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J. D. Stahl

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## Louise Fitzhugh, Marisol, and the Realm of Art

by J. D. Stahl

Louise Fitzhugh was a noteworthy graphic artist as well as an influential writer for children. Her artistic ambitions were expressed at least as much, if not more, through painting as in the books she is far better known for today. Though her paintings are not presently available to the public, we can understand Fitzhugh's literary art better by examining her attitudes toward art as revealed in the context in which she painted as well as by taking a closer look at her children's book illustrations. A striking clue to these attitudes can be found in the as-yet unnoticed resemblance between the startling sculpture of a huge wooden baby described in *Harriet the Spy* (1964) and the distinguished Venezuelan-American artist Marisol's sculpture *Baby Girl* (1963; see fig. 1). The sculpture and the reactions to it within *Harriet the Spy* as well as the artwork, artist, and milieu referred to represent Fitzhugh's views of art and its role in life, views apparent in her other children's works, which are currently the only access we have to Fitzhugh's attitudes.<sup>1</sup>

Fitzhugh's commentary about art and its relationship to wealth is most maliciously pointed in her portrait of the utterly self-absorbed and materialistic couple of *Harriet the Spy*, the Robinsons, and it contains a sly reference to an artwork Fitzhugh almost certainly saw exhibited in a New York gallery or at the Museum of Modern Art in 1963.<sup>2</sup> The sculpture Fitzhugh alludes to is a work by the Paris-born artist Marisol Escobar, known usually as Marisol. The work is an immense sculpture of a baby. The original, titled *Baby Girl* and about six feet in height, is now located at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, New York. In chapter eight of *Harriet the Spy*, Harriet notices that the Robinsons have had an immense crate delivered to their house, and, in great suspense, she watches to see what that crate contains. It is a work of art,

the strangest thing Harriet had ever seen. It was an enormous—but enormous—perhaps six feet high—wooden sculpture of a fat, petulant, rather unattractive baby. The baby wore a baby cap, huge white dress, and baby booties. The head was completely round and carved out of a butcher's block so that it resembled a beautifully grained newel post with a face carved in it. The baby sat on its diapered bottom, feet straight out ahead, and fat arms curving into fatter hands which held, surprisingly, a tiny mother. (157)

This satirical sculpture, which reverses the relationship of parent to child, is symbolically the "perfect child" the Robinsons can never have in reality. Harriet has concluded, much earlier, that the Robinsons have only one problem: "They thought they were perfect" (66), and after observing the Robinsons showing off their possessions to their guests, Harriet writes, "IF THEY HAD A BABY IT WOULD LAUGH IN ITS HEAD ALL THE TIME AT THEM SO IT'S A GOOD THING THEY DON'T. ALSO IT MIGHT NOT BE PERFECT. THEN THEY MIGHT KILL IT. I'M GLAD I'M NOT PERFECT" (68). For Fitzhugh, as for Harriet, the idea of perfection in a child or a work of art was the height of absurdity.

The monumentality of the sculpture of the baby resembles the styles of several New York artists with whom Fitzhugh is likely to have been familiar. The infant's fatness suggests the sculptures and paintings of Fernando Botero, a Colombian artist who had his first New York exhibition in 1962 at The Contemporaries Gallery on Madison Avenue. His version of Madonna and Child, with self-portrait of the artist, displays his characteristic monumentality.<sup>3</sup> But the use of butcher's block mentioned by Fitzhugh is typical of the work of Marisol, who was also living and working in New York at the time. An article in the *Buffalo Evening News* in April of 1964 on the occasion of Seymour Knox's donation of the sculpture *Baby Girl* to the Albright-Knox Art Gallery noted that "Marisol nails and glues wooden planks to make a block, which she then carves and saws at all angles until she arrives at the desired shape. Some areas are smoothed to an even finish, while others are rough and sketchy" (43).<sup>4</sup>

Thus, the work that directly influenced Fitzhugh's satirical word portrait of the oversized baby is the 1963 sculpture by Marisol. Art critic Roberta Bernstein describes Marisol's "6-foot seated *Baby Girl*, on whose lap stands a tiny Marisol marionette, [which] presents a . . . witty but unnerving image of infancy" ("Self-Portraits" 86). The marionette, it is important to note, is a self-portrait (as are many of Marisol's sculptural images). Bernstein notes that in Marisol's work, "children are never sentimentalized," a trait shared with Fitzhugh. "Rather, by showing [children] holding adult dolls, also with Marisol's face, she emphasizes their power to manipulate adults" (86).<sup>5</sup>

