

WHAT DOES A

QUEER RELATIONSHIP

LOOK LIKE?

By Meg-John Barker

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DIFFERENT MEANINGS OF

Queer identity

Queer community

Term of abuse

Strangeness or difference

Positive reclaimed word

Umbrella term for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans

QUEER

IN DIFFERENT TIMES & PLACES

People who challenge mainstream/normal sexuality/gender

Questioning fixed identities & either/or binaries

Queer theory

Queer activism

HAVE IMPLICATIONS FOR

- WHETHER WE'RE COMFORTABLE WITH THE TERM
- WHETHER WE SEE OURSELVES - OR OUR RELATIONSHIPS - AS QUEER

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

CAN WE HOLD MULTIPLE MEANINGS SIMULTANEOUSLY?

WHAT DOES QUEER MEAN TO YOU?

EVEN IF THEY ARE CONTRADICTORY?

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QUEER AS IN STRANGE

(HISTORICAL MEANING)

All the world is queer save thee and me,
and even thou art a little queer



The Diogenes club is the queerest club in London,
and Mycroft one of the queerest men.

STILL LINGERS
TODAY...

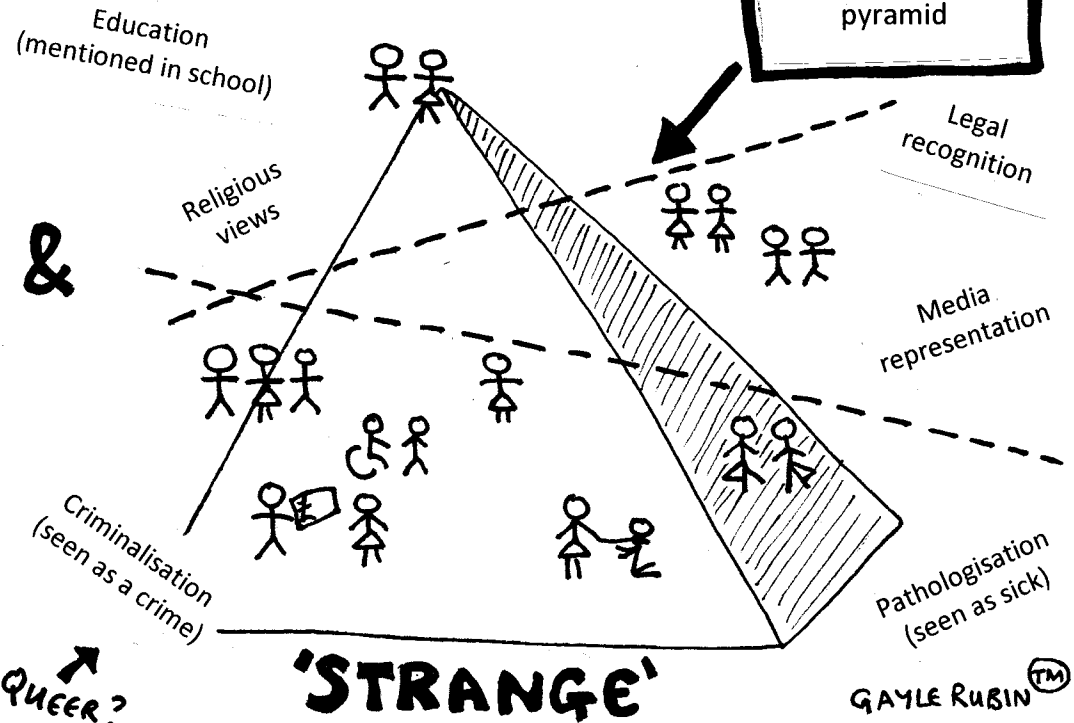
There's nowt as queer as folk

IMPLICATIONS FOR RELATIONSHIPS

ANYTHING BELOW THE LINE THAT OUR CULTURE CURRENTLY DRAWS BETWEEN

'NORMAL'

The acceptability pyramid



'STRANGE'

GAYLE RUBIN™

IMPORTANT TO KEEP IN MIND - IMPACTS HOW WE EXPERIENCE OUR RELATIONSHIPS

WHERE ARE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS ON THE PYRAMID? E.G. HOW DOES THE MEDIA DEPICT RELATIONSHIPS LIKE YOURS?

