

## Deviance and the Aesthetic Schema: A Queer(ed) Somaesthetic Analysis of “Poor Things”

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**Abstract:** *The following leverages a queer(ed) somaesthetic lens to analyze the protagonist of "Poor Things" (2023), Bella Baxter, as a figure of deviance. Bella's body, as a queer(ed) space, serves as a vehicle for learning through the sensual erotic, a source of social discourse on personhood, morality, and autonomy, and a space where others project hegemonic norms of beauty, gender, and sexuality. The article further examines queerness through her identity, actions, gender, and sexuality and challenges conventional norms, making her body a site for exploration and expression of deviation. Finally, the article examines the role of power, policing, and violence as a by-product of deviance, drawing parallels between Bella's experiences and those of queer people and other marginalized groups. By exploring Bella's character, the paper illuminates "Poor Things" (2023) as a compelling commentary on queer(ed) and embodied discussions of identity, autonomy, and personhood.*

*"I am Bella Baxter. I am a flawed, experimenting person. I seek outings and adventures. Bella's so much to discover. And there is a world to enjoy, circumnavigate. It is the goal of all to progress, grow."*  
Bella Baxter, "Poor Things" (2023)

Yorgos Lanthimos' film "Poor Things" (2023) seemingly acts as what some have called a female version of Frankenstein. However, the film offers more than a mere duplication of a timeless classic. Instead, it provides a compelling commentary on the constructs of identity, autonomy, and beauty. The protagonist, Bella Baxter, emerges as a figure of deviance, her body depicted and existing as a queer(ed) space. The analysis explores how Bella's body serves as a vehicle for learning through the sensual erotic, a source of social discourse on personhood, morality, and autonomy, and a space where others project hegemonic norms of beauty, gender, and sexuality.<sup>1</sup>

The analysis examines Bella's queerness through its manifestation in her actions, her identity, and her gender and sexuality. First, her queer(ed) origins of reanimation and subsequent

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<sup>1</sup> The article uses terms like "womanhood," "mother," "female," and "vulva" to analyze Bella's body and describe her story. However, these terms are not inherently exclusive to any gender identity, expression, or experience.

departure from period-typical norms, including the child-mother relationship and Victorian aesthetic schema, invite the exploration as an embodiment of deviation.

Second, the analysis examines Bella's body as an avenue for her exploration and learning. Through her sexual and erotic experiences, Bella navigates her identity, establishes new ways of engaging with others, and seeks autonomy in those relationships.

Finally, the analysis articulates the role of power, policing, and violence as a by-product of deviance. Other characters' responses to Bella's deviation emanate from a need to control and correct behaviors contravening their aesthetic schema. These manifestations of power are also embodied and grounded in the desire to control Bella's body through actual or threats of violence.

Bella's body and subsequent experiences present parallels to the actual lived experiences of marginalized groups, particularly queer people, both historically and contemporarily. The analysis establishes these connections as a component of the queer(ed) somaesthetic exploration of the film.

## 1. Queering Bella's Body

Bella's body serves as both a location and a catalyst for queer(ed) aesthetic discourses throughout the film. As the story unfolds, the audience discovers that Bella was formerly Victoria Blessington, a pregnant woman who completes suicide. Dr. Godwin brings her back to life by reanimating her using the brain of Victoria's baby. Dr. Godwin's actions create a queer(ed) somatic relationship between Bella and her body, deviating from a normative self-body relationship. If queerness is a sensory and relational difference destabilizing the "foundations upon which identity and sexuality are constructed" (Phillips, 2009; Halperin, 1995), then Bella's self-body relationship becomes inherently queer. She simultaneously embodies both her mother and child yet exists as neither.

A queer(ed) somaesthetics recognizes queerness as an embodied difference expressed through one's thought processes, social interactions, and expressions of gender, sexuality, and personhood. Bella's deviation in her self-body relationship marks a profound difference from the typical self-body relationship and a departure from a typical mother-child relationship. In a normative relationship, after nine months, the child no longer shares their mother's body. In this case, Bella forever maintains the connection to her mother's body as she inhabits it while not retaining her mother's previous experiences or knowledge. Instead, her unique circumstances and origin require a (re)learning and (re)fashioning of her sense of self. While her body retains the marks of her former life, including the c-section scar from her surgery, her mind does not contain these memories.

