

# IMAGES OF RODRIGO: THE CONSTRUCTION OF PAST AND PRESENT IN LATE MEDIEVAL IBERIAN CHRONICLES\*

*Imágenes del rey Rodrigo: La construcción del pasado  
y del presente en las crónicas bajomedievales*

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**RESUMEN:** Estudios recientes sobre el reinado del último rey visigodo tienden a representar las narraciones medievales como parábolas de (mala) conducta sexual. Un análisis de las narraciones bajomedievales sugiere que los autores de múltiples versiones de los acontecimientos del año 711 los juzgaron de otra manera. El presente artículo estudia el reinado de Rodrigo en varias crónicas medievales y señala la necesidad de tener en cuenta una amplia gama de información contextual a la hora de analizar el discurso de la crónica medieval.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Historiografía bajomedieval. El rey Rodrigo. Leyendas.

**ABSTRACT:** Many recent critical studies of the reign of the last of the Visigothic kings have concentrated on the extent to which medieval and early modern representations of the period depict the reign of Rodrigo as a parable of sexual misconduct. A return to late medieval narrative accounts of the events surrounding the invasions of 711 suggests that most medieval chroniclers saw the fall of Visigothic Spain in a different light. The present article examines chronistic narratives of the period and points to the necessity of considering a full range of contextual information when analysing the discourse of medieval chronicles.

**KEYWORDS:** Later Medieval Historiography. King Rodrigo. Legends.

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Of all the kings of medieval Iberia a number stand out for the interest that they have generated in the historical and literary culture of the Peninsula. In the Visigothic period, two are especially notable. Wamba is recalled at great length in many medieval chronicles and appears in several subsequent cultural manifestations, most notably in Lope's eponymous drama. If the reign of Wamba is recalled as a positive moment of the Iberian past, the opposite can only be said of that of Rodrigo, the last of the Visigoths. The reason for this is, of course, relatively straightforward. After all, the sudden and cataclysmic collapse of Visigothic Iberia must have required some explanation in later histories of place and people and all the more so since, from the perspective of later centuries, it was configured to lead to an ongoing religious, cultural and ethno-dynastic struggle for domination in the Peninsula. If 711 is the hinge on which later narratives of decline and fall pivot, it is hardly surprising that the figure of the reigning king would attract the attention of later writers and composers, and especially given the mysterious disappearance of the king at the moment of defeat. And so it proves: of all the Visigothic kings, none appears in a greater number of historical and literary accounts than the last of them; the lost king whose reign and defeat is constantly re-imagined as a parable of corruption, both personal and general, betrayal and sexual misconduct.

Much of the interest generated has, in truth, precious little to do with the historical Rodrigo<sup>1</sup>. Few scholars make any large-scale attempt to assess medieval understandings of Rodrigo as a historical figure, for most critics are rather more interested in the development of Rodrigo as myth and in particular in the place of Rodrigo –and perhaps more critically La Cava, the victim of his sexual predation– in the cultural history of the Iberian world. A recent example of this is Elizabeth Drayson's provocatively titled *The King and the Whore King Roderick and La Cava*; a history of the evolution of representations of the pair which devotes precious little attention to late-medieval historical images of Rodrigo and even in the chapter that does deal with chronicles focuses primarily on the *Arreglo toledano de la Crónica de 1344* and Pedro de Corral's *Crónica sarracina*, neither of which can be considered typical of the genre<sup>2</sup>. Inasmuch as the aim of the book is the examination of legend, of course, this is hardly surprising, but it is indicative of a tendency among recent scholarship to

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<sup>1</sup> The bibliography on Rodrigo is, of course, extensive. For commentary on the historical Rodrigo see COLLINS, R., *Early Medieval Spain: Unity in Diversity, 400-1000*, London and Basingstoke, MacMillan, 1983; COLLINS, R., *The Arab Conquest of Spain*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1989.

<sup>2</sup> DRAYSON, E., *The King and the Whore: King Roderick and La Cava*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

concentrate on the elements of the story which would gain subsequent fame, or notoriety. However, it may give the impression that sexual misdemeanour was always the centre of medieval representations of Rodrigo, something which, as we will see, is manifestly not the case. Another, rather more nuanced attempt to trace the cultural history of the Rodrigo story is made by Patricia Grieve's *The Eve of Spain: Myths of Origins in the History of Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Conflict* Again, as can be seen from the title, the focus here is the cultural, religious and sexual significance of the evolution of representations of La Cava and Rodrigo; the evolution of a legend "inextricably linked to the history and culture of Spain, to its conflicted notions of national identity and to the political climate that led to the expulsion of the Jews in 1492, the mass baptism of Muslims in the early sixteenth century, and the expulsion from Spain of the descendants of these Muslim converts through the systematic expulsion from 1609 to 1614"<sup>3</sup>. Grieve does take time to notice the accounts of the early chroniclers in rather more detail, but, again reasonably since this is not her focus, does not seek to analyse the varying medieval accounts in great depth.

My approach here is rather different. I am concerned exclusively with a range of medieval chronicistic representations of Rodrigo. I aim to examine how a series of chroniclers represent the king, how these representations respond to a range of contexts of composition and reception and to outline, at least in part, how the discourse of the medieval chronicle evolves between the first half of the thirteenth century and the second half of the fifteenth century. In analysing different, but related, late medieval accounts of the reign of Rodrigo and the fall of the Visigothic kingdom, I aim to assess which parts of narrative of Rodrigo's reign appear to have held the most importance for medieval chroniclers and which mechanisms they employed to adapt these to their own particular constraints.

