

"BEAUTIFUL AND EXHILARATING... A FAIRY TALE FOR GROWN-UPS."  
—Roxan Latta, Chicago Sun-Times

# PAN'S LABYRINTH

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A NEW FILM FROM WRITER/DIRECTOR GUILLERMO DEL TORO

PICTUREHOUSE and TELERINCO present a production of ESTUDIOS PICASSO THE BUA GANG ESPERANTO FILMS in association with CAFFEX, INC. a film by GUILLERMO DEL TORO "PAN'S LABYRINTH"  
SERGI LÓPEZ, MARIBEL VERDÚ, IVANA BAQUERO, DOUG JONES, ARADNA GIL, ALEX ANGULO, JIMMY GUILLEMO ANDRÉ, DE "TERESA VILAPIANA", "HUGO IGENIO CABALLERO", "JAVIER NAVARRETE",  
JOSÉ MARTÍN HERNÁNDEZ, "VICTOR ALABARRAN", JIMMY HELIN ATIENZA, ELEVA MANSOQUE, "HUGO DOMINGO GIL", "HERTHA NÓBREGA ALONSO", "DANIEL FRIDA TORRESLANCO", ADRIANO AUGUSTIN  
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INNOCENCE HAS A POWER EVIL CANNOT IMAGINE

# Why Study Pan's Labyrinth?



**'Pan's Labyrinth is one of the greatest of all fantasy films, even though it is anchored so firmly in the reality of war. On first viewing, it is challenging to comprehend a movie that on the one hand provides fauns and fairies, and on the other hand creates an inhuman sadist in the uniform of Franco's fascists.'**

Rodger Ebert, Chicago Sun-Times, August 25<sup>th</sup> 2007

Pan's Labyrinth was made seventy years after the outbreak of the Civil war in Spain in 1936. The film arrived at a time when the 'pact of silence' an agreement between left and right not to raise the issue or seek reparations for crimes committed by the fascist dictatorship was coming into question. The film explores the horror of the war through the eyes of a child (a device used by several 'post Franco' films) and through the use of the fantasy genre.

When studying Pan's Labyrinth we will examine how different elements such as editing, cinematography, mise-en-scene contribute to creating meaning. We will look at the aesthetic of the film, how the film looks and feels. We will examine what meanings and responses the film generates and what representations it creates. We will look at the history of the film its production contexts and the social, political, cultural and historical contexts that surround the film.

# History and Context

In the 1930s, Spain was a deeply divided country that was torn both politically and economically. The country had been deeply hit by the Great Depression after the Wall Street Crash. Partly due to this turmoil, in 1929 the military dictatorship that had ruled Spain since 1923 collapsed. In 1931 the King abdicated and the first Republican came to power.

An uneasy period of democracy followed with right-wing Nationalist and left-wing Republican parties competing for power. The Nationalist party was made up of monarchists, landowners, employers, the Roman Catholic Church and the army. The Republicans consisted of the workers, the trade unions, socialists and peasants.

In 1936 led by General Franco a section of the Spanish army rebelled against the second republic and a civil war ensued resulting in victory for the Franco and his Fascists in 1939. Franco then ruled as dictator of Spain for the next thirty six years.

The Spanish civil war is often seen by historians as the first flash point of world war two with Hitler and Mussolini supporting Franco and Stalin and the Soviet Union partially supporting the cause of the Republicans.

The war is also seen as one of the last great ideological conflict, a conflict between ideals fought out by idealists. As Stephen Schwartz describes it 'the twentieth century's most poignant and passionate historical conflict' (Film History: A International Journal, vol 20, no4 2008). Thousands of people volunteered to fight for the Republican cause coming from all over Europe, USA and Canada.



# The Pact of Silence and The Law for the Recovery of the Historical Memory

Franco is reported to have spoken of his military campaign as a 'crusade' that his intention was to 'purify' Spain bit by bit (at one point Vidal speaks of his wish to see his son born in a 'new clean Spain'). Often as Franco's armies took Republican controlled areas there followed pogroms and mass executions.

It is estimated that 500,000 people died during the war but only 300,000 of these are believed to be combatants, meaning that 40% of all casualties in the war were civilians. After the war the killings continued as the fascists sought to eradicate resistance and political opposition some mass graves that have been exhumed recently appear to date from the 60's and 70's. Military resistance continued with guerrilla groups (The Maquis) refusing to surrender especially in the north of the country and it is this group that feature in the film.

When Franco died in 1975 the country began a long process of returning to democracy as part of this process both sides left and right agreed to a 'pact of silence'. As part of the pact the war was to remain off the political agenda in order not to open wounds or detract from the democratisation of society.

