

Interpretation of Tantri's Nonverbal Dialogue in Kamila Andini's Film *The Seen And Unseen*

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the nonverbal dialogue of the character Tantri in Kamila Andini's *The Seen and Unseen* through Roland Barthes's semiotic framework (denotation, connotation, myth) and Konstantin Stanislavski's acting system (given circumstances, inner action, physical action). The research focuses on bodily gestures, facial expressions, artistic settings, symbolic properties (such as eggs, children in white shirts, cockfight dance), and ambient soundscapes that signify the transition between the *sekala niskala* (seen unseen) realms. Primary data include the film itself and key sequences, supported by literature, interviews, and cultural sources on Balinese cosmology. The findings show that the egg serves as a symbolic sequence representing the world and Tantri and Tantra's twin bond, the cockfight and "chicken dance" metaphorically express the life death tension, children in white shirts represent *catur sanak*, the unseen siblings who guide Tantra's departure, physical actions in performance embody genuine emotion without reliance on spoken dialogue. This film situates body language and cultural symbolism as primary narrative instruments for expressing grief and separation.

Keywords: *Semiotics, Nonverbal Communication, Roland Barthes, Stanislavski, Balinese Culture, Twin Symbolism, Sekala Niskala*

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INTRODUCTION

This study examines the Indonesian film *The Seen and Unseen* (Sekala Niskala, 2017), directed by Kamila Andini, which portrays the emotional bond between twin siblings Tantra and Tantri. The film explores how their relationship deepens in the face of impending separation, emphasizing emotional expression that is not conveyed verbally but instead communicated through nonverbal means. These include Tantri's facial expressions and gestures, bodily movements and dance, her interactions with the environment, and the symbolic imagery embedded throughout the film. The dances in the film carry meanings that are rich with symbolism. These choreographies are connected to and inspired by nature, the environment, animals, plants, local arts, culture, and regional myths. As a result, they incorporate movements that resemble the characteristics of a chicken, a butterfly, a

monkey, and the tonya figure (Yoga,2022). Nonverbal communication, defined as deliberate human actions interpreted with intention and capable of eliciting feedback (Kusumawati, 2015), becomes Tantri's primary medium for expressing her emotions. Portrayed as resilient and emotionally reserved, Tantri seldom articulates her feelings verbally. Instead, she communicates through nonverbal cues facial expressions, gestures, bodily movements, symbolic actions, and environmental interactions reflecting the idea that emotions can be conveyed effectively without spoken language (Prawitasari, 1995). Within the filmic context, such nonverbal expressions, including symbols and movements, function as interpretive channels for the audience (Nurfintasari, 2021).

To analyze Tantri's nonverbal dialogue, this study employs Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, which conceptualizes meaning through two levels of signification denotation and connotation (Fiske, 1996). This framework enables the identification of signs and the interpretation of representational meaning within Tantri's actions across the film. The analysis also integrates Konstantin Stanislavski's acting theory to understand the internal motivations behind these nonverbal expressions. Stanislavski's approach emphasizes that an actor does not merely display emotions but lives through them, integrating thought, body, and feeling as a unified process (Stanislavski, 1936). This theoretical combination allows for a deeper understanding of how Tantri's gestures, movements, and symbolic actions construct layers of emotional meaning, enabling the film's nonverbal narrative to communicate Tantri's psychological and emotional state with subtlety and depth. According to Langer, meaning emerges from the complex relationship among symbols, objects, and the human person (Littlejohn, 2005). Therefore, the signs presented in *The Seen and the Unseen* hold a strong relational connection to the human subject (Tantri) with the abundance of signs whose meanings can be uncovered, the film demonstrates a compelling richness of creativity, as a truly valuable film is one that carries meaning within it (Mudjiono,2021)

METODE

In this research, *The Seen and Unseen* will serve as the primary object of study. The focus of the analysis is to uncover the messages and meanings embedded in Tantri's non-verbal dialogue within the context of twin-child phenomena portrayed in the film. This study employs a qualitative research method using a semiotic approach. Qualitative research explores and seeks to understand meaning, particularly when we aim to investigate the reasons behind human behavior why people think and act in certain ways (Kusumastuti & Khoiron, 2019). The qualitative method in this study adopts a semiotic perspective, which operates within its own system of signs (Lustyantie, 2012). Through this approach, the researcher aims to reveal interpretations of Tantri's non-verbal dialogue by analyzing her bodily gestures, dance movements, symbols, signs, and other expressive elements. The semiotic approach is used to uncover the connotative meanings hidden beneath Tantri's non-verbal expressions in *The Seen and the Unseen*. Semiotics functions as a technical form of qualitative data analysis to interpret symbols and signs within a filmic text. By applying a semiotic method, the researcher expects to uncover deeper interpretations of Tantri's non-

verbal dialogue in Kamila Andini's *The Seen and the Unseen*, offering new perspectives and ways of thinking for the researcher. Furthermore, this study aims to provide insights that may not be immediately apparent to other viewers and can only be understood through a deeper examination of the film's messages and meanings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESEARCH RESULT

The findings of this study are organized into three primary categories, facial expressions and body language as reflections of Tantri's emotional state, bodily movements within the dance sequence as representations of her inner world, and nonverbal symbolism that constructs the relationship between Tantri and her twin brother, Tantra.