Of course, the chroniclers' representations of Rodrigo have not gone unnoticed by previous historians and critics. From analyses of what evidence remains to us of the early eighth-century peninsula to specific examinations of parts of the period (Sánchez Albornoz's oft-cited article being an example of the use of narrative sources in pursuit of the latter aim) many scholars have

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<sup>3</sup> GRIEVE, P., *The Eve of Spain: Myths of Origins in the History of Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Conflict*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 13. Grieve's work, like Drayson's, runs the risk of being criticised for considering the medieval narrative accounts as a function of the later development of the Rodrigo story, however it has the merit of dealing in depth with a large range of historical texts (e.g. the *Crónica mozárabe de 754*, the *Crónica de Alfonso III*).

examined the period in detail<sup>4</sup>. Menéndez Pidal's early catalogue of representations of Rodrigo naturally encompasses various chronicle versions, but he was, of course, working at a time in which the relationships between chronicle versions were not as well understood as they are now<sup>5</sup>. Many other scholars examine the question of epic and legend in medieval chronicles, and here too the figure of Rodrigo frequently has a role to play although not usually in the foreground. The most coherent attempt to analyse in detail chronistic representations of Rodrigo is that of Alan Deyermond's 1985 article<sup>6</sup>. Although his focus is specifically the *Estoria de Espanna*, he also covers some material from the sources of Alfonso's chronicle (principally Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada's earlier chronicle the *Historia Gothica*), and so his account of the way in which chroniclers configure Rodrigo, and to what ends, remains the most significant study of the king in late medieval chronicles. Deyermond's focus is explicitly on the problem of inheritance posed for Alfonso el Sabio by the existence of Rodrigo; that is, if Alfonso wished to see himself as the inheritor of the Visigothic legacy and the latest in a line of legitimate rulers of the *sennorio* that was Hispania, then he had to reconcile himself to the fact that that line passed not only through Pelayo, but through Rodrigo also. For Deyermond then, the central concern of Alfonso's depiction of the events of 711 is the placement of the notion of fall and redemption as the key to understanding the narrative. In this light, Pelayo and Rodrigo both have important functions in the maintenance of a specifically Christian order. But Alfonso's depiction is seen to be much more than this, incorporating as it does notions of *translatio imperii* and *flagellum Dei*, among others, in a perfectly symmetrical account of the fall from, and beginnings of a return to, greatness. The symmetry may not, of course, be historically justifiable, but it does place a meaning in the narrative that is perfectly consonant with the aims of Alfonso's chronicle. In this sense, Rodrigo is therefore an essential element in the redemption of Spain.

Building on Deyermond's analysis, I aim here to examine in detail the three principal thirteenth-century chronicles and a number of fourteenth and fifteenth century versions alongside them<sup>7</sup>. In what follows I examine in

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<sup>4</sup> SÁNCHEZ ALBORNOZ, C., «Cronología de la Crónica Profética. Dónde y cuando murió Don Rodrigo, último rey de los godos», *Cuadernos de Historia de España*, 1945, 3, pp. 72-76.

<sup>5</sup> MENÉNDEZ PIDAL, R., «El Rey Rodrigo en la literatura», *Boletín de la Real Academia Española*, 1924, 11, pp. 157-97, 251-86, 349-87, 519-85.

<sup>6</sup> DEYERMOND, A., «The Death and Rebirth of Visigothic Spain in the *Estoria de Espanna*», *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos*, 1985, 9, pp. 345-67.

<sup>7</sup> The texts employed here are Lucas de Tuy's *Chronicon Mundi*, Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada's *Historia Gothica*, the *Estoria de Espanna*, the *Estoria de los godos*, the *Sumario analítico de la*

particular five key narrative elements which appear in most (but not all) of the versions of the story of Rodrigo and compare the way in which these are re-configured over the centuries. The elements in question are:

- I. The manner of accession of the new king.
- II. The characterisation of Rodrigo.
- III. The actions of the king in the course of his reign, with particular emphasis on the opening of the palace in Toledo and the violation of La Cava.
- IV. The battle at the Guadiana and the reasons given for the defeat of the Visigoths.
- V. The death and burial of the king and his penance for his sins.

Most of these elements appear in all of the accounts, with the singular exception of the penance of the king which only appears in a late fourteenth-century chronicle. I will therefore examine the manner in which the individual components of the narrative are present in each of the accounts and how these are balanced according to the demands of the narrative and of the contexts of composition and reception. The way in which chroniclers write with and against each other is, in consequence, a significant element in my analysis in which the notions of horizon of expectation and historiographical habitus are important theoretical supports<sup>8</sup>.

The actual events of the years 709-711 are relatively well understood, inasmuch as such is possible from a distance of thirteen centuries, and so I do

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*Historia Gothica*, the *Libro de las generaciones*, the *Crónica d'España de García de Eugui*, the *Crónica Geral de Espanha de 1344* and the *Arreglo toledano de la Crónica de 1344*. Citations are from FALQUE REY, E (ed.), *Lucas Tudensis Chronicon Mundi*, Turnhout, Brepols, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis 74, 2003; FERNÁNDEZ VALVERDE, J., *Roderici Ximeni Historia de Rebus Hispaniae sive Historia Gothica*, Turnhout, Brepols, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis 72, 1987; *Estoria de Espanna*, El Escorial ms. Y-I-2; *Estoria de los godos*, Biblioteca Nacional de España ms 302; Sumario analítico, Biblioteca Nacional de España ms 10046; *Libro de las generaciones*, CATALÁN D., (ed.), *Crónica de 1344* pp. 213-337; *Crónica d'España de Garcia de Eugui*, El Escorial, X.II.22; *Crónica de 1344a*. CATALÁN D., (ed.), *Crónica de 1344*; *Crónica de 1344b*, CINTRA, L.F.L. (ed.), *Crónica geral de Espanha de 1344*, Lisboa, Imprensa Nacional, Casa da Moeda, 1951-1990; *Arreglo toledano de la Crónica de 1344*, Biblioteca universitaria de Salamanca 2585.

