

A Zizekian Attempt to Find a Way into Iranian Progressive Reformism through a Comparative Analysis of the Figures of Ayatollah Khomeini and Qassem Soleimani

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Abstract: The problem which is both created and tackled by this article is that although it advocates the Iranian progressive reformism as the most preferable political force in Iran, it simply does not find reformists' own formulation of their "competitive advantage" convincing enough. Thus, to provide an argument for Iranian progressive reformism this article not only strives to explain one of the latest Iranian reformists' mistakes (their stance on the assassination of Qassem Soleimani) through the Lacanian concept of imaginary identification as elaborated upon by Slavoj Zizek, but also to illuminate precisely at formulation of what that mistake was an attempt. In doing so, it conducts a comparative analysis of the funeral processions for General Qassem Soleimani in 2020 and for Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989, and then proceeds to draw some perhaps neglected points from the moment of the Islamic revolution of 1979 as well as from the period of Khomeini's leadership. However, far from being just a more elaborated explanation of Iranian reformism, an attempted reformulation like this of Iranian progressive reformism hopes to pave the way for creating new spaces for political act in Iran.

Key Words: *Iranian progressive reformism, Slavoj Zizek, Ayatollah Khomeini, Qassem Soleimani, imaginary identification, political act.*

The background: from Iranian fuel protests in mid-November 2019 to Soleimani's funeral procession in January 2020

The assassination of commander of Quds Force General Qassem Soleimani in a US drone attack ordered by former US President Donald J Trump on 3 January 2020 happened against a backdrop of Iranian people reeling from a bloody suppression in mid-November 2019 of a nationwide protest against the abrupt rise of fuel price. Within days across the country hundreds of ordinary people had been killed by the police and other security forces, thousands arrested (to date the number of fatalities have yet to be announced by the Iranian government). Apart from the outrageously and unprecedentedly large number of victims, a signature of this protest was that people had good reason to believe that the heads of all the three executive, legislative, and judiciary powers together with the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei were responsible for the situation, which gave the impression that the Iranian government as a whole is systematically oppressive and indifferent towards people's suffering. However, in about one and a half months, following the assassination of Qassem Soleimani, with millions of people attending his funeral procession, the image of the Iranian nation turned overnight from people frustrated by a corrupt and oppressive regime to a nation mourning a person who was described as second only to the Supreme Leader. As we shall see, however, the two images are much more related to each other than it may appear, and as such should not be taken too seriously.

From the subject supposed to believe...

Perhaps what millions of Iranian ordinary people who attended the huge funeral procession for Qassem Soleimani had in common was that they hailed him as a true believer in Iran's territorial integrity, as the slogan on the placards carried by a good many of the mourners indicated: "he departed so that Iran stays"ⁱⁱ (Jalaeipour 2020b). But too much emphasis on this commonality may risk obscuring the fact that a great many, if not an absolute majority, of the people were probably ready to go further and regard him as a true believer in *the possibility of the ultimate realization of the idea of the Islamic Republic in Iran*. If they considered him a true believer, it was simply because they believed that Soleimani bravely confronted challenges (especially military challenges), never shifting his responsibilities onto someone else. Whether he was such

a believer or not is of little relevance to the purpose of this paper, however. What matters is that such a sincere belief was attributed to him by the people. And the fact that such an irreplaceable believer (contingently, the people could not find anyone like him in the Islamic Republic) was assassinated by the order of a president in the White House who had adopted the most hostile policies towards their country in the history of Iran-US relations was a further provocation.

... To the subject supposed to know

But there was also another crucial quality that over-determined Soleimani's position not merely as the subject supposed to believe but also as the subject supposed to know: precisely the ambiguous yet effective nature of his activities. Although *there were few people who really knew the scope of his activities*, a great many of the Iranian populace could translate it into simple terms: safety and security from the danger of ISIS.

