

Experiencing past: selective authenticity in reenactment performance

Abstract

The paper gives an account of authenticity within the public reenactment performances of the battles from the Second World War in the area of Czech republic and Slovakia. The central theoretical funding of the paper comes from the material culture studies and interpretative anthropology.

The main research question deals with the role of material objects on constructing reenactor's perception on authenticity and how authenticity is mediated within material objects during the reenactment performance. The reenactor's perception of authenticity is achieved on multiple levels and cannot be considered as static. Authenticity is a fluid social construct dependent on the current context of reenactor's social life and emerging from an interpretative process. Reenactors select what will be consider authentic and what not. Two key perceptions on authenticity are detected. Authenticity that resides in objects and authenticity that resides in interactions. By the process of selecting, reenactors achieve personal authentic experience of the past. From the broader context, I assume that the selection of what is authentic and what is not lead me to understand how the image of the past is created.

Introduction: What is reenactment?

Reenactment. A word that may be unclear to the most of people. Nevertheless reenactment has been in a focus of many scholars [Agnew 2007, McCarthy 2014, Zotica & Mălăescu 2015, Briscu 2012, Gapps 2009, Handler & Saxton 1988, Auslander 2013]. During the research I followed a group of people who reconstruct historical events of the Second world war. The paper presents an analysis of relations among reenactors and objects they use in their performance in order to achieve authenticity. It gives an account of authenticity within the public reenactment performances of the battles from the Second World War in the area of Czech republic and Slovakia. The main research question deals with the role of material objects on constructing reenactor's perception on authenticity and how authenticity is mediated within material objects during the reenactment performance. The reenactor's perception of authenticity is achieved on multiple levels and cannot be considered as static. Authenticity is a fluid social

construct dependent on the current context of reenactor's social life and emerging from an interpretative process. It means that reenactors select what will be considered authentic and what not. The selection process results in selective authenticity that works on two levels. Authenticity that resides in objects and authenticity that resides in interactions. By the process of selecting, reenactors achieve personal authentic experience of the past. From the broader context, I assume that the selection of what is authentic and what is not lead me to understand how the image of the past is created.

Reenactment events in Czech and Slovakia are usually organized by a club of military history. Sometimes it happens that a municipal office asks a club to make a battle reenactment in their village because they want to celebrate an important historical anniversary. But most of the times it is a collaboration between a club and municipal. The history-military club works as a civic association and must be registered at the Ministry of the Interior. They have an inner structure that includes a chairman of the association, a vice-chairman, a secretary, an accountant and regular members. They must write down association statutes and hold regular assemblies. Association statutes are usually found on the club's web page.¹

Reenactors do it as their hobby or the way of spending their leisure time first. However, those who were doing it for a long time, no longer see it just as a hobby but it becomes who they are. Reenactors varies in age, occupation, education or marital status. They are from eighteen years old up to sixties. They work as lawyers, engineers, students, historians, economists or replica makers. Half of my informants has a university degree and the other half has a high school diploma from technical subjects. Older reenactors (30-55 years old) were usually married, younger reenactors (18-30 years old) were half in a relationships and half single. The reasons why they do reenactment are different. However, in most cases, the audience is not the reason why they do the reenactment. The motives of reenactors that lead them to spend that much time on doing their best in reenactment and to achieve the greatest authenticity may slightly differ, but the main reason is that they do it for themselves and for other reenactors. Their hunt for the best authentic performance is driven by a constant improvement but also by the appreciation from the other reenactors. The personal experience is another related motive why they do it. One of my key informants said that it gives him the authenticity

¹ an example of the association statutes: <http://www.militaryclub.info/erika/stanovy.htm> (22.12.2015)

of living conditions back in those times. He is interested in knowing how it feels to be raptured from his everyday way of living and thrown to the absolute destruction while facing the constant possibility of death. Even though he admits that public performances are for audience, most of them do it for themselves. One of my respondents said that he does it also because of family ties. He found out that his family was a part of the German line and he wants to feel connected to his roots. Another respondent was very proud while talking about his Czechoslovak uniform and the fact that he is reenacting the uprising and something that formed our nation.

