

A 14 year-old boy sits in the darkness of the Holiday Theater watching a scene of anti-Mexican racism in a Rock Hudson/Elizabeth Taylor movie. This scene, this memory, is at the heart of *Scene from the Movie GIANT*, a remarkable book-length poem in five parts by Tino Villanueva. Villanueva excavates the meaning of this scene and, in doing so, grapples with urgent questions of cultural identity.

"Villanueva seems to be the total integration of the English-speaking intellectual with the Spanish-speaking counterpart. He has given us an unusual approach to poetic biculturalism."

—*World Literature Today*

"Tino's poetry reclaims the identity of every Chicano who has ever sat in the back row. The most moving poetry I've read in years! Gracias, bro."—Rudolfo Anaya

"With beauty and wisdom, he restores that sense of place within each of us, that territory within the soul so often stolen by acts of racism and hatred."—Ana Baca

"In a masterful act of cultural syncretism, Villanueva subsumes the "giant" that brought his childhood to an abrupt end and started him on the path towards poetry."

—Chon A. Noriega, UCLA Department of Film & Television

"Villanueva puts into writing the thoughts and experiences of many generations of Anglos and Chicanos in Texas. He takes us from experience to writing, from writing to screen, then to the poet's page, and returns to experience."—*The El Paso Times*

"...his poetry stresses the constant tension felt by the Chicano who, living between two cultures, has a double sensitivity at the uneasy core of his existence." —*Lector*

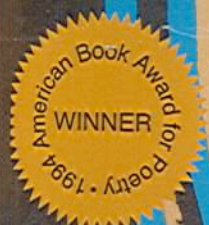
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Tino Villanueva

Scene from the Movie GIANT

Curbstone

The book cover features a stylized illustration of a face with large, dark, expressive eyes and a wide, open mouth. The face is rendered in shades of brown and black, with bright blue outlines for the eyes and mouth. The background is a mix of dark and light brown tones. The title "Scene From the movie GIANT" is written in large, white, blocky letters with black outlines, stacked vertically on the left side. The author's name "TINO VILLANUEVA" is written in similar white, blocky letters with black outlines on the right side.

Scene From the movie
GIANT
TINO
VILLANUEVA

Scene from
the Movie
GIANT

What I have from 1956 is one instant at the Holiday
Theater, where a small dimension of a film, as in
A dream, became the feature of the whole. It
Comes toward the end...the café scene, which
Reels off a slow spread of light, a stark desire

To see itself once more, though there is, at times,
No joy in old time movies. It begins with the
Jingling of bells and the plainer truth of it:
That the front door to a roadside café opens and
Shuts as the Benedicts (Rock Hudson and Elizabeth

Taylor), their daughter Luz, and daughter-in-law
Juana and grandson Jordy, pass through it not
Unobserved. Nothing sweeps up into an actual act
Of kindness into the eyes of Sarge, who owns this
Joint and has it out for dark-eyed Juana, weary

Of too much longing that comes with rejection.
Juana, from barely inside the door, and Sarge,
Stout and unpleased from behind his counter, clash
Eye-to-eye, as time stands like heat. Silence is
Everywhere, acquiring the name of hatred and Juana

Cannot bear the dread—the dark-jowl gaze of Sarge
Against her skin. Suddenly: bells go off again.
By the quiet effort of walking, three Mexican-

Unearthed the treasures of oil, buried his soul in
Money and went incoherent with alcohol. When the 40's
Came, two young men were drafted, the one called *Angel*
Dying at war. It's a generational tale, so everybody

Aged once more and said what they had to say along the
Way according to the script. And then the end: the
Hamburger joint brought into existence to the beat of
"The Yellow Rose of Texas," Juana and her child the

Color of dark amber, foreshadowing the Mexican-looking
Couple and their daughter, all in muteness, wanting
To be served. I climbed out of bed and in my head
Was a roaring of light—words spoken and unspoken

Had brought the obliterated back. Not again (I said,
From my second-floor room)...let this not be happening.
Three and-a-half hours had flicked by. As the sound
Trailed off into nothing, memory would not dissolve.

The Benedicts (up-close)

Together with their daughter Luz, they
Are casually rich, self-assured, handsome—: have
Written their hoof-beats upon the land and

Named it; whose son is absent from this
Scene and is not a keeper of cows, but Harvard-trained
Instead, and thus a rebel who practices

The goodness of medicine alongside the
Ethnic good looks of his able nurse, Juana, who is
Here with her child trying to cross

The burning threshold of this pull-in café
And gets caught in the vast unwelcome which are the eyes
Of Sarge that fire upon the heart.

The Existence of Sarge

The old man places his hat on the table and
All three have sat down, the same as if their
Ancestors had been there first. (Jump cut
To Sarge): who is all at once by the booth in
Time to hear the man stricken in years:
"Señor, buenos días." On this earth where
Animals have crawled into men, Sarge is tall
Among them, well past six-feet, oppressive
Everywhere, in a white shirt, sleeves rolled
Up that declare the beefiness of his arms
Which, if extended, could reach across bodies
Of water. He stands there like God of the
Plains country, heavy-footed like a troglodyte,
And what he says he says with the weight of
A dozen churches behind him: "You're in the
Wrong place, amigo. Come on, let's get out of
Here. Vamoose. *Ándale*." The old man, whose
Skin is second-stage bronze from too much sun
That's gotten to it and won't pull back its
Color, has feebly searched among the
Threads of his pocket and extracted the sum
Of his need. In quietude (etched in raw umber):
Reliquary hands are endlessly making a
Wordless offering in a coin purse. Then the
Very way the tight-wound voice of Sarge
Echoes through the café walls, out onto the
Street, and back inside the Holiday Theater