

There's Nothing I Can Do When I Think of You Late at Night (Weatherhead Books on Asia)

Naiqian Cao

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Set among a remote cluster of cave dwellings in Shanxi province, *There's Nothing I Can Do When I Think of You Late at Night* is a genre-defying exposé of rural communism. In a series of vivid, interlocking vignettes, several narrators speak of adultery, bestiality, incest, and vice, revealing the consequences of desire in a world of necessity.

The Wen Clan Caves are based on an isolated village where the author, Cao Naiqian, lived during the Cultural Revolution. The land is hard and unforgiving and the people suffer in poverty and ignorance. Through the individual perspectives of the Wen Clan denizens, a complete portrait of village life takes shape. Dark yet lyrical, Cao's snapshots range from pastoral stories of childhood innocence to shocking accounts of brutality and terror. His work echoes William Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses* and Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*, yet the author's depictions of elemental passions and regional mores make the book entirely his own.

Celebrated for its economy of expression, flashes of humor, and an emphasis on understatement rarely found in Chinese fiction, *There's Nothing I Can Do When I Think of You Late at Night* is an excellent introduction to the power and craft of Cao Naiqian. His vivid personalities and unflinching realism herald the haunting work of an original literary force.



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