

A BARCELONA STAGE DESIGNER IN COLONIAL INDIA:
CATALAN TRAVELLERS, TRANSIMPERIAL MOBILITY
AND THE BRITISH RAJ IN SPAIN, C. 1908

Un escenógrafo de Barcelona en la India colonial: viajeros
catalanes, movilidad transimperial y el Raj británico
en España, c. 1908

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Abstract

In 1908, two travellers from Barcelona embarked on a year-long world tour. Stage designer Oleguer Junyent and textile heir Marià Recolons' trip was extraordinary by the standards of the metropolitan Spain of their time. A great portion of their tour took them across the British empire, with India emerging as one of their most significant stops. The article examines three major macrohistorical issues that arise from their experience in colonial India: the consolidation of a global tourism industry, the making of metropolitan understandings of European imperialism and anti-imperialism, and the production of colonial knowledge for metropolitan consumption. The article explores these issues through microhistory, with an in-depth examination of the written and visual sources produced around the tour—a travelogue, letters, articles, drawings, paintings and photographs. Through these

outputs, Recolons and Junyent presented a vision of an all-powerful yet flawed British empire in colonial India. The article argues that the tour produced a rare and original body of knowledge on colonial India in early-twentieth-century Spain, where it was eagerly consumed by metropolitan audiences.

Keywords

Transimperial history; colonial India; British empire; Spain; global tourism.

Resumen

En 1908, dos viajeros de Barcelona emprendieron un viaje alrededor del mundo de un año de duración. La vuelta al mundo del escenógrafo Oleguer Junyent y el heredero textil Marià Recolons fue extraordinaria según los estándares de la España metropolitana de la época. Gran parte del viaje se desarrolló a través del imperio británico y tuvo en la India una de sus paradas más importantes. El artículo examina tres grandes cuestiones macrohistóricas que surgen de la experiencia de Junyent y Recolons en la India colonial: la consolidación de la industria turística global, la comprensión metropolitana del imperialismo europeo y el antiimperialismo y, finalmente, la producción de conocimiento sobre las colonias para consumo metropolitano. El artículo explora estos temas a través de la microhistoria, examinando en profundidad las fuentes escritas y visuales producidas en torno a esta vuelta al mundo: un diario de viaje, cartas, artículos, dibujos, pinturas y fotografías. A través de estos medios, Recolons y Junyent presentaron una visión de un imperio británico todopoderoso pero deficiente en la India colonial. El artículo argumenta que su vuelta al mundo produjo un cuerpo de conocimiento poco común y original sobre la India colonial en la España de principios del siglo xx, donde fue consumido con entusiasmo por el público metropolitano.

Palabras clave

Historia transimperial; India colonial; imperio británico; España; turismo global.

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I. INTRODUCTION

As the train pulled out of Barcelona's Estació de França, Marià Recolons and Oleguer Junyent made an unlikely pair. Recolons, the British-educated nineteen-year-old son of one of Barcelona's wealthiest industrialist families. Junyent, thirteen years his senior, an award-winning stage designer well-known in Barcelona for his work on Wagner operas at the city's preeminent opera house, the Gran Teatre del Liceu. On 11 March 1908, with the luggage packed onto the train —travel guides, Junyent's drawing supplies, his camera— and the well-wishers having waved them off at the station, the two looked forward to reaching Marseille. It was the first stop in a year-long tour that would take them across the world. Their relationship at the start of this journey was ambiguous —they were friendly, certainly, but perhaps not quite friends. Junyent was, however, friends with Marià's parents, as well as the go-to decorator for the entire Recolons family¹. It was Marià's parents who had asked Junyent to chaperone their eldest across the globe and, crucially, provided the funds that made the tour possible. If Marià Recolons' goal was to see the world before joining the family business, Junyent hoped to find inspiration for his art in faraway lands, while burnishing his reputation and furthering his career.

Their starting point, Barcelona, was the second largest city in the metropole of a diminished empire. A major colonial power in the early modern period, most of Spain's American possessions achieved independence in the 1820s. For most of the nineteenth century, Spain remained an imperial power in Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines and equatorial and northern Africa, in a phase of "imperial retreat"². In 1898, war against the United States culminated in the loss of Spain's Caribbean and Pacific colonies. In the early

¹ Beltrán Catalán (2020: 76).

² Fradera (2012, 2017).

twentieth century, however, Spain held on to some overseas territories: its African colonies, while modest in size, constituted a “new empire” that allowed metropolitan elites to imagine Spain as a colonial power³. From the metropole of this remodelled imperial project, Junyent and Recolons visited Egypt, India, Ceylon, Australia, the Philippines, China, Korea, Japan, Canada, and the United States. A constant throughout their trip was an empire whose extension in the early twentieth century was formidable: the British empire⁴. Whether it was through direct rule or through indirect political, economic and cultural pressures, its sinews of power stretched out before them⁵. At the same time, this was a venture threatened by revolt and unrest in its most important colony, around which the entire imperial edifice was built: India⁶. The subcontinent loomed large in Recolons and Junyent’s tour, as one of the two territories Junyent was most eager to visit —along with Egypt, a *de facto* British protectorate— and the place where they choose to spend the most time in the entire tour.

This article is an examination of the Indian leg in Recolons and Junyent’s world tour against the backdrop of British imperialism. Its objective is to use their journey as a wedge that opens a space to investigate a larger area of inquiry: transimperial mobility between the Spanish and British empires in the early twentieth century. This wedge conforms to a distinct method of historical writing: global microhistory, a practice that allows historians to explore global forces through the prism of individual experience⁷. As Filippo de Vivo has argued, microhistory is especially adept at tracing the cross-border movement of individuals⁸. Each of the article’s sections zooms in on a particular problem generated by the pair’s journey. Which resources, ideas and infrastructures made it possible to travel from metropolitan Spain to colonial India? How did metropolitan travellers from Spain make sense of the British empire in India and of local resistance to it? How did they present colonial India to metropolitan audiences? Microhistory allows us to examine the global forces behind these questions —the consolidation of a global tourism industry; the making of European understandings of imperialism and of the challenges of the colonised against it; and the production of colonial knowledge for metropolitan consumption— through one singular case.

³ Clarence-Smith (1986, 1991).

⁴ Parsons (1999); W. Thompson (1999), and A. Thompson (2000).

⁵ Brown (2001).

⁶ Bayly (1975); Chakrabarti (1992); Ray (1984), and Sarkar (1973).

⁷ Ghobrial (2019: 16).

⁸ De Vivo (2019: 180-181).

