

Holly A. Laird

University of Tulsa

USA

Inside the Global Imaginary of the Pax Britannica: Nationalist Intersections, Planetary Texts from before and after the two World Wars

This paper takes a revisionary look at the Pax Britannica and the Pax Americana. At their peak, neither of them effected a peace but, rather, a global set of wars, land grabs, and sociocultural despoliations. Peace studies themselves have, perhaps inevitably, thereby (d)evolved into today's Security Studies. Yet, as if a pastoral, planetary coexistence were attainable, myriads of literary, cultural, and thought workers in earlier eras have already located it, not only in the aftermath of the violent or at its margins, but also, by turns, pressing up against the violent, eluding, or transforming it. Through reconsideration of two novels on either side of the previous century's two World Wars—Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* of 1883 and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* of 1958—this paper reflects, first, the recent rise in “weak theory” and, second, the current eco – critical turn in modernist studies to the planetary to reconstruct ordinary moments of the concomitance of millennial destruction with, variously, the pacific, pacifying, and peaceful.