

The Highlights - Thematic Apperception Test

Thematic Apperception Test (Five Narrative Artists)

Organized by Kevin Zucker

Administered by [Redacted]

Developed at Harvard in the 1930s by psychologists Henry A. Murray and Christiana D. Morgan, the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) is a projective psychological test that consists of 31 cards printed with provocative but ambiguous representational images. The subject is asked to respond to each of the pictures by telling a story, and these stories are then scored or interpreted using one of a number of methods that vary according to the interpreting psychologist's training and approach.

Because the copyright holder of the test, Harvard University Press, is concerned with the potential for the TAT's value as a clinical tool being diminished were the images to be widely circulated, the image card set can only be purchased legally by a licensed administrator, and only on the understanding that the plates are not to be publicly displayed. The descriptions of the pictures are all quoted from Murray's *TAT Manual*. (1) The descriptions of the themes elicited by the pictures were compiled by [Redacted], the test administrator for this project and all these descriptions rely heavily on the work of Leopold Bellak. (2)

The test as administered here deviated from standard practice in several ways. It was abridged to seven cards, which were shown to each of the subjects. It was administered in the artists' studios or in the administrator's home, not in a neutral setting. In current clinical practice, the TAT is most frequently given as one of a battery of tests and is interpreted by an administrator with contextual information about the subject's personal history. The test administrator here had no such knowledge. The administrator has a professional background in clinical psychology but is not specifically licensed to administer the TAT. (For this reason the administrator has asked to remain anonymous.) The subjects were aware that their responses would be made public and were told that they would be allowed to review the transcripts of their tests prior to publication, and that they would be allowed to redact, but not edit or abridge, their responses. In the end, no redactions were requested by the subjects. The administrator's prompts and instructions have been removed; otherwise the transcriptions are unaltered.

The subjects, all of whom are artists whose work deals directly with narrative, were asked to respond to the image cards by describing what they saw taking place in the pictures using a narrative form with a beginning, middle, and end.

Jump to subject:

Sean McCarthy, Craig Taylor, Dana Schutz, Ryan Johnson, Anna Conway

SEAN MCCARTHY (b. 1976) spent his childhood in Texas and now lives and works in Brooklyn. He has a BFA from the University of Texas at Austin and an MFA from Yale University. McCarthy is represented by Fredericks & Freiser in New York, where he had his first solo show earlier this year. His work has been exhibited in a number of group shows at galleries and art fairs in New York, London, and Basel. He currently teaches drawing and design at Lehman College of the City University of New York.

PICTURE 4

A woman is clutching the shoulders of a man whose face and body are averted as if he were trying to pull away from her. (Illustration by C. C. Beall, reproduced by special permission of Collier's, copyright 1940, by the Crowell-Collier Publishing Company.) This picture elicits sentiments regarding male-female relationships. Themes of infidelity are often found and the male attitude toward the role and experience of women often appears. The female figure may be seen as a protector who tries to stop the male from rushing into something poorly thought out, or as trying to hold onto him for sinister purposes. A woman's attitude toward men is also stimulated. An object of interest noted by more than two-thirds of subjects is the picture of the seminude in the background. If it is not perceived or discussed at all, this may provide a clue to some level of denial and repression around sexual thoughts or feelings. The seminude is often seen both as a poster as well as an actual figure. In either case, themes of triangulation and jealousy often arise with this card.

McCarthy responds: 'Well...[sighs]...alright, I'm going to say that the picture in the background of this image, um, I would guess that it was made by the guy in the picture and that the woman is the subject of that picture. And it looks like an illustration of her in some kind of vaguely erotic situation with, um, some writing above it. So, beginning, middle, and end. I would guess that, um, this guy maybe, maybe sees the relationship between himself and this woman as some kind of romantic- like romantic with a capital R-idea of the artist and his model, um, it makes me...I don't know...it looks like he's turning away from whatever caress she's giving him so, um, I would say that for him the relationship is more, more self-centered, more about his, um, his role as an artist or writer and her as the subject. It looks like she wants something more intimate or more like a real relationship that he doesn't seem interested in. And as for where, what would happen to them, where it ends for them, um, I'll guess that that he will fairly soon move on to some other woman that he has some sort of quasi-romantic relationship with, that he'll still predominately see as his model or muse [...] and, um, she'll be sad at first but realize that he was a self-centered jerk and that it's, um, it's better that she's no longer involved with him.'

PICTURE 1

A young boy is contemplating a violin which rests on a table in front of him. (Drawing by Christiana D. Morgan.) This picture often leads to an easy identification of the subject with the boy. Themes related to the subject's feelings toward parental figures are evoked. It can become apparent whether parents were perceived as aggressive, domineering, helpful, understanding, protective, or absent. In addition to learning about the subject's relationship to his or her parents, themes related to the conflict between autonomy and compliance/noncompliance with authority arise. Aggression may be expressed, as may superego anxiety. Another theme commonly elicited by this card relates to achievement. The ways in which success is achieved or not achieved, both at the fantasy level and on the reality level, can be noticed in the subject's response. In addition, this card can be revealing in terms of symbolic sexual responses - i.e., on the masturbatory level: "playing with the fiddle." Obsessive preoccupation becomes apparent when the subject is significantly more concerned with the notepaper, messiness of the boy's hair, or a black speck on the violin.

McCarthy responds: 'Alright, so this kid has desperately wanted a violin for a long time and has been bothering his parents constantly for some time to get him one, and making promises about how much he'll practice and how he'll be to have one and they've finally gotten one for him. And now it looks completely inscrutable. He's mesmerized by it, but totally intimidated, can't make sense of it. And maybe his, although his parents gave him the violin they didn't provide lessons and just expected that his enthusiasm would allow him to teach himself to play it. But he can't figure it out. So how this will end for him is he'll, he'll try to learn to play it and fail, and he'll feel bad about it and strangely resentful towards his parents about the situation, but, um, he'll realize later in his life that the obstacles to playing it were just in his head. That somehow if he'd had more patience with himself and maybe gotten a book and taken, taken more time and been gentler with himself about the difficulty of playing it and not assuming that it meant that he was somehow deficient...that he could've overcome it and learned to play it. But happily there are other things that have come up in his life that he's been more successful with.'

PICTURE 5

A middle-aged woman is standing on the threshold of a half-opened door looking into a room. (Drawing by Samuel Thal.) The woman in this image is often perceived as a mother who may be observing a variety of different activities. At times this becomes a symbolic story of fear of observed masturbation. She may also be seen as benevolently interested in

how the child is doing, or as reprimanding the subject for being up late or not doing something that is supposed to be done. Voyeuristic material often emerges in the subject's response. At times there are hints of the subject's fantasies related to the primal scene.

McCarthy responds: 'Well, I guess that this woman was the keeper of this house, maybe she's a mother or a young grandmother and there are other people living in this house, and um, she's coming in to check on somebody in a room, but, uh, may be unpleasantly surprised by something. It could have to do with the arrangement of the furniture, because it looks like this table has been pushed too close to the- whatever that is, I guess its not an armoire, credenza maybe, I don't know what the word would be for it...but the table has leaves that now look like they can't open without hitting that other piece of furniture...so maybe it's just that someone has rearranged the room in a way that seems irrational to her. So she's unhappy about it. And maybe this will end with her becoming furious about it, but realizing that's she's blowing it out of proportion and that really she shouldn't be so upset about it, but when she tries to talk to the person who's done it, nonetheless that original feeling of rage becomes too much for her to hold back and so she, she finds that she sort of awkwardly blows up at the person about it without meaning to. Um, then the person who's, who she's upset with maybe will become defensive in turn, and it will become a conflict and she'll immediately feel bad for, for bringing it up. Um, and it will require a long conversation in which both people are eventually able to make themselves understood without it being too emotionally fraught, but it will take much more effort than, say, simply moving the table back to a place where she preferred it would have taken, or just asking that the person do that.'

PICTURE 7GF

An older woman is sitting on a sofa close beside a girl, speaking or reading to her. The girl, who holds a doll in her lap, is looking away. (Fairy Tales by Shulkin, reproduced by special permission of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.) This picture often brings out themes related to the relationship between mother and child. In a female subject, something can often be learned about feelings toward the self. This card often inspires negative attitudes toward the mother because of the way in which the girl looks off into the distance. The doll often elicits attitudes about childbirth. In this card as in the others, the subject will sometimes exhibit a defensive tendency to switch at the end of the narrative from a passive to active mode or will make an incongruous effort to resolve an otherwise disturbing story happily. Another common defense involves the subject removing a disturbing narrative from his or her own history and experience (e.g., locating the story in a geographically or temporally distant setting, adding irrelevant details or incongruous elements).

McCarthy responds: 'This one's extremely strange. I guess there's a woman and girl sitting on a chaise and there seems to be a table, part of which is obscured by the girl, but doesn't seem like it could possibly fit in the same space without somehow being connected to or going through the chaise [...] doesn't seem like it could fit otherwise. So the girl's holding a baby and holding it really seemingly carelessly, and the woman doesn't seem to notice because she's reading and looks to be concentrating intently. I mean, so far, I guess, you know the image of the guy and the woman seemed to be similarly artificial. But this seems more so. It's hard to make a narrative because it seems so improbable, like the set-up seems so improbable. I guess if I had to make a guess I might say that, um, that the girl is a young mother, a very young mother, so something troubling has happened, maybe she was raped or, um, sexually abused by a relative, because she doesn't-she looks very young. And the woman looks, I mean she's a young woman, but given how young the girl is, I would guess that the woman could be the girl's mother. And so, to me it almost looks like an allegory, like the woman is too, is too caught up in whatever it is that she's concentrating on to pay any attention to this girl. So that's how, however this pregnancy, it happened in part because this woman wasn't paying attention and now that there's a baby it seems that the girl is highly distracted. She's not...she has no sense of concentration, where the woman seems to be concentrating very heavily, and it's troubling because there's this baby that obviously needs love and attention that's not going to be forthcoming. So how does it end? I mean, in a way they both seem...the woman and the girl seem, seem kind of self-centered or oblivious to the other people around them, and it seems to me like that would mean that this couldn't possibly end well. I'd say maybe that the baby, something bad is eventually going to happen to the baby because of carelessness on the part of the girl and the woman. And they'll be quick to blame each other for it. [...] Oh, I think before this the girl may have been raped or in some other way, inappropriate sexual relationship leading to the birth of this baby that she's holding.'

