

## **THE WHITE CLAIM IN ANDREW McGAHAN'S NOVEL *THE WHITE EARTH* (2004)**

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### **Abstrak**

Makalah ini adalah hasil penganalisaan novel Andrew McGahan yang berjudul *The White Earth* (2004). Permasalahan yang dibahas adalah bagaimana orang-orang pendatang (settler) menuntut hak mereka terhadap tanah dari tuntutan Native Title yang menyatakan bahwa pemerintah mengakui hukum dan undang-undang tentang aborigines. Tanah yang dituntut merupakan hak aborigine karena itu adalah tanah budaya. Orang-orang white (settler) sangat rakus dengan kekuasaan khususnya tanah. Mereka menuntut hak mereka terhadap tanah tersebut karena menurut mereka tanah itu menjadi miliknya sebab mereka telah lama berkuasa dan bercocok tanam. Penelitian ini menggunakan konsep ideology dari Allhuthsser dan white supremacy. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga menggunakan fictional devices seperti plot, setting dan karakter untuk mengemukakan cara dan usaha yang dilakukan untuk mempertahankan harta dan tanah.

Hasil dari penganalisaan ditemukan bahwa karakter menuntut property dari dua aspek, yaitu dari pemerintahan dan keluarga. Dari sisi pemerintahan, menuntut property dengan cara melawan hukum dan undang-undang. Menyuarakan pendapatnya kepada pemerintah dengan tulisan-tulisan. Dia juga berusaha menyembunyikan fakta-fakta tentang aborigine seperti waterholes, bora rings, yang merupakan tempat aborigine menghabiskan waktunya. Dari sisi keluarga, dia mengusir anaknya karena dia melawan dan menolak sifat-sifat ayahnya yang rakus akan harta. Selain itu, dia juga memanfaatkan keadaan temannya yang lagi sakit demi kepentingan harta. Mewarisi harta kepada keponakannya juga dia lakukan untuk menjaga supaya harta dia tetap hidup dan dijaga.

**Kata Kunci:** White Claim, White Supremacy, Ideology, Land, Novel.

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## **A. Introduction**

Land is the source of conflict in the society. Many people believe that the land belong to them when they live and build the land for many years. Land cannot be owned by everyone. Although they works in the land, develop the land, live on the land for many years, it still belongs to the government. Thus, when the government's claim the land one day, they cannot claiming it if only they have the land certificate owner which is signed by the government.

Related to the history of Australia, Non-Indigenous people state that land is really important because land is their precious property. Non-indigenous people of Australia define land as their home, their mother, and their culture, and they have responsibility to care for the land. An Aboriginal musician, Galarrwuy Yunipungu state that "the land is my backbone, and I only stand straight, happy, proud, and not shame of my color, because I still have land. I think of land is history of my nation". The connection of land gives aboriginal their identity and the sense of belonging.

As the colonized country, Australia has been lived by many settlers for over of many years. Settler in Australia struggles to live in, to develop, and to build the land. They take the land for profit and benefit. For them, land is the commodity to be bought and sold, an asset to make profit from, a means to make living of it. When the British colonial invade Australia in 17<sup>th</sup> century, Aborigine were killed and demolish. British settlers took the possession of the land and country. Consequently, Non-indigenous people cannot build their land anymore. Not only British take land, but also their cultures were developed.

In fact, in late 1992, Government of Australia recognizes the right for Aboriginal people which called Native title Claim. The positions of settler in Australia are threatened by this issue because Aborigine may take or claim the land again. Law and culture must base on Aborigine's. For the settler, Aborigine doesn't have right for the land, for they never build the land. The white people claim the land is belong to them. They recognize the land based on their own belief or values.

The purpose of this journal is to discuss Andrew McGahan's novel *The White Earth* (2004) which aim to show the actions of white people claiming the land. The character tries to ignore the government decision which manage about the land right. The phenomena of claiming of property happened because of government decision on Native Title land claim legislation.