The parallels between the satirical vision of these sculptors and Fitzhugh's satire are worth pursuing. Fitzhugh leaves no doubt that the fatness of the sculptured

baby is repulsive to her: it is "petulant" and "rather unattractive," even though the materials it is carved from are beautiful: "a beautifully grained newel post with a face carved in it" (157). What, then, might it represent? Is it a suggestion of Fitzhugh's aversion to babies, which is a not infrequent theme of hers, or is it a representation of something more complicated?

As art collectors, the Robinsons are represented as full of exaggerated enthusiasm: "'A crowning achievement,' said Mr. Robinson. 'A joy, such a joy,' said Mrs. Robinson, completing a circle. 'Wait till . . . ' 'Just think what they'll . . . ' They were so excited they didn't bother to make sentences" (157). Even the delivery man from Railway Express finds them and their infatuation with their acquisition ridiculous. When Mrs. Robinson says "She is a genius," he asks rudely,

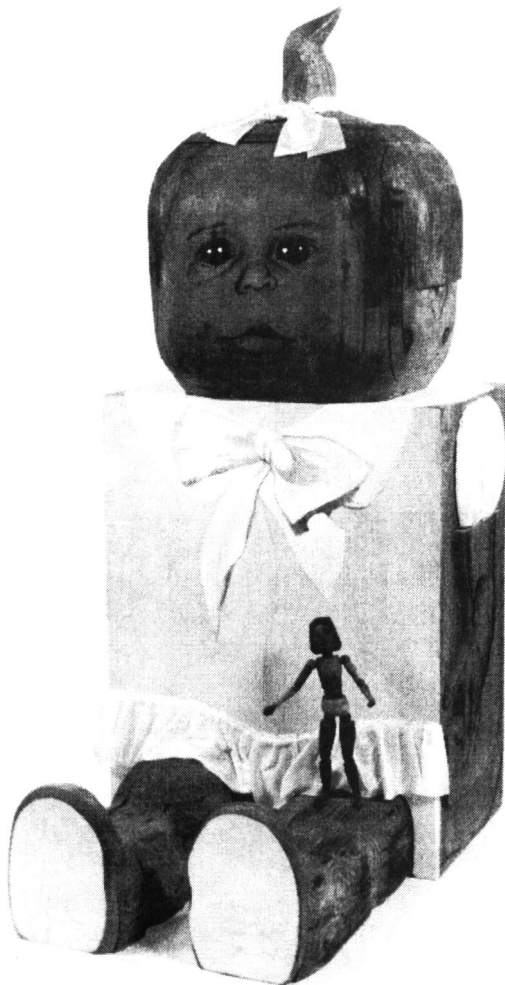


Figure 1. Marisol, *Baby Girl*, 1963, wood and mixed media, 74" x 35" x 47". Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York. Gift of Seymour H. Knox, 1964.

"Who?" and when she responds, "Why, the sculptor. She is marvelous . . . she is brilliant . . . she is a white star in the firmament," he replies, "Yeah? A dame made that?" (158). The Robinsons want the grotesque baby to *dominate* the room from the couch. They are left "holding hands and gazing at it in speechless joy" (158).

The one thing art is clearly *not* about for Fitzhugh is possession. The outlandish size of the artsy baby in *Harriet the Spy* suggests the inflated acquisitive egos of the infantile Robinsons. What they cannot recognize is that this sculpture represents themselves. Their possession possesses them, and the tiny adult in the hand of the baby symbolizes their diminution as adults in relation to their obsessive materialism. But there are also other ways to interpret the sculpture and its meanings.

Whether Fitzhugh was poking fun at art collectors' adulation of their works of art as possessions, or taking a satiric stab at Marisol's recent work, we can only speculate. It would not have been out of character for Fitzhugh to satirize currently fashionable artists, as her satiric visual portrait of James Merrill in *Suzuki Beane* (1961) demonstrates. The caricature rankled Merrill, presumably because it exposed his prissy smugness (Cook 14; see fig. 2). But it is more plausible to interpret Fitzhugh's interpretation of Marisol's work as a literary equivalent of Marisol's visual satire, for Fitzhugh and Marisol shared several fundamental thematic concerns and psychological patterns.

