M/Other

(Dedicated to my husband and children)

Fawzia Afzal-Khan
Montclair State University, USA

The clink-clanging of knives and forks against a susurrus of sobs escaping the steel faucet in the ritual cleansing which follows each meal

Me in this twilight hour sipping red in cobalt blue against the greens light, dark, darker edging the terrace where I sit while he washes the stains away

Mindful of kitchen sounds slowly seeping into the woods from whence appear a family of deer I sometimes see from the square window

And point out to the delight even now of grown children and their father familiar with the

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1 Fawzia Afzal-Khan is a Professor of English at Montclair State University, USA and Director of the Women’s and Gender Studies Programme. Her most recent books are: A Critical Stage: The Role of Secular Alternative Theatre in Pakistan and the best-selling edited collection, Shattering the Stereotypes: Muslim Women Speak Out. Syracuse University Press is publishing her memoir, Growing Up With Girlfriends Pakistani-Style, in Spring 2010.
madness of mothering
the other.

(Ossining, New York, 11 July 2008)
Worldly Woman

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I

a woman
walking near
the jet d’eau
very fast
in her abaya

perhaps she fears
the wind
might blow off
what gives her
a measure of
cover

a woman
spread eagled
a string of blood
between her thighs
red clam shells
on her breasts
she belongs

on her boat
with the red and
white trim
and the flag of the
white cross
sticking out like a
sword
from the prow

she seems so carefree
in the middle
of her perfect Lac Leman
the wind picks up
just a bit
coming off
a dark chateau
now owned by
Sir Sadruddin Khan

II

And the sun still
cheerfully bright
careses those legs
skinned to the white
before the red
begins to burn
I jump into the
fountain’s spray at
the jardin’d’anglais
searching for a moment

in my dolce vita

a woman
on the bench
wearing a green shalwar
and white kameez
locks her legs up
looking away
at some point
I wish I could still
see in a movie
from yesterday

(Lavigny, Switzerland, 16 July 2005)