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Special Topic
Transculturation

PEGASO

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SPONSORS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS
TO OUR READERS

The board of directors is pleased to announce this new refereed academic journal *Pegaso*, dedicated to offering international perspectives on literary and art studies in response to the growing interest of both professors and graduate students.

Founded by four of the University of Oklahoma’s Spanish doctoral students in the Fall of 2005, *Pegaso* (the Spanish form of the English Pegasus), recalls the miraculous winged horse of Greek mythology. When the great hero Perseus decapitated the Medusa, from her neck sprang Pegasus; later Bellerophon rode this astonishing creature to destroy the ferocious Chimera. For centuries Pegasus has symbolized qualities surrounding its birth, combating evil forces or lending assistance to heroic deeds. The journal *Pegaso* similarly aspires to be an academic forum that allows inner human potentials grow from limited material means. With this goal in mind, *Pegaso* has obtained the sponsorship of the Department of Modern Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics; an affiliation with *World Literature Today*; and support from generous sponsors whose time, interest, and monetary support have made this inaugural issue possible.

*Pegaso* will offer its readers a broad spectrum of information on varied themes concerning the Iberian Peninsula, Latin America, or U.S. Latino culture, in the fields of literary criticism, creative works, and visual arts. Our collaborations will explore themes ranging from medieval to contemporary times and will help to strengthen academic and artistic communication among international scholars at both the graduate and professorial levels.

The board of directors would like to recognize the invaluable contributions that our collaborators have made to this project. Similarly, we wish to thank our readers. Without their passion for exploring the art and literature of the Hispanic world, *Pegaso* would never have been possible.
CREATIVE WORKS SECTION

IN MEMORY OF TOMÁS RIVERA
(1935 – 1984)

Ph.D. Alumnus
Department of Modern Languages,
Literatures, and Linguistics
University of Oklahoma

The Pegaso board of directors wishes to dedicate their first section of creative works to a University of Oklahoma graduate, Dr. Tomás Rivera, who in 1969 received a doctorate in Romance Languages and Literatures from our own department. His literary accomplishments as a published novelist, poet, and essayist have brought honor and recognition to our university; but more importantly, we want to highlight his life of service dedicated to education and university administration. After graduating, Tomás Rivera served as a professor of Spanish literature and also held various administrative positions at universities in the states of Texas and California. Even today, The Tomás Rivera Policy Institute (TRPI), located on the campus of the University of Southern California, stands as testimony to his interests in advancing policy and key issues affecting Latino communities. Founded in 1985, this freestanding, nonprofit organization provides objective research, having published over 200 reports and policy briefs on a wide range of topics from immigration and education, to technology and employment.

Beyond his many distinctions and accomplishments, however, as we reflect on the theme we have chosen to inaugurate our first issue of Pegaso, we know of no better individual whose life work embodies so implicitly the process of transculturation we propose to explore. Our many collaborators have written eloquently on this theme, in an effort to shed some light on the impact and implications of exile, migration, and immigration on the different social groups in the Americas and Iberian Peninsula. So we pause for a moment to remember the life of Tomás Rivera and the many processes of “deculturation” and “neoculturation” that transformed the life of this outstanding man.

Born in Mexico, Rivera’s parents came to this country as migrant workers. He recalled with fond memories his family history, especially the stories of his grandfather’s service as an officer in the Revolution and his astonishing knowledge of military history. However, the young Rivera would have to surmount years of obstacles before completing his formal education. While following in his father’s
footsteps as a migrant worker until age twenty, he gradually underwent the long transitional process necessary for adaptation to a distinct culture. As an avid reader, Rivera’s natural curiosity and his exploration of his past through his writings would eventually lead him on the path toward a re-identification of himself, one that would also entail a sense of loss, uprooting, and change.

Best known for his novel published in 1971, \( \ldots \) y no se lo tragó la tierra (\ldots And the Earth Did Not Devour Him), the book recounts the difficult lives of migrant workers, but in truth, celebrates their strength and resilience. Considered a milestone in the Mexican American literary canon, Rivera’s work was published during the Chicano social movement of the 1970s. Despite this controversial time, Rivera himself did not view his writing as political. Through an anonymous child narrator, the author portrays the dire economic and cultural conditions experienced by the Mexican American migrant workers of the 1940s and 50s, yet resists imposing his commentary, protest, or anger. Instead, he relays to his reader the universal message of a boy’s quest for his identity. The search takes the protagonist on a journey of rediscovery to his past, to reflect on his religious and cultural beliefs as he understood them within his own family and society, and to reaffirm his own identity through a blending of the experiences, influences, and images that affected his life. Thus Rivera’s protagonist intuits a sort of collective memory of the different phases of a transitive process from one culture to another. Like the protagonist in his story, for the author himself, the forging of identity encompasses all of these processes—the loss and uprooting of the preceding culture, the creation of new cultural points of reference, and finally results in the affirmation of his own singular being.

We invite you to read other collections of short stories, poetry, and essays from this author. They can now be found in a reprinted edition of his complete works edited by Julián Olivares, Tomás Rivera: The Complete Works, 1998, by Arte Público Press of Houston, Texas.