Evolution of Satire in Turbulent Late-Soviet Azerbaijan through the Lens of “Mozalan”

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the evolution of satire through the Azerbaijani satirical television program “Mozalan” in response to the political climate from 1980 to 1992. Initially adhering to the Party line, “Mozalan” grew bolder with Glasnost, eventually developing its own direction as the Soviet Union approached collapse. Early satire (1980-1984) focused on societal issues influenced by Heydar Aliyev’s campaigns, termed “state-appropriated laughter,” using humorous light-hearted satire to promote moral improvement. From 1985 to 1989, the satire became more critical, shifting from a light-hearted to an acerbic style filled with anger, challenging state policies and expanding the scope of critique. By 1990-1992, satire intensified, with fictional episodes maintaining humor and documentary episodes expressing not only anger but also resignation, reflecting the absence of a stable government and its ideology during this chaotic period. This study highlights significant shifts in satirical styles and media representation, revealing complexities beyond existing theoretical frameworks.

Keywords: Mozalan, satire, social issues, media landscape, Azerbaijan

Contents

Chapter One: Introduction

The 1980s and early 1990s were among the most turbulent periods in Azerbaijan's history, marked by series of significant events: Heydar Aliyev's ascension to the Politburo, Mikhail Gorbachev's Perestroika ("restructuring") and Glasnost ("openness") reforms, Aliyev's removal by Gorbachev, the outbreak and escalation of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, domestic incessant political power struggle, the Soviet army's invasion in Baku, and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Despite these upheavals, much remains unknown about the everyday lives of the Azerbaijani people and the social challenges they faced during this tumultuous era.

"Mozalan," an Azerbaijani satirical television program, was established in 1971 by the Jafar Jabbarly Azerbaijanfilm studio. Between 1971 and 1992, more than 180 issues were released, each containing two to four episodes that could be fictional, documentary or animated. The aim of Mozalan was to address negative situations and highlight societal flaws through satire. The first issue of Mozalan featured a fictional film titled "Dear comrades scientists" (Hormatli alim yoldashlar, 1971), where the scientist introduces the television program "Mozalan" and outlines its future objectives by explaining the humorous meaning of the word Mozalan ("Mozalan" satirist news-reel, n.d.). The literal meaning of Mozalan is "gadfly," but in the referenced episode, the scientist defines it as a "cheater," "flatterer," "bribe-taker," "villain," "hypocrite," and "pickpocket." At the mere mention of these words by the scientist, some people start rushing out of the venue, and others become visibly upset. This scene reveals the program's objective to satirize human follies.

Figure 1: Scientist explaining about "Mozalan" in "Dear comrades scientists" (Hormatli alim yoldashlar, 1971).

The program was officially recognized by the government, and in March 1978, the Central Committee of the Azerbaijani Communist Party highlighted that Mozalan was performing remarkable and valuable work in the communist education of workers. The Committee also remarked its active role in addressing deficiencies in economic and cultural development and combating deviations from the principles of communist morality ("The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan made a decision about the wrong attitude of some ministries and chief administrations of the Republic to the critical speeches of the satirical program 'Mozalan'," 1978).

1.1. Research Question

Based on the above, the aim of this thesis is to examine how the Azerbaijani satirical television program "Mozalan" evolved its form of satire and representation in response to the turbulent political climate of 1980-1992. More specifically, this thesis intends to demonstrate how Mozalan, which followed the Party line in the early 1980s, became increasingly bold with the advent of Glasnost and eventually developed its own independent direction around the time of the Soviet Union's collapse. Through detailed analysis of specific episodes and their portrayal of social issues, this thesis will highlight the significant changes in satirical styles and media representation that occurred during this transformative period in Azerbaijani history.

1.2. Methodology

This thesis initially develops a theoretical framework based on the relevant concepts, theories and empirical findings. The framework is then applied to analyze the episodes of Mozalan. This research employs qualitative methods, with the primary data consisting of forty-five episodes of Mozalan, spanning from 1980 to 1992, which are available on YouTube. These episodes are analyzed by dividing them into three distinct periods based on political movements: i) 1980-1984 (Aliyev's active period), ii) 1985-1989 (Perestroika and Glasnost period), and iii) 1990-1992 (before and after the collapse of Soviet Union).

1.3. Structure of this paper

In chapter two, the theoretical framework is established, covering the concepts of "Satire," "Social issues in the Soviet Union," and "Media landscape under Glasnost." This framework provides the foundation for analyzing the episodes of Mozalan in the subsequent chapters: chapter three (1980-1984), chapter four (1985-1989), and chapter five (1990-1992). Each chapter explores how the episodes employ satire to address and visualize social issues in response to political changes. Finally,

chapter six will revisit the research question, synthesizing the findings. By the end of the thesis, I aim to demonstrate how Azerbaijani satire in the late Soviet era evolved dramatically in response to turbulent times, surpassing conventional theories, while vividly highlighting significant transformative period in Azerbaijani history by tracing the changes in satirical styles and the media landscape.

Chapter Two: Theoretical framework

Here the main concepts and theories related to "Satire," "Social issues in the Soviet Union," and "Media landscape under Glasnost" are explained, which will be used to analyze the data in the chapters to follow.

2.1. Satire

- **Political Satire**

Media scholar Dieter Declercq (2018: 328) defines satire as a genre whose purpose is to critique and entertain, where critique and entertainment necessarily interact, and where neither is entirely a means to an end to the other. Communication scholar Lance Holbert (2014: 26-28) states that just as the Latin word "satura," meaning "mixed dish," satire is a more complex and multifaceted message type compared to many other forms of humor, and defines political satire as follows: "a pre-generic form of political discourse containing multiple humor elements that are utilized to attack and judge the flawed nature of human political activities." The term "pre-generic" indicates that political satire is a flexible form that is not defined as a specific genre and provides sufficient explanatory power to encompass a wide range of message types (Ibid., 28). He further notes that political satire includes four elements: aggression, play, laughter and judgement, which vary proportionally depending on the form (Ibid.). While political discourse typically functions to acclaim, attack, or defend (Benoit 2007, as cited in Holbert 2014: 27), political satire is universally agreed to function primarily "to attack," combining the elements of aggression and play (Test 1991; Holbert, 2014: 27). Sociologists George E.C. Powell and Chris Paton's work on the interplay of resistance and control in humor concludes that while resistance offers temporary relief, its stabilizing or control function of potential conflict situations is more significant (Kuipers, 2008: 373).

Satire can be classified in three types: Horatian, Juvenalian, and Menippean (Gottlieb 2019; Holbert 2013: 306). Horatian satire is good-natured and light-hearted, aiming to encourage moral improvement through laughter. Juvenalian satire is more acerbic and darker, expressing anger at authority. According to literary scholar Evan Gottlieb (2019), Menippean satire appears only in prose works, reflecting the original meaning of satire as "miscellaneous" or "containing many things." Philosopher Peter Sloterdijk (1987: 103, 305) distinguishes two types of political humor: "kynicism" and "humor that has ceased its struggle." Kynicism is the cheeky side of cynicism, a sentiment that opposes the dominant consciousness and superior authority and confronts widespread lies. It involves speaking the truth with courage, cheekiness and risk, and it critically confronts prevailing views through satire (Ibid., 103). In contrast, "humor that has ceased to struggle" signifies the inability to resist both the official ideology and one's own untrue support of it, despite recognizing

the truth behind the mask of power. The humor here is directed inward, towards oneself, rather than outward at others, allowing for self-reflection and self-inspection (Ibid., 305).

Holbert (2014: 27-28) classifies the focus of political satire into three categories: “Policy/Character,” “Human folly/Vice/Sin,” and “Judgment.” In “Policy/Character,” policy includes past actions/enacted policies, future plans, and goals/policy objectives, while character is divided into personal qualities, leadership skills, and ideals such as principles and values, referring to both individuals and institutions. “Human folly” refers to the lack of good judgment and the act of doing something stupid, and includes seven deadly sins (lust, gluttony, greed, wrath, envy, hubris, sloth.) “Judgments” in satire are usually implicit within the persuasive message of satire. Furthermore, Holbert (Ibid., 28) notes that satire can be a unique form of political discourse, especially by addressing “human folly and vice.”

Communication scholar Mark Boukes (2018: 2-3) notes that political satire on television highlights the disconnect between reality and unreality, or normal and abnormal, and helps citizens recognize the difference between what politicians say and the realities in society. Satirical programs on television make viewers laugh by the unexpected messages, humorously demonstrate the dysfunctionality of politicians and the political system and, highlight the contradictions in political rhetoric (Ibid., 3). Similarly, sociolinguist Villy Tsakona and linguist Diana Elena Popa (2011: 6) argue that political humor exposes the contradictions of political decisions and actions, and the incompetence, recklessness, and corruption of politicians, simultaneously conveying political reality while revealing a discordant reality. They also remark that while political humor is used to increase the political engagement of the audience, it allows politicians to promote their positions and persuade the audiences of rationality of their political actions and decisions (Ibid., 7).

By applying these theories and concepts, the function, types, focus, and effectiveness of satire used in the episodes of Mozalan can be analyzed. For instance, this approach allows for a detailed examination of how satire critiques and entertains, determining whether it is light-hearted or more acerbic. Additionally, the primary focus areas of satire, such as policy critique, human folly, or judgment, can also be explored. In essence, these theories and concepts enable an evaluation of how Mozalan uses satire to convey its messages to its audience.

- **Satire before and after Glasnost**

According to sociologist Jeffrey Brassard (2022: 3), Soviet satire has a complex history, existing in both official and unofficial forms. Linguist Olga Mesropova (2008: 2, as cited in Brassard, 2022: 3) notes that during the Stalin and Khrushchev eras, satire was seen as a way the Communist Party

could potentially use to share and encourage communist ideas. However, with the advent of Glasnost in 1985, open criticism of the Soviet regime was not only permitted but also encouraged at the highest levels of the Communist Party. Philosopher Valentin Tolstykh (1993: 17-18) examines the characteristics of satirical films throughout the Soviet era, arguing that satire is inextricably linked to tragedy in expressing truth, and what is tragic on one level can become an object of ridicule on another, making viewers laugh along with feelings of despair, indignation, and anger. As an example of a film where satire intertwines with tragedy, Tolstykh (Ibid., 17) mentions Vaghif Mustafayev's "The Villain." Film scholar Andrew Horton (1993: 144-145) describes "The Villain" as a well-crafted comedic social satire that blames the system for turning a sympathetic lemonade factory inspector into a dictator, who eventually dies on a subway. Tolstykh (1993: 17) further notes that satire aims for emotional shock, dismay and outrage, seeking the catharsis through tragedy and absurdity, and understanding satire linked with tragedy requires self-reflection and self-awareness, as they arise from recognizing the conflicts and oddities in our everyday lives, thoughts and existence. However, the totalitarian regime's ideologically intolerant environment and constant pressure on filmmakers obstructed the critical depiction of societal flaws with satire linked with tragedy (Ibid., 18).

In this environment, Glasnost brought satirical comedy into vogue within the film industry. However, Tolstykh (Ibid., 19) notes that there were not many genuinely satirical films, arguing that true satire is a cry of dismay and shame balanced by humor, revealing the reality of contemporary Soviet society rather than its past. He further observes that many filmmakers considered the genre too "vulgar," resulting in few films that deeply expressed a loss of ideals, even though satire requires ideals or at least a longing for them. This gap led filmmakers to produce the hopeless "chernukha" genre, which portrayed only the dark side of life with exaggeration and absurdity, failing to capture the true essence of reality (Ibid.). Tolstykh (Ibid.) reiterates that satire must involve the light spread by ideals, which stem from truth and hope that laughter itself possesses.

Horton (1993) examines Glasnost satires of filmmakers Yuri Mamin, Vaghif Mustafayev, and Karen Shakhnazarov. He defines satire as "an unstable electron particle, always in danger of breaking down, becoming something else," and describes the transition of satire under Glasnost from a liberating and hilarious carnival to something dark and nasty, where both carnival and satirical laughter collapse (Ibid., 138). Mamin, considered one of the leading satirists of the late 1980s and 1990s, used satire to expose contemporary Soviet reality (Ibid, 138; Tolstykh, 1993: 19). He categorizes satire as a blend of all genres, beginning as a situation comedy and ending grotesquely, and describes his satire as the aesthetics of ugliness, reflecting the fact that life is not all about beauty; vulgarity, chaos, and paradox are everywhere in our daily lives (Horton, 1993: 138, 143).

Mamin emphasizes presenting everyday situations rather than directly attacking the state system (Ibid., 143), as the public under totalitarian regime is sensitive to subtle nuances and can grasp what cannot be explicitly stated. In an interview, Mamin states that everyday life can resemble a dark carnival, but his duty is to show people life's diversity and spread the virtues of tolerance and kindness through laughter (Ibid., 154-156).

Anthropologist Alexei Yurchak (1997) describes the role of political ridicule under late socialist regimes and in the post-Soviet period, particularly with the Soviet constituent states in mind. He notes that in late socialism, people began to openly acknowledge the falsity of official representations of reality, and laugh at the political joke-anecdote, however, these jokes remained strictly outside the official sphere and did not become a form of public discourse (Yurchak, 1997: 175). In the post-Soviet context, political ridicule serves to neutralize the experience of oppressive power, demonstrating to both the ridiculers and others that state power will never ultimately triumph in controlling the former colonized states (Ibid., 162).

