Unlike other Polish industrial sites (e.g. Nowa Huta in Kraków) that enjoyed the attention of the artistic elite, Wałbrzych was almost never in the focus of the socialist art production and only inspired amateur participants in local poetic contests. Surprisingly, after the fall of communism the former coal-mining Lower Silesian town became one of the most popular subjects of literary and cinematic depiction. In the following group of literary works Wałbrzych functions not only as a setting, but also as an important building block of the plot: Tomek Tryzna’s *Panna Nikt* [Miss Nobody], Joanna Bator’s *Piaskowa góra* [The Sandy Hill] and *Ciemno, prawie noc* [It’s Dark, almost Night], Olga Tokarczuk’s short story *Życzenie Sabiny* [Sabina’s Wish] and novel *Prowadź swój pług przez kości umarłych* [Drive your Plough over the Bones of the Dead], Agnieszka Lingas-Łoniewska’s novel *W zapomnieniu* [In Oblivion] and others. Furthermore, several filmmakers have shot their award-winning films there, highlighting the town’s incredible photogeneity: Feliks Falka’s *Komornik* [The Collector], Emily Atef’s *Droga Molly* [Molly’s Way], and Andrzej Jakimowski’s Sztuczki [Tricks].

I will argue in my paper that the aforementioned depictions of Wałbrzych reflect an intricate genre shift in post-1989 Polish art. While the earlier works represent the retrospective realistic trend of the so-called “literature of small homelands” with its emphasis on regionalism and local identity, the later works demonstrate a strong affinity for mysticism and horror, characteristic of the current global artistic trends. The question that I will attempt to tackle is whether this shift was provoked by the Polish artists’ aspirations to align their work with the latest developments in world literature and cinema or by the recent changes in the social fabric and landscape of Wałbrzych that formed a stark contrast with the surrounding picturesque mountains and the old castle Książe and contributed to its increasingly gothic look.