

REVENANT

I am the specter who returns
Unto some desolate world in ruin borne afar
On the black flowing of Lethean skies:
Ever I search, in cryptic galleries,
The void sarcophagi, the broken urns
Of many a vanished avatar;
Or haunt the gloom of crumbling pylons vast
In temples that enshrine the shadowy past.
Viewless, impalpable and fleet,
I roam stupendous avenues, and greet
Familiar sphinxes carved from everlasting stone,
Or the fair, brittle gods of long ago,
Decayed and fallen low.
And there I watch the tall clepsammiae
That time has overthrown,
And empty clepsydrae,
And dials drowned in umbrage never-lifting;
And, there on rusty parapegms,
I read the ephemerides
Of antique stars and elder planets drifting
Oblivionward in night.
And there, with purples of the tomb bedight,
And crowned with funeral gems,
I hold awhile the throne
Whereon mine immemorial selves have sate,
Canopied by the triple-tinted glory
Of the three suns forever paled and flown.

I am the specter who returns
And dwells content with his forlorn estate
In mansions lost and hoary
Where no lamp burns;
Who feasts within the sepulcher
And finds the ancient shadows lovelier
Than gardens all emblazed with sevenfold noon,
Or topaz-built towers
That throng below some iris-pouring moon.
Exiled and homeless in the younger stars,
Henceforth I shall inhabit that grey clime
Whose days belong to primal calendars;
Nor would I come again
Back to the garish terrene hours:
For I am free of vaults unfathomable,
And treasures lost from time:
With bat and vampire there
I flit through somber skies immeasurable
Or fly adown the unending subterranees;
Mummied and ceremented,
I sit in councils of the kingly dead;
And oftentimes for vestiture I wear
The granite of great idols looming darkly
In atlantean fanes;
Or closely now and starkly
I cling as clings the attenuating air
About the ruins bare.

Clark Ashton Smith