

# An investigation into the power dynamic between troy and johnny



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Butterworth, through his use of dramatic methods, creates an intense, revealing scene in which the audience is introduced to the character of Troy Whitworth and made aware of the sexual abuse Troy subjects Phaedra to when he is feeling ' a little bit randy'. Through Butterworth's characterisation of Troy and Johnny, the lack of stage directions and exploration of time and memory, he creates a tense power struggle in which dominance constantly fluctuates between Johnny and Troy. The heated exchange between the two characters over the whereabouts of Phaedra creates an electrifying atmosphere onstage, furthered by the lack of movement due to the absence of stage directions. This extract is arguably one of the most important scenes in the play as it explains why Phaedra is ' lost' and foreshadows the horrific ending of the play in Troy's direct threat to Johnny, ' I'll mark you good, gyppo.' The extract marks a shift in the play from light hearted comedy to a much darker atmosphere upon the arrival of Troy, demonstrating the eloquence and versatility of Butterworth's writing.

Butterworth's characterisation of Troy as vile and malicious derives repulsion from the audience, especially juxtaposed the likeable character of Johnny, immediately creating a scene of tension on stage. Butterworth explicitly states Troy is '[a big man]' which suggests he is meant to be physically as well as verbally intimidating. The importance of casting is prevalent in this scene as part of Troy's characterisation is his masculine, intimidating appearance to increase the severity of his threats; Butterworth engages the audience both visually and verbally. Troy's aggression is clear from the beginning of the scene. A significant number of his lines are imperatives such as ' don't', ' get', ' tell' and ' shut', contrasted next to Johnny's more

conversational tone, emphasising his impatience with Johnny's 'Bucolic Alcoholic Frolic' and general abruptness which feeds into the overall presentation of him as repulsive. It is interesting how Butterworth's use of swearing in Troy's lines is different to the swearwords that the other characters use. Unlike the other characters in the rest of the play, Troy's swearing is not used for comic effect or to express close friendship but rather to enhance the brutality of his threats through vulgar language. Troy's use of swearing is somewhat uncomfortable for the audience, demonstrating how Butterworth's clever use of dramatic method can derive two conflicting reactions from the same words. Troy's insults are particularly disgusting due to their cutting nature; 'pikey', 'gyppo', 'Worzel Maggot' and 'Stig of the Dump' dismantle the 'myth' of Johnny and expose him as something other than the untouchable legend he paints himself as. Troy's use of swearing can be likened to that of Dawn's during her confrontation with Johnny in Act Two, used to portray her frustration and anger with Johnny as opposed to comic effect. She brands Johnny a 'Supertramp,' which parallels Troy's comments about Johnny's economic situation. Butterworth seems to use these characters as physical reminders to the audience that in reality Johnny is, as Fawcett states, 'a drug dealer'. They are vital to the play as Butterworth's distortion of reality requires characters like these to shatter the illusion surrounding Johnny as it is easy for the audience to become enraptured in his fantastical stories of 'giants', 'Nigerians in Marlborough' and 'Byron boys' that he tells throughout the play. Johnny's revelation of Troy's sexual abuse is shocking and degrades Troy to a completely irredeemable character; he is the villain. The way in which he is characterised in this extract forces the audience to imagine the horrific way he must treat

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Phaedra. Butterworth uses this dramatic method to harness the power of subtext to highlight a concept that is far more appalling in the minds of the audience than could be demonstrated onstage.

