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LOIS LANE IS A LESBIAN

I plotted this augmented "confession" driving out of New Orleans at 5 a.m. with a broken left shoulder feeling cosmically sorry for myself and the world. I could've been some river boat rake shot up in a gambling game and crawling off to die in a swamp, that's how bad it was. At midnight I fell down a flight of stairs in the unlit landing of a warehouse where some kids had been showing me how they manufacture water beds. At 12.10 out on the street there, after broadcasting my agony sprawled over a car hood, I heard this nice clean American male heterosexual hippie who had been my escort explain that we should sleep in my vehicle together. At 12.15 I figured I couldn't have been in worse shape if the concussion I had just sustained had been administered by the billy club of a cop who was now offering to rape me as a reward for being so attractively destroyed. At 12.20 I climbed over the frying pan into the fire where I signaled through the flames the message that we both liked the same sex. At 12.25 my ex-companion of the water bed company was in greater shock than me and I left him gaping and fuming there to go on and win a medal for driving or careening through enemy territory in critical condition to a hospital where for four hours I waited in vain for somebody to determine the extent of the damage. At 5 a.m., as I said, I was on the road. I didn't look back. New Orleans was a disaster area called Mardi Gras. At 2 p.m. when I arrived there the French Quarter I thought was the most exotic area every side of St. Mark's Place and Carnaby Street and Telegraph Avenue and Commercial Street in Provincetown. By 7 p.m. I had lost and/or been ripped off of eight bills, I hoped I would never see another peace emblem or insignia ever; I had paid $2.55 for a ginger ale in a low class strip joint, and 25 cents to pee in a normal restaurant; I had been inadvertently charged by a troupe of longhairs pouring out of a lavender bus demonstrating for more pay for their local police force; I had declined the advances of a
New Yorker who recognized me in a coffee shop, and passed up
the subtler advances of a girl called Jill cruising me in a head-
shop; the American eagle on my van had come loose and askew;
and I had read in my own newspaper that I was part of a phony
new industry of interpersonal technology of which my confes-
sional gush is consecrated to the proposition that we must all
abandon the privileged privacy of our most precious relationships
or perish from emotional constipation and that these confessions
are becoming increasingly profitable, both culturally and finan-
cially, and that I have been publicly exhorting every pretty girl
in America to come out of the closet and into my bed (yeah) and
that I want to look good so badly that I wind up making every
else around me look bad.

If I hadn’t been so upset over the new evidence that some of
us are still finding it so difficult to celebrate all the things we are
I would have been more astonished and flattered that a success-
ful white American male heterosexual film critic had invested that
much time and energy and rhetorical diligence to pay so much
hostile attention to the meagre outpourings of the most oppressed
and confused and unrecognized minority in every country of the
world. It is as much your privilege to think I’m exaggerating as it
is mine to believe I’m stating the case to fit the facts. Each of us
is a barometer of social conditions which we observe through the
perceptual screen of our needs. Reviewing and re-reviewing my
experience of growing up and sort of surviving in a male domi-
nated heterosexual world I am now prepared to say that a female
who is a lesbian in this society is about as well off as a Sabine
woman trapped in a camp of black corporals. I am, by the way,
more in sympathy with the black cause than ever before, and in
fact with all causes, for it has recently occurred to me that all
causes are the same cause (as my critic said, we are all in the
same boat) and that what we’re doing here then is educating all
the members of ourselves to certain needs which have gone un-
heeded or unrecognized or worse damned and vilified and thrust
