

'Instructions for the Land'
'A Door to The North' 2013 Juliet McLachlan



'Wetland, Tussock,' May 2023, Whitford NZ, Photo by Abbey Falconer.

'Instructions for the Land,' is a poem written by 7-year-old New Zealand writer Juliet McLachlan.¹ Consisting of two stanzas, an old knowledge of the land is expressed. McLachlan addresses, 'Landscape' as a being or life source. Through this personification, the landscape of Aotearoa is treated with respect and honour. The poem acknowledges the complex emotion of the Landscape. From great joys to deep sadness, the earth groans. Juliet McLachlan has written from a perspective, not of the current Western construct. Rather, of an indigenous understanding, specifically the Māori of Aotearoa.

¹ 'A Door To The North' 2013 Juliet McLachlan 'Instructions for the Land' pg23

'Kia Whakanuia Te Whenua, People, Place and Landscape,' 2021 by Carolyn Hill² addresses in her foreword, 'Listen to The Land,' movements within New Zealand towards a Māori understanding of Land. *Whanganui River Act* 2017 is used as an example. In the act was the first time in the {western} world a river was recognized as a being with its own life and rights.' This acknowledgment is mirrored in McLachlan's writing, "Landscape, put your life in me." The turning of understanding the landscape's role in our human lives is vital. The Land is not separate from us for we cannot live without the life source of this planet.

I would press even further into this concept. '.. spread the heart of yours across the plains and hills and lakes." McLachlan asks of the land. "I am the river; the river is me. If the river is dying, so am I." Hill refers to the Māori locals of Whanganui's relationship with the river. Through the expressions from McLachlan and Hill, we move from a separation between land and humans to both land and human being intertwined. Landscape is not just another life we live alongside. Landscape is us and we are the land.

² *'Kia Whakanuia Te Whenua, People, Place and Landscape,'* 2021 by Carolyn Hill – pg 31