

ABSTRACT

The doctoral dissertation *Polish Pacifist Prose in the Interwar Period* addresses the presence of pacifism in Polish prose from 1918 to 1939. Its point of departure is the conviction that the memory of the Great War in Poland was dominated by patriotic, martyrological, and heroic narratives, as a result of which pacifist reflection fell into oblivion.

This dissertation does not reduce pacifism solely to a political doctrine, an ideological programme, or an unequivocal worldview declaration on the part of authors. Instead, it proposes a broader understanding of pacifism: as a form of critical ethical and literary consciousness, revealed in texts that demythologise war, question the aestheticisation of violence, expose the trauma of wartime experience, and challenge the national-military imaginary.

The aim of the dissertation is to reconstruct the pacifist strategies present in selected works of Polish interwar prose and to interpret them in their historical, social, ideological, and reception contexts. The dissertation combines close reading with an analysis of historical-literary, biographical, and cultural contexts. The research material comprises narrative prose – novels and short stories – by Jerzy Gąsowski, Jan Żyznowski, Stanisław Rembek, Emil Zegadłowicz, Eugeniusz Małaczewski, and Czesław Straszewicz. A separate chapter is devoted to the satire of Adolf Nowaczyński, read from the perspective of anxieties related to pacifism, women's emancipation, and the crisis of dominant models of masculinity.

The dissertation demonstrates that pacifism was not absent from Polish literature; rather, what was lacking were interpretative categories that would make it possible to notice and describe it. The analyses presented in the subsequent chapters therefore show that the pacifist potential of literature does not always have to be expressed through direct anti-war declarations. It may reveal itself in the form of testimony to wartime suffering, the demythologisation of heroic images, ethical opposition to violence, criticism of militarism, the undermining of the soldierly ethos, and a distrustful reflection on the language that domesticates the experience of war.

The result of the dissertation is the identification of several varieties of literary pacifism: testimonial pacifism, demythologising pacifism, ethical pacifism, contradictory pacifism, and blocked pacifism. Their common denominator is opposition to violence and an attempt to recognise war as an alien, traumatic, and destructive experience.

The most important reflection concluding the dissertation is the recognition of pacifism as a fluid and interpretative category, one that invites renewed reflection on Polish literature of the interwar period, as well as on war and militarism.

Keywords: pacifism, anti-war literature, interwar period, antimilitarism, Polish prose.

12.06.2026

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