

## Biedermeier as Classicism, Romanticism, and Realism: The Development of Polish Perspectives and Research on Biedermeier Art

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### ABSTRACT

The main subject of this article is the evolution of interest in and research on the Biedermeier art in Polish scholarly literature. It includes both statements on Biedermeier in the European context and those referring specifically to the situation on Polish territory. This study offers a broad juxtaposition of various definitions of the Biedermeier style across Polish publications, and traces the first usages of the term “Biedermeier” in Poland. It uses comparative analysis of particular texts on art, and thereby shows different lines of Polish research. It demonstrates certain methodological mistakes and internal contradictions that are sometimes to be found within the same text and explains the possible reasons for different interpretations of Biedermeier art. The overall aim of the study is to collate and bring structure to existing scholarship, which is scattered in publications on different branches of art, and in doing so, to provide the material for further research.

**KEYWORDS:** Biedermeier, classicism, romanticism, realism, Polish territory

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Although large numbers of individual art pieces are yet to be analyzed or re-analyzed, there is nevertheless a necessity to create an overall picture of historical artistic activity. The analysis of a particular object should be accompanied with an explanation of how it corresponds to the contemporaneous tendencies in art. This problem is much more complicated when it concerns those phenomena in art history that are difficult to characterize because of their non-uniformity and close relation to parallel styles, movements, etc. It is worth mentioning in this context the notion of “Biedermeier,” which was the subject of research aimed to create a definition of this phenomenon.<sup>1</sup> It has not resulted in an acknowledged agreed interpretation, but there are some common views on this term shared by art researchers. Biedermeier is usually associated with the first half of the nineteenth century, different branches of art (especially furniture and painting) and the middle-class as art commissioners. It is also regarded as more broad term concerning culture, literature, music, lifestyle and an acknowledged set of values. The research on Biedermeier focuses on the main artistic centers, while its manifestations on Polish territory have been omitted in non-Polish literature.

In the last decade of the eighteenth century, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth ceased to exist. Territories of a once large country were divided in 1772, 1793 and 1795 by the Kingdom of Prussia, the Austrian Empire and the Russian Empire. In Biedermeier times, partitioned lands were under the reign of these three countries. The subsequent loss of independence undermined the foundations of Sarmatian culture, which was expressed in the ideology, customs and lifestyle of the nobility (*szlachta*) who had ruled the country. Sarmatists also had to face the changes, such as abolition of serfdom and formation of intelligentsia, which lead gradually to the creation of modern society.<sup>2</sup> The times of partitions were also marked by national independence movements which corresponded with the art and culture of romanticism.

No attempt so far has been made across the reference literature to venture a comprehensive analysis of the manifestations of Biedermeier art on Polish

<sup>1</sup> The attempts to create an overall image of Biedermeier were usually associated with exhibitions presenting pieces of different branches of art executed in different regions—e.g.: HANS OTTOMEYER, KLAUS ALBRECHT SCHRÖDER et al. (eds.): *Biedermeier: The Invention of Simplicity* [exhibition catalogue], Ostfildern-Ruit 2006; GEORG HIMMELHEBER: *Kunst des Biedermeier 1815–1835: Architektur, Malerei, Plastik, Kunsthandwerk, Musik, Dichtung und Mode* [exhibition catalogue], München 1988; AGNES HUSSLEIN-ARCO, SABINE GRABNER (eds.): *Ist das Biedermeier?* Amerling, Waldmüller und mehr [exhibition catalogue], Wien—München 2016; RADIM VONDRÁČEK (ed.): *Biedermeier: Umění a kultura v českých zemích 1814–1848* [Biedermeier: Art and Culture in the Czech Lands 1814–1848] [exhibition catalogue], Praha 2008; KATARÍNA BEŇOVÁ (ed.): *Biedermeier* [exhibition catalogue], Bratislava 2015.

<sup>2</sup> IWONA WĘGRZYN: *Sarmatyzm i Biedermeier: Granice, cezury, przepływy. W kręgu galicyjskich spadkobierców Soplicy* [Sarmatism and Biedermeier: Borders, Cesuras, Trends. In the Circle of the Galician Successors of Soplica], in: *Prace Filologiczne: Literaturoznawstwo* 11 (2021), 14, pp. 161–182.



Fig. 1:  
Weiland Gottlieb Biedermaier, in: *Fliegende Blätter* 21 (1855), 493, p. 103,  
[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/61/Gottlieb\\_Biedermaier.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/61/Gottlieb_Biedermaier.jpg)  
(2023-01-05)

lands. Nor has there been the possibility to distinguish the “epoch of Biedermeier” in Polish culture, as is the case for scholars who make similar distinctions in reference to German speaking countries. However, the fact that Biedermeier flourished in the times of romanticism should be taken into consideration. Is it then possible for two such epochs to coexist? Or should those two phenomena, romanticism and Biedermeier, be conceived of together, as the currents of one and the same epoch? Could Biedermeier be classified as a “stylistic epoch” or a “style” when it appeared in certain categories of art and had no clearly discernible formal features? Or is it more suitable to label it as a “stylistic tendency?” In order to gain any deep insight into this issue, a critical analysis of Polish research on Biedermeier must be performed. The analysis should include various paths of methodological reasoning that lead to respective interpretations. This analysis should also be juxtaposed with research present in foreign literature.

The analysis of methods used by Polish scholars is based on publications whose authors attempted to create a holistic overview of the style or focus on a specific category of art. To a large extent they involve summary-type works, entries in dictionaries, encyclopedias and museum catalogues as well as selected articles printed in various periodical and collective works. The papers devoted to art on Polish territory are of particular importance, because the publications about Biedermeier in German-speaking countries focus on the results of research present in foreign literature. In most cases, articles that analyze specific works, artists or workshops put the subject of the research in the predetermined temporal and style-related context.

What follows here is a short history of the origin of the term “Biedermeier” and then a tracing of its first usages in Polish texts and subsequently a critical analysis of different interpretations which are categorized on the basis of the core of the definitions rather than chronological order.

## 1 The Meaning of the Notion “Biedermeier”

The term “Biedermeier” consists of two parts: “bieder-” which means “upright” and “-meier” (initially “-maier”) which was often the suffix of German names. Therefore, “Biedermeier” could be translated as “[Mr] Uprightington.” After 1848, “bieder” gained certain ironic connotations. 1854–1857 a collection of satiric and parodic poems by Louis Eichrodt and Adolf Kußmaul was published in the satiric periodical *Fliegende Blätter*.<sup>3</sup> The authors use the word “Biedermaier” in the sense of “philister,” “moron,” “petty bourgeoisie,” “parochial character” etc. (Fig. 1). In the preface to the publication, Biedermaier is described as “‘obdurate, prehistoric remnants of pre-revolutionary times’ when Germans ‘ate, drank, wrote poems and ruminated upon the world around them sitting beside the pots full of stewed cabbage,’ leaving everything else to ‘God and Bundestag.’”<sup>4</sup> Critical opinion on the times before the Springtime of the Peoples became even more widespread after the unification of Germany in 1871.

After some time, the term “Biedermeier” was adopted in the study of art. In the last decade of the nineteenth century it became widely known as a description for certain types of applied arts. After some time, it also started to be used to denote a certain epoch.<sup>5</sup> In German scientific literature on art, it was discussed from 1886 under the terms “Biedermeierzeit,” “Biedermeierepoche,” or “Biedermeierstil.”<sup>6</sup> The style of Biedermeier was prevalent not only in plastic arts. It also reflected a certain lifestyle (*Lebensstil*).

In the twentieth century Biedermeier became not only a popular subject of research but also a widespread style in interior design—particularly in furniture arrangements. In *Herders Konversations-Lexikon* it was perceived in 1910 as a “simple German style that came into existence out of the need for more comfort,” which “experienced a revival [...] as a form of natural, pragmatic simplicity and source of pleasure that one can derive from genuine material and simple, though clear structure.”<sup>7</sup> Agata Wójcik proves that the influences of

<sup>3</sup> Gedichte des schwäbischen Schullehrers Gottlieb Biedermeier und seines Freundes Horatius Treuherz. The poems were a mockery of the texts published in 1846 by Samuel Friedrich Sauter, a teacher living in the countryside. They were also published as: Biedermeiers Liederlust: Lyrische Karikaturen, Lahr 1869. JACEK KUBIAK: Wstęp [Introduction], in: JACEK KUBIAK (ed.): Spory o biedermeier, Poznań 2006, pp. 7–63, here pp. 11–12.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>6</sup> KARL ROSNER: Das deutsche Zimmer im neunzehnten Jahrhundert, Berlin—Leipzig 1898 (Das deutsche Zimmer, 2) is considered the first work on art mentioning “Biedermeier” (as “Biedermännerstil” and “Biedermännerzeit”).

<sup>7</sup> Cited in: ANNA KOZAK: Biedermeier w sztuce i kulturze niemieckiej [Biedermeier in German Art and Culture], in: ANNA KOZAK, AGNIESZKA ROSALES-RODRÍGUEZ (eds.): Biedermeier: Katalog wystawy, Warszawa 2017, pp. 15–26, here p. 18.

Biedermeier may be recognized in Polish designs.<sup>8</sup> Appliances of such kind were manufactured not only for living spaces, but also for public buildings.

## 2 The First Mentions of Biedermeier in Polish Texts

One of the first Polish publications to mention the notion “Biedermeier” was *Katalog wystawy sztuki polskiej od roku 1764–1886*, published in 1894.<sup>9</sup> It is used with the name of painter Jan Maszkowski, who is described as representative of Lwów *Biedermeierzeit*. This example shows that the term “Biedermeier” was introduced in Polish literature on art shortly after it was used for the first time in this context in German literature.