Theoretical background: Reenactment performance and authenticity

Reenactment of the Second World war is very popular in Czech republic and Slovakia. People who does it, dedicate most of their free time to master the authenticity of historical experience. Concept of authenticity in reenactment performances was broadly researched by several social scientists [Handler and Saxton 1988, Auslander 2013, Hall 2015]. Trying to find adequate definition traps us in conclusion that authenticity is a fluid concept or social construct which in current academic dictionary means that it is a vague concept. Richard Handler and William Saxton [1988] in their article do not concern about a strict definition and rather perceive authenticity as reenactor's object for the quest and as an attempt to experience connection with the past. I agree that a general definition of authenticity could be limiting in the analysis. But how can we explore reenactment performances in which actors themselves use authenticity as a distinctive value without using the concept of authenticity? Therefore I would like to propose to use the word authenticity in this paper as an emic concept. However that may lead to referring to both historical accuracy of objects and behaviors as well as to the subjective experiences of reenactors [Decker 2010]. Both meanings of authenticity are very important for us to better understand and analyze how it influences dynamics and action within the group in a deeper level. Understanding the meaning of authenticity within the group sheds some light on understanding the culture. Beverly Butler [2006] sees authenticity as core heritage values and as a significant aspect of our desire for roots and origins. Gregory Hall [2015] agrees that authenticity is one of the greatest motivators for a culture. So we cannot think of authenticity as a static but as fluid, influenced by current social and material context. When reenactors speak of an authentic experience it is not in their power to really experience the past. Therefore authenticity is connected as much with the present as with the past. That means that

reenacting certain history event cannot be analyzed as commemorating the past values but as commemorating the present experience of the past. Reenactors select what they do show and what they do not. In the following analysis I use a concept of Gregory Hall [ibid.] on *selective authenticity* to explain how the authenticity among Second World War reenactors is created and mediated.

Selective authenticity

Selective authenticity described by Hall sees authenticity in reenactment of American Civil War as a process of selection [Hall 2015]. According to him "authenticity (is) coming through on multiple levels. It is seen as a focus and orientation on objects and interactions with others to produce credible reenactments" [ibid 2]. Hall detected a part of reenactors who see the authenticity in the selection of appropriate objects and/or interactions. Objects become very important also as noticed by Auslander [2013]. On an example of slaves auctions reenactment he describes how period objects or replicas work as a way of experiencing the past through a sensual contact with these objects. In this case authenticity is achieved through objects and its mediation. In other cases reenactors chase for the contextual / interactional authenticity which Hall sees as a part of reenactor himself executed in interactions during the performance. It is expressed internally by the reenactor as opposed to within an object [ibid]. This group of reenactors see reenactment as "highly contextual social interaction process that produces a faint understanding of what circumstances would have been like during that time. Reenacting is an active construction of the present anchored by perceptions of authenticity" [ibid 19]. While Hall uses this concepts to describe two mutually excluding categories I see it as a way to describe two main sources determining reenactor's perception on authenticity. In the article I will argue that reenactors may emphasize both object-oriented authenticity at the same time with contextual/interactional authenticity. Firstly object-oriented authenticity is a scale on which on one side there are reenactors who search for a material accuracy of objects and on the other side there are reenactors who see objects as a mean to get to the performance. The second situation is what Hall describes as contextual/interactional authenticity.

Methods

This text is based on the ethnographic research that I have conducted for over two years and used two main methods: observation and semi-structured interviews.

Ethnography as a research approach provides a variety of qualitative research methods that include engagement in the lives of those being studied over an extended period of time [Davies 2008]. To investigate different aspects of the lives of people, researcher must spend a considerable amount of time not only with the people who are being studied but also in the environment that is natural or familiar to them. To be in their natural environment it meant for me to not only to observe them but to conduct participant observation. So I took part in couple of Second World War reenactment as a civilian in a period clothes. It allowed me to experience reenactment first hand.