<sup>8</sup> I deal with these in greater depth in a forthcoming book: *History and chronicle in medieval Iberia: Representations of Wamba in late medieval narrative histories*, Leiden, Brill, 2011. Jauss and Koselleck's notion of "horizon of expectation" as an explanatory tool in the construction of chronicle discourse is also explored therein.

not intend to outline these again. My focus is on late medieval narrative re-writings of these events. As Grieve comments, the early Christian accounts, principally the *Crónica mozárabe de 754* and the *Crónica de Alfonso III*, provide the basis for subsequent versions, with the addition of the legendary material of Arabic-language origin<sup>9</sup>. These chronicles are quite brief however, so I begin with the first of the three great thirteenth-century narrative histories: Lucas de Tuy's *Chronicon Mundi*. Although Grieve does not consider Lucas de Tuy's history in any depth, nor indeed regard it as being especially significant, the Leonese bishop does provide us with some interesting details which perhaps speak more of the priorities of a thirteenth-century Leonese bishop than they do of the early eighth century<sup>10</sup>.

For Lucas, the disrepair of the kingdom which leads to the collapse of the reign of the Visigoths begins long before 711 and the blame for this thus lies not with Rodrigo as much as with Wittiza and others of similar ilk<sup>11</sup>. That said, part of Rodrigo's characterisation is specifically that *uita et moribus Vitice non dissimilis*<sup>12</sup>, but the portrayal that we get of the king is not an overwhelmingly negative one. Thus, he is described as being strong of arm and also that he, and indeed Pelayo, is of royal blood. This is an important characteristic for Lucas, he had said something similar for Wamba; it is clear then that the genetic inheritance of kings is a central part of kingship for the bishop and that, as a result, the condemnation to be attached to Rodrigo is toned down. He succeeds Wittiza (*Consilio magnatorum Gotice gentis in regnum successit*)<sup>13</sup> with no hint of the controversy which appears elsewhere; there is no question over the legitimacy of his reign for he is a king like any other. For Lucas, the villain of the piece is clearly Julian. The count's motivation is two-fold: although the violation of his daughter is mentioned it is his loyalty to the sons of Wittiza which is the true motivation for his actions (*Qui condolens expulsionioni eorum et dedecori consilium inihit cum eis quatenus Sarracenos euocarent...*)<sup>14</sup> and it is he that brings about the pre-invasion weakening of the kingdom through the

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<sup>9</sup> GRIEVE, *The Eve*, pp. 39-43. For an extensive account of the events of the period and early versions of the reign of Rodrigo, see MENÉNDEZ PIDAL, «El Rey Rodrigo».

<sup>10</sup> Grieve does however point out that although the Rodrigo story becomes legitimized as rape narrative in this period, none of the three thirteenth-century chronicles cast direct blame on La Cava for the fall of Spain. GRIEVE, *The Eve*, pp. 48-54.

<sup>11</sup> The responsibility of Wittiza has a lengthy history and dates to at least the ninth century, according to MENÉNDEZ PIDAL, «El rey Rodrigo», p. 176.

<sup>12</sup> III, 62, 3-4.

<sup>13</sup> III, 62, 1-2.

<sup>14</sup> III, 62, 8-10.

scattering of military strength. Rodrigo, in consequence, is something of a bystander in his own reign, and though he fights valiantly to the death (his supposed burial in Viseu also gets a mention) it is Julian and not the king who takes centre stage. The reasons for defeat are few and there is no hint of the palace of Toledo nor the supposed penance of Rodrigo which leads to his death. Julian, on the other hand, is characterised more fully and there is no ambiguity over his motivations or his responsibility. For Lucas, it is the malign noble (and the equally malign bishop Oppas) who is at fault, and this is entirely in keeping with his monarchical outlook elsewhere in the chronicle<sup>15</sup>. Also in keeping are the hints of Francophobia which appear at the end of the account<sup>16</sup>. The first substantial narrative of Rodrigo's reign therefore has little to do with symbolic associations of the evil actions of kings and still less to do with either rape or overweening pride as the ultimate cause of defeat. Lucas is in no doubt about where ultimate responsibility lies; the king is not blameless, but he is not at fault either. Despite the allusion to the rape of Julian's daughter it is clear that the invasion would have occurred anyway.

Writing short years later, and in full knowledge of Lucas's chronicle, Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada's account of the reign of Rodrigo is broadly similar to that of the Leonese bishop, but it does differ from it in significant ways. The first four of the narrative elements I mention above are contained in Rodrigo's version and also the burial in Viseu, but the balance of these is quite different to what would appear in many subsequent chronicles. For the Archbishop the origins of disaster lie in the same three reasons pre-dating Rodrigo's reign given by Lucas<sup>17</sup>. Here then, it is Wittiza and not Rodrigo who is the central cause of subsequent defeat. Furthermore, Jiménez de Rada is equally careful to emphasise the royal origins of both Rodrigo and Pelayo in a rhetorical move presumably designed to emphasise the continuation of the Gothic line post-711. A further element of the background to Rodrigo's accession is the Archbishop's unique reference to the support the new king receives from the Roman senate. As Sánchez Albornoz notes, this is an error on Jiménez de Rada's part, but it is an indication of the authority of his chronicle that the error is perpetuated in

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<sup>15</sup> Lucas's chronicle can generally be characterised as pro-monarchical and pro-Leonese and hostile to both the nobility and non-Spaniards, particularly those of Gallic origin. See for example MARTIN, G., *Les juges de Castille*, Paris, Annexes de Cahiers de linguistique hispanique médiévale 6, 1992, esp. Chapter I, 1.

<sup>16</sup> *Non sulum modo insecutionibus barbarorum, uerum etiam Francorum armis ex parte Galliarum consumpti sunt*, III, 63, 19-20.