- **State-appropriated laughter and role of bureaucrat in Stalin era**

As noted, satire was used to advance communism during Stalin and Khrushchev's times (Brassard, 2022: 3), but how was it applied? According to literary and film scholar Otto Boele (2018: 169), state-appropriated laughter was typical of the Stalin era, with Soviet screens dominated by satire and slapstick before the advent of sound films. It is important to recognize that state-appropriated laughter contains potentially reprehensible elements (Ibid.). Literary and film scholar Evgeny Dobrenko and Natalia Jonsson-Skradol, scholar specializing in totalitarianism (2022: 391-397), discuss two musical comedies - "Volga-Volga" (1938) and "A Carnival Night" (1956), as examples of state-appropriated laughter. These films depict the triumph of a merry, laughing collective of people over a vain, bored bureaucracy under the motif of the masses against the bureaucratic contempt. The hilarious performance of the amateurs weakens the temporal and spatial aspects of the event, making it future-oriented, and shows that "a joyful holiday of free and creative activity, where no one works" is the goal of future-oriented communism. Radical populism, like carnival, creates a symbiosis of laughing ideology, state, and power, legitimizing the re-creation and resurrection of authority, breaking with the past to be reborn anew. Satirical laughter in Stalin's era functioned as a purifier while also aiming to depict an idealized Soviet way of life. In Stalinist and Khrushchev-era satirical films, the hero was the bureaucrat, not the authority. The bureaucrat represented the yesterday's face of authority, and through the bureaucrat, authority changes its appearance.

2.2. Social issues in Soviet Union

According to Alena Ledeneva, scholar specializing in informal practices in Russia (2003: 1), the six

paradoxes of socialism, as illustrated in the following anecdote, played a crucial role in undermining the Soviet system:

> "No unemployment but nobody works. [Absenteeism]
> Nobody works but productivity increases. [False reporting]
> Productivity increases but the shops are empty. [Shortage]
> The shops are empty but fridges are full. [Blat]
> Fridges are full but nobody is satisfied. [Privileges of others]
> Nobody is satisfied but all vote unanimously. [Cynicism]"

Additionally, sociologist Walter Connor (2003: 46) highlights the paradox of outward strength versus internal decay, exemplified by the informal economy (shortage, blat), corrupt practices (absenteeism, false reporting, privilege of others), social apathy (cynicism), which gradually eroded the Soviet Union. These paradoxes are frequently depicted as social issues in episodes of Mozalan. Therefore, this section will explore these paradoxes and the associated social issues in detail.

- **Absenteeism**

According to historian Donald Filtzer (1996: 9), the issue of labor discipline was always at the heart of the conflict between the elite and the workforce in the Soviet Union. The laxity of labor discipline has been noted at home and abroad, among the problems cited are absenteeism closely tied to heavy drinking on and off the job, a very irregular pace of work (time wasting, slow work, disregard for production quality), and a high turnover rate of workers. Clearly substantial amounts of production were lost due to workers' deliberate reduction of labor intensity. Hence, all phases of Soviet history saw the struggle of elites to find ways to improve workers' performance. Although the government was able to quell collective resistance, such as strikes and demonstrations, with violence, individual anti-discipline behavior, such as absenteeism and massive waste of working time, pressure from the top was ineffective (Ibid., 9-10). Workers' lax attitude toward the use of working time was a large part of the Soviet work culture. Workers wasted enormous amounts of time hanging around the work area, chatting with workmates, going out for cigarettes, leaving early for dinner breaks, or leaving early to go home (Ibid., 14).

- **False reporting**

In a highly regulated planned economy, false reporting, or "pripiska," became an inevitable consequence of the dysfunctional production and supply conditions inherent in such a system (OECD, 1996: 25). Economist Mark Harrison (2010: 1) explains that the Russian verb "pripisyvat'" means "to add" fictitious goods to a plan fulfillment report, with "pripiska" (plural: pripiski) referring to the value of the fictitious "added goods." Harrison (Ibid.) identifies pripiski as a form of accounting fraud or "plan fraud," involving blatant lies that were neither unobservable nor

unverifiable, and punishable by law. Sovietologist Nick Lampert (1984: 370-371) describes pripiski as the inflation of an organization's overreporting of its performance to maintain appearances and meet plan requirements, often accompanied by illegal bonuses and considered a form of embezzlement. This practice was particularly prevalent under a planned economy, where rewards depended on presenting satisfactory reports. Organizations exaggerated results and covered up for failures to avoid disappointing their superiors. Lampert (Ibid., 371) notes that pripiski were especially common in construction and agriculture. Egor Muleev, scholar specializing in mobility and migration (2024: 72), examines how Soviet-era transportation professionals dealt with issues like data falsification, revealing that planned numbers were prioritized and neither the company nor company management challenged the falsification process. Consequently, pripiski disrupted the balance at nearly every level of the Soviet economy, damaging service delivery, causing planning errors, and distorting the functioning and perception of the entire economic system. This gap between production planning and its realization became a focal point of criticism from the late 1970s onward (Ibid.).

- **Shortage**

The Soviet economy was characterized by shortages of goods and a pervasive informal economy, with the shortages affecting the consumer market up until the Soviet Union's dissolution (Kim and Shida, 2017: 1347). Shortages of goods arose from an imbalance between supply and demand due to insufficient inputs for outputs, and economists Byung-Yeon Kim and Yoshisada Shida (Ibid., 1371) argue that these shortages stemmed from structural issues within the centrally planned economy. The shortage of goods forced households to engage in informal economic activities to meet their needs. Some households sold goods produced on their private plots in the informal market for additional income, or resold publicly acquired goods at higher prices (Ibid., 1346). Thus, the informal economy and shortages were interlinked, with the informal economy exacerbating shortages in the public market, while shortages boosted activity in the informal sector (Ibid.). Economist Igor Birman (1988: 210-211) describes the Soviet economy as an "economy of shortages," noting that it did not produce enough to prevent waste. He cites several reasons for the supply-demand imbalance, including the difficulty of planning due to the economy's size, inefficiency of bureaucrats, and companies' tendencies to hoard inventory (Ibid., 213-214). Birman also highlights the construction sector as an area with pronounced imbalances, noting that construction projects rarely began on schedule and took years to reach planned capacity (Ibid., 214). Even after 1990, shortages have persisted or even worsened, as illustrated by the joke, "an eros store opened in Moscow, displaying naked shelves" (Saltanova, 2020).

- **Blat**

There is a Russian phrase, “nel’zya, no mozhno” (prohibited but possible) – these possibilities are called blat (Ledeneva, 1998: 1). Blat refers to using social networks to obtain scarce goods and services informally, based on general reciprocity, and it supplements the planned economy’s economic institutions. (Rehn and Taalas, 2004: 239). Edward Crankshaw, British writer on Soviet affairs (1956: 74 as cited in Ledeneva, 1998: 1), remarks that blat is an extremely elaborate network, and everyone was involved in it, including those at the heart of the Communist Party.
According to Ledeneva (Ibid., 37), the definition of blat in Soviet era is as follows:

- An exchange of “favors of access” in condition of shortages and a state system of privileges.
- A “favor of access” was provided at the public expense.
- It reorganized the public distribution of material welfare to meet the needs of personal consumption.
- Blat exchange was often mediated and covered by the rhetoric of friendship or acquaintance.

Although the networks functioned differently between ordinary people and the elite, the relatively egalitarian society enabled most people to establish far-reaching networks (Kuehnast and Dudwick, 2004: 3). Socio-cultural anthropologist Kathleen Kuehnast and anthropologist Nora Dudwick (Ibid.) further note that in the Soviet economy characterized by shortages, social status and power depended less on income and more on the breadth of one’s informal networks. This is reflected in the folk saying, “Better a hundred friends than a hundred rubles,” highlighting how connections were crucial to compensate for the state’s economic malfunction (Ibid.).

- **Privileges of others**

Despite the Soviet Union’s official egalitarian ideology, socioeconomic inequality was a common reality for much of the population, primarily due to the privileged status of certain social groups (Liivik, 2020). Historian Olev Liivik (Ibid.) argues that considering privilege solely in relation to nomenklatura as a whole is overly simplistic and fails to account for the hierarchies within the system. Privilege depends on one’s legal and regulatory status within the nomenklatura’s hierarchy. Liivik (Ibid.) categorizes socioeconomic privileges into three types: official-normative (legally regulated), administrative-bureaucratic (somewhat secret), and “unofficial” privileges (access to goods and services based on one’s position). Sovietologist Mervyn Matthews (2011: 35) notes that the nomenklatura was essential for providing access to restricted material benefits and services. Access to scarce goods and services through “unofficial” privileges was neither explicitly illegal nor legal and became a social norm as scarcity worsened (Liivik, 2020). This practice did not correct social and economic inequalities but instead fostered an environment ripe for abuse, corruption, and speculation (Ibid.) According to Matthews (2011: 31), the highest elite group consisted of party officials, followed by state, Komsomol and trade union officials, the intelligentsia (academics, doctors, legal professionals), the military, police diplomatic service and enterprise managers. In

addition to an access to a wide range of goods, privileges included an access to good accommodation, private transport and high-level blat. Matthews (Ibid., 52) observes that high-level blat was used not only to solve material issues but also for promotions, enrolling children in universities, and arranging overseas travel.

- **Cynicism**

Yurchak (1997: 185) describes the relationship between ideology and individuals in the late Soviet Union, noting that it was founded on pretense. During this period, ideological messages were not taken literally but were seen as constant and omnipresent. People acted in official settings as if they accepted ideological messages at face value, a phenomenon Yurchak terms "the misperception of pretense" (Ibid., 185-186). The pretense was not due to belief in the ideology or fear of it, but because it was the only viable way to lead a normal and fulfilling life (Ibid., 186). Yurchak also notes that this behavior exemplified the "cynical reason" of late socialism (Ibid., 185). Peter Bloom, scholar specializes in organizational studies (2008: 12), argues that cynicism is a rational acknowledgment of the irrationality of the imperfect symbolic order. Philosopher Slavoj Žižek (1989: 37) echoes this, stating that obedience to the law is required not because it is just, good, or beneficial, but simply because it is the law. Additionally, Yurchak (1997: 186) posits that people with cynical reason created their own communicative space, separate from formal and informal realms, where anecdotes could reveal the social discord between these realms and the inconsistency of people's actions within them. In essence, the anecdotes served as cultural and psychological jokes, maintaining one's pretense in official settings and helping individuals adapt without fully accepting the unchanging symbolic order (Ibid.).

The six issues introduced here are frequently addressed in episodes of Mozalan. Understanding the theories behind these issues not only helps in comprehending the nature of social problems in the late-Soviet Azerbaijan but also how satire illustrates the paradoxes between ideological promises and reality riddled with problems on television.

2.3. Media landscape under Glasnost

Before the Gorbachev era, television was tightly controlled by the State Committee for Television and Radio, which managed Russian-language programming in the fifteen republics and East Central Europe (Jensen, 1993: 99). According to historian Christine Evans (2016: 2), since the advent of the "television era" in the late 1950s, its most notable characteristic has been the continuous search for new ways to captivate the masses while legitimizing authority. This search was evident across various media, but it was most pronounced on television, where the most popular programs became remarkably experimental. The underlying reason for this was that television, being situated in

homes, was ideally positioned to address Soviet political and ideological agendas most effectively than other forms of art (Ibid.).

The primary role of media under Glasnost was to "alter the public's ethical and moral perspective" and to "motivate the public to support economic objectives" (Young and Launer, 2011: 209). However, the Chernobyl nuclear power plant explosion in April 1986 had a profound impact on both economic and information spheres (Ibid., 208; McNair, 1991: 54). Chernobyl drastically altered what the Soviet media could report. For the first time, television not only captured the personal attention of citizens but also continuously informed them about events that were cast in a negative light (Young and Launer, 2011: 217). From a rhetorical perspective, the significance of Chernobyl was that the state leadership recognized the media's potential as a public relations tool. The government and Party aimed to merge Lenin's educational media function with the perception of changing circumstances. Consequently, the strict norms of ideologizing the news were relaxed, allowing for more dynamic and timely reporting. The head of state began to leverage television's immediacy, and television documentaries were increasingly used to shape perceptions of current events, reflecting a growing appreciation for the power of electronic media (Ibid., 228-229).

Brian McNair, scholar in the fields of journalism, media and political communication (1991: 169-171), observes that Glasnost undoubtedly led to the creation of a media system that rivaled Western societies in terms of openness, reliability, depth of information, and quality of entertainment. He asserts that this transformation was not driven by reformists seeking to consolidate their political power, but by the Party's realization that a more liberal information policy was essential for the successful development of the Soviet economy. Conversely, Communication scholars Marilyn J. Young and Michael K. Launer (2011: 231) state that Glasnost, initially intended to highlight bureaucratic incompetence and obstructionism to facilitate economic reform, evolved into a platform for public debate on government policy and even the structure of the government itself.

