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"Literature as a Vehicle for the Dao": Changing perspectives of fiction and truth in Chinese literature.

This paper takes its point of departure in the traditional Chinese precept "Literature is a vehicle for conveying the Dao" and shows how in premodern times literature was used as an instrument to convey the "truths" of the Confucian orthodoxy, while in modern times it became its task to convey the "truths" of the Maoist orthodoxy. It also shows how writers of different eras have attempted to resist reducing literature to an ideological vehicle and instead seen literary creation as a way of exploring the human condition and seeking new insights.

It argues that no matter whether there were in premodern China any exact equivalents to the modern notions of fiction and truth, one may still fruitfully discuss traditional Chinese views of literature in these terms.

It discusses how fiction in the broad sense of written descriptions of imaginary rather than real people and events was conceived in the intellectual universe of the Chinese empire.

Finally it briefly discusses the significance of the emergence of the modern Chinese concept of fiction, *xugou* 虚构.