So, while against the background of ever rising inflation, continual news of corruption, and oppression not only of political activists' and intellectuals' comments and objections but also ordinary people's protests even Iranian religious people amongst other ordinary people were increasingly losing their confidence in the Islamic Republic's institutions and organizations, *Qassem Soleimani made the Islamic Republic exist*. That is to say, *far from ignoring the widening inefficiency of governmental organizations and institutions of the Islamic Republic, those people who later became mourners of Soleimani invoked it to maintain that the idea of the Islamic Republic could be realized through adopting Soleimani's approach* (let us recall again that contingently they couldn't find anyone like him among the loyal to Khamenei): for them, the inefficiency was caused by missing the right approach, and therefore was just an *appearance* of the Islamic Republic to be removed.

One might even risk hypothesizing that a majority of the mourners (who did not necessarily have to care about the "chain of command") effectively considered Khamenei, the supreme leader who had appointed Soleimani the commander of Quds Force, as kind of receiving his legitimacy from Soleimani: perhaps, they thought that Khamenei "cares", as it was Qassem Soleimani not anyone else who he had allowed to become the second only to him. The hypothesis is also corroborated by an observation: "an absolute majority of the pictures/placards carried by people [in the funeral procession] were those of Qassem Soleimani himself and mostly had national themes ... or religious and anti-American content; and rarely were pictures

of the political leaders and [placards containing] messages related to domestic politics seen in the hands” (Jalaeipour 2020b). Interestingly enough, Khamenei himself looked up to Soleimani, as he said in his first speech after Soleimani’s assassination: “Whenever the dear martyr [Soleimani] would give me an oral or written report on what he did, I admired him heartily and verbally, but today I bow before that of which he became the source and before what he brought into existence for the country but also for the region” (Khamenei 2020).

What does not make sense about all this, however, is that those people did not have the sway to elevate Soleimani to the position of the subject supposed to know. The subject supposed to know is someone who is expected to know and thus to learn, someone interpellated by you qua the Knower, entrusted by you with the task of realizing who they already are. At first glance it even seems that it was Soleimani who was in the position of the Knower and those people in the position of the subject supposed to know, simply because Soleimani was the one who taught them what they desire, but whose desire they might not question: *they had answered some questions precisely the way Soleimani did and therefore left out the questions that were left out by his answers*. For example: to be sure, ISIS was established and developed thanks to both direct and indirect support by Saudi Arabia and Western powers (Walsh 2010; Sommerville and Dalati 2017; Clemons 2014), in accordance with Soleimani’s answer to the question of how ISIS was created (Soleimani 2016). Yet was not the aggrandizement in the region of certain powerful conservatives in the Iranian government the main reason, if not the only reason, why they decided to provide that (criminal) support?

Crucially, however, the same goes for the link between Khamenei and Soleimani: the latter answered the questions the way the former did and therefore left out the questions remaining unanswered by the former’s answer. So, ultimately *it was from the point of view of Khamenei which the ordinary people had elevated Soleimani to the position of the subject supposed to know*. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, this is an example of imaginary identification, where you think to yourself that you have adopted your own point of view (“I attend the funeral procession for Soleimani because I care about Iran’s territorial integrity, etc.”), while unconsciously the point of view belongs to someone else before whose eyes you are just acting out (Zizek 2008: 116-119). In fact, the whole funeral procession was held for the gaze of Khamenei.

After Soleimani was assassinated, however, on the conscious level the people had to immediately fill the position of the subject supposed to know with someone else, simply because *the death of the subject supposed to know always happens when we have not achieved “it” yet*

(we are still under threat, the idea of the Islamic Republic has not been realized yet, etc.). And insofar as the “heartfelt beliefs” of those people were concerned, the next one in such a position was Khamenei himself (after all, Soleimanni had said that he was just a “private” for anyone in the position of the Islamic Republic’s leadership). So, now the irony was that the figure of the Knower, Khamenei, had to play the subject supposed to know, which was structurally impossible.