In any case, Glasnost significantly changed the concept of news value (Rulyova, 2010: 232). The introduction of live broadcasts, investigative reports, and global news formats transformed Soviet television programs, making television not just a tool of Glasnost but synonymous with the policy itself (Hutchings and Rulyova, 2009: 7, as cited in Rulyova, 2010: 232). News programs began to raise questions and even shock viewers who were used to repetitive stories about Soviet achievements and Party leadership (Rulyova, 2010: 232). Media scholar Mitsuru Jono (1996: 172-175) notes that in this context, television gained prominence, and Glasnost was embodied by the rise of "live shows" on television. The social and informational discussion program "12th Floor" (12 etazh), which began in 1986, demonstrated the social power of live television show. The program

included content previously deemed “noise” and excluded from television, highlighting the nationwide anger of non-elites against the social system. Thus, Perestroika, which until then had been conveyed predominantly in the literal meaning of “restructuring” through print media, became visualized by television and evoked an emotional response, especially through live images. In other words, the understanding of Perestroika shifted from a “world of formality” to a “world of emotion.” This also marked a transition in communication from “vertical” to a large-scale “horizontal” communication that connected cities throughout the Soviet Union.

“Glance” (Vzglyad), which began airing in 1987, was a weekly late-night live program that attracted nearly ten million viewers and surprised both the audience and censors with its advocacy for a de-Stalinization campaign. It was the first show to openly suggest that socialism had failed and featured content that had never been discussed before, including long-hidden archival footage (Jensen, 1993: 103). “Glance” often pointed out corruption among key Party figures and covered a wide range of taboo subjects, including the creation of dissident political parties. Consequently, the program frequently faced backlash from central authorities and was sometimes delayed or not aired at all (Ibid., 104). According to Jono (1996: 177), “Glance” built on the horizontal communication initiated by “12th Floor” and further developed interactive communication with viewers, promoting people to begin interpreting Perestroika in their own ways. Additionally, the viewer-participation program “Who’s who” (Kto est kto) aimed to introduce the public to current key government officials but often subjected these officials to cynical questions (Jensen, 1993: 104).

According to Frank Ellis, scholar of Russian and Slavonic studies (1999: 49), Glasnost was not an uncontrolled or spontaneous debate but it was orchestrated under the auspices of the Party. The debate’s boundaries were defined by Lenin’s principles, with Gorbachev serving as the interpreter and final authority for any skeptics. Essentially, Gorbachev aimed to confine Glasnost within Leninist parameters, ensuring all discussions and debates adhered to Leninist principles. It is crucial to understand that Gorbachev’s vision for the Soviet Union was not democratic but rather a diluted from of totalitarianism (Ibid., 50). Furthermore, Vladimir Mukusev, a television producer, journalist, and founder of “Glance,” noted that censorship remained prevalent, and only through the ingenuity and persistence of journalists and producers could programs like “Glance” appear on television screens (Mukusev, 2007 cited in Rulyova, 2010: 232). Despite the limits on freedom of speech, the role of television clearly grew in importance under Glasnost. The government struggled to control the independent-minded journalists and gradually realized that its inadequate restrictions on Glasnost contributed to the development of a media hostile to the Party (Jensen, 1993: 104). In 1989, television cameras were installed in the parliament, and the proceedings were broadcast live for the first time in Soviet history. This initiated a political monitoring function by television, shifting the

relationship between the public and politicians from “being monitored” to “being the monitors” (Jono, 1996: 175). Compared to print media, television expanded its coverage beyond the content of politicians’ speeches to include their behavior and the parliament’s atmosphere. Accordingly, “how it is communicated” became more important than “what is communicated.” As a result, Perestroika projected the people’s anger against the old regime and the mournful cry of the Communist Party, accelerating the collapse of the Soviet Union (Ibid., 177).

2.4. Conclusion of this chapter

Political satire is not limited to a specific genre and is constantly evolving, primarily serving to attack the folly of politicians and others. While some argue that the effect of such attacks is temporary and can control the conflicted field, political satire effectively informs viewers about political contradictions and can be used by politicians to garner support. Generally, political satire is classified into three types: Horatian, Juvenalian, and Menippean, but Sloterdijk (1987: 101, 305) classifies it into “kynicism” and “humor that has ceased to struggle.” The focus of political satire includes several categories, with a unique emphasis on addressing human folly and vice. Genuine political satire did not flourish in totalitarian regimes like the Soviet Union and was only recognized during Gorbachev’s Glasnost; even then, political jokes remained outside the official sphere even in late socialism. Filmmaker Yuri Mamin (Horton, 1993: 138) notes that Soviet satire begins with comedy and ends with grotesque. Under Stalin, satire and laughter existed, but was used to reinforce state ideology, and it often started with humor and ended with fervor and heroism (Dobrenko and Jonsson-Skradol, 2022: 397).

Furthermore, six social problems characteristic of the Soviet Union were introduced: absenteeism, false reporting, shortage, blat, privileges of others, and cynicism. Absenteeism was a major labor discipline issue, leading to substantial production losses. False reporting disrupted the Soviet economy by harming service delivery, causing planning errors, and distorting goal setting and realization. The Soviet economy was characterized by chronic shortage due to supply-demand imbalances, and the shortage of goods led to the use of blat –informal social networks to obtain goods and services in short supply. These networks were used not only by ordinary citizens, but also by privileged groups, who leveraged such privileges for material benefits and career promotions. Reflecting such society, in late socialism, people behaved with cynicism which is a rational assent to the irrationality of the eternally imperfect symbolic order. The description of each issue clearly shows their interrelated nature.

Before Gorbachev’s era, Soviet television was tightly controlled, with programming largely focused on Communist Party achievements and lacking entertainment value. Glasnost aimed to change the

public's outlook and inspire economic contributions, but the Chernobyl disaster in 1986 dramatically shifted media reporting, making it more transparent and impactful. The disaster led to the realization that media could serve as a public relations tool, merging Leninist educational functions with changing circumstances, which resulted in loosening ideological norms and utilizing television's immediacy. Programs like "12th Floor" and "Glance" introduced live, interactive broadcasts that exposed government issues and allowed public debate, challenging the status quo and accelerating Perestroika. Despite Gorbachev's efforts to limit Glasnost within Leninist principles, television became synonymous with Glasnost, shifting from controlled propaganda to a platform for public discourse and political monitoring, significantly contributing to the Soviet Union's collapse.

The concepts and theories discussed in this chapter lay a solid foundation for analyzing the episodes of Mozalan introduced in chapters three to five. Applying these theoretical frameworks assists in identifying the style of satire used to highlight the social problems, offering a deeper understanding of the specific social issues portrayed in the episodes. Furthermore, these frameworks are crucial for comprehending the impact of Glasnost on the media landscape in the late-Soviet Azerbaijan, illustrating how this policy of openness influenced the evolution of satirical style and the portrayal of social issues.

Chapter Three: 1980-1984

This chapter first introduces the situation in the Soviet Union and Azerbaijan from 1980 to 1984, and then analyzes the episodes of Mozalan produced during this period, primarily based on the concepts presented in the previous chapter.

3.1. Soviet Union and Azerbaijan in 1980-1984

- **Stagnation, consumerism, informal economy**

Due to the slowdown in economic growth, Leonid Brezhnev's era (1964-1982) is often referred to the "era of stagnation." Compared to earlier periods, Brezhnev's time was relatively quiet in terms of social change and development (Thompson, 2014: 86). Historian Natalia Chernyshova (2016: 3) remarks that while queuing for consumer goods is often seen as symbol of Soviet society, it was during the Brezhnev era that shopping became routine and consumerism began to emerge. Thus, the Brezhnev era marked a transition from consumption for survival to a new style of consumption. This increase in consumption was driven by a steady rise in salaries, leading to disposable income and expanding personal consumption from basic commodities like food to clothing, furniture, and electrical appliances. Between 1976 and 1980, sales of non-food items doubles compared to food items. While certain goods, such as quality meat, were sometimes in short supply or seasonally unavailable, shortages were not endemic as they had been before the Khrushchev era. Instead, shortages during this period tended to involve "things that other people did not have" or "special items" (Ibid., 5).

Chernyshova (Ibid., 8) further argues that the informal economy, characterized by blat and the black market, was also a defining feature of this era. As discussed in the previous chapter, blat involved leveraging a wide network of friends and acquaintances to obtain scarce goods or services, encapsulated by the Russian proverb, "Have a hundred friends rather than a hundred rubles." But who constituted these friends? Chernyshova (Ibid., 9) notes that not only store clerks, but also beauticians, due to their diverse clientele, and even doctors and nurses, owing to their wide range of patients, could be sources for distributing consumer goods and services. The prevalence of blat and the widespread black market indicate that consumers were not satisfied with the state-controlled retail options and increasingly turned to private channels to fulfil their material desires, a trend Chernyshova refers to as the "privatization of shopping" (Ibid., 10).

National salaries rose as a result of Brezhnev's 1965 Economic Reforms, which offered workers incentives such as salary increases and bonuses to boost productivity. While these reforms improved the pay environment, did they also enhance work practices and productivity? Economists Norman J.

Ireland and Peter J. Law (1980: 38-39) analyzed incentive schemes and concluded that they did not significantly boost labor productivity and had limited macroeconomic effects, thereby contributing to the era of stagnation. The complex interplay of economic reforms and private consumerism was also seen in Azerbaijan under the leadership of Heydar Aliyev.

- **Anti-corruption campaign and widespread informal economy in Azerbaijan**

Heydar Aliyev was elected as First Secretary of the Azerbaijan Communist Party in 1969 and held the position until Brezhnev's death in 1982. Then, Yuri Andropov brought Aliyev from Baku to Moscow as First Deputy Prime Minister of USSR in 1982, which elevated him from a candidate member to an official member of the Politburo (McCauley, 1997: 13). According to Thomas de Waal, journalist and scholar on the Caucasus region (2003: 148), Aliyev was the most successful republic leader in the Soviet Union during his tenure as First Secretary of the Azerbaijan Communist Party from 1969 to 1982. Also, de Waal remarks that Aliyev was a master flirt with Brezhnev, which helped raise the profile of the underprivileged Soviet Azerbaijan republic. Brezhnev visited Azerbaijan three times, receiving extravagant gifts and receptions. Through these efforts, Aliyev succeeded in persuading Brezhnev to allow the construction of an air conditioning plant in Azerbaijan (Ibid.).

Aliyev's primary policy focus was on combating corruption. According to 1983 Central Intelligence Agency report (1983: 6), Aliyev believed that corruption was a significant obstacle to economic progress. He also repeatedly identified moral decay as the root of the republic's economic problems and, while acknowledging unresolved economic issues, emphasized that more serious problems related to ideology and moral education were behind the economic issues. Aliyev condemned the sloppy and lax management style of his predecessors and emphasized the importance of strong supervision, discipline, and effective executive selection (Ibid., 8). Partly due to this, Azerbaijan's economy in the mid-1970s to 1980 outperformed the overall Soviet Union economy (Ibid., 2). However, the informal economy was also substantial, similar to other Caucasus and Central Asian countries (Kim and Shida, 2017: 1353).

In summary, the Brezhnev era is often referred to as the "era of stagnation," a term that gained popularity through Gorbachev (Evans, 2016: 5). However, it was not a time when people were struggling to survive; instead, it marked the beginning of consumerism, with people enjoying shopping with their disposable income. Although there was a shortage of basic items, these shortages became characterized by "things that other people did not have" or "special items," leading to widespread use of blat and black market. Meanwhile, in Azerbaijan, Aliyev skillfully rose through the ranks, establishing a firm position not only within Azerbaijan but also within the Soviet

government. Concerned about corruption, he promoted a campaign to enforce moral standards, yet Azerbaijan's informal economy continued to thrive.

3.2. Mozalan in 1980-1984

As introduced in chapter one, "Mozalan" is a satirical television program that aired more than 180 issues from 1971 to 1992, with each issue containing two to four episodes, including fiction, documentaries and animations. The main message of Mozalan was to convey the problematic issues in the country to the people through satire, and its efforts were highly regarded by the government. Fourteen episodes from 1980 to 1984 are available for viewing, and the most frequently addressed social issues include work ethics, undisciplined behavior, and the informal economy. This chapter analyzes how these social issues are portrayed on television through satire. Episodes that clearly reflect the situation and social problems discussed in section 3.1. were selected for analysis.

- **Sloppy management and low work motivation**

We can distinguish different types of work ethic issues. Many episodes address the issues of sloppy management and low work motivation. Sloppy management is clearly expressed in the episode **"Original method"** (Orijinal usul, 1983). Director, Ebilzade comes to work in the morning. At the entrance of the institute where Ebilzade works, a colleague approaches him to discuss some business matter, but Ebilzade tells the colleague that it is not yet time to start working, leaves the colleague alone and heads to his room. Incidentally, the starting time of work is 9 a.m. and the clock reads 8:55 a.m. Once Ebilzade enters the room, he starts his breakfast, but at the same time he opens his desk drawer. The drawer is equipped with a tape recorder, and when he turns it on, it begins to play typing sounds. Two young colleagues come to his room but decide not to enter when they hear typing at the door. The youngest of the two colleagues says, "The boss is always busy. We must work as hard as he does." They further discuss how talented a researcher the boss is. Meanwhile, in his room, Ebilzade is playing with a Rubik's cube and eventually falls asleep.