When the term “Biedermeier” was not applied, the particular features that are nowadays associated with this style were still noticed. The publication of Jerzy Mycielski concerning painting history in Poland, printed on the occasion of the retrospective exhibition in Lwów in 1894, could serve as an example.<sup>10</sup> The features of Biedermeier in landscape painting may be discerned within the meaning of the term “manner”, which “was in vogue after 1830 [...] marked by simplicity.”

The term “Biedermeier” became more popular in the first half of the twentieth century. It appeared in a critical opinion on the furniture designed by Józef Czajkowski published in 1906, where “the last era of applied arts in Poland” is mentioned: “the tradition of 1830s and 1840s that brought the empire style to our manor houses and urban rooms [...] the simplified style adapted to the modest needs eines Biedermeiers from Vienna and Wrocław [...] more ‘home-like’.”<sup>11</sup> Another early text in which the term “Biedermeier” appeared was the review of Georg Hermann’s book on the Biedermeier, written by Czesław Jankowski. Sharing positive opinions on the publication, Jankowski states that “We call the style of this epoch (in daily life of people, customs, literature, political life, dress code etc.) Biedermajerszczyzna [Biedermeier-style] [...] analogically to how the two previous epochs were named ‘Empire’ and

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<sup>8</sup> See AGATA WÓJCIK: Parafrazy biedermeieru w meblarstwie polskim początku XX wieku i dwudziestolecia międzywojennym, in: RIHA Journal (2019), article 0234, <https://doi.org/10.11588/riha.2019.0>.

<sup>9</sup> JAN BOŁOZ ANTONIEWICZ: Katalog illustrowany wystawy sztuki polskiej od roku 1764–1886 [Catalogue of the Exhibition of Polish Art from 1764 to 1886], Lwów 1894, p. XIV.

<sup>10</sup> JERZY MYCIELSKI: Sto lat dziejów malarstwa w Polsce 1760–1860: Z okazji wystawy retrospektywnej malarstwa polskiego we Lwowie 1894 r. [One Hundred Years of the History of Painting in Poland 1760–1860: On the Occasion of the Retrospective Exhibition of Polish Painting in Lwów 1894], Kraków 1897.

<sup>11</sup> W. N.: Stary Teatr [The Old Theater], in: Czas 59 (1906), 217 (2), p. 1, cited in: WÓJCIK, p. 10.



Fig. 2:  
Bed of Marshal Józef Piłsudski  
(1867–1935), Warsaw (?), ca.  
1820 – ca. 1830, beginning of the  
twentieth century, mahogany  
wood, birch wood, pinewood,  
steel, 101 x 257.5 x 105 cm.  
Photo: National Museum in  
Warsaw

‘Roccoco.’”<sup>12</sup> Characterizing Biedermeier as a cultural phenomenon, Jankowski writes that “It was our response to the Americanization of our lives that are rushing at a breakneck pace.” Works inspired by Biedermeier also earned critical reviews, for instance in the paper on Polish miniatures on the exhibition in Lwów, Stanisław Zarewicz mentions “the epoch of Biedermeyer which is so admired and at the same time so awkwardly emulated.”<sup>13</sup> However, in the catalogue of an exhibition devoted to the art of Biedermeier held in Lwów published fifteen years later, Biedermeier is assessed positively as an epoch and a style with modern solutions which manifested mainly in interiors.<sup>14</sup> Architect Stefan Strojka has a similar opinion about the Biedermeier, which he expresses in the context of the contemporary furniture industry.<sup>15</sup> He describes Biedermeier furniture as an embodiment of comfort, functionality and a well-considered choice of material. Simultaneously, two German publications concerning selected aspects of Biedermeier on Polish lands were published.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> CZESŁAW JANKOWSKI: G. Hermann, Biedermeier im Spiegel seiner Zeit ... [review], in: *Literatura i Sztuka: Dodatek do “Dziennika Poznańskiego”* 35 (1913), pp. 551–553, cited in: JACEK KUBIAK: Biedermeier, in: JÓZEF BACHÓRZ, GRAŻYNA BORKOWSKA et al. (eds.): *Słownik polskiej krytyki literackiej 1764–1918*, Warszawa—Toruń 2016, p. 75.

<sup>13</sup> STANISŁAW ZAREWICZ: *Polskie miniatury na lwowskiej wystawie* [Polish Miniatures at the Lwów Exhibition], Lwów 1913, p. 70.

<sup>14</sup> Particularly noteworthy is that sculpture was also mentioned as a form of Biedermeier art—see HENRYK CIEŚLA: Biedermeier: Przewodnik po wystawie przemysłu art. i grafiki [Biedermeier: Guide to the Exposition of Arts Industry and Graphics], Lwów 1928, pp. [2]–3.

<sup>15</sup> See: STEFAN STROJEK: Kilka uwag o sprzętach z okresu Biedermeiera i potrzebach współczesnych w meblarstwie [A Few Remarks on Biedermeier Furnishings and Contemporary Needs in Furniture Making], in: *Przemysł, Rzemiosło, Sztuka* 4 (1924), 3, pp. 30–31.

<sup>16</sup> ARTHUR KRONTHAL: Michael Alexander, Eduard Czarnikow und andere Bildnismaler der Posener Biedermeierzeit, in: *Historische Monatsblätter für Großpolen* (1921), 21, pp. 118–125; BRUNO TH. SATORI-NEUMANN: *Elbing im Biedermeier und Vormärz*, Elbing 1933.



Fig. 3:  
B. Dąbrowski, *Portrait of Paweł Pellizzaro, Owner of a Store with Prints in Warsaw*, 1838, oil, canvas, 95 x 73 cm [116 x 92.5 x 10].  
Photo: National Museum in Warsaw

Besides the new furniture, the original, old Biedermeier furniture could be found in interiors during the interwar period (Fig. 2). Not infrequently was their presence a subject of harsh criticism. Let the statement of one of the art déco designers serve as an example: “Empire furniture and innocently bugged Biedermeiers will serve as bedding until they ultimately fall into pieces, whereas worthless, Secession items is what every more or less sane human being burned or discarded long time ago.”<sup>17</sup> In general, in the times of the Second Polish Republic, Biedermeier appliances were still functional and practical. Due to their sturdiness and aesthetics, pieces of Biedermeier furniture were used in their primary function, rather than as collectors’ items. Although Biedermeier could be perceived as an epoch limited to the time between 1815 and 1848, their durable and long-lasting form and timeless aesthetic greatly exceeds its time frame.

The fact that the term “Biedermeier” became widely known in Poland in the first half of the twentieth century could be attested to by its appearance in *Ilustrowana encyklopedia powszechna* published in 1937,<sup>18</sup> as well as in the book by Henryk Cieśla.<sup>19</sup> Cieśla’s book was one of the first attempts in Poland to

<sup>17</sup> JOANNA HÜBNER-WOJCIECHOWSKA: *Art déco: Przewodnik dla kolekcjonerów* [Art déco: A Guide for Collectors], Warszawa 2009, p. 129.

<sup>18</sup> MARIAN J. WACHTEL (ed.): *Ilustrowana Encyklopedia Powszechna* [Universal Illustrated Encyclopedia]. Vol. 1: A–M, Warszawa 1937, p. 66.

<sup>19</sup> HENRYK CIEŚLA: *Historyczne style: Architektura, ornamentyka, rzemiosła* [Historical Styles: Architecture, Ornamentation, Crafts], Lwów 1930, pp. 47–50.

define different historical styles throughout the ages. Biedermeier was perceived as the last truly unique epoch or middle-class style that brought about new artistic forms. Later on, this opinion was echoed in subsequent scientific papers regarding applied arts, in particular furniture.<sup>20</sup>

### 3 Attempts to Define Biedermeier

The definitions provided in the encyclopedias and dictionaries are of limited use when an in-depth analysis is needed. In such a discussion, definitions accompanied by suitable designata are far more useful. As far as the notion of Biedermeier is concerned, the respective designates are in the first place analytical, stylistic features, but also specific physical objects. The authors who attempted to define Biedermeier after World War II had a few challenges to face: the determination of the status of Biedermeier, and Biedermeier's connection with other artistic styles. The former issue involved the interpretation of Biedermeier as an epoch, a style or a rather vague art-related phenomenon of lesser importance. The latter challenge involved attempts to enrich the definition of Biedermeier with such terms as "romanticism," "classicism," "empire," "realism," "idealism," and "sentimentalism." In most cases one of those terms dominated and found its way to the text of the definition. The choice of one of those terms was usually contingent upon the respective category of art that was the subject of the given research.

#### 3.1 Middle-class Biedermeier—an Epoch or a Style?

The notion of "epoch" as such was introduced by historians to mark the period that was distinguished based on its unique features. The most general division they use categorizes the history of the development of social life into three "macro-periods:" Antiquity, Middle Ages and modern times. In the papers dealing with the history of literature there is a limited set of epochs and sub-epochs that ensued in line with certain cultural phenomena. In Polish historiography, the notion of "the epoch of Biedermeier" appears rarely, especially in

<sup>20</sup> See: TADEUSZ DOBROWOLSKI, WŁADYSŁAW TATARKIEWICZ: *Część ósma: Sztuka romantyzmu i pozytywizmu 1830–1890. Wstęp* [Part Eight: The Art of Romanticism and Positivism 1830–1890. Introduction], in: WŁADYSŁAW LEŚNIEWSKI (ed.): *Historia sztuki polskiej. Vol. III: Sztuka nowoczesna*, 2nd ed., Kraków 1965, p. 160; JOANNA GOSTWICKA: *Dawne meble polskie* [Ancient Polish Furniture], Warszawa 1965, p. 56; STEFAN NARĘBSKI, JOANNA GOSTWICKA: *Zarys historii meblarstwa* [Outline of the History of Furniture], Toruń 1968, p. 86; JAN SETKOWICZ: *Zarys historii mebla: Od czasów starożytnych do końca XIX wieku* [Outline of the History of Furniture: From Ancient Times to the End of the Nineteenth Century], Warszawa—Kraków 1969, p. 312; JERZY MALINOWSKI: *Imitacje świata: O polskim malarstwie i krytyce artystycznej drugiej połowy XIX wieku* [Imitations of the World: On Polish Painting and Art Criticism of the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century], Kraków 1987, p. 15; JERZY MALINOWSKI: *Malarstwo polskie XIX wieku* [Polish Painting of the Nineteenth Century], Warszawa 2003, p. 97.



comparison to German research. The limited popularity of the term is yet more clear when the historical syntheses are considered. The period between 1815 and 1848 is usually classified as “the epoch of romanticism.”

