English as Postcolonial Gesture: Linguistic Liberation in the Hybrid Digital Storytelling of a Silesian DATAsculptor

Abstract

This paper examines how the deliberate use of the English language by contemporary Silesian artist Dariusz Gross (known as DATAsculptor) serves as a postcolonial gesture of linguistic liberation through hybrid, multilingual digital storytelling. By analyzing Gross's pioneering practice of "datasculpting" an art form blending data, machine learning, and sculpture, we explore how his strategic adoption of English (alongside Polish and Silesian elements) challenges linguistic hegemony and contributes to cultural decolonization. Drawing on postcolonial theory and specific examples of Gross's work (notably the project *myFATHERintheCloud.ai* and the GPT-3-generated letter "Dear Son"), the study highlights how hybrid linguistic and artistic strategies can subvert dominant narratives. Gross's multilingual digital narratives create a creative "Third Space" that resists cultural polarity and empowers Silesian identity on a global stage. The results demonstrate that datasculpting functions as a platform for linguistic hybridity and postcolonial expression, with broader implications for the decolonization of culture in digital art.

1 Introduction

Language has long been a core battleground in postcolonial cultural struggles. Colonizing powers historically imposed their languages on subjugated

peoples, often suppressing indigenous tongues and enforcing linguistic hierarchies. [1] In response, writers and artists from colonized or marginalized cultures have adopted diverse strategies: some seek to revive and prioritize their native languages, while others repurpose the colonizer's language as a tool of resistance. The act of reshaping a dominant language into new, hybrid forms can itself become a subversive gesture, "de-forming" the standard and infusing it with local voice and perspective.

This paper explores such a gesture in a perhaps unexpected context: Silesia, a culturally distinct region in Central Europe whose linguistic identity has been historically marginalized. Following World War II, Silesia (now mostly in Poland) experienced policies of linguistic homogenization, as the new nation-states suppressed Silesian speech and cultural difference in favor of a unified national language. In the Polish People's Republic era, Silesian was officially regarded not as a separate language but as a mere dialect, and public use of Silesian or German (spoken by many Upper Silesians) was discouraged. This internal colonization of cultural identity created a postcolonial dynamic within Poland's borders, where the Silesian community's mother tongue and heritage were relegated to an inferior status.[1]

Against this backdrop, contemporary Silesian artists have begun to assert their voices beyond the confines of locally hegemonic languages. One remarkable example is artist Dariusz Gross (b. 1969), who intentionally creates and disseminates his work in English. Gross, who hails from a renowned Silesian family of sculptors, has embraced English as his primary medium for writing, publishing, and storytelling, despite English being neither his native nor national language. On the surface, English might seem an unlikely choice for a postcolonial maneuver in Silesia, after all, English is a global lingua franca often associated with cultural dominance. Yet, Gross's usage of English is highly strategic: it functions as a liberating lingua franca that allows him to transcend local constraints and engage a worldwide audience on his own terms. By adopting English and blending it with Polish and Silesian

---

[1]The applicability of postcolonial theory to Eastern Europe has been discussed by scholars such as Piotr Piotrowski, who cautions that a direct postcolonial framework can oversimplify East European cultural dynamics even as concepts like empire, repression, and resistance clearly resonate. Here, the term "postcolonial" is used in a nuanced sense to denote the condition of a region (Silesia) negotiating its identity after periods of external and internal domination.

elements, Gross effectively creates a hybrid narrative space in which Silesian identity can be reimagined and broadcast globally, free from the shadow of any single nation's linguistic authority.

The significance of Gross's linguistic choice can be understood in light of postcolonial theory's concept of the 'Third Space." As theorist Homi K. Bhabha argues, cultural meaning often emerges in the in-between, hybrid space that transcends binary oppositions of colonizer and colonized. This 'in-between space," writes Bhabha, 'carries the burden of the meaning of culture, and by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves." [6] In Gross's work, the melding of English (a language of global modernity) with Silesian themes and personal history creates such a Third Space of enunciation. It allows him to avoid the polarized choice between speaking in the Polish mainstream (and thus effacing his regional identity) or limiting himself to a local dialect that lacks institutional support or global reach. Instead, Gross positions himself in a liminal, creative linguistic sphere where he can "write back" to multiple centers of power, the Polish cultural establishment, the English-speaking tech-art world simultaneously, all while articulating a distinctly Silesian narrative.

