

IT CAME FROM THE STACKS
CLARISSE PLUMIER

I rarely stay late at the library. After what I saw last night, I don't think I'll stay late again. The assignments were piling up and I was gaining momentum during this intense study session. "I'm going to head out, see you tomorrow" my study partner whispers, "don't work too hard." I nod, rub my eyes, and adjust the stack of books next to me. I watch as they head to the exit. They nod at one of the students working the desk. The door clicks behind them. I sit in silence; my wireless headphones died an hour ago. A cold breeze brushes by me. Huh, I straighten my posture, I feel strange. I look up from my laptop just to catch someone moving quite quickly between the shelves. I expect them to pop out in one of the aisles, but they don't, weird. I get back to writing.

Thud! I jump in my seat and look around. Nothing. So strange, like someone dropped a book – I notice it, there on the ground, one of my commentaries. I must've just placed it on the table weirdly. As time passes, I am lost in a void of words, citations, references, punctuation, format guides...a million years washes over me. It's too quiet in the library. Normally it's quiet, don't get me wrong, but there's no sound. No one shuffling about, no one lets out a cough or a sneeze, hell, even a sigh would be welcome. I try to break the tension by clearing my throat, no one responds. The book is still laying on the floor. I need a citation for this. I glance over the pile of books on the table. How can someone have so many books, but no information? I push away from the table and stand up. My knees, my feet, they feel old, they've never moved. I was born in this chair; I lived a thousand lives in that seat. I head into the stacks.

A cold breeze. Something moves behind me, I quickly turn around. No one. I realize how awkward that was, I'm glad no one was there. Could you imagine? They would've been so weirded out. Why am I acting so strange? The carpet consumes me, my feet feel heavy. My brain tells me I should be at my row, but I'm not, I look back over my shoulder, I've moved maybe 10 feet from the table. The lights flash, only fifteen minutes until closing time. I need to get this book. Then it happens. Indistinguishable, someone just ran in the next aisle over. Someone probably panicked about getting their books checked out in time. I laughed to myself, then I realized I'm laughing out loud. I stop. Someone else laughs. It's not a normal laugh, it has a weird cadence, it sounds like someone forcing themselves to laugh. It's *too* rhythmic, no one laughs like that. Only robots. Finally, I made it. I look back at my phone to check the reference number – oh, I don't have my phone. I could've sworn, I look back to the table, I can see it sitting on the stack of books. I retrace my steps. The laughing stops. Well, I'm certain it stopped a minute ago, but the sound is still echoing in my ear. Ha. Ha. Ha. Phone in hand, I return to the place that I was before I came back to the place that I was born. I mutter the call number to myself and begin to pace the aisle. Have you ever made the mistake of

*Continued from page 2...*Second, remember that AMS gives us a generous budget for therapy and counseling. Given all the stresses and transformations taking place during our time here, I wonder if it isn't wise to treat therapy as an elective course which we don't have to pay for. I've begun to book a session with my therapist every month or so. Sometime always comes up in class or life for us to talk about, and the insights that arise have been some of the most valuable I've learned during my time here.

I struggled to find a good therapist at first. It was hard enough to reach out for help the first time, and when that therapist proved an ill-fit it was just as hard to begin again. Yet my current counselor is remarkably gifted and was worth the setbacks to find. She was recommended to me by one of my priests, so I would suggest asking locals you trust in the city for recommendations. Starting can be incredibly daunting, but the gifts are worth the effort and bravery required.

These transformations sure are painful. But I'm reminded of John 15:2, where Jesus states that "every branch that does bear fruit the Father prunes, that it may bear more fruit." Pruning is painful and a freshly pruned bush often looks pitiful. But the pruning of this season comes with the promise that we will bear better fruit in the years ahead, and then into eternity.

going to an aisle only to realize you're in the totally wrong aisle because you read the number slightly wrong? Not me, so embarrassing. My hand touches the spine, it's an old book, but it has what I need, I know it. I remove it from its place of rest. You'll return soon. My eyes take in the cover, I flip to the appendix. A sick slurping sound fills my ears. Funny, in moments like these you want to be horrified, but I can only think "you can't have food in here." But the sound continues, with a soft moan following. It's coming from the back of the library. I want to investigate. I do.