## **B. Discussion**

### **Claiming Property Right from Government**

In late 1992, the government of Australia promotes the issues of Native Title legislation which recognizes the law and custom of indigenous people. This decision disturbs many people who are threatening of this act. They are afraid of losing their property. John as the representative does many things to rebel or to refuses the government decision.

Writing articles is one way to show his refusal to the government decision. Articles may gives information or receive information. In claiming the property, the

characters write several articles to show his disagree toward the government decision of the Native Title Act.

The following quotation state that,

Rally Called to Discuss Native Title

In the wake of the Mabo judgment, the federal government is currently drawing up plans for sweeping Native Title legislation which it plans to introduce before the end of the year. This will alienate land to the black minority, and affect us all directly! It is vital that we meet to formulate an action plan and ensure our voices are heard before it's too late. As president, I am happy to offer my own property as a meeting ground, and a date has been set for.(p. 132)

Mabo judgment, it is a high court in Australia which decide the Native Title Legislation. One of his writing that appears above show that John is threatened by the issues of Native Title. He plans to group some people to follow his action. Meanwhile, this action is solely to support his refusing to the law. *This will alienate land to the black minority, and affect us all directly.* One of the issues in the native title is the indigenous people may claim the land anymore. *And affect us all directly,* this quotation improves that if the native title is recognized, automatically the aborigine may take the land again and the settler like John will expel from the land. He tries to influence all of the society to against the government law in order he can claiming the property from the government claim. This action show his greediness because he knows the land is not his but he still keeps the land belongs to him. Moreover, this quotation also show that John anxieties of losing the property. The quotation states that "*black minority*", it refers to the indigenous people which would like taking the land from them. *It is vital that,* it means this planning is a must to keep their property belong to them. In addition, John is an important person in planning, as mention in this word "*As president*". It means that he is who invite the people to join his action to against the government. Moreover, his property as the place of the meeting existed. His desire to hold the property shows his greediness.

As a writer, John writes many articles to express his feeling to the government. One of his opinion are seen from quotation below,

We reject the monarchy and the two-party system of parliament.

We reject the United Nations and any other body that seeks to limit Australian sovereignty.

We reject government interference with basic individual rights.

We reject excessive immigration and the dilution of traditional Australian culture.

We reject excessive control of Australian resources by foreigners.

We reject special and preferential treatment of elite minorities.

We reject the alienation of Australian soil to elite minorities.(133)

The quotation above emphasizes John opinion toward the government. This article is his refusals of the government rules. This writing is function to show the government

of public or minorities opinion relating to the government rules. He feels that government manage the right of people over the property. Meanwhile, a property itself must legitimate by the government. Thus, it shows his greediness which refuses to the government law over the property. *We reject the monarchy and the two-party system of parliament.* Monarchy means a kingdom. The leader of the country called King. It means that all decisions are decided by the king. Public don't have opportunity to give their opinion. Otherwise, he tries to give his opinions toward the government system. When the monarchy system of parliament is chosen, John as Public or society can't give aspiration to the government. He must follow the government rules. Consequently, when government decides Native Title Legislation, he can't do rebellion toward the government.

In addition, John also argues about the right of people. *We reject government interference with basic individual rights.* This sentence is also one of his refusal toward the government. His opinion mentions that government or state doesn't have roles in deciding human rights. The right must be given to the individual itself. This sentence also implied that John is worried in government decision because of the legislation which considers the right of individual. This action shows his arrogant and greediness which refuses human right law, however, the right itself has social implication which manage by the government. *We reject excessive immigration and the dilution of traditional Australian culturee.* This sentence emphasizes the refusal of John toward the government decision of the Native Title Act. Since property right is equal to human right, he has taken aborigine right over the land. Meanwhile, the meaning of land to aborigine is their home, their culture and identity. This action shows his greediness which won't to give back aborigine right.

