

Film Andragogy (2023): Identity Crisis and Power Shift in Indonesian Cinema

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Abstract

The phenomenon of posthumanism in Indonesia is no longer merely a theoretical discourse, but has become an everyday experience that reshapes social relations, identity, and human existence in the digital era. This study aims to examine how Wregas Bhanuteja's film Andragogy (2023) represents the dynamics of power in posthuman cinema through visual and narrative studies, with the Actor-Network Theory (ANT) approach from Bruno Latour and Jacques Lacan's gaze theory. The results of the study show that the virality of Bu Prani's video in the film functions as a non-human actor who has agency in shaping public opinion, mobilizing social networks, and distributing power. Social media is not only a space of representation, but also regulates social narratives that oppress individuals. Bu Prani loses control over her own identity, trapped in the logic of algorithms and collective power exercised by netizens through the mechanisms of gaze and méconnaissance. Through visual framing that shows how Bu Prani's personal space is reduced and her narrative is constructed by digital social networks, this film highlights the crisis of the subject in the posthuman era. Andragogy is not only an aesthetic critique of the post-pandemic era, but also reflects how power has shifted from humans to digital objects that are able to significantly modulate social life. The findings of this study emphasize that in posthuman networks, humans are no longer the absolute center of social construction, and cinema can be a critical medium to dismantle the tension between human agency and algorithms.

Keywords: Posthuman Cinema, Actor-Network Theory, Gaze, Méconnaissance, Film Andragogy

INTRODUCTION

A decade later, talk about posthumanism is increasingly popular and not only belongs to philosophical and futurological discourse, but rather has become an everyday experience for global society, including Indonesia. Posthumanism is a response to the enormously far-reaching changes that have followed in the wake of technological progress, digitization, and paradigm changes in our ideas about human beings. Here, in this case, the elegy of the posthuman world in Indonesia is not merely a visual trend; it is a symptom of an ever more profound and layered social discontent. This is something some Indonesian filmmakers are now trying to capture by telling stories about people's lives in the midst of rapid digitalization and technology, where the line between reality and virtual representation becomes more and more vague.

The phenomenon is manifested in several feature films nominated at the forthcoming 2023 Indonesian Film Festival (FFI), like *Like & Share* (Gina S. Noer), *Sleep Call* (Fajar Nugros), and *Andragogy* (Budi Pekerti) (Wregas Bhanuteja). The three films do not only exist as works of cinema that explore contemporary issues, but also come to stand for a visual account of social anxiety in the post-pandemic world. These films illustrate that digitalization is not only a passive backdrop, but that it is more and more implementing, impinging on, and possibly even taking priority over human life, including everything connected to social relations, identity, and existence.

Recent studies support this reading. Nugraha (2024) notes that posthuman narratives in Indonesian literature reflect a growing anxiety toward the dissolution of human autonomy in the digital sphere. Similarly, Hapsarani and Nurhayati (2021) argue that technological mediation has generated a condition of “human disconnectedness,” where emotional authenticity is replaced by

algorithmic performativity. Dinata et al. (2023) emphasize that the digital turn in Indonesian cinema transforms both production and spectatorship, repositioning cultural identity within a networked and data-driven ecosystem. From a broader perspective, Kweldju (2025) shows that posthuman subjectivity has become embedded in daily communication practices, marking a shift from human-centered rationality to techno-mediated consciousness. Moreover, recent gender-focused research highlights how female representation in Indonesian popular films increasingly negotiates agency within algorithmic visibility (Women's Portrayal in Indonesia Popular Film, 2024).

In this context, according to Rosi Braidotti (2013), posthumanism disrupts the classical humanist account of man as subjectivity by proposing decentralized subjects, negotiated in technological and algorithmic networks. It is worth noting that the three movies all faced women at the front and center. Particularly in *Andragogy*, Bu Prani's role is central in the congruence in the story and well demonstrates how digital technology, particularly social media, can ruin reputation and ensnare people in the whirlpool of algorithmic power. The case of her video going viral was a significant one in Mrs. Prani's life, showing how virtual reality is able to step in and discombobulate the established social order. The digitalization in this movie is not just the scenery; it is the actuator and modulator of conflict, as framed by Foucault's observation concerning power working within invisible networks of ubiquitous surveillance (Foucault, 1977).