PICTURE 13MF

A young man is standing with a downcast head buried in his arm. Behind him is the figure of a woman lying in bed. (Drawing by Samuel Thal.) This image is often selected to disclose sexual conflict. Feelings about relationships are often projected. In inhibited subjects one often sees elements of shock in the story. In the female subject, fears of rape, attack, and other abuse by men is often observed. In the male subject, the image often brings out guilt feelings about sexual activity. Frequently, the subject will include economic deprivation in the narrative. Due to the level of detail in this image, obsessive-compulsives will become overly concerned with specifics. Subjects often view the woman as dead.

McCarthy responds: 'Okay, so this one's also sort of weirdly allegorical. So there's a man

fully clothed even with a necktie covering his face. [...] I mean it doesn't look like...it looks sort of artificial, set up to have some kind of meaning. It doesn't seem in any way natural. Like this particular image actually looks to me like a picture from Max Ernst's collage novels, like it doesn't, it doesn't look like something happening to real people in real life. What I'm trying to do is think of plausible narratives for these things. It's sort of strange when it looks so artificial. I'm going to guess that these two people are involved in a relationship. They've had sex earlier in the night, and now she's asleep and he's up and dressed and sort of agonizing over whether or not to stay. And why is he agonizing over whether or not to stay? I'm going to say that, um, he feels that he may be in love with this woman and it's frightening to him because he feels that it's likely, even though they had sex earlier in the evening, he feels that maybe she sees this as a less serious situation than he does. He sees some potential for this as a relationship but worries that she doesn't. So, how does this end? I would say that he tries really hard to be in the moment and not worry too much about whether or not this is working out the way that he would hope, instead tries to enjoy whatever they have together the best he can. But eventually it doesn't turn out that she tells him that she's interested in someone else. And he feels bad about it, not only because he saw a future with her and it hasn't worked out, but also because he tried so hard to keep his anxiety under wraps and not cause too much trouble for this woman and eventually he feels like he made it too easy for her, even in the process of her finding someone else. [...] He feels bad because he's tried so hard to keep his anxiety under wraps, and he feels he's been too good, made it too easy somehow on this woman in this situation, even as she's found some one else and is ending this relationship, he's tried too hard to make it easy on her.'

PICTURE 18GF

A woman has her hands squeezed around the throat of another woman whom she appears to be pushing backwards across the banister of a stairway. (Drawing by Samuel Thal.) This image elicits themes related to aggression. Aggression is often evaded when the subject denies that any aggressive act is taking place. Mother-daughter conflicts are often highlighted. As in many of the cards, when the subject dwells on the composition of the picture itself rather than the situation, denial and defense can be observed. Interpersonal warmth or hostility (and flight from such feelings) can be observed in relation to this card. When subject matter related to libidinal and aggressive drive is discussed in the manifest content of the material, it is said to suggest ego strength.

McCarthy responds: 'That's really creepy...[sighs]...alright, what does it look like, it looks like maybe a woman in her thirties looking down and touching another woman whose face looks sort of horrifyingly blank. Hard to tell whether her features are entirely obscured or whether she has no features, and I would lean towards her having no features. So why would

this woman have no features? Maybe, um, [sighs]...alright I'm going to guess that this woman, that is the woman in her thirties, the one with features, she's a sort of lonely person who has a lot of troubles in her life and has made this effigy, this sort of life-sized soft sculpture of this other woman. And maybe she sees it as an effigy of her mother with whom her relationship was always tense. Not outwardly antagonistic, because they were both too quiet, too reserved, but always some sort of mutual disapproval, and so now she's made this life-sized dummy of her and is acting out some kind of primal drama with it. Maybe this is even after the mother has died and she's brought it back to the parental home. [...] She's acting out some kind of primal, primal drama. I forget if I've already said maybe the mother died. Did I say that? You got that. Maybe they're back at the parental home. She's got her up against this banister. Maybe this is the stairway that led up to her mother's room. And she feels this weird mixture of tenderness and anger, where she wants to do violence to this thing but also pities it. [...] She realizes that it's too late to say or do anything to her mother that she didn't manage to do while her mother was still alive, and suddenly recognizes the futility of whatever it is that she's doing. Maybe she destroys the effigy, but without any sort of catharsis, because it stops having any clear relationship to her mother. She doesn't see it as a stand-in for her mother anymore. So maybe the process of destroying it is just letting go of all these bad feelings or maybe-no, I would have to say no-it would have to just be an acknowledgment that it's futile, that she'd still feel bad and just go back to her, go back to her life. So I know that was kind of weird, but I guess, if I had to clarify...how does it end, so she suddenly realizes the futility of whatever it is she's doing, destroys the thing and goes back home to continue to live her life.'

PICTURE 8BM

An adolescent boy looks straight out of the picture. The barrel of a rifle is visible at one side, and in the background is the dim scene of a surgical operation, like a reverie-image. (Drawing by Samuel Thal, after an illustration by Carl Mueller. Use of the latter permitted by Collier's, copyright 1939, by the Crowell-Collier Publishing Company.) Male subjects often identify with the boy in the foreground. Often themes related to aggression or ambition are elicited, e.g., the subject will describe someone being shot and operated on in the background or the boy dreaming of becoming a doctor. The operation scene may inspire attitudes around fear of mutilation. Whether the rifle is recognized and discussed or not can reveal latent hostility. Something can be learned about the adequacy of the hero in this card (i.e., the subject's projected ability to successfully complete tasks under internal and external difficulty). The adequacy of the subject's appraisal of the hero in this card and throughout the test often relates directly to the ego strength of the patient. If the subject exhibits a tendency to defensively avoid engaging with the test on a narrative level, he or she will commonly describe difficulty integrating the boy, gun, and surgical scene presented in this card into a single story.

McCarthy responds: 'So...I'm going to say that the figures of the doctors or whoever those men are, who are cutting open this other man, are not actually physically part of the same scene that the boy is...it's something the boy is thinking about maybe. So I'd say maybe that the boy in the pictures is a sadist, and he's trying to find some way to deal with his sadism constructively, although it's perverse and not working out as effectively as one might hope. So what he's thinking is about becoming a surgeon and how being a surgeon would allow him to do things like cut people up and cut people open, which are the sort of impulses he has, but would make those impulses somehow constructive. But the sadism of it is still clear in his visualization of it. And I'd say that that image behind him is his visualization of it and that there is, does, seem to be something basically sadistic about it. That is, it could be that these men are cutting a bullet out of this guy, the rifle to the left suggests that, maybe he's a soldier and he's been shot, so maybe they're cutting the bullet out of him...but maybe they are his enemies, and they're cutting him open just as a violent retaliatory act. So I'd say there is a lot of confusion in this visualization. The other thing is, it seems like the gun is in an ambiguous space relative to both the boy and the image behind him. That is, the gun could be part of the image or could be part of the boy's space. So like I said, if it's part of the space of the men in the image, in the visualization, that would have the implication that I mentioned earlier, that maybe he's a fallen soldier. But I think more likely just because of the value of the gun, the fact that it's so dark and the boy is so dark, it looks more likely that it's in the boy's space and that maybe it represents kind of a more immediate threat of the boy committing some sort of violence that isn't constructive, that maybe he'll...okay, so I'll say, how does it end. I'll say the boy never becomes a surgeon. Instead goes on a shooting spree with the gun acting out these violent, sadistic fantasies and is eventually so appalled by what he's done that he kills himself. [...] I'd say that before this the sadistic tendencies of this kid kind of cropped up in ways that were unsuspecting, that were surprising to him, and he was frightened by them. Maybe he had sudden fits of rage in which he could rapidly imagine doing some sort of terrible violence to somebody. And it's become increasingly an obsession of his, and so maybe he asked for this rifle as a gift. And it's not, it's not clear, it hasn't been clear to him or the people around him yet that he's really capable of the kind of violence that he's capable of. So leading up to the picture he has these urges, but he's beginning to think there's some way that he can do violence to people in a constructive way, like surgery.'

Jump to subject:

Sean McCarthy, Craig Taylor, Dana Schutz, Ryan Johnson, Anna Conway

CRAIG TAYLOR (b. 1971 in Baraboo, Wisconsin), grew up in Kansas City, Missouri, and now lives and works in Brooklyn. He has a BFA from Maine College of Art and an MFA from Yale University. Taylor has had solo exhibitions at March Gallery, New York, Bruno

Marina Gallery, Brooklyn, and Showroom, Berlin. His work has been featured in group shows at the International Print Center, New York; NYIT Gallery; Esther Kim Projects, Toronto; Mixed Greens, New York; Van Brunt Gallery, Brooklyn; and Bellwether, New York, among others. Taylor has also taught at Yale, Pratt, Brandeis, and the Rhode Island School of Design.

PICTURE 5

A middle-aged woman is standing on the threshold of a half-opened door looking into a room. (Drawing by Samuel Thal.) The woman in this image is often perceived as a mother who may be observing a variety of different activities. At times this becomes a symbolic story of fear of observed masturbation. She may also be seen as benevolently interested in how the child is doing, or as reprimanding the subject for being up late or not doing something that is supposed to be done. Voyeuristic material often emerges in the subject's response. At times there are hints of the subject's fantasies related to the primal scene.