In the introduction to the catalogue of an exhibition dedicated to Biedermeier artistic handicraft and industry, Zygmunt Dolczewski expands upon a possible application of the term “epoch” to Biedermeier.<sup>21</sup> He explains his opinion by putting forward the fact that important social and political changes were the “background of the newly formed artistic style” present in different branches of art. Moreover, Dolczewski indicates that Biedermeier was not a homogeneous style, due to the interplay of various artistic currents, including influences from classicism and romanticism. He concludes that “it is not the set of certain common forms that defines Biedermeier. It is rather about a specific atmosphere created by the cosiness and comfort of the interiors as well as the intimate and personal characters of many items of daily use, a sort of charming naivety in terms of the acquisition of noble patterns.”<sup>22</sup>

Similar or even broader understanding of the term “Biedermeier” was presented during an exhibition held in Rzeszów and dedicated to Biedermeier as an epoch of middle-class art.<sup>23</sup> Here, Biedermeier is defined as an epoch and art connected to family- and home-related values. It is also viewed as a culture—“the flowering of middle-class mentality.”<sup>24</sup> In the view of Zofia Karbowska, Biedermeier is an international phenomenon of pan-European reach (characteristic of the middle-class) limited only by the time frame between 1815 and 1848. She makes a distinction between romanticism and Biedermeier based on the comparison of the lifestyle of a “rebellious romantic” and that of a “middle-class fond of a calm and rather optimistic existence.”<sup>25</sup>

Biedermeier has also been interpreted as an expression of “the democratization of life that was a natural consequence of the fact that the status of the middle-class improved in general.”<sup>26</sup> This interpretation had been formed at the beginning of the twentieth century under the influence of foreign literature which stated that “middle-class art” replaced the “art of aristocracy” and is still

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<sup>21</sup> ZYGMUNT DOLCZEWSKI et al. (ed.): *Biedermeier. Rzemiosło i przemysł artystyczny I poł. XIX w.* [Biedermeier: Artistic Handicraft and Industry in the first Half of the Nineteenth Century], Słupsk 1981.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> ZOFIA KARBOWSKA: *Biedermeier—epoka sztuki mieszczańskiej* [Biedermeier—an Epoch of Middle-Class Art] [exhibition catalogue], Rzeszów 1994.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> ADAM BOCHNAK, KAZIMIERZ BUCZKOWSKI: *Rzemiosło artystyczne w Polsce* [Craft Industry in Poland], Warszawa 1971.



Fig. 4: A. Radziwiłłowa, P. Pizzala [?], *Interior of the Palace in Szpanów*, ca. 1835, drawing, watercolor, 22 x 40.9 cm. Photo: National Museum in Warsaw

repeated.<sup>27</sup> Here, the form of Biedermeier furniture is attributed to the needs of the middle-class that had “certain intellectual aspirations.”<sup>28</sup> The scholars allude to the predilections of the middle-class for comfort, practicality, solidity and, to some extent, to “the folk decorativeness.”<sup>29</sup> Biedermeier was defined as a “middle-class [...] comfortable style of useful furniture, large coffee cups and colorful glasses” that draws inspirations from classicism.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> E.g.: HARTWIG FISCHEL: *Das Wiener Interieur von einst und jetzt*, in: *Das Interieur* 1 (1900), p. 100; WILLI GEISMEIER: *Biedermeier: Das Bild vom Biedermeier, Zeit und Kultur des Biedermeier, Kunst und Kunstleben des Biedermeier*, Leipzig 1979; GEORG HIMMELHEBER: *Kunst des Biedermeier*, in: HIMMELHEBER, *Kunst des Biedermeier 1815–1835*, pp. 20–52; CLAUDIA TERENCE: *Biedermeier: A Bourgeois Style in the Restoration Period*, in: JIŘÍ RAK, RADIM VONDRÁČEK, CLAUDIA TERENCE: *Biedermeier. Art and Culture in Central Europe 1815–1848*, Milano et al. 2001, pp. 37–43.—HANS OTTOMEYER: *Von Stilen und Ständen in der Biedermeierzeit*, in: HANS OTTOMEYER, ULRIKE LAUFER (eds.): *Biedermeiers Glück und Ende: Die gestörte Idylle [exhibition catalogue]*, München 1987, pp. 91–128, here p. 125, notices that the research on art is characterized by the particular emphasis on “middle-classness” of Biedermeier than in any other discipline.

<sup>28</sup> ZDZISŁAW ŻYGULSKI JR.: *Dzieje polskiego rzemiosła artystycznego [History of the Polish Craft Industry]*, Warszawa 1987, p. 67.

<sup>29</sup> DOLCZEWSKI, p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> BOCHNAK/BUCZKOWSKI, p. 68.

Some scholars emphasize that middle-class Biedermeier became popular across other social classes and found its way under the roofs of manor houses or country cottages.<sup>31</sup> In other publications, parallel to the research conducted abroad,<sup>32</sup> more attention is drawn to the false assumption that Biedermeier had a purely middle-class origin and that it was a response only to the needs of the middle-class.<sup>33</sup> It was rather an explanation, in relation to the fact that in the first half of nineteenth century the middle-class on Polish territory did not have strong position in social strata as it was dominated by *szlachta*. The terms “epoch” and “style” in reference to Biedermeier may be found in other art-related papers too, but this issue has never been the subject of any thorough analysis.

The applicability of the conceptual categories may be seen not only on a general level. It also requires to be clearly defined within individual forms of art. Such detailed analysis is essential not only because of references to different types of artworks. It may also be an opportunity for clarifying generalizations about Biedermeier itself. Paradoxically, the whole taxonomy of the terms associated with Biedermeier is at best still far from clear, at worst chaotic. It reveals many internal contradictions. This chaos is yet more visible because the style of Biedermeier was marked by simplicity and clear forms.

One of possible reasons for these difficulties in defining Biedermeier could be a reductive understanding of how individual social classes evolved. Society was no longer clearly divided into estates. Now that the system of classes and strata was far less homogenous and had many chronological and geographical variations, it was economic status that became a key factor.

From the cultural point of view, general definitions of Biedermeier should be considered with regards to its social and cultural context as well as its historical background. Such a holistic approach could solve the problems of many art historians who find it difficult to determine whether specific designate (items) fall into the category of Biedermeier. However, the analysis of general features of Biedermeier style or epoch should be preceded by the juxtaposition of the results of the research conducted within individual categories of art.

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<sup>31</sup> See: STEFAN SIENICKI: *Wnętrza mieszkalne: Rys historyczny* [Residential Interiors: Historical Outline], Warszawa 1962, p. 371; ELŻBIETA KOWECKA: *W salonie i w kuchni: Opowieść o kulturze materialnej pałaców i dworów polskich w XIX wieku* [In Living-room and Kitchen: A Tale of Material Culture of Polish Palaces and Mansions in the nineteenth Century], 2nd ed., Warszawa 1989, p. 74; SETKOWICZ, p. 254; DOLCZEWSKI, p. 3; NARĘBSKI/GOSTWICKA, p. 85.

<sup>32</sup> The fact that Biedermeier do not have middle-class origin but rather aristocratic was discovered with the method of provenance research by OTTOMEYER, Von Stilen, and CHRISTIAN WITT-DÖRRING: *Der differenzierte Konsum: Das Wiener Möbel 1815–1848*, in: ROBERT WAISSNERBERGER (ed.): *Bürgersinn und Aufbegehren. Biedermeier und Vormärz in Wien 1815–1848* [exhibition catalogue], Wien 1987, pp. 367–387.

<sup>33</sup> See: KOZAK/ROSALES-RODRÍGUEZ.

### 3.2 Biedermeier in Applied Arts as Simplified Classicism

When Biedermeier was still in its prime time, it was perceived as a subcategory of classicism. On Polish territory it was called a “Corinthian style.”<sup>34</sup> Jan Setkiewicz claims that references made to one of the principal orders of ancient architecture proved that the people living in the epoch of Biedermeier perceived this style as a “continuance of Greek classicism from the 18th century.”<sup>35</sup> The perception of Biedermeier as simplified or middle-class classicism (with certain influences of romanticism) was particularly typical for research on applied arts.

Items of furniture in “a so-called Biedermeier style” were perceived as formally close to those of the empire style (simplified version), in particular in the initial period.<sup>36</sup> However, Stefan Sienicki states that the nature of Biedermeier interiors was far from monumental, as was the case with the empire style. Although “some art historians classified certain buildings as erected in the style of Biedermeier, they were in most cases one or another form of classicism.”<sup>37</sup> However, in the passage about furniture manufactured on Polish territory Sienicki refers to Biedermeier as “monumental.”<sup>38</sup> The thesis that Bieder-



Fig. 5:  
J. Mohr: console table,  
Kalisz, ca. 1825–1840,  
sycamore wood,  
pinewood, lime wood,  
mahogany wood.  
Photo: National  
Museum in Warsaw

<sup>34</sup> In the inventories from that time the Biedermeier items are described as “created in Corinthian style” or according to the *curentica* or *korintiky* rules. They were associated with “Corinthian” architecture or “Corinthian decoration.” GOSTWICKA, p. 57.