1. Facial Expressions and Gestures

The findings indicate that Tantri communicates most of her emotions through facial expressions and bodily gestures rather than verbal dialogue. Emotional responses such as sadness, frustration, discomfort, fear, and resignation are conveyed through both subtle and overt physical cues across various scenes.

a. Relevant Scenes

NO	SCENE	DESCRIPTION
1.	Scene 1	Tantri gazes at Tantra in the hospital and then crushes the egg in her hand.
2.	Scene 18	Tantri sits weakly in a hospital chair after overhearing her parents discussing Tantra's condition.
3.	Scene 19	Tantri appears visibly upset when she is forced to eat the egg yolk.
4.	Scene 21	Children dressed in sleeveless white garments sit huddled together at night.
5.	Scene 30	Tantri pierces her finger with a twig until it bleeds.
6.	Scene 34	Tantri watches the cockfight with an intensely focused expression.
7.	Scene 40	The final gaze shared between Tantri and Tantra in the rice field.

b. Description of Finding

a) Scene 1 – Tantri gazing at Tantra and crushing an egg

Tantri's fixed, tense stare toward her bedridden twin indicates suppressed emotion. Crushing the egg becomes a physical manifestation of the emotional tension she cannot verbalize.

b) Scene 18 – Slumped posture on the hospital chair

Tantri sits with her head lowered and shoulders collapsed, displaying emotional exhaustion and disappointment after hearing the severity of Tantra's illness.

- c) Scene 19 – Resistance expressed through facial discomfort
 Tantri's refusal to eat the egg yolk, shown through her tightened facial muscles and hesitant gestures, conveys frustration and emotional disruption.
- d) Scene 21 – Children curled up at night
 The curled posture of the children in white shirts symbolizes Tantri's internalized fear and emotional instability during her entry into the niskala (unseen) world.
- e) Scene 30 – Self-inflicted finger wound
 Tantri intentionally injures her finger, expressing a desire to physically experience the pain associated with Tantra's condition.
- f) Scene 34 – Focused observation of a cockfight
 Tantri's concentrated facial expression during the cockfight reflects her emotional engagement with the symbolic struggle she is witnessing.
- g) Scene 40 – Farewell gaze
 The deep, sustained eye contact between Tantri and Tantra marks a nonverbal moment of emotional separation and acceptance.

Overall, Tantri's facial and bodily expressions form a consistent emotional narrative throughout the film, reflecting her grief, fear, and internal struggle as she confronts her twin's deterioration.

2. Movements in Dance as Representations of Tantri's Inner World

The results reveal that dance functions as one of Tantri's primary nonverbal channels. Her movements in the dance sequences serve not only as artistic expression but also as windows into her subconscious and emotional transitions. These dances frequently occur within the niskala domain Tantri's imaginative or spiritual space where she reconnects with Tantra.

a. Relevant Scene

NO	SCENE	DESCRIPTION
1.	Scene 27	Tantri performs a ritual like dance under the fullmoon.
2.	Scene 37	Tantri and Tantra perform the chicken dance together
3.	Scene 50	Tantri performs the butterfly Inspired dance with a yellow scarf
4.	Scene 56	Tantri dances with monkey like movements inside the Hospital

b. Description of Findings

- a) Scene27 – Dance under the full moon
Tantri performs structured movements in front of the fullmoon, expressing her emotional state and forming an imagined connection with Tantra
- b) Scene 37 – Chicken dance with Tantra
The playful yet intense bodily movements between Tantri and Tantra demonstrate their bond within the niskala realm.
- c) Scene50 – Butterfly dance using a yellow scarf
Tantri’s gentle, flowing motions depict an emotional transition. The accompanying presence of children in white visually reinforces a sense of transformation.
- d) Scene 56 – Monkey like dance in the hospital
Tantri’s energetic, uncontrolled movements show an outpouring of deep emotional tension at a critical point in the story.