Validity and reliability of ethnographic research is highly depend on the reflexive approach of the researcher and ability to recognize the possible impacts on her/his perception. There are several threats to the research that lies mainly in description, interpretation and theory [Maxwell 1996: 89]. The main threat in description lies in inaccuracy and incompleteness of data and impossibility to notice everything since the observation is limited to what we are looking at. Imposing my own framework or meaning is a main threat to an interpretation part of the research. Maxwell said that this can happen for example by not paying attention to the participant's meanings, not being aware of the own framework and assumptions, or simply by asking closed or manipulative questions. Last but not least we should pay attention to a theory threat. Threat of not paying enough attention to data and the alternative explanations or understandings may lead vague generalizations [Maxwell 1996: 90]. However, at the same time it is essential if researcher acknowledges the theoretical background of his/her epistemological understanding. In this thesis, the interpretative anthropology is the base stone for the analytical approach to data and understanding of culture. Clifford Geertz [2000] sees culture as a web of meanings and he suggests to search for explanations and interpretations of cultural meanings in everyday social interactions. In detailed research of people's everyday life we are able to observe semantic structures. Ethnography, especially use of the thick description in Geertz [2000] sense, is the mean to achieve the understanding of cultural meanings.

Traditionally, ethnography results from the participant observation that is transformed into detail textual field notes. During this translation process a reconstruction of an observed social world cannot be perfectly achieved and there is a threat of misunderstanding or missing something important. I conducted a participant observation. "Ethnographic fieldwork always involves a degree of participation in the

chosen field" [Atkinson 2015: 34]. He tries to suggest that there are different degrees of participation and not all of them might be considered to be part of ethnographic research. To be participated it does not mean to "be there", but to be intellectually committed. At first, I participated at the reenactment events as a part of the audience so my participation was limited to an audience experience. Later, I always contacted some of the organizing military history clubs to get a permission to come over there and see how it works before public reenactment performance. I attended ten reenactment events and one reenactment training in total. Lately I took part in the performance. All three perception provided me with important data.

The ethnography also uses interviewing as one of the most important methods. Atkinson, however, warns that ethnographic research does not consist only of the enactment of a series of interview, no matter how active or exploratory they may be [Atkinson 2015: 34]. In total I conducted eleven interviews that were structured and arranged as a meeting. I decided not to make an interview while I was on the reenactment event. Firstly, reenactors did not have much time but also there were other reenactors and I could have got different answers. It does not mean that I did not talk to other reenactors but small talks became part of the field notes.

The snowball sampling was conducted however there was a need for samples of reenactors from different military clubs reenacting different armies (German, Soviet, Czechoslovak, Romania) ranging different age groups and different time involved in reenactment. At the end of the research I conducted six interviews with reenactors of German soldiers from four different military history clubs, two reenactors of Soviet soldiers from two different military history clubs and three reenactors of Czechoslovak army from three different clubs. They were all male² and their age ranged from 24 up to 55. It was always one to one interview that took usually from one to two hours and was recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions were analyzed for themes and concepts such as: uniform, authenticity, real or enchantment. I used a standard way of anonymizing my informants. I changed the names of the informants and did not mention the names of military history clubs. There was one particular informant who would be easily recognizable however I also changed his name for those who would read just parts of the text. The analysis was made after the return from the field and to

² There are not many women in reenactment of the Second World War. The reason is very pragmatic. Because there were not any women at the frontlines in reality.

analyze data the software was not used even though it is very popular these days. Data was coded by selecting significant concepts and searching for their redundancy and a repeating pattern. The authenticity appeared to be the primary repeating concept and the trajectory of its creation and mediation within reenactors was tracked.

Findings 1: Object-oriented authenticity and expert knowledge

On the example of an uniform I would like to point out how the individual perception on authenticity may shift from thinking of objects like uniform only as a mean to do reenactment to emphasizing the material accuracy of objects. I propose that authenticity is mediated through knowledge and material objects.

One of my informant named Dominik purchased his first uniform before knowing anything about reenactment. He just wanted to be part of the reenactment performance. *I got my first uniform from internet store. I was untouched by the community so I did not know how it works. I ordered it, asked no one if I was buying the correct one. I bought the right one but when I look back I think I made a stupid move because I could have done it better. I recall that when I received the uniform I was very disappointed. It did not look how I imagined so I questioned my decision (from my field notes).* He recalls his first performances like not knowing what he was doing. He was just happy that he could fire from a gun. After five years in reenactment community Dominik's perception of what is authentic changes. He was able to embody the knowledge about the technological process and now he is able to detect "bad" and "good" uniforms. Once he knew that reenactment will not be only a hobby which was after second year, he truly got into it. He conducted his own research by studying old archives to learn and master his knowledge on German infantry and assault engineers - on their tactics, procedures on installation of mines and much more. It was because he found it more interesting to find out how it truly was and try to reenact it then "barrel melters" that is how he refers to reenactors who just want to fire from guns. He does not only want to impress other reenactors but mostly he wants to have the feeling that he is doing it "right". His perception on authenticity has shifted from being a part of a performance to highly valuable authentic material replicas.