In 2006 Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero's Socialist government drafted the Law for the Recovery of the Historical Memory this law showed a new will to explore the past, compensate victims of the regime and attempt to locate the bodies of those who disappeared or were murdered.



# The Cinema of the Spanish Civil War

The death of Franco and the end of almost a forty year of repression was supplanted by an age of personal and political freedoms that would revitalise Spanish cinema and even though politically the subject of the war was off the agenda, in terms of cultural products the subject of the conflict was revisited in cinema, literature and television. Early post Franco Films dealing with the civil war include *The Guernica Tree* (Arrabel, 1975), *Retrato de Familia* (Gimmenez-Rico, 1976) and *Long Vacations of '36* (Espanda, 1976).

The civil war had featured in American and European cinema outside of Spain as early as 1937 with *The Spanish Earth* (Ivens, 1937) a documentary film written by Earnest Hemmingway and Hollywood's first fictional treatment of the conflict arrived the same year with *The Last train from Madrid* (Hogan, 1937).

It has been argued that these films treat the war very differently from those produced in Spain. These non-Spanish films approach the conflict with fascism in Spain as symbolic of a general struggle against totalitarianism. Ken Loach's *Land and Freedom* (Loach, 1995) for example not only identifies a struggle with fascism as part of a general class struggle but also a fight against Stalinism.

## Research Task

**Do some research into the Spanish civil war and find out who the following organisation were; PCE, POUM, CNT, International Brigades, Unión Militar Española and the FE.**

**Create a brief set of bullet points outlining the main values of each group and study this sequence from *Land and Freedom* (Loach, 1995).**



**Which of those values are displayed in the sequence by which characters?**

PCE

POUM

CNT

International Brigades

Unión Militar Española

FE.

The Spanish films that approach the war differ from those made outside of the country, they are often more reflective and searching and examine the war from the point of view of personal trauma and national disaster. These films are often full of metaphorical representations of the conflict as in *The Spirit of the Beehive* (Erice, 1973) were two children wander the country side looking for a 'Frankenstein' a manmade monster in 1940's Spain.

*The Spirit of the Beehive* contains another common feature of these films which the central role of fantasy specifically the imagined world of children to the narrative. Examples of this particular way of exploring the conflict can be seen in *The Devils Backbone* (del Toro, 2001), *Butterfly Tongues* (Cuerda, 1999), *Pan's Labyrinth* (del Toro, 2006) and most recently *Black Bread* (Villaronga, 2010)



In these films the monsters often appear only to the children or in the case of *Pan's Labyrinth* appear only in a world created by the character.

In her book on *Pan's Labyrinth* Mar Diestro-Dopido also argues that several of these films focus on the unearthing of the past / dead which she argues could be seen as a metaphor for the recovery of historical memory.

### Discussion Question

**What possible metaphorical or allegorical meanings could you associated with film monsters?**

**Look at the slides on Jung and whilst watching *Pan's Labyrinth* try to consider what these creatures mean for the characters and for is the audience.**

Carl Jung

•The Shadow  
 •"dark side" of our personality—dark both because it tends to consist predominantly of the primitive, negative, socially or religiously depreciated human emotions and impulses like sexual lust, power striving, selfishness, greed, envy, anger or rage, and due to its unintegrated nature, completely obscured from consciousness  
 •What ever we regards as wrong, undesirable becomes part of the shadow.  
 •Can be personal or collective psyche



•Myths, monsters, movie villains are reflections of this shadow in archetypal human form.  
 • The shadow is most destructive, insidious and dangerous when habitually repressed and projected, manifesting in myriad psychological disturbances ranging from neurosis to psychosis, irrational interpersonal hostility, and even cataclysmic international clashes



# Production History



According to del Toro Pan's Labyrinth is meant to be seen as an 'informal' sequel to his other civil war era film The Devil Backbone (2001) and is intended to be part of a trilogy.

Initially Pan's Labyrinth didn't come into being at all, del Toro was warned by friends and colleagues not to make the film and has in interviews eluded to the difficulties in securing funding for the film.

'the production and the shooting of Pan was very, very hard a very difficult experience. After Mimic, Pan was the toughest shoot I've ever had' Guillermo del Toro 21<sup>st</sup> of March, 2013.

'Shooting Pan's Labyrinth was very painful, but it also became a war about me not compromising. I gave back my entire salary in order to get the film made the way I wanted it. I probably should have abandoned it the moment the funding fell through the first time, but I stuck with it for almost two-and-a-half years and refused to back down.' Guillermo del Toro, The observer, 5<sup>th</sup> of November 2006

The film was rejected by every major and independent studio in the USA, but eventually found its funding through a combination of sources in Spain and Mexico.