This paper, written with both academic rigor and an artist's insight, delves into how Gross's deliberate use of English in his art and communications functions as a postcolonial gesture of linguistic liberation. We focus on his method of *datasculpting* as the central medium through which these hybrid, multilingual digital stories are told. By examining Gross's key projects and texts, particularly those in which he interweaves languages, we critically analyze how datasculpting becomes a platform for linguistic hybridity. We further reflect on the broader implications of Gross's practice for Silesian identity and for the burgeoning realm of multilingual digital narratives in contemporary art.

2 Methodology

Our approach combines a postcolonial theoretical framework with qualitative analysis of artistic practice, centered on the case study of Dariusz Gross's

work. In line with an interdisciplinary ethos, we draw upon literary analysis, art criticism, and cultural studies to interpret how language operates within Gross's digital artworks and writings. This research is also informed by practice-led inquiry: Gross's own reflections as an artist are considered, providing an insider perspective on the creative process and intentions.[2]

The primary materials for analysis include Gross's digital art projects (especially those under the umbrella of *datasculpting*), his published articles and interviews, and selected social media or blog content where he discusses his art and use of language. Particular attention is given to the project *myFA-THERintheCloud.ai* and the associated narrative element titled "Dear Son", which exemplify the artist's hybrid use of language in a digital storytelling context. We examine the content of the "Dear Son" letter and its bilingual framing, the process by which it was created, and its reception as an art piece. We also consider other works (e.g., *State of the AI Art, DATAsculpting Opole at Night*) to see how and when Gross integrates English, Polish, or Silesian elements.

Our analysis is contextualized historically and theoretically. We situate Silesian linguistic identity within a postcolonial paradigm, drawing comparisons to other postcolonial language debates (for instance, the African writers' debates on writing in English versus indigenous languages, such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's stance in *Decolonising the Mind* versus Chinua Achebe's position). We also invoke Bhabha's concept of hybridity and the Third Space, as well as relevant scholarship on multilingual digital storytelling, to frame our understanding of Gross's artistic strategies.

By synthesizing these methods, close reading of texts/artworks, contextual historical analysis, and theoretical application we aim to build a comprehensive picture of how Gross's use of English operates as a form of cultural critique and liberation. All translations (when needed) are provided by the author, and all assertions about the works are backed by citations from interviews or writings by Gross himself or by critics familiar with his oeuvre.

---

[2]Throughout this paper, the author occasionally steps into a first-person perspective, blending scholarly analysis with personal insight. This reflexive approach is intentional, reflecting Gross's dual role as researcher and creator in examining his work. Such a voice blurs the boundary between subject and analyst, itself a form of hybridity characteristic of the topic at hand.

3 Results and Analysis

3.1 Datasculpting as Multilingual Storytelling

Dariusz Gross's signature art form, which he terms *datasculpting*, epitomizes the fusion of technology, data, and creative expression. It involves using tools like machine learning algorithms, 3D modeling, and data visualization to "sculpt" artistic works from raw information. [7] In essence, datasculpting is about bridging two realms: the quantitative logic of data and the qualitative experience of art. [8] This bridging has a linguistic dimension as well. On a literal level, the practice requires fluency in programming languages (such as Python) and technical terminologies, which are predominantly English-based in today's global tech environment. Gross often notes that he "creates art for algorithms", highlighting how communicating with machines (in code) becomes part of his artistic dialogue. The code that underlies his projects, from neural network architectures to generative models, uses English keywords and syntax, effectively making the English language a substrate of his creative process. In this way, English is not simply a chosen tongue for outward communication, but an integral component of the medium itself, interwoven in the act of creation through code and data.

