

Creativity of Literary Artists and Successful Ageing

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Abstract

Theoretical foundations: The purpose of the study was to find out if literary artists, once they achieve a high chronological age over 75 years, are still creative and what influence creativity has on their lifestyle, social convoy and successful ageing. The research subject has a philosophical value foundation, based on the conviction that literary artists do not cease to create with age. *Methods:* We used qualitative research methods. With a half - structured interview, we studied the life stories of two literary artists, Ciril Zlobec and Tone Partljič. *Results:* The interviewees did not cease with literary creativity. They are not lonely. Their lifestyle and social convoy do not change enough to significantly influence the quality of life. The circle of closest friends is shrinking due to deaths, but the circle of incidental acquaintances, forming weak connections, is expanding. *Discussion:* Creativity of literary artists continues through age. Tone Partljič wishes to create his biggest literary success before his death. He creates with the same tempo, but more freely. Both interviewees enjoy creating. Their social convoy maintains firm family ties, and at the same time they are constantly interacting with incidental acquaintances and significant others. They maintain the literary artistic role they've had in their lives in the past, their lifestyle and their habits. If they are healthy, they are also satisfied with life in old age. The biggest issue for them is the decline in physical abilities, due to which they feel endangered (Ciril Zlobec). Social status enables them to age successfully.

Keywords: successful ageing; literary artists; creativity.

1. Introduction

The population is ageing in all countries of the world and according to the UN, the number of persons aged 60 and over is supposed to triple by the middle of the century. Ever more people do not only reach old age, but also reach higher chronological old age nowadays.

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Thus, 3 or even 4 generation families are more and more common. Parallel with the demographic changes, the society, changes too, and with it family life [1:7-10]. Considering the future ageing of the population, there is certainly a need to prepare a suitable state apparatus, as well as make sure that the whole society is ready for the newly arising situation. Conditions for successful ageing must be provided. The problem that the study deals with is how to give meaning to the life of older intellectuals and enable them successful ageing. With a case study, we wish to find out, if established literary artists continue their literary work in old age. We are also interested, whether literary artists in the process of ageing are socially lonely, or whether they maintain their social convoy. It is a characterising of the period of ageing that mental and physical capacities deteriorate - as a consequence of normal physiological drop in life functions [1:7-10]. An older person also loses social contacts, which can be a consequence of normal life cycle due to death, but also that ageing and giving up on roles in life means, that older people are no more socially included. The case study stems from two life stories, of the poet and scholar Ciril Zlobec, and the established satirist and writer Tone Partljič. The goal of the study is to find out, whether the artistic spirit of established literary artists is preserved through ageing and how it influences the quality of their lives or, what is the connection between literary creation of the interviewed artists and successful ageing. The goal of the research is also to find out, what contributes to their successful ageing. In connection with what we wish to find out through the study, a question is also posed, how to give meaning to the lives of older intellectuals, so that they are provided with conditions for successful ageing. It is known, that literary, or any artistic creation reinforces the condition of the mind. The study contributes its stone into the mosaic of gerontology development. It has practical and scientific value, since experts, working with older persons may also find a few guidelines for the successful ageing of their clients in this study. Its originality is in two unique and inimitable, important contemporaries of Slovenian literary art.

2. Materials and methods

Numerous studies were carried out globally in regards to successful ageing. Rowe in Kahn find, that research on successful ageing should be focused on people with better physiological and psychosocial characteristics than average old persons [2:143-149]. One of the factors of successful ageing is human activity. In our study, this activity is literary creation. Creativity is a human ability to grow beyond what exists. Mayer wrote that creativity is implanted into the human being philogenetically, which means, that it came about with the evolution of the species. Creativity is thus an anthropological ability - creative potential exists in every human being. It's just difficult to "awaken". In talented people, this occurs spontaneously. They are full of energy, initiatives, dominance within themselves. However, we can encourage anyone to be creative [3:16]. Creativity has no age limits. Age helps our brains to accumulate strategies developed from a life time of experience [4:2].

Social relations are a key aspect of aging and the life course [5:82]. Many believed that older people were isolated and alone, with few social interactions, but study showed that older people had close and supportive convoys of social relations [5:82-92]. We though, that artists are simply newer alone.