Bernstein describes how Marisol, unlike many contemporary male artists who dealt satirically with sex role stereotypes, such as Tom Wesselmann in his *Great American Nude* series of the 1960s, examined "a wider range of female experience concerning central issues in women's lives, including marriage, motherhood, and social bonding." Furthermore, unlike the male Pop artists, she "looks at women from a woman's perspective and identifies with the women she portrays" (86), which made her, as Albert Boime states "an important role model for such feminists as Gloria Steinem and [Cindy] Nemser" (16). Like Fitzhugh, who rejected the bourgeois identity her family attempted to foist upon her, Marisol explored "the dilemma involved for herself and other women who choose to reject those roles" (86).<sup>6</sup> Fitzhugh cultivated an image that was, if not as enigmatic as Marisol's, as complex and elusive. Steinem wrote about Marisol's persona for *Glamour* in 1964, noting that "Marisol's capacity for holding dead seems infinite and her face is not more open than a cat's" (127).

Like Fitzhugh, Marisol appears to have been profoundly affected by the absence of her mother. Marisol became notorious, like Greta Garbo, for maintaining silence. "At a young age, after her mother's death in 1941, Marisol took a vow of silence. 'When I was 11,' she said, 'I decided never to talk again. I didn't want to sound the way other people

did. I really didn't talk for years except for what was absolutely necessary in school and on the street. They used to think I was crazy" (Dreishpoon 95). The theme of the maternal appears in her sculpture *Mi Mama y Yo* (1968), which Dreishpoon calls "a sensitive double portrait of young Marisol with her mother, based on an old family photograph" (95). Interestingly, unlike many of Marisol's sculptures, which employ wood and found objects, this one is "executed in brightly painted steel and aluminum," materials that suggest both hardness and durability (96).

Marisol has said, "A work of art is like a dream where all the characters, no matter in what disguise, are part of the dreamer" (qtd. in Bernstein, "Self-Portraits" 86). If we apply this perspective to the sculpture in the Robinsons' living room, what can we learn? First of all, the sculpture suggests the endurance of early childhood, even if only imagined, as a powerful psychological fact. In this case, it suggests Fitzhugh's infancy as a period, often recalled later, in which her parents were battling each other for possession of her (Wolf 5; Cook 13). The adult in Fitzhugh's description of the figure in the hand of the baby sculpture, interestingly interpreted as a mother, not explicitly as a self-portrait of the artist, is a possession of the child, but a miniature—in other words, a dream version. As described in *Harriet the*

*Spy*, both the baby and its imagined mother are parts of Fitzhugh, and through Fitzhugh, of Harriet, who of course appropriates the sculpture for her own writerly purposes.

Just as the elaborate bird cages Harrison Withers painstakingly builds serve as ambivalent metaphors for art, so does this witty yet serious sculpture. Withers's creations suggest that art is, for Fitzhugh, on some level a gilded cage, an elaborate entrapment. Yet since Withers keeps many cats, one can regard the cages he builds as protection for the birds they might house, as well. Art, in Fitzhugh's vision, may therefore be seen, metaphorically, as a form of protection against hostile predators. The cage has a double function. It encloses and entraps, but it also protects and shelters its inhabitants.

In a similar fashion, the wit of the giant baby is both ridicule and serious acknowledgment. The humor of the outlandish baby is its outrageousness—it is a visual assault on our sense of normality. Like a nightmare, the giant baby represents a distortion of ordinary reality, a version of experience in which it is easy to become entangled. But the truth of the massive sculpture is its enduring presence. Anyone in the presence of the sculpture cannot escape its domineering size and monumentality, just as Fitzhugh the artist cannot escape the psychological presence of the bizarre events of her infancy.

There is a profound similarity between the qualities and interests of Fitzhugh's graphic and literary art. In both her visual art and her writing, Fitzhugh reveals her passionate rejection of social prestige and materialism, her psychological interest in the complicated inner workings of personality, her celebration of the gift of the creative artistic consciousness, and a gritty, honest style that clashed with prevalent children's book themes and illustrations at the time she began to publish.

