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### City of Slow Dissolve

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CITY OF SLOW DISSOLVE

by

John Michael Chávez

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of  
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska  
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements  
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: English

Under the Supervision of Professor Amelia M. L. Montes

Lincoln, Nebraska

May, 2011

CITY OF SLOW DISSOLVE

John Michael Chávez, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 2011

Advisor: Amelia M. L. Montes

*City of Slow Dissolve* examines identity, displacement, and construction of the self.

Beginning with the persona's root location of Colorado Springs, Colorado, moving to

Detroit, Michigan and concluding with Las Cruces, New Mexico, the speaker of the

included poems articulates the complexities of lived emotion (e.g., anxiety, anger, guilt,

and eventual acceptance), of the critical evaluation of one's surroundings, and of the

fractures of the self as the result of elected displacement in the service of personal

advancement. It is with this in mind that these poems avoid thematizing what it means to

be a Latin@ living in the United States today. Thus, the collection is not so much

populated by assimilation-driven, narrative poems, as much as it is by lyrical and prose

reflections, observations and fragments that comment on how the hopes of personal

advancement, the reality of displacement, and the effects of class drift are at times at odds

with close-knit, ethnic communities. As such, *City of Slow Dissolve* attempts to reshape

the notion of what constitutes poetry's articulation of ethnic identity in the United States

today.