One can draw a comparison between Bella's experiences of (re)learning and (re)fashioning further with some experiences of transitioning as a transgender or gender diverse person. For example, suppose someone transitions, then they might begin to re(learn) and (re)fashion their sense of self through their gender expression (i.e., chosen name, pronouns, or clothing), how they move through the world (i.e., ways of speech or movement such as walking or positioning their bodies), and what memories or experiences they choose to retain as a part of their understanding of self (i.e., one's deadname, baby pictures, or association with family). These moments may be a space of intentional divergence from the dominant social schemas that instruct a person to align with their assigned sex or gender without question. Bella's experience can mirror the opportunity for the "reconstructing and the reinvisioning of self and possibility," which serves a vital purpose in the lives of queer people (The New School & hooks, 2014).

## 2. Embodied Deviation from Victorian Schema

Bella's body further deviates from the aesthetic norms for women in Victorian London (1872-1901). Sociohistorical, cultural, and temporal factors that inform culture shape aesthetic discourses (Schusterman, 1999; James, 2013). These discourses shape the aesthetic gaze as it views and evaluates bodies (James, 2013; Brady, 2013). While responses may vary, the conceptualizations of sameness or difference in aesthetically viewing bodies inform one's aesthetic schema (Norman, 2004; DeLong, 2023). Presentations aligning with familiar aesthetic preferences produce positive responses (beauty), while those deviating from the schema produce negative responses (ugliness) (Norman, 2004; Hagman, 2006; DeLong, 2023; Cohen, 2013).

Initially, Bella's portrayal aligns well with the physical expression of womanhood during the Victorian Period in many ways. She appears to the audience as a young woman with pale skin, large blue eyes, and long black hair. Women met conventionally attractive criteria if they had clear faces, bright eyes, tinted lips, pale skin, dark hair, and eyebrows (Lennox, 2016). However, Bella deviates from these beauty ideals by wearing her hair down and free flowing along her back throughout the film. A vital piece of the social schema for Victorian women included how they wore their hair. Women who met the social schema and embodied ideas of piety and chasteness wore their hair covered. While those who did not were unchaste or morally depraved as "a woman's long hair... is the emblem of her femininity...a symbol of her sexuality, and the longer, thicker and more wanton the tresses, the more passionate the heart beneath them is assumed to be" (Aspinall, 2012, para 5-6).

Understanding the schema for Victorian women is valuable to the reading of Bella's character, who ultimately dresses and styles herself according to her desires and preferences rather than conforming to the preestablished social norms. During the Victorian Period, the term 'fallen woman' describes a woman who does not meet the dominant social schema, one who differs from societal expectations and consequently is viewed as a representation of ugliness, or darkness, and as something in dialectical opposition to the 'angel in the house' or representation of beauty (Nochlin, 1978; Aspinall, 2012; Lennox, 2016). Bella's flamboyant fashion choices (Ciminello, 2023), coupled with her deviating behaviors, make her stand out compared to other characters in the film.

## 3. Queering Bella's Sexuality

Bella's sexuality deviates from the social schema, influencing others' reactions to her. A pivotal example occurs shortly after Max McCandles, Dr. Godwin's former student and assistant hired to track Bella's progress, joins the research team. Initially, Max is fascinated by Bella, finding her physically attractive and viewing her first as an adult woman and second as a developing experiment prone to occasional violent fits. The awareness of his preestablished attraction is valuable to understanding the shifting alignment of Bella to Max's schema. As Bella advances developmentally from an 'infant' to an age where she can use more complex language, she becomes aware of her body's capability for sexual pleasure. The film depicts her discovering masturbation while eating breakfast alone at the dining room table. Elated, she calls in Mrs. Pim, the housekeeper, to demonstrate how she makes her own 'happiness' on Mrs. Pim.

Understandably, Mrs. Pim responds negatively to the attempted non-consensual attention but also loudly instructs Bella not to masturbate at all. Max also scolds Bella, who asserts that the behavior is "inappropriate for polite society." Max, who still finds Bella's physical form beautiful,

reacts in disgust to her newfound sexual awareness. He responds with ugliness through his disgust, motivated by discord within his schema.