The imminent danger, therefore, was that if Khamenei lost his fragile legitimacy in the eyes of people who probably *through imaginary identification with Khamenei himself legitimized him through Soleimani*, then, *because the people could not find anyone else to fill the position with, they, each in their personal world, would start to question the position itself*. And, in my view, the first cracks in the legitimacy of Khamenei, insofar as the personal worlds of the mourners are concerned, already appeared in the last episode of the funeral procession itself when due to the stampede in the huge gathering in the city of Kerman arising from the mismanagement on the part of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (whose commander is appointed directly by Khamenei) dozens of people lost their lives, hundreds injured.

Apart from that, however, because Soleimani was now considered a symbolic father, the person you value because of that precious Thing *in him more than him as a flesh and blood person*, his body was buried in a relatively easy manner: what mattered first and foremost was his character not his body.

From the recollection of another funeral ...

The easy way Soleimani’s body was buried was in stark contrast to the way Ayatollah Khomeini’s was in 1989, however. Unlike in the funeral procession for Soleimani, the ever increasing number of the millions of people attending the funeral procession for Khomeini was a serious cause of concern for the authorities, since until the last moment huge crowds of the bereaved – who in spite of all the difficulties in public transportation which existed at the time of Khomeini’s demiseⁱⁱ had made it to the burial site, and were increasingly doing so - *would literally not allow Khomeini’s body to get buried*. In fact, the body was eventually buried forcefully, though respectfully. If one watches those scenes,ⁱⁱⁱ one can thus readily notice an uncanny quality: the familiar sight of mourning people who slap their heads and chests turns into something unfamiliar: an incredibly huge number of people run towards the coffin to prevent

the body getting buried. This un-canniness in the strict sense of the word (Freud 1919: 219-227) was, in my view, accounted for by the fact that the bereaved had recognized Khomeini not simply as a political-religious leader whose followers you can continue to be even after he died. Rather, it was as if *something died with the death of Khomeini that could not have died and therefore could not have got buried*. How can we understand this?

Although it is often noted in the Lacanian psychoanalysis that one sees in the big Other something more than a flesh and blood person, perhaps in the final stages of the analysis, or, to be more precise, in between the success of analysis and the end of analysis (Evans 1999: 54), one ties the figure of the Other to his body. This happens when the analyst starts to refuse to accept responsibility for inner paradoxes of the analysand's desire after the desire has been successfully articulated by the analysand. At this moment, the analyst tells the analysand that while the latter thinks to themselves that they have articulated their desire in accordance with the way the analyst told them to articulate it and therefore that it is now the analyst who must explain the meaning of the paradoxes, *the very articulation itself betrays that the big Other does not exist* and that the analyst qua the big Other has been a necessary illusion, a placeholder, that helped the analysand realize this illusory yet necessary feature of the Other. Therefore, all that the analysand needs to do now is stop questioning the analyst, kind of get rid of him, and instead find out what master signifier they, as a unary I, have always-already identified with. What occurs, however, in between this moment of the success of the analysis (the moment of the articulation of the desire) and the end of analysis (the analysand's realizing of the analyst's point) is an eerie attraction towards the body of the analyst which is accounted for by the fact that the analysand's responsibility to find a new signifier can neither be projected onto the analyst's position (because the latter proclaims that the Other is a necessary illusion) nor, *by the same token*, can be represented as a sexual attraction to the analyst. The only way the analysand's responsibility to coin a new signifier can be represented on the conscious level before the end of analysis thus is through identification of the symbolic (what is in the analyst more than the analyst as a flesh and blood person) with the imaginary (the analyst's body), *as if the body itself simply is the Other*. The uncanny attachment to the analyst's body thus is neither like when you eagerly give a hug to your parent, sibling, or friend nor like when you feel sexually attracted to someone.