QUEER AS IN GAY



PUBLICLY
ACCUSED OF
BEING
QUEER

MAINSTREAM
TERM FOR GAY
MEN

RECLAIMED
PRIDE
TERM



**WE'RE HERE
WE'RE QUEER
GET USED TO IT**

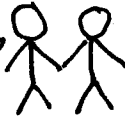
IMPLICATIONS FOR RELATIONSHIPS

SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIPS

More equal (gender roles)

Sociologists in the 1990s & 2000s

BECAUSE WE'RE OUTSIDE THE SOCIAL NORM IN ONE WAY



WE INEVITABLY QUESTION OTHER NORMS

Relationships based on trust, honesty, communication

More sexually experimental

More open to non-monogamy

TO GET INSIDE NORMALITY CASTLE

WE TRY TO MAKE OUR RELATIONSHIP 'NORMAL' IN EVERY OTHER RESPECT



WHAT ABOUT US?

More recent sociology

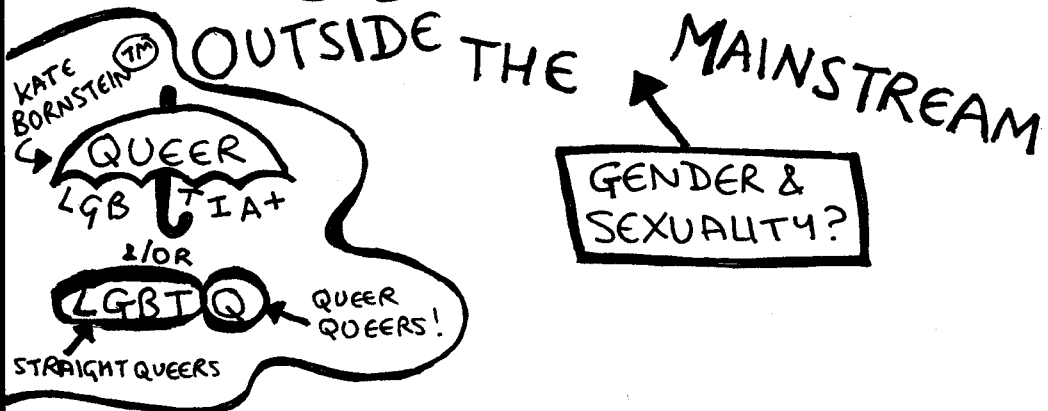
NORMATIVITY CASTLE

EXCLUDED MARGINALISED

IN WHAT WAYS DOES BEING OUTSIDE THE NORM IN ONE WAY ENCOURAGE US TO QUESTION OTHER NORMS? IN WHAT WAYS DOES IT ENCOURAGE US TO EMBRACE THEM?

DO WE HAVE OUR OWN NORMATIVITY CASTLES? HOW DO WE PROTECT THEM? ARE THERE ANY ALTERNATIVES TO THIS APPROACH?

QUEER AS IN ANYONE



THE HETEROSEXUAL MATRIX

		Attracted to	
		Male	Female
Person is	• Male	Homosexual	Heterosexual
	Female	Heterosexual	Homosexual

JUDITH BUTLER (TM)

IMPLICATIONS FOR RELATIONSHIPS

HETEROSEXUAL MATRIX ASSUMPTIONS

ALOT ABOUT WHO IS IN THE RELATIONSHIP

SEXUALLY & ROMANTICALLY

↓

		Attracted to	
		Male	Female
Person is	Male	Homosexual	Heterosexual
	Female	Heterosexual	Homosexual

HETERONORMATIVITY BINARIES ARE HIERARCHICAL
 * = PRIVILEGED

AND THIS IS FIXED FROM THE SEX THEY ARE ASSIGNED AT BIRTH

↓ 1 RELATIONSHIP AT A TIME MONOGAMOUS & COUPLED

RELATIONSHIPS THAT DISRUPT THE MATRIX

INCLUDE PEOPLE WHO ARE...

