

***Urban Spaces in al-Andalus:
Places of Unrivalled Desire and Devastating Exile.***

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Urban structures aim at the construction of private and public spaces that will define the religious, cultural, political, military power, and the singular identity of its citizens. I chose al-Andalus as the center of this discussion on visual urban culture and its literary manifestation from the XIth to the XVth century for its unique historical and cultural circumstances and for constructing an alternative social space, as a manifestation of the discourse of the Other.

The urban splendor represented by Córdoba, Sevilla, Valencia, Granada, and Murcia among many cities of medieval al-Andalus has been immortalized by poets and writers who created unrivalled images of their world. The literary images created by Hispano Arabic, Jewish, and Christian poets from al-Andalus are carriers of ideological meaning, for they represent the identity of the specific group of people and their symbiosis with the urban space.

Moreover, the literature created in al-Andalus is a literature of exile. It shares unique traits, especially those of a certain literary patriotism that will allow its citizens to define who they are and develop a self-*auto conciencia* of their literature.

As this paper argues, urbanism provided the necessary space for the Muslim, Jewish, and Christian culture to coexist in Medieval Spain, a space where their identity

would prevail. The literary and architectural manifestations of the urban space are two approaches used in the creation of urban discourse and visualization. The poetic as well as the physical construction or destruction of the city represents the defiant or defeated cultural identity of its citizens. The texts that I analyze serve as a perfect example of the importance of the city among the three cultures of al-Andalus and as Dodds suggests, today's urban spaces in Spain are a reflection of "a cultured shared, a culture born of tensions and dialogue, of resistance and admiration" (Dodds 95). In sum, the literary representations of urban places are testimony of the importance given to the city in all three cultures in the permanent struggle to affirm their own singular identity and power over the Other.

Jerrilynn D. Dodds, "Spaces" 83-96. In Menocal, ed., *The literature of Al-Andalus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

PS> I WILL NEED EQUIPMENT FOR MY PRESENTATION: PROJECTOR, SCREEN, FOR MY PP. Thank you!