CONCLUSION

A FINAL LOOK BACK

In 1248, the city of Seville falls to the Christians marking the effective end of Muslim hegemony in the Iberian Peninsula. Although the Naṣrid kingdom of Granada will hold out for another two and a half centuries before falling to the Castilians Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492, by the mid-thirteenth century al-Andalus had ceased to exist as a viable political entity. However, as shown, intimations of the end came centuries before. Constructions and re-constructions of al-Andalus take place in a poetic imagination that moves between memories of a literary golden age and personal-historical experiences. All of the writers treated in this study lived during transitional moments in Andalusi history that could easily be described as cultural upheavals, most notably the decline in status of the Arab (or Arabic-style) litterateur. Moreover, their choices of genre reflect and express these ruptures. Each genre consists of discourses, styles, and fields of imagery that in themselves carry meaning.

The city elegy (*rithāʾ al-mudun*) is, of course, rooted in loss. In the early eleventh century, in mourning the loss of Cordoba—a Cordoba rich in Arab tradition, and literary and cultural heritage—Ibn Shuhayd constructs his poetic monument to his beloved city out of his own perceptions, memories, and use of literary conventions from the *rithāʾ al-mudun*. Al-Saraquṣṭī, writing about a century later, reflects different political-cultural challenges, and presents an elegy to the city of Qayrawan in rhymed prose. The shift from the *qaṣīda* to the *maqāma* marks a change in the twelfth century Andalusi’s relationship to the poetic past from one of respect, to a more complex and uneasy one. This heritage is both embraced and rejected as poetry is translated into highly embellished prose, and the Arabic language itself can no longer by relied upon as a mediator between representation and reality.

Moses Ibn Ezra, who wrote from outside of al-Andalus but firmly within the Andalusi poetic universe, adds further dimension to the reconstruction of al-Andalus as a Jewish writer whose career straddled linguistic and cultural worlds and who embodied multiple religious and literary histories. He writes from a doubly exiled position—that of the
larger Jewish diaspora, as well as his own displacement from the literary culture of al-Andalus to the Christian north of Spain. His poetry is infused with a pride for his Andalusī past, and a melancholic nostalgia for it. By writing in the ‘modernist’ (muhdath) style and utilizing the oldest of Arabic literary conventions, the ruined campsite (al-atlāl), all in biblical Hebrew, Ibn Ezra embodied the multiple identities that define Jewish al-Andalus.

Finally, the treatises discussed here that proclaim the superiority of al-Andalus over other regions by Ibn Ḥazm, Ibn Ezra, al-Shaqundī, and Ibn al-Khaṭīb, provide a lens through which to view a shifting sense of Andalusī identity as the fortunes of literary culture changed from the eleventh to the fourteenth century. Each writer expresses his conception of al-Andalus as shaped by al-Andalus’ changing relationship to the eastern Islamic world (al-mashriq), the Christian north, and North Africa (al-maghrib). These conceptions move from a distinct conservatism and adherence to eastern tradition in Ibn Ḥazm and Ibn Ezra, to a more defensive and nostalgic assertion of Andalusī greatness in al-Shaqundī, to an ambivalent and somewhat ambiguous statement of Andalusī-Maghribī ties in the writings of Ibn al-Khaṭīb.

For the writers treated in this book, temporal distance from the places and events they recall is not the only factor in determining the nostalgia they expressed. The yearning for the eastern past that ʿAḥd al-Rahmān I expressed in eighth century Córdoba was informed by the language in which he wrote, and can be viewed as a model for later Andalusīs. As I have shown in the preceding chapters, these writers remembered and defined al-Andalus to last as long as these works are read by looking back to the past and using different literary forms that themselves rely on the language and imagery of nostalgia. It is through the writing of these texts, and reading them, that the borders of al-Andalus are defined and preserved even after al-Andalus seems to be gone. But, of course, it is not quite gone. Links to and echoes of al-Andalus can be heard even after the final end of Muslim rule in al-Andalus in 1492, in the aljamiado literature of crypto-Muslims,1 the

1 Texts written by Spanish Muslims or crypto-Muslims in Castilian and Aragonese using Arabic script. See Vincent Barletta, Covert Gestures: Crypto-Islamic Literature as Cultural Practice in Early Modern Spain (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005); Luce López-Baralt, “The Moriscos,” in The Literature of Al-Andalus. Miguel Ángel Vázquez, “Poesía morisca (o de cómo el español se convirtió en lengua literaria del islam,” Hispanic Review 75:3 (2007), 219–242; Gerard Wiegers, Islamic Literature in