- LESBIAN/GAY - DISRUPT HETERONORMATIVITY
- TRANS - DISRUPT CISNORMATIVITY
- ASEXUAL / AROMANTIC - DISRUPT SEXUAL/ROMANTIC IMPERATIVE
- NON-MONOGAMOUS - DISRUPT MONONORMATIVITY
- BISEXUAL - DISRUPT HETERO/HOMO BINARY
- NON-BINARY - DISRUPT MALE/FEMALE BINARY
- KINKY - CAN DISRUPT COITAL IMPERATIVE &/OR GENDER ROLES
- + SOLO/SINGLE - DISRUPTS COUPLE NORMATIVITY & MORE...



IN WHAT WAYS ARE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS INSIDE/OUTSIDE THE HETEROSEXUAL MATRIX? WHAT NORMATIVITIES DO YOU DISRUPT?

WHAT IMPACT DOES THIS HAVE ON

- YOU
- THE RELATIONSHIP
- THE PEOPLE YOU'RE IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH
- THE WORLD?

QUEER AS IN

NO

FIXED IDENTITIES OR BINARIES

A LOT OF THE THINGS LISTED ON THE LAST PAGE ARE STILL

IDENTITY BASED



Bi

ACE

NB



BASED ON BINARIES

METERO/HOMO CIS/TRANS
ASEXUAL/SEXUAL
MONOGAMOUS/NON-MONOGAMOUS ALLOSEXUAL
KINKY/VANILLA
STRAIGHT/QUEER...
SINGLE/COUPLED

QUEER ACTIVISTS HAVE POINTED OUT HOW EASILY THESE APPROACHES LEAD TO NEW NORMATIVITIES & EXCLUSIONS



WHAT EXPLICIT & IMPLICIT EXCLUSIONS HAVE YOU SEEN? FOR EXAMPLE WHO IS TOLD THEY CAN'T ATTEND PRIDE OR QUEER EVENTS? WHO IS EXCLUDED BECAUSE VERY FEW PEOPLE LIKE THEM WILL FEEL COMFORTABLE ATTENDING OR BE ABLE TO?

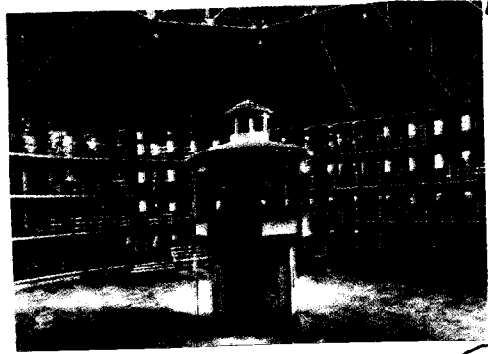
QUEERTHEORY

EXPLAINED IN ONE PAGE!

THIS IS FOUCAULT

HE SAID SOCIETY IS LIKE A PANOPTICON PRISON - WE COULD BE WATCHED AT ANY TIME SO WE LEARN TO MONITOR & POLICE OURSELVES

AND A CAT!



IDENTITY

I'M THIS CATEGORY OF PERSON I HAVE TO TELL A STORY TO EXPLAIN WHY I HAVE TO LOOK RIGHT I WANT PEOPLE LIKE ME TO BE SEEN AS NORMAL

WE DO THIS BY TRYING TO:

- DISCIPLINE OUR BODIES &
- ACHIEVE NORMALITY

- DIET
- 97M
- FASHION
- BETHE BEST
- SUCCESS

THIS IS BUTLER

PRODUCE

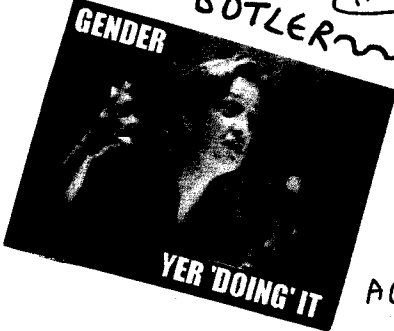
SHE SAID THAT GENDER (& PRESUMABLY OTHER ASPECTS OF IDENTITY LIKE SEXUALITY) WAS 'PERFORMATIVE' A HABIT THAT WE LEARN BY REPEATING OVER & OVER & OVER AGAIN