From an interview with my informant Marek who does reenactment for its beginnings in Czechoslovakia I learned that even small adjustments that are not according to historical evidence are not acceptable.

"I asked a professional sewer to make me my first uniform. I gave her exact sketch of how it must look. But she did it differently. She made a modern adjustments and told me that her way looks modern. So I decided to sew my own uniforms.(from an interview with Marek)

Even small details were closely overseen. He later opened his own company for sewing. He put a lot of effort to learn all about fabric, color, cuts, ranks. He even buy the fabric from the same company that were originally making them.

Both of them pay lot of attention to what they buy and where. An explanation why they know it can be made by Appadurai's concept on commodities that "represent very complex social forms and distributions of knowledge" [Appadurai 1986: 41]. Commodities such as uniforms during their commodity phases are carriers of knowledge of historical events, technological processes, and many more; and uniforms keep their knowledge even once they leave the commodity phase. During their life histories they distribute knowledge widely but it will not necessarily be received, though it will be performed anyway. By this I mean that during the performance the uniforms and the entire material context of the performance scene have a function of a knowledge carriers that will be ready to be transferred. The reenactors are in a way a mean of transmitting the knowledge as well. They actively participate in the performance and interact with the audience. However the efficacy of such a transmission is not always the same. For example the audience may not recognize the knowledge the material object possesses or it could be recognized differently. Grazian refers to authenticity as to "a variety of desirable traits: credibility, originality, sincerity, naturalness, genuineness, innateness, purity, or realness" [Grazian 2010: 191]. He suggests that even that authenticity connotes legitimacy and social value it is a social construct. Its legitimacy is achieved by the authority of expert knowledge. To get an expert knowledge I mean to get knowledge on specific attributes that takes a long time to achieve. In the next paragraph three different authorities of expert knowledge will be presented.

The technological process of manufacturing a uniform is very important, however, reenactors do not know how much and what kind of work is behind it. They might not know exactly how it is made however they have tools to learn how it should look like. They mastered their knowledge how it should look like and how it should be used. They

are able to spend hours discussing what is wrong and how it could look better. The perception on material accuracy and its importance differs if a reenactor is just a beginner and if he is someone who is involved for a longer period of time. The main difference between them is the knowledge of historical specifics. I distinguish three main sources (authorities) from which reenactors get their knowledge how the uniform and the rest of the equipment should look like. First source is advice from a fellow reenactors who do reenactment for a longer period of time and are perceived as authority. It is common mainly among the newbies who have great knowledge of historical events but usually lack knowledge on the dress regulations. Also Peter, one of my informants who just begun to do reenactment, was asking for help from the head of their military history club. He gave Peter lots of advice where he could buy good quality uniforms and Peter ordered from there. Meanwhile he was borrowing uniform from fellow members of the club and bought necessary items like boots and gun that he could not borrow. The other source is what I call current mass media resources. There are, for example, history magazines or internet. Anything can be found on the internet. For example Július is reenacting a Soviet soldier. On the internet he found manuals how to make a uniform and other equipment like knives, and he managed to make everything by himself. This kind of resource is current and it is hard to trace where the information came from. Both of the sources arise from the last one which I call the period source that includes different archive materials like period pictures, period regulation documents, period film documentaries or period instruction book. My gatekeeper Michal who is reenacting German soldier has four of the instruction books for different specializations. He got these from ebay, Aukro and a bazaar in Austria. During the Second World War, Reibert, the private instruction book from 1941 used by German army, should have been purchased by a soldier himself before he was enlisted. It included the history of German army, the basic training and manual of arms - how to handle a weapon, tactics, topography; and dress regulations. In the figure 1 and 2 we can see an infantry instruction book from 1940 from the front (left) and from the inside (right). The figure 2 shows the correct form of a dress for various occasions. From left to right there are field dress, service dress, guard dress, parade dress, reporting dress, walking-out dress, sports dress. Above the picture of the correct uniforms, the acceptable conditions for wearing privately acquired parts of clothing and kit are described. Underneath it describes the regulation based on what the soldier is allowed to wear his civil clothes only with the permission from the company