As an auteur, Wregas Bhanuteja meticulously situates "Andragogy" as a commentary on the post-pandemic social order. With finely composed visual storytelling, Wregas provides not just a compelling narrative, but also a world that mirrors the new normal of ambiguities. In the terminology of auteur theory, as presented by Sarris (1962), at the core of an auteur's strength there is his capacity to insert his personal expression into the film direction and action undertaken. In "Andragogy," Wregas not only offers an individual narrative, but also a sociopolitical critique of how human beings, especially women, face pressure in a performative digital system where we can only hope to survive.

This film can also be interpreted through the Lacanian gaze theory (Lacan 1977) as the character Bu Prani is a subject as well as an object that is seen, reproached, and put together by digital society. The look in this film operates in a layered way, that is as a tool of storytelling of course but also as a statement of the pressure of society on our identities and also how this is manifested through visual means like viral videos. From a Lacanian perspective, Bu Prani's experience also corresponds with *objet petit a* or the desire for recognition and acceptance because it is always a mirage never fully reached. Each time Bu Prani tries to recover her good name, she paradoxically ensnares herself further in the increasingly onerous network of social norms and obligations, generating a self-perpetuating loop of narrative subjectivity, recognition, and institutional breakdown.

The power of *Andragogy* resides in its capacity to employ aesthetics in critique – the aesthetic not simply as a means to an end of visual beauty. This is consistent with Theodor Adorno who asserts that art should serve as a resistance against the packing out of system, since it can uncover immanent social contradictions (in Mohamad, 2021). Verri's framing and *mise-en-scène* in *Andragogy*, for example in the scene when Mrs. Prani is sitting on a chair across the sea, doesn't merely show us solitude but gives several meanings: alienation, being trapped, being watched all the time. This visual metaphor is too important not to emphasize, as visual aesthetics in cinema help to form a critical discourse of the post-pandemic social reality, the social reality that is heavy and oppressive.

In post-COVID-19 pandemic, the world is undergoing rapid process of digitalization, including in Indonesia. Radical shifts in work behaviors, education and social activities have created a site specific habitus that has become less and less disentangleable from digital media (Susanto & Rosida, 2021). This habitus requires rapid acculturation, yet also generates new tensions, especially for digitally divided and stigmatized groups. In *Andragogy*, Bu Prani's

struggle grows to a microcosm of a societal problem, a problem in which a person's reputation, honor, and identity can be ruined in mere seconds, thanks to the calculus of the algorithm and the logic of virality.

While interest in the theme of posthumanism has recently surfaced in Indonesian cinema, the study of the ethical, psychological, and social implications of these changes has remained lacking. Such posthuman cinematic images too frequently remain on the surface of things, never managing to ask more penetrating questions about human agency and identity. It is important to study this more in-depth, as posthumanism is not only a technological progression but it means an ontological difference in the conception of human existence (Braidotti, 2013). The question then is: if *Andragogy* could reflect the multilayered folds of posthuman life and become the space of freedom for Bu Prani, who is being allured by the digital social trap? Or does this film simply mirror the sheer lack of agency in the face of algorithms? That would be useful to dissect on which precise grounds Indonesian cinema today situates itself within the global posthumanist discourse and how we can continue to utilize cinema as an aesthetic medium to encourage the cultivation of critical consciousness within society.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with visual and narrative discourse analysis methods to examine how Wregas Bhanuteja's film *Andragogy* (2023) represents the dynamics of power in posthuman cinema. The main focus of this study is to explore how social media, as part of the posthuman network, becomes an important actor in shaping, organizing, and influencing the social reality experienced by Bu Prani, the central character in the film. This study also highlights how power is no longer centered on a single individual or institution, but is distributed in a complex manner through human and non-human networks, as stated by Bruno Latour in Actor-Network Theory (ANT).