The sound has stopped. I've lost the source which makes me want to stop the search. I laugh to myself. An echo. Ha. Ha. Ha. No, I should stop, my legs have sprung to new life, resurrected. They carry me, they shouldn't. I wish they wouldn't, but curiosity can move mountains and kill cats. The slurping resumes, I hate it. Now I hear a page turn, thick paper against rough skin. The moaning gets louder. I prepare myself to turn the corner, I know they're there. I know I am about to come face to face with this person. My heart is racing in my ears. A deep breath, one foot, pivot. I see *him*. Then the lights go out. No. no. it hasn't been fifteen minutes, I scramble for my phone, dropping my book in the process. I hear nothing but my heart pounding. My phone...where? I look back down the aisle and I see it light up on the table. Then a hot breath on my neck. It reeks. Bitter and stale alcohol, it smells like beer. I want to say something but before I can talk, I'm cut off, "A dog barks when his master is attacked. I would be a coward if I saw that God's truth is attacked and yet would remain silent." I hear footsteps, the lights come back on. There's no one here. I grab my laptop and unceremoniously shove it in my bag. I leave the stack of books. I'll never stay late, not unless I want to run into the phantom neo-Calvinist again.



"I don't know what's going on at Cambridge but THE WORST Kierkegaard scholars come from there."
-Overheard at Regent

REFLECTIONS ON HOSPITALITY AND GRACE
AMELIA HAMITER

In the cultures I grew up with, hospitality is a race. You strive to be the first one offering to pay the bill or welcoming newcomers to your city. If someone else beats you to it, you must return the favor promptly and ideally in a bigger way. If a kid shares their lunch with you at school, the next week you are sent back with a box of cookies. If someone pays for your coffee, you should treat them to a full meal. Just as your hospitality is enthusiastic, so must be your gratitude.

I've found that this dynamic beautifully highlights the joy of enthusiastic generosity and the importance of practicing gratitude. However, at times it can also lead to an unhealthy feeling of constant indebtedness, in which you can never show gratitude enough when you've received hospitality – especially if you find yourself lacking the resources to return it.

The need to avoid such situations can nurture an overpowering need for self-reliance, or at least it did for me – a reality that I wasn't aware of until I moved to Vancouver last summer. This was my first time moving entirely on my own, without on-call relatives or a car, to a different country during a pandemic. Very quickly, the difficulty of this transition exposed my unhealthy commitment to self-reliance as I tried to do everything myself. Trying to furnish a place via public transportation was a lot for one person, and spending every day exploring alone, even for an introvert, became draining.

However, the idea of asking for help felt even more paralyzing. I was intimidated by how poorly I would be able to return any favor. Ironically, I have a lot of experience being on the other side of this dynamic, having grown up in a ministry household that often functioned as a hotel for family friends, colleagues, and international students. I know that it is genuinely fun and rewarding to help a newcomer get settled in your city. But now that I was the newcomer, I was floored by how much vulnerability it took to give up my self-reliance and ask for favors that I couldn't reciprocate.

It took a few emotional breakdowns before I finally (with much fear and trembling) texted a friend of a friend who lived in Vancouver and had passed on her number with an offer to help me settle in. She promptly drove me all around town, helping me buy pillows and shelves and thus accomplish in a day errands which would have taken me a week! Since then, I've received so many other forms of

seemingly unmerited hospitality, from people driving me all the way to Ikea, to sharing baked goods and candy in the Atrium, to giving unnumbered rides home from the pub.

Not to over-dramatize (and this is meant to be a short reflection, not a systematic treatise), but these experiences of hospitality have started to feel like glimpses of the grace of God, who gives gifts freely with the full knowledge that we can never properly "repay" them. Grace is an antidote to my feeling of being constantly in debt. It's a gentle forgiveness for not being able to say thank you enough.

Further, I'm also learning that friendship isn't transactional. At Regent, the fact that we are all broke, exhausted grad students is an equalizer that breaks down the hierarchical roles of hospitality that many of us are used to. Through recent discussions, I've been learning that my deep-seated instinct to treat hospitality like a competition can actually be disruptive to this mutuality. Treating a friendship too much like a transaction can devalue the friendship itself. Sometimes it's hurtful to try to pay for something that's been given freely.