Most of what can be known about Fitzhugh's art career is to be found in Karen Cook's fine article in the *Village Voice Literary Supplement*, "Regarding Harriet: Louise Fitzhugh Comes in from the Cold." Cook writes that Fitzhugh studied art at the Art Students League and Cooper Union and in France and Italy. She reportedly told friends that she painted murals for food in Italy (Cook 13). According to Cook, who interviewed Fitzhugh's friends and lovers, her artistic influences included the English painter Francis Bacon, master of the horrifying, satirical, and hallucinatory; the German Expressionist Max Beckmann, whose works are notable, as the *Encyclopedia Britannica* records, "for the violence with which they reflect the tragic events of the twentieth century"; and the Norwegian Expressionist Edward Munch, best known for his painting *The Scream*, an unforgettable image of terror and agony. All three are painters of the tormented subconscious. Cook writes that



Figure 2. Caricature of James Merrill, Suzuki Beane (1961).

Fitzhugh made “dark woodcuts of children huddled against baseboards or lost in the woods” (13). She painted extensively and passionately during her years in Greenwich Village, which spanned most of the 1950s.

Cook's vivid descriptions of Fitzhugh's paintings are evocative of Fitzhugh's themes:

In one painting Fitzhugh did after a breakup with a woman lover, two stubby, vaguely childlike figures are being ripped apart, literally dismembered by their separation, with only the tips of their fingers still entwined. The dull canvas is splattered with a thin, blood-like red. In another, a self-portrait, she stands shrugging helplessly, the left side of her face disappearing into a kind of mist, as if it were being erased. (13)

An exhibit of her work at the Banfer Gallery in New York was favorably reviewed in *Art News* in 1963, which noted: Fitzhugh “has a painter's feel, a satirist's eye, a comic's hand. She depends substantially on line and a montage technique, assembling images, one memory overlying, giving way to another” (65). The reviewer continues, “*Two Salesladies Discussing God* in colored inks and synthetic resins resembles Mother ripened to vintage state in the cellar” (65), an interesting if somewhat cryptic comment in light of Fitzhugh's tormented relationship with her own mother and her savage portrait, in *Sport* (1979), of a possessive, manipulative mother, a wealthy woman who kidnaps her own son. Cook points out that Fitzhugh expressed her anxieties through her art:

She sketched the way Harriet took notes—constantly, fluently, without censor. She always painted people, frequently asking neighbors to pose. . . . She drew from her unconscious, sometimes painting her dreams. In the early '60s, she splashed colorful inks on paper in Rorschach-style patterns, then improvised drawings around the shapes. When she didn't like her work, she cut it up, to keep it from being salvaged. (13)

For Fitzhugh, art was a form of psychological exploration, not the production of marketable aesthetic objects.

Unfortunately, Fitzhugh's paintings have vanished into the obscurity of private collections. It appears that most of her surviving work is being kept from public view. Her graphic work is accessible to us today only through the illustrations of her children's books, prominently *Harriet the Spy*, but also *Nobody's Family Is Going to Change* (1974), and, less well known today, *Suzuki Beane* (1961), the spoof of the bohemian milieu in which Fitzhugh and her collaborator,

Sandra Scoppetone, were immersed at the time. These children's books, and the illustrations of the early books in particular, tell us much about Fitzhugh's attitudes toward society and the rebellious loner. The visual images Fitzhugh created, in combination with her satirical texts, form a composite of her artistic sensibility.

The text by Scoppetone and the pen and ink drawings by Fitzhugh in the picture book *Suzuki Beane* complement each other. If anything, Fitzhugh's portraits have more satiric force than Scoppetone's text. Suzuki Beane is a brash and self-confident beatnik child. Much about her and about the book in which she appears foreshadows *Harriet the Spy*. For instance, there is Suzuki's sarcastic commentary on school: “there's a lot of other squares in that class too—like they're always doing draggy things man it is so meaningless” (16). Suzuki's parents, Marcia and Hugh, don't come off much better than her classmates, even though they are beats too. Suzuki revolts against dancing school, to which her friend Henry Martin drags her. Her revolt takes the form of an improvisational dance, which the teacher brings to an end by snagging her with her cane. The dance teacher is a nasty caricature, especially in Fitzhugh's drawing, and Fitzhugh is no kinder to Henry Martin's parents, who are portrayed as vacuous, arrogant upper-class creatures. The most sympathetically presented adult in this book is Helen, the black maid and cook, who is the only one capable of showing Suzuki



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Figure 3. Henry Martin, from *Suzuki Beane*.

and her friend any affection. The drawings of Helen are not caricatures but are sympathetic, even lovingly drawn portraits. By contrast, perhaps the most frightening image in the book is Fitzhugh's image of the upper-class child predestined to lead a certain kind of life: bound for Yale, whether he knows it or not. He stares out from the page with haunted eyes (see fig. 3). Fitzhugh's portraits are caustic satiric commentaries on the injuries of class.