## Research Task

**What is the Tequila gang and who constitutes its membership?**

**What notable films are the Tequila gang associated with?**





Del Toro was able to rely on some of his old contacts in the 'Tequila gang' and found the remaining money from Spanish televisual studio Tele5. The total production budget came to approximately \$15 million and took almost \$90 Million in global box office.

The film premiered at Cannes in May 2006 (where it received a twenty two minute standing ovation) and in the UK at the Fright Fest Festival the same year, the film received its first general release in October 2006 in Spain and Mexico.

The film received wide spread critical appeal Mark Kermode described it as one of the best films of the year 'Set against the backdrop of fascist Spain in 1944, Pan's Labyrinth is a dark fairy tale that distils his distinctive mix of fact and fantasy, poetry and politics, pain and pleasure. It's an epic, poetic vision in which the grim realities of war are matched and mirrored by a descent into an underworld populated by fearsomely beautiful monsters - a transformative, life-affirming nightmare which is, for my money, the very best film of the year.' Mark Kermode, The Observer, 5th of November 2006.

The film was nominated for several awards, winning a BAFTA for best costume design, three academy awards for best art direction, cinematography ,make up and a Goya award (Spain's equivalent to the academy awards) for best cinematography.

### Trivial Pursuits

**Unhappy with the translation on The Devil Backbone Guillermo del Toro wrote the subtitles for the film himself....and he was the voice of the toad.**

#### Discussion Questions

**In production del Toro preferred to use prosthetics (using artificial limbs, masks and other elements of costume and make up design)rather than CGI to create the fantasy creatures in the film.**

**Do you feel that this technique gives these creatures a different feel than purely CGI created characters?**

**Does this use of prosthetics alter your reading of the characters?**

# Representations

In order to begin to think about the representations in Pan's Labyrinth it is worth thinking about the film as two separate spaces. The world created by Ofelia and the one inhabited by Vidal.

The film is essentially highly ambiguous and can be read in many different ways, giving you the option of several different symbolic or metaphorical readings of character, locations or objects

When examining your notes on screening think about the different uses of mise en scene that create these different worlds. Look at these different uses of colour, objects and even framing and try to consider these as possessing representational meanings.



There are three principle female characters in the film these are; Ofelia, her mother Carmen and the house keeper Mercedes.

Consider how each of these characters may represent stages or types of femininity and what each of them represent in terms of gender.

Ofelia

Carmen

Mercedes

Women in the anti-fascist forces played a pivotal role in resisting Franco which included fighting on the front lines a tradition that is carried on in the film through the character of Mercedes.

The role of women in Franco's Spain was very much reduced. Women's status of wives and carers had reduced them to a second class citizens in the 'New Nation'. These social expectations of women are echoed in the actions and attitudes of Vidal himself the physical manifestation of Franco's New Nation. The way he controls, dismisses or simply ignores all things female in his world. He resents both Ofelia and Carmen (the latter he regards as little less than a vessel that carries his unborn son), preferring to live away from the family unit.



**Discussion questions**

**To what extent does Vidal dismiss femininity? Try to identify where you think this happens in the film. These can be direct interactions with the female characters or more metaphorical representations of femininity.**

**'the very reason that Mercedes is able to smuggle food, medicine and information to the Maquis without Vidal noticing, because to him, a woman is not only a second class citizen, but virtually invisible'** Mar Diestro-Dopido, Pan's Labyrinth, BFI Publishing, 2013

**With reference to the text, to what extent do you agree with this statement?**

Think about some of the fantasy creatures that feature in the film. Examine what possible meanings they may possess. Think about how they look, what associations are made around their characterisation and what narrative role they may play.

Pan the Faun

The Pale Man

The Toad

## Mythology, Religion and Pan's Labyrinth

Pan's set the northern area of Spain we are told near to the border with France. The mountainous areas and forests place it most likely the areas between Galicia and Navarra rather than on the Pyrenees. These areas are also the most likely setting as this is the part of Spain where the Maquis existed after the end of the war.



It is also likely to be Galicia given the film's references to folklore/art and the various Galician and Celtic art and designs that appear in the film.

This interest in folklore and mythology has always been a preoccupation of del Toro since his first feature *Cronos* (1993). As Mar Diestro-Dopido states when discussing del Toro's monsters 'these are often drawn from classic mythology, literature, art, popular culture and folklore, and contrast with the horror of a specific historical reality' *Pan's Labyrinth*, Mar Diestro-Dopido, BFI Publishing, 2013.

