

## South Asia and the Non-aligned Movement in two post-Yugoslav Texts

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**Abstract:** In this talk, I perform a comparatist reading of two post-Yugoslav texts and a text of British Empire in South Asia to draw out their unexpected overlaps and distinctions. I draw on a body of theory attentive to the phenomenological implications of “dialectical montage,” a series of film frames that include disconnected jump cuts, to analyze how unexpected convergences can happen across geopolitical divides. I do this by considering how the lingering power of anticolonial movements emerges between the lines, or frames, of recent works from the Western Balkans. In Téa Obreht’s *The Tiger’s Wife* (2011), Natalia has a road map to a disbanded country much like the former Yugoslavia. This obsolete map cannot reliably guide her as she crosses its new borders to uncover the story of how her grandfather died. The shifting political borders and national identities disorient her, but this unsettled world transforms into an ominous one when she discovers that elements of Rudyard Kipling’s *The Jungle Book*, which her grandfather had read to her as a child, have infiltrated the real world to wreak havoc on the life of the “Mohammedan” deaf-mute butcher’s wife. Instead of the resolution that Natalia had hoped to achieve by discovering the story of her grandfather’s death, she is instead left with an unsettling account of a lifetime of social tension. By juxtaposing Obreht’s tale with the postcolonial criticism on cultural appropriation and colonial power in Kipling’s works, I find a subtle comparison and contrast between the Western Balkans and South Asia that draws out their overlapping histories of shifting borders and charged language politics. My analysis is further enriched when I bring yet another text into the dialectical montage: a recent documentary from Serbia commemorating Yugoslavia’s involvement alongside India in the anticolonial Non-aligned Movement. The documentary attests to the movement’s enduring legacy in the post-Yugoslav imagination. Its recourse to anticolonial solidarity as an alternative to both ethnic-national divisions and European “normalization” further highlights the stakes of Obreht’s intervention.