underground so that we can all coexist more happily together. My initial reaction to the women's movement was a classic. The line was "What's the matter with them, I've been doing it all these years." You can hear this same line from accomplished females all over the place. It's an elitist capitalistic attitude which blesses the fortunate and condemns the ignorant. My initial reaction to the black movement was hey wait a minute I didn't choose to be born white, and let me tell you about the problems of a white homosexual female in a . . . et cetera. Now I suggest you go up to a black person and say White People Have Problems Too and see what kind of response you get. I'm going on record here to notify every heterosexual male and female that every lesbian and every homosexual is all too aware of the problems of heterosexuals since they permeate every aspect of our social political economic and cultural lives. That we were in fact educated on these problems. That we were brought up and spoon fed or pitch forked on the crucible of the problems of thousands of Romes and Julies radiating outward from all our sublimely miserable and broken families into the movies and the funnies and the histories and the psychologies and the novels and our great Western classics. It is, in fact, the heterosexual problems which create a gay liberation movement or any movement to end the artificial social construction of sexual specialization which makes some of our members ill and confused. It is the heterosexual problem which creates this tremendous body of clinical literature to brand some aspect of sexuality perverse and abnormal. It is the heterosexual problem which creates the monstrosity of transsexualism, surely the most pitiful operation going, to "help" some gullible people not to be homosexual in a society far from convinced that all the equipment we are born with is perfectly beautiful. It is the heterosexual problem which creates therapies designed to "cure" people of their natural sexual interests. These therapies and those clinical studies belong to the same market of a disease called normalcy. A healthy society would enjoy and encourage all of its
perversions by which in fact the society would be defined. Polymorphous perversity is the norm. There is no norm. Unless it’s Mailer, who perfectly embodies the heterosexual problem. I think all of us are authorities on the heterosexual problem. Knowledge on the subject is instantly available, in case you’ve missed out, in every daily newspaper with their front page accounts of the Wars. We are bored with the news from the heterosexual fronts. We want to hear from the lesbians and the homosexuals now. I want homosexual movies and novels and funnies and histories and songs and classics. Even problem stories. Certainly the songs. Let all those gay rock artists come out from behind their phony lyrics. But the movies! The big medium. I don’t expect the next batch of gay ones to show us nothing but the doomed clandestine affair of Therese and Isabelle in boarding school, and the wrecked life of Sister George whose girlfriend leaves her for a great white witch of the west whose cold clawing sexual advances constitute the only sexual revelation in the film, and the huge tree of D. H. Lawrence’s well equipped “Fox” falling on one of his two heroines to effectively wipe out the contender to his hero’s object, or the girls in “Persona” never getting to the point, or the sisters in “Silence,” and the boys in anybody’s band parading their stereotyped images to a public greedy for their distress and martyrdom. —Andy Warhol could give us a few straight stories. Eight hours of Nancy and Little Lulu in bed. Or Blondie and Lois Lane. I don’t care much about endings one way or another but the homosexual movies could begin by making up for all the years we grew up watching Gary Cooper and Richard Greene ride gloriously into the purple sunset with Myrna Loy and Mrs. Miniver etc. to live happily ever after. This film critic a few months ago wrote in the context of some review that “although I don’t belong to the happy-endings-for-homosexuals club . . .” which made me ask him when I saw him “why don’t you belong to the happy-endings-for-homosexuals club?” Exactly. The question is why we don’t all belong to the happy endings (and beginnings and
middles) for everybody club. Can you imagine me saying, in any context, "although I don't belong to the happy-endings-for-heterosexuals club"? Can you imagine anybody saying "although I don't belong to the happy-endings-for-black-people club"? Can you imagine any intelligent observer at this moment in history writing an article damning the blacks and their social agonies? Or suggesting that James Baldwin or Eldridge Cleaver or LeRoi Jones were something *more* or something *other* than their blackness—that they were not so much black people who happened to be fine writers as fine writers who happen to be black? We are not *any* of us something more (or less) or *other* than *anything* that we are. We are the sum total of all we are and we are all of what we are in every thought and in every action we manifest.