This episode is a typical example of Horatian satire, light-hearted and aimed at improving the viewers' morals through laughter. It clearly addresses the issue of the manager's lax labor discipline, focusing the satire on the manager's folly. The episode humorously highlights his dysfunctionality, aligning with the perspective of Boukes (2018: 3). While it lacks the "cry of dismay and shame" that Tolstykh (1993: 19) describes, it effectively showcases the reality of contemporary society. As filmmaker Mamin (Horton, 1993: 138) emphasizes that satire depicts everyday situations, this satire also portrays daily life. However, while Mamin suggests that issues are not depicted explicitly in Soviet satire, this episode directly addresses the issue of labor discipline.

Figure 2: Ebilzade's drawer equipped with tape recorder in "Original method" (Orijinal usul, 1983).

Another episode about sloppy management is **"Only one solution"** (Yegana alaj, 1981). The setting is the home of a manager, and a burglar breaks in his house. The manager wakes up and notices the burglar. The manager impatiently tries to give the luxury items to the burglar, but the burglar refuses to accept them. Instead, the burglar says, "I don't want anything. Just sign this document" and passes the document to the manager. The manager signs it and asks the burglar why he wants the signature. The burglar replies, "I was waiting for your signature at the reception of your room with twisted neck for six months." This episode also portrays a bright, Horatian satire, highlighting the manager's lax attitude toward the use of working time through the burglar's final line. The focus of the satire is on human folly, and it showcases the disconnection between the public image and the reality of the manager, as well as the manager's dysfunctionality, aligning with Boukes' (2018: 3) arguments. Although this episode is before the Glasnost era, it directly exposes the reality of contemporary Soviet society.

Figure 3: A burglar snatching the signed document from a man appears to be his boss in “Only one solution” (Yegana alaj, 1981).

In the episode **“Proof”** (Subut, 1982), a government official visits a factory and inspects the factory’s work. The factory is unorganized, dirty, and the plants are dead. Also, the workers are obviously not working and are not even wearing proper uniforms. One of the workers says, “Here they come!” and the workers rush to clean the space and change into new uniforms (with price tags still attached), and the dead plants are replaced with lush plants. An official enters with the factory managers. Behind the official is a poster in Russian that reads “Follow Safety Instructions.” The official starts checking and asks the workers if they are following the safety instruction properly. The factory manager behind the official gestures to the workers to answer “Yes, we do!”, and the workers give thumbs up saying “Perfectly!” to the official. However, all the workers’ thumbs are wrapped in bandages. Clearly, the workers are not following safety instructions, and a sloppy management appears to be behind this.

This episode is light-hearted and encourages moral improvement through laughter. The satire focuses on the folly of the people working in the factory, and, as Test, scholar specializing in satire (1991, as cited in Holbert, 2014: 27), mentions, the episode’s satire includes elements of aggression and play, functioning as an “attack” towards the workers. Although socialism theoretically ensures that the means of production are publicly owned and workers are the masters of the country, the reality depicted in the episode shows that workers’ motivation is far from ideal. As Tolstykh (1993: 17) points out, while it is tragic on one level that no one is working, despite the fact that a socialist country is supposed to be a “worker’s state,” the episode incorporates elements of mockery and laughter.

Figure 4: Bandaged thumbs-up of workers in “Proof” (Subut, 1982).

- **Shortage and informal economy**

Along with labor norms, other frequently discussed social issues during this period are the shortage, informal economy, and black market. **“The one who seeks finds”** (Ahtaran tapar, 1980) represents these issues in detail. The episode begins with customers visiting various stores in Baku, but not finding what they want at every turn. At a car spare parts store, a shopkeeper explains how to obtain a spare part to a customer who is frustrated and tired of being told every month that they will be available by the end of the month, but the parts never arrive. The camera then shows people standing in a row on the street or sitting in cars, selling various items and negotiating prices. The shopkeeper does not use the term “black market” but explains that these are “our chain stores” and that any spare parts can be bought by going to these “chain stores.”

Shortage of goods and the informal economy were two major features of the Soviet economy (Kim and Shida, 2017: 1347). However, the issues addressed in this episode seem to extend beyond them. The shopkeeper explains the location of the black market as being near the police station, suggesting that the police were taking the most advantage of the black market, which can be seen as a form of “unofficial” privilege. Furthermore, while this episode might initially appear to be a light-hearted Horatian satire, considering that shortages were caused by structural problem in the centrally planned economy (Ibid., 1371), it can also be interpreted as Juvenalian satire. Furthermore, although the satire seems to focus on the folly of the people, it could be seen as a critique of government policy from the people’s perspective. Therefore, the satire in this episode can be understood in various ways, encompassing a wide range of messages.

Figure 5: People negotiating in black market in “The one who seeks finds” (Ahtaran tapar, 1980).

“Issue No. 777” (Masala No. 777, 1981) illustrates the shortage of goods (specifically meat), the informal economy, and work ethic. The setting is an elementary school where a math class is being held. The teacher poses a question to the students: “A certain shepherd had 500 sheep and needs to increase his flock by 150 this year. However, at the time of this year’s inspection, 100 sheep were missing. Now, how many sheep are left?” During the question, one student shows dissatisfaction on his face, prompting the teacher to ask him for the answer. The student answers, “We need to capture.” The teacher asks, “Capture what?” The episode ends with the student’s reply, “We have to capture the shepherd and report it to the prosecutor!”

This episode, like others, is a Horatian satire, but is the focus of satire solely on the folly of the shepherd? The fact that the teacher does not question the missing sheep or the shepherd’s selling off of the government-supplied livestock shows that the informal economy had become commonplace and routine, which makes the teacher a focus of the satire as well. The episode not only elicits laughter by contrasting the dysfunctionality of adults (shepherd and teacher) with the disciplined child, but also exposes the reality with an expression of a loss of ideals, which is a characteristic of “real” Soviet satire (Tolstykh, 1993: 19).

Figure 6: Teacher listening to the student's answer in "Issue No. 777" (Masala No. 777, 1981).

In **"Sacred oath"** (Muqaddas and, 1983), four friends, all medical professionals, gather for dinner. They express gratitude for their friendship. Then, one of the men, whom we'll call A, starts complaining to the man next to him, B, about B's anonymous letter to the prosecutor. A says, "You claim that I scammed you by selling wall furniture from Yugoslavia for 6,000 manat[1] instead of 4,000 manat. Considering the high quality, even 8,000 manat would be a bargain. The price could double or triple. Am I correct?" B admits, "You are right." Another man, C, then complains about A, "You speak beautiful words, but you've never written anything good about me in an anonymous letter. I get accused of selling gasoline for ten manat per liter. When did I do that? It hurt my feelings." B suggests, "Let's put our hands on Quran and vow not to write anonymous letters anymore," and everyone agrees. A takes a Quran from the cupboard, and they all vow never to write anonymously again. Cut to A's son, who is writing something. A says to the son, "Write this: 'Dear Mr. Prosecutor, Dr. Yunusov, yesterday he took the hospital's air conditioner home.' Write. I cannot write myself because I vowed on the Quran."

At first glance, this episode appears to be an amusing depiction of denunciation, surveillance society and people's unethical behavior. The emphasis is also on the scarcity of specific goods, the doctors' privileged access to goods and services unavailable to ordinary citizens, and their black-market dealings with luxury items such as furniture from Yugoslavia, gasoline and air-conditioners. The focus of this satire is clearly on the folly of medical professionals. It highlights the discrepancy between the image and reality of medical professionals, amusingly showcasing their dysfunctionality, which aligns with Boukes' (2018: 3) concept of political satire on television.

[1] During the Soviet era, the ruble was also called the manat in Azerbaijan ["Sign of Azerbaijan manat" (Znak Azerbaidjanskogo manata,) n.d.].

Furthermore, the exposure of medical professionals' incompetence and corrupted behavior aligns with Tsakona and Popa's (2011: 6-7) view on political satire. This episode follows the pattern described by filmmaker Mamin (Horton, 1993: 138), starting with a hilarious carnival and ending with something nasty, revealing Soviet reality through the aesthetics of ugliness.

Figure 7: Men are about to place their hands on Quran and vow not to write anonymous letters in "Sacred oath" (Muqaddas and, 1983).

- **Bribery**

In the episode **"Mashadi Ibad - 80"** (1980), a grandfather (Mashadi Ibad) who cares for his granddaughter, who works at an air-conditioning factory, visits the rector of a university. Mashadi Ibad tries to enroll his granddaughter by offering a bribe, but the rector refuses and reminds him that such an act is an "antipode" to right behavior. The episode ends with Mashadi Ibad telling his friend, who brought a bribe to the rector for his grandson like Mashadi Ibad, to stop because it is useless.

The satire in this episode is of the Horatian type, encouraging moral improvement through laughter, with the focus on the folly of Mashadi Ibad and his friend. While this episode does not show a stark contrast between reality and unreality, it induces laughter by highlighting the dysfunctionality of ordinary people in contrast to the disciplined rector. Furthermore, "Mashadi" is a religious title of honor given to Muslims who completed pilgrimage to Mashhad in Iran, a significant site for Shia Muslims ("Mashadi," n.d.). This suggests that Mashadi Ibad is a very religious person. However, such a devout person is involved in bribery. As KGB head, Yuri Andropov took a hardline stance against religion, launching a vigorous campaign starting in late 1979 against religious dissent, which promoted ideological hardening and strengthened atheism (Anderson, 1994: 106). In this climate, Mashadi Ibad's resorting to bribes, and the university rector's denouncing bribery, may have been

intended to highlight the futility of religion and faith. Meanwhile, when Mashadi Ibad visits the rector's office, he introduces himself with a Sovietized name "Ibad Mashadiyevich." One might also understand that he is no longer religious and is so immersed in Soviet society that bribing is no longer a big deal. This episode can be considered Menippean satire as it includes multiple humor elements (Gottlieb 2019).

Figure 8: Mashadi Ibad surprised that his bribe was not accepted by rector in "Mashadi Ibad - 80" (1980).

"Exam" (Imtahan, 1982) is another episode portraying the issue of corruption and bribe. At a university, a student performs poorly in an oral exam, and the professor tells him to retake it in a week. The student says, "You were entrusted to take care of me," but the professor denies it, saying, "I was not entrusted by anyone, go home." Interestingly, the bribe here is indirect, arranged through a third party, and the professor does not deny accepting bribes, but clarifies he hasn't received one yet by using the term "entrustment." The student then says, "He must have given you an apartment or a car without standing in line." The professor, surprised but pleased, asks, "Do you know Professor Elendar?" The student lies, saying "He is my uncle, and we played board games yesterday." The professor knows that Elendar is on a business trip and realizes that the student is lying, harshly telling him to leave. The student, grinning, retorts, "Don't you care what happens to your future? I know two professors entrusted you to take care of me!" The professor shows him a list of students who gave him bribes and says, "If I see your name on this list, I will give you a 5!" The episode ends here.

This episode is also a light-hearted Horatian satire, with the focus of the satire on the folly of both teacher and the student, and it humorously demonstrates the dysfunctionality of educational system.

After the student says, “Don’t you care what happens to your future?”, many might think he will expose the professor’s bribery. However, the student continues to argue for the “entrustment,” insisting that two professors had entrusted the professor. This indicates that bribery was routine for both givers and takers. The bribery is made through third party, which is a format of blat, and the conversation reveals that the third party facilitating the entrustment is preferably a close relative in a high position. Blat is generally considered a network of friends and acquaintances used to cope with shortages caused by the state’s malfunction (Ledeneva, 1998: 37). However, in this context, the network is used entirely to solve a problem caused by student’s personal “malfunction” and it has nothing to do with the state. Blat was likely used not only to address problems caused by the centrally planned economy but also in other contexts.

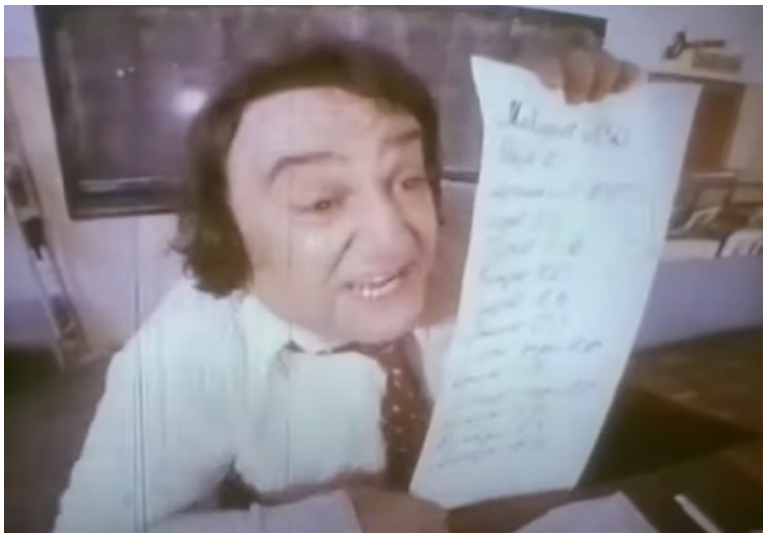

Figure 9: The professor showing a list of students who gave him bribes in “Exam” (Imtahan, 1982).

