Letter from Shanghai, 1938

With quotations from letters and journals of the poet Robin Hyde (1906-1939), who worked as a war correspondent in China in 1938.

Dearest N.—

Thank you for the re-telling of your dream
I tried to write and link up some poems but our childhood places are in fragments
Almost every night
I dream about New Zealand
& when I wake I don't know where I am
green light sinking through stained-glass
peace isn't deep enough?
The screaming pink azaleas
This morning I saw bodies in the river
Tell me of the view outside your window
& I will tell you mine—
my green bicycle
the sixteen strokes of my new Chinese name
which I am learning how to write
There are parts of the city still unburnt
in its wet petalled glory

I too saw the city turning blue
lying in the red padded quilt
the hills above the house on fire
wild mint and burning gorse
Do you find that in travelling
Do you miss it too?
make me too tender and too wild
& afterwards I could not write
Tell me the things you wish not to forget
the wild azaleas
Shanghai girls in their blue cotton jackets
为爱日
slowly with my own hand
I hope you may see it one day
breathing and unhurt