Bella's action of embracing and seeking pleasure is queerness in action. Queerness is not necessarily about sex, though that can be a component of it. Instead, queerness can be "about the self that is at odds with everything around it, and that has to invent and create and find a place to speak and to thrive and to live" within one's society (The New School & hooks, 2014). During the Victorian Period, women were to be sexually engaged only with one man and were not to seek pleasure independently. They were to be 'objects of pleasure for men to use.' In opposition to this perspective of her body as property for others, Bella engages with the "epicenter of female sexuality in which pleasure and repression collide on an embodied fault line that is both private and public, political and existential, symbolic and corporeal" (Waskul et al., 2007, p. 152).

Bella deviates from expected behavior in seeking her pleasure through masturbation, in speaking frankly about masturbation and her pleasure openly, and in attempting to entice others into engaging in the same action. Queerness is grounded in difference by its very nature. It leans away from historically accepted ways of being, such as cisgender, heteronormative, and patriarchal dominant cultural hegemonies – generating new ways of being and knowing within our societies (Phillips, 2009; Walks, 2014).

The reactions of ugliness from Mrs. Pim and Max can draw another valuable parallel as an allegory for queer experience. In many societies informed by heteronormative, patriarchal, and Abrahamic religions, the experiences and identities of queer people encounter ugliness. This ugliness manifests verbally through statements of denial or unacceptance, reactions of disgust, and even violence, much like Bella experiences verbal denial and admonishment from Mrs. Pim and Max. Despite this adverse reaction, this moment in the film illustrates Bella transcending beyond the social forces that attempt to control her way of being and claims her liberatory and affirming sense of autonomy (Friedman, 2019; Schneewind, 2009). In doing so, it mirrors how queer people may navigate negative responses to their identities and personhood to establish empowerment and strive for self-actualization.

Beyond allegory, there is an inherent and literal sense of queerness and beauty in Bella's reclamation of her body. In Paris, Bella begins working at a Brothel where she meets Toinette, a young Black woman. Toinette, outspoken and educated, helps Bella navigate a sex-worker world and introduces her to philosophies and politics that further Bella's social awareness. Toinette finds Bella beautiful in their sameness, two women engaging in sex work and seeking a better and more equitable world. Toinette illustrates her affections through her words and actions, including an erotic scene between Toinette and Bella.

During this sex scene, Bella's body transforms from purely a queer(ed) entity to a character with a queer identity. As an identity, queerness can represent the spectrum of the LGBTQIA+ community and "different hegemonic identities of gender and sexuality" (Walks, 2014; Weston, 1993). Her sexuality, which previously had been admonished by Mrs. Pim and Max, is now on display and celebrated by a close person in her life. The film's unabashed illustration of Bella and Toinette's sexual engagement is essential after showing numerous heterosexual scenes between Bella and various men. It queers what the viewer comes to believe about Bella's body and sexuality throughout the film by showing her finding pleasure with another woman.

One critique of the film revolves around whether Bella, in her sexual explorations, is capable of consent due to her 'mental age.' While this paper aims not to explore this component of the discussion, a few considerations regarding the film and consent exist. Throughout the film, the audience is not aware of 'how old the brain of the baby is' within Bella's character. Early on, it is apparent that she is still learning to walk, talk, and interface with others in her world. When

Bella becomes sexually active later in the film with Duncan Wedderburn and others, viewers can make meaning about her behavioral patterns and disposition. However, the film does not address her 'mental age.' Some commentary from individuals who worked on the film, such as the intimacy coordinator Elle McAlpine, envisions Bella as 16-17 (Hunt, 2024). While, Emma Stone, the actress who portrays Bella, shares that she did not see Bella as a child in any of those scenes (Harrison, 2024). Other opinions suggest that the film, regardless of the 'age' of Bella in the scenes offers important representation and commentary of masturbation for girls and women in a world that does not teach them about their bodies (Roberts, 2023). The author contends that these are valuable questions and considerations in exploring the film but are outside the scope of this analysis.

#### **4. The Embodied Sensual Erotic as Sense-Making**

Bella's erotic sensuous experiences serve as her means of accessing, learning about, and understanding the world. As histories, beliefs, and ideas inform one's experiences, the brain constructs meaning, which shapes one's interpretation and construction of meaning (Schusterman, 1999; James, 2013; Ford, 2023). A valuable component of these experiences encompasses the sensual, sexual, and erotic experiences, both real and imagined (Lorde, 2007; Sartwell, 2021; Schusterman, 2023). Activities like masturbation are a method of somatic discovery, providing a space for sensual and erotic information gathering for the embodied self (Waskul et al., 2007; Roberts, 2023).