Fitzhugh's drive to portray truths, regardless of audience, is clear in *Bang, Bang, You're Dead*, an anti-war picture book she and Scoppetone collaborated on. Published in 1969 and controversial when it first appeared, it received very critical notices, partly due to the violence of the images. Daryl Alexander in *School Library Journal* called it "a literary ABM that overshoots its mark" (148). Nevertheless, its harshness testifies to a determination to tell the truth as Fitzhugh saw it, a determination that finds more satisfying artistic expression in her children's novels.

There are also the illustrations for *I Am Five* (1978), published posthumously. Her vigorous, satiric drawings to her own text are important as early graphic expressions of the New Realism in children's book illustration. They have the courage to be ugly. A comparison of the illustrations Fitzhugh did for *I Am Five* with the illustrations by Susan Bonners for Fitzhugh's *I Am Four* (1982), commissioned by the publisher after Fitzhugh's death, reveals an immense contrast. Fitzhugh's drawings are spiky, energetic, irreverent. Bonners's images are conventional and stereotypical. Bonners is smooth and superficial; Fitzhugh is willing to show her protagonist as a bit unattractive, silly, fierce, and real. Her honesty and vigor make Bonners's drawings look idealized and false.

Adults in Fitzhugh's books are often drawn harshly, their fatuousness, self-absorption, cruelty, and stupidity unsparingly presented in her spiky visual style. Mrs. Plumber looks dissipated and displays a hint of cruelty in her pointed fingernails. Ole Golly's mother is ridiculous and frightening, with her disjointed limbs and her lugubrious, idiotic stare. Miss Elson is a vamp, sprawling on the floor, with a sinister touch of threat in her crazed eyes. Mr. and Mrs. Robinson, sedate in their chairs, look detached and superior, unapproachable. And Harriet's parents appear both menacing and fashionable, the dark frames of Mr. Welsch's glasses nearly obscuring his eyes above the dark gash of his mouth, Mrs. Welsch's eyebrows and mouth distorted in anger.

Some of her portraits of adults are more sympathetic, such as her famous image of Ole Golly with the monitory finger, or the friendly Mr. Waldenstein. However, the image of Harrison M. Withers, the maker of cages and lover of cats, is the most sympathetic portrait, and implicitly raises the question of Fitzhugh's vision of art and the artist. Harrison Withers looks like a haunted man, a survivor of

great suffering, though his mouth also expresses contentment. Withers exemplifies for Harriet someone who loves his work, and therefore, according to a dictum of Ole Golly's, loves life. He is the artist who, totally absorbed, works in isolation on his creation, "a particularly beautiful cage, a replica of a Victorian summer house" (71). He is poor. He lives alone, except for his many cats, whom he has given literary and artistic names. He is a kind of role model for Harriet, though she would never think of him in those terms: "ANYWAY I WOULDN'T MIND LIVING LIKE HARRISON WITHERS BECAUSE HE LOOKS HAPPY EXCEPT I WOULDN'T LIKE ALL THOSE CATS. I MIGHT EVEN LIKE A DOG" (72-73).

Harriet takes quite literally her father's assumption that wealth and art cannot be reconciled. She writes, "MY FATHER IS ALWAYS SAYING STARVINGARTIST OR STARVINGWRITER. MAYBE I BETTER REDUCE" (53). In a variety of ways, Fitzhugh implies that money and a life in art are incompatible. Ole Golly has taught Harriet that "RICH PEOPLE ARE BORING. SHE SAYS WHEN PEOPLE DON'T DO ANYTHING THEY DON'T THINK ANYTHING, AND WHEN THEY DON'T THINK ANYTHING THERE'S NOTHING TO THINK ABOUT THEM" (45), an adage that is illustrated by the vacuousness of Mrs. Plumber's lazy, rich self-indulgent habits. Mrs. Plumber's ridiculous pretensions are exposed when she says, "My dear, I have *infinite* possibilities. Now don't you think I would make a *mar-ve-lous* actress? Or there's *painting*; I could *paint*. What do you think of that? . . . Well, darling, I'm only *forty*, think of *Gauguin* . . ." (46).