These findings support the interpretation that Tantri’s dances symbolize her emotional progression from longing, to struggle, to eventual acceptance within a nonverbal and non-realistic space.

3. Nonverbal Symbolism in the Relationship Between Tantri and Tantra

The analysis reveals a consistent pattern of visual and symbolic elements that construct the emotional and spiritual relationship between the twins. These symbols appearing repeatedly across the film carry thematic weight and form the nonverbal foundation of their bond.

c. Relevant Scene

SYMBOLS	SCENE	DESCRIPTION
Eggs	1,5,15,19	Eggs appear in several crucial moments shared meals between Tantri and Tantra, offerings on a shrine, and Tantri’s experience of an egg without a yolk. These repeated appearances visually connect their relationship to the idea of wholeness, division, and loss.
The Children in White Shirts	11,21,33,40,45,50	Groups of children dressed in white sleeveless shirts appear especially in nocturnal or niskala sequences. Their positions, gestures, and Movements consistently accompany Tantri’s emotional transitions, functioning as visual extensions of her inner state.
Puppy	13	Tantri brings a puppy associated with Tantra to the hospital. The animal’s reaction in the room, particularly its barking, visually marks a sensitive response to the changing condition around Tantra..

Rice Seedlings	25	Tantri and Tantra plant rice seedlings together near the hospital. This shared action becomes a visual metaphor for continuity and the hope of new beginnings.
Fullmoon	10,27,29	The full moon appears as an object repeatedly seen and referred to by the twins. It becomes a stable visual reference that connects their experiences across different scenes.
Cockfight	34	The cockfight is observed silently by Tantri. The intense visual of two roosters fighting is presented in parallel with Tantri's silent reaction, suggesting a nonverbal link to ongoing struggle.
Monkeys	54,55,56	Monkeys appear around the temple and the seashore, then are echoed in Tantri's later monkey-like dance. Their presence visually bridges the boundary between the seen and unseen realms.

Overall, these symbolic elements reinforce the emotional and spiritual connection between Tantri and Tantra, expressed entirely through nonverbal cinematic cues.

DISCUSSION

This section interprets the research findings by connecting them to the theoretical frameworks of Roland Barthes and Konstantin Stanislavski. While the Results section outlines the patterns of Tantri's nonverbal communication in *The Seen and the Unseen*, this section explains the meanings embedded in those findings, how they operate, and why they matter within the film's narrative context. The analysis links Barthes' semiotic layers denotation, connotation, and myth with Stanislavski's acting system, particularly given circumstances, objectives, the magic if, physical actions, and the emotional physical relationship. Together, these frameworks demonstrate how Tantri's nonverbal expression constructs meaning, represents internal conflict, and shapes the symbolic relationship with her twin brother, Tantra.

1. Facial Expressions and Gestures as Emotional Reflection

1.1 Denotative Meaning of Facial Expressions and Gestures



Picture 1. Denotative Meaning of Facial Expressions and Gestures

This scene shows Tantri eating a boiled egg, inside which only the egg white remains. Denotatively, the scene depicts a young girl anxiously searching for the missing yolk, visible through her rapid, irregular hand movements and facial expression marked by lowered, tightened brows, tense facial muscles, and a firmly closed mouth. These physical cues form the first-order signs identified by the viewer and function as the most direct mode of nonverbal communication. The denotative gestures serve as an entry point into understanding the deeper emotions underlying the visible performance.

1.2 Connotative Meaning: Emotional Significance Behind Tantri's Bodily Gestures

At Barthes' second level of signification, Tantri's expressions produce connotative meanings that extend beyond simple emotional responses. Connotatively, the missing yolk symbolizes the disappearance of her twin brother's presence. The absence of this essential part represents her internal imbalance. Her frantic, irregular scraping of the egg becomes a representation of denial—an attempt to find what should be there but is no longer present..

1.3 Myth: Balinese Cultural Symbolism Behind Tantri's Emotions

At the mythic level of Barthes' semiotics, Tantri's expressions can be interpreted within the cultural context of Bali, where emotions—especially grief—are often ritualized, controlled, or transformed into symbolic acts. Tantri rarely exhibits dramatic crying; instead, her sorrow manifests through ritual quietude, bodily control, and symbolic gestures. Her expressions align with cultural myths of spiritual acceptance, where suffering is tied to cosmology rather than purely psychological struggle. In this scene, the egg functions as a symbolic object within Balinese myth, representing the world or the earth. The disappearance of one part of the egg further reinforces the connotative meaning that Tantri is experiencing a loss of relational balance with her twin brother.

