



Mother Country

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The basic premise, that a country with a national health system (no one is ever turned away from a National Health Service hospital for lack of money or insurance) could be knowingly poisoning its inhabitants for profit, seems completely unacceptable when one first starts reading MOTHER COUNTRY.

This incredulity will be especially strong among the many Anglophile Americans who trace their roots back to England, Ireland, Scotland, or Wales, or who merely admire the sense of history and culture that seems to surround every ancient building there. Like a person diagnosed with a life-threatening disease, however, Robinson's readers will find this initial denial giving way to shock and anger and then, by the end of the book, a slow, numbing acceptance that it is all horribly true.

Robinson tells the story of the transformation of the publicly disgraced Windscale nuclear processing plant to the more socially acceptable Sellafield--accomplished with a mere change of name and no actual mitigation of the environmental circumstances--in a clear, elegant prose. Her manner is direct and unpretentious: She does not lecture her readers nor talk down to them. Windscale/Sellafield's history has much to do with Great Britain's political and economic history, and these are the topics that take up much of the book. Robinson supplies complete references for all of her quotes and facts, as well as a selected bibliography for the reader interested in pursuing the subject. MOTHER COUNTRY is not exactly light reading, but it is definitely eye-opening. The strangest revelation of the book is that, in general, the British public already seems to know all these terrifying facts and still nobody does anything about Sellafield (beyond the few who are labeled troublemakers). Perhaps that is what is at the root of Robinson's appeal to Americans: External political pressure might possibly accomplish more than the women of Greenham Common ever will.

Sources for Further Study

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