

Michelle Macklem.

<sup>2</sup>Doe is a survivor of the serial attacks committed by Canada's infamous "Balcony Rapist" in the mid-1980s.

<sup>3</sup>In a compelling and comprehensive evaluation of the semiotics of the myth, Roland Barthes outlines a "second-order semiological system" that serves to naturalize a view that is, in fact, socially produced (*Mythologies* 13). Effective mythical speech purports an intent at the expense of literality, thus conditioning its capacity for the "ideological abuse" (10) that produces *the dominant symbolic order*. When a woman is raped and it is said, "She was wearing a short skirt," I understand what the statement is to signify to me—she is at fault. This message is in no way contained in the utterance, so I am therefore faced with the second-order signification. The second-order signifier is formed with a previous system, that is, a woman wearing a short skirt, which could signify a host of meanings: the weather was hot, mini-skirts were in fashion, or she wished to attract sexual attention, to name a few. A hegemonic cultural distortion serves to determine the latter as the definitive first-order sign that, in a chain of signification, then becomes the signifier in the myth. The desire for sexual attention is naturalized as sexual availability, which is what is ultimately presented as signified. Importantly, myth works because the second-order signifier "does not suppress the meaning, it only impoverishes it, it puts it at a distance, it holds it at one's disposal" (117).

<sup>4</sup>In the official university hearing, Nungesser was found "not responsible" for the rape (Bazonon).

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## JOANNA M. WESTON

### The Missing Women

their red dresses  
swing from wires  
along the highway

blowing wild  
on chaotic winds  
screaming

the names  
of lost children  
no one knows

where they went  
or who took them  
into death

Joanna M. Weston's middle-reader, *Frame and The McGuire*, was published in 2015; and her poetry collection, *A Bedroom of Searchlights*, was published by Inanna Publications in 2016.