<sup>35</sup> SETKOWICZ, pp. 312–313.

<sup>36</sup> SIENICKI, p. 237.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., pp. 237–238.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 416.

meier's simplicity derived from classicism or its late form (empire style) was influenced by foreign research.<sup>39</sup> Also, research on the existence of Biedermeier style in architecture was first conducted abroad.<sup>40</sup>

Setkowicz explains that the popularity of simplified Biedermeier forms was due to the lack of financial resources that had been "allocated for buying courtly furniture of former historical styles."<sup>41</sup> It is questionable whether that simplification was only due to economic factors, as the author claims. In the opinion of Stanisław Stefan Mieleszkiewicz, the simplification of the classicist forms was just one of two new formal features of this new style—besides the introduction of new, abstract patterns ("formal dualism").<sup>42</sup>

A contradictory interpretation is offered by Helena Blumówna.<sup>43</sup> She rejects the perception of Biedermeier ("a 'style' relevant for German and Austrian middle-class culture adapted to Polish reality") as a form of neoclassicism, calling it "a new phenomenon that emerged in order to satisfy the practical needs of a changing bourgeois-class." In a publication on bedrooms and beds in the nineteenth century, Małgorzata Korżel-Kraśna goes as far as to claim that Biedermeier was a style which "in its original form was a sheer opposite of former empire style," which seems to be too far-fetched a statement.<sup>44</sup> Opinion on the similarities and differences between these two styles depends on the factors that are taken into consideration. The empire style was an official and representative art, which used rich forms. On the other hand, there were works of art marked by simplicity. Such differences in views on the relations between empire and Biedermeier also occur in foreign literature.<sup>45</sup>

Another issue that is frequently expanded upon in foreign and Polish research is how Biedermeier furniture gradually acquired certain motifs from gothic and rococo, which were characteristic of historicism.<sup>46</sup> According to this interpretation Biedermeier was one of three short historical periods. It was preceded by empire and followed by neo-Gothic.<sup>47</sup> Compared to the eclecticism

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<sup>39</sup> One of the recent publications focused on the origin of Biedermeier's simplicity is OTTOMEYER/SCHRÖDER.

<sup>40</sup> E.g.: HIMMELHEBER, *Kunst des Biedermeier 1815–1835*.

<sup>41</sup> SETKOWICZ, p. 254.

<sup>42</sup> See: STANISŁAW STEFAN MIELESZKIEWICZ: *Meble biedermeierowskie* [Biedermeier Furniture], in: KOZAK/ROSALES-RODRÍGUEZ, pp. 175–189, here p. 175.

<sup>43</sup> HELENA BLUMÓWNA: *Rzemiosło artystyczne* [Craft Industry], in: LEŚNIEWSKI, pp. 254–265, here p. 255.

<sup>44</sup> MAŁGORZATA KORŻEL-KRAŚNA: *Revolucja w sypialni: Łóżka w XIX wieku* [Revolution in the Bedroom: The Bed in the Nineteenth Century] [exhibition catalogue], Wrocław 2018, p. 56.

<sup>45</sup> This issue is analyzed e.g. by: OTTOMEYER, *Von Stilen*, p. 106.

<sup>46</sup> E.g.: OTTOMEYER, *Von Stilen*, p. 101; HANS OTTOMEYER: *The Invention of Simplicity*, in: OTTOMEYER/SCHRÖDER, pp. 43–55, here p. 86; SIENICKI, p. 239.

<sup>47</sup> See: TADEUSZ MAŃKOWSKI: *Rzemiosło artystyczne* [Craft Industry], in: LEŚNIEWSKI, pp. 134–148, here p. 148; MIELESZKIEWICZ, p. 175.

of the second half of the nineteenth century, Biedermeier is viewed in a positive light.<sup>48</sup>

Some scholars emphasize the influence of English or English-style furniture that filled many living interiors.<sup>49</sup> Setkowicz calls London one of the centers of Biedermeier—next to Vienna and Berlin.<sup>50</sup> Interestingly enough, when the same author writes about how the new style was acquired in different countries, he does not even mention England.<sup>51</sup>

Different dates for Biedermeier on Polish territory are provided by scholars. In most cases, however, they indicate the 1820s as the time of its beginnings and the 1850s or 1860s as its end.<sup>52</sup> Variations also occurred in foreign literature on European Biedermeier, depending on which branch of art is being discussed. The time between 1815 and 1830 is often indicated in the context of applied arts, while the period from the 1830s to 1860s is proposed in the research on painting.<sup>53</sup> These two examples show how differently Biedermeier is perceived by researchers.

Attempts at defining Biedermeier on Polish territory have one common theme: the determination of the territorial scope and extent to which German, Austrian, and possibly Russian art influenced the new style or epoch. From this point of view, influence originating from German-speaking countries dominated both in terms of the shape of the furniture and the material from which it was made.<sup>54</sup>

This issue shed light on another problem, namely the determination of the native origin of the items manufactured on Polish territory. Blumówna categorizes the items of Biedermeier furniture found on Polish territory into three groups: those of clearly regional character, those inspired by western patterns, and imported items.<sup>55</sup> The furniture imported from abroad mostly went to the palaces, whereas the objects of native origin could be found primarily in middle-class interiors.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>48</sup> See: BLUMÓWNA.

<sup>49</sup> See: GOSTWICKA, p. 56; ŻYGULSKI JR., p. 67. The influence of English art is also mentioned in foreign literature—e.g.: OTTOMEYER, Von Stilen, p. 125; HIMMELHEBER, *Kunst des Biedermeier*; OTTOMEYER, *The Invention*.

<sup>50</sup> See: SETKOWICZ, p. 254.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 312–319, chapter “Polish Furniture Industry across Historical Epochs.”

<sup>52</sup> CIEŚLA, *Historyczne style*, pp. 47–48; SETKOWICZ, p. 312; GOSTWICKA, p. 56; ŻYGULSKI JR., p. 62; MIELESZKIEWICZ, p. 189; TADEUSZ DOBROWOLSKI: *Sztuka polska od czasów najdawniejszych do ostatnich* [Polish Art from the Earliest Times to the Latest], Kraków 1974, p. 548; TADEUSZ DOBROWOLSKI: *Sztuka Krakowa* [Cracow's Art], 4th ed., Kraków 1971, p. 425; IGNACY TŁOCZEK: *Polskie snycerstwo* [Polish Woodcarving], Wrocław et al. 1984, p. 83.

<sup>53</sup> HIMMELHEBER, *Kunst des Biedermeier*; OTTOMEYER/SCHRÖDER.

<sup>54</sup> See: SIENICKI, pp. 238, 415; ŻYGULSKI JR.; NARĘBSKI/GOSTWICKA, pp. 85–86; GOSTWICKA, pp. 56–57.

<sup>55</sup> BLUMÓWNA, p. 255.

<sup>56</sup> GOSTWICKA, p. 66.

The need for an in-depth analysis of the furniture assembled in individual production centers is indicated by researchers. It is emphasized that “Polish” workshops were more primitive, and apart from mahogany it was native wood species that gained popularity.<sup>57</sup> What set the Biedermeier furniture assembled on Polish territory apart was “a plenitude of forms, beautiful intarsia designs and good craftsmanship.” Warsaw, Cracow and Kolbuszowa were mentioned as the most important artistic centers, with the first city having a more pan-European character, and Kolbuszowa as well as Cracow being more representative of native furniture art.<sup>58</sup>

Although nobody questions the existence of Biedermeier in art furniture, its characteristics become more problematic when it comes to fabrics, clothes and other handcrafted items. The issue of decorative Biedermeier motifs on various fabrics was analyzed in those publications dealing primarily with furniture<sup>59</sup> and in the texts that revolved around the embroidery of the nineteenth century, including cross knit and patchwork embroidery.<sup>60</sup>

The lack of clear categorization of Biedermeier in those areas may be due to the fact that Polish territory remained under the strong influence of cultural centers where Biedermeier was of lesser importance or did not exist at all. Another explanation could be the common practice of importing the goods from areas where Biedermeier was not present. Examples of such imports are eastern carpets imported from the Ottoman Empire, Persia, the Caucasus and Central Asia.<sup>61</sup> As far as fashion is concerned, it was Paris that set the main trends. This is probably why Andrzej Banach defines Biedermeier as a German counterpart of the style of Louis Philippe that prevailed in France at the same time, and used these two terms as synonyms.<sup>62</sup> The factors that made it difficult to apply the term Biedermeier in fashion are listed by Małgorzata Możdżyńska-Nawotka.<sup>63</sup> She mentions, for instance, the existence of certain political and ideological phenomena in fashion which were irreconcilable with the “homeliness” of Biedermeier. It is probably mainly because of those difficulties that Ewa Orlińska-Mianowska and Monika Janisz use the expressions “middle-class fashion,”

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<sup>57</sup> BLUMÓWNA, p. 255; DOBROWOLSKI, *Sztuka polska*, p. 548.

<sup>58</sup> GOSTWICKA, p. 74; ŻYGULSKI, p. 68; TADEUSZ CHRZANOWSKI, MARIAN KORNECKI: *Sztuka Ziemi Krakowskie [Art of the Kraków Lands]*, Kraków 1982, p. 563; BOCHNAK/BUCZKOWSKI, pp. 80–81; SIENICKI, pp. 398–399.

<sup>59</sup> SIENICKI, p. 416.

<sup>60</sup> See: BOCHNAK/BUCZKOWSKI; JOANNA ECKHARDT: *Rzemiosło artystyczne do końca XIX w. [Craft Industry till the End of the Nineteenth Century]*, in: KAZIMIERZ MALINOWSKI et al. (eds.): *Dziesięć wieków Poznania. Vol. 3: Sztuki plastyczne*, Poznań—Warszawa 1956, pp. 193–236, here p. 234; BLUMÓWNA, p. 264.