Following the infamous masturbation scene, Bella's sexual relationship with Duncan enables her access to varied experiences, advancing her growth and development. His affections and doting enable Bella to visit faraway lands like Spain and Alexandria, try new foods like oysters and pastries, and gain valuable world experiences that illustrate the beautiful and the ugly, the good and the bad. In her travels, she forges new friendships with Harry Astley and Martha Von Kurtzroc, who introduce her to new ideas through sharing books, experiences, and philosophical dialogues. These relationships and experiences are only made possible through the access provided through her sexual engagement with Duncan.

Bella's engagement in sex work further acts as a learning mechanism by challenging her sense of erotic schema. When Duncan and Bella arrive in Paris after a series of sordid events, they appear penniless, and, to make money, Bella chooses to work at a brothel. During that first client-sex worker exchange, she finds that the man uses her only for his pleasure. To Bella, that is a new experience, and the lack of interest in their mutual erotic satisfaction shocks her. After becoming a full-time resident and worker within the brothel, Bella learns that, ultimately, the transactional exchange does not meet her desire or need for the sensual or erotic as a pleasurable learning tool. It deviates from her schema as a form of ugliness that drives her desire to change it (Cohen, 2013).

In the face of ugliness, Bella queers her relationship with her clients to generate change claiming the power of the erotic. She enacts her will by establishing boundaries and processes with her clients, involving humor, story-telling, and bodily hygiene to make the process more enjoyable for them both.

These additions not only queer the client-sex worker relationship through transformation but also create beauty for Bella. Several scenes illustrate the change within the client-sex worker relationship, such as her meeting with a working-class man who shares with her the story of how he fell off his bike as a child or the time she and another client took turns telling jokes, and they laughed before having sex. These moments create a point of connection, intimacy,

and learning that Bella leverages to further her sensuous needs and, inadvertently, those of the clients. The sharing of vulnerability between Bella and her clients creates an opportunity for shared connection and trust (Ward, 2022), even if transactional, which brings her closer to her desired schema. She is, to the viewer's knowledge, the only sex worker in the Brothel who uses this strategy, and it ultimately makes her the most sought-after as well (Roberts, 2024).

Bella's use of the erotic as a learning tool also allows her to teach through the erotic. In queering her client-sex worker relationship, she not only establishes and claims a beautiful exchange for herself but creates a unique experience for her clients. The vulnerability and sharing provide pleasure not only through sexual activities but also through epistemic pleasures of knowing, learning, and receiving knowledge from others (Gill, 2014).

Bella's queering of the client-sex worker roles empowers her within the erotic, allowing her to change the social conditions to align with her sensual aesthetic schema and regain her physical autonomy. The body that previously was an 'experiment' by Dr. Godwin, to an object of desire and intrigue by Max, then an object of possession and obsession by Duncan, and temporarily an unruly tenant by Madame Swiney, is now able to act within her proclivities and to do so while obtaining knowledge.

Bella experiences a deeply embodied sense of gender-based oppression through the challenges she navigates in a patriarchal society that devalues women. Her actions following the changes to her client-sex worker relationships illustrate the power of reclaiming her labor from an oppressive, unfeeling system by engaging in it how she so chooses. The reclamation of her body and her labor allows her to "develop a healthy relationship to her sexuality; she knows sex should be enjoyable for her, not just for men, and that she should not be coerced into it" (Roberts, 2024, para 22). Finally, Bella's deliberate deviation from the dominant schema as a woman embracing the sensual and erotic provides direction for how she navigates the Brothel space as a sex worker and, ultimately, as a woman who will choose to leave that space.

While the body offers epistemic opportunities, it also serves as a space for domination and policing (Lorde, 2007; Sartwell, 2021; Armstrong, 1996). The body as an aesthetic object is evaluated and valued based on numerous criteria. The space where bodies may align or diverge from their society is also where they become objects of power or oppression to control or police others (Bishop & Wojtanowski, 2018; Foucault, 1990). These dynamics play a central role in the film for Bella, a character actively seeking autonomy and the authority to make decisions regarding her body and its use.

