Like Walter Benjamin’s “Angel of History,” South Asian literary studies has been marked by the backward glance and its attention to the past—its preoccupation with the (post)colonial. Indeed, ideas of the postcolonial, postcoloniality, and postcolonial theory inform the boundary condition within which we come to understand the placement of South Asian literatures and cultures. Analyses of South Asia’s multiply-inflected literatures have mobilized around prominent postcolonial themes such as home/homelessness, diasporic and hybrid consciousness, and race and ethnic difference. Additionally, South Asian literary studies has gained visibility from its cultural proximity to postcolonial theorists with connections to the subcontinent (Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Homi Bhabha, Arjun Appadurai) to a point where imbrications between postcolonial theory and South Asian studies are ubiquitous and near synonymous.

Given the framing of the field, particularly in the period between the 1980s through the 1990s, what kinds of reflections and questions about the past, present and futures of South Asian literary cultures have we put aside? Anthony Appiah asserts in the CFP for the 2017 [Presidential Theme on Border and Boundaries] MLA that “traditions of scholarship have developed indifference towards how literature and other representational arts cross the ethnoterritorial.” How does postcolonial studies in the current historical moment characterize or complicate “the ethnoterritorial”? If so, what are the ontological, environmental, ethical, and aesthetic implications of our continued marking of time and space via the imperial-colonial project? Is South Asian literary studies being haunted by a spectre, and is that spectre postcolonial theory? Can we reconcile Robert J. C. Young’s energizing endorsement of the value of the postcolonial in his 2012 essay, "Postcolonial Remains" with novelist Amit Chaudhuri’s desire to discuss “culture as distinct from the post-colonial discourse?” As we settle into the 21st century, in what ways is the imperial-colonial project important or even pertinent to a subcontinent now marked in some ways by neoliberal globalization and shifting diasporic and transnational flows?

We need to map the frontiers of the postcolonial beyond ahistorical imaginations and reductive identities. As newer generations of those who write on South Asia, we must ask ourselves about what constitutes the “newness” of such projects. How can analyses of the recursive nature of theory help us to develop alternative and radical discourses that can lead to transformational politics? To this end, we invite panels to define, interrogate, and analyze spaces and places that affect our understanding of South Asian literary and cultural projects. That is, we invite panels and papers that approach the spaces and places in the context of postcolonial studies such as:

- concerns in governmental policy and policing
- shifts in the production of knowledge and art
• crossing disciplinary divides in research and pedagogy
• absolutes and liminality in articulations of gender and sexuality
• the advance of film, digital humanities, and social media
• oceanic studies and national and cultural contact zones
• 'travelling theories' especially across East/West and global North/South
• the representation and reception of hybrid and diasporic texts
• themes of transnational world order(s) in the age of terror
• eco-criticism, animal studies, and the postcolonial anthropocene
• emergent critical approaches, recent authors, and developing forms
• the nuclearization of South Asia
• Comparative Partitions
• Head gear as signifiers of pathology/religious affiliation

Please submit your abstract of no more than 300 words, institutional affiliation, and a/v needs online here by the firm deadline of September 15, 2016.

Please note that all accepted participants will be expected to become members of SALA by October 15, 2016. For membership and other details, please visit the SALA website. Conference participants are expected to present their accepted papers in person. SALA does not encourage proxy presentations or Skype presentations.

If you have any questions, please feel free to email the conference co-chairs, Dr. Priya Jha (University of Redlands), Dr. Pratham-Maya Dora-Laskey (Alma College), and Dr. Melanie R. Wattenbarger (University of Mumbai), at salaconference2017@gmail.com.