John claims the land which is not belong to him. He owned the land but there is no any legal certificate. It can be seen in the quotation below,

How could they? The Kuran people were taken away by force.'  
'The legislation is perfectly clear. If they left, for whatever reason, then they lose all rights of appeal.'  
'Oh yes, it's a nice legal trick. But in this case they kept coming back, didn't they? Year after year. Until your father killed them.'  
'Even if that were true, how does it give them a case now? Where's the continuing presence since then?'  
'Continuing presence might not mean what you think it means.'  
'It damn well means something!'(354)

The quotation above reveals that the land is cultural because it is a place where aborigines do their rituals and spend most of their time which is shown by the sentences "*the keep coming*", it shows that whether Aborigine has been chase away, destroy, they still visit the place because it is belong to them. Consequently, the settler killed most the aborigines. Because of this past even, it forces John to do many things to claiming the property from the claimant.

Land must be recognized by the law and rules. It should be authorized. In fact, John never thinks about legal right. What he is only thinking is shown by this quotation,

It was no pleasant fantasy or hope, it was an utter conviction, an acceptance of truth — no matter how long it took, he would get the station back. Indeed, as he turned upon the spot, drinking in every sight and sound of the landscape, he knew that this was the instant in which he took possession. Not legally, not financially, but essentially (146)

John has belief that this place is his. He belongs to the place. His very strong statement says that “*not legally, not financially but essentially*”. This quotation shows that John never put the laws in his property. *Not legally*, it means that this land doesn't have any certificate and is illegitimate, and *not financially* means that this must have not been connected to economies or money. On the other hand, John obtains the land without buying. Moreover, the text states that “*Kuran Station was within his sights...now that John was becoming a large landowner in his own right* (246). This quotation clearly depicts that no one is recognizing his property. He is the one who believes the property is his. He recognized the property by his own right.

William's uncle had a sheet of paper in his hand, jabbed it towards the doctor. 'Moffat, you're a Justice of the Peace, right?'

'That's right.'

'Then notarise this for me.'

The doctor looked at the paper, bewildered. 'What?'

'Sign the damn thing! Make it legal!'

Dr Moffat took the document. 'But what is it?'

'My will, you fool. What else?' (336)

The quotation proves that John does many ways and efforts to claim the property. He has his own ideology which is everything must be kept and held. The quotation above reveals that John inherits the land to his nephew by legalizing a document or will. *Make it legal*, this is a very strong explanation which means that he forces someone to authorize his certificate. From the phrases *Make it legal*, it shows that John never gets the land as a legal right which describes as no rules, or law. The government doesn't recognize the land belongs to him.

Discover up the truth also he does to claim the property. There are several evidences which probably straightened in which the place may belong to aborigine. John tries to cover up all of the evidences that he knows.

No one must ever know. You understand, don't you? They must never have the proof they need. They must never take this land from me.'

William looked up at the old man's face and saw an immeasurable misery etched there, hollow and wretched and beyond hope.

'Give me the light, boy. It'll have to be you. I can't get down there. (363)

The quotation above shows that John loves his land so much. *No one must ever know*, this quotation emphasizes that John is very frightened if people know about his land. Government must ever know about the proof which is the bone of Aborigine. The land must belong to him even though Native Title is recognized. *They must never take this land from me.*' the tone of this sentence can be describes as the angry, rebellion, scared. This condition forces him to do many things to claiming the property belong to him.

Gone,' John McIvor cried back, his hands full of bones.  
'You're too late. They're all gone. They were never here.'  
Ruth stood aghast.

This bone is scared him so much because it is Aborigines' which were killed by his father. As the following quotation state that *But in this case they kept coming back, didn't they? Year after year. Until your father killed them (354)*. It means that the place or land he owns is illegitimate. This land is aborigines', but they are chase out from their own country.