<sup>61</sup> ŻYGULSKI, p. 69.

<sup>62</sup> See: ANDRZEJ BANACH: *O modzie XIX w. [On Nineteenth-Century Fashion]*, Warszawa 1957, pp. 234–257.

<sup>63</sup> See: MAŁGORZATA MOŻDŻYŃSKA-NAWOTKA: *A Rubens or a Chair, or a Novel, Perhaps? The Riddle of Fashion in the Biedermeier Period*, in: ROSALES-RODRÍGUEZ, *Polski biedermeier*, pp. 93–109.

“fashion of the first half of the nineteenth century” or “fashion of the Biedermeier times” as they write about the use of fabrics between 1815 and 1848 and avoid straightforwardly calling those items “Biedermeier.”<sup>64</sup>

The term “Biedermeier” is also used in reference to old glassware, although at the same time it is claimed that glass art on Polish territory remained conservative and kept classicist forms from the times of Louis XVI and the French Empire as its dominant forms.<sup>65</sup> Many items of this that remain in Polish collections originate from Prussian or Czech manufacturers.

In some older texts about ceramics produced on Polish territory, the term “Biedermeier” is hardly used.<sup>66</sup> As Wanda Załęska concludes, it is difficult to discern individual features of Biedermeier porcelain: “We should rather speak



Fig. 6: Tea cup with rose ornament, Königliche Porzellan-Manufaktur, Berlin, ca. 1825, porcelain, 11,3 x 10 x 8. Photo: National Museum in Warsaw

<sup>64</sup> MONIKA JANISZ, EWA ORLIŃSKA-MIANOWSKA: *Ubiory i tkaniny w latach 1815–1848* [Clothing and Textiles in the Years 1815–1848], in: KOZAK/ROSALES-RODRÍGUEZ, pp. 335–343.

<sup>65</sup> BOCHNAK/BUCKOWSKI, p. 80; JUSTYNA WIERZCHOWSKA: *Szkło biedermeierowskie na Śląsku* [Biedermeier Glass in Silesia], in: KOZAK/ROSALES-RODRÍGUEZ, pp. 183–291, here p. 283; ALEKSANDRA J. KASPRZAK: *Huty szkła kryształowego w Królestwie Polskim w pierwszej połowie XIX wieku* [Crystal Glass Mills in the Kingdom of Poland in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century], in: ROSALES-RODRÍGUEZ, *Polski biedermeier*, pp. 193–207, here p. 205.

<sup>66</sup> MARIA STARZEWSKA, MARIA JEŻEWSKA: *Polski fajans* [Polski Fayence], Wrocław et al. 1978.



about the popularity of certain forms and decorations and about short-term ‘trends’ that favored specific patterns which fitted into the cultural reality of that particular moment.”<sup>67</sup>

It is much more difficult to encounter the term “Biedermeier” in older publications dealing with goldsmithery and foundry, although modern literature reveals its existence in those categories of art.<sup>68</sup> This was due to the fact that classicism was perceived as a prevalent trend in the goldsmithery of the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>69</sup> In this view, the existence of Biedermeier is not mentioned between empire and historicism.<sup>70</sup> However, Zdzisław Żygulski Jr. mentions the influence of middle-class tastes on goldsmithery. He names a set of styles that manifested themselves in Polish silver goods from the nineteenth century, which included German Biedermeier.<sup>71</sup> Ewa Martyna-Michalska writes also about goldsmithery and jewellery in the context of Biedermeier period.<sup>72</sup> Biedermeier is viewed as the rejection of empire style exquisiteness and the preference for simple, classical forms, as well as the use of geometrical vessel-like shapes, sometimes with no ornaments whatsoever.

### 3.3 Biedermeier in Painting—Between Romanticism and Realism

The term “Biedermeier” is primarily associated with applied arts.<sup>73</sup> However, it is also present in research on painting and graphic. The scholars who deal with this issue perceive Biedermeier as a trend to be associated with romanticism and realism, rather than classicism, in the context of the “middle-classness” of this art. Much rarer is the mentioning of Biedermeier as a form of classicism.<sup>74</sup>

#### 3.3.1 *Biedermeier Painting vs. “Middle-class Realism” and “Small Realism”*

Perceived as a cultural epoch, Biedermeier was associated with the notion of “middle-class realism”, which had a rather broad scope of meaning. The notion of Biedermeier appeared most often in the context of portraits. It was also associated with Biedermeier “conventional and, to some extent, romantic land-

<sup>67</sup> WANDA ZAŁĘSKA: Porcelana biedermeieru [Biedermeier Porcelain], in: KOZAK/ROSALLES-RODRÍGUEZ, pp. 245–253, here p. 248.

<sup>68</sup> KOZAK/ROSALLES-RODRÍGUEZ.

<sup>69</sup> JAN SAMEK: Polskie złotnictwo [Polish Goldsmithery], Wrocław et al. 1988, p. 183.

<sup>70</sup> ECKHARDT, p. 207.

<sup>71</sup> ŻYGULSKI JR., p. 70.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 66. EWA MARTYNA-MICHALSKA: Złotnictwo i jubilerstwo okresu biedermeieru [Goldsmithery and Jewelry during Biedermeier], in: KOZAK/ROSALLES-RODRÍGUEZ, pp. 365–371, here p. 365.

<sup>73</sup> DOBROWOLSKI/TATARKIEWICZ, p. 155.

<sup>74</sup> ANDRZEJ RYSZKIEWICZ: Polski portret zbiorowy [The Polish Group Portrait], Wrocław et al. 1961, p. 137.

scapes” and still lives.<sup>75</sup> In the portraits “classicist tradition clearly gives way to typical middle-class realism of the Biedermeier epoch. What sets those portraits apart is a clear message they convey, true life aspects that they depict, psychological depth based on the best traditions of painters’ craftsmanship.” They were the “expression of petit-bourgeois nature in art and the relation between social classes that became stable and clear in those times.”<sup>76</sup> What could attract a reader’s attention in these quotations from a catalogue of Polish middle-class realism paintings, published in 1956, is the presence of typical Marxist terminology. Its use here is largely due to the fact that the exhibition took place in the years of high Stalinism. This was when the doctrine of “socialist realism” was widely promoted and glorified as a structural opposition to “middle-class realism.” “Class-related” terminology was used in an ideological sense to prove the influence of the class-awareness of the painters in the way they depicted the person or people on their canvases. This emphasis on middle-class preferences could also be explained by the fact that it was considered that the middle-class and intellectuals had much greater influence on painting than on “public” architecture or sculpture. Realism was perceived as an “artistic current” which responded to their tastes.<sup>77</sup>

Small wonder then that the same expression, that is, “middle-class realism of the Biedermeier epoch” appears in many other publications.<sup>78</sup> Stefan Kozakiewicz uses “middle-class realism” as a synonym for the term “Biedermeier,” which was described as a “foreign and unfortunate expression.”<sup>79</sup> “Middle-class realism” was perceived as a herald of “critical realism” of the second half of the nineteenth century. This notion was still popular in the 1990s. It is used for instance in the guide to the exhibition “Biedermeier—an epoch of middle-class art” held in Rzeszów.<sup>80</sup> Painting performed in the “period of Biedermeier

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>76</sup> PRZEMYSŁAW MICHAŁOWSKI (ed.): *Malarstwo polskie realizmu mieszczańskiego I połowy XIX wieku* [Polish Painting of Middle-Class Realism of the First Half of the Nineteenth Century] [exhibition catalogue], Poznań 1956, p. 8.

<sup>77</sup> DOBROWOLSKI/TATARKIEWICZ, p. 162.

<sup>78</sup> E.g.: PRZEMYSŁAW MICHAŁOWSKI: *Malarstwo do końca XIX wieku* [Painting until the End of the Nineteenth Century], in: MALINOWSKI, *Dziesięć wieków Poznania*, pp. 133–144, here p. 141; TADEUSZ DOBROWOLSKI: *Malarstwo* [Painting], in: LEŚNIEWSKI, p. 109. It was also used in foreign publications, e.g.: ELEK PETROVICS: *Jegyzetek művészettünk történetéhez a XIX. század első felében* [Notes on the History of Our Art in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century], Budapest 1933; LAJOS NÉMETH: *Magyar képzőművészet a 19. század derekán* [Hungarian Fine Art in the Middle of the Nineteenth Century], in: NÓRA ARADI (ed.): *A művészet története Magyarországon a Honfoglalástól napjainkig*, Budapest 1983, pp. 333–353, here p. 336.

<sup>79</sup> STEFAN KOZAKIEWICZ: *Malarstwo polskie: Oświecenie—klasycyzm—romantyzm* [Polish Painting: Enlightenment—Classicism—Romanticism], Warszawa 1976, p. 70. The author opts for the use of the term “middle-class portrait” noting that it could be a “landowner’s portrait” as well.

<sup>80</sup> KARBOWSKA, p. 8.



Fig. 7: A. Płonczyński, copy of J. N. Głowacki's *View from Wawel*, 1848, oil, canvas, 57 x 76 [72.5 x 91] cm. Photo: National Museum in Cracow

style” is characterized as realistic and “sometimes with certain features typical for classicism or romanticism.” The term “middle-class realism” in the context of Biedermeier could also be found in more recent publications.<sup>81</sup>

Another term associated with “middle-classness” was “small realism.” This expression came into use in the 1960s mainly among historians and literary critics. It was coined to describe a sort of cognitive minimalism. Such features as “daily life” and the mediocrity of individual people or events came into play. The term “small realism” was introduced in research on painting of the Biedermeier period—for example by Tadeusz Dobrowolski, who states that “the middle-class culture” was associated with “small [minor] ideals.”<sup>82</sup> The tastes of the *petit-bourgeoisie* manifested themselves in the “art of little forms.”<sup>83</sup> This view is accompanied by a critical assessment of the middle-class, which—in the opinion of Dobrowolski—was a hardworking and down-to-earth social class but with “rather little fantasy,” though not devoid of “atavistic longing for

<sup>81</sup> E.g.: AGNIESZKA ROSALES-RODRÍGUEZ: Romantyzm “udomowiony”: Biedermeier w malarstwie [“Domesticated” Romanticism: Biedermeier in Painting], in: KOZAK/ROSALLES-RODRÍGUEZ, pp. 31–45, here p. 43.

