The ancient Greek tragedy of “Eleni”

by

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Who wrote “Eleni”

Euripides was one of the greatest playwrights of ancient Greece, born around 484 BCE in Athens. He is considered one of the three major tragedians, alongside Aeschylus and Sophocles, and wrote about 90 plays, of which around 19 survive today, including Medea and The Bacchae. His work was innovative because he focused on realistic characters, strong emotions, and psychological depth, often questioning traditional beliefs about the gods and society. Unlike earlier playwrights, Euripides showed ordinary people with flawsand made their actions and passions the cause of their tragic fate.His plays had a lasting influence on theatre and are still studied and performed today.

Some information about "Eleni"

*The tragedy **"Helen"** by Euripides was first performed in **412 BCE in Athens** at the festival of Dionysia and was part of a group of plays presented together in competition. It is written in **Ancient Greek** and follows the typical structure of Greek tragedy, including a **chorus of Greek women**, but it is considered unusual because it mixes tragic elements with more romantic and lighter tones. The play was written during a difficult period for Athens after a major military defeat, and it reflects contemporary ideas by questioning traditional beliefs and the value of war.*

The plot of the tragedy

In Euripides' Helen, the story begins after the Trojan War, but with a twist: the real Helen was never in Troy—she was carried off to Egypt by the gods before the war, and what went to Troy was only a phantom double of her. This means the long war was fought over nothing but an illusion.Helen has been living in Egypt under the protection of King Proteus, but after his death his son Theoclymenus tries to force her to marry him. She fears she will never see her husband Menelaus again, especially after hearing a refugee claim Menelaus is dead. Soon, however, Menelaus arrives in Egypt alive but shipwrecked. At first he doesn't believe Helen's story, but when he learns the phantom that went to Troy has vanished, he accepts the truth.Still trapped in Egypt, Helen and Menelaus devise a clever plan: Helen tells Theoclymenus that Menelaus is dead and that she must perform burial rites at sea before marrying him. The king grants her a ship and supplies, which Helen and Menelaus then use to escape back toward Greece. The play closes with their successful flight and the king's realization that he has been tricked.