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THE HONEYMOON STAGE

Oscar Schwartz

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The Honeymoon Stage is a collection of poems written for friends on the internet over a five-year period. These friends were spread across the globe, and most of them the poet had never met, and will never know. Poetry was the method by which the correspondents felt they could authenticate themselves to one another, despite their separation in space, and their friendships being mediated through screens. The poems engage with the flattened syntax of internet language, registering its awkwardness while bringing human qualities to the centre of the exchange. They inhabit a surreal world marked by shifting identities and video-clip encounters, blog-like intimacies and strange scraps of information, discovering in this reality new ways of thinking and feeling.

Oscar Schwartz is a poet and researcher based in Darwin who is concerned with the intersection between technology and culture. His poetry has been published in *Best Australian Poems*, the *Age*, *Cordite* and international journals. *The Honeymoon Stage* is his debut collection.

'If the internet is the twenty-first century God, *The Honeymoon Stage* is the new theological verse.' MICHAEL FARRELL



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Author's note

Writing *The Honeymoon Stage* was a Turing test-like experience, finding the combinations of language that could demonstrate humanity from screen to screen, across wires. But for me sincerity isn't the same as authenticity. Although the book is structured in three parts – Me, You and Us – these pronouns do not necessarily belong exclusively to me and my life. To write many of the poems in this book I invented alternate personas who lived on the internet, made friends, got into arguments. The poems are thus spoken by and convey the actions of persons living parallel lives to mine. This doesn't make the book less sincere, but just shows the sincerity can be an act of creation rather than confession. This is an idea that we're becoming more familiar with – as we increasingly use our devices to communicate – but is also rarely celebrated or encouraged as a poetic act. For me, this performance and self-creation online offers a new language that is often slight, funny, casual, light, emotive, but also explores the tensions between the ecstasy and anxiety of connection.

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