

Satire as a Critical Practice by Amar Yezli

Mourad Litimi¹

¹ Université de Djilali Bounaama (Algérie)

m.litimi@univ-dbk.m.dz

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ABSTRACT: Amar Yezli, an Algerian thinker, has become a notable figure in Algerian media through the topics he addressed and his expressive methods. He regularly published satirical columns in different Algerian newspapers that tackled issues drawn from the heart of Algerian society and its core concerns. His language, rich in satire and filled with metaphors and allusion, examined in detail the contradictions of reality and exposed the lies and machinations of some opportunistic segments within Algerian society.

Numerous topics were addressed by Amar Yezli in his long career in satire. He criticized various negative aspects of society, and corrupt officials received a substantial share of his criticism, making his works widely popular and well-received by readers.

Hence, this study will attempt to answer several questions, foremost among them:

- What is meant by satire, and what is critical satire?
- What is the role of critical satire in critiquing institutions?
- How do metaphor and allusion contribute to improving the satirical critical process?

KEYWORDS: Allusion, Article, Criticism, Journalism, Satire.

RÉSUMÉ: Amar Yezli, penseur algérien, est devenu une figure marquante des médias algériens à travers les sujets qu'il a abordés et ses méthodes expressives. Il publiait régulièrement des chroniques satiriques dans différents journaux algériens qui abordaient des questions puisées au cœur de la société algérienne et de ses préoccupations fondamentales. Son langage, riche en satire et rempli de métaphores et d'allusions, examinait en détail les contradictions de la réalité et exposait les mensonges et les machinations de certains segments opportunistes de la société algérienne .

De nombreux sujets ont été abordés par Amar Yezli au cours de sa longue carrière dans la satire. Il a critiqué divers aspects négatifs de la société, et les

fonctionnaires corrompus ont reçu une part substantielle de ses critiques, rendant ses œuvres largement populaires et bien accueillies par les lecteurs. Par conséquent, cette étude tentera de répondre à plusieurs questions, au premier rang des quelles:

- *Qu'entend-on par satire et qu'est-ce que la satire critique?*
- *Quel est le rôle de la satire critique dans la critique des institutions?*
- *Comment la métaphore et l'allusion contribuent-elles à améliorer le processus critique satirique?*

MOTS-CLÉS : Allusion, Article, Critique, Journalisme, Satire.

Introduction

Throughout his long career in satirical journalism, **Amar Yezli** sought to alert readers from different segments to the contradictions within Algerian society and the hypocrisy governing social relations, as well as to demonstrate the deceit and lies of various officials across different institutions. He emphasized the negative practices that prevail in society and are overlooked by its members. **Yezli** was unwavering in his opinions; he did not attack the common people or overlook the transgressions of high-ranking officials, unlike much of today's press. Instead, he was sharply critical of them, openly criticizing their policies. Accordingly, **Yezli** endeavored to promote advanced awareness among Algerian readers and stimulate their critical thinking and understanding.

2. Amar Yezli and His Writing Journey:

Amar Yezli, a researcher, thinker, and satirical media figure from Algeria, was born in Nedroma, Tlemcen province 1955. He became famous for his satirical columns in Algerian newspapers and dailies. His media career started with the newspaper "Al-Jumhuriya" in western Algeria, where he wrote a column entitled "Tharthara". He later wrote a half-page column on the back page titled "Chakchouka", published weekly. He then founded the satirical weekly "As-Sah-Afa" with a group of journalists after Algeria entered a period of political pluralism.

However, it was discontinued with the suspension of the electoral process in the 1990s. Later, he moved to the magazine "Echourouk Al-Arabi" and subsequently "Echourouk El Yaoumi", where he published

widely popular and influential columns such as "Mnamat Amar Yezli" and "Amar Bouzouar". His most famous column was entitled "Cirque Amar".

In addition to his work in journalism, **Yezli** was a creative writer, authoring numerous story collections, encompassing "Ma Baada El Tufan", "El Basamat", and "Ma Ahla Rujoo Ilayh". He also wrote several plays, including "Mnamat El Wahrani", and television scripts, such as "Ana Chkon Howa?" and "Zawja Li Zawji". However, his most significant distinction was in the domain of social studies, where he authored various works, including "Algerian Culture in the Face of French Occupation", "Satire and Cultural Resistance to Occupation", "The Women's Revolution", "Tabr al-khawatir fi fikr al-amir 'Abd al-Qadir" and "The Tribe, Space, and Belief". Despite all these contributions, **Yezli** was best known among Algerians for his work in the media, as newspapers were more widely read than books and academic articles, which were targeted at specialists and elites.

