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Synthetic

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CRITICAL ABSTRACT: SYNTHETIC

Creative Thesis Plan B

Julia Prince

Throughout her life, the poet May Swenson concerned herself with communicating pathways to personal improvement and self-discovery by navigating the distinct social and psychological challenges specific to her historical context, personality, and gender. Though deceased, Swenson is still able to communicate these notions successfully, as many of her poems' speakers do not conceal their intentions, but rather "force the truth."

Synthetic, a poetry chapbook, similarly "forces the truth," as the speaker – like Swenson's – craves to bare all and discover more about who she is, as she contends with her own social and psychological challenges regarding beauty-gestures, practices, and relationships within the domestic realm. The speaker relates tangible experiences, adding her voice to the female poets of past and present who have also asked themselves – *what does it mean to be a woman?* In attempt to force truths regarding her own identity, the speaker examines her roles as a female, daughter, girlfriend, ex-girlfriend, and future mother through poetry. While examining these roles, the speaker contends with societal ideals of beauty, realizing that many beauty practices have been encouraged or emphasized within her domestic realm, even since childhood. In order to make better sense of the beauty pressures put upon her by lovers, her mother, and herself, the speaker toys with the thought that while such practices can be harmful, they might also, at times, be empowering.