More importantly, datasculpting enables Gross to craft narratives that are not bound to a single spoken language. Data itself can be thought of as a universal medium, numbers, binary, and algorithms transcend linguistic boundaries. However, when Gross presents the outcomes of data-driven art to human audiences, he wraps them in language: titles, descriptions, and interactive text within the pieces are often in English, sometimes punctuated by Polish or Silesian words. This multilingual presentation invites a broad audience while still encoding local significance. It creates what Anderson and Macleroy describe as a transcultural narrative space where monocultural discourse is disrupted and "connections between languages" are forged in the storytelling process (Anderson & Macleroy, 2016)[3]. Gross's data sculptures,

---

[3]Anderson, J., Macleroy, V. (2016). *Multilingual Digital Storytelling: Engaging creatively and critically with literacy.* Abingdon: Routledge. In this work, the authors outline how blending languages in digital story projects can challenge dominant discourses and validate the knowledge embedded in minority languages. Their insights resonate with Gross's approach of mixing linguistic codes to enrich narrative and meaning.

often experienced online or in interactive digital spaces, are inherently accessible to a global viewership because of their English textual components, yet they carry the nuances of Silesian life and personal memory, thus operating on multiple linguistic and cultural registers at once.

3.2   'Dear Son": A Bilingual Legacy in Cyberspace

A pivotal example of Gross's hybrid multilingual storytelling is the project *myFATHERintheCloud.ai*, particularly the narrative element titled 'Mój ojciec Dear Son' ". The very title of this work is telling: it juxtaposes Polish and English phrases – *Mój ojciec* (Polish for "My father") and "Dear Son" (an address in English) symbolically bridging two voices and two languages. This project was conceived as an homage to Gross's late father, Siegfried Gross, a master sculptor often referred to as "the master from Silesia" during his lifetime. After Siegfried's passing in 2019, Gross embarked on an ambitious endeavor to "continue" his father's artistic life in the digital realm. [9] The core of the project involved training a machine learning model on the corpus of his father's lifetime of work, sketches, photographs of sculptures, written notes, to create a kind of Artificial Intelligence sculptor that could produce new works in his father's style. In a deeply poetic turn, Gross also leveraged OpenAI's GPT-3 language model to generate a letter from this virtual father to his living son.

The result was the letter titled *"Dear Son"*, ostensibly written by Siegfried (posthumously through the AI) addressing Dariusz. Notably, this letter was generated and published in English. According to Gross's own account in an interview, he input his father's texts and personal writings as training data, and then prompted GPT-3 to produce a letter as if written by his father to him. The decision to have the AI write in English was deliberate. Gross presented the text in English for a global audience, even though the intimate content was rooted in the personal Silesian context of a father-son relationship. The opening lines of the letter read:

> "I am writing a letter to you, words seem to me the best medium to convey to you my experiences, thoughts and plans. Eight hundred days have passed since my passage. I would like to share

with you what I have experienced during this time."

. These lines (which were, remarkably, crafted by an AI blending the father's voice) highlight the centrality of language and storytelling as the medium of connection across the divide of death. The father's voice, revived in silico, chooses words as the vehicle for his legacy. In doing so, he (or rather the AI) chooses English words, implicitly positioning the message beyond the local context and into a universal one.

The letter continues in a reflective, almost spiritual tone, guiding the son to "listen" to art and nature, and to carry forward the artistic mission. For Silesian readers or those who know the Gross family's background, the subtext of these passages is rich with local meaning, references to the "third dimension" and exploring new worlds echo the family's multigenerational leap from carving wooden angels in village churches to crafting AI-driven experiences. [9] Yet, by being articulated in English, the letter invites readers who do not know those specifics to still partake in a universal narrative about art, legacy, and immortality. The hybridity of this text operates on several levels. Formally, it is a hybrid of human and machine authorship (a collaboration between Gross's curation and the AI's generation). Linguistically, it is a hybrid of cultural contexts, a Polish father figure speaking in an English idiom. One might say the father's voice has been "translated" into English as it is reborn, which in itself is a profound metaphor for cultural survival: rather than remaining locked in the silence of oblivion or the niche of a minority language, the voice adapts and perseveres in a new linguistic form.

