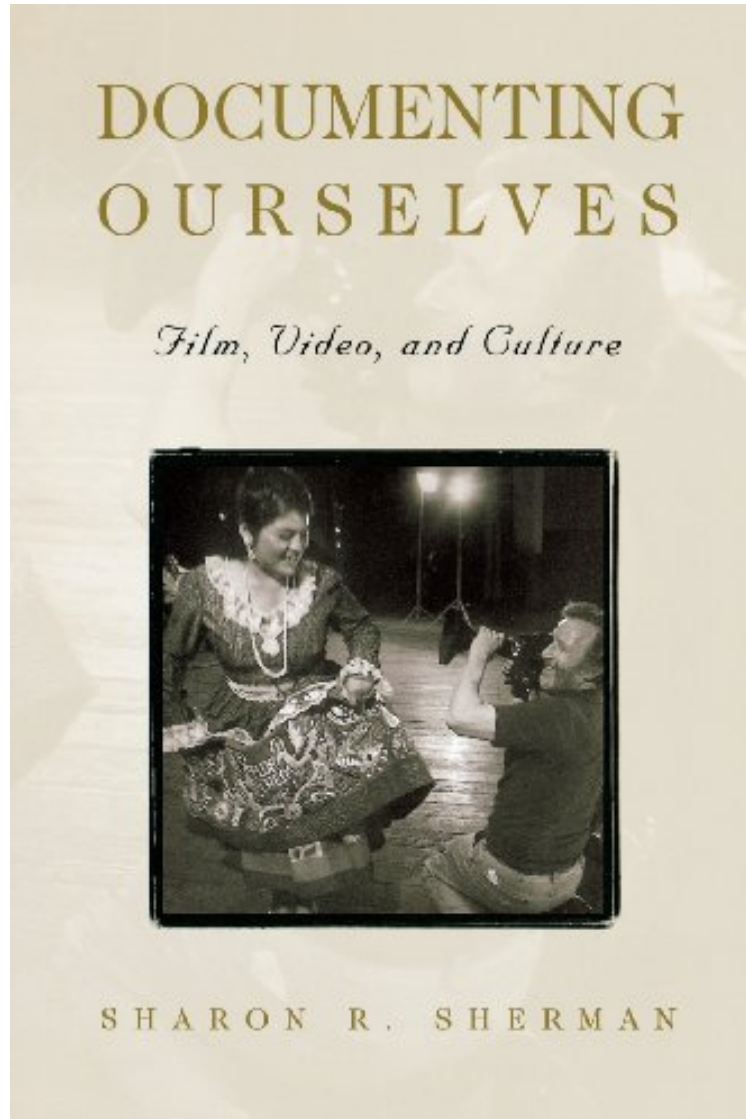


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Documenting Ourselves: Film, Video, and Culture

Sharon R. Sherman

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Sharon R. Sherman : Documenting Ourselves: Film, Video, and Culture before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Documenting Ourselves: Film, Video, and Culture:

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. nice text for visual anthropology courses By Sarah Baeckler Sharon Sherman's book is a very useful primer for visual anthropology courses which include production as a main component. This book provides readers a nice history of the genre as well as lessons in the politics and poetics of documentary film production. Most unique, maybe, is her structure based on analysing the work of great documentary

filmmakers such as the amazing director Les Blank (if you don't know his movies, check out his website for sure). The only shortcoming of this book is that since Sherman views anthropological filmmaking from the paradigm of her field, Folklore, her analysis demands that the docs she look at be Folklore Documentaries - a perspective that can be as limiting as the idea of "reading" movies as "texts." Movies should be watched as just what they are, moving pictures, and I much prefer the holistic label of anthropological films to encompass most docs and many fictional films. Folklore docs just doesn't have the theoretical range to fully study the anthropological aspects of the cinematic medium and documentary genre. Still, well worth reading. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Excellent Resource for Understanding/Making Documentaries By grasshopper4 A folklore film or video is a documentary about folklore. Because folklore consists of the traditional expressive culture of various communities, a folklore documentary is designed to represent how people within various social groups express themselves. Sherman provides an excellent history of ethnographic documentaries that relate to folklife studies, and she demonstrates how unique contributions by folklorists have advanced the techniques and styles of filmmaking in general. This fine book is useful for learning about filmmaking and thus is a good resource for anyone who wants to make or understand media representations of culture. 0 of 13 people found the following review helpful. films and folkloric analysis? Is that an oxymoron? By A Customer The author cannot be serious. Films and documentaries are the stuff of elite (eg, Fellini) and popular culture (eg, Spielberg). Folklore, on the other hand, is something that certainly can be documented and even the folklore performance can be captured (perhaps) with hidden cameras and directors unseen. But isn't folklore the stuff of tradition that is generally untainted by the majority culture? So why even try to apply the folklore science "analysis" to the world of films and videos in the first place. I don't get it. Do other readers get it?

Since Robert Flaherty's landmark film *Nanook of the North* (1922) arguments have raged over whether or not film records of people and traditions can ever be "authentic." And yet never before has a single volume combined documentary, ethnographic, and folkloristic filmmaking to explore this controversy. What happens when we turn the camera on ourselves? This question has long plagued documentary filmmakers concerned with issues of reflexivity, subject participation, and self-consciousness. *Documenting Ourselves* includes interviews with filmmakers Les Blank, Pat Ferrero, Jorge Preloran, Bill Ferris, and others, who discuss the ways their own productions and subjects have influenced them. Sharon Sherman examines the history of documentary films and discusses current theories and techniques of folklore and fieldwork. But Sharon Sherman does not limit herself to the problems faced by filmmakers today. She examines the history of documentary films, tracing them from their origins as a means of capturing human motion through the emergence of various film styles. She also discusses current theories and techniques of folklore and fieldwork, concluding that advances in video technology have made the camcorder an essential tool that has the potential to redefine the nature of the documentary itself.

"Sherman's fine book traces the documentary tradition and is a major contribution to our appreciation of how film and video deepens our understanding of the human experience." Bill Ferris, Director, Center for the Study of Southern Culture "A brilliant study of a new documentary genre. . . . This book has three effects on the reader: one craves seeing the films she discusses; one finds it impossible to teach a documentary film course again without a representation of folkloric film; and one feels more optimistic about technology." Choice "A vision of modern folklore studies on film which is collaborative, engaged and which celebrates the local, even as it documents and participates." Times Literary Supplement "Throughout the book there are thoughtful, insightful observations about the epistemological, social, and moral dimensions of making films about culture, and it is worth reading for those and for the interviews." Western Folklore About the Author Sharon R. Sherman, director of the folklore program and professor of English at the University of Oregon, is an accomplished filmmaker with more than twenty years of experience in the field and in teaching film and folklore.