



Theatre from the cracks in the psyche of culture

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Revenge of innocence in
The Grudge, The Ring and *Dark Water*
casts *Homeless Minds* adrift alone
on a wide, wide sea



**Homeless Minds and
the Revenge of Innocence**

Have you seen the ghost characters of the young woman and the children in the films *The Ring, The Grudge* and *Dark Water*? Each character exacts revenge, not so much on the perpetrator of the crime against them, but on those bystanders who are infected with something akin to original sin.

The films are significant for more than horror. They touch on deeply ingrained feelings of guilt. Has our contemporary sensibility killed the innocence or naivete in our children and that which is childlike within ourselves? Is this part of the price or curse for our move away from the mythic certainties of religion and cultural traditions in favour of negotiated relative explanations for experience? Is there something of the Ancient Mariner phenomena where the human psyche has to keep telling the story of one's existence over and over in constantly reinvented imaginations in order to



Renee Trentini as a haunting figure in HOMELESS MINDS

compensate for the lack of ancient dogmas where law and truth is unequivocal? The lack of a homing device of religious belief leaves the traveller through life in a constant homeless state. Demarcations of semantic truth and actual phenomenological truth become blurred as the mind tries to assimilate and order social, cultural and personal experience. Are the words themselves the reality or merely the reflection of reality? And is reality altered as words are introduced to explain reality and/or experience of reality. Janine Ayres and I began with these ghost-like figures from film to devise *Homeless Minds* as an exploration of such issues.

Both *The Ring* and *Dark Water* deal with the revenge of innocence. Both deal heavily with water. Like the [albatross killed by the Ancient Mariner](#), the ghost figures target more than the perpetrator. One act can alter the whole balance of nature and the cosmos. The putting to rest of these restless spirits is not easy. Like [poltergeists](#), these spirits remain with individual causing mental and even physical disturbance.

While there is little place in a post modern aesthetic for such notions, the individual writer / artist / designer may try to distance him or her self from the invisible hauntings that distort reality while finding it impossible to be truly released from the clinging energies of past actions. While such energies may well be a fruitful source of creativity, they may also be the clog in the mental engine. But lack of recognition leads to denial; both personal and cultural.

Artists and writers are subject to cultural, historical and social forces that encompass their physical location and heritage. While not necessarily directly related or responsible for the shadowy aspects of society (eg. detention centres in Australia), no Australian writer or artist can be completely free of an association with such a phenomenon nor the myriads of associated aspects. Just as no one raised in a particular cultural setting can ever fully discard or unlearn such a setting. This may be a source of enrichment or a haunting. The killing of birds of good omen (as in the case of the Ancient Mariner's Albatross) unleashes horrific events and a sustained vengeance.

The same applies on a personal level. The shattering of innocence by an individual and the killing of connections with the past can also bring with it unwanted baggage. That which lingers, perhaps unseen by the individual, is also the source of interruption and disruption. The removal of ritual absolutions and binding certainties from much of contemporary living leaves the mind in a constant state of having to shape and reshape its form and existence.

When attempting to explain one's life and relationships, the difficulty arises with the blurring of actual experience with the explanation of experience. These are not the same things. An explanation is not the event. Subsequent experience and semantics may significantly change the actual experience in the memory of the traveller. Trying to reflect this in theatre is difficult.

In May 2005, Janine Ayres and Joe Woodward set up a project combining contemporary dance, text and theatre performance. The title, *Homeless Minds* came from my previous SCREAM essay on [Theatre Of The Homeless Mind](#) and with reference to Peter Berger's famous treatise on [The Homeless Mind](#). We deliberately wanted to provoke ourselves to move beyond our specific artform in order to investigate a relativist approach to a work's creation. This meant working with a group of diverse approaches and backgrounds. Our starting points were totally different.



Innovative choreographer/
dancer Janine Ayres in
rehearsal for *Homeless Minds*

Blaide Lallemand brought a visual arts (specifically sculpture and installation art) and acting training and practice to the work. Renee Trentini brought classical ballet training and practice. Janine Ayres and I found focus points for combining contemporary dance and text-based approaches. Beginning with my text, Janine devised dance that reflected the sound and rhythm of the words without necessarily being influenced by the content. After considerable workshoping and explorations in movement and sound, the text was discarded totally leaving the way open for new text to be devised on the workshop floor to reflect the moods and visual aspects being created. This required a letting go of one's input in order to find new bones and new flesh for spoken text and sound. Blaide's very astute design mind provided the provocative questions to try focusing and grounding the work. Blaide Lallemand is an [award-winning installation artist](#). The natural tensions between the approaches of different art forms became apparent during the process of clarifying the structure and content of *Homeless Minds*.

The artistic process is a vulnerable process. It is most vulnerable when it is close to life itself. *Homeless Minds*, in its precursor form, is vulnerable. Both the content and form reflect that nervous high wire over banality, exposure and something more profound. As artists, we can't be smug when stepping off the precipice of what is known into

unknown territory. But like the Ancient Mariner "alone on a wide wide sea" as artists we are compelled to make the attempt at evoking the stories drawn from the human journey; especially as this journey is so uncertain and becoming more so.

"There is no absolute up or down, as Aristotle taught; no absolute position in space; but the position of a body is relative to that of other bodies. Everywhere there is incessant relative change in position throughout the universe, and the observer is always at the centre of things." [Giordano Bruno \(prior to his burning at the stake by the Inquisition in 1600\)](#)



Award winning artist
Blaide Lallemand and
director / actor Joe Woodward rehearsing ***Homeless
Minds***