

Philosophical novel. Qian Zhongshu. *Fortress Besieged*. Existential Crisis. Allegory. Modern China.

Beginning with an overview of the interconnection between literature and philosophy in modern Chinese literature, this paper analyses the novel *Fortress Besieged* (1947) written by Qian Zhongshu, a polyglot Chinese scholar of East-West comparative literature and philosophy. It compares the novel's overarching allegory, i. e. a fortress besieged, in juxtaposition with the philosophical allegories about the mutability and limitations of human life. It concludes with a reflection on the seminal influence of this novel in contemporary Chinese society where "fortress besieged" has become an everyday word referring to one's existential crisis.

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