



## **TRIUNFO ARCINIEGAS**

Candidate from Colombia

Hans Christian Andersen Award 2024

Fundalectura, IBBY Colombia

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## TRIUNFO ARCINIEGAS - Author



Colombian writer, born in Malaga. Master in Literature (Javierana University) and Translation Specialist (University of Pamplona), considered one of the classics of Colombian children's literature.

He won the VII Enka Award in 1989 with *Las batallas de Rosalino*, Comfamiliar del Atlántico Award in 1991 with *Caperucita Roja y otras historias perversas*, National Literature Award of Colcultura in 1993 with *La chica de Transilvania*,

Dramaturgia para la Niñez award in 1998 with *Torcuato es un león viejo*, Children's literature Parker in 2003 with *La negra y el diablo* and the National Short Story Award Jorge Gaitán Durán in 2007 with *Mujeres muertas de amor*. Triunfo is an author highly recommended by the Bank of the Book of Venezuela.

## A STATEMENT ON THE CANDIDATE'S CONTRIBUTION TO LITERATURE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

I have set out to tell stories with elegance and beauty, attending to the fundamental truths of man. Their fears and their deepest dreams, celebrating life but not forgetting the constant presence of death, respecting the intelligence and the sensitivity of the reader. Poetry, humor, and irreverence have been my working tools. The office of writing is sacred and should be exercised without traps and without risk. That's the only way it's worth it.

Books, painting, and cinema have been a fundamental part of my education and my happiness in this no man's land. I have drunk of life, its most precious fruits. Writing is nothing more than give back so many privileges.



## AWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS to the author

**1989:** VII Enka Childrens Literature Award to the book *Las batallas de Rosalino*.

**1991:** Comfamiliar del Atlántico Award to the book *Caperucita roja y otras historias perversas*.

**1993:** Colcultura National Literature Award to the book *La muchacha de Transilvania y otras historias de amor*.

**1998:** National Award of Playwriting for Children for the book *Torcuato es un león viejo*.

**2002:** Regional Prize for Literature for the book *El dragón viejo*

**2003:** Regional Prize for Literature for the book *Mujer de niebla*.

**2003:** Parker Children literature award for the book *La negra y el diablo*.

**2007:** National Short Story Award Jorge Gaitán Durán for the book *Mujeres muertas de amor*.

**2017:** IBBY Honour List 2016 for the book *Letras robadas*.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY of the author

- La silla que se le perdió una pata y otra historias*, Panamericana (1988)
- La media pérdida*, Panamericana (1989)
- El león que escribía cartas de amor*, Panamericana (1989)
- Las batallas de Rosalino*, Alfaguara (1989)
- Los casibandidos que casi roban el sol y otras historias*, Fondo de Cultura Económica (1989)
- La lagartija y el sol*, Carlos Valencia (1989)
- La muchacha de Transilvania y otras historias de amor*, Panamericana (1993)
- La pluma más bonita*, Editorial Colina (1994)
- Después de la lluvia*, Panamericana (1997)
- La vaca de Octavio / La araña sube al monte*, Panamericana (1997)
- Lucy es pecosa*, Panamericana (1997)
- Mambrú se fue a la guerra*, Panamericana (1997)
- El super burro y otros héroes*, Panamericana (1999)
- Torcuato es un león viejo*
- El pirata de la pata de palo*, Panamericana (2000)
- El vampiro y otras visitas*, Fondo de Cultura Económica (2001)
- Los besos de María*, Alfaguara (2001)
- La sirena de agua dulce*, SM (2002)
- Mamá no es una gallina*, Panamericana (2002)
- Pecas*, Panamericana (2002)
- Amores eternos*, Panamericana (2003)
- La gota de agua*, Panamericana (2003)

## BIBLIOGRAPHY of the author

- La verdadera historia del gato con botas*, Norma (2003)
- La ventana y la bruja*, Panamericana (2003)
- Caperucita roja y otras historias perversas*, SM (2003)
- Serafín es un diablo*, Panamericana (2003)
- Caja de las lágrimas*, Ediciones Urano (2004)
- Carmela toda la vida*, Fondo de Cultura Económica (2004)
- Tres tristes tigres*, Panamericana (2004)
- El amor y otras materias, *Norma* (2004)
- Los olvidos de Alejandra*, Panamericana (2005)
- Roberto está loco*, Fondo de Cultura Económica (2005)
- Yo, Claudia*, Editorial Castillo (2006)
- Señoras y señores*, Ediciones Ekaré (2007)
- Bocafloor*, Alfaguara (2007)
- El árbol triste*, SM (2008)
- El papá de los tres cerditos*, SM (2009)
- La casa de chocolate*, SM (2009)
- El rabo de Paco*, Fondo de Cultura Económica (2011)
- El último viaje de Lupita López*, SM (2011)
- La hija del vampiro*, SM (2011)
- Las barbas del árbol*, Lumen (2011)
- El niño gato*, SM (2013)
- La llorona*, SM (2013)
- Letras robadas*, Océano Travesía (2013)
- Toto, el rey*, Editorial Castillo (2013)

