
[71] ***“National views” and gender: Humboldt’s understanding of animacy in Algonquian***

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Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835) has a place in the history of nominal classification studies for inspiring Jacob Grimm’s theory of the semantic motivation of Indo-European gender (cf. Kilarski 2013: 120-132). However, Humboldt’s main concern was not the motivation of gender systems. His main point was that the *Sprachsinn* (linguistic sense) of different nations can be guided to varying extent by the *reine Sprachform* (pure linguistic form). He found in some indigenous American languages the distinction animacy vs. inanimacy, which he contrasted with the gender systems of the “classical languages,” deeming the former to stem from a “view of nature” (*Naturansicht*) and the latter from the “grammatical view” (*grammatischer Ansicht*) or *Sprachform* (cf. Humboldt GS V: 262, 458-459; GS VI: 27-28, 352-353; GS VII: 172-173). This paper will deal with the link between Humboldt’s view of grammatical gender and his descriptions of American languages. In his observations on gender, he mentions Delaware (i.e., Algonquian, cf. Humboldt 2013), Nahuatl (Humboldt 1994), and Totonac (Humboldt 2009: 43-118). This paper will focus on Humboldt’s Algonquian studies, which began in April 1820 with his reception of the “Correspondence” between John Heckewelder (1743-1823) and Peter Stephen Duponceau (1760-1844) (Heckewelder & Duponceau 1819) and led to the compilation of two grammars of Eastern Algonquian languages (Humboldt 2013: 121-254) in 1822. Thanks to his analytical method, Humboldt gained important insights into the central role of the feature of animacy in the organization of the lexicon and the grammatical system of these languages. He regarded this feature as the defining characteristic of Algonquian languages and linked it with the *Ansichten der Nationen* (views of the nations). This will give us the opportunity to discuss Humboldt’s notion of *Weltansicht* (worldview) and related concepts as applied by himself in his linguistic descriptions.

References Heckewelder, John & Peter Stephen Duponceau. 1819. A Correspondence [...] Respecting the Languages of the American Indians. American Philosophical Society: Transactions of the Historical and Literary Committee, Vol. 1, 351-448. Humboldt, Wilhelm von. 1903-1936. *Gesammelte Schriften*. A. Leitzmann, ed. 17 vols. Berlin: Behr. (=GS) 1994. *Mexikanische Grammatik*. Manfred Ringmacher, ed. Paderborn: Schöningh. 2009. *Mittelamerikanische Grammatiken*. Manfred Ringmacher & Ute Tintemann, eds. Paderborn: Schöningh. 2013. *Nordamerikanische Grammatiken*. Paderborn: Schöningh. Kilarski, Marcin. 2013. *Nominal Classification: A History of its Study from the Classical Period to the Present*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.