- **Use of western music**

Although not directly related to satire, the occasional use of Western music is one of characteristics of Mozalan in this period. For example, in the episode **“Only One Solution”** (Yegana alaj, 1981), the intro of Pink Floyd’s “Time” is used at the beginning, followed by Adriano Celentano's Italian pop song “Pay, Pay, Pay” from the middle to the end. Pink Floyd’s “Time” speaks of how time seems endless when we are young, but eventually we find ourselves with nothing left to achieve and the remaining time passing in vain (“Time,” n.d.). This aligns with the episode’s portrayal of a worker waiting for his boss’s signature for six months, accomplishing nothing. In contrast, “Pay, Pay, Pay,” with its focus on rhythm rather than a specific message, provides comic relief. Additionally, French composer Frank Pourcel’s “Little Man” is used in two episodes – **“Consultation”** (Mushavira, 1981) and **“Sacred Oath”** (Muqaddas and, 1983). Originally sung by Sonny Bono and Cher in 1966, Pourcel arranged it for orchestra (“Little Man by Franck Pourcel et

son grand orchestra," n.d.). In 1983, cultural authorities, led by Komsomol and the Ministry of Culture, began cracking down on rock and disco music. However, until then, both pragmatic and conservative groups existed (Kveberg, 2015: 211-213), allowing the use of these Western songs. These songs were likely permitted because their use was limited to instrumental parts without lyrics ("Time" and "Little Man") or because the lyrics were not deeply meaningful ("Pay, Pay, Pay").

3.3. Conclusion of this chapter

In this chapter, the episodes from 1980 to 1984 were analyzed. Although the satire from this era may not initially seem like political satire because it does not target the government or politicians directly, it becomes evident that these episodes consistently address issues such as declining moral standards, mismanagement, bribery, and corruption – concerns that were of great interest to Aliyev. Therefore, the themes of the episodes from this period were strongly influenced by the political campaign promoted by Aliyev. As Tsakona and Popa (2011) suggest, Mozalan allowed politicians to promote their positions and persuade audiences of the rationality of their political actions and decisions. Furthermore, the main characters in these episodes are not government officials, indicating that the episodes were clearly intended to enlighten the general public from the government perspective.

In terms of ingraining political actions and decisions into the populace and society, the satire of this period can be regarded as "state-appropriated laughter," similar to how satire was used during the Stalin and Khrushchev eras to advance communism. However, while the satire of the Stalin-Khrushchev era depicted an idealized Soviet lifestyle with the motif of the masses opposing the authority of bureaucrats, the state-appropriate laughter in Azerbaijan during this period features diverse protagonists beyond bureaucrats and lacks a clear opposition. Instead, it calls for self-reflection among viewers.

The satire's style during this period is predominantly of the bright Horatian type, aiming for moral improvement through laughter, with a focus on human folly. Many episodes highlight the discrepancy between ideal image and reality, demonstrating that political humor can target not only politicians and political systems, as Boukes (2018: 3) argues, but also other fields. Additionally, the episodes often reflect Tolstykh's (1993: 17) observation that what is tragic on one level can become an object of ridicule on another, capturing a characteristic of Soviet satire. Tolstykh (Ibid., 18) argues that under totalitarian regimes, critical depictions of reality with satire were excluded. However, in Azerbaijan from 1980 to 1984, reality was already being clearly portrayed with satire.

Regarding the media landscape, as previously argued, the satire of this era is considered as messages from the government to the people. This aligns with Ellis' (1999: 49) assertion that these television

programs were produced under the auspices of the Communist Party, reflecting a vertical relationship where politicians monitored the populace.

Chapter Four: 1985-1989

This chapter begins by outlining the context in the Soviet Union and Azerbaijan between 1985 and 1989, followed by an analysis of Mozalan episodes from this period, using the concepts discussed in chapter two as the primary basis for analysis.

4.1. Soviet Union and Azerbaijan in 1985-1989

- **Gorbachev and reforms**

Gorbachev became General Secretary in 1985. He called for Perestroika, a series of political and economic reforms, and Glasnost as a means to that end. In promoting these initiatives, Gorbachev not only advocated for political and economic reforms but also aimed to restore people's morals. His comprehensive moral reformation program focused on the pursuit of truth, combating corruption, restoring human rights, and encouraging a morally sound lifestyle (Tarschys, 1993: 7).

One of Gorbachev's most well-known policies was his anti-alcohol campaign. In May 1985, the resolution "Measures to Overcome Drunkenness and Alcoholism" was enacted in response to the widespread alcohol abuse and its associated problems such as death, absenteeism, and low labor productivity (Gathmann and Welisch, 2012: 63). This policy significantly reduced the country's alcohol production and sharply increased alcohol prices. Additionally, liquor stores shortened their sales hours, and the legal drinking age was raised from 18 to 21 (Ibid., 63-64). Although official statistics showed a decrease in alcohol consumption and fewer new diagnoses of alcoholism, it is likely that home-distilled moonshine called "samogon" replaced the store-bought liquor. Consequently, the number of moonshine producers increased, along with the number of people dangerously intoxicated by illegally produced alcohol. As a result, the initial momentum of the reform was completely lost, leading to the lifting of the prohibition and restrictions in 1989 (Tarschys, 1993: 21-23).

- **Dismissal of Aliyev from the Politburo and start of domestic power struggle**

What was Azerbaijan like during this period? Although Aliyev remained a member of the Politburo even after Gorbachev became General Secretary, he was removed by Gorbachev following an October 1987 Politburo meeting where Aliyev criticized the term "pluralism" in Gorbachev's report for the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution, calling it an ideological term from the West (Brown, 2001: 240-241). This led to an intensification of the domestic power struggle within Azerbaijan. Aliyev retired and returned to his hometown of Nakhchivan but continued to wield influence in Azerbaijan. Meanwhile, the new leader of Azerbaijani Communist Party, Abdurahman Vezirov, was building his own network, and the Popular Front, a nationalistic opposition party, was

gaining momentum and seeking opportunities to collaborate with Aliyev. Officially registered in 1989, the Popular Front elected Abulfaz Elchibey, an anti-Russian, pro-independence Azerbaijani who would later become the second president of Azerbaijan, as its new chairman in July 1989. As the Popular Front's influence rapidly grew, Vezirov lost all authority due to the mass deportation of Azeris from Armenia due to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (de Waal, 2013: 86-89).

- **Outbreak of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict**

During the Soviet era, Nagorno-Karabakh was an autonomous oblast within Azerbaijan, home to a large Armenian population. Starting in late 1987, Karabakh movement, which advocated for unification with Armenia, became active, leading to ethnic violence and forcing ethnic Azeris to flee their villages (Ibid., 19). On February 20, 1988, the Regional Soviet officially requested the transfer of Nagorno-Karabakh from the Azerbaijani SSR to the Armenian SSR. Amidst this tense environment, two Azeri men were killed in Nagorno-Karabakh (Ibid., 16). This news quickly spread throughout Azerbaijan, triggering an anti-Armenian pogrom in Sumgait city from February 26 to 29. During the Sumgait pogrom, officially 32 people were killed, but strangely, neither Moscow nor Baku took immediate action, and Moscow did not permit an investigation into the incident. This inaction led to various conspiracy theories among the populace, including suspicions that Armenian themselves had orchestrated the event (Ibid., 40-43). The escalating tension between the two nations eventually erupted into conflict, displacing many Azeris and Armenians from their homes.

4.2. Mozalan in 1985-1989

There are two significant differences between the episodes of this period and those up to 1984: the emergence of episodes based on specific historical incidents and the emergence of documentary-style episodes with authentic footage. Additionally, there are more episodes that ridicule government officials than the general public compared to the previous period. In terms of themes, episodes related to work ethic have increased significantly.

- **Episodes ridiculing the government with specific historical events**

The early 1980s were marked by political instability, with the General Secretary changing every year. The episode **"Eternal engine"** (Abadi muharrik, 1985) reflects this period and portrays a person adept at navigating such a volatile environment. In the episode, a subordinate named Badamov approaches his boss to sign a document registering his invention of an engine that runs forever. The boss initially dismisses it, saying, "An engine that runs forever is impossible with today's science and technology." However, when Badamov mentions that Mr. Munasibovich (presumed to be the chairman of the organization) is one of the inventors, the boss immediately proceeds with the registration. The engine then unexpectedly stops, coinciding with the chairman's

death. Sensing that his boss will be the next chairman, Badamov grins and expresses his obedience. The engine then starts running again, signaling the start of a new era.

The episode portrays a person who adapts well despite changes in top leadership, set against the backdrop of the annual change of General Secretaries at the central government. The episode is clearly a light-hearted Horatian satire, and the focus of satire is on human folly, specifically greed. The episode humorously depicts the dysfunctional nature of political system, which aligns with Boukes' (2018: 3) argument on political satire on television. Moving on to the next step without regard for the chairman's death is tragic on one level, but it becomes an object of ridicule on another, which aligns with Tolstykh's (1993: 17-18) concept of the characteristics of Soviet satire. On the other hand, although Tolstykh argues that even in the late 1980s, it was challenging to present satirical comedy freely due to its perceived vulgarity (Ibid., 19), this episode boldly exposes the vulgarity of Soviet society. The flow of the episode follows the "comedy to grotesque" pattern, as Horton (1993: 138) identifies as characteristic of Glasnost-era satire.

Figure 10: Boss signs the document as soon as he hears that the chairman is involved in engine invention in "Eternal engine" (Abadi muharrik, 1985).

"Game of fate" (Taleyin oyunu, 1988) is a complete mockery of Gorbachev's anti-alcohol campaign. Before Gorbachev became General Secretary, a manager at a beverage factory is instructed by a Party official to stop producing lemonade and start producing beer. Although the manager explains that the factory lacks the budget, the Party official insists that if he cannot comply, he must leave the Party membership card and resign. Fast forward to 1985, the manager receives another call from the Party official, now ordering him to dismantle the beer production equipment. Again, the manager cites budget constraints, but the official reiterates, "The Resolution has already

been signed. If you can't do it, leave the party and quit your job." Two years later, the manager gets another call from the Party official, demanding the immediate resumption of beer production. The official threatens, "The nation wants beer. If you can't resume production immediately, put your Party membership card on the desk and leave." However, by this time, the manager has already left the party, and the episode ends with him lamenting that he has nothing left to put on the desk to quit the job.

Although this episode contains elements of laughter seen in Horatian satire, it boldly ridicules the central government and their policy, and the factory manager's behavior against the Party official also shows a stance of resistance, suggesting it is closer to what Sloterdijk (1987: 103) calls "kynicism." The satire's focus on "Policy" is a new development not seen in the episodes prior to 1984. This episode highlights the disconnection between the normal (the manager) and abnormal (the Party official, the anti-alcohol campaign), helping citizens recognize what is happening behind the scenes, which aligns with Boukes' (2018: 3) remark on political satire on television. Although Tolstykh (1993: 18) argues that satire conflicting with ideology is impossible under totalitarian regime, the episode directly mocks ideologically based policy. Furthermore, Ellis (1999: 49) asserts that even during Glasnost era, television programs were produced under the supervision and guidance of the Communist party. However, this episode appears that the oversight of the Party did not extend fully to Azerbaijan. In terms of social issues depicted, the episode represents what Žižek calls a cynicism: the idea that a law must be obeyed not because it is right or beneficial, but simply because it is the law (1989: 37).

Figure 11: Manager (right) takes a beer bottle away from a factory worker. Behind them is a banner "Inspired labor to motherland" in "Game of fate" (Taleyin oyunu, 1988).

As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh deteriorated since late 1987, with a series of clashes resulting in numerous deaths and a high level of anti-Armenian sentiment in Azerbaijan. The episode **"Neighbors"** (Gonshular, 1989) satirizes Armenia's encroachment on Azerbaijani land. In the episode, a family moves in next door to a man living with his wife. Shortly after moving in, the new neighbor asks the man to store their belongings (including a dog) in the man's house since it is larger, and the man agrees. Over time, the neighbor starts using the man's well and gradually encroaches on his territory. The neighbor installs a lock on the man's well without permission, forcing the man to borrow a key from the neighbor to draw water, effectively reversing their positions. The neighbor further installs an antenna on the man's roof, the neighbor's wife rests in the man's yard, the children play on his property, and eventually, the neighbor completely takes over the man's house. Horrified, the man runs away. When another neighbor asks, "Why are you in such a hurry?" The man replies, "You should run away when landless people come to take your land."

This episode clearly illustrates Armenia's attempt to seize Nagorno-Karabakh, reflecting anti-Armenian sentiment. On the other hand, the scene of the man running away at the end criticizes the weak-kneed Azerbaijani government as well. Thus, this episode is not simply a depiction of conflict with Armenia but also a criticism of the government from the people's perspective, embodying Juvenalian satire with acerbic and dark characteristics. As Test (1991) and Holbert (2014: 27) argue, political satire serves the function of "attacking" through a blend of aggression and play, and this episode exemplifies that purpose. The satire in this episode is closely linked to tragedy, yet it is portrayed as an object of ridicule, making viewers laugh with feelings of despair and anger. This aligns perfectly with Tolstykh's (1993: 17-18) definition of Soviet satire. Additionally, the episode flows from situational comedy to grotesque, reflecting the argument made by filmmaker Mamin (Horton, 1993: 138). The neighbor's intrusion is irrational, but the man's response by running away reflects what Bloom (2008: 12) calls a rational assent to the irrationality of order, indicating that this episode touches on cynicism.