Amar Yezli represents a distinctive figure in the Algerian media landscape. He is a seasoned journalist who is well-acquainted with Algerian reality and a cultured and scholarly figure. He holds a master's degree in popular culture from the University of Tlemcen, supervised by Palestinian poet **Izzedine Al-Manasrah**, and a doctorate with a thesis entitled "Satire as a Form of Resistance to the French Occupation", supervised by **Abdelmalek Mortadh**. **Yezli** also teaches in the sociology department at the University of Oran. This diverse background and experience enable **Yezli** to understand society, analyze its discourses, and critique them. He is proficient in the language, capable of manipulating it, and knowledgeable about the intricacies and peculiarities of Algerian society. He is also well-versed in sociology and its tools. Researcher **Mohamed Al-Amri** affirmed that the cultural level of a satirical writer determines the nature and value of his works **Error! Reference source not found.**; the higher the cultural level of the writer, the more they use innovative methods and create new, refined, and aesthetically pleasing ways of expression. Conversely, the lower their cultural level, the more their expressions decline, resorting to crude humor and weak, trivial comedic styles.

3. Satire Concept:

The concept of satire is generally associated with meanings of laughter, mockery, and ridicule, and it intertwines with other closely related terms such as invective, sarcasm, humor, and jokes. Nonetheless, satire maintains its unique structure and independence as a form of discourse **Error! Reference source not found..** Notably, the concept of satire is dynamic and evolves over time and across different societies **Error! Reference source not found.,** making it a challenging area to define or fully comprehend.

Nabil Ragheb defines satire in literature as "the element that contains a dramatic blend of criticism, invective, allusion, witticism, sarcasm, and humour, sought at denigrating a person, principle, idea, or anything by emphasizing its flaws, shortcomings, and deficiencies **Error! Reference source not found..**" Satire employs laughter to criticize, expose, and reform by highlighting the negative aspects.

Satirical writing seeks to critique the negative aspects of individuals and institutions with the intent of reform and correction. In essence, it is far from insult and defamation; it does not attack people personally, criticize their physical traits, curse, or belittle people's honour. Satire that employs insults and curses as tools and targets people's flaws and scandals does not fall within the scope of literary satire we are studying. It is merely trivial bickering that does not deserve attention or consideration. One notices his avoidance of vulgarity or personal derogation by observing **Yezli's** satirical works across different genres, whether journalistic or literary. Even when mentioning public figures by name, it is in the context of criticizing what they represent as officials, not as individuals.

Some people believe that satirical writing is not serious, but in truth, it addresses serious topics written by its authors with utmost seriousness in a humorous format **Error! Reference source not found..** Satirical writers are among the most severe people, bearing the nation's concerns and striving for reform and correction. This is evidenced by the testimony of the Algerian thinker **Mohammed Al-Hadi Al-Hassni** about

the value of the satirical columns presented by **Yezli**. In this context, he states, "I am keen to read his column in Echourouk El Yaoumi, for its meaningful content and elegant structure..."**Error! Reference source not found.** In **Yezli's** satirical writings, El-Hassni found deep, noble, and lofty meanings in beautiful and refined language. However, some classify satirical writing within humour literature as one of the highest forms of literary expression**Error! Reference source not found.** due to its semantic and structural components.

4. Features of Satirical Writing by Amar Yezli:

- For **Amar Yezli**, Satire is a tool to critique corrupt officials, unsuccessful members of society, and negative social phenomena. His conscious satirical writing becomes a defensive tool against oppression and tyranny**Error! Reference source not found.** **Yezli's** criticism spans all segments of society without discrimination, as injustice and abuse are not limited to officials but can also occur among ordinary people. For instance, he states: "Recognition by **Ben Khalaf** that the parliament operates illegally while he is a legislator, and his demand to apply the law to lawmakers who evade applying it to themselves..."**Error! Reference source not found.** In this excerpt, **Yezli** critiques the operation of the Algerian parliament through the words of one of its members, **Ben Khalaf**, emphasizing how lawmakers evade the laws they establish.

- Flexibility in expression: **Yezli's** satirical discourse effortlessly ranges from serious to humorous tones**Error! Reference source not found.**, and it can address the most serious topics with the most satirical methods. This versatility is attributed to **Yezli's** diverse background, mastery of the Arabic language, and expressive techniques.