Taylor responds: "This is a, some kind of matronly figure who has walked into a seemingly private space and is neither shocked or...I don't know, she seems pretty expressionless to me, so maybe she is checking to see how somebody's doing? Obviously the light is on so maybe the person's reading or sleeping or...I mean, there's books, so it's almost like it's a study or just a library or something. It looks like they probably have something important to discuss, maybe some sort of household matter. It could even be something as simple as what's for dinner or something. It doesn't seem particularly urgent to me. It's a well-lived in space, and it seems almost like it's supposed to have the appearance of a tidiness or something, but also seems pretty generic in terms of the furniture and things like that. She's strangely dressed like a 1950s mother, although she has a funny, revealing leg sticking out of what would seemingly be a pleated skirt or...(laughs) a, um, yeah, it's almost like a void, from the waist down. The flowers seem fake, almost artificial. [...] What happens in the end is that, um, I don't, I really don't know. Really...it seems to me like maybe they're going to...it just seems to me that some sort of communication is going to happen...what it is I don't know. I can't really put any kind of emotive or emotional thing on it because her face is hard to determine but it doesn't seem particularly urgent to me. [...] So what happens is they have a discussion, whoever's in that room. They're going to talk about something, but I don't know what (laughs). [...] The person in the room is presumably a male figure. To me it seems like a male figure that would be kind of sleepy and middle aged. There's something slightly geriatric about this whole picture to me (laughs) it also has incredibly strange perspective, the actual drawing. It's okay that I talk about these things? Because I feel like the scale relationship in these pictures is really off. Part of it has to do with the cropping. So you don't really see a ceiling or a floor. Or it almost implies, like, uh, a timeless kind of space, which I

think is why to me it seems almost as if these are like grandparents. Or memories of grandparents. Or people from the early twentieth century. [...] Before this, somebody was just in that room reading, and that person just came from, I mean according to this picture, that person just came from outer space or something. It's literally a dark space, there's no description of what's out there, it's just a void...And these books, if you look at them in proportion, they're, like, miniature.'

PICTURE 18GF

A woman has her hands squeezed around the throat of another woman whom she appears to be pushing backwards across the banister of a stairway. (Drawing by Samuel Thal.) This image elicits themes related to aggression. Aggression is often evaded when the subject denies that any aggressive act is taking place. Mother-daughter conflicts are often highlighted. As in many of the cards, when the subject dwells on the composition of the picture itself rather than the situation, denial and defense can be observed. Interpersonal warmth or hostility (and flight from such feelings) can be observed in relation to this card. When subject matter related to libidinal and aggressive drive is discussed in the manifest content of the material, it is said to suggest ego strength.

Taylor responds: 'This is just a strange, almost, this is a confusing picture. First of all the staircase is at such a kind of perspective that it seems that everything is, it would just be a steep, almost impossible passage to go up. And the two figures in the foreground...the dominant one is oddly feminine. She also has kind of, such nondescript features on her face and also bobbed hair so it seems as if it's almost genderless. The figure, it's so strange, she's sticking her finger in his ear while his shoulders are almost...his shoulders look as if they are connected like an appendage to her body almost like a ventriloquist's doll. And really is being controlled. But the only reason I really say this is there's absolutely no description in terms of his face. His face is just like a shape, hidden behind the hair. I really couldn't tell you what happened before because if I'm supposed to believe this to be true, this figure that she's holding has absolutely really no bone structure except in his face, and that would just imply that it's a mannequin or a doll, and therefore, it would just seem as if she's picking it up off the ground or something, so maybe that's what happened before. I mean the look in her eye. It's definitely, there's a certain amount of sympathy for the automaton. It's kind of amazing how she's dressed like a washerwoman. [...] I just feel like there's a really sincere attempt at the dominant figure to communicate with the...puppet. Whatever the communication is, it's almost like there's a longing to say something, that she never really truly can talk. So I guess there's a desperation in sticking her figure in his ear, but that would imply that he couldn't hear anyways, because she would try and talk and her finger's in his ear...I don't know (laughs). [...] It ends well. She's going to take that doll upstairs and put it

to bed.'

PICTURE 4

A woman is clutching the shoulders of a man whose face and body are averted as if he were trying to pull away from her. (Illustration by C. C. Beall, reproduced by special permission of Collier's, copyright 1940, by the Crowell-Collier Publishing Company.) This picture elicits sentiments regarding male-female relationships. Themes of infidelity are often found and the male attitude toward the role and experience of women often appears. The female figure may be seen as a protector who tries to stop the male from rushing into something poorly thought out, or as trying to hold onto him for sinister purposes. A woman's attitude toward men is also stimulated. An object of interest noted by more than two-thirds of subjects is the picture of the seminude in the background. If it is not perceived or discussed at all, this may provide a clue to some level of denial and repression around sexual thoughts or feelings. The seminude is often seen both as a poster as well as an actual figure. In either case, themes of triangulation and jealousy often arise with this card.

Taylor responds: 'Wow this is such a strange image. This woman is trying to seduce this man. And I primarily think that because of the pin-up behind his face. Or at she's at least trying to get him to pay attention to her. His face looks as if it's like sculpted out of plasticine. And...he seems a little distracted, as if there's something in the foreground that we're not aware of as viewers of this image that she wants him to pay attention to her instead of whatever that may be. [...] Before all this, he was, to me it seems as if he was like making drawings or something...it seems like a studio environment of some sort...and yeah, she just came in and wanted some attention. [...] It just seems to me that the male figure is really wild. There's something about the look in his eye that actually isn't, isn't actually crazy, so I think that eventually he will calm down and she will get his attention.'

PICTURE 1

A young boy is contemplating a violin which rests on a table in front of him. (Drawing by Christiana D. Morgan.) This picture often leads to an easy identification of the subject with the boy. Themes related to the subject's feelings toward parental figures are evoked. It can become apparent whether parents were perceived as aggressive, domineering, helpful, understanding, protective or absent. In addition to learning about the subject's relationship to his or her parents, themes related to the conflict between autonomy and compliance/noncompliance with authority arise. Aggression may be expressed, as may superego anxiety. Another theme commonly elicited by this card relates to achievement. The

ways in which success is achieved or not achieved, both at the fantasy level and on the reality level, can be noticed in the subject's response. In addition, this card can be revealing in terms of symbolic sexual responses - i.e., on the masturbatory level: "playing with the fiddle." Obsessive preoccupation becomes apparent when the subject is significantly more concerned with the notepaper, messiness of the boys hair, or a black speck on the violin.

Taylor responds: 'This is a prodigy violinist who's contemplating the universe. He sits, obviously this is such a weird image, because it's at once sitting on a desk that's like a surface, but it's also, where there would be a horizon, it's obliterated into, like, the stars or the galaxy. There's almost something kind of constellation-like about this kid. He's contemplating all the things that he can create with that violin. He's got a quintessential boy's haircut. Although it seems as if he's a little sleepy and maybe a little bored. [...] Before this he was just practicing and figuring everything out and he just decided to take a break. [...] It ends with him just continuing to play the violin, whenever it's...time. It really does seem like a kind of repose.'

Picture 7GF

An older woman is sitting on a sofa close beside a girl, speaking or reading to her. The girl, who holds a doll in her lap, is looking away. (Fairy Tales by Shulkin, reproduced by special permission of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.) This picture often brings out themes related to the relationship between mother and child. In a female subject, something can often be learned about feelings toward the self. This card often inspires negative attitudes toward the mother because of the way in which the girl looks off into the distance. The doll often elicits attitudes about childbirth. In this card as in the others, the subject will sometimes exhibit a defensive tendency to switch at the end of the narrative from a passive to active mode or will make an incongruous effort to resolve an otherwise disturbing story happily. Another common defense involves the subject removing a disturbing narrative from his or her own history and experience (e.g., locating the story in a geographically or temporally distant setting, adding irrelevant details or incongruous elements).

Taylor responds: 'This is the three stages of women. It's, it's a strangely mannerist, kind of mannered drawing or painting, whatever it is. Because there's like proportion issues. The seemingly post-adolescent girl who may or many not be, she's either a babysitter or a mom whose holding the infant, her hands seem incredibly large and strong versus the scale of her body. She's being read to by a servant. And there seems to be a kind of...enclosure created by furniture, which I think makes it easier for them to hear one another. It's not clear whether the story that the maid is reading is for the infant or the girl, who seems bored. Or at least

disinterested in either being a babysitter or being a mother. The furniture is of a certain kind mid-twentieth century, middle-class quality. And the only strange perspective in this drawing has to do with the cropping of the table, so it makes it seem that the table is much flatter than it actually is. This girl is very precocious, maybe even slightly deviant. Which I think is part of the boredom. It's almost as if there's a struggle with what's going on off the picture and the kind of domestic situation it sets up for the girl. In the end she has the position of duty with this child, so she's going to raise the child.'

PICTURE 8BM

An adolescent boy looks straight out of the picture. The barrel of a rifle is visible at one side, and in the background is the dim scene of a surgical operation, like a reverie-image. (Drawing by Samuel Thal, after an illustration by Carl Mueller. Use of the latter permitted by Collier's, copyright 1939, by the Crowell-Collier Publishing Company.) Male subjects often identify with the boy in the foreground. Often themes related to aggression or ambition are elicited, e.g., the subject will describe someone being shot and operated on in the background or the boy dreaming of becoming a doctor. The operation scene may inspire attitudes around fear of mutilation. Whether the rifle is recognized and discussed or not can reveal latent hostility. Something can be learned about the adequacy of the hero in this card (i.e., the subject's projected ability to successfully complete tasks under internal and external difficulty). The adequacy of the subject's appraisal of the hero in this card and throughout the test often relates directly to the ego strength of the patient.

