

# The film pan's labyrinth: how guillermo del toro uses the sound and silence effec...

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



The world of sound lends much strength to the significance and intensity of the scenes in Pan's Labyrinth. The scenes echoing deafening silence operate as effectively as the resonant. Sound and silence are juxtaposed to externalize fear, anger or anxiety or to mark the climax of a scene. The protagonist of the film Pan, represents an ancient deity of worship among Greco-Roman circles, typified as the goated man, playing a musical instrument called the Pan-flute or Pan-pipes. With this instrument, similar to the enigmatic magic of the Pied Piper, he would enchant his animal listeners with his harmonies. As a godlike shepherd, Pan's inhabits the pastoral wilderness, tending a flock of goats serenading them with his rustic tunes. Pan or the Roman equivalent, Faunus, also wears a dark and sinister character - embodying the god of wine and wild, passionate sex, Pan typically seduces or hotly pursues the innocent and unsuspecting. The labyrinthine component of the movie connotes a complex mystery - a mystery of intricate passages, tunnels and chambers by which it is highly difficult to elude or escape. Here, one understands that Pan's power derives from his ability to deceive and confuse. In addition, Pan delights in inducing fear and terror to those around him. According to the myth, with his coarse and booming voice, he would scare away many; therefore, music is an essential to him to charm, captivate and enthrall his victims.

In Pan's Labyrinth set in Spain, sounds add to the narrative. Some recurrent sounds are gun reports, and explosion of bombs which bespeak war and violence in Fascist Spain. Sound always describes the level of peril: gusts of wind, baby shrieks, creaking furniture, approaching footsteps presage fear, lurking doom, and death. The track listing, The Pan's Labyrinth lullaby

<https://assignbuster.com/the-film-pans-labyrinth-how-guillermo-del-toro-uses-the-sound-and-silence-effect/>

becomes the theme song of the film with good reason because of its link with the main preoccupation of the author, the child and childhood. The main themes, concerns and motifs of Pan's Labyrinth are the child and childhood, war, rebellion and tyranny, and death. In exploring the roles of sound, we can draw parallels and make connections to the themes, and emotion of the character which can either reveal internal conflict, intense desire, crippling fear or utopic bliss.

During the scene titled "The Tale," Ofelia cannot go to sleep and feels insomnia because of fear and evil foreboding; therefore, she joins her mother in bed. While in bed, Ofelia hears eerie sounds of ill omen such as creaking roof and furniture, footsteps, mumbled voices and gusts of wind. All of these tunes instill fear in the child's heart and since this movie is based on the child and childhood, who cannot remember an occasion when afraid and alone at night, one crawls into bed with a parent to cuddles and feel safe? Ofelia's mother then recounts the story of Ofelia's biological father, his sudden death and her loneliness as a widow and single mother. After recounting this tale, Ofelia's mother is seized with an acute pain due to the fetus in her womb. Her mother suffers incredible pain during her pregnancy which would very soon take her life. Hence the mysterious, frightful, sounds in the scene, "The Tale" presage the death of Ofelia's mother.

A lullaby is a sound commonly associated with childhood however in Pan's Labyrinth, this song is far from soothing for it rings of fear, foreboding and darkness. This song sung by Mercedes becomes the theme song on which the entire film is hinged. As a lullaby is sung to a child on the brink of sleep,

in the same way, Mercedes foreshadows Ofelia's eternal sleep (death) by singing a dirge-like farewell song to her. A lullaby also ushers the sleeper into the dream world and indeed Ofelia is already in her own world of dreams, fantasy and magical realism. Even after her death, Mercedes' lullaby acts as the transition from death to the after-life (another idyllic dream world) where Ofelia is happily reunited with her parents. The movie is rightly interspersed with snatches of the song for the action unfolds in a world of fantasy and dreams.

During the chase between the child-murderer, the Pale-Man and Ofelia, the air reverberates with echoes, baby cries, scream, monster growls, drums in crescendo and the heart-beat. These sound effects heighten the intensity of the scene and underline the foremost themes such as the child, childhood and death while the feelings invoked are gripping fear and anxiety. This scene also evokes to the mind of the movie critic the biblical story of The Murder of the Innocents - very popular story of infanticide during the time of Jesus. This image is mirrored for one observes one who tries to murder the child, the Pale Man. Similarly, another child murderer is Captain Vidal who tries to rob, the protagonist, Ofelia of her childhood dreams by insisting that her fairytale world is a world of nonsense and foolishness.

In sum, the employment and manipulation of sound create atmosphere/ambience, evoke feeling and describes the character and scene in a unique way which using any other method cannot achieve. Sound in the scenes beforementioned gives the viewer a clear illustration of the plot and story-line. In Pan's Labyrinth, the sound of music continues to underscore the

salient themes of characterization, childhood, fantasy, war, death and fantasy.