- **Yezli's** satire often evokes laughter while introducing a tragic and bleak picture, reflecting individual and societal misery. Just as there is black comedy, there is also black satire. **Yezli's** satirical writings predominantly feature black comedy, expressing a bitter reality in a satirical style where laughter is mingled with sorrow and irony with pain. The laughter induced is not for joy but for sorrow. For example, he writes: "Historical events in our country, particularly those associated

with the liberation revolution and its memory, have lost their importance among our young men as well as our young women, to the extent that no one—whether male or female—remembers much of what used to be remembered from the memories of our recent history, which is the history of the revolution and resistance"**Error! Reference source not found..** Despite its satirical tone, this passage conveys profound sadness and sorrow over the loss of Algerian youth's passion for their country and revolution and their disregard for their identity. In another context, **Yezli** describes the period of the electoral process suspension in the 1990s and the restriction of private newspapers and political parties: "I slept on this confusion, only to find myself living in a strange state of denial: private channels were sealed, advertising was banned from printed ones, and the media were reduced to three government newspapers: 2 French-language and one "M'baara," and three pluralistic channels: 2 in the "Lhih" language and the second in Amazigh, French, and colloquial Arabic. As for the parties, they were also reduced to three government entities: 'Flan', 'Zidane', and 'Hanane' parties, and whoever did not enter the house of Abu Sufyan shall not be safe"**Error! Reference source not found..** This excerpt vividly depicts the media and political landscape during the 1990s electoral suspension, highlighting the suppression of private newspapers and political parties.

Amar Yezli rejects that his satirical writings are merely for laughter and amusement. He states: "I am a satirical writer: satire implies more than just laughter; it also means causing pain, hurt, pricking, and making people cry"**Error! Reference source not found..** The pricking and crying seek to alert and educate. This feature in **Amar Yezli's** satirical writing and his previous statements indicate his profound understanding and mastery of satirical writing. Literary theorists and those interested in satire across cultures agree that satirical literature often expresses a tragic reality. The laughter it induces is fleeting, soon replaced by the sadness and sorrow conveyed by the satirical text**Error! Reference source not found..**

• **Amar Yezli** employs Algerian proverbs and widely used rhetorical imagery in his satire. For example, he says: "We decided to enroll all major candidates who do not hold a baccalaureate into

university, following a short-term **Error! Reference source not found.** 'round it up and give it to the blind' approach." The proverb (Kawwar w med laawar) means doing something poorly with the sole intention of getting it done, regardless of quality. **Amar Yezli** utilizes this proverb to mock the practice of awarding baccalaureate degrees to some officials without earning them, enabling them to gain university degrees and occupy high positions undeservedly. Another example is: "Ra'gda wa tamangi la rajeem wa la laa'b wa la jary wa la khla dar ummah **Error! Reference source not found.**". This proverb criticizes segments of society that do nothing but still enjoy comfort. He also says: "Ana mir wa anta mir, chkon ysoug el hmir ... khodra foug ta'am" **Error! Reference source not found.**. The first proverb suggests that everyone has their role, which cannot be neglected, while the second describes someone who exists without any value or impact. Ultimately, "Returning with Makhloufi's empty shoes **Error! Reference source not found.**!" is a literary twist on the classical Arabic proverb used to describe returning empty-handed. **Yezli** adapted this expression to comment on Algeria's disappointing results in the 2016 Rio Olympics, where high hopes were placed on the athlete Makhloufi, only to have Algerian athletes fulfill poor results.

• **Yezli** employs symbols, a common feature among writers and satirists who fear censorship and seek for eloquent expression. Ancient Arab satirists frequently utilized symbolism **Error! Reference source not found.**, believing that allusion and apophysis were more impactful than declaration. For instance, he says: "People have been turned into human wolves" **Error! Reference source not found.**, with the wolf symbolizing evil, deception, and treachery.

• **Yezli** often incorporates religious references, especially from the Quran, into his satirical writing. Notably, **Yezli's** use of religious discourse and the Quran is done respectfully, without diminishing the sanctity of the text. His linguistic proficiency enables him to adapt religious quotes in a satirical context while preserving their reverence. For instance, he says: "The soothsayer lies even if he tells the truth" **Error! Reference source not found.**, and "O brothers, fear Allah and cleanse yourselves of filth and immorality..." **Error! Reference source not found.** Several

examples of **Yezli's** use of religious discourse and Quranic text are attributed to his upbringing. His father, may Allah have mercy on him, was an Imam, and **Yezli** memorized the Quran under his guidance, significantly influencing his cultural and linguistic background.

