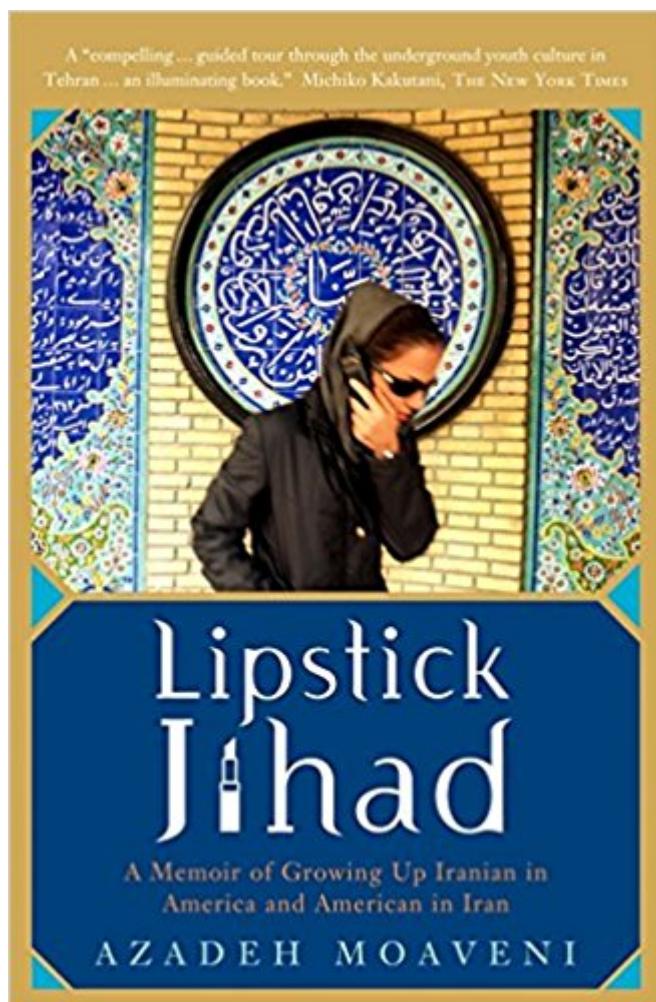


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# Lipstick Jihad: A Memoir Of Growing Up Iranian In America And American In Iran



## Synopsis

As far back as she can remember, Azadeh Moaveni has felt at odds with her tangled identity as an Iranian-American. In suburban America, Azadeh lived in two worlds. At home, she was the daughter of the Iranian exile community, serving tea, clinging to tradition, and dreaming of Tehran. Outside, she was a California girl who practiced yoga and listened to Madonna. For years, she ignored the tense standoff between her two cultures. But college magnified the clash between Iran and America, and after graduating, she moved to Iran as a journalist. This is the story of her search for identity, between two cultures cleaved apart by a violent history. It is also the story of Iran, a restive land lost in the twilight of its revolution. Moaveni's homecoming falls in the heady days of the country's reform movement, when young people demonstrated in the streets and shouted for the Islamic regime to end. In these tumultuous times, she struggles to build a life in a dark country, wholly unlike the luminous, saffron and turquoise-tinted Iran of her imagination. As she leads us through the drug-soaked, underground parties of Tehran, into the hedonistic lives of young people desperate for change, Moaveni paints a rare portrait of Iran's rebellious next generation. The landscape of her Tehran – ski slopes, fashion shows, malls and cafes – is populated by a cast of young people whose exuberance and despair brings the modern reality of Iran to vivid life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Time reporter Moaveni, the American-born child of Iranian exiles, spent two years (2000–2001) working in Tehran. Although she reports on the overall tumult and repression felt by Iranians between the 1999 pro-democracy student demonstrations and the 2002 "Axis of

Evil" declaration, the book's dominant story is more intimate. Moaveni was on a personal search "to figure out my relationship" to Iran. Neither her adolescent ethnic identity conundrums nor her idyllic memories of a childhood visit prepared her for the realities she confronted as she navigated Iran, learning its rules, restrictions and taboos—and how to evade and even exploit them like a local. Because she was a journalist, the shadowy, unnerving presence of an Iranian intelligence agent/interrogator hovered continually ("it would be useful if we saw your work before publication," he told her). Readers also get intimate glimpses of domestic life: Moaveni lived among family and depicts clandestine partying, women's gyms and the popularity of cosmetic surgery. Eventually, Moaveni became "more at home than [her mother] was" in Iran, and a visit to the U.S. showed how Moaveni, who now lives in Beirut, had grown unaccustomed to American life, "where my Iranian instincts served no purpose." *Lipstick Jihad* is a catchy title, but its flippancy does a disservice to Moaveni's nuanced narrative. Agent, Diana Finch. (Mar.) Forecast: This work, as well as Afschineh Latifi's *Even After All This Time*, reviewed above, joins the recent explosion of memoirs by women about living in Iran, and could be displayed alongside Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*, Roya Hakakian's *Journey from the Land of No* and Azar Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran*. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