Recolons and Junyent's world tour is particularly well-suited to a global microhistorical approach. It is the most substantial —in terms of the quantity, quality, and diversity of sources— of all visits of travellers from Spain to India from the mid-nineteenth century to Indian independence. Throughout the tour, Junyent wrote to his friend Miquel Utrillo —an artist himself, as well as a cultural promoter who edited and published these letters, first as a serialised travelogue and later as a book⁹. There are other written sources about the trip: magazine articles by Junyent and Recolons published in the Catalan and Spanish press, Junyent's concise travel diary, and his collection of travel ephemera¹⁰. The latter two —along with Junyent's letters to Utrillo— are held in the Armengol-Junyent Archive, a private collection maintained by the stage designer's descendants. During the tour, Junyent also produced an important body of visual sources. He sketched and painted furiously, often in scraps of hotel paper that freed him from carrying his own paper supplies. In India alone he produced over 200 works of art in mediums such as gouache, watercolour, and oil painting. An amateur photographer, he also took pictures with his compact Véroscope camera, complementing them with the purchase of professional images —a photographic collection now spread across the Armengol-Junyent Archive, the Arxiu Fotogràfic de Barcelona, and the Mas Archive at the Institut Amatller d'Art Hispànic in Barcelona¹¹. The article examines these written and visual sources through the theoretical insights of microhistory, which invites historians to read documents “beyond the edge of the page”, delving beneath their explicit content to unearth indirect suggestions and involuntary implications¹². Through this approach, Junyent and Recolons emerge not as the “faceless globetrotters”¹³ of John-Paul Ghobrial's critique of some forms of global microhistory writing, but as fully fleshed out participants in the imperial currents of the world through which they moved.

Transimperial history has produced suggestive studies that have destabilised metropolitan-centred imperial histories, emphasising instead the multi-directional contacts, alliances and contestations established between different colonies and metropolises¹⁴. While some disparate projects have examined the circulation of people and ideas between the Spanish and British empires in the modern period, this remains an understudied field —largely because the

⁹ Junyent (1981).

¹⁰ For some magazine articles examples, see Junyent (1908) and Recolons (1909).

¹¹ Beltrán Catalán (2020: 392).

¹² Levi (2019: 41-42).

¹³ Ghobrial (2014: 59).

¹⁴ Ballantyne (2012) and Hedinger and Hée (2018).

historiographical traditions of these two empires have not always been in dialogue with each other¹⁵. Within this transimperial framework, an even more unexplored issue is the contacts between metropolitan Spain and colonial India¹⁶. This article contributes to these two interconnected areas and, through it, to the history of Spain from a global perspective. Jorge Luengo and Pol Dalmau have argued for the need to bring Spain into the fold of global history, to demonstrate its embeddedness in a wide set of global connections¹⁷. If this historiographical project is to be advanced, it requires specificity and texture: some of these global connections were simply denser and more lasting than others. Microhistory emerges as a tool to reveal these textures. Even seemingly “minor” linkages such as Recolons and Junyent’s, however, can shed light on how the Spanish empire was connected with its contemporaries and their colonies.

Finally, the article also critically re-examines and expands our understanding of Recolons and Junyent’s experiences abroad. The trip has so far been described as Junyent the stage designer’s tour —the journey of a tourist-artist preoccupied with documenting the “exotic” architecture of India, China, and Japan for later use in his artistic output. This is the case of the prologue for the 1981 reedition of Junyent’s travelogue *Roda el món i torna al Born* —the edition most readily available to readers today—, as well as two more recent studies of the tour¹⁸. By decentring the tour to include Recolons and examining both travellers not as uncomplicated tourists but as men who commented on British imperialism and anti-imperial resistance from the viewpoint of Barcelona’s upper classes in metropolitan Spain, the tour emerges as something more than a “creative parenthesis” in Junyent’s artistic production¹⁹. Research on Catalan travellers to other colonial or semi-colonial spaces, such as Morocco and Egypt, has demonstrated that they saw the places they visited with a political gaze, often opining about colonialism²⁰. Recolons and Junyent’s gaze as tourists is inextricable from the European imperialism that enabled their movement across the world. By reading the written and visual sources produced around the tour “beyond the edge of the page”, the article reveals how the two men engaged with a world of colonisers and colonised.

¹⁵ For some of these examples, see Díaz-Esteve (2022); Elizalde (2011, 2016); Moisand and Segura-Garcia (2022), and Permanyer-Ugartemendia (2014).

¹⁶ Donate Sánchez (2007) and Framke (2016).

¹⁷ Luengo and Dalmau (2018: 444).

¹⁸ Junyent (1981: 5-10) and Plou Anadón (2016).

¹⁹ Beltrán Catalán (2020: 387).

²⁰ Cerarols Ramírez (2008: 198-228).

II. A STAGE DESIGNER AND AN INDUSTRIAL HEIR GO ON A WORLD TOUR

Oleguer Junyent (1876-1956) was born in Barcelona's Born neighbourhood in a family of craftspeople and artists. He studied at the Escola de la Llotja, Barcelona's art school, from 1889 to 1895. He also trained as a stage designer, rising through the ranks in the workshops of Barcelona's leading stage designers²¹. From 1899 he spent some years in Paris and travelled through Italy and Germany, again drawing copiously²². In 1901, he began collaborating with the Gran Teatre del Liceu. With his innovative themes and techniques, Junyent soon became one of the opera house's most trusted stage designers —particularly for the Wagner operas that the Liceu audience loved so much²³. He was intensely well-connected with Barcelona's industrial and political elites, who patronised him as a decorator for their grand residences²⁴. From at least 1902 he was a close friend of the influential Catalan politician Francesc Cambó —and was equally close to the ideology of Cambó's party, the Lliga Regionalista de Catalunya ("Regionalist League of Catalonia"), a conservative, monarchic, and Catalanist organisation²⁵. By the time Junyent embarked on his tour in 1908, Cambó's Lliga dominated Solidaritat Catalana, a coalition of political parties that was hegemonic in Catalonia. This brief sketch of Junyent and the Barcelona he inhabited would not be complete without mentioning a significant trend in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Catalan art, shared with artistic movements in other parts of Europe: the taste for the exotic and the Orient²⁶. With the glut of operas and plays set in "the Orient" in the previous half a century, it made sense for a stage designer to visit territories such as Egypt, India, Ceylon and Japan —the lands, respectively, of Verdi's *Aida* (1872), Delibes' *Lakmé* (1883), Bizet's *Les pêcheurs de perles* (1863), and Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* (1904).

