *v.* to violate or break a law, command, or moral code

ODE 4

Chorus. All Danae's beauty was locked away
In a brazen cell where the sunlight could not come:
A small room, still as any grave, enclosed her.
Yet she was a princess too,
And Zeus in a rain of gold poured love upon her.
O child, child,
No power in wealth or war
Or tough sea-blackened ships
Can prevail against untiring Destiny!

And Dryas' son also, that furious king,
Bore the god's prisoning anger for his pride:
Sealed up by Dionysus in deaf stone,
His madness died among echoes.
So at the last he learned what dreadful power
His tongue had mocked:
For he had profaned the revels
And fired the wrath of the nine
Implacable sisters that love the sound of the flute.

And old men tell a half-remembered tale
Of horror done where a dark ledge splits the sea
And a double surf beats on the grey shores:
How a king's new woman, sick
With hatred for the queen he had imprisoned,
Ripped out his two sons' eyes with her bloody hands
While grinning Ares watched the shuttle plunge
Four times: four blind wounds crying for revenge,

Crying, tears and blood mingled. Piteously born,
Those sons whose mother was of heavenly birth!
Her father was the god of the north wind,
And she was cradled by gales;
She raced with young colts on the glittering hills
And walked untrammelled in the open light:
But in her marriage deathless Fate found means
To build a tomb like yours for all her joy.

1-5 Danae (dăn'ə-ē') was a princess who was imprisoned by her father because it had been predicted that her son would one day kill him. After Zeus visited Danae in the form of a shower of gold, she gave birth to his son Perseus, who eventually did kill his grandfather.

10-18 King Lycurgus (lĭ-kûr'gəs), son of Dryas (drī'əs), was driven mad and imprisoned in stone for objecting to the worship of Dionysus. The nine implacable sisters are the Muses, the goddesses who presided over literature, the arts, and the sciences. Once offended, they were impossible to appease.

19-34 These lines refer to the myth of King Phineus (fĭn'yōös), who imprisoned his first wife, the daughter of the north wind, and allowed his new wife to blind his sons from his first marriage.