<sup>17</sup> These are: the blinding and attempting blinding of various Visigothic nobles; the privileging of the Jews and the placement of Oppas in the see of Toledo.

many subsequent versions<sup>18</sup>. For the archbishop, Rodrigo is a rebel against the tyrant Wittiza, but he is one who is justified and approved of by all; nonetheless, given that Wittiza lives on, Jiménez de Rada is careful to respect legality and to note that *cepit conregnare Rodericus*<sup>19</sup>. Jiménez de Rada's Rodrigo fits into a clearly defined structure of the telling of history, and his reign is not accorded any particularly disproportionate treatment; although his reign ends in disaster he is seen as one of a line of kings and in keeping with the structure of the chronicle his reign is accorded no special attention. Jiménez de Rada, it seems, is interested less in the narration of detail than in ensuring that the overall scheme of history is respected.

If the manner of accession and characterisation of the new king are broadly in line with those of the *Chronicon Mundi* (*durus in bellis et ad negocia expeditus, set in moribus non dissimilis Witize*)<sup>20</sup>, there is a significant addition to the events of his reign: the opening of the palace at Toledo *contra uoluntatem omnium*<sup>21</sup>. This is dealt with in Jiménez de Rada's characteristically clipped fashion, but it is presented not as a cause of defeat so much as an omen of it, if anything it demonstrates the king's impetuosity but this is presented to us as comment on the king rather than explanation for subsequent collapse of the kingdom. Something similar could be said of the other episode referred to, that of the rape of Julian's unnamed daughter who, in the Archbishop's version, was betrothed to the king. Unlike the *Chronicon Mundi*, the *Historia Gothica* does not present Julian as a scheming noble, although it does specifically mention his links to Wittiza, thereby perhaps casting a shadow on his antecedents and character. Crucially though, the *Historia* does seem to regard this one action of Rodrigo's as the ultimate cause of defeat: *Set utrumlibet fuerit, Gallia Gotice et Hispanie excialis excidii causa fuit*<sup>22</sup>. Nonetheless, this is a statement of fact and direct consequences, rather than a reflection on sexual behaviour, for the immediate result of the rape is Julian's angry turn to his future Arab allies. The centre of all of this is not so much the unnamed daughter nor the particular actions of the king, but rather the extent to which the Goths have been brought low from their previous greatness (to which, it is understood, they will

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<sup>18</sup> Most of the chronicles that are based on the *Historia Gothica*, including the *Estoria de Espanna*, retain the detail of supposed support of the Roman Senate for Rodrigo.

<sup>19</sup> III. xviii. 3.

<sup>20</sup> III. xviii. 7.

<sup>21</sup> III. xviii. 13. The anti-Rodrigo origins of the palace legend are outlined by MENÉNDEZ PIDAL, «El Rey Rodrigo», p. 178.

<sup>22</sup> III. xviii. 9.

subsequently return). To that end, the rape is not the defining moment of Rodrigo's reign that it would subsequently become, rather it is an indication of the corruption of the Goths, recounted in neutral fashion; for the Archbishop, Rodrigo's reign is the culmination of a process of which personal conduct is merely a part. The later references to defeat are in the context of Gothic indolence in peacetime and framed as a disaster running counter to the long tradition of military victory and conquest. Rodrigo's reign is not therefore about sexual behaviour and still less about prurient detail, but rather serves as a parable of "Gothness" both good (courage and resolution in the face of military adversity) and bad (the loss of tradition and the impact of various types of treachery). It ends with only brief reference to the discovery of the king's grave at Viseu but with significant detail on the conquest of the Peninsula and the character of Hispania and the people who ruled it. If for Lucas, the cause of defeat can be found in the character of Julian as much as anything else, for Jiménez de Rada it is the failure to uphold the Gothic traditions and the breakdown of a co-operative polity which is the message of 711; although it ends with an invective against Julian the causes of disaster go far beyond the individual and their actions<sup>23</sup>. This is, of course, in keeping with the view of the Archbishop expressed elsewhere in his chronicle and speaks to the importance of the role of all contexts, and particularly those of composition, in the construction of historical discourse, for Jiménez de Rada, *grand seigneur*<sup>24</sup>, Archbishop and trusted servant of his own king, had every reason to propound the necessity for a balanced exercise of social and political power. The consequences of loss of tradition and disharmony amongst the principal classes of the body politic in 711 must have seemed as relevant at the apparent end of Reconquest as they obviously had been at its beginning.

Chronologically close to the *Historia Gothica*, but ideologically quite distinct, the *Estoria de Espanna* was presented with the significant problem of royal continuity that is addressed by Deyermond. Unlike Jiménez de Rada, Alfonso el Sabio had no particular wish to suggest that co-operative government was the key to sound leadership, but in the context of the fall of Spain placing responsibility at the feet of the king was equally unsatisfactory<sup>25</sup>. Although, as is common elsewhere in the *Estoria*, he casts an occasional nod in the direction

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<sup>23</sup> III. XX. 74-79. The invective ends: *Memoria eius in omni ore amarescet et nomen eius in eternum putrescet.*

<sup>24</sup> MARTIN, *Les juges*, p. 257.

<sup>25</sup> Alfonso's chronicle is, as one might expect, consistently monarchical in outlook, albeit in a thoroughly original fashion.