commander or someone of a higher rank. After that there is also written how the uniform should fit and if it does not, how to manage to fix it. Besides instruction books reenactors like to collect old pictures in which they see how the uniform was worn. They get the pictures from different bazaars that they visit all over the Central Europe.

These were the main authorities in creating the knowledge on what reenactors wear and how they should wear it. Except the first one, reenactors search authority mostly in material objects that carries and transfers expertise knowledge to others. Authenticity is carried and transferred through the material objects imprinted with knowledge. Uniform is indeed a carrier of technological knowledge. Marek who sew uniforms for living has conducted the deep research on the battle techniques and strategies, and the equipment and uniforms were not only the carrier of knowledge but also a mediator. Therefore Dominik who bought the uniform from Marek embodies this knowledge. This process of establishing what would be recognized as authentic is what Grazian calls "assigning authenticity" [Grazian 2010:192]. It is one of the constructing strategies of authenticity and Grazian describes it as followed: "Authenticity is produced through discourses that valorize certain qualities and assign or attribute them to cultural objects and symbols as a means of creating distinction, whether of status, prestige, or value" [ibid:192]. Spooner describes it a little bit similar pointing out the social mechanism of negotiation of authenticity. Negotiation is a continuous process functioning within a social area [Spooner 1986: 225]. The material objects such as uniforms or instruction books used in the reenactment performance could be therefore considered to be part of the discourse that produced the authenticity or the way how the authenticity is negotiated within the reenactors. When the reenactor buys a certain object he reproduces authenticity that is build on his own criteria.

Object authenticity and interactional authenticity are widely interconnected. For example Dominik, Marek and other members from the same club are specializing in a mining technique. They showed me couple of pictures from performances where they were preparing the mine booby traps. From the picture everything I could see was a bunch of soldiers leaning over a small wooden box. As an audience I would not be able to detect that was a mine and if it looked authentic. However the use of objects here have a different effect. Since they found on the archives that when German army was retreating they were putting mines to slow down Soviet army. So the goal of Dominik

and Marek was to make an authentic interaction within the members of their infantry in the performance using their replicas. There were not objects that made the performance authentic, it was the reconstruction of the battle strategy in which each one of them was in interaction with another to make an authentic material context for the performing strategy. As Hall describes "reenacting is not a way to directly experience anything that realistically resembled the historical circumstances of the period but a way to select interactions that develop authenticity" [Hall 2015: 18]. These reenactors have a quest for authentic experience by which I mean a full personal immersion. An example of a reenactor who does it to have an authentic experience is Július who made his own uniforms. He bought the fabric online and found on the internet the tutorial how to make a Soviet uniform. He even colored the uniform himself. The color looked really different than the rest of the Soviet uniforms but he had an explanation that even in the war, the uniforms got dirty and used and the color faded. So at the end of the war the soldiers did not have uniforms of the same color. He tries to make every equipment he could by himself. I noticed that he wants to experience it all, including the manufacturing his own uniform and equipment. Július negotiated and established his perception of authenticity in his social context. He was driven by the quest of authentic experience and not the exact technological knowledge that is embedded in the military material objects. His goal was to be in interaction with other reenactors and enjoy the possibility to commemorate the events. The other example can be found in Lukáš who is reenacting the Czechoslovak army. When I interviewed him I had a strong feeling that he is very proud on his uniform. He was not interested so much in public performances but enjoyed private performances a lot. Reenactors sometimes meet no audience and play that they live a life on the front as soldiers of a certain rank, with a certain experience. He was even telling me how much he enjoyed that it was very cold during the night and how much it gave him the right feeling.