Figure 12: Neighbor installs antenna at man's house without permission in "Neighbors" (Gonshular, 1989).

"Dedication" (Fadailar, 1986) is not based on a specific historical event, but it is a bold mockery of the government officials' work ethic, particularly, the false reporting. In the episode, a housing inspection committee checks apartment rooms. The boss wears a neck corset and has a cast on his arm, one subordinate is on crutches, and another has a bandage over his face. Clearly, every room is in disrepair, with sand falling from the ceiling and strange noises coming from the pipes. However, the committee members pretend not to see any problems and proceed with their checks, declaring that the hallways, kitchen, and bedrooms are all fine. The only remaining area is the balcony, but no one wants to do it, leading to a dispute. Checking the balcony is seen as life-threatening task. Finally, one man, looking pale, decides to check the balcony, accompanied by a drum roll. When he steps out onto the balcony and it doesn't collapse, he exclaims, "Yes!" and the episode ends with joy.

The officials risking their lives to perform the checks is hilarious, but behind the scenes, we see sloppy construction and false reporting to the government as social issues. This is a typical Horatian satire, meaning light-hearted, aiming to promote moral improvement through laughter, and the focus of satire is bureaucrats' folly. The dysfunctionality of bureaucrats and the state system is boldly illustrated, which aligns with the argument of Boukes (2018: 3) on political satire on television. While Mamin's (Horton, 1993: 143) concept of ugliness is thoroughly depicted, unlike his claim, this episode is quite direct in its criticism of the government. The characteristic flow of Glasnost satire is "from carnival to darkness" (Horton, 1993: 138), but this episode does not fit that pattern. Instead, it starts with darkness, which intensifies throughout, and ends with a "carnival of darkness." Thus, the flow could be described as "from darkness to a carnival of darkness."

Figure 13: Bureaucrat risking his life to check the balcony in “Dedication” (Fadailar, 1986).

- **Emergence of documentary episodes with authentic footage**

The significant difference between the episodes of this period and those up to 1984 is the emergence of documentary-style episodes with authentic footage and a narrator. These episodes feature actual citizens and workers and criticize the government. They are more journalistic in nature and lack playful comedy element.

In **“Result”** (Natija, 1989), the setting is the dormitory of an oil refinery plant named after Lenin. The narrator notes that the Mozalan team has visited this dormitory before, and the episode aims to check the improvements since their last visit. From the beginning, the episode criticizes the conditions, stating, “The exterior has been cleaned, but the interior remains dreadful,” “You can enter through the window instead of the door,” and “The sewage system does not function at all.” The Mozalan team interviews the director, who claims that the minister also visited and significant funds were spent on equipment and repairs, but the screen continues to show the building’s terrible condition. The narrator criticizes not only the director but also the government officials for their ineffectiveness, saying, “The minister came here to drink tea and made no impact.” Interviews with residents also reveal their terrible living conditions, and the episode ends with the narrator stating, “You people have to feel sorry for the residents living in the dorm,” referring to both the plant director and government officials.

This episode clearly embodies Juvenalian satire, devoid of comedic elements and featuring the genuine voices of angry residents. Although the primary function of political satire is “to attack” with elements of aggression and play (Test 1991; Holbert, 2014: 27), this episode lacks the element

of “play.” Thus, the satire in this episode can be classified as “kynicism,” which involves courageously speaking the truth against authority (Sloterdijk, 1987: 103). The focus of the satire is both “Policy” and it primarily criticizes the poor qualities of individuals, specifically targeting the director. Additionally, the episode helps viewers understand the disparity between government officials’ statements and the actual situation. As Tolstykh (1993: 19) argues about “real” satire, the satire in this episode embodies a cry of dismay and shame balanced by “dark” humor, exposing reality. According to Tolstykh’s (Ibid.) definition of “chernukha,” this episode does not qualify. While it portrays the dark side of life, it captures the true essence of reality without exaggeration. Unlike filmmaker Mamin’s argument, this episode explicitly declares the issue and directly attacks the state institution, and it begins and ends with ugliness (Horton, 1993: 138, 143).

Figure 14: Residents being interviewed in “Result” (Natija, 1989).

Another documentary-style episode from this period is **“Two pieces of advice”** (Iki maslahat, 1989). This episode highlights the neglect and deterioration of Baku’s architecture. It begins with an interview with the director of the Institute of Architecture and Art, who claims, “Baku is a unique city with a mix of Azerbaijani and European architecture. We must protect it as carefully as the pupils of our eyes.” However, the narrator questions this, saying, “I wonder if they are protecting it at all. I can give you two pieces of advice.” For the first advice, the narrator suggests, “When guests come, show them beautiful architecture from far away. Otherwise, the guests will have a heart attack,” then criticizes the government, “Even if one hundred people complain to the government about this problem, no one will listen.” For the second advice, the narrator says, “When guests arrive, do not let them inside the buildings. The corridors, originally as beautiful as a museum, are falling apart or poorly painted over to hide the damages. They could not be restored even if artists from all over the country gathered.” Admitting these are hopeless advice, the narrator concludes,

“This is all we can do, unfortunately,” and the episode ends.

Similar to the documentary style episode above, this episode does not have playful comedic elements. When evaluating whether the episode includes the four essential elements of satire (aggression, play, laughter and judgement) as outlined by Holbert (2014: 28), the answer is yes. However, the laughter element is more akin to a wry smile. Given that the episode expresses anger at authority, it can be classified as “kynicism” or Juvenalian satire. Yet, by the end of the episode, the narrator acknowledges the futility of their advice, displaying a sense of resignation. Thus, the episode transcends mere anger, incorporating a profound sense of inevitability and passive acceptance, which is close to cynicism. The narrator’s opening line, “Baku, often referred to as Naples,” contrasted with the dilapidated buildings shown in the episode, starkly illustrates the gap between illusion and reality, capturing the essence of television satire as described by Boukes (2018: 3). This episode follows the Glasnost satire flow, moving from light to darkness. However, it diverges from typical Glasnost satire characteristics by not sugarcoating issues but rather explicitly stating problems and directly criticizing government institutions.

Figure 15: Director of the Institute of Architecture and Art being interviewed in “Two pieces of advice” (Iki maslahat, 1989).

- **People’s morals are still a big concern**

While some episodes criticize and ridicule the government, many others seem aimed at improving people’s morals, aligning with the government’s policy.

“Inside out” (Tersine, 1987) begins with the arrival of a new director at a hospital. The doctors are surprised to find that the director’s lab coat has no pockets. The director declares, “The previous

management had low morals. Let's change the bad practice and follow the rules!" The screen shows the stunned faces of the doctors, and their thoughts are heard: "No pockets mean no bribes...," "What in the world is a lab coat without pockets?" One doctor even draws a picture of a car during the meeting, likely representing the car he hoped to buy with bribe money. When the director asks about the consultation fee, a doctor answers with his hands in his pockets, and the director tells him to take his hands out of his pocket when speaking, highlighting the normalcy of bribery. At the end, the director realizes that his lab coat is inside out. When he corrects it, it is revealed that the director's coat has far more pockets than other doctors', shocking them. It turns out the director takes more bribes than anyone else.

The issue depicted in this episode is privilege of others, highlighting that doctors were among the elite occupations, as Matthews (2011: 31) points out, and that privilege extended beyond the nomenklatura. The episode exemplifies Horatian satire, characterized by its light-hearted approach and aim to encourage moral improvement. It attacks doctors with the elements of aggression and play, effectively highlighting their flaws while maintaining a humorous tone. The entire episode humorously demonstrates the dysfunctional nature of doctors and the medical system. The director's speech and his lab coat having more pockets than anyone else's clearly portray the discrepancy between the ideal and reality. This aligns with Boukes' (2018: 3) argument although his focus is primarily on politicians. Tolstykh (1993: 19) observes that genuine satire, which effectively balances humor with expressions of dismay and shame to reveal the truths of contemporary society, was rare even after Glasnost. However, this episode vividly encapsulates all these elements, expressing a loss of ideals.

Figure 16: Doctors surprised that director's lab coat has no pockets in "Inside out" (Tersine, 1987).

Another episode related to people's moral is **"Exam"** (Imtahan, 1989). The setting is an oral exam at a university, focusing on the history of the Communist Party. When thinking of episodes about exams and universities, one might expect a professor receiving gifts from students, but this episode depicts a more complex moral lapse of the professor. There are four students, three with the last name Gayibov and one named Mammadov. The professor asks a student for his last name, and when Mammadov responds, the professor is visibly disappointed. Despite Mammadov confidently answering the exam questions, the professor only gives him a "Pass." The professor then tells the Gayibovs, "I know you have prepared well for the exam, so the grade is excellent," prompting Mammadov to protest, "This is unfair. You give them good grades because the Gayibovs' fathers are chairmen and ministers." The professor nonchalantly admits, "That's right. I don't hide anything. This is democracy and transparency. You can also protest and criticize us like in a democracy." Mammadov protests as instructed, and the episode ends with applause from the professor and other students.

This episode is another example of Horatian satire, with the focus of satire clearly on the professor's folly. The social issue highlighted in this episode involves blat, the informal connections between the professor and the Gayibov families. Given that the professor likely leveraged this high-level blat to obtain certain privileges, the issue of privilege of others is also addressed. What makes this episode particularly interesting is that, despite being a class on the history of the Communist Party, the professor justifies his improper act (favoring the Gayibovs) by invoking the principle of democracy and even encourages the student Mammadov to protest based on democratic values. Tolstykh (1993: 18) argues that an intolerant ideological climate excluded the critical depiction of reality through satire, yet here we see satire boldly targeting state ideology. This contradiction highlights a unique aspect of Azerbaijani media. Thus, while Ellis (1999: 49) asserts that the Communist Party controlled television content even during Glasnost, this does not seem to entirely apply to Azerbaijan. This episode suggests that satirical expression in Azerbaijan was more liberated than in theories.

Figure 17: Student protesting next to professor from “Exam” (Imtahan, 1989).

4.3. Conclusion of this chapter

Many of the episodes from this period align with significant actual events. The major difference compared to the pre-1984 period is that some episodes criticize and ridicule the government and its policies, while others are more documentary in nature, featuring actual people. However, this does not mean that the episodes during this period are entirely opposed to government policies. For example, issues concerning the morals of the people, which Gorbachev greatly emphasized, are still addressed in the form of Horatian satire, as they had been until 1984. Consequently, although not entirely, it can be said that the target is increasingly shifting “from the people to the government,” rather than “from the government to the people.”

In terms of satirical types, the fictional episodes predominantly exhibit Horatian satire, characterized by its light-hearted and humorous approach. Conversely, the documentary-style episodes with authentic footage lean towards Juvenalian satire, expressing anger, or “kynicism,” demonstrating resistance to authority. Up until 1984, the focus of satire was primarily on human folly. However, post-1985 episodes began to satirize policies, such as Gorbachev’s anti-alcohol campaign, in addition to human folly. The method of contrasting ideal with reality, a hallmark of television satire, continued to be employed during this period. On the other hand, there was a noticeable shift from addressing specific social issues, as introduced in the theoretical framework, to highlighting the overall work ethic of the government as the primary issue. This trend is particularly evident in the documentary-style episodes.

Compared to the theorized characteristics of satire under Glasnost, several differences are observed.

Filmmaker Mamin (Horton, 1993: 143) suggests that explicit attacks on the government were absent under the totalitarian regime. However, during this period, the episodes, although not targeting the most important political figures, blatantly attack the government and its officials. Additionally, Tolstykh (1993: 19) and Yurchak (1997: 175) argue that political satire remained hidden even in the late socialism due to its vulgarity and ideological conflict, but this is not the case in Azerbaijan during this time. Furthermore, the flow of the episodes does not adhere to the typical comedic-to-grotesque progression, either.

Regarding the relationship with the media landscape, the main aspects of Glasnost - criticism and disclosure, are clearly reflected, and the accompanying public anger is specifically presented in the documentary episodes with authentic footage. According to Ellis (1999: 49), television programs remained under the control of the Communist Party even after Glasnost, but this claim does not fully apply to the episodes from this period in Azerbaijan. It is true that the episodes tend to focus on individuals who are not central figures in the government, suggesting some degree of Party control. However, episodes that mock Gorbachev's policies or discuss democracy in a class on the history of the Communist Party indicate a relaxation of this control. Therefore, it seems that there is a loosening of the Party's grip on Azerbaijani television programs during this time.

Chapter Five: 1990-1992

This chapter starts by detailing the context in the Soviet Union and Azerbaijan from 1985 to 1989, and then proceeds to analyze Mozalan episodes from this era, utilizing the concepts introduced in chapter two as the main framework for analysis.