SELF IMPROVE

FIT IN

BELONG

SUCCESS



GENDER

YER 'DOING' IT

BEING NICE CARING ABOUT APPEARANCE

EXPRESSING FEELINGS WALKING & TALKING IN A FEMININE WAY



NOT SHOWING EMOTION PROVING TOUGHNESS WEARING 'MALE' CLOTHES WALKING & TALKING LIKE A MAN

BINARIES

IT IS POSSIBLE TO RESIST & SUBVERT THIS

WE CAN CALL FIXED IDENTITIES & BINARIES INTO QUESTION THROUGH OUR ACTIONS

IN THIS WAY OUR GENDER ETC. GET WRITTEN ON OUR BODIES & BRAINS THEY ARE THINGS WE DO NOT THINGS WE ARE

10

OR THEY BECOME WHAT WE ARE

IMPLICATIONS FOR (QUEER) RELATIONSHIPS GENDER, SEXUAL & RELATIONSHIP DIVERSITY (GRSD)

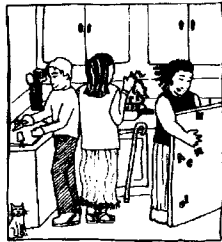
INSTEAD OF BINARY IDENTITIES...

EITHER



OR

SWINGER



OPEN



POLYAMOROUS

MONOGAMOUS

NON-MONOGAMOUS

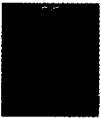
poly fidelity

MONOGAMISH

fuckbuddies

open relationships

swinging



hook up



friends with benefits



relationship anarchy

hierarchical poly



egalitarian poly

solo poly



polyamory

Monopoly

Monogamy? Polygamy?

mono/poly



PROLIFERATION OF DIFFERENT
WAYS OF DOING RELATIONSHIPS
LIKE THE EXPLOSION OF GENDER &
SEXUALITY TERMS...

RELATIONSHIP DIVERSITY

DO YOU SEE YOUR
RELATIONSHIP HERE?
WHAT TERMS DO
YOU USE?

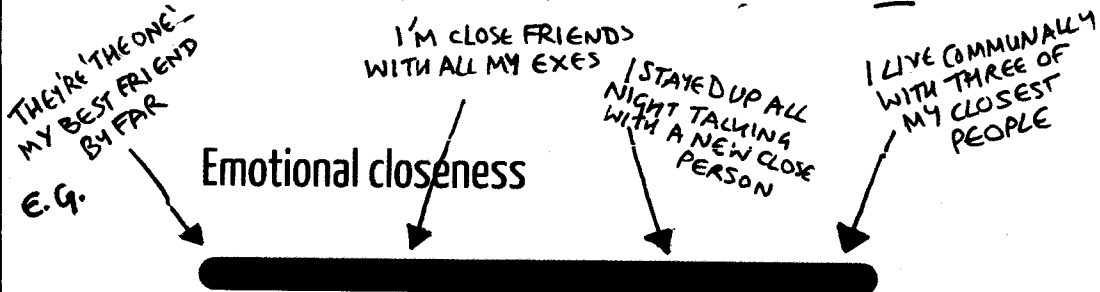
ARE YOU NON-MONOGAMOUS
OR MONOGAMOUS OR
BETWEEN/BYOND?
IS THIS AN IDENTITY OR NOT?



CHALLENGING EITHER/OR RELATIONSHIP BINARIES

INSTEAD OF THE MONOGAMY/NON-MONOGAMY BINARY WE COULD SEE OUR RELATIONSHIPS MORE ON A CONTINUUM FROM MONOGAMY TO NON-MONOGAMY

A LOT OF PEOPLE ACTUALLY SEE IT MORE ON TWO CONTINUA



Monoamory

One close intimate relationship.
No close relationships outside this.

Polyamory

Multiple close relationships.

E.G. WE MAKE SURE WE'RE NEVER ALONG WITH SOMEONE OF THE SAME GENDER AS OUR PARTNER

Sex

FANTASISING 150K
PORNIS OK

CYBERSEX 150K

SNOGGING 150K
ONE NIGHT STANDS ARE OK

IT'S FINE TO HAVE SEX WITH ANYONE

Monosex

No sexual/physical contact outside the relationship.

Polysex

Multiple sexual encounters.

