

Book review:

Helen Garner, *Joe Cinque's Consolation: A true story of death, grief and the law.*



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In this book Helen Garner follows the trials of two young women (both law students at Australian National University, ACT) accused of murder, and the tribulations of the mortified parents of the murdered victim, Joe Cinque. The book gives a fascinating insight into two separate murder trials; taking the reader into the court room and behind the scenes to attempt to reconstruct the events which led up to the murder.

The two accused were Anu Singh and her best friend Madhavi Rao. Anu, the main perpetrator, plotted to kill her boyfriend Joe Cinque at a dinner party with a cocktail of drugs including heroin and rohypnol. It seems that several people knew of Singh's plans, particularly Madhavi Rao, who assisted Anu to carry out the crime, which led to Cinque's death. It is intriguing that no single motivating factor is given (in the book) for the reason behind the murder. It is this unresolved dilemma that provides much of the captivation.

Garner endeavours to provide to her readers a balanced view of all the events leading to and surrounding the murder of Joe Cinque. In doing this she tries to find the justification for the reasoning behind the verdicts: Singh was only found guilty of manslaughter (not murder) on psychological grounds, and sentenced to four years prison with parole. Rao was acquitted for evidential reasons. From Garner's portrayal and from my understanding, Joe Cinque's parents were outraged as a result of the verdicts.

In the end answers to several complex questions are dealt with in a very logical fashion and give comfort. Towards the pinnacle of the book, however, horror and disbelief are conveyed in the operation of our legal system, cleverly juxtaposed against the cool logic and

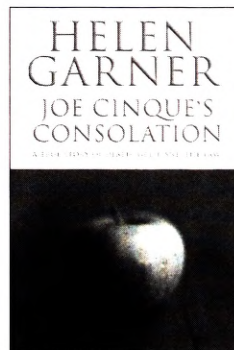
reality of the law. What is so absorbing about this book is its longing to grapple with the reasoning and background of events leading up to the murder.

To this day, it seems that no one knew Anu Singh's true motive for killing her "beloved" boyfriend Joe Cinque. It is true that Singh had a history of psychological problems. This was no doubt further complicated by Singh's insecurities, jealousies and constant desire to be in control. For this reason, the relevance of the expert witness testimony given by Singh's psychologist, Dr Paul Mullen, and the reasoning behind disallowing Crown expert witnesses on to the stand is hard to appreciate. Justice Crispin, however, later explains this reasoning. The frankness of Justice Crispin in discussing several matters in the case, which are left hidden until that moment is astounding and enlightening.

Helen tracks down several key witnesses and friends of the victim's family who had any dealing with Singh or Rao. There is a definite incongruity in what all the witnesses

say about both accused, on and off the stand. Garner also contacted both accused to discuss their version of events, but they both declined to speak with her.

Garner, through this book, it seems, is closely acquainted with the Cinque family and perhaps this book is a journey for them, just as much as for Garner and her readers. It is a bumpy roller-coaster ride through human emotion, frailty, and, perhaps, madness. The book is fascinating reading for all, but especially for those studying or practicing law. The read makes one realise how complex the law is in concert with human emotions, and motivations. I was kept engrossed well past the last page and hope you find it just as stimulating. ■



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responsible for illegal logging, poaching and the illegal pet trade to the attention of the Indonesian legal system.

- **Use of technology.** BOS in conjunction with its sister organization SarVision BV, is using a Dynamic Forest Monitoring System (proprietary satellite technology) to monitor the forests of Indonesia for any illegal activity by companies or individuals. When abnormal forest activity is identified, BOS through the use of the local forest police and its own microlite planes, is able to apprehend the offenders and hand them over to the local authorities. In one instance it was 5 days from detection to detention!
- **Education and local support.** BOS has helped train more than 1000 Indonesian researchers, provides a livelihood for over 650 Indonesian families, directly employs over 250 native people, introduced improved land management techniques and provides medical facilities and educational opportunities for native people in the region.
- **International support.** BOS is enlisting international condemnation of Thailand for failing to release up to 100 illegally smuggled orangutans used in kick boxing matches at a Bangkok tourist attraction. BOS

is working with the international community to be part of debt forgiveness and carbon offset agreements. BOS is also taking a leadership role in bringing to the world's attention the increasing growth in palm oil plantations and the diminishing size of the South East Asia forests.

How young lawyers can get involved

The nature of the work that is undertaken by BOS is complex, time-consuming, and, at times, requires legal input. For example, BOS Australia recently passed a special resolution to convert from an association to a corporation. Currently, BOS is working with its volunteer lawyers to obtain DGR tax status. BOS undertakes significant work in lobbying governments, both in Australia and abroad, for policy and legal changes. BOS also undertake the preparing of submissions to various governments and their departments in the areas of conservation and international laws. A number of lawyers work with BOS as volunteers to help it achieve its aims. If you are interested in the important conservation activities that are undertaken by BOS, please contact BOS at contact@orangutans.com.au. For more information regarding BOS Australia, please see www.orangutans.com.au. ■