Bella's body, as a target of the aesthetic gaze, is also reduced to a sexual object that many desire to control. Lorde's (2007) concept of power in the erotic as connection or pornographic abuse illustrates how various characters attempt to punish Bella's deviation from their aesthetic schema. Duncan is a prominent character who seduces Bella's soma with ideas of freedom (both physical and sexual) and an escape from the 'polite society' referenced by Max. Like Max, Duncan is captivated by Bella's innocence and childlike disposition and is forthcoming and explicit with his sexual desires towards Bella. He views Bella as a conquest, representing his schema for what he defines as an ideal woman. That ideal schema includes one who is insatiable, interested in him, who validates his sexual prowess, and who can look good on his arm as he engages in his debauchorous actions of gambling and drinking. Initially, Bella begins their sexual journey aligning with Duncan's schema. However, that quickly changes following their arrival in Lisbon.

Bella's desire for autonomy becomes apparent through her desire to explore the city, engaging in self-pleasure by way of embodied experiences with the world around her, and engaging in sexual activities with other men. One such incident in Lisbon occurs when Bella disappears for the day, exploring the city streets, drinking, and ending her escapades by returning to Duncan,

who discovers she has engaged in sexual activities with another man. For Bella, the exchange between her and this mystery man is a product of her naivety and lack of understanding of the man's intentions with her. She views it purely as an experiment or learning opportunity and is confused by Duncan's horrified reaction to the discovery. He is so distraught at his inability to control her actions that he steals Bella away onto a Ship in a chest, kidnapping her to exercise control over her body.

For Duncan, these actions mark the advent of Bella's dramatic deviation from his schema through her actions of individual personhood, intellectual development, and sexuality. He employs his power to impede or stop her deviation by using methods of control. In another incident, Duncan forcefully removes Bella from a table when she spits something unpleasant onto her plate. He holds her arm painfully before telling her, "You will confine yourself to three phrases. 'How marvelous. Delighted. And how do they make the pastries so crisp?' Yes?" The dominant culture wields power as a weapon as Duncan illustrates in his treatment of Bella.

Aesthetics must consider the insurmountable role of power as that which creates, reinforces, and is created and reinforced by dominant social hegemonies of the beautiful, the sensual, and the erotic. Power creates and reinforces hierarchies wherein those having access to abilities, people, or resources can advance or sustain the conditions wherein their power is enactable (Schusterman, 1999; Young, 2011; James, 2013; Ford, 2023). One of the many ways power manifests is through the policing and punishing of undesirable characteristics and reinforcing and praising desired ones. In the context of real Victorian London and the setting of "Poor Things," the dominant culture is patriarchal, cisnormative, and heteronormative, as much of the population aligns with the established social schema by being cisgender and heterosexual (Foucault, 1990; Friedman, 2019).

A queer(ed) somaesthetic approach considers how power reinforces somatic schemas of domination and control. Duncan's treatment of Bella illustrates patriarchal notions of who holds power in their relationship. It is an attempt to control not only her sexual self but her literal way of experiencing the world. Duncan's attempt to exercise power over Bella further parallels the policing of hegemonic norms that scrutinize queer people for their deviations from the dominant social schema of expected behavior and portrayal.

Duncan's reactions to Bella's deviation from the schema also inform his view of her value and morality. The Victorian social schema establishes these connections, portraying women as 'angels' or 'fallen' based on their individualized, subjective choices in decorating and using their bodies. A notable example of this is following Bella's experience with Duncan when he learns that she has engaged in sex work to earn them money. He lashes out at her, telling her that "whoring is the worst thing that a woman can do" before taking her money and leaving her alone in Paris. Duncan's engagement in the discourse of Bella's profession manifests as avoidance and anger as his specific schema dictates what professions and actions are acceptable for women. The reaction Duncan can further parallel the queer experience wherein individuals may place moral value upon the alignment or deviation of one's sexuality, gender, or gendered expression with the hegemonic norm. The reaction of ugliness by those who place negative moral judgment upon queer people may then manifest as avoidance or anger, like Duncan, per the discord in their individual schemas.

While at the brothel, Bella experiences further power exerted over her through her divergence from the typical sex worker-madame relationship. While working at the brothel, Bella establishes her autonomy in her client-sex worker relationships by infusing her subjective preferences into the erotic exchange. Having grown her confidence, Bella attempts to advocate for herself and the other sex workers by inquiring why the staff cannot choose which clients they wish to serve.