Junyent's travel partner had no such artistic ambitions. He was, however, instrumental in the trip taking place²⁷. Marià Recolons was the eldest son of one of the richest couples of the Catalan bourgeoisie: Concepció Regordosa and

²¹ Beltrán Catalán (2020: 112-125).

²² *Ibid.*: 135-182.

²³ *Ibid.*: 197-230.

²⁴ *Ibid.*: 380.

²⁵ Junyent (1981: 8).

²⁶ Bru i Turull (2014, 2017).

²⁷ Beltrán Catalán and López Piqueras (2019: 115).

Tomàs Recolons, both members of textile magnate families²⁸. It was this wealth that financed the trip for both travellers. All hotel bills were issued to Recolons, although a few added Junyent's name after his²⁹. Junyent travelled with the financial means and the reference letters of the young man's family, which were above what he would have been able to procure by himself even as an artist patronised by the Barcelona upper class. In exchange, Recolons' parents expected Junyent to chaperone Marià and serve as a good influence—for instance, by prompting him to write letters back home if he failed in his filial duty to do so (Junyent was not very successful on this particular front, judging by Concepció's complaints of lack of contact from her son)³⁰. There was one last important way in which Recolons was central to the trip: he was fluent in English, a language Junyent did not speak. As Junyent utterly depended on his translations, much of what he learnt about the places they visited was filtered through Recolons, in ways we unfortunately cannot reconstruct from the sources³¹. As for Recolons' purpose in undertaking the tour, Utrillo argued that it was the same of all young men who travel: "to return made into men"³². A photographic portrait from 1909 reveals a self-assured young man with slicked-back dark hair and a small, neat moustache³³. Whenever he appears with his travel companion in photographs and drawings, the physical contrast with Junyent—balding, shorter, with more angular features and a longer, wispiest moustache—is striking. These are, in short, our two travellers.

In some ways, Recolons and Junyent's tour was far from unique. It was part of a wider upper-class trend across Europe: the practice of international tourism. Across the nineteenth century, the progressive development of railways and steamships—and, from 1869, the opening of the Suez Canal—facilitated travel across long distances³⁴. As the tourism industry emerged, so did travel agencies, travel guides and luxury hotels³⁵. The late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European tourists who populated these spaces were financially elite, but not aristocratic, and saw global travel as a way to distinguish themselves socially³⁶. They were joined by members of Barcelona's

²⁸ Beltrán Catalán (2020: 375).

²⁹ Armengol-Junyent Archive.

³⁰ Beltrán Catalán (2020: 405-407).

³¹ Junyent (1981: 20).

³² *Ibid.*: 11.

³³ Recolons (1909: 1895).

³⁴ Miller (2019: 12).

³⁵ Berghoff *et al.* (2002); Buzard (1993); Haddad (2005), and MacKenzie (2005).

³⁶ Miller (2019: 14).

bourgeoisie, which in participating in global tourism invested in the cultural values of other European elites³⁷. These Catalan tourists mostly stayed close to home, however, generally traveling to Morocco or Egypt³⁸. World tours including India were extremely rare. From the second half of the nineteenth century until 1908, the only other salient tourist from Spain whose world tour took him to India is Romà Batlló i Sunyol, who visited the subcontinent around 1900³⁹. Just as Recolons, he was the son of a Barcelona textile magnate. In 1908 Barcelona, a world tour such as Recolons and Junyent's was an extraordinary marker of wealth, taste, and European-oriented modernity.

Recolons and Junyent's world tour was facilitated by the British firm Thomas Cook & Son, the world's most important travel agency at the time. Far from being "capricious"⁴⁰, their itinerary largely adhered to the routes indicated by the travel agency as early as 1881⁴¹. These routes followed the easiest transportation lines, which in turn followed the course of European—and particularly British— influence across much of the world⁴². Out of all their destinations, India was the one where they made more stops, staying there for a couple of months. While Junyent may have certainly been interested in exploring India out of artistic interest, the pre-eminence of the subcontinent in the tour is undeniably linked to the fact that from the late nineteenth century Thomas Cook & Son put a great deal of effort and resources into the development of Indian tours⁴³. The Indian leg of Recolons and Junyent's journey was bookended by the subcontinent's two most important urban centres, the port cities of Bombay and Calcutta, as was standard for most tourists. After landing in Bombay from Aden, they took a series of northbound trains: first to Ahmedabad, in the Bombay Presidency of British India; then to the princely states of Jaipur and Alwar, in Rajputana; then to Delhi; then to Rawalpindi and Lahore in the Punjab province of British India; and, finally, to the princely state of Kashmir. From this northernmost point they headed south to Agra. Turning east, they visited the holy city of Banaras and reached Calcutta, the capital of British India, before getting on

³⁷ Garcia Ramón *et al.* (2005: 75).

³⁸ For the Ottoman empire, see Lucía Castejón (2018) and Martín Asuero (2006, 2007). For China, see Ai (2019). For Morocco, see Cerarols Ramírez (2008) and Marín (1996).

³⁹ Batlló i Sunyol (n. d.).

⁴⁰ Plou Anadón (2015: 215).

⁴¹ Cook (1881).

⁴² Withey (1997: 272).

⁴³ *Ibid.*: 273.

a steamship bound for Ceylon⁴⁴. This was a fairly standard tourist itinerary, with two significant exclusions: on their way from Agra to Banaras they skipped Cawnpore and Lucknow, two important stops for British tourists. Both were sites of imperial remembrance that commemorated British losses in two respective sieges in the Indian Rebellion of 1857 —a series of military and civilian uprisings that were close to overthrowing British rule over much of central and northern India⁴⁵. It is possible that Cawnpore and Lucknow, with their links to the recent political and military history of the British empire in India, held little appeal for these two Catalan travellers. After all, they already felt the presence of the British empire everywhere they went.

III. ENCOUNTERING THE BRITISH EMPIRE, LOCATING INDIAN RESISTANCE

Recolons and Junyent's tour took them across the British empire in practically all of its political incarnations —the *de facto* protectorate (Egypt); the settlement ruled from another colony (Aden, governed from the Bombay Presidency); the Crown colony (British India, Ceylon); the nominally independent country under indirect rule (Jaipur, Alwar and Kashmir, as princely states); the self-governing white settler colony (Canada); and, finally, the metropolitan capital (London). To this inventory we may add two former British possessions (the old Thirteen Colonies of the United States of America and the much more recently independent Australia), as well as countries where the British empire had long present through trade, diplomacy, and warfare (China). Junyent's writing captures some of these distinctions —perhaps partially acquired from the travel guides the pair brought with them, whose titles have unfortunately not survived. In Egypt, visits to the monumental sites of its ancient history did not keep Junyent from noticing that the British were the “true owners of the country”. In the United States, he saw the country as the “son of English organisation”. Recolons recorded his “overwhelming surprise” at the “presence of British activity in all the places we visited”⁴⁶. The sight of the Union Jack and of British ships was awe-inspiring to the “young and inexperienced eyes of a good Catalan”⁴⁷.

