



## Crazy Louise, or Conversazione Sacra

By Louise Landes Levi

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### Crazy Louise, or Conversazione Sacra By Louise Landes Levi

Poetry. Women's Studies. Louise Landes Levi's *CRAZY LOUISE, OR LA CONVERSAZIONE SACRA* is a deliberate departure—both from the formal construction of her previous works & from her focus on early (medieval) forms of feminine process & liberation (*Sweet on My Lips: the Love Poems of Mira Bai*). Here Levi works close to home, a personal often fragmented process—she details & deconstructs conventions relating to maternal instinct—to hierarchical lineage & to the suffering of female perceptual process—within the patriarchal construct unable to recognize it. Behind apparent "madness," the madness of genocide, of illegitimate (domestic) & legitimate (state sponsored) torture. (Craze: 1570s, "diseased, sickly," from craze + y. Meaning "full of cracks or flaws" from 1580s; that "of unsound mind, or behaving as so" et. al). The intent in this linguistic cacophony: to transcend. Levi writes, as an "initiate" invoking oriental schools of "crazy" (unconventional) wisdom to contain the debilitating, socially invasive use of this same term "crazy" in our occidental world, especially with relation to women. A close view of sexual trauma, a reading & rewriting of the body, political & personal, this book in an introduction, indeed an unveiling as the cover portrait by Ira Cohen, suggests. The author writes, "Ira knew how to look—he cld. prophesize through the lens. He knew I wld. one day unveil myself. Dear Reader, you certainly cannot tell a book by its cover—if you could these pages wld. be written in gold." The text—a series of untitled poems—is comprised of writings ca. 1992-2002. The author conceived of this title & this cover for 10 years, finally putting the text together, on Christmas Day, 2010, three days after the death of poet Janine Pommy Vega, who had asked her to do so. The text, spontaneously assembled, proved to be inalterable.

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## Editorial Review

### About the Author

Louise Landes Levi is a poet, musician, translator and nomad. She was a founding member of Daniel Moore's Floating Lotus Magic Opera Company, Americas first fusion orchestra. She traveled through Afghanistan in the late 1960s, and journeyed alone to India, via Istanbul, Tabriz, Mashed, Herat, Khandahar, Kabul, Peshawar, Rawalpundi and Lahore. In India she studied the North Indian traditions of music and poetry, from which she later made several translations, including one of Mira, an Indian singer-saint of the 16th century (*Sweet On My Lips: The Love Poems of Mira Bai*, Cool Grove Press, 1997 & 2003). She has published numerous translations of René Daumal, including his major study in Indian Aesthetics, *Rasa: Essays on Indian Aesthetics and Selected Sanskrit Studies* (New Directions, 1982), and of Henri Michaux (made in collaboration with the author). Over the past several decades she has published over a dozen books of poetry and autobiographical prose, including *Avenue A & Ninth Street* (Shivastan, 2004), *Uvasi & Mohammed* (Il Bagatto, 2005), *Banana Baby* (with facing Italian translations by Alessandro Tuoni, Super Nova, 2006), *THE BOOK L* (Cool Grove Press, 2010), *Love Cantos, 1-5* (Jack In Your Box, 2011), and *CRAZY LOUISE, OR CONVERSAZIONE SACRA* (Station Hill Press of Barrytown, 2017). Her electronic chapbooks are available on the web site Big Bridge. She has also released musical and spoken word recordings, most recently *City of Delirium* (Sloow Tapes). When not traveling she resides in a tower in Bagnore (Italy), and New York.

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