The characterisation of Johnny is of central importance in making this such a significant scene. Butterworth uses a different tone of aggression with Johnny, masking his hostility with comedy as opposed to Troy's clear, direct threats. Johnny initially seems welcoming to Troy, asking him to 'pull up a chair' and join the 'Bucolic Alcoholic Frolic', however it soon becomes clear that Johnny's friendliness is actually a form of mockery with the intention of provoking Troy. Referring to Troy as 'Mr Whitworth' implies a sense of respect yet Johnny subverts its usage to make a clear distinction to the audience that Troy is no 'mate'. Johnny proceeds to taunt Troy over the whereabouts of Phaedra, asking 'which one's she?' and 'what's she look like?'. In comparison to Troy's use of imperatives to assert his dominance, Johnny withholds answers from Troy and skirts around his questions to purposely exasperate him to maintain control of the situation. Butterworth's use of questioning is a particularly effective method used in this extract to create tension as Johnny returns almost all of Troy's questions with questions of his own. In the opening line of Johnny's first speech, he refers to the children in his wood as 'rats', explicitly linking him to the Pied Piper, an image that Troy vocalises - 'Thinks he's the Pied Piper.' This image is subtly alluded to throughout the play, in Act One Johnny states 'fuckin' kids is like rats' and 'Bloody kids. [are] Like rats' and this scene marking the epitome of the extended metaphor. Johnny represents the character which attracts the lost children, but also implore the audience to question his motives; do the

lost children come to him or does he lure them away? Throughout Johnny's first speech he focuses on Phaedra's physical characteristics; ' Small. Brown hair. Freckles. Big eyes.' Butterworth's use of asyndetic listing puts emphasis on each of Phaedra's individual features, something which Johnny is aware will anger Troy and fills the subtext with sexual connotations, which feeds into the build up to the final revelation. Johnny's patronising use of ' boy' towards Troy emphasis his control of the scene. Butterworth eloquently uses Johnny's lines to build tension onstage as each word he says has a subverted meaning. Troy knows Phaedra is ' young', ' fifteen' and ' not safe' as Johnny points out, reinforcing the appalling nature of her situation; sexual abuse from her stepfather whose got ' the Queen of Flintock under [his] roof.' Butterworth doesn't explicitly say what Troy does to Phaedra, implying it is too unspeakable, leaving the truth in the minds of the audience who only know how that Troy finds it ' hard to sleep with her right next door.'

The lack of stage directions makes this scene particularly intense, as all the tension derives from Troy and Johnny's dialogue. Unlike Butterworth's usually long, specifically detailed stage directions, only ' pause' and ' beat' are used in this extract. The pauses create a period of silence onstage, producing an electric atmosphere and audience anticipation of who is going to speak next. The lack of stage directions places the focus of the scene on the language delivery and stillness of actors, in contrast to the previous long, elaborate comic sequences in the play as seen when we first meet Johnny in a ' war helmet and goggles' barking at Fawcett and Parsons. Butterworth's use of interruption also displays the dynamic power struggle taking place

between Johnny and Troy, with Johnny's long unbroken speeches implying that he is the one who has won control at the end.

The theme of time and memory is explored in this scene, giving the audience insight into the characters of Troy and Johnny while also adding to the overall mystic surrounding Johnny that is built up throughout the play. Johnny claims in Act One 'there's not one mum or dad round here could come here and say they weren't drinking, smoking, pilling and the rest when they was that and younger.' This extract shows this claim to be true as Troy's brothers 'last summer' were 'always up here' and Troy himself spent time in Rooster's Wood when he 'fifteen, sixteen years old.' Spending time at Rooster's Wood seems to have become a right of passage in Flintock and gives Johnny a sense of timelessness. New younger people swarm to his wood 'like rats', marking the progression of time, yet Johnny himself remains 'stuck' in a sort of time warp in his stationary caravan; it seems Rooster's Wood is untouched by time. Johnny's final speech of the extract is peppered with Satanic imagery such as Tarot cards with 'devils on the back' and 'blood-red' wine, adding to the overall illusion of Johnny being associated with pagan magic and giving him a sense of immortality. Troy's insults also centre heavily on Johnny's Romani heritage, calling him a 'gyppo', 'did' and 'diddicoy', further linking Johnny to having 'not just any blood' but magical 'Byron blood', making him even more complex as a character.

Butterworth's use of dramatic effect throughout this extract is characteristic of the play as a whole, while also really demonstrating to the audience the vile nature of Troy and creating pathos and understanding towards Phaedra.

Butterworth's contrasting characterisation of Johnny and Troy paints Johnny  
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as George and Troy as the dragon, a fitting image considering this extract takes place on St. George's day, and feeds into the overall magical connotations surrounding Johnny.