



A Dramaturgical Review of
THE WOMEN OF LOCKERBIE

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Preamble

The *Women of Lockerbie* was written as a tribute to what took place in Lockerbie, Scotland following the disastrous events of December 21st, 1988. Deborah Baley Brevoort started writing *The Women of Lockerbie* immediately following the Bombing of Pan Am flight 103 and began to see it widely produced following the attack on the World Trade Center in 2001.

The play is a dramatic reinterpretation – or rather, a theatrical tribute to the emotional power – of the Laundry Project that took place in Lockerbie following the bombing. The Laundry Project was an effort taken up by the people of Lockerbie to clean the personal items found on the plane and return them back to their respective victims' families. This project had a profoundly positive impact not only on the victims' families but also on people like Robert Mueller, the F.B.I. agent heading the investigation. Mueller would later implement relief policies directly inspired by the accomplishments of the Laundry Project when he became director of the F.B.I. in 2001.

To honor the real volunteers of the Laundry Project – Elma Pringle, Josephine Donaldson, and Moira Shearer, among others – Brevoort uses the form of Classical Greek Tragedy (more specifically, tragicomedy) to elevate the women of Lockerbie in the play to a state of heroism. In allowing the women to be an insistent force for positive acts of love (classical heroic characters often stand by their convictions regardless of any ensuing conflict), the play follows the other characters as they realize their own hamartia (rather, their own flaws) are keeping them from moving forward. Thus, Brevoort demonstrates with classical tragic conventions how acts of love like the Laundry Project can help people through grief.

Appendix

General Information:

- Women of Lockerbie is set in the year 1995, seven years after the disaster (Brevoort).
The bombing occurred 21 December 1988 (“Pan Am 103 Bombing.”).
- 270 people died between the explosion and the crash. There were 243 passengers on the plane in addition to the flight crew. All passengers died (“Remembering Pan Am Flight 103.”).
- Lockerbie is a small town in the Dumfries region of Southwestern Scotland near the coast and the English border. According to a 2001 census, it had a population of 4009 inhabitants (“Lockerbie.”).
- The Laundry Ladies - Elma Pringle, Josephine Donaldson, and Moira Shearer - volunteered to assist in the cleanup of Lockerbie following the disaster. They were some of the people who led the effort to collect, clean, and send back to the families the personal items of the bombing’s victims. They were assisted, in no small part, by the rest of the citizens of Lockerbie (“Remembering Pan Am Flight 103: The 'LAUNDRY LADIES'.”).

Regarding the Historicity of the Play:

- While most of the official remembrance ceremonies take place in America, and it is unlikely all of the victims’ families travel to Lockerbie for the anniversary each year, it is true that family members of the victims’ families did travel to Lockerbie in the weeks immediately following the bombing in 1988 (Foundation). Additionally, it has been

reported that some of the families have kept in touch with people they met in Lockerbie throughout the years (“Lockerbie, BBC.”).

- Contrary to the character Olive’s statements in her page 90 monologue, the Pan Am Flight 103 bombing was likely not a retaliation for the U.S. bombing of a passenger jet from Iran [likely a reference to the 1988 tragedy when Iran Air Flight 655 was shot down by the USS Vincennes on July 3rd] (Brevoort 90) (“Iran Air Flight 655.”). Rather, it is well supported and commonly believed that the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 was retaliation for the 1986 U.S. attack on the Libyan capital, Tripoli (“Pan Am Flight 103.”).
- The Laundry Project took about year to complete in reality (“The Miracle of the Women of Lockerbie - Topanga Messenger.”). Additionally, the Laundry Project was begun immediately following the bombing (“Remembering Pan Am Flight 103.”). In the play, the efforts of the Laundry Ladies have not yet begun seven years following the disaster (Brevoort).
- In reality, there was little conflict between U.S. Government Officials, Scottish Officials, and the Women of Lockerbie. As far as is known, there was no attempt to burn the personal items of the victims. In fact, Officials assisted in the processing of the victims’ personal belongings because they were necessary evidence in the governments’ criminal investigations (Newsroom). However, there was little to no F.B.I. procedure for assisting the families of victims prior to the Lockerbie disaster. The Laundry Project did inspire Bureau Officials to implement procedures that would, among other things, guarantee assistance to the families of people killed in terrorist attacks (“Remembering Pan Am Flight 103.”).

- Suse Lowenstein, the mother of Alexander Lowenstein (the inspiration for the character of Adam Livingston), did in fact obtain a jacket of her son's following the disaster thanks to the efforts of the Laundry Ladies. She now wears that jacket every time she enters her art studio (Houston).

Glossary

A List of Words and Terms pertaining to Grecian Tragedy

- Agon – Greek term meaning conflict (“Agon.”). Typically, a portion of comedy where two characters debate an issue and the first speaker commonly loses the debate (MacLennan).
- Choral Dialogue – There is no direct mentions of choral dialogue available. However, this probably contextually means: a situation wherein characters debate an issue (similar to agon) (MacLennan).
- Choral Ode – A section wherein the chorus typically addressed the audience and provided moral postulation or reflected on the action which had just taken place on the stage (MacLennan).
- Episode – A portion of Greek tragedy where characters engage in dialogue, or conversation, with the chorus (MacLennan).
- Greek Chorus – A group of (in the case of this play) women who represent the everyday folk that live in the location in which the play is set. They typically interact with characters, commentate on the action of the play, and are traditionally accompanied by music or speak in verse (“Chapter 2 - Greek Theatre.”).

