

# Carlito's way essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Al Pacino's Carlito's emanates as a common example of a protagonist clinging to their dreams yet drifting within shadows of their former selves. Character's who are world-weary and set on retirement yet hell bent on "one last job" or a long due desire for absolution. They come as troubled souls unable to define a new existence, yet driven by a goal to realise it. In Carlito's case renting Ford Pinto's in the Bahamas. However the film hinges on the protagonist's constant struggles to what hinders such dreams, most typically shadowy figures and past deeds emerging from the past to return and haunt them. Although the protagonists are reluctant heroes, they are not weak or negative figures living under the maxim of no heroes amongst thieves, they are "The strongest figures of assertion the cinema has ever produced, because they reverse, "the striving from this world to the other into a striving from another world to this one" Carlito's sees himself in a new light, consequently neglecting his former self and striving to become who now he wants to be, as he exaggeratedly professes in a courtroom judge as a closing statement to an appeal, We do not sympathise with Carlito and it is obviously doubtful to believe him judging by his exaggeration, however the film subsequently presents us the sincerity of such a declaration.

Carlito's chooses not to get involved and questions his young cousin Guajiro's choice of a lifestyle, evidently mastered by him judging by the following sequence. Carlito's alter ego Benny Blanco from the Bronx (John Leguizamo) is a younger mirror image of himself, constantly which tries to repel. Saso: (on Benny) It doesn't make sense for you to hate this guy, because this man is \*you\* twenty years ago Carlito: Never me, never me! Brian De Palma ingeniously uses the dynamics of this mise en scene in order

to illustrate his narrative; within two key scenes which appear to mirror one and another. The first scene presents Carlito as he gracefully composes, shapes and adapts the set and positions of the characters.

Using distractions to acquire weapons (first a pool ball, then a pool stick to disarm and gain a loaded pistol) Carlito manipulates the mise en scene and makes a stage of his own to gain an advantage over the killers around him. In the second scene, Carlito is again the unexpected guest once more welcomed to the boat by the query " who's he?". However at sea, gone is the sixth sense and self awareness which enabled him to survive on the territory he was raised on. He is literally both a fish out of water, and lost helplessly at sea as he bewilderingly protests " I cant see"; similarly to the way Guajiro was fatally unable to see the cold beer. De Palma also stresses Carlito's uncomfortably ill-equipped position by dressing him in the same leather clad costume he wore during the pool scene, a contrast to Dave's and Frankie's equipped and ready to go water wear. Dave instead composes the action of the boat scene and uses distractions by commanding Frankie to " keep his eye on the light"; similarly to the way Carlito commands a pool player to keep his " eye on the ball".

The fish hook Tony T reaches out to resembles the earlier pool cue Carlito used as a weapon in the previous scene, and surprisingly Carlito turns his back to find that Dave is using it as a weapon to attack Tony T. Brian De Palma continuously plays with the mise en scene throughout the film in one sequence Carlito symbolically commands a waiter to " send back" Benny's bottle of champagne. Within the platform scene , Benny symbolically shoots Carlito with a suppressed pistol exploding to the sound of cork discharging

from a champagne bottle. The silenced pistol is veiled within a white sling, ironically resembling the same white scarf the waiter wears.

His costume also mirrors a white suited Carlito in an earlier flash back sequence. The colour white is also apparent when Tony wears a white sling as he confronts Frank, again with a silenced pistol. Symbolically Carlito rejected and sent back a gesture of good will from Benny, in the final provocative scene it is Benny who rejects the “ new and improved” Carlito's Brigante and consequently sends him back. Consequently the younger Benny and Tony replace and are reincarnated as the younger Carlito and Frank.

There is also a symbolic connection to women, considering that Benny and Tony, both young and cocky punks who not only wish to take over their old school counterparts, but also the trophy women veiled around them. When this is threatened, both Frank and Carlito take action which consequently leads to their inevitable doom. The trigger which finally instigated Frank's decision to kill Tony is out of jealous rage for his wife's ever growing affections for Tony's charms.