⁴⁴ Junyent (1981).

⁴⁵ Heathorn (2007); Lahiri (2003), and Tickell (2009).

⁴⁶ Recolons (1909: 1884).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*: 1886.

By way of contrast with the ubiquity of the British empire, Recolons noted the absence of Spanish economic and commercial activities across their tour, as well as of Spanish travellers. The experience of being the only travellers from Spain on the move was far from unique: most globetrotters from Spain found themselves alone⁴⁸. In eleven months, they only met three travellers from Spain. In Kashmir they improbably bumped into another stage designer from Barcelona, Frederic Madrazo, and in Australia they came across two more Catalans, the Olivers—an opera singer accompanied by her brother on a singing tour. These, however, were all artists—not the enterprising businessmen and traders Recolons hoped to find as bearers of Spanish influence⁴⁹. In this way, Recolons critiqued Spain's meagre global ambitions in the early twentieth century.

The existence of the British Raj in India was evident to Recolons and Junyent as early as Marseille, with the presence of two groups of people onboard the *Egypt*, the steamship bound for Port Said: the Indian lascars (sailors) and servants employed on the vessel and the British female passengers—young women and their older chaperones—on their way to India⁵⁰. Equally, they were reminded of British colonialism in India long after leaving the subcontinent, through the Indian Muslim and Parsi cemeteries they saw in Hong Kong⁵¹. These spaces were indications of commercial networks facilitated by the British empire in which Indians played an important role. Tony Ballantyne has established that the everyday operation of the empire linked points in space through often complex and shifting networks, creating “webs of empire” across long distances⁵². The Indian lascars in Marseille, the young *misses* crossing the Mediterranean on their way to the subcontinent, the Indian Muslims and Parsis buried in Hong Kong—they were all outcomes of the “integrative work” of British empire, remarked upon by two travellers from metropolitan Spain⁵³.

Recolons and Junyent felt the weight of the British empire more keenly in India than anywhere else. Recolons, always more attuned to economic factors than his companion, noted the centrality of the British Raj to Britain's wider empire: the subcontinent was an “empire that in itself would be enough to maintain the splendour of the metropole”⁵⁴. On the train from Bombay to

⁴⁸ Ai (2019: 45-46).

⁴⁹ Recolons (1909: 1884).

⁵⁰ Junyent (1981: 15-17).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*: 104.

⁵² Ballantyne (2012: 13-24).

⁵³ *Ibid.*: 15.

⁵⁴ Recolons (1909).

Ahmedabad, the textile heir admired the fertile cotton fields of Gujarat for their economic value. Junyent argued that it was British administration that brought progress to western India, enabling the trade and prosperity that resulted from those fields⁵⁵. His other positive appraisal of British rule in India had to do with what he saw as its civilising power over its disorderly, unsanitary colonised subjects and the pernicious hot climates they inhabited. He was impressed with the water and sanitation infrastructure in Aden —an “imposition” of the Bombay Presidency that had turned the settlement into “a salubrious place”⁵⁶. In Bombay, while visiting the “indigenous neighbourhood” he noted its lanes’ scrupulous cleanliness, imposed by “the iron hand” of British administration with the support of the city’s progressive philanthropist magnates⁵⁷. Junyent echoed much wider European discourses around the dangers of colonial climates and the need of the colonial state to lift the colonised out of their harmful living conditions⁵⁸. His mention of Bombay’s economic elites —and, by implication, of the masses that benefited from their largesse—, however, also had a metropolitan dimension. It would have resonated with readers in Barcelona and other Catalan cities at a time of profound unrest among Catalonia’s working classes⁵⁹.

While Junyent saw some merit in British rule in India, he argued that Britain’s civilising mission did more harm than good to the subcontinent. He described Indians as “a race that once was the creator of a powerful, conquering civilisation” which had turned the subcontinent into “a great centre of culture”⁶⁰. He was particularly enamoured with India’s “excellent examples of national architecture”⁶¹ —a disparate collection that included the Elephanta Caves (a collection of Hindu and Buddhist cave temples built about the fifth to seventh centuries in an island near Bombay); the “wonder of detailed, delicate and sumptuous sculpture” in Mount Abu’s Jain temples (eleventh to thirteenth centuries); and Agra’s Mughal Taj Mahal and Fort⁶². British colonialism corrupted this “national” tradition, in architecture as in other forms of cultural expression. Junyent was particularly displeased with European architecture in Bombay, as one of the sites where British presence

⁵⁵ Junyent (1981: 57).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*: 51.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*: 53.

⁵⁸ Arnold (1993); Fischer-Tiné and Mann (2004), and Kennedy (1996).

⁵⁹ Connelly Ullman (1974).

⁶⁰ Junyent (1981: 57, 62).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*: 52.

⁶² *Ibid.*: 52, 59.

was more longstanding and intense. He loathed what he saw as a pastiche of imported European styles —Greek, Gothic, Renaissance, etc.— in buildings such as Elphinstone College and Victoria Terminus, Bombay’s grand train station⁶³. Recolons and Junyent’s understanding of the decline of a once-glorious Indian civilisation did not turn to a more usual culprit in imperialist discourses: the arrival to the subcontinent of successive Muslim rulers from central Asia from the medieval to the early modern period⁶⁴. Whether through ignorance about or disregard for these sources, the pair created a more atypical account of the making of colonial India.

In Bombay, the decline of Indian society and culture was not only evident in the city’s architecture, but also on its theatre stages. Recolons and Junyent attended several performances in what the stage designer called “the national and nationalist theatres of Hindustan”⁶⁵. He found the music pleasant but complained it had been corrupted by the British, who “cannot be cited as an example of a music-loving people”⁶⁶. He also paid attention to the audience, arguing that Indian theatre-goers hoped to realise “the acts of heroism represented in their national theatre”. Instead of realising them, Junyent went on, “they sleepily glimpse... a very different life from the one they are cradled in under English tutelage”⁶⁷. Colonial domination had reduced the once powerful, conquering Indians to childlike wards of the British Raj. Junyent’s cultural critique of imperialism was remarkable at a time when few tourists questioned British rule in India —at the same time, it was mixed with colonial stereotypes that infantilised Indians, presenting them as incapable of self-rule⁶⁸.