Now the point is that perhaps Khomeini could only occupy the position of the analyst after his death. The people believed in him and hoped so much that their revolution led by him would be consummated with, linked to the Shiite messianic moment (the reappearance of Mahdi the

twelfth Shiite Imam). It was his death, and the contingent absence of any other figure to fill his position, which confronted them with their responsibility to find a new signifier. *For a short moment the responsibility was represented as the identification by the bereaved of Khomeini's body and soul.*

However short, the moment of Khomeini's funeral thus manifested the deadlock of the symbolic (Khomeini as a great leader, his character, teachings etc.) and the imaginary (his body), which is precisely what is called in the Lacanian theory *the real*, i.e. a persistence which is not represented as somehow meaningful, but betrays itself qua a nonsensical yet intriguing paradox: people attending Khomeini's funeral ceremony would not let the body get buried. Nonsensical as it is, it intrigues us simply because it is somehow related to what we really want. Hence we need to admit, perhaps despite our disposition to consider history as gradual progression, that Khomeini's funeral was theoretically much more advanced than Soleimani's: in the former at some level people not only had realized, if vaguely, that there is a necessary connection between the soul and the body, but also that this connection amounts to a deadlock.

The same kind of paradox took place in a different, happy mode with Khomeini being alive in Iran's early days of the Islamic revolution of 1979, when although the previous regime had lost control, the new order was not established yet, and therefore the Islamic Republic actually meant a unity over an absolute negation of the previous regime, and every Iranian who had identified himself as a No was included in the Islamic Republic, regardless of their religion, sex, political orientation, ethnicity, etc. In other words, the Islamic Republic was just an answer to the question of how people who identified with a negation without any contents could still recognize themselves as a unary "I": they were addressed by a new signifier i.e. Islamic Republic embodied in the flesh and blood person of Khomeini. People ambiguously felt freedom - though perhaps an absolute majority of them were not quite clear what that feeling meant. The feeling was represented as owing to the leadership of Khomeini, whose character could only be embodied in the flesh and blood of Khomeini himself.

The source of many problems and disasters arising after the revolution, however, could not be found in such boring wise comments as "those people (i.e. Khomeini together with tens of millions of the revolutionaries) knew what they did not desire, but not what they did desire": the problem with such wisdoms is that they fail to recognize that the "I" who does the act of negation is just a place-holder of the act of negation, thus cannot be filled with any positive contents. The disaster therefore breaks out precisely when the "I" starts to fill itself with a positive content, that

is, “with what they did desire”. Instead of grabbing at such wisdoms which fail to recognize themselves as the source of evil, it therefore must be emphasized that the leader of the revolution, the political groups, and the people were not quite clear that Khomeini was a great leader precisely insofar as *he had managed to organize a void, and for the success to continue they would have needed to recognize that it was still a matter of the organization of this void* rather than a vain attempt to represent this void as a positive content which, of course, would exclude many of the people who used to share the negation of the Shah’s regime. To put it the other way, they would have needed to realize that the “I” with whom they had identified with under the signifier “the Islamic Republic” was a necessary illusion, a place-holder, point of view which allowed them to see the void, the illusion itself.

Thus, although the resemblance between the moment of the revolution in 1979 and the moment of Khomeini’s funeral in 1989 was that in both people had tied ideas to a specific body, the problem was that people were not quite clear how to go to the end: if one completely understands how to tie “idea” to “body”, one realizes the inevitability of one’s death, and therefore lets the flesh and blood person and/or their dead body go.

... To why we should love Iranian progressive reformists

We will have to return to the issue of Khomeini soon, but first we need to ask a question related to Soleimani’s funeral: even some of the most progressive Iranian reformists issued statements to offer their condolences on the loss of Soleimani (by progressive reformists I understand first and foremost the reformists who consider institutionalization of self-criticism as an integral part of reformism). Some of them, including Mostafa Tajzadeh who as a political activist had endured years of solitary confinement in the Islamic Republic even attended his funeral. So, if even the most progressive reformists align themselves with the politics of the conservatives, why should we not only like them but also like them better than all the other actually existing Iranian political forces (royalists, “leftists”^{iv}, etc.) that seem to oppose the conservatives both in and outside the country?