Bruno Latour is a key theory in this study, with the understanding that social reality is not only shaped by human relations, but also involves the important role of non-human actors. In the context of the film *Andragogy*, the virality of Bu Prani's video becomes a critical point to show how non-human objects such as videos can act as agents that significantly influence social change. Latour (2005) emphasizes that in social networks, objects have the capacity to mobilize, organize, and even destroy someone's reputation. In this film, viral videos are not only a medium for disseminating information, but also function as actors that regulate social relations, shift public opinion, and form new arenas for power that is spread through digital networks. Latour's (1993) concept of the parliament of things is also an important key in this study, where social media as a non-human entity takes part in the practice of power that has so far been considered only for humans. Gaze is not just about who sees, but how the subject becomes the object of the collective gaze. In the film *Andragogy*, Bu Prani no longer controls her own narrative; she becomes a construction of what is seen, talked about, and decided by social media as an omnipresent actor. The process of *méconnaissance* (self-misrecognition) occurs when Mrs. Prani tries to pursue social expectations that have been distorted by the virality of the video, where she is seen not as a whole person, but as a fragment curated by the social network.

Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) approach through the concept of Body without Organs (BwO) also complements this analysis to read how Bu Prani's digital body, which should be fluid and free, is trapped in the rigidity of algorithms. Instead of becoming a liberated body, Bu Prani's self-representation in cyberspace is actually reduced to a narrow image that is easy to consume, manipulate, and judge. Social media, which was initially considered a non-centered rhizome space, in this film actually plays a role as a capitalist machine that simplifies identity into a visual commodity that is easy to manipulate.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Actor-Network Dynamics: Understanding Viral Video Agency As Non-Human Actors

Andragogy presents a realistic portrait of how non-human actors, in this case social media and viral videos, are no longer passive tools but active actors that contribute to shaping social reality. The data in this film strongly shows how Bu Prani's viral video not only spreads as content, but also rearranges social relations, destroys reputations, and directs public opinion. Latour (2005) in *Reassembling the Social* emphasizes the importance of understanding the heterogeneous interactions between humans and non-humans that form social networks. Based on the data of the events recorded in the film, the power of the viral video illustrates this principle very clearly. Jerrentrup (2025) similarly shows how algorithmic entities, hashtags, and media content act as nodes in hybrid networks that co-shape discourse and perception. In the early scene, when Bu Prani's video spreads on social media, the direct impact that is recorded is the change in the attitude of society, including the school environment where Bu Prani works. The data shows how the responses of students, teachers, and parents turn from respect to criticism and rejection. Irwanto et al. (2025) demonstrate in a case of youth violence how viral content mobilizes human clusters around focal nodes in social media, transforming passive viewers into actors of opinion change. This change shows how the viral video mobilizes a wide human network, from individuals to institutions, to exert systematic social pressure on Bu Prani.

Based on Actor-Network Theory (ANT), all entities in a network, both human and non-human, have equal agency. In the film, the viral video is not only an object to be watched, but also a center of mobilization that triggers action, perception formation, and collective decision-making. Field data from the film shows how the viral video becomes the main node connecting Mrs. Prani, netizens, media, students, family, and the school. This network works dynamically and reciprocally, where social pressure from netizens has a direct impact on the institution's decision to postpone Mrs. Prani's promotion. Nahari (2024) examines *Andragogy* itself, showing how the viral video is constructed as a virality “formula”—not merely content but actor—that drives the narrative and public reaction.

Latour (1993) in *We Have Never Been Modern* rejects the strict separation between subject and object. The film *Andragogy* proves this statement by showing how the boundaries between humans and technology become blurred. Mrs. Prani's viral video is not only spread by humans, but becomes an entity that regulates how humans act and respond. Tsiavos (2025) argues that in the context of the modern film industry, digital agents (algorithms, viral content) as “narrative actors” also have the capacity to structure audience interpretations and production decisions. Film data shows that the decisions of Mrs. Prani's family, students, and the school are all influenced by the existence of the viral video. The network that is formed is complex and mutually influential. Thomas (2024) further reminds us that digital actors, such as viral videos, can mediate symbolic power and distribute narrative power into the public sphere.