• **Yezli** effectively blends Classical Arabic with colloquial dialects, employing colloquial expressions as the context requires. For instance, he says: "The principle of Machiavelli, 'the end justifies the means,' has been applied in all aspects of life in our country as an application of the mentality of rights without obligations! The divine absolute right: Kolna keef keef! ... 'Alaash flan aando kda men daar wa kda min dinar? Wa 'alaash houwa khyr menni?" **Error! Reference source not found.** In this statement, **Yezli** criticizes a prevalent negative phenomenon in Algerian society, demanding rights without achieving the slightest obligations and pursuing benefits without any effort. He also says: "Specific was democratically dismissed, without immunity, and the rest of the "El Baggara", wel "Khaddara", and a few of "Al Chaffara" returned strongly to the administration" **Error! Reference source not found.**, criticizing how the Algerian parliament operates, where immunity is stripped from parliament members who criticize the government's shortcomings, like M.P. Tahar Missoum, known as "Specific," who is known for his sharp criticism of the government and executive branch, while some compliant and corrupt M.P.s remain.

Notably, **Yezli's** use of colloquial Arabic is limited to satirical writings, which keep pace with the speech context associated with the speaker and the communicative context related to the audience he addresses. Conversely, his academic writings avoid colloquial language, favouring a more formal language with precise terminology known to researchers in history and sociology.

• **Yezli's** ability to address different segments of society without excluding anyone is apparent, although understanding his work relies on the cultural level of each person. Humour is accessible to all readers, but understanding the essence and intellectual core of his writing depends on the reader's prior knowledge and intellectual capabilities. **Yezli** writes on three levels **Error! Reference source not found.**:

✓ **The Simplified Level:** Readable by an ordinary reader with a superficial cultural level who finds only the pleasure of laughter.

✓ **Reading between the Lines:** The second dimension of reading necessitates the reader's having a cultural level that enables understanding of the references, semiotic indications, and the purpose of their use.

✓ **Elite Reading:** Where only those skilled in decoding the symbols within the text can understand its details and meanings.

• **Yezli's** style expresses profound ideas without being vulgar.

• **Yezli** sharply criticizes businessmen surrounding former President Bouteflika. For example, he says: "This time the telethon returns from the hotel door of the government businessmen, those who were nothing, and became within 15 years, 'things'!! They have become the nerve of the state and its ligaments"**Error! Reference source not found..** In this statement, **Yezli** criticizes the expansion of businessmen around the Bouteflika regime who had nothing and, after years of looting the people's wealth, now own luxury cars, yachts, and private planes. It is tragic and ironic that they gather in hotels to collect financial instruments in the form of loans to support the public treasury which they have emptied through plunder.

• **Yezli** reflects on present societal events and their details. For instance, he criticizes the leaking of baccalaureate exam questions: "Only in-depth investigations can reveal what happened in this year's baccalaureate exams, but it is already known that in a country where corruption is rampant, everything is up for sale! ... What happened, I do not see as a leak, but rather as smuggling! A theft of the certificate that is the key to the university!"**Error! Reference source not found.** **Yezli** views the phenomenon of leaking baccalaureate exam questions from a broader perspective, criticizing its causes before criticizing the leak itself, demonstrating that the leak is an inevitable result of widespread corruption in the country where everything becomes tradable and negotiable.

• **Yezli** often depicts events as dreams. For instance, he says: "I slept on the news to find myself the leader of the resistance ... and woke up from my sleep resisting the long sleep,**Error! Reference source not found.**" and "When I woke up, it was the last day of Ramadan"**Error! Reference source not found.** and "When I woke up from my sleep, a hot oil pan was falling on my face"**Error! Reference source not found.**.. This feature is attributed to his exposure to the works of the Algerian scholar Rukn al-Din Mohammed ben Mohammed ben Mahrez al-Wahrani and his influence from his book "Mnamat al-Wahrani".

• **Yezli** employs wordplay and alteration while preserving their general form. He says: "I thought a thousand times and twice how to get the country out of this political, cultural, and security misery that the overwhelming minority**Error! Reference source not found.** has brought us to", and "The reason, lack of money, and the non-settlement of property documents and the negligence of "Al Idhara!"**Error! Reference source not found.**.. He also says: "No to missing the opportunity" and "A bundle of dreams". This wordplay and alteration add an aesthetic touch to the phrase and convey specific connotations intended by the writer.

5. Objectives of Satirical Writing by Amar Yezli:

• Satirical writing primarily relies on allusion and puns, allowing the satirist to critique and analyze without fear of punishment**Error! Reference source not found.**.. His method enables the writer to evade legal consequences and avoid embarrassment through indirect communication, introducing expressions with various meanings. This ambiguity protects the writer from accountability while conveying messages that readers can understand, even if authorities cannot find grounds for reprimand.

