One Day I'll Tell You the Things I've Seen: Stories. Santiago Vaquera-Vásquez. Albuquerque: U. of New Mexico P., 2015. p/bk 120 pp. ISBN 978-0-8263-5573-7. Price $18.95.

The fifteen stories in this slender volume read like a somewhat disjointed novella. Little by little, in bits and pieces, we learn the story of the Rodriguez family, focusing on Daniel Rodriguez, a middle-aged, divorced college professor who is also the narrator of most of the stories. The book's main theme is the very timely one of immigration and its consequences in the lives of immigrants.

The stories are framed by two episodes in which Daniel finds himself waiting to cross the border from Mexico to the US. In the first episode his father, "who left for the other side and never came back," and who is now "a blurry memory of a figure saying good-bye from a doorway and driving away in his car," (3) has just died. When the border guard asks Daniel what he is bringing from Mexico, he wants to reply, "Nothing more than my dead," but instead simply replies "Nothing." In the episode that concludes the book, the border guard asks him where he is going, and he replies, "¿A dónde voy? Home. A mi home," but then goes on to say that at that precise moment, he doesn't know where that is (120). The bilingual, Spanglish reply is symptomatic of the fact that he doesn't really feel "at home" in either English or Spanish.

In fact Daniel's life has been one of rootlessness. He is a wanderer, a vagabond, who is compelled to keep moving and feels most at home in airports. Born in a small, mostly Mexican-American farming community in Northern California, Daniel was first uprooted at the age of thirteen when his abusive alcoholic father abandoned the family and his younger sister was diagnosed with cancer. His mother was forced to send the other children to live with relatives for a couple of years. At that time "he tried to make himself hard, no longer wanted to feel, had to make himself numb to everything" (85). As a teenager, because he was very bright and a good student, the other kids "saw him as a nerd or a coconut [i.e., brown on the outside and white on the inside] who had rejected his own raza to be white" (99). Later, Daniel attends Dartmouth College, where he has little in common with either the upper-class Anglo students or the Hispanics from wealthy families. He experiences similar alienation in graduate school

and in the academic community. Though he does not feel comfortable in white society and prefers to live in areas with a large Mexican-American population, he views his own community with a jaundiced eye. His opinion of the Hispanics he meets in Southern California is that "Self-hate leaked from their skin. They were the ones who came from money but denied it, as if being upper-class were a disease. They wanted to be farmworkers and claimed to be authentically attached to the land so they could say that they knew discrimination" (14-15). In fact "Hispanic" in this book is a code word for "affluent/assimilated." However, his attitude toward "Chicanos" (social activists) is similarly ironic if somewhat less hostile. The book is full of examples of the cruelty with which Mexican Americans treat each other. For example, one character, María—who calls herself Betty—says that another, "Andrea, was nothing more than a chava who, since she couldn't be white, opted to be an exotic Latina" and that "any interest that Andrea had in the plight of the poor was nothing more than show" (24-25). The narrator, however, informs us that in fact "Betty" herself came from privileged roots and would never know suffering.

Daniel's marriage breaks up because his wife finds him distant, lacking emotions and empathy. He has a number of fleeting affairs with different women—some of them carried on simultaneously—but all eventually break up because of Daniel's inability to commit. He understands that this is because he can't bear to lose control and fears that a deeper, lasting relationship would lead inevitably to suffering.

So he just keeps moving, driven by "insatiable longings for elsewhere" (117). The penultimate chapter in this book, "Snapshots of People I've Known," is a series of poignant, nostalgic sketches of people he has met in Turkey, San Francisco, Mexico City, Madrid, Amsterdam, Cholula, Iowa City, Pennsylvania, and Tijuana, among other places, "the people I've known and their forms of departure" (117).

Michael McGaha
Pomona College