Junyent was aware that there was a past of resistance against the British empire in India. In Delhi —out of all the places they visited, the one most closely associated with the Indian Rebellion— the violent uprisings of 1857 were mentioned by all the local guides and inhabitants they spoke to, “as if they inwardly considered” rising up again⁶⁹. Recolons and Junyent found it strange that a land that “superficially seems to us to be inferior, because its inhabitants have a different skin colour” dared to “face the conquerors” as it did over those months of revolt⁷⁰. 1857, however, was in the past —the

⁶³ *Ibid.*: 52.

⁶⁴ Ahmed Asif (2016: 161).

⁶⁵ Junyent (1981: 40).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*: 37.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*: 40.

⁶⁸ Hotchkiss (2001) and Withey (1997: 290).

⁶⁹ Junyent (1981: 65).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*: 67-68.

inhabitants of Junyent's 1908 India could only "sleepily glimpse" or "inwardly consider" resistance against British rule. And yet, a close reading of Junyent's account does reveal an empire under strain.

The first hint of trouble appeared in Aden, a strategic port for the maintenance of British influence in the Middle East and Asia. The pair waited until sunset, when the heat went down, to walk the streets. They marvelled at the settlement's military bustle, with British and Indian soldiers in all types of uniforms and weaponry, all headed for or returning from other British colonies⁷¹. In noting the empire's ability to mobilise its metropolitan and colonial soldiers overseas, Junyent implicitly revealed that there were challenges against it that had to be dealt with by force. Such force became more apparent when they visited the British Indian province of Punjab, a key territory to control neighbouring Afghanistan and, through it, Britain's own anxieties about Russian designs on colonial India⁷². In the great provincial capital of Lahore, the two travellers found "a bastion of British power in the great artery towards Afghanistan"; in Rawalpindi, a large garrison town ready to strike against "anything that might happen" in Afghanistan⁷³. Later, on their way north to Srinagar, they encountered Sikh soldiers with large caravans of camels carrying military supplies, as well as rushing military couriers⁷⁴.

Threats to the British Raj, however, also came from within the borders of British India. At the train station in Delhi, groups of light-skinned, tall, slender men caught Reolons and Junyent's attention. They were told they were Kashmiris and Afghans headed for the North-West Frontier, the mountainous borderland with Afghanistan, where they were to work as porters to assist the British in quelling unrest in the region. This unrest came not only from local tribal challenges to foreign rule, but also from interference in tribal affairs from the Afghan court across the border. This volatile situation led to a series of British punitive expeditions, two of which Junyent mentioned as the reason why the men they saw in Delhi were heading north in 1908. The first one was the Bazar Valley Campaign against the Zakka Khel clan of the Afridi, a Pashtun tribe on the Peshawar border⁷⁵. The second one was the Mohmand Expedition, which targeted another Pashtun tribe, the Mohmands (mistransliterated by Junyent as "Moands")⁷⁶.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*: 51.

⁷² Beattie (2021) and Condos (2017).

⁷³ Junyent (1981: 69, 80).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*: 72.

⁷⁵ Davies (1932: 136); Sykes (2013: 244).

⁷⁶ Davies (1932: 173).

Junyent noted that the British triumphed over both tribes: “This flare of the Moands and Zakka Kheels has been insignificant; the English have rapidly extinguished any whim of a sustained uprising”⁷⁷. In Junyent’s worldview the British Raj, for all its shortcomings, faced no significant challenges in early-twentieth-century India. Junyent’s assessment left out of the picture a significant amount of anticolonial activity —both in the form of the moderate politics of the Indian National Congress, established in 1885, and in the radical, violent anti-imperialism that shook western India and Bengal beginning in the early 1900s⁷⁸. Recolons and Junyent’s stay in India coincided, for instance, with the aftermath of the highly publicised Alipore Bomb Case, which saw the trial of a number of high-profile revolutionaries accused of an assassination attempt on a British magistrate⁷⁹. These forms of resistance, well covered in British and Indian newspapers, did not appear in the two travellers’ accounts.

The pair’s penultimate world tour stop reinforced their understanding of the continued strength of the British empire. From New York, Recolons and Junyent caught a steamship to Britain. Junyent had visited London briefly in 1902, as part of one of his European trips⁸⁰. After eleven months of travel, however, he saw the city in a different light. He suffered a “brutal impression... a revelation of a fact that had hitherto been hidden to me... now, after a quick tour across a great part of the world, I have comprehended the reality of what England is: she is the mistress of half the world, and the office of the immense dominion is London”⁸¹. In re-evaluating London from a European capital to an imperial capital, Junyent reasserted the supremacy of a flawed yet ultimately unchallenged empire.

During his time in India, however, Junyent did see a way out of British imperialism. It was certainly not to be found in Bombay, Delhi or anywhere else in British India. The respite from the deleterious effects of British colonisation came in the form of the princely states. While the states were actually under various degrees of indirect British control, Junyent understood them as pristine islands of Indian tradition, carefully maintained by the maharajas, rajas and nawabs who ruled them. Junyent had longed to see princely India before the trip and invoked “l’Índia dels Rajahs” several times in his writings⁸².

⁷⁷ Junyent (1981: 69).

⁷⁸ Patel (2020) and McQuade (2014, 2021).

⁷⁹ Maclean *et al.* (2017).

⁸⁰ Beltrán Catalán (2020: 174).

⁸¹ Junyent (1981: 162).

⁸² *Ibid.*: 7.

In princely Jaipur he found a “truly civilised great city”⁸³. He praised its planned urbanism, built in a grid pattern under Maharaja Jai Singh II in the early eighteenth century; its palaces; and its educational institutions. As for Alwar, Maharaja Jai Singh Prabhakar’s “thoroughly Western tastes” did not prevent him from maintaining “the ancient manor house as a museum and temple of historical relics”, nor from keeping “Oriental books of an immense artistic value” in his palace library⁸⁴. In Kashmir, Junyent reported his pleasure at being away from the “ports full of movement and the necessary riches of the British empire”⁸⁵. Indian princes emerged as patrons and custodians of an India unspoiled by imperial art, culture and trade. Their states made it possible to travel back in time to an India before colonisation. Junyent’s admiration for the princely states turned on its head the imperial discourse that pitted the stagnant “tradition” of princely India against the superior “colonial modernity” of British India⁸⁶. At the same time, it prefigured the importance of Indian rulers and the royal sites they maintained in the making of tourist itineraries in India —particularly in Rajasthani states such as Jaipur and Alwar— after Independence⁸⁷.