1.4 Stanislavski's : Inner Action

From Stanislavski's perspective, Tantri's facial and bodily expressions arise from inner action, manifested through her panic and her searching gestures as vehicles for her living, felt emotions. The given circumstances include Tantra's illness and the looming separation. Stanislavski emphasizes that truthful acting emerges

from purposeful action, and Tantri's choices consistently reflect her desire to preserve emotional and spiritual closeness with Tantra.

2. Movement as Representation of the Inner World



Picture 2. Movement as Representation of the Inner World

2.1 Denotative Meaning: The Full Moon Dance

In Barthes' denotative reading, the dance consists of literal movements hand extensions, foot patterns, and costume changes showing Tantri performing under the full moon in reference to the Sesanghyangan dance, a devotional performance traditionally used to pray and communicate with the cosmos. She wears an all-white costume and adopts ritualistic postures directed upward.

2.2 Connotative Meaning: Spiritual Communication with the Moon

Tantri's dance establishes a symbolic communication with the divine. The moon represents feminine energy, maternal forces, and the universe. Her movements beneath the moon become a form of supplication, a way of addressing the cosmos about Tantra's condition and pleading for his healing.

2.3 Myth

In Bali, the full moon (purnama) is regarded as a sacred day for Hindus to seek blessings and healing from Hyang Widhi. Tantri's dance before the full moon thus becomes an act of spiritual petition, a plea to the divine for her twin brother's recovery.

2.4 Stanislavski : Sincere Movement

This scene demonstrates Stanislavski's concept of physical action as the trigger for genuine emotion. Tantri dances under the moon not merely as symbolic expression but as a real ritual act of pleading and seeking healing. Her actions are driven by given circumstances the threat of losing Tantra and embodied through the magic if (if I could change his fate), allowing her movements to channel sincere, on-screen emotion.

3. Nonverbal Symbolism and the Tantri–Tantra Relationship



Picture 3. Denotative Meaning: The Children in White Shirts

3.1 Denotative Meaning: The Children in White Shirts

Children wearing sleeveless white shirts frequently appear when Tantri enters the *niskala* (unseen) realm. They engage in unusual movements—rolling on the ground, flapping their arms, hanging, and dancing. Their presence consistently marks Tantri's transition into the unseen world.

3.2 Connotative Meaning: The Four Spiritual Siblings of Tantra

These white-clothed children accompany Tantri in moments of spiritual crossing. They are interpreted as mythical siblings spiritual kin guiding the soul. Their movements, especially in welcoming rituals, embody narratives of death and return. The white-shirted children represent Tantra's unseen siblings who gather to call him home as his time approaches.

3.3 Myth

According to Balinese belief, every newborn is accompanied by four spiritual siblings, known as *catur sanak Getih* (blood), *Yeh Nyom* (amniotic fluid), *Lamas* (umbilical cord), and *Ari-Ari* (placenta). These siblings disperse in the directions of the wind as the child grows and return when it is time during moments of life-and-death transition to escort their sibling. In this context, the children in white arrive to accompany their fifth sibling, Tantra, back to the spiritual realm when his time has come.

CONCLUSION

This research investigates how the character Tantri in *The Seen and Unseen* constructs nonverbal dialogue through facial expressions, bodily movements, and subtle gestures that trace her emotional trajectory as she confronts the impending loss of her twin brother, Tantra. Viewed through Stanislavski's system, these physical actions are rooted in Tantri's psychological objective to sustain her connection with Tantra, while Barthes' semiotics reveals how these expressions evolve from simple visual signs into emotional and mythic meanings. Tantri's dance movements also function as an alternative mode of communication when verbal expression becomes insufficient. The full-moon dance, the welcoming dance performed by the white-clad children, gestures that resemble chickens

and butterflies, as well as the chaotic, monkey-like movements in the hospital, collectively articulate Tantri's spiritual and emotional negotiation at the threshold between the seen and the unseen worlds. Each sequence of movements reflects a distinct psychological state pleading, resisting, transforming, or letting go—and operates as purposeful physical action grounded in an inner need to communicate with realms beyond ordinary perception.

Visual symbols such as the egg, the white-clothed children, the puppy, rice seedlings, cockfighting scenes, the monkey, the full moon, and the yellow sash further reinforce the emotional and spiritual bridge between Tantri and Tantra. Their recurring presence marks cycles of life, the tension between life and death, solitude, transition, and Balinese spiritual concepts such as *catur sanak*. Taken together, Tantri's nonverbal communication—her expressions, gestures, dances, and symbolic interactions forms a visual language that becomes central to the film's narrative structure. Through the combined perspectives of Barthes and Stanislavski, this study concludes that the film's most powerful dialogue emerges not from spoken words, but from movement, gesture, and symbolic resonance.

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