The Western habit of separating everything and of constantly defining our own spaces by the creation of an enemy is the habit that projected a profession called criticism by which people glibly judge and assess the complications of the lives of others. I never woke up one morning to say Ah now I am going to write something culturally and financially profitable called a confession. I don't share our film critic's obsession with careerism in the forms he describes it as Looking For An Edge. Confession isn't a luxury, it's a necessity. By any American standards none of us is rich. When any artist in this crazy pragmatic country begins to survive by doing just what he wants to do, his art, it seems to me an occasion for rejoicing. That the artists themselves should be attacking each other for arriving at this precarious position of a tenuous security seems to me the height of insanity. In New Orleans that apocalyptic afternoon I picked up the James Taylor cover pix issue of Rolling Stone along with The Voice. Taylor is quoted: "It is very strange making a living out of being yourself." —and the writer goes on: "which neatly defines the personal confessional school of songwriting which promises to supplant much of the hard rock of the '60s." —Confessional literature in any form
hardly needs an apology for its current expressions. One shouldn't have to refer to our honorable ancestors St. Augustine or Rousseau or de Quincey. The form is a misleading one in any case, for one might always ask what is not a confession? Still, there is a kind of religious consciousness, awakening, by fire and shock, which powers the necessity, an inner compulsion, to forge a confessional style. Nerval and Rimbaud and Artaud are such artists in the French tradition. The French historically have seemed especially susceptible. In any country the tradition can be related by a short mental jump to the religious ecstasies and confessions of a Theresa of Avila. At the present moment in America there's an activity we might call confessional journalism which is practiced along the whole gamut of profit at one end and revelation at the other. It's interesting to me that our film critic should express his distaste and displeasure over the medium while practicing it in the same breath. If I had anything to do with stimulating his interest in himself to the point of public display I'd be pleased since I believe the entire practice of criticism is a pathetic projection of personal terrors and inadequacies and suppressed ambition. The rhetorical expertise of some of its practitioners is the best educated refusal to deal with the central problem of the world—the Self. My "confessional gush" is consecrated to no other proposition than that of collecting all of my selves that I can raise to consciousness in the shape of current experiences into some form of literary energy at the moment I sit down most every week to write that damn column. Sometimes I get a masterpiece seizure and work very hard for a structural coup. Sometimes I'm unsuccessfully trying to merge my literary ambition with my cause concerns. It's always a dilemma. What to say and how to say it. And you have to perpetuate the illusion that it means something to somebody besides yourself. Otherwise why the hell would you be publishing it? Why the hell am I bothering here to regress to an old academic style to answer a person who feels that his own myths and feelings are being ridi-
culled when he sees an exhibition of another way of life? Because that's the way I feel right now. I have straight friends whose lives I honor and respect and they don't feel ridiculed by the difference they discern in me. If it's anybody's turn to feel ridiculed, and by the massive heterosexual culture, you know who it is, and that's what the gay liberation is all about—to end this ridiculous posturing about anybody else's sexuality. My first and final line if I had only one on the subject would be that if you can't walk out your door and down the street and into the park in any familiar embrace with the one you love the whole society is in trouble. Men will have to give up the idea that every female is their potential mate. And women will have to abandon their designs on every male. Gay people are now expecting and demanding the same sanctified regard for their sexual interests and unions as they have rendered for as long as they can remember to the weird forces that endowed them with life in the first place. Now there is only one way for this social change to take place. And that is for all gay people, those who know it and accept it, to stand up and speak for themselves. There is no other way. The laws and discriminatory practices will alter according as the attitude does, and the attitude continues absurd as long as the society tolerates its aberrations by successfully pretending that it doesn't know what it already suspects. Ask any gay person about their traumatic confrontations with their families. Everybody knows everything. That is, we are in constant telepathic communication. But society is an iceberg. Most of it is under water. Knowledge which would reveal our most ancient archetypal terrors and taboos, our collective sins and guilts, is rigorously repressed. When this unconscious material erupts and surfaces we become the animal I can only imagine we once were—an animal all of whose parts were in mutual and open-ended communication. The human animal is, perhaps, in the tragic position of having to surface all the way up in order to go all the way back down, or vice versa. Total conscious knowledge means clear traf-
fic from the depths of the unconscious to the rational parts of the functional forebrain. If the iceberg of society surfaced completely we’d be living in a painful but compassionate utopia. I believe with Freud and Brown and Reich etc. that sexual polymorphous perversity (you can, by the way, reconcile Reich with the others) and all its social consequences is the paradise we must profoundly wish to recover. Specialization (sexual, technological, etc.) is the monster that civilization visited on itself to sustain its material needs. We’re working now for an aerial view. We need to know what we already know. Not enough can be said to inform people of what they already know. A secret is an archaic hoarded treasure. Secrets mean borders and barriers and codes and passports and thick walls and frontiers between people. Just a year ago I permitted Rosalyn Drexler at a small dinner party to convince me I’d been a dope for revealing myself at an artists’ colony where I’d been I was not being self protective as Rosalyn pointed out “Oh Jill, can’t you keep a secret” and I was not yet able to reply immediately “Do you keep your marriage to Sherman a secret?” —But if you think I’m having fun being a blabber mouth lesbian you’re mistaken. The field is thick with clashing swords. The ground is already drenched in blood. If you think I’m feeling sorry for myself you’re right. But I’m greatly in favor of people feeling that particular emotion. It’s against the grain of the fearless Protestant ethic. Yet you don’t know you’re a human being until you feel sorry for yourself in a very grand way. Then you look around you and see possibly for the first time how we’re all in it together and then you’ll feel that big cosmic emotion and that’s how you discover with a certain shock that you’re religious even though you’ve read the French existentialists on the death of God.