5.1. Soviet Union and Azerbaijan in 1990-1992

- Rise of Yeltsin and collapse of the Soviet Union

Boris Yeltsin's political career experienced a significant revival in 1989. He ran for a seat in the newly established Congress of People's Deputies, created as part of Perestroika to eliminate conservative party members. Yeltsin won with an overwhelming majority. Following this victory, Yeltsin and other reformist deputies formed the "Interregional Group" to push for more radical democratic reforms (Marples, 2004: 65-67). In February 1990, the Soviet presidency was established, and in March, Gorbachev was elected by the Congress. However, significant opposition arose when Interregional Group voted against Gorbachev, fearing his consolidation of power. By May 1990, Yeltsin's influence increased as he was elected chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) (Ibid., 68-69). In March 1991, a referendum revealed that approximately 70% of the population supported the idea of Russian Republic having its own president. Yeltsin quickly announced his candidacy. In June, he won the presidential election with 57% of the vote, becoming the first democratically elected president in Russian history (Ibid., 72-75). Ten days after his inauguration, Yeltsin made a decisive move by instructing the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR to draft legislation banning political activities within Soviet-controlled entities, including the Soviet Armed Forces and KGB (Ibid., 77-78). This action asserted Yeltsin's authority over both Soviet and Russian institutions, substantially diminishing Gorbachev's influence.

In August 1991, a coup d'état was attempted by KGB head Viktor Kryuchkov and other conservatives who opposed to Gorbachev's reforms. They aimed to seize state power by placing Gorbachev under house arrest and declaring a state of emergency. Gorbachev was detained at his dacha on the Black Sea coast, and the coup plotters pressured him to sign the emergency declaration, which he refused. Meanwhile, in Moscow, tanks occupied key government offices (Ibid., 81-84). Yeltsin vehemently opposed the coup, calling on the nation to strike against it at the White House. His actions garnered widespread domestic and international support. Consequently, the coup failed within three days, accelerating the Soviet Union's disintegration (Ibid., 85-87). In December 1991, the leaders of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus met and declared the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Subsequently, the Soviet republics declared their independence one by one. On December 25, 1991, Gorbachev resigned as President of the Soviet Union, officially marking the end

of the Soviet Union's history (Ibid., 95-96).

- **Economic collapse and the emergence of oligarchs**

During this period, economists Andrei Shleifer and Robert W. Vishny (1991: 343) observe that the combination of suppressed inflation and economic liberalization after 1988 disrupted the enforcement and coordination mechanisms of the traditional Soviet economy. Specifically, suppressed inflation resulted in a decline in labor productivity, firms hoarding intermediate inputs, and uneven supply distribution due to the freedom of choice among trading partners. This productivity loss led to a severe shortage of goods, causing market prices significantly higher than state prices (Ibid., 347). The Yeltsin administration began transitioning to a market economy in 1991, initiating significant privatization efforts in 1992 (Firdmuc and Gundacker, 2017: 1). During this privatization process, a new business elite, known as the oligarchs, emerged. These individuals acquired state-owned assets at low prices, gaining substantial economic power. In the absence of a strong state, the power and property connections established under former communist rule were key factors in their rise to becoming oligarchs (Ibid., 6).

- **Chaos in Azerbaijan**

Azerbaijan experienced significant upheaval during this period. On January 9, 1990, the Armenian parliament voted to include Nagorno-Karabakh in its budget, enraging Azerbaijan and intensifying nationalist movements. This led to large-scale violence against Armenians which erupted in Baku on January 13, resulting in the deaths of around ninety Armenians. In response to the escalating situation, the central government in Moscow sent a delegation to Baku, but nationalist activists only intensified their activities. They took control of the streets, barricaded roads leading to the barracks, and held a large rally in front of the Central Committee building, effectively blocking access. Faced with this unrest, Gorbachev decided to send troops. On January 19-20, tanks invaded Baku from both the north and south, resulting in the deaths of over 130 Baku citizens and injuries to hundreds more (de Waal, 2013: 90-93). The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan continued intermittently, further deteriorating relations between the two nations. Amidst this turmoil, Azerbaijan declared its independence in August 1991. According to political scientist Svante E. Cornell (2001: 118), this independence was achieved under far from ideal or orderly conditions, severely impacting the country's political and economic development. Domestically, the situation was equally chaotic. Although Ayaz Mutalibov was elected as the first president in September 1991, his rule was weak, marked by serious domestic power struggles between the ruling party and nationalist opposition, raising fears of civil war. The armed forces were engaged not only against Armenians but also in internal conflicts within Azerbaijan (de Waal, 2013: 176-178). In this chaotic environment, a massacre occurred in Khojaly in Nagorno-Karabakh, where nearly 500 Azeris were

killed. The event remains a significant symbol of tragedy for Azerbaijanis to this day (Ibid., 314). As a result, Mutalibov was forced to resign, and Abulfaz Elchibey from the nationalist opposition party took over as president in June 1992 (Ibid., 334).

5.2. Mozalan in 1990-1992

Episodes from this period continue to criticize the government, much like the episodes from 1985 to 1989. However, there is a notable shift in tone, with some episodes which show a sense of desperation and futility in relying on the government. Documentary-style episodes with authentic footage also persist, featuring interviews with more politically powerful figures such as regional politicians and the director of a regional gas committee, making these episodes more politically charged. Additionally, there is frequent mention of economic deprivation and shortages, reflecting the harsh realities of the time. One episode appears to draw inspiration from the rise of oligarchs following the collapse of the Soviet Union, highlighting the new socio-economic dynamics in post-Soviet Azerbaijan.

- **Documentaries continued with harsher criticism**

"Trace of one letter" (Bir mektubun izire, 1990) harshly criticizes the government more than any previous episode. It starts with footage of numerous complaint letters against the government received by the Mozalan production team. The setting is a village in the Masally district where residents voice their grievances and dissatisfaction with the government through interviews. The main issue in the village is the lack of gas supply due to the halted construction. One resident emphatically states, "Government officials don't care about us." The narrator then criticizes the government's poor implementation capacity. A local politician also blames the central government, saying, "Gasification for this village was not included in the plan." The documentary then cuts to an interview with the director of the gas committee of the neighboring district responsible for the construction work in Masally. The director's discomfort is evident on the screen, and he excuses the delay by claiming that both construction and installation are going. The episode reveals rusted materials exposed in front of the gas administration building, prompting the narrator to say, "We have found the root of the problem." It concludes with an image of the building of the Azerbaijan central government's fuel committee and the narrator pointing out their responsibility for the situation.

This episode is a complete Juvenalian satire, devoid of comedic elements, and it clearly expresses anger at the authorities, particularly the central government of Azerbaijan. Unlike previous episodes up to 1989, which only mentioned the central government indirectly, this episode directly visualizes it. By contrasting the director's statements with the footage of actual situation in the village, the

episode reveals the dysfunctional nature of the political system and the contradictions in political rhetoric, aligning with Boukes' (2018: 3) argument on political satire on television. However, the issues here are presented without humor. Furthermore, although Tolstykh (1993: 18) suggests that showing emotional shock, dismay, and outrage is theoretically considered a luxury under a totalitarian regime, this episode vividly portrays these emotional responses, highlighting the totalitarian system's dysfunction at the time. Additionally, the difficulty in relating the social issues discussed in chapter two to this episode may stem from the collapse of the totalitarian regime.

Figure 18: Government fuel committee under criticism from "Trace of one letter" (Bir mektubun izire, 1990).

Another episode criticizing the government is **"Winter is coming"** (Qysh ki gelir, 1991). This episode is fictional but incorporates authentic footage of poor infrastructure throughout. At the beginning, a man sings a song about the disastrous infrastructure, with lyrics that clearly criticize the government, including phrases like "complaints (to the authority) with no result" and "who can solve this cursed problem." After the song, the scene shifts to the man digging a hole when a bureaucrat rushes over. The man says, "I visited your offices many times and the government won't help us, so I'm going to build a communal bathhouse here by myself!" The bureaucrat responds, "The government can do anything! The hot water does not belong only to you! It belongs to the people!" The man retorts, "If you say it belongs to the people, fix it and supply hot water. The people here are dying." The bureaucrat runs away, saying, "I'm not in charge of this issue." The bureaucrat returns with his boss, who also believes that the government can do anything. The man digging a hole explains to the boss, "The hot water flows in vain, thus I use it to start a business." The boss is surprised and asks, "Has the nation found a way to make money? Is that even possible?" The boss then orders the bureaucrat, "Fix this problem by this afternoon," and leaves. The episode ends with

hot water being safely supplied to the apartment.

This episode's theme of horrific infrastructure and government irresponsibility is serious, but the satire is light-hearted and aims to encourage moral improvement by eliciting laughter. By this time, ideological protection was already irrelevant, and the episode actively highlights social shortcomings and critically portrays the reality, helping viewers recognize disconnections between reality and unreality, as Boukes (2018: 3) remarks. In this episode, reality is represented by the horrific infrastructure and government irresponsibility, while the government's claim of omnipotence (the government can do anything) appears to be the unreality. However, the bureaucrat's boss eventually solves the problem, suggesting that the perceived omnipotence of the government may still hold true depending on the individual addressed. Additionally, another scene demonstrates the contrast between reality and unreality. Considering this episode was produced in 1991, private commercial activities were already tolerated as part of Perestroika. Despite this, the bureaucrat's boss is surprised that a citizen can make money, indicating the reality (ignorance of officials far from Moscow) and unreality (reforms initiated by the central government in Moscow).

Figure 19: A bureaucrat and his boss (left) arrive at the site where the man is digging a hole from "Winter is coming" (Qysh ki gelir, 1991).

- **Giving up on helpless government**

Another documentary episode, **"The name is Sunny though…"** (Ady Guneshlidir…, 1992), depicts the turmoil in Azerbaijan. This episode focuses on an actual district in Baku officially named "Sunny" (Guneshli). The narrator begins with a scathing description: "From a distance it looks like New York, but when you get closer ... if you can get closer..." The screen then shows streets filled

with potholes, buses and trucks stuck in puddles, and large amounts of abandoned trash. The most shocking image is a bus that appears to have been blown up and left on the street. The episode continues to show the devastation of cooperative apartments and many buildings left abandoned during construction. The narrator mentions, “This area was to be supplied with one thousand phone numbers in June 1991,” and quotes the chief architect, saying, “We have no materials, and winter is coming. We will see what we can do in spring.” Scenes of cows foraging in the garbage are shown, followed by the narrator quoting the director of the building department: “We dare to leave the garbage here. This is a kind of experiment.” The episode concludes with the narrator quoting the chief architect again, saying, “We are in a difficult situation.”

Compared to previous documentary episodes, this episode highlights a sense of hopelessness and resignation rather than direct criticism of the government. The helplessness is evident in the words of the government officials interviewed. They do not make excuses for the criticism they receive and accept the fact that there is nothing they can do about it. In earlier episodes, the production team attempted to offer some solutions or constructive criticism to the issues being presented. However, in this particular episode, they refrain from proposing any solutions and instead just quote a government official who acknowledges the problem by stating, “We are in a difficult situation.” As Boukes (2018: 3) remarks, this episode shows viewers the disconnection between reality and unreality (“Sunny” district looking like New York from a distance,) and it reveals social shortcomings and critically portrays reality. Thus, this episode undeniably has the elements characteristic of political satire. However, this episode is neither Horatian nor Juvenalian satire, as there is no laughter or anger. Instead of the flow of satire described by filmmaker Mamin (Horton, 1993: 138) as “from comedy to grotesque,” it would be more appropriate to say “from grotesque to grotesque.” In Azerbaijan’s time of turmoil, with no clear power or ideology to resist, satire seems to be directed not at others but at each viewer for self-reflection and self-inspection. In this sense, it resembles Sloterdijk’s (1987: 103) concept of “humor that has ceased to struggle.”

Figure 20: Burned-down bus left on the street in “Sunny” district from “The name is Sunny though…” (Ady Guneshlidir…, 1992).

- **Economic collapse**

“Suicide” (Intihar, 1991) represents a dire inflationary situation. The episode begins with a man attempting to jump off a building. A firefighter tries to persuade him to come down, but the man refuses to listen. The firefighter then says, “Let’s talk about your family,” to which the man responds, “No need. I’m dying because I can’t support them.” The firefighter inquires, “Why can’t you support your family?” The man replies, “Do you know how expensive gasoline, sugar, and sausages have become? I want to buy clothes and nutritious food for the kids, but everything has become too expensive!” and prepares to jump off the roof. The firefighter then says, “You have no idea what happens after you die. First, your dead body needs to be washed and wrapped in a white dress, for which, of course, money is required. Besides that, your family needs money for a mullah and a grave. A lot of money is needed after you die!” Another resident adds, “It costs a lot to write your name on the grave, too!” The firefighter continues, “On the third and seventh day, and on four Friday nights after your death, your family must invite all your friends and treat them to dinner. Still, is it worth the jump?” Confronted with the costs of living and dying, the man abandons his suicide plans and the episode ends.

The social issue addressed in this episode clearly illustrates the severe shortage and inflation situation highlighted by economist Jarko Fidrmuc and Lidwina Gundacker, scholar in migration and integration (2017: 6), at the beginning of this chapter. Although the message, “Dying costs more money than living,” is harsh, the episode elicits laughter. However, it does not promote moral improvement. Instead, it expresses anger at the fact that it has become harder to live and die, thus leaning more towards Juvenalian satire, or Menippean satire containing many elements (Gottlieb,

2019). The episode exemplifies what the filmmaker Mamin calls “aesthetics of ugliness” – vulgarity (suicide attempt), chaos (economic collapse), and paradox (death costs more money) that people encounter in daily lives (Horton, 2009: 144). It is an episode in which satire clearly exposes the harsh reality of people’s lives.

