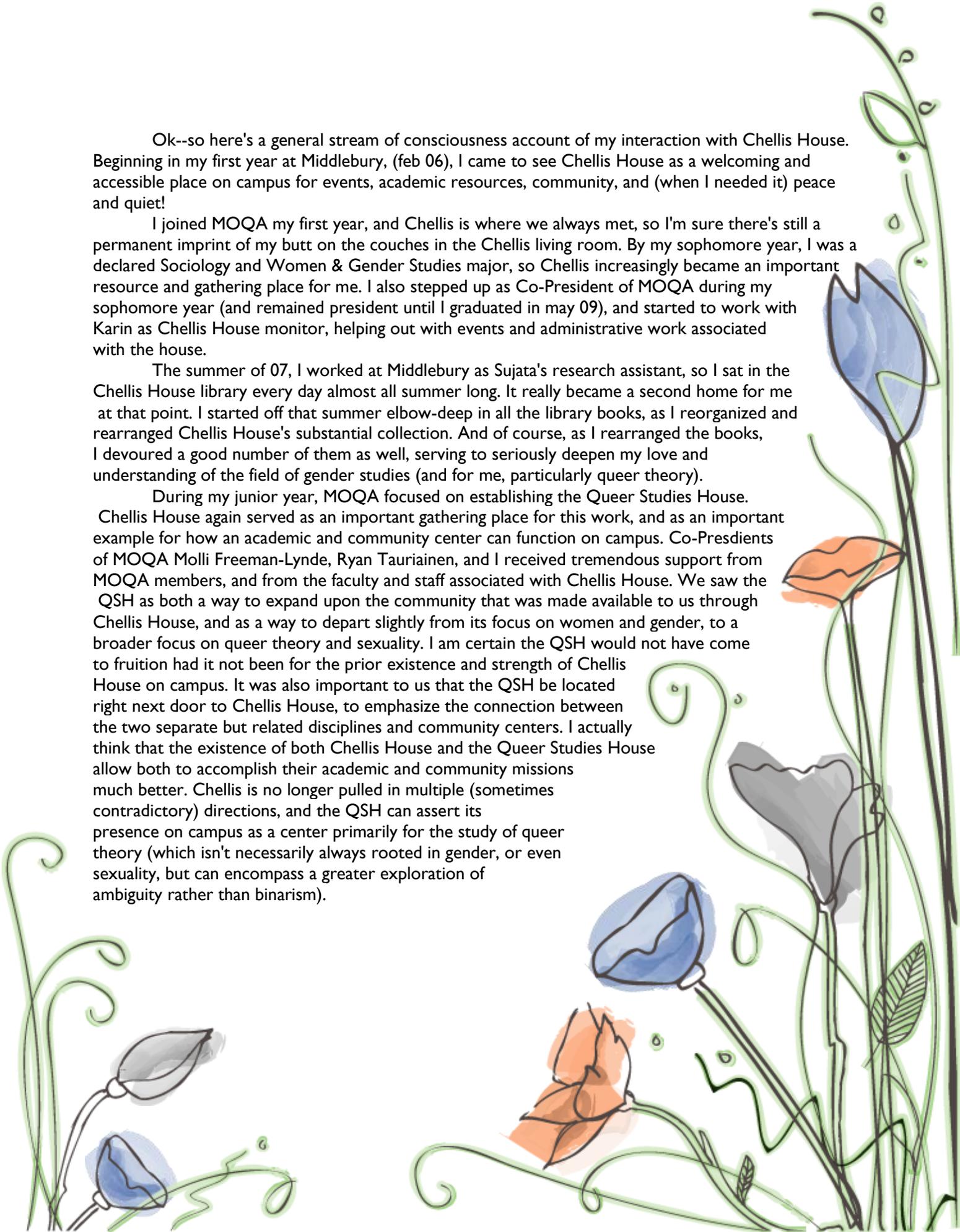


Ok--so here's a general stream of consciousness account of my interaction with Chellis House. Beginning in my first year at Middlebury, (feb 06), I came to see Chellis House as a welcoming and accessible place on campus for events, academic resources, community, and (when I needed it) peace and quiet!

I joined MOQA my first year, and Chellis is where we always met, so I'm sure there's still a permanent imprint of my butt on the couches in the Chellis living room. By my sophomore year, I was a declared Sociology and Women & Gender Studies major, so Chellis increasingly became an important resource and gathering place for me. I also stepped up as Co-President of MOQA during my sophomore year (and remained president until I graduated in may 09), and started to work with Karin as Chellis House monitor, helping out with events and administrative work associated with the house.

The summer of 07, I worked at Middlebury as Sujata's research assistant, so I sat in the Chellis House library every day almost all summer long. It really became a second home for me at that point. I started off that summer elbow-deep in all the library books, as I reorganized and rearranged Chellis House's substantial collection. And of course, as I rearranged the books, I devoured a good number of them as well, serving to seriously deepen my love and understanding of the field of gender studies (and for me, particularly queer theory).

During my junior year, MOQA focused on establishing the Queer Studies House. Chellis House again served as an important gathering place for this work, and as an important example for how an academic and community center can function on campus. Co-Presidents of MOQA Molli Freeman-Lynde, Ryan Tauriainen, and I received tremendous support from MOQA members, and from the faculty and staff associated with Chellis House. We saw the QSH as both a way to expand upon the community that was made available to us through Chellis House, and as a way to depart slightly from its focus on women and gender, to a broader focus on queer theory and sexuality. I am certain the QSH would not have come to fruition had it not been for the prior existence and strength of Chellis House on campus. It was also important to us that the QSH be located right next door to Chellis House, to emphasize the connection between the two separate but related disciplines and community centers. I actually think that the existence of both Chellis House and the Queer Studies House allow both to accomplish their academic and community missions much better. Chellis is no longer pulled in multiple (sometimes contradictory) directions, and the QSH can assert its presence on campus as a center primarily for the study of queer theory (which isn't necessarily always rooted in gender, or even sexuality, but can encompass a greater exploration of ambiguity rather than binarism).



By my senior year (and QSH's first year in existence), we were still exploring the new relationship between the two houses. I am actually really curious to hear from you how this relationship has developed. How are each of the houses used for you or perceived by the greater Middlebury community? I wonder if our intentions have been realized, or if something different has asserted itself over the years....always interested to see how an idea develops over time, especially in a community with a four-year revolving door!

I hope this general overview has been helpful. I would LOVE to answer more of your questions, or give you more detailed info in one area or another, depending on what you need. I can speak much more to the influence of WAGS on my academic life as well, but that's a bit separate from my experience with Chellis. I am currently a masters grad student at NYC for media, culture and communication, with the intention of continuing on for a PhD to study queer theory, most likely situation in either a Gender Studies or Sociology department....we'll see!

-Christine