I know the media thrives on our petty intramural battles but we really want something bigger for ourselves don’t we? Why, in any event, would a quarterback want to tackle his own center? I’ve got enough trouble. I’m persona non grata with every “group”
in the country, just for openers. The women’s lib people don’t like the way I swim. The Gay Liberation Front says I wouldn’t get any support from them. Both organizations think I’m a male chauvinist pig, probably because I take more girls to bed (or want to or pretend to) than I have a right to—as though nobody was ever luring me to bed. —A black man once told me that Le-Roi Jones and the like wanted my head on a platter. The artists were never pleased that I began to find their lives more interesting than their work. The religious groups accuse me of grubbing around on a fame and art trip. The artists coalition types begrudge my sudden minimal independence in my old age. All radicals dismiss me as an idle dreamer. Gay newspaper says I’m an exhibitionist. And I suppose the Adbudon society has it in for me too. Anyway I’m on everybody’s list as number one menace to the universe. I have a case of the most exquisite paranoia. It’s a wonderful feeling. For a female lesbian bastard writer mental case I’m doing awfully well. The only movement I’m dedicated to myself is finding out what anybody is calling me so I can say yeah that’s me. For example: Co-opting the names in the name-calling dictionaries called psychoanalytical textbooks would finish a profession which defines its existence by an occult terminology of names branding whatever it isn’t—that is, the enemy. Schizophrenics, Unite!

**POST SCRIPT**

My agitation on behalf of Lois Lane dates most specifically back to last November in San Francisco. That afternoon a few weeks ago in New Orleans was just the detonation of the fuse that was lit back in California where I had driven away from a melodrama dinner party and a busted affair feeling more like a Joan in armor than I know it’s wise or safe to. But the incident convinced me I would no longer tolerate an innuendo which sounded like an assault on a sexual identity which is fragile enough in the present social circumstances. Moving away from a more detached Ti-
betany trip I had to justify my sudden militancy so I just said well you have to go along with it until it's over, you can't deny that rage you experienced, you don't even know where it's going, you just keep a watch on it and see if you can explode it where it'll hurt the most to mean as much to the peoples you imagine who share the same or similar vulnerability as it meant to you when you thought you were experiencing the entire social prejudice in hurricane form in the microcosm of a dinner party. A black person these days has a certain advantage in being clearly black. I'm not keen about walking across any threshold and announcing my sexual preference over a hello and a handshake. But we might have to alter the etiquettes to suit the new consciousness of the awakened and confirmed lesbian and homosexual who no longer wish to participate in the prejudice against her/himself by permitting any host or hostess or companion to assume a sexuality not clearly defined one way or another by look or style. I don't know how it should work. Lots of radical lesbians are currently in isolation to enjoy only their own company. One told me that the straight friends I've alluded to must be unique in transcending their programming with their humanity. Maybe so. Or else I'm kidding myself. These straight people in San Francisco were strangers to me and friends of a girl who was a quasi-romance of mine for a year, meaning in the worst sense of literary male chauvinism someone you have possessed but from whom you have remained nevertheless detached. I had arrived in November with ideas of being more involved if possible but I think she was eager to make me pay for my old detachment which she considered a cruelty. The prices of interesting sex. And I wasn't completely immune to the unexpected revenge since after all I did care you know, in some way, so I felt bad enough for a couple of days and even returned after I got my head together to see if she really meant it and she didn't after a sloppy dinner at a waterfront restaurant where I got smashed enough to pretend that the interesting bed scene we ended up in would be emotionally more
substantial than the way it always was when I was partly not there. —Such a business. So the next day there I was again trying to feel more involved but clutching the same old way wanting to run from the clinging which was partly responsible or the original detachment which was clearly the mode of my involvement in this particular relationship. We then permitted, so far as I could see, this tenuous affair to be shattered by straight society in an incident that was potent enough apparently to make me feel the way LeRoi must have when the black power thing hit him. Anyway I began to understand the meaning of a true social rage. It happened on this evening about 8 p.m. over a tableau of the Mr. and Mrs. and my lover and her roommate and me uncomfortable enough trying to tolerate the barking cheesecake friendliness of the Mr. while