A List of Words and Terms Pertaining to Scottish Culture or Other Facets of Culture

Mentioned in the Play

- Annan (River) – /’an,en/ (“How to Pronounce ANNAN (English/UK) - PronounceNames.com.”).

- Dumfries – /'dʌm,frɪs/ (“How to Pronounce Dumfries (American ENGLISH/US) - PronounceNames.com.”).
- Kinnel (Kinnell) – /'kɪn,el/ (“Kinnell Pronunciation.”).
- Moffat – /'Mɑh,flɪt/ (“Moffat Pronunciation.”).
- Solway Firth – /'sɑl,we fɜrth/ (“Solway Firth PRONUNCIATION.”).

A List of Names and Their Respective Pronunciations

- Corcoran – /'Kɔr,kɪr,ɪn/ (“Corcoran Pronunciation.”).
- Laing (Bishop) – /'lɑɪ,ŋ/ (similar to “Lang”) (“How to PRONOUNCE Laing | English Pronunciation.”).
- Madeline – /mɑd'e,lɑɪn/

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- Adam Alexander Livingston (Page 13) – Adam Alexander Livingston is likely based on the real Alexander Silas Lowenstein. He was one of the 35 students killed in the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 while returning from studying abroad through Syracuse University's Division of International Programs Abroad (DIPA), he left behind his parents, Peter and Suse Lowenstein, and his brother, Lucas. He was 21 when he died (“Alexander Lowenstein Family Papers an Inventory of the Papers at the Pan Am Flight 103/Lockerbie Air Disaster Archives at Syracuse University.”).
- All my Children (Page 30) – An American Soap Opera on ABC (ran from 1970-2011). Follows the misadventures of closely connected families (“All my Children.”).
- Drystone Sheepfold (In reference to the stone wall mentioned on page 25) – A sheepfold (enclosure for sheep) made from locally obtained stones (Jones, et al).
- Lamb Hill (Page 25) – A hill overlooking the town of Lockerbie (Limited).
- Memorial Service (Page 19) – Each year, a memorial is held at Arlington National Cemetery to commemorate the victims of the plane bombing of Pan Am flight 103 (“Remembering Victims of Flight 103.”). There is a Cairn in Arlington National Cemetery commemorating the victims. It is built of 270 block of red Scottish sandstone and was a gift to the United States from the people of Scotland. A cairn is a traditional Scottish monument honoring the dead (“Pan Am Flight 103 Memorial.”). Additional memorials include the memorial, “Cycle to Syracuse”, where the first responders in Lockerbie made the trip to Syracuse University to finish the trip some of the students on flight 103 never did, and Lockerbie Memorial week at Syracuse University (Rodoski).

There is also a Memorial in Lockerbie commemorating the victims of the disaster (Scotland).

- Pan Am 103 flight route (Page 31) – Was on route to New York City from London (“Pan Am Flight 103.”).
- Stone Wall at Lamb Hill (Page 25) – Likely a drystone sheepfold (Jones, Gerry, et al).
- Ted Koppel (Page 30) – An anchor and managing editor of the ABC News Nightline Program that ran from 1980 until his retirement in 2005 (“Columnist Biography: Ted Koppel.”).
- The Charged and the Convicted (Page 46) – Abdelbaset Ali Mohmed al-Megrahi was convicted and sentenced to 20 years in prison (later 27). Upon discovering he was terminally ill, he was later released from his imprisonment so that he could return to Libya. He died of cancer shortly after his return. Lamin Khalifa Fhimah was acquitted (“Pan Am Flight 103.”). On December 21st, 2020, the 32nd anniversary of the disaster, the U.S. Attorney’s Office brought new charges against former Libyan intelligence operative Abu Agela Mas’ud Kheir Al-Marimi for his alleged role in making the bombs that destroyed Pan Am Flight 103 (“New Charges in Pan Am Flight 103 Bombing.”). The Libyan Government also agreed, after much time, to pay the victims’ families for damages done. The official investigation remains open to this day (“Remembering Pan Am Flight 103.”) (“Former Senior Libyan Intelligence Officer and Bomb-Maker for the Muamar Qaddafi Regime Charged for the December 21, 1988 Bombing of Pan Am Flight 103.”).
- The Church (Page 10) – Likely Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Lockerbie, Scotland (“Remembering Victims of Flight 103.”).

- The Warehouse (Page 19) – Referring to an actual warehouse on the edge of town where a laundry was set up to clean the personal items of the victims (Houston).
- Winter Solstice Bonfires (Page 25) – Early northern Europeans were primarily hunter-gatherers and so kept track of the sun's movements as they depended on it, and the life it brought to their local ecosystem. They would celebrate the winter solstice, the last time they would have ample food until spring, by lighting bonfires, drinking, and eating the beef from the cattle they slaughtered (they could not easily maintain the feeding routine of cattle during the deep winter). This was carried on and became part of Scottish Tradition (Catherine, Katie &).

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