Provided by the reformists themselves, an easy but not convincing answer is that none of the reformists said that that they agreed with everything which Soleimani did. Indeed, their official line seemed to have been based on a differentiation between his right and wrong actions. Yet, because, they said, the right things he did was more than the wrong things and because even

when he did the wrong action he was a true believer in what he did (i.e. because in his own system of thought, Soleimani considered what he was doing as the right thing to do), they celebrated him. And they said that they defined “right” and “wrong” in terms of a fair distribution of happiness within a nation state, in a nutshell, in terms of national interests. Thus, according to them Soleimani was a figure whose “character and performance” contributed to a fairer distribution of happiness in Iran, and hence he was “a national capital”. (Jalaeipour 2020b)

We, however, need to recall that *few people really knew the scope of Soleimani’s activities* both inside and outside Iran and therefore were in a position to make such overall judgments, and probably all the reformists who adopted that official line fell out of the circle in the know. Again, we thus may have to come to the conclusion that there was an imaginary identification on the part of the Iranian reformists: while they thought to themselves that they adopted their own point of view, they had adopted Khamenei’s.

The reformists’ specific logic of argumentation does not redeem the imaginary identification, but reveals it even more evidently: as with the people who attended Soleimani’s funeral, to consider the latter a believer in/a person who is supposed to know how to preserve the territorial integrity of Iran, the reformists had to refuse to ask the questions left out by Soleimani’s answer, which means they had elevated Soleimani to the position of the Knower who could teach us what we desire but whose desire we could not question. To put it the other way, although apparently they did differentiate his right and wrong actions, they simply ignored the fact that what they considered the right part (defense of Iran’s territorial integrity) effectively involved the wrong part (powerful conservatives’ aggrandizement), as was explained a few pages back.

Thus, should we not place the Iranian reformists’ official stance on Soleimani’s assassination in the wider political context? We know that Soleimani’s assassination took place in Iraq precisely in days when inside Iran reformists were struggling to avoid disqualification by the conservative Guardian Council for the parliamentary election ahead. So, perhaps, their attendance in the funeral was accounted for by a “deeply felt” thirst for power: “we state our overall approval of Qassem Soleimani’s performance in the hope that in exchange the Guardian Council will not disqualify our nominees”. The answer to this solution, however, is negative, not because no reformists might have entertained such calculations but because even if they had, *it did not matter*. As Slavoj Žižek maintains, the innerly-felt distance you take towards what you officially state is a mere appearance of your persistent unconscious belief in your official statement, indeed in all the logical and temporal consequences thereof. So, the proper response to such a

solution is to ask *what if the thirst for power felt by those reformists who did entertain such thoughts was just an appearance of their reverence for Qassem Soleimani?*

Interestingly enough, a year after the assassination of Soleimani, it turned out, at least in some analysts' view, that the million-mourner funeral procession for Soleimani weakened the position of war mongers in the US and deterred them from trying new ways to provoke Iranian conservative hardliners, which could have ignited a full-scale war in the region: according to the US war mongering propaganda, Iranian populace waiting for the US help would celebrate the assassination of Soleimani.

The point, however, is that at the time of the assassination of Soleimani the Iranian reformists did not go beyond saying that the

“... terror attack darkened the prospects of peace in the turbulent Middle East and opened the way for adventure, escalation of tensions, and more hostility. We ... call upon nations and governments across the world to discourage the outbreak of a new war in our region through showing a politically and legally effective response against the White House's war mongering.” (Islamic Republic News Agency 2020).

They thus never called upon the Iranian people to attend the funeral procession in order to preclude an imminent war. Perhaps with the benefit of the hindsight, however, after a year the above mentioned reformist activist Mostafa Tajzadeh said that the main reason why he attended Soleimani's funeral procession was to prevent the outbreak of war (Tajzadeh 2021).

So, why should we not only like the Iranian progressive reformists, but also should like them best? To answer this question we need to direct our attention not to the moment of the Islamic revolution of 1979 led by Khomeini, or his demise in 1989, but to the period between the two, the period of Khomeini's leadership.