Adult/High School—Moaveni went to Tehran to report for Time—to find out both the truth about Iran and, she hoped, her "authentic self." One of the strongest memoirs written about being trapped between two countries, the book begins with the author as a young Californian who told friends she was "Persian." Secretly enthralled by the country her parents left during the Islamic Revolution, she wanted to love Iran and determined to give it a chance. She quickly adapted to not smoking or smiling in public. She learned how dating boys and girls seen together on the street are subject to being beaten by the police. During her time in Iran, certain regulations relaxed: veils and roopooshes became available in an array of colors. Citizens pulled off the occasional wild party in the street. There were things she could not accept—as when a friend of hers was caught with a bottle of wine and fined 30 lashes. The author writes well about the aftermath of 9/11—feeling "suspect" in the U.S. and tensing under the weight of President Bush's naming Iran as part of an "Axis of Evil." She includes many stories about Iranians with varying situations and perspectives. Her book is an excellent introduction to the country's recent history and the Islamic Revolution. It makes fine reading both for those who will identify with the author and for those who are curious about how teens in very different countries negotiate their

lives. — Emily Lloyd, Stephen J. Betze Library, Georgetown, DE Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

Azadeh Moaveni is a likable young woman who never felt at "home" in America because of her Iranian heritage. She felt compelled to return to the country of her parents, who immigrated to America due to political turmoil at the end of the Shah's reign. Adadeh was thrilled by her parents tales of a beautiful country and customs of old. When she moved to Iran as a reporter for Time magazine, she found that she was more American than she thought. This is a wonderful personal story, woven with intricately detailed Iranian history. Azadeh can write like nobody's business, she is highly educated and her attention to detail is thorough. I loved this story and adore this writer, she is a wonderful story teller and hope she continues to write more in the future. Read Honeymoon in Tehran after this book as they are written in order of her experiences. I happened to be listening to Rosie radio on Sirius and Janette Barber mentioned what a great read these two books are, so I ordered them and agree. We in America hear only of the horrible government in Iran, not of the ordinary people who try to maintain a normal life with a brutal government. I highly recommend this to anyone who has a desire to understand the middle east, just a little bit more. Fantastic book.

As a Persian-speaking American who learned Persian in college and spent nine months in pre-revolutionary Iran, and am now married to an Iranian, I found Moaveni's book rang true on so many levels...it's the best take I've seen so far on the Iranian diaspora experience in the US, while her descriptions of life as an Iranian-American in Teheran are vivid and brilliantly crafted. So much of the heroism, tragedy and extraordinary cultural contrasts in Iran that we have witnessed on television and the Internet in recent months (2009) takes on whole new dimensions and a great deal more clarity with Moaveni's lucid revelations. I can't wait to read HONEYMOON IN TEHRAN.

I read Moaveni's follow-up book to this one, Honeymoon in Tehran, before reading Lipstick Jihad. I was a huge fan and curious to read her "prequel". It was lots of fun to go vicariously experience her first impressions of Tehran and the experiences of her life that lead up to her first move there, especially already knowing what was to happen later in her tale. She is a beautiful and entertaining writer, infusing her account of modern Iranian culture with many on-the-ground, profoundly relate-able accounts. I left the book feeling inspired as a fellow journalist, and wishing I could go for coffee with Moaveni the next time she's in town!

I enjoyed this book and found it somewhat enlightening about Iran and it was interesting to read how the younger set manages to socialize despite the constant repression by their government. Before going to Iran to live for a time, the author has an idyllic remembrance of a visit there, coupled with the reminiscences of her family. Once she gets there she gets an education of what it's like to live in a society that is in no way free and is governed by religious fanatics. I was annoyed that she still felt so torn throughout the book - she wanted Iran to be so different, and seemed to consider herself Iranian, never once acknowledging her great good fortune of having been born an American. She never mentioned an appreciation for America, only yearning for a better Iran so she could stay there, and ultimately went to live in Beirut but doesn't say why. She could not have a fulfilled life in America? Another thing that bothered me was the narrow perspective. She wrote about how the people she socialized with didn't care at all about Islam and weren't religious, thus giving the impression that the only religious fanatics in Iran are the people running the government. She seemed to think that if Iran could go back to a secular government that Islam would no longer be a problem for Iranians. Also I would have liked more depth pertaining to the problems women experience in this type of environment.

This memoir portrays this woman's reflection on her struggle with finding identity between being an American and being Iranian, whatever each of those labels mean. Although much of the time there is a whiny tone, it proves that the author is being very genuine in the expression of her memories and feelings. It brings a personal perspective to the history of Iran and American-Iranian relations.

What a book! Azadeh is a very bright writer and did an excellent job of telling her story, great title too and very well chosen. This book brings a whole new dimension to Iran. While I thought most Middle Eastern people were obedient to their religion and the mullahs, government, etc., this throws that out the window. Many groups are very modern, rebel in their own ways and desire basic freedoms we all enjoy. They protest, they push the authorities, etc. After reading this, it is so clear to me that the Iranian government is not that tightly in place and the people will probably attain their freedom, as they had at one time, on their own. A very important book to read.

I think this is one of the best books I have read to date about the experience of an Iranian growing up in the USA and trying to cope and then going back to Iran under the IRI and trying to cope. I think that for the average 3rd or even 2nd generation American they have no idea of the complexity of the

challenges psychologically, emotionally and socially that an immigrant is subjected to. As I read the book I relived with the author the periods of naive hope and then brutal disillusionment that accompanied her in both cultures. I could relate in a very personal way with the various defence mechanisms and denials that different personality types developed to cope with either transplantation to the USA or life under the IRI. My hat is off to Ms. Moaveni for such an accurate and insightful portrayal of the situation and I can certainly understand why she had to find a different place to live from either country.

exactly as described

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