IV. BRINGING COLONIAL INDIA TO BARCELONA

When Recolons and Junyent began their tour from Barcelona’s Estació de França, the popular Catalan magazine *L’Esquella de la Torratxa* reported the departure of “the reputed stage designer don Olaguer [sic] Junyent”⁸⁸. Recolons was invisible in this piece, as he would be in most of the cultural and media production surrounding the tour. In terms of its public projection, this was very much Junyent’s adventure. The article in *L’Esquella de la Torratxa* was the first news of what would be a much-publicised trip, largely through the intervention of Miquel Utrillo. From August 1908, with the two travellers halfway through their tour, Utrillo edited the letters Junyent regularly sent him and published them as a serialised travelogue in *La Il·lustració Catalana*, a leading Catalan-language illustrated magazine⁸⁹. Utrillo simultaneously

⁸³ *Ibid.*: 61.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*: 65.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*: 76.

⁸⁶ Ramusack (2004).

⁸⁷ Ramusack (1994).

⁸⁸ *L’Esquella de la Torratxa*, 1525 (20 March 1908: 202).

⁸⁹ Espinet i Burunat (1997).

arranged for Junyent's drawings to be published in various magazines —such as *L'Esquella de la Torratxa*, *La Il·lustració Catalana*, and *La Publicidad*—, often following orders from Junyent⁹⁰. These textual and visual glimpses into the tour increased readers' interest in Junyent's experiences, generating expectations about his homecoming⁹¹. The strategy seems to have worked. Utrillo wrote to Junyent to warn him that “everyone is talking about your trip here”, with a friendly threat: “you better get ready to talk more than you would like when you return”⁹².

Recolons and Junyent returned to Barcelona in January 1909, eleven months after their departure. The stage designer was feted with a banquet at the *Maison Dorée*, an exclusive restaurant patronised by the city's bourgeois intellectuals and artists⁹³. He was presented with a gift: a food sculpture made out of root vegetables that depicted him riding an elephant. The object that signified and celebrated his world tour portrayed an animal with an unmistakable link to the Indian subcontinent, thus highlighting the centrality that India played in metropolitan perceptions of his itinerary. After the banquet, the sculpture was displayed on the window shop of a café in the neighbourhood of Gràcia's busy Carrer Salmerón, where it would have been seen by Barcelonans of all social classes⁹⁴. In a city where the most remarkable Indian presence was Avi (“Grandfather”), the lone Asian elephant at the zoo, this hardy food sculpture was just the first sign in the creation of a seemingly modest but significant body of knowledge about colonial India in Barcelona⁹⁵.

Junyent was not just ready to talk about his tour. His return led to writings, drawings, paintings, photographs, and other material culture linked to colonial India finding a space in early-twentieth-century Barcelona, where they contributed to creating a rare and original imaginary about the British Raj and the Indian subcontinent. Beyond the stereotypical figure of the Asian elephant and Orientalist tropes about the riches of Indian princes, India was one of the most unknown parts of Recolons and Junyent's tour for Catalan audiences —who had more familiarity with the Philippines, Egypt, and China through the accounts of previous travellers, diplomats and army officers. Metropolitan imaginaries of China and Japan also had an important

⁹⁰ Beltrán Catalán (2020: 397).

⁹¹ *Ibid.*: 394.

⁹² Miquel Utrillo to Oleguer Junyent (1 May 1908), Armengol-Junyent Archive.

⁹³ *La Il·lustració Catalana* (21 March 1909: 303, 259).

⁹⁴ Beltrán Catalán (2020: 460) and Armengol-Junyent Archive.

⁹⁵ Hochadel and Valls (2016: 33).

place in early-twentieth-century art and collecting⁹⁶. The making of knowledge about colonial India in metropolitan Spain, by contrast, constitutes a hitherto unexplored topic.

In 1910, Utrillo turned the serialised travelogue published in *La Il·lustració Catalana* into a book entitled *Roda el món i torna al Born* (“Around the World and Back to the Born”). The Catalan proverb in the book’s title suggested that, after crossing the world, there was no place like home (not only was Junyent from the Born, but the train station where the tour started sits at the edge of this neighbourhood). Utrillo also authored the book’s prologue. If Recolons had filtered the words of Indian guides and locals for Junyent through his translations, Utrillo emerged as a second mediator between Junyent’s words and a metropolitan audience, despite never having been to India himself. While the book has been described as “simply a travel diary”, this article has demonstrated that it incorporated the author’s understanding of Indian society, politics, and culture, constructing a critique of British imperialism while underlining the inability of Indians to effect political change⁹⁷. As Mary Louise Pratt has argued, European travel writing on the colonial world produced the “domestic subject” of European imperialism, engaging metropolitan reading publics with expansionist enterprises⁹⁸. This microhistory complicates this picture, as Recolons, Junyent, and Utrillo jointly conjured up another empire’s colony —a colony of which their metropolitan audiences had little previous knowledge

In *Roda el món i torna al Born*, Junyent engaged in a process of translation by comparison to make India comprehensible to a Catalan audience. He compared the theatres of Bombay with the working-class theatres of Barcelona’s Parallel⁹⁹. The fort in Alwar turned the city into “the Lleida of Hindustan” —a reference to the Catalan city’s imposing hilltop cathedral¹⁰⁰. In Mughal Delhi, the main thoroughfare in the market of Chandni Chowk (charmingly transliterated as “Tchandui-Tchauk”) is “the Rambla of Delhi”; the red sandstone walls of the Red Fort are reminiscent of the stone found around the city of Martorell¹⁰¹. In Kashmir, the nights are as cold “as in the peaks of the Pyrenees” —a comparison that matches the Catalan equivalents

⁹⁶ Bru i Turull (2014, 2017); Ginés Blasi (2013); Plou Anadón (2017); Ortells-Nicolau (2017), and Rossell Cigarrán (2015).

⁹⁷ Plou Anadón (2015: 218).

⁹⁸ Pratt (1992: 4).

⁹⁹ Junyent (1908: 37).

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*: 65.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*: 66.

of Kashmir's topography (the Aran Valley) and religious architecture (Romanesque churches, which come to Junyent's mind during a visit to the eighth-century Hindu Martand Sun Temple)¹⁰². Equating the human and physical geographies of a visited land with one's own was a common device in travel writing¹⁰³. Through these comparisons, India appeared as intelligible and within reach to Catalan readers. Junyent was also engaged, however, in the production of racial, class, and bodily differences.