The literary artists, who are the subject of our study, have created a lot of literature in their lives, and also continue with literary creation in their old age, which helps them age successfully.

2.1. Challenges

- Do established literary artists continue with literary activity in old age?
- Are literary artists socially lonely in the process of ageing, or do they maintain their social convoy?

2.2. Methods

Qualitative Methodology

The data was put into order and sorted with the use of qualitative methodology.

Half-structured interview

We carried out two half-structured interviews with Slovenian literary artists, both over 75 years of age, Tone Partljič and Ciril Zlobec. We carried out the interview with each literary artist individually, but used the same questions for both. Interview with Tone Partljič took place in his home in Maribor, on 21st Nov. 2015, and the interview with Ciril Zlobec took place in Hotel Slon in Ljubljana, on 24th Nov. 2015. A sound recording of both interviews was made. Both interviews lasted a total of four hours and a half together, with the shorter lasting 2 hours. I collected the data myself.

2.3. Sample

The sampling method used is a purpose sample.

Information on research participants

The first interviewed individual, Tone Partljič, Slovenian writer, dramatist, comedy author, class teacher, screenwriter, former theatre principal, and politician, was born on August 5th, 1940, in Maribor. He got a degree in English and Slovenian language at the Maribor Academy of Pedagogic in Maribor.

In 1971, he became the dramaturge of the SNG Drama theatre in Ljubljana. In 1987, he took over as the artistic principal of the city theatre of Ljubljana, MGL, and in 1991, he became the principal of SNG Drama Ljubljana. From 1990 to his retirement in 2004, he was a member of Slovenian Parliament, and from 1992 on, he was a member of parliament for the Liberal Democratic Party of Slovenia

The second interviewed individual, Ciril Zlobec, poet, novelist, essayist, translator and academic, was born on the 4th of July in Karst.

Awards: the Prešern Fund Award for Life Achievements (2016), the Prešern Fund Award for Satirical Comedy Plays (1980), the Levstik Award for the book *Hotel Sem Prijeti Sonce* (I Tried to Touch the Sun, 1982), Grum Award for the play *Moj Ata, Socialistični Kulak* (My Papa, a Socialist Kulak, 1984), Glazer Award of the city of Maribor for life achievements in the field of culture (2006).

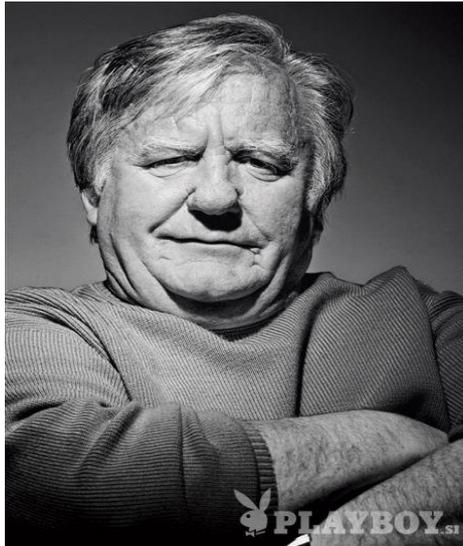


Figure 1: Tone Partljič



Figure 2: Ciril Zlobec

He is also known as translator, mainly from Italian and Serbo-Croatian. Since 1985, he has been the member of the Slovenian Academy of Science and Arts. In 1990, he became a member of the government of the Republic of Slovenia. He has received several awards for his literary work, among which are the Tomšič Award (1956), the Prešern Award (1982), the Župančič Award (1978), and the Vernonika Award. He is a correspondence member of the Croatian Academy of Science and Arts. His life has been impacted by personal tragedy, as both his children, his daughter and son, passed away. At a chronological age of 91, he is still present in the media and still creates literature.

2.4. Measuring Instrument

I used a half-structured interview as the research instrument.

The research questions included the following areas:

Topic: EXPLANATION OF THE FLOW OF LIFE:

1. Which are the special conditions, that influenced your way of life?
2. Can you describe something, what changed your life? What is the foundation for reviving of important events in the past? Why do you think so?
3. Which period in your life was of the highest quality and which was of the lowest quality?

