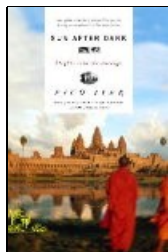


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Book Review
Sun After Dark
Flights Into the Foreign
by [Pico Iyer](#)

Reviewer: [Geoff Wisner](#), Staff Reviewer
Posted: November 3, 2005

Back in 1988 I reviewed [Video Night in Kathmandu](#), Pico Iyer's first book. In it, the author roamed through Asia taking note of the creeping influence of Western culture. The writing was brilliant in a quick, impressionistic way marked with puns and quips in the manner of *Time* magazine, where Iyer had been employed. The author's account of cultures in collision made for striking images and some humor, but I was left with the discouraging impression that much of Asia had been ruined. I promised myself, in particular, never to go to Bali.

It's intriguing and encouraging, then, to read this book, in which Iyer returns to some of the same locations he described in *Video Night* — including Bali — and finds them more mysterious this time around.

The travel pieces and book reviews collected in *Sun After Dark* share the theme of the unsettling journey. In "A Haunted House of Treasures," Iyer encounters the ravaged monuments and terrible memories of Cambodia. In Bolivia, he goes on a guided tour of a prison, and when he tries to leave early is subjected to a strip search and has his privates prodded with a truncheon. Buddhism is a recurring concern in *Sun After Dark*, and the book includes long profiles of the Dalai Lama, whom Iyer has known for many years, and the songwriter Leonard Cohen, who now lives in a remote Zen center in the mountains outside Los Angeles.

Iyer returns to Bali, and this time sees that "Bali is a magical world for those who can see its invisible forces and read all the unseen currents in the air (that woman is a *leyak* witch, and that shade of green portends death.)" His time there is both creepy and romantic, and when he takes home a carved owl as a souvenir it summons up more than he expected. "Almost instantly the New York night was so full of chatterings and hauntings that I had to get up and rip the thing down, and put it away in a closet where I'd never have to lay eyes on it again."

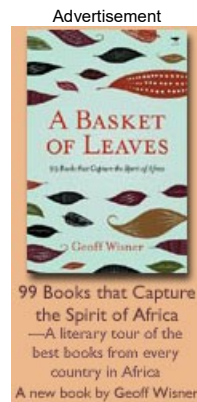
About the Reviewer

[Geoff Wisner](#) is a freelance writer and staff member of Indigocafe.com. He is the author of [A Basket of Leaves: 99 Books That Capture the Spirit of Africa](#). Visit his website at www.geoffwisner.com.



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