Nowhere is the making of such differences more evident than in the elements of the book that would have stood out the most to anyone who opened it—its hundreds of sketches, drawings, and photographs. The Indian men who appear in these visual sources are overwhelmingly subaltern workers employed in activities linked to a consolidated tourism industry: Kashmiri houseboat workers, skippers, guides, carriage drivers, snake charmers, restaurant servers, and hotel *punkhwallahs*—men who operated large fans, using a pulley system, to keep guests cool. Only two small sketches feature women—a young Kashmiri woman identified as a “skipper's daughter” and two dancers, captured mid-performance at the hotel where Recolons and Junyent stayed in Jaipur. Whether their role is to serve or to perform for the wealthy European tourist, these Indian figures are exoticised through their headgear and clothes. Their turbans, caps, veils, shawls, and loose-fitting clothing turned them into sartorial others. As E. M. Collingham has argued, in the British context the looser clothes of Indians represented the moral laxity of the colonized, while the highly structured dress of upper-class British men reflected moral rectitude¹⁰⁴. The making of sartorial difference was also at play in this transimperial contact zone, with a particular class bias.

In the hotel restaurants and clubs they spent time in, Recolons and Junyent met a fair share of upper-class Indians—English-speaking, England-educated elites who facilitated their travels across the subcontinent and with whom they had sustained and meaningful encounters, to the extent of describing them as friends. They also witnessed at least two highly visual, spectacular aristocratic events: the departure of the Maharaja of Jaipur for his summer residence, with a parade of courtiers, soldiers and elephants, and a prince's wedding procession¹⁰⁵. Junyent produced four vignettes of the wedding procession, which remain unpublished to this day. Upper-class and aristocratic India did not make it into the book, at least visually. This was an

¹⁰² *Ibid.*: 72-74.

¹⁰³ Quaireau and Ounoughi (2021).

¹⁰⁴ Collingham (2001: 57).

¹⁰⁵ Junyent (1981: 63).

India of the unprivileged —an India at the service of well-to-do European travellers. Junyent's India, at the same time, eschewed well-rooted Orientalist tropes about the pomp and splendour of Indian royalty that would have been familiar to metropolitan audiences¹⁰⁶. Travel writing certainly produced “the rest of the world” for European readerships¹⁰⁷. In this case, through its accompanying images, it allowed Catalan audiences to imagine an India culturally decimated by British domination and available to serve any tourist who could afford to travel there. Junyent made his class privilege clear in the caption of one of his sketches from Kashmir. The picture shows a turbaned, moustachioed servant posing for the artist: “Our servant Mahomed, interpreter and model, all for one *pesseta* a day”¹⁰⁸. Through the inequalities of colonial domination, Junyent found himself enjoying a standard of living that was well above the one he usually enjoyed in the metropole —a common experience for even middle-class Europeans in the colonies¹⁰⁹.

This imaginary of colonial India was not just transmitted through *Roda el món i torna al Born*. Junyent's drawings, paintings and photographs of the tour were displayed in Barcelona on at least three occasions, all of them widely reported by the press. First and foremost was an exhibition at Sala Faiança, commissioned by Utrillo, which featured drawings and paintings from the entire tour, including India¹¹⁰. Junyent and the renowned professional photographer Adolf Mas collaborated to present photographs of the trip in a public event held at the Ateneu Barcelonès, a prestigious cultural association¹¹¹. Mas also delivered a presentation exclusively on Junyent's Indian photographs at the Centre Excursionista de Catalunya (Hiking Club of Catalonia), where the images were shown to the audience as Mas read passages from the book¹¹². Unlike the sketches in *Roda el món i torna al Born*, Junyent's Indian paintings and photographs rarely featured people. Instead, they depicted the sites and landscapes he admired: the precolonial, “national” architecture of British India and the spaces of princely India —Hindu temples, deserted ghats in Banaras, palaces and forts, the forests of Kashmir. Not all of these pictures were taken by Junyent. Some he had purchased in India, where they had been authored by Indian photographers such as the

¹⁰⁶ See, for instance, *La Ilustración* (7 October 1888: 15).

¹⁰⁷ Pratt (1992: 5).

¹⁰⁸ Junyent (1981: 72-74).

¹⁰⁹ Buettner (2004).

¹¹⁰ Beltrán Catalán (2020: 453-462).

¹¹¹ *La Vanguardia* (18 December 1909: 3).

¹¹² *Butlletí del Centre Excursionista de Catalunya* (1910, XX: 31).

Delhi-based H. A. Mirza and Gobindram & Oodeyram of Jaipur¹¹³. Junyent did not credit them, in an erasure of Indian artistry and labour that was common in other European countries in the early twentieth century¹¹⁴. The making of this body of knowledge about India in metropolitan Spain was the result of an entangled process. In this process, some Catalan men —Recolons, Junyent, Utrillo, Mas— successively translated and reinterpreted the words and work of unnamed or uncredited Indian actors —from the aforementioned photographers to the local guides and inhabitants whose words Recolons translated for Junyent in India.

There was one final arena in which Junyent brought colonial India to metropolitan Spain: the opera stage. In 1918, he produced the stage design for José María Usandizaga's *La llama* in its premiere at San Sebastián's Teatro Victoria Eugenia. While María Lejárraga's libretto was originally set in the Caucasus, the action was transported to India¹¹⁵. Junyent's work featured elements of the precolonial Indian architecture he appreciated, such as onion domes that Clara Beltrán Catalán has argued were inspired by the Taj Mahal¹¹⁶. India also made it into the wardrobes of some opera singers. Junyent bought fabric and garments in some of the places he visited, including China, India, and Japan. Unlike other types of collectable objects, clothes were relatively easy to transport. In India he purchased various fabrics, sarees, and Kashmiri shawls —the latter were desirable souvenirs for European tourists in the subcontinent¹¹⁷. In 1915, some of these fabrics and shawls were repurposed to produce all the costumes worn by soprano María Barrientos in Léo Delibes' *Lakmé* at the Liceu. A friend of Junyent, Barrientos sang the title role of the daughter of a Brahmin priest who falls in love with a British officer in mid-nineteenth-century India. The opera's Orientalist themes made it popular in early twentieth-century Barcelona, with the newspaper *La Vanguardia* reporting approvingly after the opening night that Barrientos' costumes, brought by Junyent from India, enhanced the production's authenticity¹¹⁸.