The characters of Mbok Rahayu and her daughter also provide supporting data that strengthens Latour's theory. The drastic increase in buyers of kue putu after the viral video went viral is the result of how technology reshapes social and economic capital. Mbok Rahayu, who previously ran a stable and humane business, had to adapt to the flow of virality that accelerated the rhythm of her trade, changed her social interaction patterns, and placed herself in a capital network that she did not control. This data further strengthens the fact that technology not only facilitates interaction, but also reorganizes economic and social structures. Latour (2005) states that social networks are always in the process of assembling and disassembling. The data in the film shows this process very concretely. The assembling process occurs when the viral video forms solidarity among netizens who criticize Mrs. Prani, forming public opinion which then

pressures the school to stop Mrs. Prani's promotion process. The disassembling process occurs when Mrs. Prani, along with her family, tries to clarify to restore their reputation, but the power of the network that has already formed is too strong to be changed. The data shows that even though Mrs. Prani tries to convey the truth, public perception is not easily corrected. Mrs. Prani's efforts to regain control over her life narrative have repeatedly failed. The data shows that Mrs. Prani's clarifications through the media and direct interactions were unable to stop the flow of virality that had already been formed. This confirms Latour's view that human agency is increasingly being displaced by the power of non-human actors. The data also shows that even though Mrs. Prani tried to rebuild her social network, the power of social media and public opinion remains more dominant in regulating perception. Latour (2004) in *Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam?* emphasizes the importance of going beyond the human-object dichotomy to understand social reality more comprehensively. The film *Andragogy* is a reflection of this complexity, where viral videos become central actors that not only mediate, but determine the direction of the story. The data shows that it is not Mrs. Prani's actions that direct the course of the narrative, but how the viral video is interpreted and spread by the public.

Andragogy shows how an object, namely a viral video, gains a political and social voice in shaping reality. The film data shows how the video becomes a single representation that the public trusts more than Mrs. Prani's own voice. The video, which is actually cut and out of context, becomes a "representative" who speaks on behalf of Mrs. Prani in front of the public, replacing Mrs. Prani's authority in controlling her personal narrative. In the film, Mrs. Prani's efforts to correct the wrong perception are drowned out by the speed and power of social media. The data shows that the media and netizens trust the narrative of the viral video more than Mrs. Prani's direct clarification. This strengthens Latour's (2004) criticism that representations formed by non-human systems have dominated social judgment, making humans lose authority over their own reality. The data in the film also shows how social media acts as a new institution that determines truth and social justice. Netizens quickly form opinions and punish Mrs. Prani without considering clarification. In this network, justice is no longer a product of human deliberation, but the result of algorithms and the dynamics of virality controlled by social media as a non-human actor. Human authority, in this case Mrs. Prani, is becoming increasingly weak in maintaining her personal identity and reputation.

In the parliament of things, social and political legitimacy increasingly shifts to objects such as viral videos and social media. The film data confirms that Mrs. Prani's reputation is no longer controlled by the direct community or formal institutions, but by perceptions formed through social media networks. This shows how in the posthuman world, power has spread and is no longer concentrated in individuals or formal institutions, but in network nodes involving technology. The film *Andragogy* is a clear depiction of how humans can lose control over their life narratives in posthuman social networks. Mrs. Prani is no longer the center of control in her social network. She is only a small node that is easily manipulated by the power of technology and social media. The data shows how Mrs. Prani's process of clarification, resistance, and search for justice are always slower and less powerful than the flow of virality.

A. ***Displacement of Human Centrality: the Crisis of the Subject in Posthuman Networks***

Another important aspect raised in *Andragogy* is how the film emphasizes the dislocation of the center of humanity in the posthuman network system—an issue that aligns with Latour's critique of modernism, which always considers humans as the center of all social explanations. Latour (1993) rejects the dichotomous division between subject and object, human and nonhuman. In *Andragogy*, we see how human dominance as the full controller of social narratives is displaced by active digital objects such as the viral video that determines Mrs. Prani's reputation and fate. This shift echoes Turkkila's (2025) argument that nonhuman entities must be attributed agency, rather than treated as passive instruments. Nicenboim (2025) similarly suggests that digital design can redistribute power and challenge human centrality. Bocian,

Gonidis, and Everett (2024) demonstrate that nonhuman agents can generate moral pressure, influencing human perception and behavior—precisely what happens when the viral video reshapes public opinion in the film. Moreover, Söderlund (2025) explains that digital agents are capable of self-promotion as a form of active participation, mirroring the viral video's control over narrative flow. Sklar (2025) further argues that AI and digital media can act as independent interactive agents, reinforcing the idea that technological entities now share, and sometimes surpass, human agency in social storytelling.