<sup>82</sup> DOBROWOLSKI, *Sztuka polska*, p. 546.

<sup>83</sup> TADEUSZ DOBROWOLSKI: *Malarstwo polskie ostatnich dwustu lat* [Polish Painting of the Last Two Hundred Years], Wrocław et al. 1989, p. 81.

countryside, nature and clear sky.”<sup>84</sup> This hypothesis does not mention one crucial element of Biedermeier, which is the transition of reality to the enclosed living interior by means of an image (domestication of nature). In other words, it was not reality itself, but rather its reflection.

Paintings created according to middle-class tastes were also subject to criticism. Dobrowolski states that they were created mainly by “less known artists tainted with the sin of eclecticism and opportunism.”<sup>85</sup> The perception of middle-class art (which was in fact Biedermeier) as an art with no higher aspirations and created by mediocre artists of average talent and intellectual capacities was due to the fact that it was present largely in “lower” genres of painting, such as portrait, still life, genre scenes or veduta. This view on Biedermeier existed also in foreign literature.<sup>86</sup>

Another interpretation is offered by Jerzy Malinowski.<sup>87</sup> He claims that Biedermeier as a style present on Polish territory did not have an exclusively “middle-class” character. In his opinion, unlike German and Austrian Biedermeier, which were homogenous, the Polish strain of this style had two different forms: an “urban” and “noble” one. Both forms differed in attitude.<sup>88</sup> The “urban” strain of Biedermeier was similar to its German and Austrian counterparts. It was focused on the contemporary world, whereas the “noble” form was rooted in the historical tradition. The interpretation of Biedermeier as not strictly middle-class style is characteristic of contemporary research.<sup>89</sup>

What seems to be typical in contemporary research is outlining a considerably more complicated network of connections between Biedermeier and other

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>86</sup> E.g. PAUL FERDINAND SCHMIDT: *Biedermeier-Malerei: Zur Geschichte und Geistigkeit der deutschen Malerei in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, München 1922, cited in: RADIM VONDRÁČEK: *Biedermeier and Its Semantics*, in: RAK/VONDRÁČEK/TERENZI, pp. 23–35, here p. 30.

<sup>87</sup> MALINOWSKI, *Imitacje świata*.

<sup>88</sup> Malinowski uses the term “urban,” instead of “middle-class,” because “it is also connected to intelligentsia, clerks.” Initially Malinowski categorizes the portrait and landscape painting with staffage as an “urban strain.” At the same time, he regards genre painting as representative of the “noble” form (MALINOWSKI, *Imitacje świata*, pp. 9, 14). However, more than a decade later he changed his mind. In his opinion portraits still belong to typically “urban” Biedermeier, but instead of landscape painting, he now classifies genre scenes (oft satirical ones) that were associated with landscapes as “urban” too. He regards “daily scenes depicting the life in the manor and in the countryside” and historical scenes as typically “noble.” The author classifies the kind of scenes painted by Januarius Suchodolski as “noble” Biedermeier. However, later in the text “*Malarstwo polskie*” from 2003 he considers Suchodolski a romanticist painter (MALINOWSKI, *Malarstwo polskie*, pp. 73–78).

<sup>89</sup> AGNIESZKA CISKA: *Biedermeier—prosto, mieszczańsko, zacisznie* [Biedermeier—Simple, Middle-Class, Secluded], in: DANIELEWICZ, pp. 34–41, here p. 36.

styles.<sup>90</sup> In part this is due to the fact that the styles did not occur in a linear manner, one after another. Certain features of individual styles appear before these or other? styles become popular or remain after they pass. For instance Agnieszka Ciska indicates similarities between Biedermeier, neoclassicism, romanticism and Nazarene painting.<sup>91</sup> She also mentions the influences of “genre conventions of the Dutch art from seventeenth century, patterns from eighteenth-century England and finally—German domestic painting tradition which remained under strong influence of realism.”<sup>92</sup> Interestingly, in the introduction to the catalogue in which the text of Ciska is published, Iwona Danielewicz states that it was German romanticism “surfacing in the middle-class culture [...] that initiated a very interesting phenomenon of Biedermeier and the Düsseldorf school of landscape painting.”<sup>93</sup>

### 3.3.2 *Biedermeier as Domesticated Romanticism*

In the Polish publications about Biedermeier, as well as the term “realism,” the term “romanticism” can often be found. This is due to the fact that romanticism and Biedermeier flourished almost simultaneously. This may be compared to the co-existence of Biedermeier and *Vormärz* in German-speaking countries. Tadeusz Dobrowolski, for instance, considers Biedermeier a worse form of romanticism and realism—he calls it “diluted romanticism” and a “curt realism” that became “a benchmark of middle-class Biedermeier culture.”<sup>94</sup> He also uses the term “middle-class romanticism” in the context of the Biedermeier.<sup>95</sup> On the other hand, Karbowska highlights the presence of “idealistic and romanticist influences” in Biedermeier landscapes that were painted in accordance with the principles of “conventional realism.”<sup>96</sup> Piotr Kibort adds that “the underlying principles of Biedermeier were the pursuit of realism and the

<sup>90</sup> E.g. AGNIESZKA ŚWIĘTOSŁAWSKA: *Obrazy codzienności: Polskie malarstwo rodzajowe I połowy XIX wieku* [Images of Everyday Life: Polish Genre Painting of the First Half of the Nineteenth Century], Warszawa—Toruń 2015, p. 477.

<sup>91</sup> CISKA, p. 35. Other authors also analyze the influences of Nazarene style in Biedermeier. See KOZAK, pp. 22–23; ROSALES-RODRÍGUEZ, *Romantyzm “udomowiony,”* pp. 33–34.

<sup>92</sup> CISKA, p. 36.

<sup>93</sup> DANIELEWICZ, p. 8.

<sup>94</sup> DOBROWOLSKI, *Malarstwo polskie*, p. 81.

<sup>95</sup> It was somewhere else again that Dobrowolski classifies Jan Nepomucen Głowacki (Fig. 7) as a representative of romantic landscape painting “retouched in the vein of middle-class style.” As far as the portraits painted by Alojzy Rejchan are concerned, he states that they “demonstrate a combination of Biedermeier with its small middle-class realism and the aftermath of romanticism.” The works of the same kind painted by Rafał Hadziewicz are described as “of a mainstream type, half-romantic, half-Biedermeier,” see: DOBROWOLSKI, *Malarstwo polskie*, pp. 84, 87. In view of: KOZAKIEWICZ, p. 67, the portraits painted by Hadziewicz were “typically post-classicist.”

<sup>96</sup> KARBOWSKA, p. 10.



Fig. 8:  
J. F. Piwarski, *"The Last Penny" tavern near Warsaw*, ca. 1845, oil, canvas, 99 x 132 [108 x 141 x 6] cm. Photo: National Museum in Warsaw

sentimentalism of romanticism inspired by the aesthetics of Renaissance."<sup>97</sup> The above-mentioned opinions are based on the view that Biedermeier cannot be compared to a single phenomenon, because of the plurality of its influences.

In recent years, however, there has been a tendency to introduce the term "domesticated romanticism" to the research on Biedermeier on Polish territory. One of the newest publications, in which the authors attempt to some extent to determine what the Polish version of Biedermeier looked like, if it had indeed ever existed, is titled "Polish Biedermeier—'domesticated' romanticism."<sup>98</sup> It resulted in the interpretation of Biedermeier as a specific type of romanticism which was in its heyday at that time. The expression "domesticated romanticism" was coined by Virgil Nemoianu.<sup>99</sup> Although this term was applied in the research on the history of literature, it has been incorporated in Polish research on art.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>97</sup> PIOTR KIBORT: Ilustracja świata: Rysunek biedermeierowski [Illustration of the World: Biedermeier Drawing], in: KOZAK/ROSALES-RODRÍGUEZ, pp. 119–122, here p. 121.

<sup>98</sup> AGNIESZKA ROSALES-RODRÍGUEZ (ed.): Polski biedermeier—romantyzm udomowiony [Polish Biedermeier—Domesticated Romanticism], Warszawa 2018. This publication came as an aftermath of the National Museum exhibition 2017 (KOZAK/ROSALES-RODRÍGUEZ, Biedermeier).

<sup>99</sup> VIRGIL NEMOIANU: *The Taming of Romanticism: European Literature and the Age of Biedermeier*, Cambridge, MA et al. 1984.

<sup>100</sup> ROSALES-RODRÍGUEZ, Polski Biedermeier; MIRELLA KURKOWSKA: "Romantyzm udomowiony"—rodzina i społeczeństwo w kulturze popularnej epoki biedermeieru: Kilka uwag o powstawaniu i upowszechnianiu nowych wzorców [Domesticated Romanticism—Family and Society in the Popular Culture of Biedermeier Epoque: Some Remarks on the Formation and Dissemination of New Patterns], in: ANDRZEJ PIENKOS, AGNIESZKA ROSALES-RODRÍGUEZ (eds.): *Epoka Chopina—kultura romantyczna we Francji i w Polsce*, Warszawa 2013, pp. 197–202. The term "domesticated romanticism" appears also in the context of the exhibition Biedermeier held in 2017 by the National Museum in Warsaw, see: KOZAK/ROSALES-RODRÍGUEZ.