In *Pan's Labyrinth* we can see this interest in the objects and creatures that inhabit Ofelia's world. In the film del Toro uses actual historical context expressed through the view point of a child to create two contrasting worlds within the film. The collisions between these worlds are expressed in the dynamic between two of the film's characters. Ofelia who escapes the cruelties of the world through her fairy tales and her step father the violent and sadistic fascist officer Vidal.



Del Toro has often said that Pan is his least Catholic film although other have disagreed (Alejandro González Iñárritu described the film as a 'truly catholic film') and there are some obvious religious references in the film such as temptation, sacrifice and eternal life.

State and church are personified by the priest who quotes to prisoner before he is tortured 'Remember my sons, you should confess what you know because God doesn't care what happens to your bodies; He already saved your souls' and Vida, both are seen as totalitarian and requiring blind obedience.

At one point one of Vidal's soldiers offers 'daily bread' to the local population a benefit to life under fascism, although this can be read as symbolising the link between Franco and the church.



Some religious themes appear such as when Ofelia is punished and barred from paradise because of giving in to temptation when she eats from the Pale man's table. The pale man himself possesses a stigmata in each hand and the notion of sacrifice is explored in the film. Also there are certain uses of iconography that are religious such as these images of St Lucy.



# Notes on Screening

*Whilst watching any of the films in class it is important to take notes through-out the screening*

*This hand-out should be used as a guide in order to help you follow the film and identify the key areas you should focus on*

*You will need to refer to your class notes and handouts on cinematography, editing and mise-en-scene.*

## **Opening Sequence;**

We begin in the real world but are immediately placed into a fantast narrative how? How do we enter the 'underworld' of the Princess? Think about the uses off set design, colour, and voice over. Also consider the use of mise en scene how do these provide us with contradictory location and how does this scene set the tone of the film?



## **Uses of colour and light;**

There are significant differences in the uses of light and colour in the films two principle locations fantasy and reality (possibly three if we divide the 'real' world into that of the mill and that of the forest). Try to think about what these difference of light mean and where or around whom the darkness seems more prevalent?



Look at you notes on German expressionism.

Where can you see examples of this style in the film?



**Use of cinematography;**

Examine the fluidity of the camera work and the use of crane shot, how do these support the idea that the film is a fantasy and in what way does the camera indicate that we are moving in-between the different worlds/ scenes.

**Use of camera angles;**

Look at how different camera angles are used to indicate dominance or neutrality between characters.

**Representations;**

How do you respond to the representations of gender in the film? What meanings can you take from the representations of Mercedes, Carmen and Ofelia?

**Other Key Questions to consider while watching the film;**

How do you respond to the uses of imagery in the film in particular the use of uterine imagery and colours?



How are the Maquis are represented and is there anything significant in the placement of Vidal's army by the mill and the Maquis in the forest.

How do you respond to the resolution of the film does it fulfil your expectations or not?



In the film the presence of Vidal's father is always present in what way and what is its significance?

### Discussion Questions

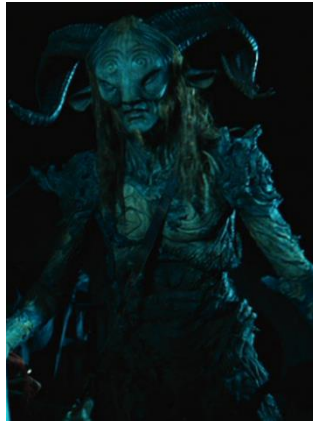
Could the fact that following her death Ofelia escapes to the fantasy world be seen as an attempt to dilute the audience's horror at witnessing the killing of a child?

Is Ofelia's fantasy world an escape from the cruel realities of Vidal's world or is it a form of resistance to it?

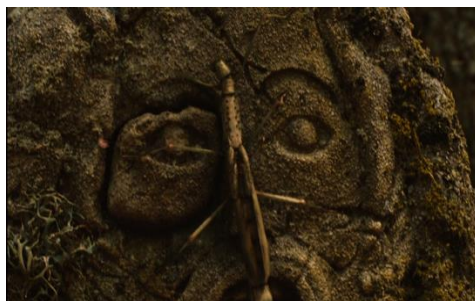
## The aesthetic of Pan's Labyrinth

Guillermo del Toro films begin as a series of notes and sketches he keeps his note book with at all time and these for the basis of all of his films.