Gross's use of English here can be seen as a postcolonial gesture of liberation in multiple senses. Firstly, it liberates the personal story from the confines of locality. By communicating the deeply Silesian tale of a master sculptor's legacy in English, Gross ensures that this story does not remain a regional anecdote but enters the global cultural consciousness. It is an act of "writing back" not to a former colonizer per se, but to any cultural center that might have overlooked voices like his father's. In this sense, English becomes a tool to counter marginalization: the elder Gross's artistic spirit, now embodied in data, is not subjugated to obscurity but speaks on the world stage. Secondly, the choice of English can be read as a subtle critique of Poland's linguistic hegemony within Silesia. Gross bypasses the Polish language when presenting this tribute, opting instead for an international language. This bypass can be

interpreted as a form of linguistic bypass surgery on the arteries of cultural transmission, circumventing a blocked route (where Polish-centric narratives might assimilate or dilute the Silesian specificity) and channeling the cultural content directly to a broader human context. In doing so, he avoids the risk of the story being co-opted into the dominant national narrative; instead, it stands on its own, translated and transformed, as a piece of world literature or digital folklore.

It is worth noting that the letter was published online (e.g., via MLearning platforms) and discussed in both tech-art circles and by Polish media. [9] The reactions often remarked on the eeriness and emotional impact of receiving a message from a deceased parent through AI. However, what also emerges is how the use of English made the work legible and moving to people far removed from Silesia. A reader in New York or London, encountering "Dear Son," might simply appreciate it as a speculative art piece about an AI-generated voice from beyond, without even realizing that the author and subject hail from a small Silesian town. On one hand, this universality is a strength, it demonstrates the power of a hybrid narrative to speak across cultural boundaries. On the other hand, one could question whether something is lost in translation: does using English risk obscuring the specifically Silesian references or the father's true voice? Gross's strategy, however, mitigates this by retaining Polish elements in the framing (the bilingual title, the context provided in interviews referencing locations like Saint Anne's Mountain, etc.). The result is a carefully balanced act of code-switching: English carries the narrative, while Polish (and by extension Silesian heritage) provides an undertow of meaning for those who recognize it.

3.3 Challenging Linguistic Hegemony and Decolonizing the Digital Space

Gross's artistic practice, as exemplified by the above case, actively challenges linguistic hegemony on several fronts. Firstly, within the Polish context, it challenges the assumption that meaningful cultural production must occur in the Polish language for a Polish audience. Gross, by often choosing English, implicitly rejects the gatekeeping of Polish-language cultural institutions. Instead of seeking validation solely through Polish art critics or local galleries,

he positions his work in a transnational framework. This move is particularly significant for a Silesian artist, given that Silesian culture has sometimes been sidelined or treated as provincial within Poland. Gross's success and recognition abroad, for instance, being listed among top AI artists globally, reinforces the message that a local identity need not be provincial, and that communicating in a global language can actually amplify the voice of a minority culture rather than dilute it.

In postcolonial terms, one might say Gross is performing an act of epistemic decolonization. By using the erstwhile "colonizer's tongue" (in a global sense, English as the dominant international language) and infusing it with Silesian content, he turns the dynamics of cultural influence on their head. It echoes the way many postcolonial writers, from Salman Rushdie to Chinua Achebe, chose to write in English but with a twist, embedding their indigenous worldviews, idioms, and rhythms within it, thereby bending the language to their purposes. In Gross's case, the bending is not so much at the level of idiom (his English is standard, accessible), but at the level of context and narrative. We see this when he invokes places and themes that are deeply Silesian (such as the Baroque churches his father adorned, or the *"Slave Choir"* from Verdi's opera *Nabucco* which he played at a memorial event in a Silesian basilica). These elements carry connotations of oppression and longing for freedom, the "Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves" in *Nabucco* famously symbolizes exiled people yearning for their homeland, a theme that would resonate with any community that has felt dominated by outsiders. By integrating such a piece in a digital art performance and discussing it presumably in English-language contexts (e.g., describing it to an international audience), Gross draws a subtle parallel between the Biblical captives and the cultural captivity of regional identities. It's a nuanced form of resistance that leverages the power of shared cultural symbols via the medium of a shared global language.

From a digital storytelling standpoint, Gross's approach also decolonizes the space of technology and AI art. Tech is often criticized for being Anglocentric, most programming languages and datasets are English-based, and Western narratives dominate AI-generated content. Gross's DATAsculptor persona stands at the intersection of AI and art as a Silesian, Eastern European presence that is not subsumed by Silicon Valley norms. He brings his heritage into that space in a way that is neither apologetic nor opaque.