The rather groundless tendency to “incorporate” Biedermeier into romanticism (in the context of Polish lands), despite the significant differences between these two phenomena, including their origins, can be partly explained by the above-mentioned fact that Biedermeier emerged on Polish territory in times of domination of romanticism. Despite far-reaching ideological differences, both styles bear certain common features, such as sentimentalism. This could also be one of the reasons why both trends are often grouped together. Curiously, in recent foreign literature there is a tendency to emphasize the differences between Biedermeier and romanticism with an indication that further research is needed.<sup>101</sup>

In many general historical syntheses that deal with the analysis of social and economic problems, there is an increasing use of the term “the epoch of romanticism”. National liberation tendencies are regarded as a part of this. Under the influence of historians, art researchers decided to search in painting for such features, that would fit into the characteristics of romanticism. Indeed, Kibort makes a point that in many older Polish research publications, the aesthetics of romanticism were acknowledged as “the only fundamental and widespread style of that epoch.” He states that this was merely because the term “Biedermeier” came into use only in the 1960s.<sup>102</sup> In fact, the term was applied much earlier. However, the difference between the art of Biedermeier and that of “high” romanticism was not overlooked. The former was largely associated with the middle-class and realist character of this art. In the view of Malinowski, the term “Biedermeier” became successful as an expression that attempted to reconcile the “contradictions between classicism or realism and romanticism. The fact that the term Biedermeier does not directly evoke any other term (which would be the case with ‘national romanticism,’ ‘early realism,’ ‘middle-class realism’ etc.) emphasizes its independence [and] it also creates a common ground for Polish and Central European art.”<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> E.g.: RADIM VONDRÁČEK: Introduction: The History and Reception of Biedermeier, in: RADIM VONDRÁČEK (ed.): *Biedermeier: Art and Culture in the Bohemian Lands 1814–1848*, Prague 2010, pp. 11–33.

<sup>102</sup> KIBORT, p. 122.

<sup>103</sup> MALINOWSKI, *Imitacje świata*, p. 19. EWA MICKE-BRONIAREK: *Malarstwo polskie: Realizm, naturalizm* [Polish Painting: Realism, Naturalism], Warszawa 2007, p. 13, has a similar opinion and claims that Biedermeier succeeded in putting together the traditions of idealism or classicism and romanticism. Malinowski demonstrates that Biedermeier and romanticism painting were different in regards to how they related to the outside world (MALINOWSKI, *Imitacje świata*, p. 28; MALINOWSKI, *Malarstwo polskie*, p. 77). Similar features of Biedermeier are enlisted by Magdalena Warkoczewska. She proves that many portraits painted in the times of romanticism were closer to Biedermeier than to romanticism (MAGDALENA WARKOCZEWSKA: *Malarstwo i grafika epoki romantyzmu w Wielkopolsce: Dzieje i funkcje* [Painting and Illustration in the Epoque of Romanticism in Greater Poland: History and Functions], Warszawa—Poznań 1984, p. 219).

The appropriateness of the term “Biedermeier” is also discussed by Agnieszka Rosales-Rodríguez, who poses the following question: “Is the term Biedermeier at all necessary in the research on the painting of the first half of the 19th century? Or is it just one more vague, abstract notion invented by humanists that makes a mosaic of romantic art yet more complicated?” Subsequently she states that the interpretation of Biedermeier as a “subordinate form of romanticism” allows us to “appreciate and highlight those aspects of art of those times which were excluded from the scope of a large cultural framework, which was romanticism.” Biedermeier is the term that encompasses “the cultural phenomena which refer to simple, down-to-earth, practical, local issues of daily life that had long been suppressed from the area of reflection. All that was described in a suitable language of realism.”<sup>104</sup> The difference between romanticism and Biedermeier is also indicated: “Pathetic romanticism and moderate, simple Biedermeier have different roots and use different ways of expressions in painting although they coexisted in the same epoch.”<sup>105</sup>

Could such starkly contrasting attitudes be categorized under one and the same term? When Biedermeier aspires to reconcile things that were excluded from the scope of romanticism, is it then not a contraction to define Biedermeier as a form of romanticism? What is the name and timeframe of the mentioned epoch in which Biedermeier and romanticism coexisted?

Rosales-Rodríguez emphasizes that the term “domesticated romanticism” is not employed in order to reduce Biedermeier to “the background role or a cultural model of minor importance. [...] On Polish territory the narrative about culture was largely dominated by high discourse that revolved around romanticism. [...] Shift towards Biedermeier [...] allows us to review old national myths, appreciate the connections with other European countries and their influence on native culture, even if it was the occupiers that exercised the influence [...]”<sup>106</sup> However, the introduction of the term “romanticism” into the definition of “Polish Biedermeier” seems to result in categorizing Biedermeier as subordinate to romanticism and does not put an end to erroneous patterns of interpreting art history, but instead only slightly modifies it.

Curiously, the authors of two articles published in the same book, express their critical opinion on defining this style as “domesticated romanticism.”

<sup>104</sup> ROSALES-RODRÍGUEZ, *Romantyzm “udomowiony,”* p. 32.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33. In the view of Rosales-Rodríguez, landscapes painted on Polish territory in the first half of the nineteenth century were mainly “of the Biedermeier kind. They tended to everything that was familiar, safe, idyllic, traditional” and did not depict transcendence, which was the case in the painting of romanticism (AGNIESZKA ROSALES-RODRÍGUEZ: *Swojska natura: Biedermeierowski pejzaż a romantyczne mity* [Familiar Nature: Biedermeier Landscape vs. Romantic Myths, in: ROSALES-RODRÍGUEZ, *Polski biedermeier*, pp. 277–292, here p. 290).

<sup>106</sup> AGNIESZKA ROSALES-RODRÍGUEZ: *Wstęp*, in: ROSALES-RODRÍGUEZ, *Polski biedermeier*, pp. 7–8, here p. 8.





Fig. 9:  
A. Kokular, *Drawing Room in the Artist's Home*, ca. 1830, oil, canvas, 71 x 92 [91 x 110 x 9] cm.  
Photo: National Museum in Warsaw

Mikołaj Getka-Kenig states that the acquisition of such a term could easily lead to an over-simplification of how the style of Biedermeier was perceived, given that Biedermeier was largely inspired by the heritage of classicism.<sup>107</sup> Dobrochna Ratajczakowa adds that Biedermeier “smoothed” the contrast between classicism and romanticism” by incorporating different traditions, which is why it was perceived as “domesticated” or “tamed romanticism.” She assesses that Nemoianu held the same opinion which “in fact ‘robbed’ Biedermeier of its true identity.”<sup>108</sup> It should be perceived as a phenomenon that was inspired by different sources and marked by multi-stylism.

The term “domesticated romanticism” has been interpreted in a different way by individual authors who agree with it. Dorota Mackenzie claims that “domesticated romanticism” manifested itself in the person of Fryderyk Chopin who preferred to play for small audiences than in large venues.<sup>109</sup> Although one of the trends of Biedermeier was to “bring art home,” context is important here. Opposing the “despiritualisation of feelings” was not part of Biedermeier mentality.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>107</sup> MIKOŁAJ GETKA-KENIG: Academic Classicism and the Democratisation of Artistic Life in Warsaw, 1815–1830, in: ROSALES-RODRÍGUEZ, *Polski biedermeier*, pp. 245–258, here p. 245.

<sup>108</sup> DOBROCHNA RATAJCZAKOWA: Jak teatr “przemycił” do Polski biedermeier (1791–1830) [How Theater “smuggled” Biedermeier into Poland (1791–1830)], in: ROSALES-RODRÍGUEZ, *Polski biedermeier*, pp. 55–69, here p. 57.

<sup>109</sup> DOROTA MACKENZIE: “Jak mi tu smutno, że nie mam komu się wyjęzyczyć ...”: Chopinowskie koncerty kameralne w salonach biedermeieru jako przykład romantyzmu “udomowionego” [“How Sad I Am Here, That I Have No One to Languish ...”: Chopin’s Chamber Concerts in Biedermeier Salons as an Example of “Domesticated” Romanticism], in: ROSALES-RODRÍGUEZ, *Polski biedermeier*, pp. 111–122, here p. 121.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

Paweł K. Krawczyk and Anna Ozaist-Przybyła attribute the term “domesticated romanticism” to an attempt to “lift the country out of its civilizational collapse” by building industrial towns.<sup>111</sup> The pioneers of this initiative, who had been involved in fighting against the occupier before, laid down their arms in order to resort to legal and economic measures. In the authors’ view, such an attitude brings them close to “domesticated romanticism.” The scholars do not identify this term directly with Biedermeier. Based on the research from abroad, they define it as “reduced, simplified classicism.”<sup>112</sup> Inspired by foreign scholars who categorize the works of certain architects as typically Biedermeier, the authors claim that the architecture of the industrial cities in Congress Poland could be classified as Biedermeier. It is fairly uncommon for Polish scholars to distinguish Biedermeier in architecture.<sup>113</sup>

The fact that Biedermeier and romanticism were characterized by contradictory attitudes as well as their different origin calls into question the term “domesticated romanticism.” Considering the character of Biedermeier art, one could only find a sound justification to call it “domesticated.” The period between the Congress of Vienna and *Völkerfrühling* was a time of relative political stability in Europe, which made it easy to assume a rather passive attitude towards the reality. However, on Polish territory that suffered under the rule of the occupiers it was truly difficult to reach the “harmony” typical for Biedermeier, especially in the context of national-liberation fights that took place at this time. The repressions people had to endure led to rebellion rather than to peaceful seclusion that the ruling powers could expect. However, this attitude was quite common. “Like a German Biedermann after liberation wars, a Polish nobleman and burgher, in the atmosphere of plotting against the occupiers appreciated the seclusion of his own home, familial security, religion and traditional values.”<sup>114</sup> The “chivalric code” was replaced by the apology of “good-naturedness.” The ideal of a good householder prevailed over the ideals of a hero.<sup>115</sup> Biedermeier became “domesticated” in the neo-Sarmatist attitudes.