• Fulfilling the shock that leads to awakening in the recipient: The satirical expressions and accompanying humorous images in critiquing a serious issue create a shock for the recipient, making them scrutinize and ponder over it. Satirical criticism of an extremely serious issue illustrates a shock to the recipient, achieving astonishment in them. They experience a moment of imbalance due to the gravity of the facts introduced to them, prompting them to attempt to understand what is

happening and grasp the reality. For example, "When the Minister of the Interior declares before a gathering of media representatives ... and some media of "Tabghil" in the form of 'repentant confessions' that the number of votes of fraudulent voters is about 4 million 'whip'... this indeed confirms that the desire for change exists ... but in which direction**Error! Reference source not found.**? His direct yet humorous description of election fraud in Algeria shocks the recipient, particularly in how it is expressed, making them profoundly reflect on the situation that Algeria previously witnessed.

- Revealing societal contradictions and demonstrating the hypocrisy surrounding social relationships based on favoritism: The topics **Yezli** addresses originate from the heart of Algerian reality or international issues affecting Algeria. Through these topics, he aims to critique and unveil the negative aspects of society and emphasize the relationships that govern individuals in the community, which are often based on benefits, interests, and evasiveness.

- Satire becomes an argumentative tool to persuade the audience of the need to change their reality. **Yezli** criticizes individuals and institutions, emphasizing their flaws to convince people to abandon these negative traits, change their perspectives, and rectify what can be enhanced. He uses satire to change beliefs and mentalities, promoting awareness among the audience.

- Correcting errors and societal negatives**Error! Reference source not found.**: An observer of satirical writing finds that its primary goal is to correct and rectify the topics discussed by the satirists in their writings. For the satirist, satire is not a tool for disparagement or denigration but for reform and correction. They critique to expose and highlight negatives to rectify and correct them.

- Making the recipient criticize himself and review his actions without feeling embarrassed; amid laughter, the reader receives the satirist's messages without feeling personally targeted. This prompts the reader to seek self-correction and rectify his mistakes, unlike direct criticism, which breeds resentment and hatred. The writer uses puns and indirect references understood by those to whom they are directed

without explicitly mentioning them, alleviating embarrassment and encouraging the recipient to enhance themselves. However, some situations require direct criticism, where there is no room for puns or indirect references. In such cases, direct expression and naming individuals become imperative, as the rhetorical context dictates. This happened to **Yezli** numerous times when he had to mention certain personalities by name.

- **Making the recipient feel a sense of satisfaction through his satire of officials who ignore their suffering:** **Yezli** says in this context, "If you ask me what its significance is to the reader, I will tell you that it is also an outlet and a symbolic expression of what weighs on the reader's mind but they cannot express. Ultimately, satire is a way to vent and release political and social frustrations that neither the creator nor the consumer finds a way to release and express"**Error! Reference source not found..** Satirical criticism serves as an outlet and a mechanism for the reader and the writer to release their repressed emotions.

6. Reader Requirements for Yezli:

A close examination of **Yezli's** satirical writings demonstrates a frequent use of figurative language and famous proverbs, particularly puns, which carry a clear, understandable meaning for everyone and an obscure meaning that necessitates thought and interpretation. This obscure meaning is what **Yezli** intends. Therefore, readers of **Amar Yezli's** satirical columns need to meet numerous conditions, including:

- **Extensive Knowledge of Algerian Popular Proverbs:** **Yezli** frequently uses these proverbs. To understand his intentions, readers should know these proverbs and their meanings.

- **Interpretation Skills:** **Yezli** does not employ direct expressions; instead, he hints at meanings, requiring readers to be capable of interpreting his words and identifying their proper context.

- **Quick Wit:** **Yezli** expresses himself through hints and gestures, avoiding censorship and accountability. Readers need to understand these hints and gestures quickly.

• **Understanding of Algerian Society's Intricacies:** Critiquing social issues in a limited space column necessitates brevity and implication. Readers must understand these intentions and grasp what **Yezli** hints at.

• **Knowledge of Algerian Politics:** **Yezli** often refers to officials, influential figures, and specific sectors. To understand his critique, readers need to know the contexts surrounding the topics he addresses.

7. Conclusion:

For **Amar Yezli**, satirical writing is a pragmatic tool to expose the bleak reality that citizens from different segments of society live in and a rhetorical tool to persuade them of the necessity to alter this reality for the better. Yezli's satirical writing cannot be classified simply as humour or amusement; it is a critical satire that humorously expresses a harsh reality, falling under the realm of dark satire. It seeks to develop advanced awareness among Algerian readers and make them understand their reality and the relationships that govern them.

References:

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