Taylor responds: 'Wow. This is, like, a really...wow, this is a kind of very upsetting. There's a really dandyish boy in the foreground who because of the...he seems to have a large cerebral cortex and a poof of hair to match that. There's a compositional device in the picture that's a gun. It wouldn't necessarily have to be interpreted that way, but it definitely looks like a gun. Maybe it's because there's a scene of violence and/or like surgery or something going on behind him. There's light coming down, behind him, to illuminate the scene in back, but it really actually diffuses the scene. And it's of two men who look like they're, probably because of the haircuts, look like they're from, hmm, I would say, 1904 or 1905. They're either really crazy grave robbers or they are doctors. And it may seem kind of aggressive and violent just because of the time it reminds me of, makes me think they just don't have modern surgical instruments to take care of it. It really doesn't make any sense why the kind of prep school kid's in the front. It seems completely coincidental. It's almost as if there's two separate situations, collaged together. I presume in the background, though, they either found this person, dead, and they're performing some kind of autopsy, or this person's been really hurt and they need to operate immediately, because there's a sense of urgency which could also be why it seems kind of strangely aggressive. The guy at the front

seems really concerned with his wardrobe. There's an incredibly strange...The representation of the body, on the figure in the foreground, becomes almost like a shape that's disproportioned. The kind of high-contrast shape in the foreground seems to put more attention on him, even though there's not a lot going on there except, like I stated before, the disproportion. I'm assuming that the surgery's going to be open. It's almost like the guy in the foreground is guarding them or making them do this, maybe even, if I wanted to make an association between the two, but I really do feel like it's two separate situations. [...] It ends with, well, whatever is going on in the background. They finish their job and everything. It's almost as if it's at dawn, and it becomes daytime and everybody's healed. I don't really know what happens to the guy in the front. I'm assuming he just leaves the foreground. [...] Their jobs were, like I said, either to perform an autopsy or, like, help this person who's in need. I can't really decipher what the figure lying down is doing.'

Jump to subject:

Sean McCarthy, Craig Taylor, Dana Schutz, Ryan Johnson, Anna Conway

DANA SCHUTZ (b. 1976 in Livonia, Michigan) lives and works in Brooklyn. She has a BFA from the Cleveland Institute of Art and an MFA from Columbia University. She has had solo exhibitions at Zach Feuer, New York; Contemporary Fine Arts, Berlin; Emmanuel Perrotin, Paris; Site Santa Fe; the Rose Museum at Brandeis University; and the JCCC/Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas; among others. Schutz has been included in group shows at the Whitney Museum, New York; The Hermitage, St. Petersburg; the UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Shanghai Museum; the Royal Academy, London; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Corcoran Museum, Washington D.C.; the Venice Biennale; P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, New York; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; and many others. Her work has been written about in most major art publications and is included in prestigious public and private collections worldwide.

PICTURE 1

A young boy is contemplating a violin which rests on a table in front of him. (Drawing by Christiana D. Morgan.) This picture often leads to an easy identification of the subject with the boy. Themes related to the subject's feelings toward parental figures are evoked. It can become apparent whether parents were perceived as aggressive, domineering, helpful, understanding, protective or absent. In addition to learning about the subject's relationship to his or her parents, themes related to the conflict between autonomy and compliance/noncompliance with authority arise. Aggression may be expressed, as may superego anxiety. Another theme commonly elicited by this card relates to achievement. The ways in which success is achieved or not achieved, both at the fantasy level and on the

reality level, can be noticed in the subject's response. In addition, this card can be revealing in terms of symbolic sexual responses - i.e., on the masturbatory level: "playing with the fiddle." Obsessive preoccupation becomes apparent when the subject is significantly more concerned with the notepaper, messiness of the boys hair, or a black speck on the violin.

Schutz responds: 'Um...so, there's a chubby kid who is being punished for not...for yelling some shit during dinner. Or not some "shit" (laughs). There's a chubby child who was acting up during dinner so now he's punished and, like, forced to spend some alone time with his violin. Which he reluctantly, he sort of enjoys, but sort of reluctantly enjoys it. [...] So he spends time with his violin and he is...um, staring into it and then begins to fall asleep and goes into a...wait, this is actually not a good story. Do other people have problems too? I feel like I'll try and explain the image but I should make a story of what happens next to him. [...] He stares into the hole of the violin and it...um, traumatizes him as he goes further into life and becomes a proctologist. (laughs) Maybe I'm just giving too much of a psychological read into it. [...] He was eating mashed potatoes at dinner. It's hard for me to think of what happened next for him, you know? [...] Well, it ends with him being an older man living in Germany and he has reddish hair that's thinning in a comb-over kind of fashion. And he probably comes back to this moment at some point. He's in an office with potted plants or something. [...] But there's no ending, that's not a very good ending to the story. [...] He goes to Germany. He doesn't have very many friends. Or his relationships start to fail or something. He has no legs (laughs). [...] Maybe as a child he had no legs...and he was punished for acting up during dinner. And the violin was...I think he has a so-so relationship with the violin. It was more the hole in the violin that made him become a proctologist, I don't know, and made his relationships fail.'

PICTURE 5

A middle-aged woman is standing on the threshold of a half-opened door looking into a room. (Drawing by Samuel Thal.) The woman in this image is often perceived as a mother who may be observing a variety of different activities. At times this becomes a symbolic story of fear of observed masturbation. She may also be seen as benevolently interested in how the child is doing, or as reprimanding the subject for being up late or not doing something that is supposed to be done. Voyeuristic material often emerges in the subject's response. At times there are hints of the subject's fantasies related to the primal scene.

Schutz responds: 'Oh this is a good image. So there's like a small little dwarf who, um, it's actually not really a dwarf. He is a dwarf, probably dwarfism. He's been abandoned, and he has to stay with his, he has a really strange uptight mother and um, she's coming into the

room because she hears a sound but then, and she's looking for him, but then something else has happened to him, like his, um, feet have begun to melt or something, so she's, um, um, so he's slowly getting shorter and shorter, like smaller and smaller, and disappearing (laughs) then there's something that happens with the flowers. He feels like if he can throw the flowers at her he can get her attention. But it doesn't seem that he can reach the flowers. So she walks into the room to go find him and maybe she's not related to him, maybe he's just a small goblin in the room. I'm not normally into fairy tales, but this one looks like it could go into a fairy tale. It looks like a horror movie or something. So there's something in the room she can't see, and it wants to get her attention but it's slowly getting smaller and smaller, you know, her focus is on something else in the room, like not quite the flowers but the flowers make me think there's something else in the room that's out of focus. She goes into the room, passes the flowers, and then he eats her calves (laughs) and that's it. But it seems like Hitchcocky. The woman herself lives alone. Maybe she's adopted this sort of, maybe she thinks it's a dwarf or something. I don't mean anything against dwarves. She just thinks it's a sickly relative of her family's that gross, not growing, so she takes care of it and wants to take care of it. But she's not like a very warm or nurturing woman because her lips are small. But it ends badly, probably for her and the dwarf. Because she attacked it. Maybe you don't see where it ends, it sort of pans off or something...[...] He eats her calves. But he has other friends or other things that live in the radiator, not the radiator but the heat vent and they come out and also...she doesn't know what she's adopted, and they come out and also eat her but they're more of like a gaseous, small...and the only thing that's left are the flowers. And like a pile on the floor. That's an okay story, right?'

PICTURE 4

A woman is clutching the shoulders of a man whose face and body are averted as if he were trying to pull away from her. (Illustration by C. C. Beall, reproduced by special permission of Collier's, copyright 1940, by the Crowell-Collier Publishing Company.) This picture elicits sentiments regarding male-female relationships. Themes of infidelity are often found and the male attitude toward the role and experience of women often appears. The female figure may be seen as a protector who tries to stop the male from rushing into something poorly thought out, or as trying to hold onto him for sinister purposes. A woman's attitude toward men is also stimulated. An object of interest noted by more than two-thirds of subjects is the picture of the seminude in the background. If it is not perceived or discussed at all, this may provide a clue to some level of denial and repression around sexual thoughts or feelings. The seminude is often seen both as a poster as well as an actual figure. In either case, themes of triangulation and jealousy often arise with this card.

Schutz responds: 'This is a woman who sort of sculpted a mannequin man for her...he's just a

bust, and she like carries him around all the time, but he's really heavy and he's made out of concrete or something. And at first it just seems like a kind of, um, a thing that she has in her room or something, but then it becomes, like, this thing that she doesn't...it becomes this weird...I mean it is creepy...I guess it's not that creepy to have a mannequin bust, but he's very detailed you know. And it keeps her from moving places because maybe she like made him, but then he's like really heavy so she can't really carry him around really well from, like, room to room. And she lives in, like, Kansas or something, or maybe Louisiana. A place where it's warm weather and the people like, drink iced tea outside. It's, like, nice. It ends when she gets, um, you know, her best friend is moving away, and she's going-the town is dying out, the town is not becoming...everyone is dying in the town, it's not a welcome town, there's just people drinking lemonade all the time on the porch, which is nice, but it's like the only thing happening, so she has to leave,. But she has a sort of chiseled creepy mannequin man bust, and she has to carry him to the car, to finally leave, you know, and it's just like really heavy. Like, she you know, drops it. It doesn't like break or anything...All my stories end the same way. It sucks. It was again, on her toe, but it doesn't like maim her or anything, it's like really heavy, like concrete, and then she tries to pick him up, but it crushes her hand, it crushes not so much her hands but her toes, it doesn't crush her hands so they don't work, but she can't get them...so she puts him on wheels...she's all scraped up...but as she's doing it he's getting more and more bashed in. Parts of him are chipping off him, his nose, the curl of his hair. She's broken all her nails. It ends...it ends happily. She moves to a new town, sort of happily, she moves to a new town where there's more activities for her to do, but then his face is all bashed in and he has no nose, but they don't have the same concrete at the town so she has to patch up his face with something else, so she draws on the eyes and the nose, but he ends up looking not quite as together as before, something like that. And then I think after a while she just sort of gives up, and it becomes this really strange thing in the room and sort of, she doesn't invite anybody over, because she can't move him out of the space again because he'll get all banged up, but then people don't really visit, she doesn't really want them to visit, because there's this bad mannequin in her house. But before, when she lived in Louisiana it was like a point of pride and maybe one of the more interesting things in the town, because there was nothing in town except for lemonade and this mannequin (laughs).'