The next proof is that he hide is Bora Rings. As the following quotation state,

But take this bora ring. If the government or some Aboriginal land council knew it was here, they'd be swarming up this hill in no time. They'd say these stones were proof that the blacks lived here, that they used this land for their rituals, and that therefore I should give it back to them. Obviously I don't want that to happen, so I don't tell anybody that the ring is here

The quotation aboves clearly state that Bora ring is the place where aborigines mostly spend their time in doing rituals. Because Native title is to claim aboriginal culture, bora rings must become once. This is also one ways that John does to keep the property belong to him. What he said is to claiming the property. John knows the land is cultural; therefore he tries to keep the place in secret.

The old man straightened sternly. 'But  
the ironic thing is that because of laws like Native Title, I have to  
keep this place secret. And it *is* a secret, Will.'  
'Like the water hole?'  
'Exactly like the water hole.'  
'But why?'  
'It's dangerous information in these times, that's why. This is  
my land now, I know you understand that. Whoever might have  
lived here once, they're gone (180)

John hides the waterholes where aborigine mostly spends their time, gathering and doing their behavior. It aim is to cover up the evident and the truth about the land. *It's dangerous information in these times*", this quotation describes John afraid to the government or to the society around him. He does this because he want to keep the property belong to him forever.

### **Claiming Property from Families**

From the families, John also claims the property. He loves property more than his family. He become selfish, arrogant and doesn't care toward the people around him. It is shown by the quotation below,

In 1967 he purchased another twelve hundred acres, bringing his ownership of Kuran Plains land to just on four thousand acres all told. He was now one of the largest grain-growers in the area. He was also one of the most unpopular. This was only partly because of the suspicions about Dudley. John was a demanding employer, paying poorly for long hours. He refused to serve on any grain boards or committees, as was expected of a farmer of his stature. He belonged to no church or club, and gave nothing to charity. Indeed, he was so mean, his neighbours muttered, that despite his riches he still lived in the tiny, dilapidated cottage he had bought in the 1940s. He hadn't even bothered to install proper plumbing. All John knew was that, at long last, Kuran Station was within his sights. So let his neighbours sneer. (245-246)

The Quotation above shows that John has much property, or wealth or land. However, the text above states that John is very arrogant, selfish, unsocial able. Even though he is rich, no body know him as the text revealed "*He was also one of the most unpopular*" it reveals that he doesn't have good relationship with his people and society. "*He refused to serve on any grain boards or committees, as was expected of a farmer of his stature. He belonged to no church or club, and gave nothing to charity*" it means that he is possessiveness, careless, stingy and arrogant. He refuses the rules at time where all of farmers must give a tax to the society. However, john refuses to do this thing. What he believes that this place is his. No one must get the place as the sentence states "*Kuran Station was within his sight*", it means that this place in concerned in his own right.

He chase out his daughter because she resist John rules and decision. Ruth, who works in the government, is his daughter. She works as the investigator of deviance organization. It can be seen from the quotation below,

'I'm a legal adviser. I work for the state government — in the Premier's Department. One of our jobs is to keep an eye on radical political organisations. One day someone was passing an Independence League newsletter around the office, laughing at this crazy little right-wing group from the bush. So I had a look. And there was the name on the letterhead.' She breathed out smoke in wonderment. 'My own father, chief proprietor of Fascists Incorporated. The weirdest thing is, take away the bogus patriotism and the inherent racism, and he's mouthing the same old anarchist shit he used to hate so much

Ruth is John's Daughter whose job is in State. The quotation above reveals that Ruth is a legal advisor which mostly knows about the law and rules of the

government. *Radical political organizations* means that this organization are kind of hard, no laws, no rules, it function is to against the government rules. Ruth works to consider and to pay attention to this organization. In fact, John, who is her father, is one of the leaders of one of the organization.