For example, on platforms like Hugging Face and Github, where he shares his work, he does so in English but under the moniker DATAsculptor, immediately identifiable yet somewhat outside the typical Anglophone milieu. By doing so, he claims space in the digital art discourse for creators from historically peripheral regions. This is vital in preventing a new kind of colonialism, a digital/technological colonialism, where only certain cultures shape the narratives of the future. Gross's contributions, including conceptual pieces like "State of the AI Art" (2023) and entries in AI art forums, often carry a perspective that is informed by his unique background. In one of his LinkedIn essays, he provocatively stated: "I do not create for humans. I create art for algorithms... 'cocaine for the eyes and brain'", a statement that hints at an irreverence for conventional art consumption and perhaps an indirect critique of art markets. This irreverence could be seen as rooted in his outsider posture, a stance common to postcolonial intellectuals who speak from the margin to the center, often with subversive tone.

The work of Gross DATAsculptor also underlines broader implications for how we understand decolonization in the context of digital art and globalization. It suggests that decolonization need not always mean a return to using only the suppressed indigenous language (as advocates like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o would urge). There is also a path of creative appropriation, wherein the language of the former hegemon is taken up by the subaltern voice and made to tell a different story. Gross's English is not the Queen's English; it is a Silesian-English, a digital-art English, one that carries inflections of his region and his persona. It thereby erodes the notion that English belongs to the Anglophone West, illustrating what postcolonial theorist Ashcroft calls the "englishes" of the world that diversify and indigenize the language (Ashcroft et al., 1989).

For Silesian identity, Gross's success on a global stage is both empowering and instructive. It shows younger Silesian creators that one can be proudly rooted in Silesia yet not provincial; one can speak to the world without abandoning where one comes from. In fact, Gross's work suggests that telling your story in a global language can be an effective strategy to safeguard that story, ensuring it is heard widely and not erased or absorbed without acknowledgment. There is a kind of linguistic self-determination at play: Silesians defining the terms on which their culture is shared internationally, rather than having it defined for them by external observers or translated

through a dominant culture's lens.

Finally, this study highlights that multilingual digital narratives are a powerful tool in the contemporary artist's arsenal for addressing issues of power and identity. As technology enables stories to be told across multiple modalities and languages, artists like Gross show how these tools can be used to upend traditional power dynamics. A digital story can seamlessly incorporate more than one language, offering a model for how our increasingly connected world might embrace linguistic diversity instead of flattening it. Gross's datasculptures, with their mix of code and prose, image and text, Polish and English, point toward an art form that is inherently plural. In such pluralistic art, the act of including multiple languages is not just a stylistic choice but a political one, a quiet assertion that the future will not be monolingual, and that cultural liberation can be coded into the very DNA of our stories.

In conclusion, the deliberate use of English by Silesian artist Dariusz Gross serves as a postcolonial gesture of linguistic liberation by creating hybrid multilingual narratives that transcend and transform the confines of linguistic hegemony. Through datasculpting, Gross has carved out a unique space where Silesian heritage converges with global digital culture, illustrating that true decolonization of storytelling lies in the freedom to choose one's expressive language (or languages) and to mold it to one's creative will. His work invites us to listen, in more than one tongue, to the voices that were once muted and to recognize in their echo the possibility of a more inclusive cultural future.

References

[1] Anderson, J., Macleroy, V. (2016). *Multilingual Digital Storytelling: Engaging creatively and critically with literacy*. Abingdon: Routledge.

[2] Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., Tiffin, H. (1989). *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and practice in post-colonial literatures*. London: Routledge.

[3] Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.

[4] Emory University. (2014). Language. In *Postcolonial Studies @ Emory*.

[5] Gross, D. (2021, Oct 31). Dear Son... Can AI create immortal art? *MLearning.ai* . (GPT-3 generated letter and commentary)

[6] Gross, D. (2024, May 1). Master the Art of Datasculpting: sculpt data sculpture. *MLearning.ai Art.*

[7] Kamusella, T. (2012). The Silesian Language in the Early 21st Century. *International Journal of Sociology of Language, 218*, 23–50. (Excerpt retrieved from St Andrews Research Repository).

[8] Piotrowski, P. (2014). East European Art Peripheries Facing Post-Colonial Theory. *Nonsite*, (12).

[9] Redzisz, M. (2019, September 18). In the name of the father: an immortal sculptor. *Sztuczna Inteligencja.*