Andragogy's narrative encourages us to abandon the old paradigm that views humans as completely autonomous entities in shaping social reality. This film is a sharp critique that in the digital era, humans are no longer able to be the sole center in controlling meaning. This displacement is in line with Latour's idea that humans are only one node in a larger network, where agency is distributed to many actors—both human and non-human. The visual data in the film supports this idea. At minute 01:22:44 when Mrs. Prani tries to maintain her identity by asking for public clarification through an interview on local television, the camera deliberately places Mrs. Prani in a narrow framing, confined by doors and windows, symbolizing that Mrs. Prani's narrative space is getting smaller and controlled by logic outside of herself.

This dislocation process forms a subject crisis in Andragogy, where Mrs. Prani loses the ability to interpret and direct her own narrative. Mrs. Prani is marginalized by the power of a network that she does not control, an event that marks a paradigm shift in agency from humans to social and technological networks. Mrs. Prani represents a subject trapped in a fluid posthuman network structure, where the position of humans as the center of meaning and power begins to be replaced by non-human actors who have an equal role in determining the direction of social life. Andragogy emphasizes the posthuman discourse by emphasizing that the displacement of human centrality is not just a threat, but a reality that must be faced and understood. This film not only offers a visualization of Mrs. Prani's conflict, but also invites us to reflect on how today's social structure places humans in an increasingly limited position, where the power to define oneself is continuously contested by algorithms, social media, and network logic that dominates the digital era.

Collective Gaze dan Méconnaissance

Gaze in this film is no longer just about who is looking, but rather how the subject becomes the object of a mass gaze that is shaped and reinforced by social media as a non-human actor. Mrs. Prani no longer has full control over her narrative. Her identity is constructed, shaped, and curated by the collective eyes of netizens who look at her through distorted viral video clips. The scene when Mrs. Prani just got home and read the notifications flooding her cellphone at timecode 00:12:07 is the starting point of social media's invasion into her personal life. The visual framing in this scene places the cellphone as the center of attention with an intimate close-up angle. This framing is not just a cinematographic technique, but serves to underline how Mrs. Prani's personal space has been infiltrated and controlled by social media. At this moment, Mrs. Prani is no longer the manager of the story about herself; her narrative has been taken over by actors in the digital social network.

In the logic of the gaze, Mrs. Prani becomes the object of an invisible eye, namely netizens who produce, disseminate, and comment on her without equal resistance. Mrs. Prani is indirectly trapped in the expectations formed by others, and her private space turns into a public space that is open to being judged. The next scene shows online news headlines that quickly report Mrs. Prani's incident. The framing in this scene focuses fully on the news screen that displays video clips and media narratives. This representation emphasizes how the media becomes an important actor in shaping social perception. In this visual construction, the media is not only a means of information, but also a producer of meaning that accelerates the formation of Mrs. Prani's image in the eyes of the public. The framing freezes Mrs. Prani in a narrow and

often inaccurate label. Mrs. Prani's identity is squeezed into a mere sensational headline, which is immediately consumed by the public without any space for contextualization.

Latour (2005) asserts that in social networks, objects such as media and viral videos are no longer neutral; they become mediators that regulate the distribution of power and the formation of meaning. This framing shows how Mrs. Prani is reduced to a visual representation curated by an algorithm, not as a whole individual. The power of the collective gaze is further emphasized in the scene when the social media comment column is flooded with insults and one-sided assumptions. The framing that displays a series of comments in sequence shows how the power of public opinion is built through a massive and fast digital rhythm. The gaze is not only present as an individual gaze, but becomes a simultaneous and destructive collective gaze. Netizens, unconsciously, form one giant eye that monopolizes moral and social assessments of Mrs. Prani. This scene shows that the process of forming Mrs. Prani's identity has been taken over by the collective gaze.