As his daughter, she is chosen become John's heir. However, Ruth refuses to take the property. She prefers to live with her husband rather than takes the property. Therefore, she chase out from the house. It can be seen from the following quotation

John told his daughter that if she insisted on staying with her husband, then he had no interest in seeing her again. The vindication in Ruth's eyes made it perfectly clear that she'd hoped for this. But just to make the cut as deep and fatal as it could be, John spelt out exactly what he meant — that she would be severed from them completely, there would be no more support, she would never be welcome home, and no matter what sort of wealth John accrued in the rest of his life, no matter what property, no matter the possession of Kuran Station itself, none of it would ever come to her. Not if it was to be shared with this boy she had presented. And with a triumphant, shining anger, Ruth replied that such terms suited her exactly.(270)

The quotation above describes Ruth resistant toward the property. She even won't the property. Thus, John asked her to go away and didn't give a percent toward Ruth of his property. *no matter what property, no matter the possession of Kuran Station itself, none of it would ever come to her.* This statement proves that John would never share or give the property to her.

Moreover, John hates all of women in his house, especially his own daughter. The following quotation state that,

In fact, he was surrounded now by women he did not want. Veronica, and the old house keeper, they were vultures the both of them, circling, eager, to pick his carcass. But the worse by far was his daughter, the poisonous child. If he could rise from is bed and physically chase her out Cast all of them out (338)

Those quotations reveal that John dislikes all the people who close to him such his servant, his sister and daughter. Why he hates his daughter more is what she will do to fail all of John effort to claiming his property. *The poisonous child* means that she is very dangerous, scary, frighten, which will kill John one day.

John exploits the situation around him for a property. He chooses his friend, Dudley rather than his daughter. He sent her daughter away and took care of his friend. He does this in order he could get Dudley's property. It can be seen from the following quotation,

He discussed the situation with Harriet that night. At first he spoke only of how Dudley needed their help, not the punishment of an institution. If they assisted him with cooking and cleaning,



maybe he could survive at his own house....Faced with this, John struggled internally for a moment, then came to a reluctant admission. It wasn't that simple, he said. And he outlined his concerns about Dudley's property...They debated far into the night. No matter how he tried, John was incapable of making Harriet appreciate what Dudley's farm might mean to their fortunes... . And for her part, Harriet was appalled to discover what really lay at the core of her husband — a man so cold and calculating that his main concern wasn't for their daughter's safety, or even for Dudley's, but for property and money and a crumbling old homestead. (223)

John is very greedy of a property. His daughter is chased out from the house because she will be disturbed by Dudley, his friends. Dudley has a psychological problem because he was an army. John needs to treat Dudley as much as good. However, this treatment is aim to get Dudley property. He assumed that he will get the property when Dudley is dead. When he discussed Ruth and Dudley he only thinks about Dudley's property. It is shown form this quotation "*And he outlined his concerns about Dudley's property*". It reveals that John desire only the property. It describe that John is very careless, greedy, egoist. Moreover, he is very sly because he exploits his friend condition to a property. Eventhough they keep talking until late at night, John only thinks about Dudley property. He tries to ring true his wife if the property is very important to their future as the following sentence said "*No matter how he tried, John was incapable of making Harriet appreciate what Dudley's farm might mean to their fortunes*".

### **C. Conclusion**

*The White Earth* which is written by Andrew McGahan reveals the effort of claiming of property right. This action emerges as the issues of Native Title act in 1992. John as the represented does many ways to claiming the property. Claiming property is divided into two aspects—from the government and from the family.

There are two ways that John done to claiming land. The first is by writing several articles. In these articles he tries to express his rejection toward the government decision of Native Title Act. John argues that government doesn't have right toward the individual. The second ways that John does to claiming the property is discover up the truth about historical of aborigine. There are several objects or area that John hide from the society or public; waterholes, Bora rings, bones, and bald. These things are the evident of aboriginal history.

Family also disturbs him of property. His closed people don't accept his decision of the property. His daughter refuses to become his heir, so he chases his daughter out of home. His daughter is a lawyer who works in the parliament and against his decision of the property. His wife also refuses his desire of the property. He gives divorce to his wife because he loves his property more. John also exploits the situation and condition of his friend. He gives medical treatment to his friend in order he can get his friend property.

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