Topic: PROFESSIONAL ROLE:

4. What can you tell me about feelings, which your past professional role triggers? How do you feel today? How would you describe your life in the past few years?

Topic: ENVIRONMENT:

5. How would you describe your environment? Does it differ from the one that you knew in your mature years?
6. What in the way of life has changed the most?
7. Do the relatives, acquaintances, friends and other people see you differently than in the past? How have relationships between people changed? Describe!

Topic: SELF-IMAGE:

8. How would you describe your personality?
9. Does the fact that you're older influence your self-image? How? Are you satisfied with the current way of life, compared to the one when you were in your best years?
10. Who is the most important person in your life?

Topic: ROLES IN LIFE:

11. What would you change in past life (profession, work, family...) and what would you change now?
12. Do you think that you achieved what you wanted in life? What are your future expectations?
13. What does being successful at the peak of one's career mean, and what does it mean now?
14. How would you describe yourself in five words?

2.5. Limitation of research

There are some constraints in our research. To get the interview with the most important and still active elderly literary artists in state is very difficult.

Slovenia is small country with cca.2 Million people, and we even do not have so many elderly literary artists to provide a basis for credible claims.

3. Results From the Case Study

Questions and answers of both interviewed individuals, and discussion

Transcript of sound recordings:

Table 1

Topic	EXPLANATION OF THE FLOW OF LIFE	
1st question	Which are the special conditions, that influenced your way of life?	
	<p>Tone Partljič</p> <p>The environment and family I was born into. My mother and father were servants on a larger farm. Mother was born out of wedlock and without parents. Life was hell for her. She was bright and "well read". She had a desire to read. Without schools, she read Crime and Punishment with me. I talked to her a lot. My father was an emotional man, he had hands of gold. He got work at a railroad. There were three of us children. A happy family, even though my father had had quiet weeks as well. I remember an event from when I was 9 months old. Thank you gods for these delusions! My mother had influence on me. My father, a socialist kulak (trans. note: owner of land, cultivated with hired work force)... I went to the library and the teacher from Trieste who also influenced me greatly had me read Shakespeare plays.</p>	<p>Ciril Zlobec</p> <p>I was born in Karst, in a farmer's and worker's family, the last of seven children. I'm a child of the second mother. The criterion of my childhood was to feed hungry mouths. I had an exceptional mother. In spite of difficult social situations, I had a happy childhood in a way, a model, loving family. Around me, I saw very difficult lives. It was the priest who noticed my writing. He said, that I will have to be sent off to study. My mother liked to read, speak in rhymes, we hid Slovenian books at home. When she read poems I told her I didn't understand anything and she replied, I don't either, but poems are so beautiful. That's when I felt it was something beautiful, something I'd like to do.</p>
2nd question	Can you describe something, what changed your life? What is the foundation for reviving of important events in the past? Why do you think so?	
	<p>Tone Partljič</p> <p>Change of professions, I changed over from teacher to dramaturge. I travelled a lot, I read all autobiographies of writers, poems, painters, I was in Paris forty times. The impression lines up, if I e.g.</p>	<p>Ciril Zlobec</p> <p>Do not test me more, life! You gave me a lot and took all of it away. My position is specific due to a loss of children. Why do I think so? I fear death in pain or in loss of psycho-physical condition which degrades you..</p>

