

**Dominika Ferens**

**'How natives think': The legacy of ethnography in criticism and minority literature**

**ABSTRACT**

In this presentation I reconstruct one of the contexts in which American minority literatures are produced: the ethnographic expectations of both market readers and some academic critics. Ethnography – a western practice of observing and participating in the daily life of another culture with the aim of reporting on one's observations to lay and academic readers at home – is generally understood as a social science that works against chauvinism and racism born of cultural ignorance. Yet ethnography has also divided people into subjects and objects of observation; by focusing on cultural difference, it manufactured the "primitive" and the exotic; it also downplayed the role of global politics and intercultural contacts in the making of non-western cultures. By examining several works by the Caribbean writer Jamaica Kincaid, I attempt to problematize a range of literary strategies of negotiating the legacy of ethnography.

**BIO**

Dominika Ferens teaches American literature at the University of Wrocław. Her research interests include anti/ethnographic literature, American minority literatures, gender and queer studies, urban studies, and critical race studies. She is the author of *Ways of Knowing Small Places: Intersections of American Literature and Ethnography since the 1960s* (2010) and *Edith and Winnifred Eaton: Chinatown Missions and Japanese Romances* (2002).