PICTURE 7GF

An older woman is sitting on a sofa close beside a girl, speaking or reading to her. The girl, who holds a doll in her lap, is looking away. (Fairy Tales by Shulkin, reproduced by special permission of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.) This picture often brings out themes related to the relationship between mother and child. In a female subject, something can often be learned about feelings toward the self. This card often inspires negative attitudes toward the mother because of the way in which the girl looks off into the distance.

The doll often elicits attitudes about childbirth. In this card as in the others, the subject will sometimes exhibit a defensive tendency to switch at the end of the narrative from a passive to active mode or will make an incongruous effort to resolve an otherwise disturbing story happily. Another common defense involves the subject removing a disturbing narrative from his or her own history and experience (e.g., locating the story in a geographically or temporally distant setting, adding irrelevant details or incongruous elements).

Schutz responds: 'So, there's a woman who...is...okay, there's a fourteen year old girl who...maybe she's not fourteen, maybe she's younger, like eight or something...and she had been very, like, defiant, like she has attitude and stuff like that, like she has this baby...she doesn't have a lot of attitude...and there's this woman who's kind of like her caretaker but she has a...breast obsession. The woman. So she is worried that the girl because she doesn't have breasts yet and won't be able to take care of the baby. So she wants to send her to, um, she's like pressuring her to get breast implants or something. And the girl just wants to leave. And she is, like she has a boyfriend that wants to, um like go and join the carnival or something. Like a real kind of teenager story you know. Instead, like, the mother, she's like kind of pressuring her to, I don't know, get breast implants (laughs) so she decides to leave with this boy named Bobby, and they go off and join the carnival, and she becomes an acrobat. And she never grows breasts. And the baby, um, never really, never really grows or something. I kind of forget about the baby. The baby's not part of it (laughs). That wasn't that good. But she's looking at her chest...she won't let her leave town because she wants her to go get enormous breasts so she like can feed the baby.'

PICTURE 8BM

An adolescent boy looks straight out of the picture. The barrel of a rifle is visible at one side, and in the background is the dim scene of a surgical operation, like a reverie-image. (Drawing by Samuel Thal, after an illustration by Carl Mueller. Use of the latter permitted by Collier's, copyright 1939, by the Crowell-Collier Publishing Company.) Male subjects often identify with the boy in the foreground. Often themes related to aggression or ambition are elicited, e.g., the subject will describe someone being shot and operated on in the background or the boy dreaming of becoming a doctor. The operation scene may inspire attitudes around fear of mutilation. Whether the rifle is recognized and discussed or not can reveal latent hostility. Something can be learned about the adequacy of the hero in this card (i.e., the subject's projected ability to successfully complete tasks under internal and external difficulty). The adequacy of the subject's appraisal of the hero in this card and throughout the test often relates directly to the ego strength of the patient. If the subject exhibits a tendency to defensively avoid engaging with the test on a narrative level, he or she will commonly describe difficulty integrating the boy, gun, and surgical scene presented in this card into a

single story.

Schutz responds: 'So there's like a woman...um, in 1942...it's kind of in World War II times or something...but her name is...maybe again it's in Germany...maybe just because the drawing looks German or something and she looks kind of German and she is posing as a man and, um, they are...and there's like some, I guess it's like her husband has been, not quite shot down, for some reason he's died for some reason in the war and they're going to harvest his parts or something, and she's going to use them for some experiment that's going to find a cure for polio. But, is it a boring story?...Sorry, it's kind of boring. But she's going to use them for some experiment, I guess there's some disease that is sickening the town and she's going to use his parts to get, to find a cure for this thing that's like sickening the town. And she...puts him a blender but people can't believe it, they think it's a guy who's doing it, they don't know that they were married, but that's like the whole thing, that she actually knew this person or something and it doesn't seem to work...It doesn't work actually, she doesn't find a cure for polio. She's just blended together (laughs)...but she found a really good strength drink out of it. Um, it works on the town but there's not enough of it, so just it becomes this really strong town, like really strong Germans (laughs), and they're not as depressed after the war, I guess. No, that's not true. They're this really sort of athletic town, but she herself doesn't drink it-she remains with her same build. And everyone thinks she's the skinniest guy in town, like a super weakling. Like everyone wonders why she didn't drink it but it's because she knows it's her husband's ground-up materials. And she wins a prize (laughs). [...] Yeah, like no one really knows much about the town or something. Because it was a secret experiment.'

PICTURE 13MF

A young man is standing with a downcast head buried in his arm. Behind him is the figure of a woman lying in bed. (Drawing by Samuel Thal.) This image is often selected to disclose sexual conflict. Feelings about relationships are often projected. In inhibited subjects one often sees elements of shock in the story. In the female subject, fears of rape, attack and other abuse by men is often observed. In the male subject, the image often brings out guilt feelings about sexual activity. Frequently, the subject will include economic deprivation in the narrative. Due to the level of detail in this image, obsessive-compulsives will become overly concerned with specifics. Subjects often view the woman as dead.

Schutz responds: 'Wow, this is a dramatic one. Oh, so man...there's a man who is a college student or something poor. He just graduated from college and he becomes, he's sort of looking for a job. And he's going on the train to, you know, find a job. On the way there he

becomes a dictionary salesman, or he sells dictionaries. So he goes to this house and he sells this woman some dictionaries and maybe a thesaurus, and it gets late, it's sort of in the summer or something, they like get it on in this town. He wakes up and he didn't realize she was dead and died in the night so he has this dilemma where he doesn't know if he should leave or what...It's like again, in some kind of...or maybe...I guess he's traveling like kind of far away and stuff like that...but it does look like it could be a apartment...I'm just imagining, I guess it could be in like some house somewhere but he actually, he wakes up, he actually doesn't leave the house, he just sort of lives in the house that she lived in. He doesn't leave the house or go anywhere. Like she's clearly dead because like her arm is on the ground. So he doesn't know what to do, so he just sits with her in the house, and she sort of...kind of rots there...and anything...But then he just reads the thesaurus and books and tries to better himself. And apparently while he's in the house or something, apparently he, I don't know...I just kind of feel like he assumes her life, her house, and reads thesauruses. [...] He, uh, makes a stretched out outfit out of her skin (laughs). I'll just go with the creepy vein. And basically lives his life as her in the town and he learns how to do this, he's selling not dictionaries but encyclopedias and he learns how to do it from the encyclopedias. But he can't really leave because he's afraid that people will need to come there. He's not driving, just took the train, and she lives close by. So he just waits for enough time to pass for everything to die down, like she's just gone, then he makes an outfit out of her skin, they don't really recognize her because its all stretched out, they don't know what it is. They don't see him or her really.'

PICTURE 18GF

A woman has her hands squeezed around the throat of another woman whom she appears to be pushing backwards across the banister of a stairway. (Drawing by Samuel Thal.) This image elicits themes related to aggression. Aggression is often evaded when the subject denies that any aggressive act is taking place. Mother-daughter conflicts are often highlighted. As in many of the cards, when the subject dwells on the composition of the picture itself rather than the situation, denial and defense can be observed. Interpersonal warmth or hostility (and flight from such feelings) can be observed in relation to this card. When subject matter related to libidinal and aggressive drive is discussed in the manifest content of the material, it is said to suggest ego strength.

Schutz responds: 'There's a woman with a crippled hand and it's like, um, it works independent of her, it's kind of like a squirmy wriggly hand you know, and all it wants to do is braid hair. And there's this woman who has no face who's kind of like in the same home they're in, because they're in this home where everyone has something special about them, you know. So the woman with the big hand finds this other woman in the place who has no

face and she just starts braiding but the woman with no face can't see what's happening because she doesn't have a face and she is kind of trying to get away, you know, but it's kind of enjoyable, but she's trying to slide along the banister, and is hoping that if she can just get away from the wriggly hand...It's not like the woman is trying to control the hand. The woman who is braiding, she's not even aware that's she braiding, she's just like zoning out on this blank face, so she doesn't even know she's looking at a face because there's no features there. So basically the woman slides away and gets away from the woman with the wriggly hand, and she has horrible posture, like really bad scoliosis, no face, and she kind of slides away from the woman with the hand and kind of tries to feel her way out of the house and the woman with the wriggly hand keeps on wriggling up the balcony that goes up the stairs, because they're next to the banister. So she kind of wriggles up the stairs...There's, like, an upstairs kitchen where she goes and tries to make tea, but she's kind of not so happy, the woman with this hand, because she can't help but just like fidget with things or braid things, and it doesn't work so well when she's trying to make coffee or anything else. She could've used the other person's hand but it was really hard because the other woman didn't have a mouth, so they just couldn't join forces. The woman goes upstairs and fumbles her way through a pot of tea and the other girl kind of feels around by the doorway for another four hours and maybe gets outside and then probably gets back inside because there's no where she can go...she doesn't have a face.'