	see a Monet painting live too. The events I remember most are morally ethical ones.	
3rd question	Which period in your life was of the highest quality and which was of the lowest quality?	
	Tone Partljič	Ciril Zlobec
	In every period, I seek some points of confirmation, that I have not lived in vain. I taught Slovenian with all devotion. The period of greatest learning was the 20 years in theatre, from dramaturge, to artistic leader of Drama, from ages 30 to 50. The least productive period for me was teaching, up to my 30th year, since I had to adapt more than when I was a member of parliament. Politics was a new period, which I did not want and that is where I found that there are other ethical norms in politics than there are in private life. I suffered like a dog.	The highest quality and most intense was the experience of being a partisan. When friends fell by my side and I fought without thinking that I could die. I lived the life of a partisan in the Primorska region in the purest ethical form. The first post-war time, being in my twenties after war, was impossible. Building of homeland, "shock work"... But I also have understanding for these barren periods. They created an illusion that could not be made real in people. The expectations of those who fight never become reality. It is true, illusions are necessary, I am even sure that there is a human necessity, to fight for something that can not be made real, but at the same time we must be aware that this is the only condition under which we can realise the maximum of the possible. I'm a sceptical utopist.
Topic	PROFESSIONAL ROLE	
4th question	What can you tell me about feelings, which your past professional role triggers? How do you feel today? How would you describe your life in the past few years?	
	Tone Partljič	Ciril Zlobec
	Now I write, read, and mature, and I am capable of getting deeper than I used to be. Now I feel in top condition and feel sorry that I will have to die soon. When I now write in my room, I am so free and happy... I feel like a little god.	My life was always complicated, but I enjoyed it, since I saw confirmation in it, that I can do it. My life looks like a collection of problems but in the end, I have a series of "satisfactions". In memory, I go back and find that I saw a lot of things only from one side, since I was rushing towards the fundamental goal, which is death. I find this and that, that hasn't been lived out yet., which I didn't manage to live out until the end. I am older, more of a memory man. I wrote memories, which will help the living live, when he remains alone. Perhaps it will be my wife, or

		myself. Memories becomes the "sense makers" of my path. The thing I'm most afraid of is oblivion. I always has a goal in front of me.
Topic	ENVIRONMENT	
5th question	How would you describe your environment? Does it differ from the one that you knew in your mature years?	
	Tone Partljič	Ciril Zlobec
	Up to my 30th year, I lived in a rural environment, and during that time, went to schools in Maribor. From the perspective of directness, I still carry those places in me. Time in Maribor was a time of rebelliousness. When I lived in Ljubljana, I could not write. Now I have a feeling that I came back home, when I returned to Maribor in 2004.	Sometimes things were very simple, transparent, and you had a feeling that you have life in control. Nowadays the world is entirely different. Everyone has their own truth. People became regular employees. If I was a president, I would create the job of a Mind Coordination Minister. The tragedy of our time is that there is a lot of everything, money, knowledge... but it is not in correlation with lives of people. We live according to the principle of every man for himself.
6th question	What in the way of life has changed the most?	
	Tone Partljič	Ciril Zlobec
	I am certain that I am a lot more tolerant to people. I am ready to look for arguments why people change, why things happen. Emotionally, everything narrows down to the family. Of course, I am interested in the destiny of the nation and the world, I am a writer after all. Now I am so old, that I see what empty phrases are.	Old age is not beautiful, as it psycho - physically bereaves you of sense. Syntagm - my short eternity. I cannot understand this phenomenon of death! Why has the creator not taken the sense of eternity away from Adam and Eve already? Nobody in life remembers the moment of birth, and nobody is in a state to describe the moment of death. A human does not remember the beginning and will not remember their end. You cannot come to terms with this transience. My eternity is short. This makes us magnificent. We are more open for tragedy than we are for joy.
7th question	Do the relatives, acquaintances, friends and other people see you differently than in the past? How have relationships between people changed? Describe!	
	Tone Partljič	Ciril Zlobec
	I am more polite to people, but do in no way kiss up to them. If someone is unfair, I say so. I want my peace and also for most part leave other people in peace	I am a loner soup, but I do have a gift of open communication. Crowds always bothered me, as one has to submit to them. At the expense of freedom, I also exposed myself to dangerous