One stage design in San Sebastián and a soprano's wardrobe in Barcelona may seem rather modest results for a stay in India that had been undertaken in the name of artistic inspiration. The world tour and its Indian leg, however, contributed to Junyent's career in other ways. After all, the opening

¹¹³ For more on the pictures, see Torrella (2017).

¹¹⁴ Bautze (2003: 227).

¹¹⁵ Beltrán Catalán (2020: 657).

¹¹⁶ "Estreno de *La Llama*", *El Noticiero* (14 September 1918).

¹¹⁷ Miller (2019: 174-183) and Zutshi (2009).

¹¹⁸ *La Vanguardia* (8 April 1915: 9).

night report in *La Vanguardia* demonstrated that the stage designer's experience in India still played a role in the public perception of his figure years after its conclusion. Commentators mentioned Junyent's trip to India and its supposed impact on the artist as late as 1924. After visiting one of his exhibitions, an art critic speculated that Junyent "must have had dealings with some faqir who told him some cabalistic formula to give strength to paintings; it is otherwise incomprehensible that they can have so much liveliness and strength"¹¹⁹. Through Orientalist tropes about the occult knowledge of the East, Junyent emerged as a privileged artist whose unique connection with India enhanced his artistic output.

From the initial report of the tour in *L'Esquella de la Torratxa* to the developments examined in this section, Junyent's status and contacts made it possible for the trip to be well-publicised in Catalonia. As Amy Miller has established, the exhibition of material culture acquired through international travel was a means of conveying a rise in social position¹²⁰. In Junyent's case, the class distinction obtained through the tour was maintained for years not only through its material culture, but also through published accounts and events such as exhibitions. In the 1920s, Junyent became a heavyweight of the Barcelona art scene, serving as president of two prestigious institutions, the Reial Cercle Artistic and the Foment de les Arts Decoratives. He also turned art consultant for some of Catalonia's most noted collectors, from the industrialist Lluís Plandiura and the Egyptologist Eduard Toda to his friend Francesc Cambó, with whom he sailed around the Adriatic in the politician's yacht, the *Catalònia*, in the early 1930s¹²¹. As for Junyent's relationship with Recolons, the two remained friends for life. In 1948, one year after India achieved its independence, they met to celebrate the 40th anniversary of their world tour¹²².

V. CONCLUSION

The engagement with colonial India of Europeans whose countries had no formal colonial experience in the subcontinent has produced studies on Italian and German cases that have brought fresh insights into the contours

¹¹⁹ "Xerrameques artístiques: L'Olaguer Junyent a las Layetanas", *L'Esquella de la Torratxa*, 2382 (30 October 1924: 685).

¹²⁰ Miller (2019: 210).

¹²¹ Beltrán Catalán (2021).

¹²² Ramon Borràs Collection [box J3], Biblioteca de Catalunya.

of European colonialism in India¹²³. In the case of the Spanish empire, Recolons and Junyent's world tour allows us to trace the making of a small but rare and original body of knowledge about colonial India in metropolitan Spain. These two "unusually cosmopolitan individuals" were instrumental in this process¹²⁴. They shaped this body of knowledge through a series of translations and mistranslations that implicated, to varying degrees, Indian, British, and Indian actors. The resulting product combined Orientalist tropes, European imperialist discourses, Spanish metropolitan perspectives, and cultural critiques of empire, producing a hybrid account of the politics, society, and culture of colonial India under British rule. At the same time, their metropolitan contemporaries could interpret the pair's Indian journey in a decidedly Catalan key. Junyent's praise for the survival of India's "national" artistic traditions in the midst of widespread cultural and social decline—a decline caused by foreign imperial rule—mapped easily into Catalonia's politics. As Francesc Cambó, leader of the Lliga Regionalista de Catalunya and close friend of Junyent, demanded greater autonomy for Catalonia through the Solidaritat Catalana coalition, it would have been easy for those who shared Cambó's ideology to equate India with Catalonia and the British empire with Spain.

Reading the tour's sources "beyond the edge of the page" allows us to complicate our understanding of metropolitan tourist accounts of colonial India, as well as of this particular tour. Recolons and Junyent's gazes were inherently political and marked by the world of empires they lived in. While Junyent did not argue for the end of the British Raj, he did not present a triumphalist account of it either. Instead, he questioned Britain's colonial project in India and revealed its perceived shortcomings. The tour's imperial dimension has hitherto been forgotten, in a colonial amnesia that is present in many former European empires. The tour's imperial legacies, however, live on in modern-day Barcelona—if we care to find them. In the early 1910s, Junyent bought a house in Gràcia's Carrer Bonavista. He set up his residence there, as well as the studio where he worked and stored his collections¹²⁵. Carefully maintained by his descendants, it can be visited to this day. India has a small but noticeable presence on its walls, through Junyent's drawings and paintings of royal palaces, Kashmiri boatmen and surly Hindu priests.

Much research remains to be done to reach a more sophisticated understanding of the transimperial history of the British and Spanish empires, as

¹²³ Lowndes Vicente (2012) and Khan (2020).

¹²⁴ De Vries (2019: 28).

¹²⁵ Armengol Junyent and Armengol de Groot (2016).

well as of the contact zone created by the encounter of metropolitan Spain and colonial India. The racial and gendered experiences of Spanish travellers to India have deliberately been beyond the scope of this article, as it would require an in-depth analysis that could yield important contrasts with the experiences of Britons and other Europeans in the subcontinent.

A second area of enquiry lies in the exploration of the accounts of travellers from metropolitan Spain to colonial India in the interwar period, when the Indian anticolonial movement became a highly visible mass movement. This is a relatively large group, compared with the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Interwar travellers who left written accounts of their trips to colonial India include the bestselling novelist and politician Vicente Blasco Ibáñez (1923); the Canarian biologist Jerónimo Megías Fernández (1923)—in a trip chronicled in *Blanco y Negro* by the writer Marcos Rafael Blanco-Belmonte—; the Aragonese military officer and engineer Francisco Bastos Ansart (1926); Catalan businessman Joan Marín Balmas (1927); the aristocrat Ricardo Martorell Téllez-Girón (c. 1930); and diplomat Francisco de Reynoso (c. 1930)¹²⁶. A careful study of their words and experiences would allow us to tease out the nuances of different metropolitan Spaniards in colonial India, unravelling further hidden connections that would be invisible to a macro analysis¹²⁷. This would enable us to advance the study of transimperial encounters in the underexplored contact zone of metropolitan Spain and colonial India.

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