It is a commonplace to state that history in its multiple forms has a special place in the cultural make-up of most human societies. Nowhere is this more true than in the inheritors of the Greco-Roman traditions. Thus, when John Burrow states that:

Historiography is not only a genre in itself, exhibiting continuities and revivals, as well as shifting focuses of attention. It is also a part of Western culture as a whole—at times a highly influential and even central part as well as being obviously a receptacle for the concerns of that culture and influenced by its fluctuations. [...] Versions of the past have been offered, sometimes obliquely but often with visible anxiety as diagnoses of contemporaneous predicaments or malaises.

he identifies two key elements in the writing of history, to wit, its central place as cultural form imbued with past authority and its role as reflector of contemporary concerns. Although the form of historical writing undoubtedly changed over time, the symbolic value of the control of the past can be seen as clearly in the works of Lucas de Tuy, Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada and Alfonso el Sabio as it can in those of Herodotus, Thucydides, Sallust, Livy and Tacitus. This is not to say, of course, that all aspects of historical writing are reducible to an explanation of the enunciative, socio-political and cultural contexts which form part of the environment in which histories are written, but it does mean that a fuller understanding can be reached with the aid of an analysis of the dialectic relationship between texts and contexts.

Thus far, we have been concerned with a close examination of relevant phenomena in the limited number of medieval Iberian chronicles which serve as our source material. This procedure, while having

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all the virtues of analysis at a high level of detail, naturally runs the risk of obscuring the wider contexts involved in the composition of the chronicles concerned. Having established how the writers of these chronicles write with and against their source materials it remains to assess how this constant re-writing reflects and is reflected in the political context in which it occurs. Following on from this lies the task of attempting to establish what, if anything, these texts share at the level of discursive practice. That is, to examine the (unraised) question that lies at the heart of Burrow’s quotation which assumes that there is indeed something clearly identifiable as a historiographical genre. In order to do this, some attempt must be made to extrapolate the elements of Georges Martin’s discourse of the medieval historical imaginary from the (admittedly limited) evidence provided here.² This can only be achieved with an understanding of the ways in which the chroniclers concerned address the textual context (that is, the horizons of expectation created for them by previous writers and which they in turn create) in the light of their political contexts (which do not determine but generally orient the content and form of the histories produced).³ I aim to do this in two ways: first by re-evaluating the evidence presented in the preceding two chapters in the light of the contextual elements outlined in chapter 1 and second by identifying the loci of contention, that is, the selection of thematic and formal elements which appear to have been of particular interest to the chroniclers. These latter are the historical materials which presented the chroniclers with their greatest challenges, but also their greatest opportunities in re-writing the past in the present.

The past in the present, the present in the past

Given the events of the first half of the thirteenth century, and in particular the extensive conquest of Andalucía, one might expect Lucas de Tuy’s chronicle to reflect in the past of Wamba, some of the present of Fernando III. As has previously been mentioned, the principal constituent features of the Chronicon Mundi are said to be Lucas’ clericalism, orthodoxy, providentialism and Gothicism, allied to a royalist and pro-Leonese outlook. What, if anything, of

² Martin, Les juges, 11-18.
³ See Jauss, Toward an Aesthetic, 25, 28, 30.