of Lucas de Tuy, it is the Archbishop's version that provides the fundamentals of the Alfonso's account of the reign and explanation of defeat. The responsibility for turning swords into ploughshares, the return of the Jews and other sins of Wittiza are all contributory factors in bringing the Goths low. In all of this, there is a clear echo of Jiménez de Rada's *Historia*, framed, it is true, in the rigid structural devices of Alfonso's history, but fundamentally unaltered. From Rodrigo's election, to his character and even to the accounts of the opening of the palace and brief reference to the rape of Julian's daughter the narrative elements clearly recall those of the *Historia*. As for Rodrigo, the immediate cause of the loss of Spain (*desto se leuanto el destroymiento de Espanna*)<sup>26</sup> is the rape of the equally unnamed daughter of Julian, but it is noticeable how little of the narration is taken up by this event and the opening of the palace of Toledo that precedes it. Equally noticeable is the toning down of Rodrigo's impetuosity; his opening of the palace is brief and the allusion to the opposition of others is removed entirely<sup>27</sup>. In truth, Rodrigo figures hardly at all in his own reign and, in line with the *Historia*, the final invective is directed solely at Julian. If we are invited to blame Rodrigo for the fall of Spain, then this is not done overtly. Indeed, when the sins of the Goths are finally enumerated it is his blinding of Wittiza (along with so many other such sins of other kings) which is mentioned and not any other mis-deeds. How then are we led to understand the fall of Spain? Not as the consequence of mis-rule by one king, but as the gradual loss of the characteristics that had made the Goths great. The opening of the palace and the rape of Julian's daughter are an indication of inevitability and an immediate cause, respectively, but neither of them are central explanatory factors. Both are included alongside the loss of custom and the influence of pestilence, we presume, because both are well known, but neither is accorded much explanatory power. For that, we have to return to the prologue to the *Estoria* which promises to speak of:

*como por el desacuerdo que ouieron los godos con su sennor el rey Rodrigo & por la traycion que urdio el conde don Jllan & el arçobispo Oppa, passaron los daffrica & ganaron lo demas despanna*<sup>28</sup>.

Herein lies the true meaning of Rodrigo's reign for Alfonso: the dangers of discord and treachery, and not the personal conduct of the king. Again, one

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<sup>26</sup> 190va. 47-8.

<sup>27</sup> As might be expected, the silencing of monarchical error is not unusual in Alfonso's view of the past.

<sup>28</sup> 2vb. 16-20.

might imagine why this would have been of interest to the king of Castile in the 1270's.

All three chroniclers then could be described as sober realists. They recount events at greater or lesser length in the context of long perspective on the Peninsula, but none of them describes in great depth what would come to be considered later the key moments of Rodrigo's reign. By this token we might imagine that neither the palace nor the as-yet-unnamed daughter of Julian were considered to be especially important in explaining the events of 711.

Later chronicles would see a shift in these priorities. Two early translations of the *Historia Gothica* demonstrate how this process occurs. The first of these, the *Estoria de los godos*, has a unique take on the events of Rodrigo's reign. Contrary to the subsequent views of Rodrigo, it is the opening of the palace rather than the rape of the still-unnamed daughter which attracts the greatest attention. One element of this is worthy of particular mention: in line with practice elsewhere in the translation, the account is brought to life with additional details. Thus, it is said that Rodrigo opened the palace because he had no *guerra nin coyta nin mengua*<sup>29</sup>, the words of the cloth bearing the images of Spain's future conquerers are written in four languages rather than Jiménez de Rada's one, the detail of each king adding a lock to the palace emerges and a more explicit link is made between the figures depicted and the all-conquering Arabs. In this phenomenon we see a gradually increasing interest in the detail of individual occurrences; the set-piece thereby become the focus of the narration, complete with added dramatic tension. It is this, rather than the rape, which is seen as the key to the destruction of Spain. Although Rodrigo fights his losing battle well; in the face of treachery of the sons of Wittiza and, more importantly *muestro peccado*<sup>30</sup>, Spain is lost. That Rodrigo is responsible is emphasised by his presence at the beginning of the invective against Julian; when the chronicler states *Asi fino la profecia del paño de Toledo & la coudiçia & los fechos del rey Rodrigo*<sup>31</sup> he is sharing the blame for the disaster in a move which begins the process of shifting the chronicle away from the recounting of time past within an ordered structure and towards a retelling of the past in which the dramatic setpiece takes prominence. But it is most telling that in the late thirteenth century the drama of the rape is not what concerns the chroniclers most. This is borne out by the evidence of another early translation of the

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<sup>29</sup> 21r. 27-8.

<sup>30</sup> 22v. 24. The anonymous translator places a more immediate, and collective, interpretation on the fall of Spain than was provided by his sources.

<sup>31</sup> 23r. 10.

*Historia Gothica*, known as the *Sumario analítico de la Historia Gothica*. Rodrigo's reign is recounted at a length which is unusual for what is generally a succinct chronicle. Here, the blame attaches almost exclusively to Julian, and no explanation is given for this, as his daughter is not mentioned. The palace of Toledo does, however, make an appearance (albeit in the margins) in another indication of the fact that thirteenth-century chroniclers had little interest in matters sexual where Rodrigo was concerned. This is also borne out by many of the subsequent translations of the *Historia Gothica* and re-writings of the *Estoria de Espanna*.

A rather different approach can be seen in a historiographical tradition which is quite distinct to that of Lucas de Tuy, Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada and Alfonso el Sabio. This is the Navarrese tradition, which is represented by the *Liber Regum* and its 1260's recasting the *Libro de las generaciones*. Following the *Liber Regum*, the *Libro* says of Rodrigo that *fo bon rrey e conquiso muyto*<sup>32</sup>. The account of his reign makes no mention of the palace of Toledo or of the daughter of Julian, rather the blame for defeat lies on two key features: the first is encapsulated in the phrase *entraron moros en Espayña a la era de dcclii, tres idus nouenbris, por consejo de los fijos del rrey Baptizanus e de so nieto el conde don Julian*<sup>33</sup>. Here the reference is back to Wittiza (called *Batizanus, el postrimero rrey de los godos* who is characterised as *de mala uida e ouo muytas mugeres*)<sup>34</sup> and his sons on whom most opprobrium falls. The second element is equally clear: *por el pecado de los christianos e por mala mantenencia que tenian, cobraron otra vez moros toda la tierra de mar a mar*<sup>35</sup>. The context here is different, however; surrounding the reign of Wamba is a host of new kings, their inheritors and repeated Muslim invasions. Thus, the fall of Spain might definitively occur in Rodrigo's reign, but Christian/Islamic conflict had been occurring for some time. In consequence, no personal blame attaches to Rodrigo, rather the fault lies with other individuals and the sins of the Goths who have allowed themselves to be weakened by bad customs. If there is a hint of the feminisation of the Goths here in the weakening brought about by the marriage of the clergy, it is no more than a hint and sexual immorality is scarcely seen as a major contributory factor in the disaster. On the contrary, it is the actions of a particular member of the nobility, and the indication of the evil associated with one particular lineage, which stands out. This is, of course, in

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<sup>32</sup> p. 306, l.319.