I am also learning that expressions of hospitality can – and must – take on different forms in different seasons of life. How do I practice hospitality in a realistic, sustainable way in my current life situation? I haven't yet figured this out. But the Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed; it's finding a transcendent expanse of resources where you thought you had none. I've been reminded of this by friends like Hannah Hawksbee deciding to invite friends over for meals despite having a diminutive flat, and Rachel Hart meeting up for a leisurely conversation over bubble tea even when there are a billion things going on. It's all the other little ways that God's grace permits us to extend kindness towards each other on a daily basis. In this process, I am learning that grace empowers us to give in the same way that it empowers us to receive - without the weight of shame or debt, but in the love of Jesus Christ.

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EXPECT A CRISIS WHILE AT REGENT
DANIEL MELVILL JONES

In our first Soul of Ministry lecture, Professor Ross Hastings mentioned how he wrestled with his own depression when he was a student here at Regent and observed that many students struggle with depression at some point while studying here. When Annie and I first arrived at Regent, Rachel Hart told us that many people attending Regent have some sort of crises.

Why is this? I'm no expert on the psychology of Regent students, but since having my own vicious struggle with depression during my first semester I have been reflecting on this phenomenon. Here are some of those thoughts.

When I arrived at Regent, I was surprised by how similar I was to many of my fellow students. At first I was delighted! With every new person I talked to, I felt that "what, you too?" moment which C. S. Lewis says is the foundation of a great friendship. "What, you too have read Willie Jennings and care passionately about the need for racial reconciliation in the church?" "What, you too have grown up in evangelicalism and are now drawn towards higher church Anglicanism, including an interest in chanting the psalms?" "What, you too can name every Wes Anderson feature in order of release and can assign each one to a sacred sacrament?" (Okay, that last one was new to me too.) It was all too exciting. The potential for deep friendship lurked within each person I met.

But then it started to get a little exhausting. I started to wonder just how unique I really was. Back in Calgary I felt like I was the only young person in my community who had an interest in poetry, a potential for academics, and was excited over the possibilities of engaging faith and culture. Yet at Regent I lost count of the number of fellow photographers who also write poetry and are gifted public speakers. I began to wonder if I actually mattered to the church and to the world. There were many other gifted, capable people who could take my place.

I also think depression is to be expected at Regent because of the very work we are engaged in. Theology demands the whole person. By their very nature the questions we engage in knock at our sense of self. Many students here are having the versions of Christianity they grew up with torn down in order to be replaced by a more robust version of the faith. Others already had this happen and are wondering why it is taking so long for everyone else to catch up.

To act as if all this doesn't take a toll on our sense of self is to be unfaithful to the very nature of our studies. Personal breakdowns shouldn't be a surprise. If anything, they mean we are doing something right.

Then there is the reshaping of vocations that naturally occurs through this work. I arrived at Regent eager to write an academic thesis. Within six months, the call to ministry became so overpowering that I switched to an MDiv. Other students have had the reverse experience, arriving expecting to be ministers and recognising that they are

called to another field.

Many students change denominations. Some fall in love and get married (often to someone from another country or even continent). Others fall in and out of love, reaching the end of their degree believing in the theology of singleness but still wrestling with its pain and loneliness (and wondering why God doesn't call more single Christen men to this College).

There is also sheer burnout of the academic semester. I once listened to an interview with a scholar who suggested that the North American academic schedule trains us to gorge on information like a glutton on rich food. Instead of training us in a balanced diet of feasting and fasting, the academic year prefers that we binge on papers and readings for a few short months (or even weeks) before setting us free for the long freedom of summer.

Our studies at Regent teach us to value solitude alongside community, Sabbath rest alongside ambitious academics, good food alongside time in nature, the rhythms of the church year alongside the need for cultural engagement. All of this demands time and space to process, yet the academic schedule and the abundance of opportunities for social gatherings forces us to cram it all in.

