## Paul Chin

## The Stacks

"We begin our journey in the expansive underworld of Widener Library: the stacks"\*

Understand the demarcation of the underworld but understand too that you must not have crossed into Elysium.

For if you had, you would know how to get lost in vast tracts of land where beyond the eyes can see stretch miles and miles of corn; and seen the leather skins gleaming like husks under a Kansas sun, the smell of dust, transubstantiated in that same sun, and heard the corn murmuring, each to each.

For I have crossed over thousands of times and am acquainted with the sentinel; and have not descended but ascended on a Thursday afternoon into paradise; tiptoeing past angels.

And have I not braved the winter's bite, the gnashing teeth of night, to attain this rest? And seen the light, the light from far, light bursting forth from sepulcher?

Or do I betray myself.
For why else does anyone brave the underworld except to rescue Eurydice; or ascend to Heaven except to chance a glimpse of Beatrice at her carrell, hidden behind the angle of impossibly long bookshelves, or perhaps perusing German books that neither of us can read.

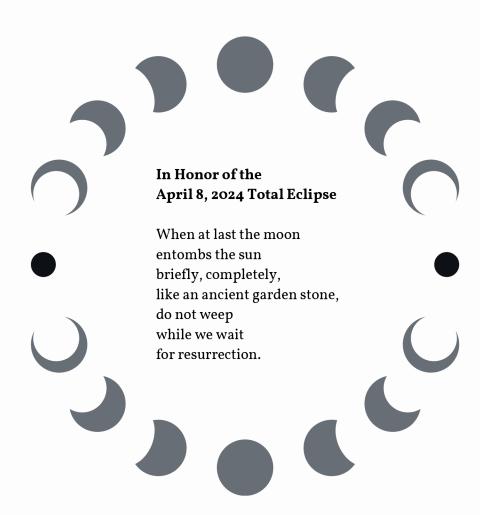
\*Quoted from a Crimson article on the Stacks 1/26/24

## **Cum Laude**

What to do for three Greek signs Or phrases writ in deadened tongue, To prove to friends that we were best At toiling fast under the sun?

Despite ourselves we cannot help That gripping need for subtle nods. So on our hearts ambitions rest immovable as household gods.

In all our life we strive for praise and scarcely hear the reaper laugh. A final transcript unbeknownst: Emblazoned stone, epitaph.



## Meditation on a stained-glass window You are a stained-glass window Giving birth to ancient color In a cold, stone church Paul Chin 10