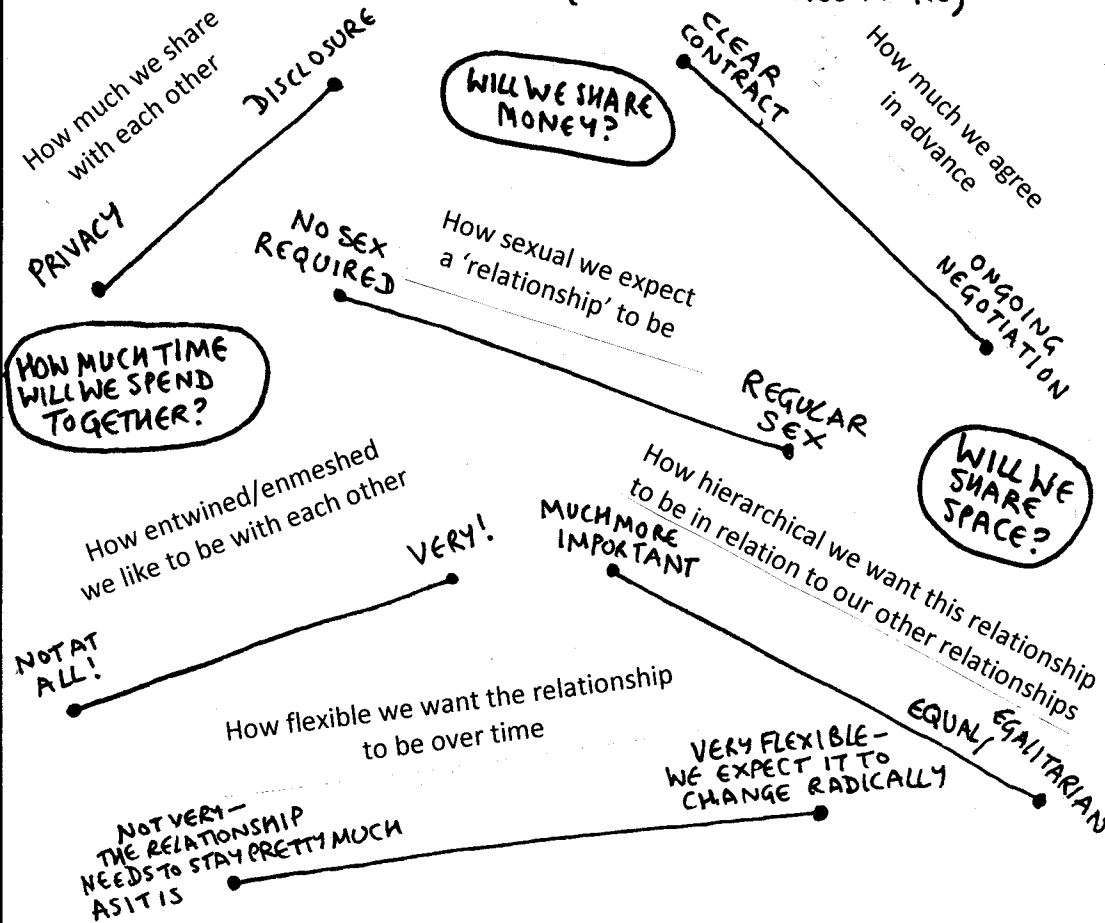
WHERE ARE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS ON THESE CONTINUA?
WHERE HAVE THEY BEEN IN THE PAST?

WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE THEM TO BE?
WHERE WOULD THE PEOPLE YOU'RE IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH LIKE THEM TO BE?

MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS OF RELATIONSHIPS

ACTUALLY THERE ARE LOTS OF DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS LIKE THIS THAT WE COULD USE TO CHART OUR RELATIONSHIPS (OR RELATIONSHIP PREFERENCES)

HERE ARE JUST A FEW (FEEL FREE TO ADD MORE)



WHERE ARE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS ON THESE CONTINUA?
WHERE HAVE THEY BEEN IN THE PAST?

WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE THEM TO BE?
WHERE WOULD THE PEOPLE YOU'RE IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH LIKE THEM TO BE?

HOW WE DO NOT WHAT WE ARE

FROM A QUEER PERSPECTIVE WE COULD MOVE AWAY FROM
- LABELLING OUR RELATIONSHIP IDENTITY (FIXED)
& TRYING TO FIT THE NORMS AROUND THAT
& DEFINING OURSELVES AGAINST BINARY OPPOSITES
TOWARDS FOCUSING ON HOW WE DO OUR RELATIONSHIPS

WHAT ARE YOUR RELATIONSHIP ETHICS?
HOW DO YOU LIKE TO TREAT PEOPLE & BE TREATED?