LIST OF TRANSLATED EDITIONS  
and their languages

**English**

*Tres tristes tigres*

*Three Sad Tigers*

Bogotá, Panamericana, 2004

**German**

*Yo, Claudia*

*Ich, Prinzessin Sophia*

Frankfurt, Fisher Verlag, 2009

**Portuguese**

*Roberto está loco*

*Roberto está louco*

São Paulo, DeLeitura, 2013



## APRECIATIVE essay

### **The long road from paradox to irony:**

The humor in Triunfo Arciniegas

By Carlos Sánchez Lozano

A relevant thematic axis that crosses the literary work for children of the Colombian writer Triunfo Arciniegas is humor. In twenty years of creative work (1988-2008) and more than forty children's books published in Colombia, Mexico and Spain, he has made notorious experiments and findings in this regard... Arciniegas not only enters into the solid Latin American tradition of humor in children's literature (Rafael Pombo, Javier Villafañe, Aquiles Nazoa, Ema Wolf), the author also levels himself in a rich intertextual dialogue with masters of the humor of universal literature as Augusto Monterroso, Roald Dahl, Gianni Rodari and Tomi Ungerer.

In this essay, the evolution of the humor representation in the stories, novels, and albums more representative of Arciniegas will be noticed. As in all work of a professional writer will be noticed innovations, abrupt changes of orientation, experimentation, moments of ups and downs. His permanent concern will be made to produce quality literature for children, to turn them into authentic intellectual pairs of their work, and in turn their intention to contribute to provide them with reflective tools that allow them to understand the meaning and value of humor as a form to make a question, but also to alter conventional realities, and to find ways of escape in cultural spheres with rigid codes of behavior.

## **How is humor founded on children?**

First let us clarify that humor is any message that is transmitted through the gesture, the word—spoken or written—the image or music that aims to provoke the smile or laughter. The dictionary of the RAE defines it as “joviality, sharpness”. The French Robert as “form of ingenuity that consists of showing or deforming the reality, enhancing its fun and unusual aspects”. The English Oxford as “something funny, less intellectual, but more sympathetic than wit.”

The textual forms in which humor is expressed vary: jokes, apothegms, heavy jokes, puns, farces, buffoonery, satire, ironies, comedies, graffiti. These discursive structures have evolved, and many of them were openly censored at particular moments in history. The great historian Jacques Le Goff points out that humor, both in Antiquity and in the Middle Ages, was not seen as a respectable verbal or literary form and was left for the lower classes<sup>1</sup>.

Humor is a code that tells us about the societies where it emerges and undoubtedly through it can be studied the relations between social classes, against power and any form of social organization. It involves at least the participation of two or three real or imaginary people: the one that provokes laughter, the one who laughs and the one who is laughed at. As Le Goff insists, “laughter is a social practice with its codes, its rituals, its agents and its theatricality.”

In the analysis of how humor is constructed in children, cognitive psychologists emphasize that children first take a literal, serious look at the facts (mimetic fixation), but the discovery of laughter is progressive. Laughter arises in the face of distortion, contradiction, exaggeration, and it is significant to progressively socialize in the family and through the media in

formats such as “gag” in cartoons, charrasquillos, jokes in the Literature through the picture books. Humor also implies a grammar of the intellectually demanding paradox. An average literate seven-year-old already understands a seemingly complex verbal joke like this:

—¿Cómo se escribe nariz en inglés?

—No sé.

—¡Correcto!

\*A joke in Spanish

This preamble applies to warn that in the literary work for children of Triunfo Arciniegas there are three visible forms of humor: the paradox, the parody and, finally, the irony. The thesis that will be sustained is that in his books an education is concretized for the humor, the distance, and the rupture of the formality. These literary texts constitute a preparation for the children on how to face a solemn world, apparently serious -cohesionado and without fissures-, that is to say, a world adverse.

## **The failure as a triumph**

As Beatriz Robledo pointed out, citing the volume of stories Little Red Riding Hood and other perverse stories, Arciniegas early included humor in his books and used it as an expressive tool to gain a place in Colombian children's literature.