In conclusion object oriented authenticity is always to some extent interconnected with interaction authenticity. It means that reenactors care so much about the accuracy of objects used in reenactment performances. If it comes to fabrics, color or shape of a uniform or if they use accurate mining devices which no audience could possibly see. The expert knowledge that is incorporated within the objects works as a mediator of authenticity. However objects are in action and action is in objects. That means

interactional authenticity provides an explanation to a questions which object analysis cannot provide by itself alone.

Findings 2: Contextual/Interactional authenticity

For some reenactors, the authenticity of a uniform is very significant, but everybody also agrees that the dramatic performance plays also an important role. To be the part of the performance it is essential to have a correct uniform and the needed equipment but reenactors are encouraged to act out different emotions, embody the movements of the soldiers and merge with the character so they could achieve an authentic reenactment experience.

It takes a huge luggage to bring it all to the place of happening. When reenactors arrive to the place it is usually a field and they either sleep in a near building or they must build period tents. They know it in advance so if needed they bring the period tents with them as well. Reenactors usually arrive one day before the actual performance and they almost immediately change and wear the uniform until the battle performance is over. They put the period underwear, period white or grey shirt and terminate it with a field blouse, trousers and field belt with a gun case. They usually do not put on the breadbag and ammunition pouches right away because they put it on only when there is a red alert announced in the camp.

My very first reenactment event that I attended was two years ago in a small village close to my hometown. The reenactors were sleeping in a local community center. Everyone was wearing mostly German uniforms even the night before. They did not hesitate and walked to a close bar and were drinking there until the last call. Others who did not go to the bar were having fun outside the community centre playing period looking game Domino. Another reason why they put uniforms on as soon as possible is the experience of the authenticity. A night before the actual reenactment performance there is no audience watching reenactors. They can calmly connect to how it might have felt seventy years ago. Couple of respondents described the necessity of physical experience with the uniform "the feeling of the itchy uniform might be uncomfortable but it is how the real soldiers felt like". Moreover if the weather is cold or wet they even got the physiological experience. Sometimes they wear uniforms one day earlier to connect to the past, sometimes it is because they are required to wear their uniforms because of the events regulations. On some performances they built a period camp which is supposed to function as it did during the actual war. That means

there were night watches, occasional ambush by the enemy, the morning warm-up and hygiene and field kitchen with a field cook. So if someone would not put on his uniform it would destroy the whole period feeling. It was very important for reenactors to create an authentic material context so they could behave accordingly and immerse with their historical character.

As word *interactional* suggests, reenactors interacts with someone. No performance can have no audience. In this case there are two types of audience: other reenactors and visitors. Reenactors interact with each other most of the time. When reenactors build a camp and dress into uniforms, their duties arise. In the camp it is essential to follow the rules as it was obligatory in any other army camp. That means they are given patrols, they are expected to salute their superior, they must follow every period regulation that they know of. Some reenactors cannot imagine to achieve the authentic experience without these interactions. Other reenactors are not concerned that much about interactions and they might emphasize authenticity of the objects. The other type of audience I mentioned is visitors. It was only recently that I have encountered reenactment group that was more focused on presenting their hobby to unknown visitors than among themselves. They reenact American army that have liberated western Czechoslovakia. This reenactment performances are made by completely different group of reenactors because from their perspective it is completely different events and therefore they cannot reenact both. Reenactment of liberation of western Czechoslovakia by Americans is accompanied by the big celebration festival. Soldiers camps are situated in parks and people can visit them and see the soldiers period life. However when I first attended as an audience I could not help myself than think that it is a celebration of war. Everybody was happy and everybody was commemorating the great achievements of American army. It is in a enormous contrast compares to reenactment events between German and Soviet soldiers in East parts of Czechoslovakia that are quite violent. Reenactors of American soldiers are eager to interact with visitors as well. To tell them more about reenactment and historical events. They make presentations of their roll cat, firing skills etc. But at the same time their task is to search for American veterans that have liberated western Czechoslovakia. When an American veteran soldier arrives to the festival they contact him and show him what they do and what objects they collected. If they have a chance to present it to visitors they are very satisfied that they could educate other visitors. But

still they keep in mind that it is not real. They do not present past, but they know that they present certain version of the past. In their opinion they pay tribute to certain values and historical events.

In conclusion selective process in authenticity is happening always. We do not see and will never see the authentic representation of something. It is not possible. But what we will always see is selection. Some things are selected to be a representative and some things are hidden from representation.