WHAT ARE YOU HOPING FOR FROM A/THIS RELATIONSHIP?
WHAT CAN YOU OFFER?
WHAT ARE THE LIMITATIONS ON WHAT YOU CAN OFFER?
HOW DO YOU PREFER TO COMMUNICATE?

IT AINT WHAT YOU DO ITS THE WAY THAT YOU DO IT

FOR EXAMPLE WE COULD EXPAND 'OPENNESS' BEYOND NON-MONO GAM

HOW OPEN CAN YOU BE TO VULNERABILITY IN THIS RELATIONSHIP (INSTEAD OF WITHDRAWING OR ATTACKING WHEN IT GETS HARD?)

HOW OPEN ARE THE WINDOWS ON YOUR RELATIONSHIP - SO PEOPLE CAN SEE & HELP WHEN THINGS GET TOUGH?

NOTICE WHEN WE CLOSE & CLENCH & WHEN WE OPEN & EXPAND

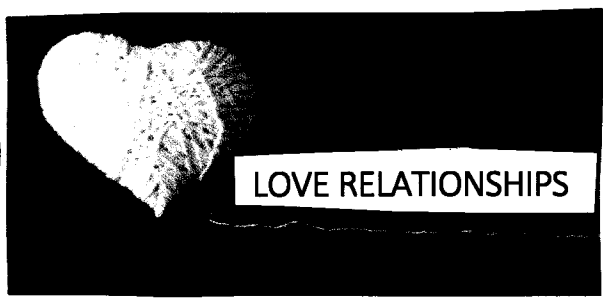
DOES THIS RELATIONSHIP OPEN UP OUR POSSIBILITIES MORE THAN IT CLOSES THEM DOWN

OUR PERSONAL HISTORIES
EG PAST TRAUMA
CULTURAL SHAME
MARGINALISATION
ETC.

CAN WE OPEN UP MORE? (14) WHAT GETS IN THE WAY OF THIS?

EXPANDING OUR IDEA OF RELATIONSHIPS

SO FAR THIS ZINE HAS ASSUMED WE'RE TALKING ABOUT



WHAT DOES THAT INCLUDE & EXCLUDE?

WHAT IS LOVE?

BUT THERE ARE FURTHER BINARIES TO QUESTION HERE

Partners vs. friends, family, colleagues, neighbours, etc.

E.g.

Relationships with humans vs. animals

ETC.
ETC.
ETC.

Relationships with beings vs. places, times, ideas, the planet, etc.

THIS RAISES PROFOUND QUESTIONS ABOUT WHO WE VALUE HIGHER & WHY RELATES TO ...

- Sexism, racism, homophobia, etc.
- Disability rights
- Colonialism
- War
- Fat activism
- Class & austerity
- Education system
- Criminal justice system
- Treatment of sex workers
- Mental health etc. etc. etc.
- Treatment of refugees

HOW DO YOU DEFINE A RELATIONSHIP? IS IT BASED ON TIME SPENT TOGETHER, SPACE SHARED, WHO YOU FEEL CLOSEST TO, WHO YOU CAN LET IN FURTHEST, SHARED VALUES, WHO IS RECOGNISED BY OTHER PEOPLE, HOW MUCH YOU LIKE SOMEONE, SEXUAL ATTRACTION, IN-LOVE FEELINGS, HOW LONG YOU'VE KNOWN THEM &/OR OTHER THINGS?

IS YOUR MODEL OF RELATIONSHIPS FLAT, HIERARCHICAL, OR SOMETHING ELSE? WHAT IMPACT DOES THIS HAVE ON YOU AND OTHERS?

CAN YOU REVISIT QUESTIONS IN THIS ZINE FOR ALL OF THE RELATIONSHIPS IN YOUR LIFE?

READ MORE...

(IF YOU WANT TO)

www.rewriting-the-rules.com

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* THESE 2 ARE MORE ACADEMIC



QUEER SQUARE ZINES

YOUR

NOTES



QUEER SQUARE
ZINES