Jump to subject:

Sean McCarthy, Craig Taylor, Dana Schutz, Ryan Johnson, Anna Conway

RYAN JOHNSON (b. 1978 in Karachi, Pakistan) lives and works in Brooklyn. He has a BFA from Pratt and an MFA from Columbia. Johnson has had solo shows at LFL Gallery, New York, and Franco Soffiantino Arte Contemporanea, Turin, and most recently at Guild and Greyshkul, New York, where he is represented. He has been featured in group exhibitions at P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, New York, The Moore Space, Miami, Artenova-Fuoriuso, Pescara, Italy, and The Contemporary Museum, Honolulu, amongst others. His work has been written about and reproduced extensively.

PICTURE 1

A young boy is contemplating a violin which rests on a table in front of him. (Drawing by Christiana D. Morgan.) This picture often leads to an easy identification of the subject with the boy. Themes related to the subject's feelings toward parental figures are evoked. It can become apparent whether parents were perceived as aggressive, domineering, helpful, understanding, protective or absent. In addition to learning about the subject's relationship to his or her parents, themes related to the conflict between autonomy and

compliance/noncompliance with authority arise. Aggression may be expressed, as may superego anxiety. Another theme commonly elicited by this card relates to achievement. The ways in which success is achieved or not achieved, both at the fantasy level and on the reality level, can be noticed in the subject's response. In addition, this card can be revealing in terms of symbolic sexual responses - i.e., on the masturbatory level: "playing with the fiddle." Obsessive preoccupation becomes apparent when the subject is significantly more concerned with the notepaper, messiness of the boy's hair, or a black speck on the violin.

Johnson responds: 'Wow. That's a cool image. Well, the kid looks blind. I can't tell if that's just the reproduction. Um...(laughs) he looks like he's wearing a karate outfit too. Like, he's in a karate class. So maybe he finished his studies and then he went to karate class and then he came home and he's supposed to practice his violin but he doesn't seem too psyched about practice, practicing...his violin. So maybe he's thinking, maybe something happened in karate class or maybe he's not very good at karate because he's blind or maybe...I don't know. Um...so yeah, I don't know, he...and then...yeah he didn't feel like practicing violin so...it feels like it's...this image is like right in like late afternoon, like between when someone might be getting out of school and having dinner with their family and so I guess if he did his studies and then went to karate and then is just staring at his violin when he's supposed to be practicing, I guess after this image he goes and just has dinner with his family.'

PICTURE 5

A middle-aged woman is standing on the threshold of a half-opened door looking into a room. (Drawing by Samuel Thal.) The woman in this image is often perceived as a mother who may be observing a variety of different activities. At times this becomes a symbolic story of fear of observed masturbation. She may also be seen as benevolently interested in how the child is doing, or as reprimanding the subject for being up late or not doing something that is supposed to be done. Voyeuristic material often emerges in the subject's response. At times there are hints of the subject's fantasies related to the primal scene.

Johnson responds: 'Um...I don't know, it just looks like somebody's mom telling them, it's like, time for dinner or something. I don't know if I'm thinking of that because it's a continuation of the last image or what. Um, but I don't really know, what, would happen before this image. Obviously, it seems...or it seems like someone's in the room because they're not in the picture, because it seems like she's checking on somebody, like, telling them, "Oh it's time to come to dinner, so stop whatever you're doing," to the person who's not in the image. Um, and then after that, I mean, I don't know, I don't know what's after the

image, I guess the person in the room goes to dinner.'

PICTURE 4

A woman is clutching the shoulders of a man whose face and body are averted as if he were trying to pull away from her. (Illustration by C. C. Beall, reproduced by special permission of Collier's, copyright 1940, by the Crowell-Collier Publishing Company.) This picture elicits sentiments regarding male-female relationships. Themes of infidelity are often found and the male attitude toward the role and experience of women often appears. The female figure may be seen as a protector who tries to stop the male from rushing into something poorly thought out, or as trying to hold onto him for sinister purposes. A woman's attitude toward men is also stimulated. An object of interest noted by more than two-thirds of subjects is the picture of the seminude in the background. If it is not perceived or discussed at all, this may provide a clue to some level of denial and repression around sexual thoughts or feelings. The seminude is often seen both as a poster as well as an actual figure. In either case, themes of triangulation and jealousy often arise with this card.

Johnson responds: '(laughs) This one seems more charged. Um, let's see...well, the woman sort of looks like a nurse with the white shirt, but I don't think she is. She's probably just in...it's like a hot summer or something so she's wearing a white shirt. The guy seems distracted, the woman's looking at him...(sighs) and there's a weird, like, advertising or pin-up image behind him. Yeah, maybe, I guess, I mean they're clearly sort of romantically involved but then he seems like he got a call to do something, so he's got to go. He sort of vaguely looks like he's in the military but I don't think he is. Yeah, so it seems like they were like kissing or something and then someone called for him...like he's got to go do something but then she's sort of giving him this look like, "Oh, don't go." But it seems pretty clear that he's probably going to go, just because he's leaning out of the picture, away from her. But...yeah, so what would be a story, I mean I guess that's...I don't know if that's a story...I guess I'm just sort of reading the picture. [...] I guess he just leaves. So then it's just her and the picture...of the like underwear picture or pin-up whatever that is in the background. But it looks like the setting is sort of hot, like it's the tropics, but I'm probably saying that because I grew up in the tropics. But just the white shirt and the way he's dressed, and it seems like, I don't know, summer somewhere. I don't know...I don't know if that one was very interesting of a story. [...] [In the beginning], um, yeah, they're embracing or something. I don't know if they're kissing or if they're hugging or talking face to face. I mean just the way she's holding him, they're obviously in real close proximity to each other so something's going on.'

PICTURE 8BM

An adolescent boy looks straight out of the picture. The barrel of a rifle is visible at one side, and in the background is the dim scene of a surgical operation, like a reverie-image.

(Drawing by Samuel Thal, after an illustration by Carl Mueller. Use of the latter permitted by Collier's, copyright 1939, by the Crowell-Collier Publishing Company.) Male subjects often identify with the boy in the foreground. Often themes related to aggression or ambition are elicited, e.g., the subject will describe someone being shot and operated on in the background or the boy dreaming of becoming a doctor. The operation scene may inspire attitudes around fear of mutilation. Whether the rifle is recognized and discussed or not can reveal latent hostility. Something can be learned about the adequacy of the hero in this card (i.e., the subject's projected ability to successfully complete tasks under internal and external difficulty). The adequacy of the subject's appraisal of the hero in this card and throughout the test often relates directly to the ego strength of the patient.

Johnson responds: 'Alright, I guess this...there's a young man, there's a gun and then some kind of surgery. Um, so maybe the young man shot some guy...like, accidentally, he doesn't look very mean. Um, and then the person he shot, maybe one of his friends or his brother or something...is getting some kind of surgery but it looks like it's definitely not modern surgery, so I guess the setting would be...not very contemporary. [...] Okay, so before this image is the young man accidentally shot his friend with a gun. And then his friend is getting surgery. I'm still not really telling a story (laughs), and then, um, after this story I guess his friend survives surgery successfully and the boy is very relieved because he felt terrible.'

PICTURE 7GF

An older woman is sitting on a sofa close beside a girl, speaking or reading to her. The girl, who holds a doll in her lap, is looking away. (Fairy Tales by Shulkin, reproduced by special permission of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.) This picture often brings out themes related to the relationship between mother and child. In a female subject, something can often be learned about feelings toward the self. This card often inspires negative attitudes toward the mother because of the way in which the girl looks off into the distance. The doll often elicits attitudes about childbirth. In this card as in the others, the subject will sometimes exhibit a defensive tendency to switch at the end of the narrative from a passive to active mode or will make an incongruous effort to resolve an otherwise disturbing story happily. Another common defense involves the subject removing a disturbing narrative from his or her own history and experience (e.g., locating the story in a geographically or temporally distant setting, adding irrelevant details or incongruous elements).

Johnson responds: 'So, the mom, there's a mom and her daughter. And the daughter's holding a doll. And so the mom has two kids and one of the kids just left to go to college. So the younger one is left alone with the mom and the dad, who's not in the picture...but the younger kid really misses her sister who went to college. And maybe that's why she's holding the doll. Um, the mom is reading a story to her youngest daughter who's in the picture. And after this image, they go on a walk.'

PICTURE 13MF

A young man is standing with a downcast head buried in his arm. Behind him is the figure of a woman lying in bed. (Drawing by Samuel Thal.) This image is often selected to disclose sexual conflict. Feelings about relationships are often projected. In inhibited subjects one often sees elements of shock in the story. In the female subject, fears of rape, attack and other abuse by men is often observed. In the male subject, the image often brings out guilt feelings about sexual activity. Frequently, the subject will include economic deprivation in the narrative. Due to the level of detail in this image, obsessive-compulsives will become overly concerned with specifics. Subjects often view the woman as dead.