The fundamental fantasy of Ayatollah Khomeini the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran was astonishingly simplistic: the absolute majority of Iranians prefer one single prevailing, correct interpretation of Islam and therefore no tension must have been left between the Islamic and the Republic. Simplistic as his fundamental fantasy might be, Ayatollah Khomeini has remained the figure of the great Other in today's Iranian politics, because *at the level of decision-making by the Iranian government* i.e. at the level at which it is decided what is to be allowed or done and what is not, even today's political struggles within the Islamic Republic still revolve around what is meant by the Islamic Republic: from the version according to which the truth of Islam as a

particular religion is a *function* of what it has in common with other religions and moral systems, and the commonalities are compatible with such modern values as, freedom, feminism, democracy etc.; to the conservative version according to which the Republican dimension of the system effectively means something like “Of course, we are seeking to fulfill what people want. It’s just that we know better than them what they really want.”

The crucial difference between the reformists (even quite a few of the reformists who cannot be included amongst the progressive reformists) and the conservatives is that while the latter dismiss the tension between the Islamic and the Republic as an *illusion* to be removed from people’s mind through conservative teachings, the former maintain that the tension *exists* not only between governmental policies and people’s lifestyles but also *within* governmental policies and people’s lifestyles: the tension is experienced, and yet cannot be resolved by the conservative knowledge. But also the reformists maintain that the Iranian populace too is responsible for the tension and need to be involved in cancelling it out. This second crucial point distinguishes them not only from the conservatives but also from the Iranian royalists, “leftists”, etc., as the latter groups, whether in theory or in practice (sometimes with their theory naively running counter to their practice), regard the tension as just *imposed* by the Islamic republic, thereby victimizing the Iranian people. So, although, in my view, reformists’ celebration of Soleimani was a mistake, that mistake was just an attempt at the formulation of a tension for which, they insist, both the government and the people are responsible.

But why not think that the tension is just imposed by the Islamic Republic? To answer this question properly we need to find out how Iranians *enjoy* the Islamic Republic. Iranians sometimes deprecate themselves by saying things like “we ourselves like it when they [the Islamic Republic’s agents] do *it* to us”. At stake, however, is the understanding that *Iranians enjoy the Islamic Republic precisely when they do not like it*, i.e. when they do things that reproduce the system and yet they feel that it is not their real self which is doing it, when they distance themselves from their own action. Nonetheless, the point is not that we should detect this unconscious, obscene enjoyment to remove it, but that *we realize how to enjoy the enjoyment of reproducing the system*.

This can be illustrated by what the Girl of the Revolution Street Vida Muvahhed did during the protests in November 2019 in Tehran. In the crowd she went up on a utility box in the street, removed her hijab (a white headscarf), tied it to a stick and waved it to the crowd as a flag. Elsewhere I have tried to explain in detail why the idea of hijab is so dear to those conservative

hardliners who have almost always held the coercive power in post-revolutionary Iran (Mehraein 2021). And there is a perspicacious analysis conducted by Farshid Khorshidnam (2017) focusing on “hijab ticks” (Iranian women’s fiddling with their hijab - shawls, headscarves or chador - while talking to or faced with men). But for our present purposes we need to bear in mind that Iranian government’s “cultural work” to persuade women that hijab as a dress code is what every woman deep down wants to conform with in spite of their resistance to Islamic teachings is always supplemented by the presence of the morality police which betrays the fact that ultimately what woman must realize is that man knows something about her which she herself can never know: although woman must realize something about morality, this something is not of the kind of what she can learn through serious intellectual efforts. Rather, she needs to realize i.e. to be confronted by the fact that there is some inaccessible knowledge outside her. This analysis, however, is a bit further complicated by a modern phenomenon i.e. attribution by the conservative hardliner of westernized obscenity to women with lax hijab. What is implied but never declared by the conservative hardliner officials, what the women ultimately must realize, is that the women should not mind filthiest sexual conducts sanctioned by the decadent western culture; hence the conservative hardliners do not mind if their agents (morality police, interrogators, plain-clothes agents) treat the women in such ways or ascribe such obscene desires and actions to the women that the women themselves often find shocking; or if their very agents themselves who are supposed to punish westernized women for their immorality might ogle the women. After all, the point is to confront the women with their own obscenity.