	<p>too. For now, I am not a grumpy old man yet. I attempt to seek the good in people. I am bothered by people who always know everything. I do not hide disagreement with others any more. In these years I see, that I am popular in Maribor. It is the first time someone stops me in the streets in this way. The attitude towards me has improved since I left politics. People see me in a nicer way. When I was a member of parliament, I noticed they looked at me in hostile ways due to a high wage. They made me responsible for everything, including that, which I opposed. They considered me a part of the political pack. Relationships in the narrower family circle have not changed. Except for my colleagues dying one by one, things have remained unchanged.</p>	<p>situations. Now there's constantly someone wanting something, they ask for speeches, opinions... I was lucky to have had an above average number of acquaintances in my life. I allowed the possibilities of unpredictable friendships (Dobrica Čosić). True friends were those who did not expect favours. Friendship is very important due to mutual complementing. I had an almost cult friendship of The Four (Poems of the Four). I was under great stress, but tried as best I could to manage them. My friends were also under stress, Pavček (son Marko commit suicide), Kajetan, and Menart too... we had an exceptionally loyal friendship. I was the oldest and yet I remained alone. I have a family, grandchildren and wife, and we are very closely connected.</p>
Topic	SELF-IMAGE	
8th question	How would you describe your personality?	
	Tone Partljič	Ciril Zlobec
	<p>I would never in this life consciously do something unethical with money. I would also be extremely bothered if I got caressed by some man. I would never touch any drugs. For me, high moral norms are a value.</p> <p>Character-wise I am certainly sanguine. If I promise something, I am panickingly worried that I would not do it. What I start, I finish. I am merry, sociable, I like to make people laugh.</p>	<p>An aphorism, which is my starting point for the entire life: I travel out of myself into myself. My guide is intimate fairness. A human, to oneself, is the most explored territory. Very early in life I discovered, how the human being is constantly in temptation, makes compromises with oneself, or - or. Even if he has an opportunistic solution, he sees the background... he is a lot stricter to himself than to others. So I am considered critical and rebellious. I began enjoying the fact, that I am strong and that I can be rebellious. I joined the partisans on my own free will, so that I could fight for the freedom of the nation, which also implies my personal freedom. Only I decide on myself. I am understanding, but do not change my fundamental principles. Until the autumn of</p>

		1945, I was a model partisan, loyal to myself. After the war finished, they would not let me go study, so I deserted and entered.
9th question	Does the fact that you're older influence your self-image? How? Are you satisfied with the current way of life, compared to the one when you were in your best years?	
	Tone Partljič	Ciril Zlobec
	I feel a bit better, even though I'm constantly involved. I do things that are closer to my interests. I have an impression, that I don't have the time for reexaminations any more, whether in writing, or in establishing relationships. At 75 years of age, I can't, not without knowing, where I am. I don't think of death at all, but am somehow aware, that the majority is behind me and am afraid, that I could do more, but will not have the time. So I hurry now. The question of death does not confuse me or cause anxiety, but I fear illness. The only thing I know for sure is that I will die in the end, and do not cause panic about that.	Look, I was a partisan for two years, and as you can see, I did not fall, and two months ago I fell twice. The occupator was a lesser enemy for me than these 90 years. I had no time to prepare for old age. Youth and mature age could be lived out, but now I have no experience. I am unprepared. Every morning, I read obituaries in Delo (transl. note: daily newspaper) and tell myself, aha, I am not in here, I am still alive. Everything I talk about, I tried, which does not mean, however, that I am not also an altruist. I am honest, everything that is passing has ended in the reinforcement of that egoism that makes me happy.
10th question	Who is the most important person in your life?	
	Tone Partljič	Ciril Zlobec
	Wife Milka.	I myself.
Topic	ROLES IN LIFE	
11th question	What would you change in past life (profession, work, family...) and what would you change now?	
	Tone Partljič	Ciril Zlobec
	As much as I am a master of my own fate, the circumstances also influenced life. If I had been born in the city, my starting point would've been different. I was at an important crossroads once and still do not know, if I decided wrongly. I had to choose between study and work. I chose work, since I already had a family. My biggest lack, even today, is still education. Since I allow for people to drag and tear me to 10 sides, I should have focused on my three women, I would like to improve my writing, I would	If I could have, I would have influenced the life of my children, so I wouldn't have remained an orphaned father. I dream about my children a lot. They appear to me with the awareness that they are dead, but ensure, that they are happy. And now, this energy that is left, let it stay.