No wonder we burnout. No wonder we crash and spiral. No wonder the clouds of depression gather over us so often.

I don't know what the solution is. But I would like to offer two suggestions.

First, do not be ashamed of choosing to slow down. I know it's not possible for everyone. But if you can, take a summer course or two so you can have a lighter course load during the next semester. Use that free time to lean into community, or to practice the spiritual disciplines you're learning about, or to take a weekend retreat to one of the many affordable Christian retreat centres in the area. Let's find ways to practice Sabbaths while we are at Regent, rather than telling ourselves that we will do so when this season ends... *continued on page 4.*

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FAREWELL VANCITY PIZZA – IT'S BEEN A SLICE
ALEX STROHSCHNEIN

I've never felt more like an old man when I reminisce about how pizza used to be \$1 per slice (including tax!). And in a city as transient as Vancouver, Vancity Pizza has been one of the few constants in my life. Yes, some things have certainly changed - the location moved two blocks west and a slice of pizza costs a lot more than the original \$1 but it's the pizza place I keep coming back to ever since I first bought some pizza for lunch in grade 6 (back in those days you could get two slices of pizza and a can of pop for \$3!).

There are many good, "artisanal" pizza places in Vancouver - Via Tevere, Bufala, Community Taps. But for what Vancity Pizza is, it is good, satisfying pizza, an unpretentious pizza-by-the-slice joint that also offers whole pizzas and delicious donairs. It doesn't have prosciutto or arugula or maple bourbon drizzle or garlic cream sauce (I once ordered a whole garlic pizza thinking it was like the white sauce at Freshslice and both laughed and lamented when I discovered I'd just ordered a large pizza topped only with garlic) but it has the staples - cheese, pepperoni, Hawaiian, vegetarian. Or you can create your own (my go-to is pepperoni and sausage). The crust is chewy, but pleasant because so. I can't count how many times I would grab a slice walking home from Templeton Secondary School or the times my friends and I would order a couple whole pizzas and eat them watching some sci-fi B-movie. There is something Wendell Berryian in my affection for Vancity Pizza and as it has been a comfort to me, so I have sought to be loyal to it. New friends may enter your life who you want to spend time with but old friends have the sheen of reliability, durability, longevity.

And there is the kindness of the owner and operator, Shud (I must admit, awkwardly, I hope I am spelling his name correctly). He is warm and friendly, the only employee, answering phone call orders with "What would you like, dear?" Over the past few years he has had a pay-it-forward slice program where customers can pay for a slice of pizza to feed someone in need. Until I graduated high school I only ever bought pepperoni pizza and one day a woman in front of me was going to buy all of the pepperoni pizza slices from the warmer and he kindly asked her if she could save two of the slices for me.

I've known my best friend Kyle since grade 8. I've gone to the nearby Vietnamese hair salon for hair cuts since undergrad. A lot of my friends from Regent have moved away from Vancouver and/or drifted out of my life. And in pizza chains employees are always coming and going. I've changed churches, changed beliefs, changed neighbourhoods, changed jobs, but there has been something comforting about Shud and the constancy of Vancity Pizza these past twenty years, two-thirds of my life. He has always been hardworking and friendly and as I've learned he is retiring at the end of the month, I wish him the very best. Vancity Pizza might continue without

him, but it won't be the same without him. I will miss his pizza.

Farewell Shud, farewell Vancity Pizza - it's been a slice.

DAD JOKE OF THE WEEK*

I got the words "jacuzzi" and "yakuza" mixed up.

Now I'm in hot water with the Japanese mafia.

**Et Cetera guarantees that its Dad Jokes are authentic samples of paternal humour provided on a regular basis by the Editor's own father.*

SONNET III.
THEO TRISTITIA

Haunted I am now, by this song
that echoes from the earth below.
Demon drumbeats pounding – pounding.
A child's heart beating alone.
I, too, have heard this mournful song
out from abysmal ashen skies.
I have known the end of reason.
I have seen the gods' tearful eyes.
And did you know you were alone?
Yes – even as you heard this song.
From ghostly lips and dead man's bones,
you thought you heard the angel's tongue.
To ash and dust, we shall return,
as mountains fall and cities burn.