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Continuing our series seeking to draw attention to overlooked readings on Tibet, we are happy to be able to provide comments by two long-time friends of the blog, Pico Iyer and Pankaj Mishra, talented and versatile writers whose most recent books are The Open Road: The Global Journey of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama and Temptations of the West: How to Be Modern in India, Pakistan, Tibet, and Beyond, respectively. It seemed particularly appropriate to ask Iyer and Mishra to suggest articles or books that they have found useful in thinking about Tibet but which might be under the radar of many of our readers. This is because six months ago, when we were covering the unrest in Tibet, we put up links to things that each of them had written for newspapers or magazines. We also pointed our readers to the latter’s New Yorker review of the former’s latest book.

Iyer: Read John Avedon’s In Exile from the Land of Snows, already a quarter of a century old and, as a result, fresher, more full of wonder and outrage, with better access to the principal players than any subsequent book on Tibet and its recent history. Then, as a postscript, turn to The Story of Tibet, by Thomas Laird, from 2006, to see not just the larger frame into which Tibet’s recent history has to be put, but, more important, the way in which the world’s most celebrated living Tibetan would read that history, as parable, warning and instruction.

Tibet, more than anywhere, is enfolded in myths, Western projections and wishful fantasies. The only books to read on the subject are the ones that take you deeper and more rigorously into real life.

Mishra: Thanks to the wonderfully comprehensive China Beat site, I can’t think of any undernoticed book or article on China and Tibet in recent months.

Tags: 2008 Tibet