<sup>33</sup> p. 306, l.321.

<sup>34</sup> p. 306, l.315.

<sup>35</sup> p. 307, l.330.

perfect consonance with the stance of the *Libro de las generaciones* elsewhere; something which is perhaps not to be wondered at, given the dynastic background to the composition of both *Liber* and *Libro*<sup>36</sup>. In one sense then, this is a story of continuity without explicit blame falling on the figure of the king. Previously, the *Libro* had stated that *duro el linaje de los godos ata el tiempo del rrey Rodrigo en Espayña*<sup>37</sup>, so it is clear that, notwithstanding the absence of structural divisions, we might be led to understand that Rodrigo represents the end of one lineage and the beginning of another. On the other hand, in one of the *Libro*'s more obscure passages the election of Pelayo is described as follows:

*E leuaron por election al rrey Pelayo, qui estaua en una cuua en Achena e hera del linaje del rrey Rrodrigo. Este rrey don Pelayo hera fijo de la hermana del rrey Rrodrigo, de la rreyña vieja, de la que escondio las goarnaziones en los silos e en las cubas e fezo inplir las cubas de los sillos e de las cuebas de saluado que no conoçiesen que goarniziones auia dentro. Desta era Castilla la Vieja, por lo que hera infantango della*<sup>38</sup>.

Not only does it appear, then, that Rodrigo is not directly blamed for the fall of Spain, but the new lineage acquires its legitimacy by virtue of its blood link to him. This is a quite unique view for the thirteenth century (and nor does it do not appear in the *Liber Regum*); it is one which presents a conception of the disaster that re-enforces the necessity for the inheritance principle (of importance in the context of Navarrese dynastic strife) and specifically links the pre- and post-Fall rulers. And it is worth emphasising that nowhere in any of this is there a mention of rape.

The emphasis on the rape of Julian's daughter first becomes prominent with the tradition of chronicles associated with Pedro Afonso's *Crónica d'España de 1344*. The two fourteenth-century versions of the Conde de Barcelos' compilation and its fifteenth-century Toledan re-writing, the *Arreglo toledano*, figure prominently in most critical accounts of Rodrigo's reign. Alongside Pedro de Corral's *Crónica sarracina* they are the most studied texts

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<sup>36</sup> The context of the composition of the *Liber Regum* was one of dynastic uncertainty due to the restoration of a monarchical line which passed through an illegitimate son. In the case of the *Libro de las generaciones*, the context was similar, but different: the incoming Evreux (French) dynasty was not without its opponents in the 1260s.

<sup>37</sup> p. 306, l.312.

<sup>38</sup> p. 308, l.336-40. Menéndez Pidal comments on Eugui's use of this passage without realising it is originally from the *Libro de las generaciones*. «El Rey Rodrigo», p. 285.

in the analysis of medieval accounts of Rodrigo, although, as will be seen, they are by no means typical of medieval chronistic representations of the king. In the first instance, it should be noted that the lengthy versions of Rodrigo's reign derive not from the Alfonsine chronicles which provide Pedro Afonso with most of his source material, but rather the *Crónica del Moro Rasis*; that is, the romance translations of al-Razi's *Ajbar Muluk al-Andalus*<sup>39</sup>. Pedro Afonso's version is of interest for a whole host of reasons, covering all but one of the narrative blocs mentioned above.

The characterisation and election of Rodrigo is quite different to that of the other texts dealt with here. Rodrigo is chosen because he is "sesudo", he is from the lineage of kings and will ensure justice for all. Most importantly, he is not one of the sons of Costa (Wittiza) as this is prime requirement of the council that chooses him. What also differs in this version of Rodrigo is the manner of narration. Throughout there are significant set piece moments which are narrated in direct speech. Unlike the sober version of Jiménez de Rada, for example, we are presented here with an account that is brought to life at great length, both elements of which might be considered to hint at a new purpose for historical narration, or at the very least, a different class of audience. The moment of election is also revealing, in the oaths that are sworn (in direct speech) it is made clear that Rodrigo is a "regidor" chosen specifically by God and not for reasons of inheritance. It is also made clear that the sons of the previous king will take over when of age and that Rodrigo will rule on behalf of all (*pobres e ricos*). This latter point echoes the election of Wamba and points to some of the concerns of the mid-fourteenth-century chronicler<sup>40</sup>.

In what follows, the episodes of the palace in Toledo and La Cava are intertwined. The Cava episode is full of literary motifs (letters, advice from friend, council of war) and in it comes the first widescale representation of the rape both in the sense of the description of events and in that of the psychological and political drama that ensues<sup>41</sup>. It is not, however, solely a question of sexual morality. One of the more prominent elements explored here is the relationship between king and vassal; in particular (within the confines of Julian's council of war) the extent of Julian's responsibility to the king.

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<sup>39</sup> The later Rodrigo sections in the *Crónica de Rasis* are replaced by text taken from the *Crónica sarracina*, so it is difficult to assess how al-Razi's chronicle made the transition to romance in these passages. See CATALÁN, D. (ed.), *Crónica del moro Rasis*, Madrid. Gredos, 1975.

<sup>40</sup> The election of Wamba is accompanied by similar concerns for the well-being of all. See WARD, *History and Chronicle*, pp. 73-74 and specially Chapter 3.

<sup>41</sup> These passages are dealt with in depth in the above-mentioned works by Drayson and Grieve.

