Re-imagining the Nonfiction Criminal Narrative: 
Documentary Reenactment as Political Agency

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Abstract
Taking a close look at Emile de Antonio’s *In the King of Prussia* (1982) and Lynn Hershman Leeson’s *Strange Culture* (2007), this article explores how a defendant’s participation in a documentary reenactment of his or her alleged crime or criminal trial can complicate our reading of a case’s social and cultural history. As both a literary and performative technique, reenactment is especially well suited to documentary investigations of true crime and legal subjects. The legal trial is already, in a sense, a conjectural reenactment of a historical event, and the true crime genre is itself about fostering a return to the scene of the crime through its recreation and representation. This article focuses on documentaries in which subjects who have been accused of crimes against the state collaboratively reenact elements of their cases outside of (and notably separate from) the institutions that traditionally officiate legal speech. *In the King of Prussia* and *Strange Culture* use reenactments to help their subjects recover justice in situations where the law has failed to produce it. Both films highlight ways in which subjects who are caught up in the disciplinary power of the law must use alternative means in order to reassert their own subjectivity and reclaim a sense of agency over their own representations. Documentary becomes a space for these men and women, criminalized for their political beliefs and activist behavior, to challenge law’s power and reconstitute themselves as social subjects.

Keywords
documentary, reenactment, law, agency, trial, performance