This is a concrete realization of *méconnaissance* in Lacan's psychoanalysis. *Méconnaissance* is a situation where the subject misrecognizes himself, because he sees himself through the reflection formed by others. Mrs. Prani begins to accept the narrative formed by netizens as a reflection of himself, even though the construction is incomplete and often wrong. The crucial scene at minute 01:22:44 shows Mrs. Prani trying to restore her reputation through an interview on local television. However, the visual framing places her in a narrow space, confined by doors and windows, symbolically indicating that Mrs. Prani's confessional space is shrinking. The camera isolates Mrs. Prani in a frame that emphasizes her limitations, giving the impression that Mrs. Prani's efforts to speak are no longer relevant in the network of social media power that has already formed public opinion.

This framing creates the impression that Mrs. Prani is not speaking to reveal the truth, but to try to adjust to the expectations of the public that have been built. This is the point where the process of *méconnaissance* becomes total. Mrs. Prani, who was originally a subject who had control over the narrative of her life, is now completely trapped in an identity formed by others. She tries to fulfill what the public wants to hear, no longer defending herself authentically. This narrow framing becomes a visual metaphor for the crisis of self-representation in the digital era. Mrs. Prani, like many individuals in posthuman society, no longer has the space to build an autonomous self-narrative. What is seen becomes the sole truth, and what goes viral becomes the highest legitimacy. Social reality is controlled by the logic of virality that quickly erases individual context, history, and complexity.

Mrs. Prani becomes a victim of media framing and social mechanisms that eliminate the space for clarification, giving the stage only to what is viral. The collective gaze in this film produces tremendous psychological and social pressure. Gaze works like a Foucauldian panopticon system that continuously monitors, judges, and regulates behavior. Mrs. Prani feels watched at every step, and this fear forces her to adjust to the identity that has been determined by digital society. At this point, the process of *méconnaissance* reaches its peak. Mrs. Prani is no longer able to distinguish between her true self-identity and the self-identity constructed by social media. She internalizes this false reflection, believing that she is as seen and talked about by the public.

CONCLUSION

The film *Andragogy* by Wregas Bhanuteja vividly illustrates the power dynamics and subjectivity crisis in Indonesia's posthuman social reality. Through the framework of Actor-Network Theory (ANT), the film demonstrates how non-human actors, particularly viral videos and social media, possess significant agency in shaping social structures, public opinion, and

personal identities. The case of Bu Prani reveals that in the posthuman era, the authority to control one's narrative is no longer fully in human hands. Her identity is fragmented, curated, and rapidly redefined by the collective gaze of digital society, where algorithms and virality have become dominant forces in determining truth and social legitimacy.

The study's findings emphasize that Bu Prani's attempts to reclaim her reputation are repeatedly undermined by the power of the social network that privileges virality over clarification. Her efforts to resist, clarify, and restore her self-narrative are consistently outpaced by the swift circulation of digital content, proving Latour's (2005) argument that social networks are driven by both human and non-human actors that continuously assemble and disassemble social realities. Furthermore, the film powerfully visualizes the displacement of human centrality. Bu Prani's increasing marginalization in controlling her life story signifies a profound subjectivity crisis in posthuman networks, where power is decentralized and flows through both human and technological nodes. The pervasive gaze depicted in the film aligns with Lacan's concept of *méconnaissance*, where Bu Prani misrecognizes herself through the distorted reflections of public perception, ultimately internalizing the externally constructed identity shaped by social media. The collective gaze in *Andragogy* operates as a modern panopticon, creating social pressure that forces individuals to conform to public expectations curated by algorithms. This condition is visually reinforced through framing choices that consistently limit Bu Prani's narrative space, symbolizing her diminishing agency within the posthuman social order.

The film offers a sharp critique of how social media platforms, as non-human entities, actively participate in regulating social norms and justice, replacing traditional institutions. Justice in this network is no longer a product of human deliberation, but an outcome of viral dynamics and algorithmic logics. Ultimately, *Andragogy* demonstrates that in Indonesia's post-pandemic digital society, humans are no longer sovereign over their own narratives. Non-human actors like viral videos have gained political and social voices that can displace, reconstruct, and even erase human agency. Cinema, in this context, becomes an important aesthetic medium not only to reflect but also to critique the complexities of posthuman life and the new forms of power that emerge within it.

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