Although the above described Vida Muvahhed’s act followed by Narges Hosseini’s and then by several other women is usually understood as a civil disobedience towards forced hijab, if we include the unconscious into our analysis, we may realize that, quite the contrary, it was an over-identification, hyper-agreement with the conservatives in the Islamic Republic: “why do you try to lecture me about hijab when what you really mean is an enjoinder to remove my hijab? Just look at me to directly get what you really want!” However, it is only and only this feminine gesture which can genuinely hystericize, symbolically castrate the conservative hardliner, because within the dominant discourse they can enjoy it only when they can attribute the obscenity to the woman not to themselves. As a consequence of the feminine gesture, he thus perceives himself as different within himself: to be the one who tells the woman what she wants he has to be the one who is told by the woman what he wants (not to mention his identification in the literal sense of the word with the woman); he is neither the Other nor the Other of the Other, but the difference between the two. After such hystericization, he will be able to redefine

himself, pulls himself together, only if he recognizes *that the link he established between woman and being the object of man's sexual desire has always already been an utterly stupid yet absolutely necessary one for him*. Put bluntly, he would realize that hijab has always already been his fetish, with all the stupidity and yet irresistible force of a fetish and with all the indifference which might be aroused in us towards those who do not share our fetish. It is why, although he would insist on maintaining such a link, he would let women who do not want to be included in it be. He would be indifferent towards them, would not mind them following their own pathway, as he has realized that the Other's enjoyment is as stupid yet necessary as his, *which is what equality truly means*. A genuine understanding of the utter stupidity, however, would be manifested not only by being tolerant towards women who want to try other types of sexuality, but also by a particular kind of sense of humor within the community itself of the conservative hardliners: precisely because the stupidity is absolutely necessary for him *it cannot but be formulated in a friendly way i.e. in a way that unequivocally affirms the significance to us of maintaining the link* (humor is when we refer to a stupidity as necessary for sustaining our friendship). To put it the other way, the realization of stupidity is manifested not through what is said (on that level virtually nothing changes) but through the way it is said. To put it yet another way, it is neither that the conservative hardliners and women within the community would joke with each other since they would not really respect each other; nor is it that beneath the appearance of joking they would respect each other (though a banter would involve presumption of an idiot who interprets the banter as either the former or the latter). But, rather, to put it in Alenka Zupancic's words, they would exchange jokes as a way of alluding to the very link itself between them as a joke that is the only support for their identity (Zupancic 2012). It is how according to Lacanian psychoanalysis the end of analysis with perverts does not mean the disappearance of perverse behavior (Evans 1999: 143; Zizek 2004), but pervert's recognition of his perversion as his symptom which is the necessary condition of his being.

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Notes

- ⁱ . All the translations from Persian to English in this article are conducted by me.
- ⁱⁱ . To see a witty but precise account in Farsi of how the public transportation could be experienced by Iranian populace in those years, see Ahmad Zeidabadi's *Bahar-i Zindigi dar Zimistan-i Tehran* [*The Spring of Life in the Winter of Tehran*] p. 38-49.
- ⁱⁱⁱ . I find it curious that the best documentary I have seen released on the funeral procession for Khomeini which includes the moment when the body was eventually buried has been made by manotv, a TV channel with obvious royalist attitudes (if not financed by the Pahlavis who had to leave Iran because of Khomeini's revolution (Khalaj 2013)). However, we might need to bear in mind that most of the analyses of Khomeini's performance, beliefs, and approach provided in the documentary sound a bit superficial, although, in all fairness, the parts prior to the one about the funeral procession sound more like a hurried prelude to the main part.
- ^{iv} . Although as a Zizekian I am a leftist, in view of actually existing Iranian leftists' approach and attitudes I feel much closer to the reformists.