Johnson responds: 'Um, okay. So before this image, this couple were sleeping. It's weird, because the way the woman is, she doesn't look alive. It's really awkward because...I mean she could be sleeping but no one would really sleep without the sheet on like that. So that looks strange, she definitely looks certainly dead or unnaturally posed...or maybe whoever drew it-well, maybe they drew it on purpose like that (laughs). Um, but I don't know, I mean it doesn't make sense that she's dead, because he just looks like he's getting up because he got a call to go to work late, in the middle of the night. But she definitely looks dead so I should just make up a story about that. Because it's very unnatural-looking. So maybe this is a couple, and the wife died of a heart attack...and he is distraught about that and puts on his clothes, although it doesn't make sense why she is exposed. But, um, okay, so the wife dies of a heart attack in the middle of the night and this guy realizes that his wife is dead and gets up and gets dressed...and then is going, just about to leave the house...because this looks like way back when...he's going to leave the house and, like, get a neighbor...maybe he already called. Yeah, they have a phone, he called a doctor or the police or the authorities or something, so this is in between the time the doctor and, I guess just the doctor, don't know why he'd call the police, but the police probably come too...between the time the doctor and the police get there, so he's dressed. Um, yeah, so then after this image the doctor gets there and consoles him and the police get there and start asking him questions, or a couple questions, it just looks like a small town so he probably knows everyone that's there...the doctor and the police people...and they probably know there was no foul play, so it's more just consoling him because his wife just died (laughs.) [...] [Doing this is] not really weird,

it's more like you have to...it's like reading these drawings...it's like so specific...You know, it's impossible not to go with the extreme interpretation. Like, I could say this woman is asleep, but just the fact that the sheet, she's not covered, something just seems wrong, because you wouldn't depict somebody sleeping like that, like it just looks really awkward that way her arm is just, like, stiff. It's obviously on purpose but when you read it you can't help but go with the more extreme interpretation.'

PICTURE 18GF

A woman has her hands squeezed around the throat of another woman whom she appears to be pushing backwards across the banister of a stairway. (Drawing by Samuel Thal.) This image elicits themes related to aggression. Aggression is often evaded when the subject denies that any aggressive act is taking place. Mother-daughter conflicts are often highlighted. As in many of the cards, when the subject dwells on the composition of the picture itself rather than the situation, denial and defense can be observed. Interpersonal warmth or hostility (and flight from such feelings) can be observed in relation to this card. When subject matter related to libidinal and aggressive drive is discussed in the manifest content of the material, it is said to suggest ego strength.

Johnson responds: 'Okay, this one looks really surreal. Like the person doesn't have a face. So maybe this is a dream image. This woman is having a dream and...so this is still from her dream and there's sort of a...she's confronted with this doubling of herself in the dream, so there's two of her at the bottom of the stairway. And then...as she gets closer, before this image they're sort of standing apart and then in the dream as they get closer together, as they approach each other, the one woman standing closer to the stairway, the face starts to fade away and dissolve-not dissolve, but it becomes flat, and just turns into a flat face, like she has no face. So by the time the woman who's holding the faceless version of herself gets all the way to the stairway, the figure doesn't have any sort of face left. It's just like a smooth thing and that's very confusing for her. Um, and then...after this image I guess she wakes up because it seems sort of terrifying. And realizes she's having a dream. [...] [In the beginning] I guess she goes into this house. And there's like nothing in the house, because it's a dream. It's just totally barren. I don't even know if there's any walls. But there's a staircase and the woman who looks like her is standing by the staircase. And then with each step as she gets closer to the woman, her face disappears. And then she wakes up because, hmm, maybe something could happen. There's like a car alarm or something...car alarm goes off...and then, yeah that's why she wakes up, because of the car alarm.'

Jump to subject:

Sean McCarthy, Craig Taylor, Dana Schutz, Ryan Johnson, Anna Conway

ANNA CONWAY (b. 1973 in Durango, Colorado) grew up in Foxboro, Massachusetts, and now lives and works in New York. She has a BFA from Cooper Union and an MFA from Columbia University. Conway is represented by Guild & Greyskul, New York, and has been included in group shows such as Greater New York 2005, Art Review 25 Emerging US Artists, Phantasmia at the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, and Painting as Fact, Fact as Fiction at de Pury and Luxembourg, Zurich, curated by Bob Nickas. Conway's work has been written about and reproduced in the New Yorker, Art Review, Frieze, Art in America, and Modern Painters, among others. She is also the recipient of a 2005 Pollock-Krasner award and a 2008 American Academy of Arts and Letters Willard Metcalf award.

PICTURE 5

A middle-aged woman is standing on the threshold of a half-opened door looking into a room. (Drawing by Samuel Thal.) The woman in this image is often perceived as a mother who may be observing a variety of different activities. At times this becomes a symbolic story of fear of observed masturbation. She may also be seen as benevolently interested in how the child is doing, or as reprimanding the subject for being up late or not doing something that is supposed to be done. Voyeuristic material often emerges in the subject's response. At times there are hints of the subject's fantasies related to the primal scene.

Conway responds: 'Hmmm...I just realized something funny about this room. Um, that it's, um...so the light is on, it's at night...I think this woman, I think this woman is leaving her, her home, her childhood home...and she was visiting her elderly mother. Yeah. I think what happened was she's on her way out, and she's looking one last time and her mom's asleep, and she's asleep in a kind of old lady, messy room. I think that her mother must be senile a little bit and aging, and this room was her sort of living room at one point but now she has so much, um, furniture she's sort of moved everything into one room where she spends all her time and the rest of the house is dark. And this daughter is probably in her forties and is looking with concern and a little bit of disgust at her mom, who's now asleep in this kind of cramped, claustrophobic room and, um, I have the feeling this is middle of the story. I have the feeling she'd come over there in the afternoon and spent the afternoon trying to help her mom get rid of things and organize and she's now kind of frustrated and her mom fell asleep and she's taking out now. And she's going to go, she's going to sit in her car out in the driveway for a good ten minutes and think some really sad thoughts and feel half angry at her mother, and half really sad. And then she's going to go back home to her family and not talk about this at all, not talk about her feelings about it...Maybe she'll stop for a drink on the

way home. She might stop for a drink or buy herself some Rossi on the ride home. Yeah, she's going to buy some Rossi and drink it. And she's going to tell her husband that she had a fine time with her mother. 'Cause she doesn't want people to know that she actually hates the house and feels really depressed. And she didn't say goodbye to her mother. This is her checking on her mother when her mom is asleep.'

PICTURE 1

A young boy is contemplating a violin which rests on a table in front of him. (Drawing by Christiana D. Morgan.) This picture often leads to an easy identification of the subject with the boy. Themes related to the subject's feelings toward parental figures are evoked. It can become apparent whether parents were perceived as aggressive, domineering, helpful, understanding, protective or absent. In addition to learning about the subject's relationship to his or her parents, themes related to the conflict between autonomy and compliance/noncompliance with authority arise. Aggression may be expressed, as may superego anxiety. Another theme commonly elicited by this card relates to achievement. The ways in which success is achieved or not achieved, both at the fantasy level and on the reality level, can be noticed in the subject's response. In addition, this card can be revealing in terms of symbolic sexual responses - i.e., on the masturbatory level: "playing with the fiddle." Obsessive preoccupation becomes apparent when the subject is significantly more concerned with the notepaper, messiness of the boys hair, or a black speck on the violin.

Conway responds: 'This kid is slow. I think this kid has, um...he has some sort of disorder...he might even be deaf actually. But he's a little slow too. He's a special needs kid. And he actually attends an after-school program in the late afternoon, and he's left alone a lot, he's just kind of shuffled around. But he attends an after-school program. And he walks out to use the bathroom, and he has a sort of meandering little life. And people don't...and he's kind of a soft sweet kid, and he's not being watched over right now. He's wandered off and he's found a music room for gifted kids and he's looking at some kid's beautiful violin and he's staring at it a little cross-eyed. And he knows it's meant to make sound and music but he's having a really difficult time trying to imagine that this small violin can do anything. He's feeling really envious and strange. And he's a few minutes away from having kind of a little temper-tantrum. He's building up, he's in a little bit of a trance right now, staring at it, but he's building up an enormous amount of resentment in the middle of all this staring at this other kid's violin. He's always told not to touch delicate things. And so he's, um, yeah, in about fifteen minutes he's going to get picked up by one of his parents and he's going to throw a temper-tantrum and he's going to be thinking of this violin. And that he probably should've smashed it. And in this moment that he's staring at it, he's actually thinking that he might want to break it but then no one would know that he broke it and he actually prefers to

break things in front of people. But in this moment he's in a very passive, trance-like, experience. And he ends up breaking something in the car. Like an ashtray.'

PICTURE 4

A woman is clutching the shoulders of a man whose face and body are averted as if he were trying to pull away from her. (Illustration by C. C. Beall, reproduced by special permission of Collier's, copyright 1940, by the Crowell-Collier Publishing Company.) This picture elicits sentiments regarding male-female relationships. Themes of infidelity are often found and the male attitude toward the role and experience of women often appears. The female figure may be seen as a protector who tries to stop the male from rushing into something poorly thought out, or as trying to hold onto him for sinister purposes. A woman's attitude toward men is also stimulated. An object of interest noted by more than two-thirds of subjects is the picture of the seminude in the background. If it is not perceived or discussed at all, this may provide a clue to some level of denial and repression around sexual thoughts or feelings. The seminude is often seen both as a poster as well as an actual figure. In either case, themes of triangulation and jealousy often arise with this card.

Conway responds: 'Yeah, this is, um...this is taking place in my grandmother's...this woman's my grandmother's age...so yeah I guess that's in the forties. And, um, this guy who's been married for about ten years, to this woman's older sister. And this is her younger sister who's jealous of her older sister, and she thinks he's in love with this guy, because he's kind of cheesy and good-looking. And she's become obsessive about her role as the, like, hot sister, and they've always flirted and she, um, she even has photographs of herself, she's a very vain person, and she has photographs of herself, this is in her apartment. And she's called him over, under some auspices of helping him with something and she's kind of carefully choreographed her house to look really sexy. She's going to get him to sleep with her, that's what she wants. And I think this is the moment where he's kind of realized the kind of situation that he's put himself in. And she's trying to prevent him from leaving. And she's considering apologizing for putting him in an awkward situation, and she's getting a little desperate and a little hurt and confused about what she wants to have happen. And, um, he's actually, he's actually concerned that she might even be setting him up in some way with this sister. [...] That maybe the older sister's somewhere in the house or that they're trying to trap him. He's completely confused about her, her role in this. And, um, they had just...they've just been sitting, talking, and she told him that she, she fumbled around and she finally admitted that the reason he's there is because she'd been suicidal or desperate or something or depressed...and he's realizing how inappropriate the whole situation is and she can't really keep up with up the charade and he's about to drive out of there extremely quickly. And he has no idea what he's going to tell his wife. [...] He's been flirting with her for years, the

sister, and he ends up feeling incredibly guilty and he tells his wife that he wants to have a child with her. And they make a baby and it breaks this woman's heart and her ego is crushed. [...] No, he ends up just feeling really guilty and telling his wife that he wants to have a baby with her...And he has sex with his wife that night feeling incredibly confused and getting the two of them mixed up. These people are incredibly cheesy. I can't believe them...They're really shallow. His wife gets pregnant.'