Fitzhugh regarded art not as an idle avocation, but as a passionate quest for truth. We can better comprehend Fitzhugh's relation to the realm of art through the links suggested here to contemporary artists whose work she may have seen and appropriated, particularly to Marisol, as well as through the psychological undercurrents these appropriations hint at. Fitzhugh's stance as an artist is to tell complicated truths with a mixture of wit and honesty. It is important to Fitzhugh, as it is to Harriet, the writer in training, to tell the truth as directly as possible. Yet the truth is difficult and bizarre, and can often best be told through what appears to be satire or exaggeration. Thus Fitzhugh's illustrations for her children's books often incorporate elements of caricature. They have affinities to the distortions of cartoons, but they also have depths of insight and complexity that make them richer than the easy images of many cartoonists.<sup>7</sup> We recognize both types and individuals in Fitzhugh's drawings.

Fitzhugh's conception of art in the broadest sense, including writing, can be summed up as having three interconnected aims. The first is satiric and critical. This aim is achieved through exaggeration and through an emphasis on

the bizarre and the strange inherent in activities and personalities often accepted as normal. Like Botero and Marisol, Fitzhugh enables us to examine the familiar in distorted form and thus recognize and question the grotesque in what we usually gloss over. The second aim of her art is psychological truth-telling. With painful honesty, she forces us to examine how children such as Harriet, Sport, Janie, Beth Ellen, and Willie experience the world. Her honesty generates laughter by showing us unexpected and incongruous realities. The third aim of her art is celebratory. As Virginia Wolf rightly emphasizes in her analysis, Fitzhugh shows us the beauty and the often painful joy of being alive and of being true to oneself (62-64).

Examining Fitzhugh's graphic art in the context of the art of some of her contemporaries in New York City in the late 1950s and early 1960s enables us to see her work in relation to the larger currents of American culture. She shares with the earlier artists of the twentieth century that influenced her such as Munch, Käthe Kollwitz, Francis Bacon and others an obsession with psychological states, conditions of dis-ease, anxiety, and suffering. But seeing the connections to artists such as Botero and Marisol, who were her contemporaries, helps us to see more clearly the sources and direction of some of the social satire and of the witty, ambivalent celebration inherent in Fitzhugh's critical illustrations. She critiques materialism, including, rather self-reflexively, the snobbery and possessiveness of art collecting. Significantly, Marisol sculpted Sidney Janis, an art dealer who exhibited and sold Marisol's work. The full title of her sculpture is *Portrait of Sidney Janis Selling a Portrait of Sidney Janis by Marisol by Marisol* (1967). Like Marisol, Fitzhugh both parodied and reveled in the special status of the artist.

Ironically, through Fitzhugh, generations of young readers have encountered a representation of Marisol's important sculpture in a satiric context, but without knowing the name of the "marvelous . . . brilliant" artist, the "white star in the firmament." In January 1993, *Highlights for Children* published a brief essay about Marisol's work, with a large photo of *Baby Girl*, but without noting its literary incarnation in *Harriet the Spy*.<sup>8</sup> Marisol's silence about her own work may or may not have contributed to the relative anonymity of the artist who created the sculpture on which Fitzhugh based her satirical, yet curiously self-revealing fictional artwork.<sup>9</sup> Fitzhugh's own visual artworks are virtually unknown today. Perhaps it was in part Fitzhugh's rejection of the commercial circus of dealers, patrons, and owners that has caused her paintings to fade into obscurity.

It is difficult to think of the creator of the talkative Harriet as being silent, but paintings in private rooms, perhaps in attics or closets, are a form of silence. Fitzhugh's writing grapples with the paradoxical desires for privacy and self-exposure, revelation and secrecy. As an artist who was active in a fertile milieu of artistic expression in the middle of the twentieth century, Fitzhugh explored her inner demons through her painting, but she best revealed her passion and her love of art through writing and illustrating for children. That is her enduring legacy.

#### NOTES

I wish to thank Ruth Vecchione for the impetus that led to this article.

<sup>1</sup>Determined efforts to locate Fitzhugh's paintings have proven futile. The author would be grateful for any help in discovering the whereabouts of her works of art (or reproductions of them).