The suggestion deviates from the typical client-sex worker and client-madame relationship in that it positions sex workers with more power and autonomy over their engagements. Bella has found enjoyment and alignment with her schema in holding more control over what her client relationships look like and believes there is value in expanding this opportunity.

The suggestion to shift the client-sex worker dynamic is queer in that it extends outside of preestablished heterosexual hegemonic norms at the time. It offers opportunities for transforming the sex worker-client relationship from a subservient transaction wherein the sex worker must comply with the client's wants regardless of their preferences to a more equal exchange. A reality wherein one views the sex worker as a sexual expert or teacher and the client as a student who, rather than merely fulfilling their sexual desires, can have them "explored, considered, transformed, and engaged in a way that recognizes the ontological specificity of the parties involved" (Cahill, 2024, p. 848). In this way, transforming the client-sex worker relationship would offer a Foucauldian shift in power that embodies capillary power, extending into the learning processes, aspects, and actions of life (Foucault, 1980; Ivashkevich, 2012).

Madame Swiney's reaction to Bella's deviation from the schema is ugliness by way of violence. After refuting Bella's suggestion, Madame Swiney reinforces the power dynamic by stating "that is the way things are" before dismissing the women. She meets with Bella privately and bites her ear to the point of drawing blood. A practice she will repeat and one which uses her body to police the bodies of the women under her employ. Bella has broken the unspoken rules about who holds positions of power and makes decisions within the brothel. Her action establishes that deviation from the brothel's subcultural norms will result in decisive and painful actions.

A final point of embodied erotic discourse central to the film is the role and symbolism of Bella's vulva, with an emphasis on the clitoris. To omit the emphasis on the vulva when discussing her body would do a disservice to the film. Bella explores her sexuality and pleasure through activities such as masturbating, engaging in penetrative sex, and receiving acts of oral sex (without reciprocating). These activities are more than gratuitous depictions of sex. They serve as critical points of development and growth for Bella.

The source of Bella's pleasure, her clitoris, is identified as the literal and symbolic source of her deviation. The audience meets Alfie Blessington, the husband of the deceased Victoria Blessington, in the final act. Following his and Duncan's interruption of Bella and Max's wedding, Bella goes to his estate, which is under duress due to his cruelty towards the staff. He believes that Bella (who he insists is Victoria) ran from him. In reckoning with the perception of Bella's deviation from the schema, Alfie schedules to have Bella castrated. Much like others in the film, he attempts to exert power over Bella through violence, believing that removing what he views as a literal and symbolic representation of rebellion and a threat to their marriage. Female castration in Victorian England was a method of controlling women. While it was not a standard procedure, clitoridectomy could occur in response to "behavior [s] seen as unfeminine and as a threat to marriage...[including] "distaste for marital intercourse," "a great distaste for her husband," violent behaviour, or even just answering back" (King, 2018, para 4). The discourse around Bella's body, sexuality, and the totality of her development and actions throughout the film lead to this climatic moment in a mirror to Victorian history.

Finally, recognizing the clitoris is a source of pleasurable sensuality that historically and arguably contemporarily is viewed as taboo and shameful. Its history and erasure (both literally and figuratively) can render it as "symbolic, corporeal, and experiential territory that may be occupied by others, in this case, men" who wish to exert extreme power and violence over others (Waskul et al., 2007, p. 166). The threat of castrating the protagonist attempts to sever not only



a source of embodied pleasure and joy but symbolically hinders her somatic experiences of knowing, being, and experiencing.

## 5. Conclusion

A queer(ed) somaesthetic analysis of "Poor Things" offers a valuable exploration how power is wielded over marginalized bodies in reaction to perceptions of deviance and the power of the erotic as a learning and self-actualizing mechanism. The analysis established Bella's queerness through its manifestation in her actions, her identity, and her gender and sexuality. Her body is a site of (re)learning (re)fashioning of her sense of self. Through her sexual and erotic experiences, Bella navigates her identity, establishes new ways of engaging with others, and seeks autonomy in those relationships. These embodied experiences are further established a site of power, policing, and violence as a by-product of deviance. Others' reactions to Bella illustrated how ugliness fuels reactions striving to control and correct behaviors contravening their aesthetic schema. These explorations serve as both an example and allegory for the experiences of queer people in historical and contemporary societies.

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