

# Why it's Always Raining in Los Angeles

a response to Johanna Bundon's *Scribe & Gretel*

Film Noir is fundamentally a manifestation of Christian society. Its emphasis on moral ambivalence in narrative and character is reflected in its use of light and dark; every scene, and every face, is lit strongly—usually with a light from above. Contrast is pushed to the bleeding edge of plausibility so that each character is rendered in stark shadow and light, simultaneously. The shadow is evil, or the devil, or death, or hate, or whatever it is that you, personally, are terrified of. In the art of Christendom—as in its film and dance—the light is God.

Always.

Film Noir obsesses apathetically (if such a thing can be said) over decisions good-bad, right-wrong, purity-filth, and its characters sit on the hyphens between those poles, rocking back and forth. They manage to be tragic regardless of the side they choose, and regardless of the binary they're engaged in. But they do get to choose, and surely that's the point. Surely one always has the freedom to turn from, or to leave, or to opt out; to substitute one progression towards oblivion with another.

That choice is the place that *Scribe & Gretel* inhabits. It is a ritualized space, and the ritual is inherently liminal—it is the blurry half-shadow between black and white, light and dark, right and wrong. Or none of those things.

Sartre said that hell was other people. Having never been, I can only guess, and offer the distinct possibility that hell is our way of clinging to those choices long after they have ceased to be relevant.

**Lee Henderson, 2007**