However, the ideal of the Sarmatist living a peaceful life, preoccupied with family, land and daily activities, had existed earlier. After the partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, old Sarmatism was reevaluated. Its positive

<sup>111</sup> PAWEŁ K. KRAWCZYK, ANNA OZAIST-PRZYBYŁA: Biedermeier w Zgierzu i wybranych miastach fabrycznych Królestwa Polskiego [Biedermeier in Zgierz and Selected Factory Towns in the Kingdom of Poland], in: ROSALES-RODRÍGUEZ, *Polski biedermeier*, pp. 135–159, here p. 158.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> E.g.: CIEŚLA, *Historyczne style*, p. 48, distinguishes Biedermeier in architecture, although with the remark that there are no monumental examples and that the architectural ornaments were in empire style.

<sup>114</sup> ROSALES-RODRÍGUEZ, *Romantyzm “udomowiony,”* p. 40. The similarities between the lifestyle of German middle-class and *szlachta* are mentioned also by: MIRELLA KURKOWSKA: Biedermeier—specyfika polskiej adaptacji wzorca [Specifics of the Polish Adaptation of a Pattern], in: ROSALES-RODRÍGUEZ, *Polski biedermeier*, pp. 23–36.

<sup>115</sup> MIECZYSLAW PORĘBSKI: *Malowane dzieje* [Painted History], Warszawa 1962, p. 71.

assessment existed in Polish culture as so-called “romantic Sarmatism.” Iwona Węgrzyn notices the similarities between the “romantic Sarmatism” and Biedermeier, indicating that they shared traditionalism, love for hominess and daily life and also practical reason.<sup>116</sup> In her opinion, Polish culture developed from the “romantic Sarmatism” to the manorial culture redefined in spirit of Biedermeier—old traditions were modernized but not in revolutionary manner. However, it should be noted that modernization of Polish Sarmatic culture began earlier—under the influence of the Enlightenment.<sup>117</sup>

Węgrzyn also states that Biedermeier was variant of romanticism characteristic for German middle-class culture. But was it possible for the variant of romanticism to “redefine” the culture which originated from the already romantic Sarmatism? Or does this cultural diffusion constitute another argument that Biedermeier should be interpreted as an autonomic phenomenon which interacted with romanticism? It should also be noted, as mentioned earlier, that Biedermeier was not associated only with middle-class culture.

The term “domesticated romanticism” is hardly acceptable, especially in regards to applied arts, which are not associated with the “romantic style.” This is because romanticism was understood in the first place as an attitude towards reality. One of its tendencies was the fact that many artists were inspired by historical styles (historicism), which outlived the epoch of romanticism. According to Ratajczakowa, a theatre historian, “romanticism and Biedermeier could be compared to two sides of the same coin. What they have in common is the ore they were made of. This ore symbolized an inevitable change.”<sup>118</sup> She claims that “sometimes both styles could be recognized in the works of one and the same author.”

All the opinions mentioned above indicate that it was not only the definition of Biedermeier that scholars were divided about. The differences emerged at the stage of the analysis of various ideological contexts and mindsets.

### 3.4 “Polish” Biedermeier?

The notion of “Polish Biedermeier” implies the presence of certain national aspects which were not typical for a conservative Biedermeier lifestyle focused on local, home-related matters rather than on defining or the pursuit of national identity. The formation of the “modern nation” and nationalist ideology that was sometimes a part of it emerged only in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>119</sup> Keeping this in mind, it would be additionally questionable to put the vocabulary related to nation as such to the framework of Biedermeier, espe-

<sup>116</sup> WĘGRZYN, *Sarmatyzm*, p. 170.

<sup>117</sup> MACIEJ PARKITNY: *Nowoczesność oświecenia* [The Modernity of Enlightenment], Poznań 2018, p. 70.

<sup>118</sup> DOBROCHNA RATAJCZAKOWA: *Teatr i dramat*, in: ANNA SKOCZEK (ed.): *Historia literatury polskiej w dziesięciu tomach*. Vol. 5: *Romantyzm*, Bochnia 2003, p. 164.

<sup>119</sup> TADEUSZ ŁEPKOWSKI: *Polska—narodziny nowoczesnego narodu 1764–1870* [Poland—The Birth of a Modern Nation, 1764–1870], Warszawa 2003.

cially when considering the period between 1815 and 1848. During the Enlightenment period, the nation was interpreted as equal to the state. However, after the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had lost its independence, the *szlachta* who had once ruled the country embodied the political nation, even though the state had ceased to exist. In reality, this political nation consisted of people of different nationality, languages and religions. On the other side were peasants who usually identified with their village or parish and did not associate themselves with the political nation and had not had a sense of national identity for a long time. For those reasons, it seems to be more justified to use the phrase “art on Polish lands” rather than “Polish art.”

At the same time, it would also be ill-considered to state that one’s attitude could be described as nationalist based on furniture or other appliances in one’s home. However, the twentieth century Biedermeier has been considered as a part of Polish history because of its presence in old manor houses. Defining Biedermeier as a “Polish style” in recent literature probably originates from this point of view.

Rosales-Rodríguez explains: “We emphasize somewhat contrarily the Polishness of Biedermeier in the title. In fact, Biedermeier was often adapted to our native lands with the settlements of German craftsmen, surge of foreign artists and their artisanal works, reception of western trends [...]. The attempts to acquire and adapt this style to the needs and capacities of Polish recipients were interesting and sometimes original.”<sup>120</sup> Although many scholars distance themselves from the term “Polish Biedermeier,” it is claimed to have a patriotic note. The statement of Joanna Woch that the Polish intellectual class “created an art of Polish Biedermeier, in which they found expression for their patriotism”<sup>121</sup> seems to be incorrect because the style originated from the countries of the occupiers and it reflects pan-European tendencies, something which the author herself made clear.<sup>122</sup> Similar false categorization can be found in an introduction to the book *Polish Biedermeier*, where patriotism is mentioned as one of the distinguishing features.<sup>123</sup> Biedermeier associated with patriotism was also researched in Czech literature.<sup>124</sup>

<sup>120</sup> ROSALES-RODRÍGUEZ, Wstęp, p. 7.

<sup>121</sup> JOANNA WOCH: *Meble polskie pierwszej połowy XIX wieku na tle rozwoju meblarstwa rosyjskiego, austriackiego i pruskiego* [Polish Furniture of the First Half of the Nineteenth Century against the Background of the Development of Russian, Austrian, and Prussian Furniture Making], in: ROSALES-RODRÍGUEZ, *Polski biedermeier*, pp. 123–133, here p. 123.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 124–125. A guide for collectors, written by the same author, addresses the growing interest in Biedermeier in Poland: JOANNA WOCH: *Biedermeier. Przewodnik dla kolekcjonerów* [Biedermeier: A Collectors’ Guide], Warszawa 2006.

<sup>123</sup> See: ROSALES-RODRÍGUEZ, Wstęp, p. 8.

<sup>124</sup> E.g.: JIŘÍ RAK: The Biedermeier Period in Austria and Bohemia and Its Legacy, in: RAK/VONDRÁČEK/TERENZI, pp. 13–21; VONDRÁČEK, *Biedermeier*; JANA WITTLICHOVÁ: *Biedermeier Prints in Bohemia and Moravia*, in: VONDRÁČEK, *Biedermeier: Art and Culture*, pp. 189–201.

The presence of patriotism in the art of Biedermeier on Polish territory should become a subject of a more thorough analysis, taking into consideration the specific political situation on the post-partition territories as well as cultural context (the coexistence of romanticism and Biedermeier). Another crucial factor that should be included in the research is the origin of patriotic attitudes and the provenance of the term *patria* (fatherland) which is also connected with the notion of homeland. In this perspective, patriotism was not an attitude that referred strictly to a specific state with its borders and later ethnic or national group. Local patriotism also existed.

#### 4 Conclusion

A critical analysis of scientific papers and publications written for the general public that revolve around the subject of Biedermeier art, especially on Polish territory, reveals the existence of various tendencies in terms of defining it. It is especially the different approaches of scholars dealing with applied arts vs. painting that seem to be particularly striking. In the research on applied arts Biedermeier is defined as simplified classicism, whereas in the publications on painting it is associated with middle-class realism, classified as romanticism, or a hybrid style that is a blending of both. The scholars who interpret Biedermeier as a type of classicism focus their research on the form of the items, whereas those who analyze the dependence of Biedermeier on romanticism and realism are interested in the message conveyed by the works. Only a few authors assume a more holistic approach and demonstrate the connection between Biedermeier and many different currents and styles in art, which seems to reflect reality to a greater extent. All these ideas lead to the question: Which phenomena in the art of the first half of the nineteenth century present on Polish territory could be attributed to Biedermeier and which are the manifestations of other styles?

Another issue is the fact that in Polish literature on art there are relatively few quotes or references to foreign publications on Biedermeier. The criteria that help to classify a given work as typical for romanticism and Biedermeier are often mixed because they are not used in a consistent manner. The status of Biedermeier on Polish lands was not clearly distinguished—as a style or a cultural epoch.

In the philosophical tradition, theoretical generalizations often appear with no reference to the designata of the terms that are introduced. When analyzing the heritage of the art of the nineteenth century, art historians are to a large extent mature enough to find suitable generalizations which could embrace the whole set of designata. This perspective offers a comprehensive explanation of the disputes and discrepancies in regards to terminology. In any case, this doubtless reflects the complexity of the real world.

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