***COMICS AND THE GREAT WAR***

**Henrik Smrekar: Črnovojnik (Henrik Smrekar:The black soldier)**

1. Read Henrik Smrekar's comic Črnovojnik and transform it into a comic short story.

2. Describe the narrative style (metaphors, similes, personification, imagery, hyperbole, alliteration …). Analyze vocabulary and expressive codes of comics.

3. Describe the graphic style in the comics. Analyze it in detail, using an appropriate specific language (like caricature, realistic, stylized writing, details, usage of jargon).

4. Critically analyze the way in which the great war is dealt with: the comic between documentary and fictional narrative reconstruction. Compare the narrative comic with the known historical sources, establish a relationship between narrative invention and reality.

5. Describe the author's point of view: a partisan reading (the artist's ideological political commitment).

The proto-comic is available on:

<http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu/sl/contributions/5094>

**HINKO SMREKAR, ČRNOVOJNIK/BLACK SOLDIER – ANALYSIS OF THE PROTO-COMIC**

The so-called Črnovojniki/black soldiers were military units consisting of too old, too young or partially disabled men who carried out military activities. They were used mostly in rear lines for the protection of the infrastructure, for military installations and supply centers. Towards the end of the war, however, due to lack of other soldiers, they were sent to the front. In the army they were hungry, because they got just a little bit of food, however, they were expected to do their duty.

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| **Rezultat iskanja slik za črnovojnik** | The proto-comic Črnovojnik was published in 1919 by Umetniška propaganda Ljubljana. It is about Smrekar's war experiences between 1915 and 1916. The author described this story as »a fantastic, carefully disguised, doubtful teaser about the sad carneval of the World War I«. Henrik Smrekar described the black soldiers as a cheerful and varied group. The soldiers were optimistic at the beginning, but Henrik Smrekar himself wrote that his fantasy is not reality, because even before the war he made drawings of the horrific character. In order to avoid military commitments he acted like a fool and showed a complete inability to participate in military. |

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|  | Drawings are caricatures, soldiers in it appear incompetent, almost like they are drunk. They are not honorable and courageous, as people imagined the army (the army really wasn't such a noble, Henrik Smrekar has only pointed this out). Uniforms were drawn quite realistically, only a bit out of order. | |
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|  | | Smrekar also presented health care of that time as a caricature. As he wrote, "every patient got a spoon of blessing." Health care at that time wasn’t really good, and there weren’t enough doctors. In the comic he pointed out the the terrible conditions in the army. He wrote about how he was "flea trained" as a war prisoner. | |

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|  | He described how they had to cook for themselves at the camp and how they were changing food for tobacco with the guards. Every morning they were waiting for news from the front. The comics also describes the situation in society at the time. You couldn't trust anyone, because society was full of snitches and so many women were cheating. In conclusion the comic talks also about how some people got rich at the expense of the war, while on the other side millions of people suffered and sacrificed their lives. |

Of course Hinko Smrekar was primarily known for his drawings, cartoons and illustrations. But he wrote with abundant rate of the ridicule and selfirony, as in his words he describes and draws a "sad carnival the first world war", which is "fantastic, carefully disguised, ambiguous and full of jokes".

The proto-comics contains also a lot of insightful figures of speach, metaphors, adjectives … The writer uses a kind of jargon words, that are originaly from German. A few words are also outdated and in today's conversation no longer apply. On the humorous way the author describes the events, the anecdotes and the company at the time of the first world war.

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|  | The excerpt talks about how women's lives changed in the time of war. The women were given more freedom, so they drunk alcohol, and weremore adoulteorus. It shows the subordinate position of women in that time.  Metaphors and transferred meaning:   * Babice so imele polne roke dela. (The midwifes had hands full (of work))   Due to women's lives being full of adventures, a lot of births was the consequence.     * …ženske so pile za žive in mrtve… … (women drunk fort the alive and dead …)   They drunk a lot with the excuse it is for the living and the dead.     * …vojni vihar je razdeval deviške vence… (the war tempest was blowing virginal wreaths away)   The war made women behaviour change. |

Altogether the proto-comic offers a great insight into an every day's life of non-hero soldiers, men and women in war, picturing them with kind mocking.