Specifically, it is suggested that Julian owes no loyalty to the king since he does not hold any land from Rodrigo<sup>42</sup>. It is clear that underlying the narrative of treachery and betrayal there is also an undercurrent of the dynamics of fourteenth-century political relationships. The extent of the narration makes of it a far more subtle account of Rodrigo's reign and since the La Cava episode is so central to it it becomes clear that there is no single condemnation of Julian, rather there is treachery on all sides. The second version of the *Crónica de 1344* is little changed from the first, and this is also interesting in itself since it had more *Estoria de Espanna* material to hand, but chose not to employ it in this case<sup>43</sup>. Furthermore, the invective against Julian has no place here, so we must assume that the author wished not to condemn Julian in the way others had.

Two other accounts, related to narrations already mentioned here, are also revealing. The *Crónica d'España de García de Eugui*, which had the *Libro de las generaciones* and the *Estoria de los godos* to hand, is a late fourteenth-century Navarrese version. Rodrigo's reign is drawn fundamentally from the *Estoria de los godos*, but it adds to it the legend of Rodrigo's death in Viseu as a result of a grisly penance given to him by the local bishop. Eugui's narration is of interest for two reasons: first, he includes the penance, which appears in no other previous prose accounts, presumably because it was widely known. That is, it seems reasonable to assume that it appears here because, although not part of the written tradition of the Rodrigo of history, it must have been popularly known (and believed to be true). This, it seems to me, is a comment on the evolution of chronicle discourse into the narration of the known and away from chronicle as historical method. Second, the account of the reign itself is made up almost entirely of the setpiece moments of the palace and Julian's daughter to the exclusion of the other narrative elements mentioned above. This also points to a movement away from the records of history as time passing and towards the notion of the detailed narration of the verosimil set piece. As a result, Eugui's narration, ostensibly a calque of the *Estoria de los godos*, is in practice something quite different, and one in which sexual conduct becomes a centre point in a way which was not true of earlier accounts.

Amongst the many other accounts of Rodrigo's reign, that of the *Arreglo toledano de la crónica de 1344* is the one that has attracted most attention. The reason for this is because of the previously-mentioned tendency to emphasise prurient detail. The *Arreglo* deals in great depth with the lead-up to the rape and its concentration on physical detail makes it quite different in character to any

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<sup>42</sup> *ca el non es tu señor, nín tienes del tierra*, CATALÁN (ed.), *Crónica de 1344*, p. 119.

<sup>43</sup> The second version of the chronicle is, as the editors note, far more of an Alfonsine chronicle.

of the other accounts mentioned here, with the possible exception of the Portuguese chronicle on which it is based<sup>44</sup>. The interest in the set-piece moment to the disregard of other historiographical structural devices in the *Arreglo* marks a sea-change in the nature of the narrative. Here, the emphasis is more on the description of the individual event than on any notion of how this might fit into the overall structure of the chronicle. To this end, many of the sections of the *Arreglo* might be considered to be self-contained; their importance lying as much in their entertainment value as in their contribution to a sustained and coherent historical narrative. This may, therefore, be considered an indication of a process by which the character of chronicle discourse changed. However, given the paucity of manuscripts of the *Arreglo* (and particularly in comparison with other chronicle versions of the Iberian past) it probably ought not be taken as a sign of the widespread acceptance of a sexualised view of the fall of Spain and the king with whom that fall was forever associated.

## CONCLUSION

It should be pointed out that the texts mentioned above are scarcely a full representation of chronistic depictions of Rodrigo in the late middle ages. In addition to a host of fifteenth-century general chronicles such as those of Rodríguez de Almela, Sánchez de Arévalo and Cartagena, to mention just a few, there were many re-writings of the Alfonsine chronicles and the *Historia Gothica* in the late medieval period also. The present analysis does not, therefore, pretend to be an exhaustive account of the ways in which Rodrigo was depicted. The texts were chosen because they are all, in one way or another, related to each other and because their particularities can be seen as illustrative of a process of evolution in late medieval chronicle discourse. Given these limitations, it is proposed that the analysis of medieval chronicles can only be of utility if a range of contextual features that contribute to their understanding are taken into account; that is, depictions of Rodrigo come to mean in a variety of

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<sup>44</sup> The first two versions have Rodrigo catch a glimpse of La Cava's ankle, whereas the *Arreglo* has him see her *folgando* naked with her friend with whom she has *especial amistad*. She also falls pregnant with the king's child.

contexts, of which the cultural context is but one. Four others seem to me to be of fundamental importance<sup>45</sup>. These are:

a. The context of composition: a notion dealt with by Georges Martin in his *Juges de Castille*. In the case of the first three chronicles dealt with here it can be seen that the narration of what are ostensibly the same events are subtly marked by the clerical/monarchical, clerical/co-operative and strictly monarchical world views that led to their composition. In this light, the character of the king, the nature of his actions and the consequences of them are seen to be significantly different. Later re-writings of the Rodrigo sections can also be illuminated by consideration of the compositional context. Thus the emphasis on the king is more understandable in a monarchical chronicle, such as that of Eugui and Pedro Afonso's insistence on the place of justice for all might be more readily understood in the personal and political context in which he was writing. None of this, of course, should be understood as determining the content or construction of the narrative but rather as contributing to it.

b. A second, similarly contributory factor is the internal, structural context of the narration. That is, where in the chronicle the section occurs, its internal significance, the relation of the section to the surrounding material, the structural characteristics of the chronicle as a whole and the structural relationships that underpin the parts and the whole. In the current analysis, it might be pointed out that these questions are rather blithely ignored. As I implicitly criticise those studies which excise the Rodrigo sections from their discursive context, it might reasonably be suggested that my own form of analysis is based on precisely this form of operating. Nonetheless, it is clear that in all the texts that concern me here, the narration of Rodrigo's reign is merely one part of a sustained narrative and that part of how these sections should be understood is to be found in the dynamics of internal discursive relationships. Thus, in the early chronicles considered here, Rodrigo's reign is made to fit into a historiographical scheme which is clearly at the service of a defined socio-political aim. Rodrigo is therefore one of many kings and not a privileged figure by comparison with other monarchs. In subsequent versions, form is replaced by detail as the principal discursive factor, that is, greater interest appears to lie in the detail of events than in their relationship to the whole of the chronicle as those events become more readily configured as free-standing stories. Despite this, to ignore the textual context within which these narrations are to be found is to deny a significant factor in how they come to mean.

