



### Lyla Rye

*Echo* is the sound of two women's voices telling the same stories of growing up in rural Ontario. They resound from one side of the mauve fabric-clad elevator to the other. This intimate space is home to conversations both spoken and unspoken, a space that is as much a private confessional as it is a public receptacle for the exchanges between strangers. Either way, one risks being overheard when speaking out loud in this public/private enclave. The younger woman's voice precedes the elder's; they are syncopated so that she whose voice was just leading is now following. Now they are talking to one another—or are they? They have a story to tell and it's as though the urgency is so great that it takes the force of both of them to tell it. But are these the memoirs of an old woman speaking about incidents that occurred years ago or the young woman's future anecdotes? They tell of driving without a license, wreaking havoc at dance clubs, and the adventures of wearing a mauve bias-cut dress so tight the seam splits. The dress itself is the conduit for the memories in this story:

*. . . he came over from Orono and picked me up in Oshawa. . . I made a new dress, snug as possible, and cut on the bias. . . We were dancing and had a whale of a time, and the darn seam split down the side! That was embarrassing but it didn't matter. After paying the price to go in, we weren't going home for love nor money.*

Behind a split in the seam of the elevator's fabric is a mirror. A glimpse of one's own reflection might provoke a moment of introspection: Who do you look like? Who do you sound like? Who will your children be like? Family resemblance is never far away. The elderly woman in *Echo* is the artist's grand-aunt Emma, whose wardrobe clearly played a significant role in her life: the clothes in her closet were painstakingly organized according to decade. Emma passed on several articles of clothing to her great niece—an inheritance that is neither more nor less significant than the tales that may well accompany them.

We know one another through the stories that we tell and retell—never recounted quite the same way twice but always with familiarity and ease. *Echo* is a technological version of oral traditions.