	like to educate myself as best as possible to understand the world. I would like to write my best novel.	
12th question	Do you think that you achieved what you wanted in life? What are your future expectations?	
	Tone Partljič	Ciril Zlobec
	I wrote 30 books, they put on my plays, I teach people critical perspective. I achieved what I wanted. For a few years though, I have been dreaming about a comedy, and it's not coming along. I would like to write my best comedy yet, and a book. I would like to remain healthy so I could go fish at the seaside.	From small wishes, the larger ones grow. 117 books, translations... I have considerably more than I ever dreamed about. I am a member of four academies. More than was realised, the weaker expectations grow. At this moment, I don't expect anything special. Everything has been reduced to family condition. It is the 66th year of marriage, this is the fundamental fact. If you think of the family, there is always something happy.
13th question	What does being successful at the peak of one's career mean, and what does it mean now?	
	Tone Partljič	Ciril Zlobec
	People value your work, you feel that you are useful. Now success means keeping a clear head. With numerous challenges, commercial tricks, political stories, do not give in and keep a distance from the events.	I have not experienced a moment of loneliness. Literary success does not have a carrying dynamic nowadays.
14th question	How would you describe yourself in five words?	
	Tone Partljič	Ciril Zlobec
	1. riter 2. apa and husband 3. lovenian 4. urious 5. ealthy human	1. , 2. o myself, 3. emain 4. nsolvable 5. ystery

We include direct transcripts of interviews, because they very clear define our Challenges. From the life stories

of both Slovenian literary giants do not notice a reduction in artistic creativity. Despite high chronological age, they seem to be extremely intelligent. In the replies of Tone Partljič and Ciril Zlobec, we can find good insight into the life story of both individuals. We conclude from the study that literary artists' creativity does not end with ageing, but continues, in some even more accelerated, as they wish to create their biggest literary work before dying (Tone Partljič). They create with the same tempo than in the past, but feel more free in their work and enjoy literary creation (Tone Partljič). Literary artists, even at high chronological age, are not socially lonely. Their social convoy maintains tight family ties, and at the same time, they are in constant interaction with random acquaintances and significant others, which establish contacts with literary artists due to their artistic work. Quality of life is not reduced with age. Both interviewed individuals maintain their past life literary and artistic role and with it also their lifestyle and habits. They live an active old age, doing what they are good at and enjoy. If they are also healthy, they are satisfied with their lives in the old age. The biggest problem in life for them is the reduction in physical and mental capacities, due to which they feel endangered (Ciril Zlobec). Social status allows them successful ageing. Both interviewed individuals in the reply to the 12th Question also state, that they are satisfied with their lives in spite of old age. We realise that we have too small-N for qualitative research. Semi-structured interviews with two elder literary artists do not provide a basis for credible claims about "literary artists" in general, and their creativity, loneliness, quality of life, or any other characteristics. But even that, interviews gave us exact answers on our challenges.

4. Conclusion

The literary artists from the study achieve a high chronological age. In both life stories, we can see that literary creativity is maintained in high chronological age of over 75 years. Tone Partljič is fully occupied with new literary projects and even hopes, that in his late life cycle, he will manage to create his best novel. Both interviewed individuals are satisfied with their lives. When Tone Partljič writes (creates) in his room, he is free and happy, he feels as if he's a small god. Ciril Zlobec, due to exceptional events in his life, the death of his children, is very unhappy, however, as he says, he finds solace in his family and "egoism that brings happiness". Connection between literary creation of both literary artists and successful ageing is strongly present. The more creative the artists are, the more successful the ageing is. The artists create literary works in their home environments, Tone Partljič in Maribor and Ciril Zlobec in Ljubljana. They both have ideal conditions for writing. The environment is encouraging. People constantly turn to them, providing them with confirmations, that their work is appreciated, which, along with internal motivation of their own, is additional motivation for work. Both artists respond to the needs of their environment.

The artists have a respectful attitude towards their environment, but we can also say the same goes the other way around. Both artists received awards for their work multiple times in the past. Ciril Zlobec was chosen as the name of the year on the Val 202 radio station in 2015, and Tone Partljič received the most prestigious, Prešern prize, for life achievements, on February 8th, 2016. By maintaining literary activities, established literary artists from our study maintain their activity in general and age successfully. With this finding, the study can be useful for others, interested in gerontological themes, which also gives it practical value. Literary creation is possible and recommended in high chronologic age as well, as it contributes to successful ageing.

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