PICTURE 13MF

A young man is standing with a downcast head buried in his arm. Behind him is the figure of a woman lying in bed. (Drawing by Samuel Thal.) This image is often selected to disclose sexual conflict. Feelings about relationships are often projected. In inhibited subjects one often sees elements of shock in the story. In the female subject, fears of rape, attack and other abuse by men is often observed. In the male subject, the image often brings out guilt feelings about sexual activity. Frequently, the subject will include economic deprivation in the narrative. Due to the level of detail in this image, obsessive-compulsives will become overly concerned with specifics. Subjects often view the woman as dead.

Conway responds: 'Jesus (long pause). This, um...this man has been working with this woman for about five years. And they live in a really small town. And she has been very, very kind to him. She feels sorry for him. This is her house and it's very clean and sweet. And he...he's been in love with her for a really long time, as he sees it. And she's actually quite a homebody and a sort of naïve person and...she's even a little older than he is so she assumed he was just kind of a nerd. And he, um, he's invited her to a lot of different events and she's always declined and she doesn't ever want to know him outside of work. She doesn't want to be friends with him socially. And, he ended up following her after work this day, this night. And she went and met two friends of hers. And he followed her home to see where she lived. And it was really hot in her apartment, and she did end up going to bed naked. And he broke in, as quietly as he could, just to see her, and he sort of couldn't stop staring at her. And she woke up when she saw him and she screamed really quickly. And he just strangled her to keep her quiet. It was very instinctual on his part and he's completely shattered and horrified by himself. And he's just been following her since he left work and he can't believe what he's done. And he's hiding his eyes because he can't even look at her. And he's going to turn himself in. This is nothing like him. He doesn't want to be alive right now. And the only thing he can do is turn himself in. And he's going to walk to the police station. And he's not even going to think about a story. He's just going to tell them very straightforwardly exactly what happened. [...] I keep thinking about these people being boring. They all look like they're from my mother's hometown. So depressing. They look like they're from Iowa.'

PICTURE 18GF

A woman has her hands squeezed around the throat of another woman whom she appears to be pushing backwards across the banister of a stairway. (Drawing by Samuel Thal.) This image elicits themes related to aggression. Aggression is often evaded when the subject denies that any aggressive act is taking place. Mother-daughter conflicts are often highlighted. As in many of the cards, when the subject dwells on the composition of the picture itself rather than the situation, denial and defense can be observed. Interpersonal warmth or hostility (and flight from such feelings) can be observed in relation to this card. When subject matter related to libidinal and aggressive drive is discussed in the manifest content of the material, it is said to suggest ego strength.

Conway responds: 'Shit, this one's so Iowa. It's like the most aggressive thing happening. Oh my god (long pause). Huh...I mean, the sizes of them are really strange. So this, this girl...this girl is the daughter of...she's a really weird kid...this girl's the daughter of someone who makes clothing. And...she's sort of assembled a dressed-up, she's an only child, and this is this weird doll, this big doll, that she's made with wigs. She's given some of the leftover things to play with...but she's made this massive doll that she wishes dearly was real. And she's looking at it with such disappointment because she actually doesn't have a sister and she's made it look like an older sister, a companion, and it has this sort of shapeless, lumpy, skinny body, it looks more like an old woman. But she's tried to make a pretty older sister. And nothing she can do with materials can seem to make this woman beautiful. It just looks like this weird pasty, badly, poorly shaped old lady, instead of what she imagined it being. And she's been trying to fix it and change its face, and mold it to look like, to look like a sister. It's really late at night. And she's...she's about to start sobbing and...she's going to fold this doll in half. Cause she's actually scared of her doll too, she's not even sure if she wants to take it upstairs, she's going to fold it in half and hide it in her mom's closet. And then she's going to cry herself to sleep. She also gave the woman a haircut, a really bad haircut, which is the worst thing a girl can do to a doll.'

PICTURE 8BM

An adolescent boy looks straight out of the picture. The barrel of a rifle is visible at one side, and in the background is the dim scene of a surgical operation, like a reverie-image. (Drawing by Samuel Thal, after an illustration by Carl Mueller. Use of the latter permitted by Collier's, copyright 1939, by the Crowell-Collier Publishing Company.) Male subjects often identify with the boy in the foreground. Often themes related to aggression or ambition

are elicited, e.g., the subject will describe someone being shot and operated on in the background or the boy dreaming of becoming a doctor. The operation scene may inspire attitudes around fear of mutilation. Whether the rifle is recognized and discussed or not can reveal latent hostility. Something can be learned about the adequacy of the hero in this card (i.e., the subject's projected ability to successfully complete tasks under internal and external difficulty). The adequacy of the subject's appraisal of the hero in this card and throughout the test often relates directly to the ego strength of the patient. If the subject exhibits a tendency to defensively avoid engaging with the test on a narrative level, he or she will commonly describe difficulty integrating the boy, gun, and surgical scene presented in this card into a single story.

Conway responds: 'I mean this kid is just freaking crazy. He's, um, although...this isn't a boy, it's a girl. And she's actually, like, twenty-five. And this is a drawing that she's made of herself. She hasn't been able...she has a fantasy that she's a man, and she'd love to be a man, and she looks enough like a man that she's sort of pleased. She doesn't have the guts to cut her hair or really become a man, which is what she's always wanted, but she imagines herself as a macho...she's trying to figure out what she'd want to be if she were a man...either a surgeon...she definitely wants to have something to do with the military, desperately, and she can't get into the military because women aren't allowed at that time. And she's trying to see how sexy she can be as a man, so she draws herself as a sort of dapper guy with a gun and the background is her working under the tutelage of some army surgeon. And she can't decide if they're working on an enemy or just a faceless victim. And they're freaking out, they're in some dangerous place, and they're operating in a really operating way on an enemy or a soldier. And she's, um...she's just finished this drawing, and she's looking at this drawing of herself and the gun...and right after she finishes this drawing, she cuts off her hair, in this style. She tries to mimic the style. And she's feeling really brave and old. And...and she ends up...waking up with her hair cut. And leaving the town where she lives, the next day, to try and become a man, she's not sure how. But that's her goal, to be a man. [...] It looks like a girl to me, doesn't she? Because it looks like so many depictions that we've seen, of like, transvestites or butchy women. [...] I'm thinking about who these people are, and how old they are, and I don't know, I feel neutered I think because they seem old, like no one would've thought of something like that then, you know?'

PICTURE 7GF

An older woman is sitting on a sofa close beside a girl, speaking or reading to her. The girl, who holds a doll in her lap, is looking away. (Fairy Tales by Shulkin, reproduced by special permission of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.) This picture often brings out themes related to the relationship between mother and child. In a female subject, something

can often be learned about feelings toward the self. This card often inspires negative attitudes toward the mother because of the way in which the girl looks off into the distance. The doll often elicits attitudes about childbirth. In this card as in the others, the subject will sometimes exhibit a defensive tendency to switch at the end of the narrative from a passive to active mode or will make an incongruous effort to resolve an otherwise disturbing story happily. Another common defense involves the subject removing a disturbing narrative from his or her own history and experience (e.g., locating the story in a geographically or temporally distant setting, adding irrelevant details or incongruous elements).

Conway responds: 'What the fuck is up with the furniture in this picture? Some of these drawings are just, like, what? I mean, maybe...the furniture is all fucked up and crammed into this picture, it's crazy. Like, literally, the book's up against her arm, the baby's up against a table, there's a table and a doilie and a chair against some sort of loveseat, it's really just claustrophobic. It's a crazy claustrophobic space. Hmmm...see, this is what I thought was going on in this one, but it might be colored by my...but this looks completely choreographed, like over the top where some of them look so, like the one with the doll she's, "arrggh," freaking out and...this one is so choreographed that I can only imagine there is some sort of pervert behind this composition of people and that...um, like a small town painter guy, kind of, he's like the cheesy, talented, like dapper dude in this town, and he's painted this portrait of these two women. And he's choreographed very carefully, and he pays them really well to sit for him. And it's kind of his fantasy, his soft porn or something, that he has them come over and sit for him. This girl's too old to be holding a doll...and she's sort of dressed like a woman-slash-little kid. And then he has this more, he's set up this incredibly forced, silly composition that they kind of think he's, you know they think of themselves as subject matter, like a Renoir or something, but actually they're, you know, it's kind of this talented but pervy man who's, um, arranged them with all of this overstuffed insanity around them as if it were natural. And he's trying accommodate their comfort. And supposedly it's this nanny reading a book to her underling or her "charge," I guess is what they would say. Yeah, so this is the painting that he made. This kind of adoring painting of the two of them. And, um...and...I think it ends really quietly. I feel like it ends with the last sitting and he's staring at them, he's pretending to do the last touches on his painting, he's actually considering how he's going to ask them to pose again. He knows they'll probably accept because he pays them well. But he's trying to come up with the next idea for his painting and he's really hoping that they'll get naked for him but he doesn't know how to ask them.'