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<sup>45</sup> These are developed further in WARD, *History and Chronicle*, pp. 179-181, and see also Martin, *Les juges*.

c. A further context which must be taken into account is that of reception. As we know little about the performative and reading aspects of medieval chronicles, it might be thought that there is precious little to say on the subject. On the other hand, we do have the evidence of successive versions of the chronicles in question and so we can make some educated guesses about the anxieties of influence of the chain of chroniclers, that is, the way in which they deploy their source material writing both with and against it. Again, there is a clear distinction to be made between the earlier chronicles and the later ones. The fundamentals of the narration are remarkably similar in the three great thirteenth-century chronicles and the emphases that they place on the respective narrative blocs is equally similar. From this we know that the rape of Julian's daughter did not give rise to a great deal of interest in the early vernacular accounts, rather the focus lay in all three on a wider understanding of the causes of disaster. The *Libro de las generaciones* of course pays no attention to it whatsoever, although this may be explained by the fact that the *Libro* is from an entirely autochthonous historiographical tradition. The way in which previous chronicles were read and re-interpreted by successive chroniclers is therefore an important part of the dynamics of historiographical construction.

d. A final context is what might, for want of a better term, be called the generic context. That is, the influence on the composition of, in this case, the reign of Rodrigo that is exercised by the conscious or sub-conscious knowledge that the composer was working within a specific discursive tradition. This is the realms of the poetics of the medieval chronicle which has exercised many critical minds lately<sup>46</sup>. If it can be demonstrated that there is a series of definitional characteristics in the composition of medieval chronicles, then the awareness of these might be thought to have had an impact on the nature of the composition of chronicles. Several recent studies have demonstrated a range of characteristics of form and content which are shared by a large number of Iberian chronicles (prose, narrative, chronological ordering, spatial restriction, subject matter)<sup>47</sup>. It is clear that none of these on their own, with the possible exception of content, understood in the most fundamental way possible (that is, toponyms and personal names), is a sole defining characteristic. Nonetheless, the awareness that they were writing some sort of history in broadly linear

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<sup>46</sup> Most notably in ARIZALETA, A. (ed.), *Poétique de la chronique: L'écriture des textes historiographiques au Moyen Âge (péninsule Ibérique et France)*, Toulouse, CNRS – Université de Toulouse-Le Mirail, 2008.

<sup>47</sup> See, for example, JEAN-MARIE, S., «*L'Historia de Rebus Hispaniae* de Rodrigue Jiménez de Rada: éléments d'une poétique», en ARIZALETA, A. (ed.), *Poétique*, pp. 135-152.

fashion seems to have been shared by all the chroniclers discussed here. What is notable, however, is the decline in the importance of chronology and non-narrative structuring devices and a concomitant increase in the importance of direct speech and the set piece moment, what I have described elsewhere as the loci of historiographical action<sup>48</sup>. These characteristics of the late medieval chronicle may have led to something of a crisis of the genre, or more positively to the creation of a quite different category of prose and may also leave the impression that what was important in the narrations of the end of the period was always so; something which the earlier chronicles would suggest is not true. It also appears to be the case that later chroniclers were required to include everything thought to be true (including the outlandish), which would suggest that the inclusion of the commonly-known became a defining characteristic of this type of history as the readership for it increased.

To remove the story of Rodrigo (or any other comparable narration) from the range of contexts that produced it is to fall into the trap of privileging one specific discursive element over all others. In the case of Rodrigo, the accretion of literary and historical representations over the centuries may obscure the ways in which the medieval Rodrigo came to mean. Thus, for example, when Drayson suggests that “medieval Hispanic historiography up to and including the *Refundición de la Crónica de 1344* explains the invasion of Spain as retribution for sexual licentiousness, firmly linking punishment and destruction with sexual misdemeanour according to the prescriptions of Catholicism”<sup>49</sup>, one might be tempted to regard this view as being coloured by various of the subsequent representations of Rodrigo, for, as we have seen, the question of sexual misdemeanour scarcely enters into most of the medieval accounts of Rodrigo’s reign, and where mentioned it is rarely offered as a cause of the ensuing disaster. Grieve’s more nuanced view points out that the sexual dimension to the Rodrigo story is not as prominent in the thirteenth-century narrations as Drayson’s quote would suggest, and if anything it is the palace at Toledo rather than the rape which has the greatest narrative force in early romance accounts. All of this points to the skills of chroniclers in balancing the source material with the needs of their own narratives. In weighing the demands of past present and future, they were obliged to take account of a range of influences; the two most important perhaps being what Jauss would call the horizon of expectation, comprising in this case the pre-existing historical accounts combined with what was considered to be true, and the demands of the

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<sup>48</sup> WARD, *History and Chronicle*, pp. 174-179.

<sup>49</sup> DRAYSON, *The King*, p. 215.

socio-political context in which they were writing. Their task therefore lay in the composition of these elements in determined proportions in line with (but not necessarily determined by) the contexts of composition and reception. In the chronicle versions of Rodrigo's reign we can see a gradual evolution of the discourse of historical narration away from the imposition of method and structure on the events of the past and towards an exploration (or invention) of the detail of those events. The rise in the use of direct speech, for example, may point to a different use of the stories of the past and a significantly different audience. That process may subsequently have led to conceptually different forms of prose writing. But however it was destined to evolve, the subsequent representations of Rodrigo should not inflect our view of the late medieval historical representations which can only be understood as a function of the discursive contexts outlined above.