<sup>2</sup>Avis Berman, in a detailed, well-illustrated article in *Smithsonian Magazine* (February 1984) notes that Marisol "participated in a show at MOMA in 1963, where she had a traffic-stopping room of her own" (60).

<sup>3</sup>Botero quixotically denies that he paints or sculpts fat figures. "They look rather slim to me," he has said repeatedly (*Arciniegas* 51). However, he acknowledges that his work is sometimes satirical, though he emphasizes that the voluminousness of his sculptures is to him primarily a matter of sensuality. His portraits of upper-class Colombian figures and groups, such as the Presidential Family, are undoubtedly satirical, nonetheless. In fact, their sensuality may be part of the satire.

<sup>4</sup>Marisol had been, as had Fitzhugh, a student at the Art Students' League, and had her first individual exhibition at the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York in 1958. From 1960 onwards she constructed wooden sculptures with casts of human faces and limbs arranged in groups, often of political figures such as Charles De Gaulle or the Kennedy family, sometimes satirical portraits of upper-class life. In 1961 she was included in the Art of Assemblage exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Marisol has been called "one of the least understood pioneers of Pop Art" and "the lone female survivor of the movement" (Boime 6), although her identification as a member of the Pop Art movement remains a matter of dispute.

<sup>5</sup>The reporter for the *Buffalo Evening News*, writing about the acquisition of *Baby Girl*, makes an interesting contrast with another work by Marisol also in the Albright-Knox collection: "The baby is in a completely opposite mood from the previous Marisol piece acquired by the gallery, 'The Generals,' a delightful spoof on Simon Bolivar and George Washington. The Generals [sic] is extremely popular with children and is liked by many adults as a 'fun' piece. But the Baby is scarcely gentle fun. Marisol, says Miss Ursula Eland, curatorial assistant, 'is ruthless in her treatment of the image of the happy, fat, gurgling baby'" (43). The implication is that *Baby Girl* will not appeal to children, at least not in the same "fun" way as *The Generals* supposedly does.

<sup>6</sup>Cecile Whiting argues, in a critical reassessment of Marisol's work, that recent feminist theory such as the work of Luce Irigaray and Mary Ann Doane "allows a reconsideration and repositioning of Marisol, unavailable at the time of the production of her sculptures in the 1960s" (74). In Whiting's view, "Marisol's sculpture mimics various representational systems for signifying femininity." Her sculpture "reveals the ways in which both the roles of conventional femininity and the signs of masculine creativity are contingent and figured forms of representation. Her sculpture, in short, denies the existence of any coherent, natural and essential feminine—or for that matter masculine—subject" (74).

<sup>7</sup>Interestingly, Albert Boime has convincingly demonstrated that Marisol's work is also significantly indebted to comics and cartooning. He writes, "Although she does not literally appropriate from cartoons, the whimsy and incisiveness of cartoon styles and caricatures inform her social and political characterizations" (6), another affinity to the work of Fitzhugh. Like Harriet practicing her writing in the Sixth Grade Page of the school paper, as a girl, Marisol practiced artistic self-expression in the pages of the yearbook of Westlake, the exclusive girls' school in Los Angeles she attended in 1948-49 and graduated from in 1949. Marisol's work took the form of ironic cartoons in the pages of *Vox Puellarum*. See Virginia Wolf's perceptive discussion of caricature in Fitzhugh's work (26-27).

<sup>8</sup>Herma Silverstein's introductory paragraph states, in italics: "Too old to play with dolls? Not a sculptor named Marisol. She makes humorous figures that are really life-size dolls, but dolls created by a fine artist" (40). She concludes her essay: "Today Marisol's life-size dolls are world famous. Her skill in combining real objects with ones she creates from her imagination gives her figures a magical life of their own in which make-believe and the real world become one" (41).

<sup>9</sup>*Baby Girl* has been reproduced in various publications. The *Smithsonian Magazine* feature article included a full-page reproduction, for instance (62). A more recent example is its appearance on the front cover of *The Wilson Quarterly* to illustrate an article on "Raising the American Child, 1899-1999" (Winter 1999).

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*J. D. Stahl is an associate professor of English at Virginia Tech. He is helping to organize the June 2000 ChLA conference, "Landmarks, Boundaries, and Watersheds," in Roanoke, Virginia.*