Conclusion

The paper gives an account of authenticity within the public reenactment performances of the battles from the Second World War in the area of Czech republic and Slovakia. The main research question deals with the role of material objects on constructing reenactor's perception on authenticity and how authenticity is mediated within material objects during the reenactment performance.

The paper presents an analysis of relations among reenactors, object and their behavior. in order to achieve authentic experience. By authentic reenactment experience it is understood the experience that is obviously settled in the presence but it induces a strong feeling of an authentic belonging to the past. Most of the reenactors are trying to achieve the authentic experience by which I mean full personal immersion. It can only be achieved through selective process that sets what is to be consider authentic and what does not. The selection process results in selective authenticity that works on two levels, happening in two simultaneous processes: object-oriented authenticity and interactional authenticity. I claim that object-oriented authenticity is only possible if there is interactional authenticity achieved. Therefore authenticity is a fluid social construct depending on a current social and material context. By the process of selecting, reenactors achieve personal authentic experience of the past. From the broader context, I assume that the selection of what is authentic and what is not lead me to understand how the image of the past is created.

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Figures:

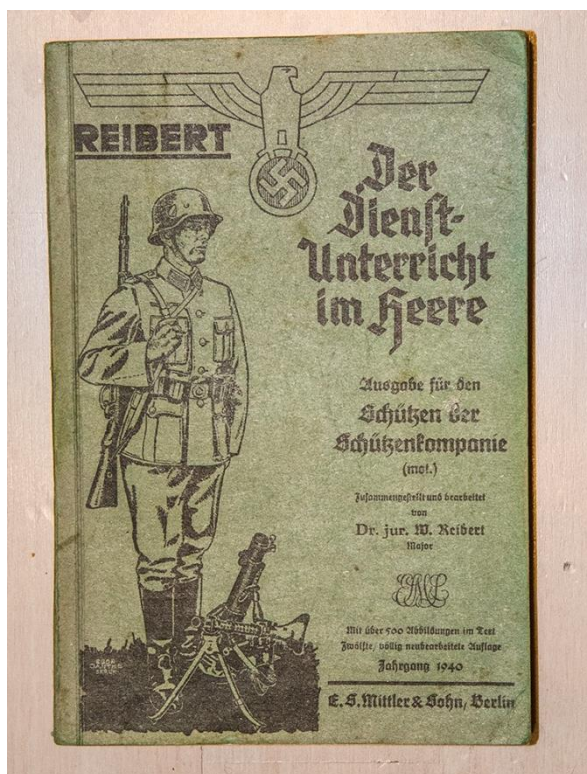


Figure 1: The instruction book

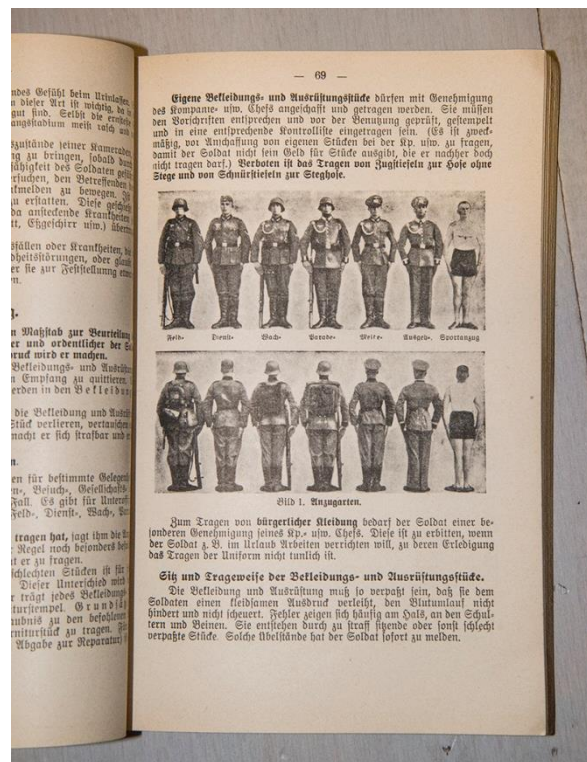


Figure 2: The instruction book from the inside