relating to the slightly hysterical but not unnatural warmth of the Mrs. who began to insist on a therapy rap which somehow evolved into the dreadful moment when she referred to a male friend, or acquaintance, in tones of slow heavy import as an “in-cur-a-ble hom-o-sex u-al.” The place got hung purply apoplexy there for a few seconds during which I flashed a number of thoughts and decisions while the Mr. who had been reclining on the couch ogling the roommate got ready to clinch the opener and close the case for straight America with a ponderous guttural back-up “We-l-l, honey, we don’t rea-ll-y know”—which had the effect of turning my body inside my skin into an armored tank smoking at the joints and hanging over a precipice. I became an instant revolutionary. But I had to hold on and hang in there for the evening with my old fashioned decorum because in the few seconds between her remark and his I had flashed the awful knowledge that I was stranded between the necessity of responding to an intolerable assault and my responsibility to a lover whom I couldn’t betray in her closet relation to these people who knew the truth anyway I presume and were playing on the ambivalence of their friend in the normal acceptable fashion of stressing the secret to render it socially impo-
tent. Now I could see for the first time the full import and impact of the closet game. The whole secret-shame-sorry syndrome. I was raging like 20 titans inside my skin unable to act. I went mute but nothing was right. A slaughter was in order and the lady moved in for the kill. The victim became the roommate whom we eventually carried off to cry and scream the rest of it out at home. Now can you dig also that my girlfriend had become angry at me for all this? Yeah, these are the wages of sin in our cockeyed society whose collective guilt is denied by the pretense of secrecy. The reverberations of this scene must've traveled down the coast to the Los Angeles fault that made the earthquake. I arose that a.m. in a pure white fury and yelled myself blue in the eyeballs. That was the end of the relationship and the end of my own equivocation as to my sexual identity in any social circumstances and the identity of anyone else with whom I was going to be involved.

POST POST SCRIPT
My two grand passions of the last six years (one before and one after London) were not advantageously arranged. Besides remaining exposed in the shark infested New York art world I had the nerve to be married to a couple of Cassandras, or Cleopatras, as well. One had the kind of eyes that drive Kings mad and cause Empires to fall. The other had the kind of somnolent seductive athletic grace and classic aristocratic features that drives everybody mad. Both were very intelligent people too. The first was in mortal fear of her blue chip family whose house she dutifully visited once a week for dinner, an occasion that neither of us thought for a moment should include yours truly confused. She was also the object of probably the most determined and persistent courting in the history of that sort of assault (by a third party on a couple) which was launched by a macho male boy wonder artist assisted with the greatest zeal in the enterprise by his dealer who even followed us to provincial cities to continue
their blandishments in a nearby house or in the same hotel! —The second was no improvement for me in these respects because she was not only a beauty and a bacchante but an heiress as well. She moved in with me and spent the money I didn’t have and met my famous comrades and tried to seduce my best friend and sucked me into oblivion and threw my Village Voices in the fire and introduced me to her mother who consulted the psychiatrists and became ill, and angry (“I buried that long ago, dear”) and called her husband in from Spain and just generally mobilized all her powerful resources to save her wayward daughter from the corruptions of real love until she wisely gave up and retreated in refined resignation to Europe to brood I suppose and to wait for the inevitable. I had an authentic princess and the royal family was furious. I believe they were better off than the Rockefellers and Kennedys combined. And don’t think I didn’t have designs on every bit of their bread. My plan was a modern Lesbos on the mainland. Whole cities of pleasure palaces for girls. Whole paradises of Daphnes in bunches of elegant chateaux catered by beautiful eunuchs and liveried flowers. Why the hell not. Well, alas, as you know my scheme aborted because the heroine, whom I really loved by the way, disappeared, and although I tumbled after like a good Jill by flying to Spain to rescue the princess from the big bad witch, they were waiting with the psychiatric machinery and the shut-up money and a bottle of whisky on a hot Moorish hilltop to wipe me out and of course I obliged. After all, who was I but an impoverished American female posing as an important British bastard. Anyway we weren’t the proper story book couple. I returned home and began screwing around right away. I refused even to be a Snow White for another Snow White any more. I’m urging all Snow Whites to get up out of their caskets and mobilize and claim their own sexuality.