Figure 21: A man abandons his suicide attempt upon realizing the high cost of dying in “Suicide” (Intihar, 1991).

The episode **“Stop being single”** (Subaylarynyzdan gelesiniz, 1991) humorously portrays the economic hardships of the period from an unexpected angle. The main character, a young man living alone, discovers that his iron is broken. He asks his neighbors for an iron, but no one has one. An elderly woman from the apartment across the street, who has been watching him with affection, shows him an iron from her window and invites him over, but he politely declines. The young man searches through various stores for an iron but only repeatedly encounters the word “shortage,” driving him crazy. Eventually, he decides to visit the elderly woman with a flower in hand, leading to their joyful wedding. The episode ends with the man holding an iron, saying, “Let’s stop being single.”

The social issue addressed in this episode is clearly the shortage, which evokes great laughter. The story of a man who nearly goes mad due to a shortage and ends up marrying an elderly woman to solve the issue is powerful. It humorously and acerbically expresses the situation of shortages. While this is a comedic episode, it does not seem to genuinely aim to encourage moral improvement. This episode clearly depicts the dysfunctional economic system, aligning with Boukes’ (2018: 3) argument, even though his argument primarily focuses on the political field. Through satire, we can

see that in a situation like before and after the collapse of the Soviet Union, where a country is no longer viable as a state, dysfunction is not confined to politics, but spreads to other areas as well. If we ask whether this episode retains the characteristics of satire under Glasnost, the answer is partly. Although the marriage to the elderly woman gives an emotional shock, the episode does not rely on enlightened spiritual cleansing, as Tolstykh (1993: 18) remarks. On the other hand, with all due respect to the old lady, the episode begins with situational comedy and ends with the grotesque, which aligns with what filmmaker Mamin describes about the flow of satire (Horton, 1993: 138).

Figure 22: Man looking at an iron at the wedding in “Stop being single” (Subaylarynyzdan gelesiniz, 1991).

The episode **“Whom to believe” (Kima inanaq, 1990)** explores the reasons behind the shortage of good-quality fruits and vegetables in the markets in Baku. It begins with the narrator highlighting the reputation of the Quba district for its apples. He then notes that people travel to the area to inspect the quality of apples for themselves, hinting that there must be an underlying reason for this behavior. The narrative then cuts to interviews with various individuals, each offering a different perspective on the issue. An employee at the market claims that apples shipped from Quba are initially in good condition, implying that the problem arises in Baku. In contrast, the director of the district’s fruit and vegetable center blames the villagers for keeping the best apples for themselves and sending only the poor-quality ones to Baku. A truck driver provides another viewpoint, stating that they receive poor-quality goods at the center and that the lengthy registration process in Baku exacerbates the issue. The director disputes this, saying there has been no record of long registration delays. The director of the fruit and vegetable center in Baku adds that they receive low-quality products and lack proper refrigeration, leading to spoiled goods. The episode shows footage of both

poor-quality and excellent-quality fruits in different markets, ending with the narrator asking, “Who tells the truth?” This question highlights the complexity and the lack of accountability in the supply chain.

This episode, like the other documentary episodes, is not lighthearted. While it may elicit a bitter smile, it certainly does not provoke cheerful laughter. For example, the interviewees, even if they are ordinary people, have their names disclosed on television, and the presentation of the episode is sufficiently acerbic. However, it is not a complete Juvenalian satire, as it does not depict anger towards authority. It is not highly political, but the rhetoric contains contradictions, aligning with Boukes’ (2018: 3) concept of political satire on television. The flow of the episode is similar to what the filmmaker Yuri Mamin (Horton, 2009 :138-143) describes. Although this episode is a documentary with authentic footage and does not start with situational comedy, it begins with a pleasant image of apple farmers and ends with ugliness. Regarding social issues, the episode addresses shortage, blat, and privilege of others. These issues had long existed, but it is largely due to Glasnost that they could be openly addressed and publicly showcased through documentary. The shortage here is not caused by state control of production as commonly believed. Instead, it is caused by farmers exploiting their privilege and selling good-quality products informally to certain markets in Baku using blat. In other words, the shortage has an artificially created aspect as well. Furthermore, as presented in the theoretical framework in chapter two, Liivik (2020) considers that the privilege of others depends on the hierarchy within the Nomenklatura. However, this episode reveals that local farmers also held privileges.

Figure 23: Market employee being interviewed from “Whom to believe” (Kima inanaq, 1990).

- **Emergence of the oligarchs in Azerbaijan**

The episode **"Business" (Kommersiya, 1992)** illustrates the rise of oligarchs during the period of economic collapse. It opens with a man playing the trumpet. His dissatisfied wife informs him that their neighbor to the right has started a "business," replaced his old car, a Zaporozhets, with a new one, and gestures "shame on you" to the man (shown on screen: the neighbor washing his new car). Ignoring her, the man continues to play. She returns, stating that the left neighbor has also started a "business" and built a big house (shown on screen: the neighbor in his new house). Unmoved, the man keeps playing. Finally, she tells him that the upstairs neighbor has started a "business," bought a private airplane, and no longer greets her (shown on screen: the neighbor's family boarding on their plane). The man, deciding to act, says, "Okay, okay. I'll start 'business' today." A deeper brass sound follows, and the wife finds him playing a tuba with satisfaction.

According to Fidrmuc and Gundacker (2017: 6), the power and property ties established during the Soviet period were key elements in becoming an oligarch. This episode likely addresses issues related to blat and privilege of others. Blat refers to informal ties used for reorganizing the public distribution of material welfare (Ledeneva, 1998: 37). Among the different types of blat, high-level blat was a privilege reserved for the elites to obtain luxury items (Mathews, 2011: 52). This suggests that individuals became oligarchs by leveraging the high-level blat and the associated privileges they acquired during the Soviet era. As a type of satire, this episode is clearly Horatian, characterized by its comedic nature and the provocation of laughter. What makes this episode particularly intriguing is its adherence to the fundamental rule of satire, which contrasts ideal and reality. However, instead of depicting this through specific professions or systems, it portrays the disparity through the materialistic wife and the pragmatic husband. The focus on this satire is on the folly of the oligarchs and the materialistic wife, not the husband who buys the tuba. Tolstykh (1993: 17) asserts that satire must include the light cast by ideal, and in this episode, the man embodies this ideal. Furthermore, as Mamin (Horton, 1993: 154) suggests, this episode conveys an intention to spread the virtues of tolerance and kindness through laughter, even though everyday life is like a dark carnival. Additionally, by highlighting the "abnormality" of the oligarchs, the episode prompts viewers to engage in self-reflection (Tolstykh, 1993: 19). The fact that the man did not become an oligarch provides a sense of hope to the viewers. Therefore, the flow of this episode is not from light to darkness or from comedy to grotesque, as Mamin (Horton, 1993: 138, 143) suggests, but rather from darkness to light.

Figure 24: Neighboring family boarding a private airplane from “Business” (Kommersiya, 1992).

5.3. Conclusion of this chapter

The episodes from this period also target the political and economic situation of the time, with criticism of the government becoming harsher than before 1989, whether in documentaries or fictional episodes. On the other hand, as symbolized by the episode “The name is Sunny though…,” we now see episodes depicting the chaotic situation in Azerbaijan where the interviewed officials do not make excuse, suggesting that criticizing the government has become futile.

In terms of satire, the fictional episodes during this period remain Horatian, using humor mostly to encourage moral improvement. However, the documentary-style episodes do not solely express anger; some convey a sense of resignation that goes beyond mere indignation. This differs from what Sloterdijk (1987: 305) refers to as “humor that has ceased to struggle,” which involves a solid ideology where people recognize its futility yet choose not to resist. It is evident that during this period of turmoil in Azerbaijan, there was a clear lack of any recognizable ideology, making Sloterdijk’s concept inapplicable. So, what distinguishes resignation from cynicism? In cynicism, there is a critical recognition of the irrationality of ideologies or laws, yet realistic choices are made despite this acknowledgment. Resignation, on the other hand, is about “a submissive unresisting attitude” and “passive acquiescence” (*Collins English Dictionary*, 13th ed., 2018, s.v. “resignation”), embodying a sense of defeat rather than a practical decision. Therefore, through the episodes from this period, it became clear that satire during times of national turmoil can convey a sense of resignation through humor. Additionally, during this period, episodes increasingly shifted away from addressing specific social issues, instead focusing more on criticizing the entire state system. This shift suggests that highlighting specific social issue is more feasible when the state system is

relatively stable. The flow of satire also varied greatly. It did not always follow the pattern of moving from comedy to darkness; instead, there were instances where it transitioned from darkness to more darkness, or from darkness to light.

In terms of the media landscape, Ellis' (1999: 49) argument that all discussions had to stay within Leninist parameters and that television programs were produced under direct Party control even under Glasnost does not entirely apply to the dysfunctional Soviet Union and Azerbaijan during this time. As Jono (1996: 172-175) points out, the previously suppressed angry voices of the people, which were considered "noise," began to be fully reflected in television programs, shifting the content from "world of formality" to a "world of emotion." Regarding the form of communication, Jono (Ibid.) suggests that it shifted from vertical (top-down) to broadly horizontal (among the people) after Perestroika. I believe this is not entirely accurate for Azerbaijan during this period. The form of communication transitioned "from broadly horizontal (among the people) to top (the regime)" or remained "only horizontal (communication among the people without involving the state)." Furthermore, while the television programs during the Perestroika period are theoretically characterized by visualized images showing the anger of non-elites against the authority, Azerbaijani television program from this era expresses not only anger but also a sense of resignation towards the reality. In summary, even in terms of the media landscape, different aspects emerged that are not covered in theoretical framework.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

This thesis examined how the Azerbaijani satirical television program "Mozalan" evolved its form of satire and representation in response to the turbulent political climate from 1980 to 1992. The analysis revealed that Mozalan, which adhered closely to the Party line in the early 1980s, grew increasingly bold with the advent of Glasnost, eventually developing its own independent direction as the Soviet Union approached its collapse. By examining specific episodes and their depiction of social issues, this thesis underscored the significant shifts in satirical styles and media representation that marked this transformative period in Azerbaijani history.

During the early period from 1980 to 1984, while satire did not directly target government officials or politicians, it addressed issues such as declining moral standards, slovenly attitude at work, and corruption. These themes were influenced by Aliyev's political campaigns, suggesting that the state was utilizing Mozalan to promote political viewpoints and policies, and educate the general public. In other words, the satire during this period in Azerbaijan can be called "state-appropriated laughter," aiming to ingrain political actions and decisions into a mass and society, similar to the Stalin and Khrushchev eras. Additionally, the satire of this period was predominantly Horatian, aiming for moral improvement through laughter and highlighting the discrepancy between ideal and reality.

From 1985 to 1989, satire in Azerbaijan became more critical of government policies, with some episodes adopting a documentary approach featuring actual people, including bureaucrats. This period marked a shift in the direction of the satire, moving increasingly "from the people to the government" rather than "from the government to the people." While fictional episodes maintained a Horatian style, documentary-style episodes with authentic footage exhibited Juvenalian or "kynicism" characteristics, expressing anger and courageous resistance to authority. The episodes began to satirize state policies, such as Gorbachev's anti-alcohol campaign, challenging Ellis' (1999: 49) assertion that television programs remained under the Party's control even after Glasnost and suggesting a loosening of this control. Accordingly, the scope of issues addressed also expanded from specific social issues to critiquing the government's work ethic. Compared to the theoretical characteristics of satire under Glasnost, several differences were observed. As mentioned above, explicit attacks on the government became more common, contrary to earlier beliefs that political satire was suppressed under the totalitarian regime even after Glasnost was introduced.

From 1990 to 1992, Azerbaijani satire intensified its criticism of government, with both documentary and fictional episodes offering harsher critiques. Some episodes began to express emotions beyond anger. Fictional episodes maintained a Horatian style, using humor to promote

moral improvement, while documentary episodes conveyed not only anger but also a sense of resignation, highlighting the lack of solid state and its ideology during this period. This resignation, unlike cynicism, suggests a passive acceptance of unfavorable conditions without a clear target for anger. Additionally, Ellis (Ibid.) claims that discussions remained confined to Leninist parameters under Party control even after Glasnost became increasingly inapplicable to Azerbaijan during this period. Communication certainly shifted from a "world of formality" to a "world of emotion," but the form of communication transformed not merely from vertical to horizontal as Jono (1996: 175) argues, but "from horizontal towards vertical," or remained "horizontal without government involvement." The analysis of the episodes revealed that Azerbaijani satire and media landscape of this era have many aspects that theoretical framework cannot fully cover.

This study of Mozalan is only the first step in understanding the style of satire and its representation in Azerbaijan from 1980 to 1992. Limited by the availability of episodes, it cannot fully generalize the trends; further research with more materials is necessary to deepen insights and gain a broader understanding. Nevertheless, this paper demonstrated that the increasing openness and critical nature of Azerbaijani satire, reflecting the turbulent times, surpassed what was typically discussed in the theories about satire in the late Soviet period. It also highlighted significant transformative periods in Azerbaijani history through changes in satire style and the media landscape. Additionally, it proved that satire, as a tool of social and political criticism, has the ability to adapt to and reflect the complexities of its time.

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