Del Toro is a big fan of Goya in particular the dark paintings, as a result he uses a similar type of colour palate and the chiaroscuro lighting that Goya used in his paintings imitating the dark shadows created by Goya's application of paint.



This form of lighting features throughout Pan's Labyrinth especially as so much of the film occurs underground. The theme of being underground also reoccurs in the films of del Toro. In Pan's Labyrinth this adventure into a world of darkness as part of a path to enlightenment is what Ofelia takes. As with Alice in wonderland his story is full of symbolism and therefore the importance of and presentation of iconography in his films needs to be addressed.



The film is also very striking in its use of colour. The colour used in the film helps us to distinguish between the real and unreal worlds of the film and the internal states of the characters or the world that they create.



The editing of the film is essentially continuity del Toro does not want to distract from the story. Panning is used on some occasions to move between scenes but the principle form of transition is the cut this allows us to suspend disbelief and absorb ourselves into the world of the film. Camera movements are fluid and add to the fantasy feel of the film with crane shots being used to move in and out of the different worlds with in the text.

Essay Questions;

Explore how one example of cinematography is used in one sequence from the film.

Explore the 'constructed' nature of the film. Illustrate with at least one sequence from the film.

# Develop your understanding

Look again at the following sequences and analyse them using your knowledge of film form.  
You will need to refer to your notes and hand outs on film form.



## Opening scene

Look at the use of narration, colour and light.

## Opening sequence

Film begins in the real world but very quickly enters the fantasy realm when Ofelia's blood begins to flow backwards.

Our passage into the underworld is through Ofelia's eye, does this thus give us a subjective view point?

The narration begins to tell us the story of the princess who defies her father and escapes to the real world.

Is this meant to be seen as a parallel to Ofelia escaping Vidal by entering a fantasy world?



The camera pans upwards to reveal Ofelia running up the staircases toward the sun.

The camera work in Pan tends to be quite fluid, to flow. what kind of quality does this give the visuals?

As we get to the surface the colour plate changes radically. We have an image of a destroyed building and a grave.

Does this suggest that the real world is in fact an escape or not?



We then enter the back of the car with Carmen and Ofelia.

Does Carmen's dismissing of Ofelia's fairy tales, her failure to believe predetermine her demise?

Replacing the eye in the statue of the faun implies what?

During our introduction to Vidal what are his first words and how is his relationship with both Ofelia and Carmen established through cinematography?





**Closing sequence**  
Look at again its use of colour and light.  
Also consider how the camera I used to move us between locations.

### Closing sequence

What device is used to first indicate that we are transcending to another world?

Although Ofelia is shot from a high angle is she presented as vulnerable?

What is Ofelia's new importance in the court?

We later transcend back to the dead Ofelia in the real world how do you respond to this resolution?





**Ofelia's second task the Pale man.**

**Look at the use of mise en scene.**

## **The Pale Man**

Examine the mise en scene of the room.

What is the dominant colour on the banquet table and what does this suggest.

Ofelia's eyes scan the room to reveal different objects in the room. What type of editing is this and what meanings do we get from the cut away?

How would you describe the movement of the Pale man and what technique is used to build excitement when he is pursuing Ofelia?





The mill and the store room.

Think about the mise en scene and how it relates to the character of Vidal

## The Mill and the Store Room

The Mill is a dark space full of shadows, cogs and machinery. At one point we see Vidal cleaning his father watch in this space

Does this space's mise en scene suggest Vidal's internal state? Using visuals to express internal state we refer to as what?

How do these two locations most associated with Vidal differ from the locations most associated with the Maquis?







**Ofelia and the Faun**  
Look at the uses of high and low angle shots.

### Ofelia and the faun

Look at the use of camera angles and how these indicate power relations between the two.

Examine how these constantly shift indicating a dynamic between the two.





# EL LABERINTO DEL FAUNO

DIRIGIDA POR  
**GUILLERMO DEL TORO**

TELLECIÓN: MONTAÑA EN PRODUCCIÓN DE ESTUDIO PRODUCE, TERESA GARCÍA, ESTUARDO FERRER, GUILLERMO DEL TORO  
EN COLABORACIÓN CON GUILLERMO DEL TORO "EL LABERINTO DEL FAUNO" SIGUELO EN: MARCEL RIVERO, FUALI INDERO DOUG BONES, ARMANDO AL, ALICE AUSTIN  
MONTAÑA EN PRODUCCIÓN SIGUELO EN: JAVIER VEZ, JORGE VILAPLANA, SIGUELO EN PRODUCCIÓN SIGUELO EN: JAVIER VEZ, JORGE VILAPLANA  
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