BORREAL QUEST
by Karlis Rusa

Cold and dark and bleak
dawn my Northern days;
truly the soul would grow weak
had I not seen beyond the haze
enshrouding the mountains that rise
before and above me—
veiling a land of surprise,
savage and lovely.
(For my dreams once brought me sight
of citadels there, and never-thawed gardens;
on battlements stood silent wardens
and in the deep skies was a blue-flashing light.)

In the abode of ever-winter, 'mid hyaline splendor,
frozen sits the pale Queen on her throne, far from tender,
deaf to the winds that whistle forlornly the icy turrets among,
deaf to crystal-chimes that tinkle in septentrional song.
(The rigidly leaning watchers I shall pass
and softly mount frosted stairways to doors hanging open forever;
and completely my heart I shall sever
from dusky Southland memories, for I shall be where the snow-
clouds mass . . .
and the piping wind as music will be
in the hall where moveless sits She.)

Unknown, unreal is this land whither I turn,
but having attained it, at the Queen's feet I shall learn
to love the coldness, the whiteness, the wild keening wind—
be one with them, forgetting all I have suffered or sinned.

Yet still through boundless fields of snow I must plow;
deep into my spirit the teeth of the North sink now!