The explosion of humor is evident from the first book of Arciniegas, The Chair that lost a leg and other stories, although the jokes, paradoxes and hyperboles, characteristics after his work in the nineties, are presented in a contained way. In one of his best stories - which would later become an independent album - "The Lion who wrote love letters", there is a comic strip

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poetically nuanced in the fact that the king of the jungle will inevitably fall in love with a bird of paradise Whom he has seen only once, while neglecting his reign in the jungle, and then moving to the city where the bird is being held in a zoo and committing the fatal crime of love:

He jumped with all his courage and knocked down the weak wire door and  
Surprised the bird of paradise in the most beautiful of dreams, beaches  
Of New Guinea. Of the succulent banquet, only the beautiful.  
Feathers, which the sun transformed into a fantastic fire.

Several stories of the time such as “Blue-eyed cat”, “The beautiful and the worm” and even his first novel, *Las batallas de Rosalino*, are caricatures of success and, indeed, apologies of failure as a normal possibility in life. But the greatest achievement of this period is the book *The Casibandids* that almost steal the sun<sup>5</sup>, a mixture of satire, buffoonery and surrealist piece. Based on Tomi Ungerer's three bandits, Arciniegas takes pleasure in taking an argument to the extreme and taking advantage of all the expressive resources of humorous language to make children laugh with a crazy and certainly sad end story.

### **The cycle of paradoxes**

In the works of the first five-year period of the nineties, Arciniegas's style is based on another humorous resource: paradoxes. The paradox is a rhetorical figure consisting of uniting seemingly contradictory and irreconcilable ideas. The paradoxes are materialized in four structural forms of the stories of Arciniegas:

#### A. First paragraphs

Arciniegas follows Quiroga's rule of capturing the reader in the first lines and he does so by focusing his interest in a humorous situation marked by eccentric, clearly out of character characters, at the same time suggesting a purely comic conflict.

#### B) Arbitrary frames

This paradoxical humor clearly appears in situations that invite immediate laughter, with contrasts based on disconnected situations. Humans or animals always do the opposite of what a certain logic would recommend.

#### C) Comic comparisons and hyperboles

Fun contrasts, based on contrasting things or unconnected facts or that invite verbal or visual mockery, and extreme exaggerations, are part of the narrative approach of Arciniegas.

In some moments, the influence and the intertextual relation with Roald Dahl becomes evident.

#### D) Distorted characters

Arciniegas must have created over fifty characters, some memorable, causing a strong impact on the child and tragicomic, so crazy they are. Several are characterized by uprooting, poverty or physical deformity.

### **Lower the Comedy Curtain**

The humor has served Triunfo Arciniegas, during twenty years of literary work dedicated to children, to question hypocritical social, political and cultural conventions of the Hispanic scope, but also to announce the utopia of

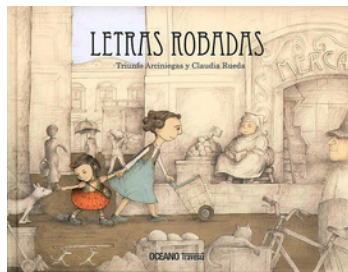
laughter when everything is disarmed from its place and breathe air of freedom in the interpretation of the world. His work has been educational. His literary pursuits and achievements have been a model of reflection for the budding writers of children's literature in Colombia in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

We can consider it a classic, a master of humor.

## REVIEW OF THE BOOKS submitted to the jury

### ***Letras robadas, Océano Travesía***

The name of the protagonist of this album is Clara, and everyone says that she is weird because she likes the bats, the teeth ... and to learn to read. In fact, that's what she likes best; so much, that makes of its walk by the market a lesson of reading.



### ***Cuando el mundo era así, Cataplum***

The name of the protagonist of this album is Clara, and everyone says that she is weird because she likes the bats, the teeth ... and to learn to read. In fact, that's what she likes best; so much, that makes of its walk by the market a lesson of reading.





## *Caperucita roja y otras historias perversas.*

The three little pigs are not the poor innocents who defend their huts from the breath of a terrible wolf, but the most sagacious and cunning pigs ever known. Woe to the poor wolf. And what about the other wolf, so gentle and well-intentioned, prey to the spell and tricks of the petulant and vain Little Red Riding Hood? With the ingenuity and grace to which we are accustomed, Triunfo Arciniegas wrote this book of upside-down stories based on the discontent that The wolves are always so perverse, the girls so candid, the maidens so beautiful, the princes so clever.



## *El árbol triste*

The tree is no longer the same without the presence of the birds. Its leaves fall like tears. Sometimes I lie down under the sad tree and watch the trembling of the branches, as if the birds had just landed or taken flight.



## LIST OF THE BOOKS sent to the jurors

- *Letras robadas*, Océano Travesía
- *Cuando el mundo era así*, Cataplum
- *Caperucita roja y otras historias perversas*, SM
- *El árbol triste*, SM