

THE GENERATIVE LOGIC AND SPIRITUAL CONSTRUCTION OF SU SHI'S CONCEPT OF "HOME" FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS THEORY

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Abstract: *Su Shi experienced lifelong official wandering and repeated demotions. His idea of "home" reflects his personal journey and the spiritual essence of ancient Chinese scholar-officials. Current studies mainly interpret this idea via Confucian, Buddhist and Taoist thought, patriotism and personality, lacking dynamic analysis of its evolving formation. Based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs and literary psychology, this paper examines Su Shi's poems and essays across different life stages to unpack how his "home" concept developed sequentially into physical, ethical and spiritual forms. In youth, "home" represented material stability, family duties and political ambitions. Exile transformed it into an ethical community bound by kinship, friendship and compassion for ordinary folks. After being banished to Huangzhou, Huizhou and Danzhou, Su Shi surpassed physical dwellings and reached the spiritual state that "Where the mind finds peace, there is my home". This study puts forward a three-layer framework and the "Su Shi Need-Transcendence Model". Unlike Maslow's linear need progression, Su Shi attained spiritual transcendence through writing, cultural beliefs and self-cultivation amid constant threats to his safety needs, revealing the distinctive spiritual transcendence embedded in traditional Chinese culture.*

Keywords: *Su Shi, Conception of Home, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Literary Psychology, Spiritual Construction*

Introduction

Su Shi: Historical and Cultural Background

Su Shi (1037–1101), also known as Zizhan and Dongpo, was one of the most influential writers, poets, calligraphers, painters, and politicians of the Northern Song Dynasty (960–1127) in China. He is widely recognized as one of the greatest figures in the history of Chinese literature, having made enduring contributions to poetry, prose, calligraphy, painting, and philosophy. Throughout his political career, Su Shi experienced multiple promotions, demotions, and exiles due to political conflicts, the most famous of which was the "Wutai Poetry Incident" (Wutai Shicai) in 1079. He was successively demoted to Huangzhou, Huizhou, and Danzhou, and this series of demotions profoundly influenced his literary works and philosophical views. Su Shi fused the Confucian ideal of social responsibility, the Taoist spirit of freedom, and the Buddhist concept of self-transcendence, forming a resilient and optimistic philosophy of life. His famous quote, "Where the mind finds peace, there is my home" (Ci xin An chu Shi Wu Xiang), has become one of the most classic expressions for Chinese people to understand their sense of spiritual belonging. This study explores the evolution of Su Shi's concept of "home" through this unique historical and cultural background.

From Realistic Home to Spiritual Home: The Formation and Spiritual Construction of Su Shi's Concept of "Home"

In *Song of the Wind and Rain*, Su Shi writes, "Where the mind finds peace, there is my home". These seven words reveal his unique understanding of home. Throughout his life, he traveled to Meishan, Kaifeng, Hangzhou, Mizhou, Xuzhou, Huzhou, Huangzhou, Huizhou, Danzhou, Changzhou and many other places. His official career was fraught with hardships, and he spent most of his life wandering and displaced. Contrasting with his drifting life trajectory, the notion of home runs through all his literary works and life experiences. From his youthful focus on family duties and official achievements, to his exile years pouring emotions into landscapes and missing relatives and friends, and to his later years transcending reality to pursue inner peace, home acts not only as a core theme of Su Shi's writing, but also a pivotal anchor for shaping his personality and spirit.

Conventionally, home refers to a residence, family or clan community where people settle down. For Su Shi, who endured constant political turbulence and life hardships, the connotation of home far exceeded physical space. After the Wutai Poetry Case, Su Shi lost stable official status and living conditions, and his tangible home was repeatedly destroyed. Nevertheless, he did not suffer spiritual breakdown; instead, he redefined the meaning of home amid displacement and exile. From the open-mindedness of "A straw raincoat suffices to brave a lifetime of wind and rain" in Huangzhou, to the contentment of "I would feast on lychees three hundred a day and never wish to leave Lingnan" in Huizhou, and the spiritual transcendence of "I bear no resentment for venturing to this remote southern wilderness, for this journey offers matchless wonders" in Hainan, Su Shi gradually transformed physical dwellings into inner spiritual refuge, completing the shift from external space to the inner realm of life.

Research on Su Shi's conception of home facilitates in-depth comprehension of his life philosophy and literary spirit, and further reveals how traditional Chinese literati reconstructed their spirits through cultural faith, literary creation and self-cultivation amid real predicaments, bearing dual significance for literary research and literary psychology.

Taking Maslow's hierarchy of needs as the analytical framework and adopting literary psychology methodologies, this paper contends that Su Shi's conception of home is a dynamically generated construct shaped by real circumstances, life experience and spiritual aspiration, rather than a fixed cultural concept. Its development unfolds in three phases: physical home, emotional home and spiritual home. On this basis, this paper puts forward the three-tier structure of "physical home—ethical home—spiritual home" and develops the Su Shi Need-Transcendence Model. Unlike Maslow's linear progression of hierarchical needs, Su Shi attained active spiritual transcendence through literary creation, cultural faith and self-cultivation while suffering sustained frustrations to his safety needs.

Literature Review

Research on Su Shi's Conception of Home

There have been abundant research findings on Su Shi's thoughts and personality spirit, with discussions on the concept of "family" and life consciousness continuously deepening. Wang Shuizhao and Zhu Gang systematically reviewed Su Shi's life journey and ideological evolution in their "Commentary on Su Shi", pointing out that his thoughts exhibit the basic characteristics of a complementary blend of Confucianism and Taoism, laying an important foundation for understanding the cultural connotation of Su Shi's "family" thoughts (Wang Shuizhao & Zhu Gang, 2011). Yang Shengkuan's "Research on Su Shi's Personality" delves into Su Shi's spiritual world from the perspective of personality construction, arguing that Su Shi developed a personality spirit that combines Confucian responsibility, Taoist detachment, and Buddhist harmony during his long exile (Yang Shengkuan, 2013).

Specifically regarding the study of the "family" ideology, Xu Hua's "Research on the Family Instructions of the 'Three Su' - Centered on Poetry and Prose" explores the inheritance of the Su family's educational tradition and its influence on Su Shi from the perspective of family culture and family instruction tradition. It argues that Su Shi's "family" ideology embodies the unity of Confucian concepts of self-cultivation, family governance, and state administration, as well as the spiritual tradition of scholar-officials (Xu Hua, 2018). Yan Mengchun's "Using Virtue to Manage the World: The Inheritance and Implications of the Su Family's Educational Tradition in Meishan" further points out that the Su family's educational tradition in Meishan revolves around virtue, with filial piety, loyalty, and benevolence jointly constructing a framework of responsibility. The kinship community and political community are connected through virtue (Yan Mengchun, 2024). In addition, Zhu Gang's article "The 'Family' of Dongpo Scholar" systematically sorts out the multiple connotations and evolutionary trajectories of the "family" concept in Su Shi's poetry and prose, pointing out that Su Shi's concept of family is constantly changing and reconstructing, showing a dynamic characteristic of continuous migration and expansion from his hometown Meishan to Dongpo in Huangzhou, and then to Changzhou, Huizhou, and Danzhou (Zhu Gang, 2019). These studies have well revealed the cultural connotation of Su Shi's "family" ideology, but most of them remain at a static analysis of the ideological content. There is still a lack of systematic dynamic explanations on how the "family" concept continuously changes and develops with life experiences, especially research that reveals its generative mechanism from a psychological perspective.

Research on Su Shi's Life Consciousness and Exile Literature

Regarding the research on Su Shi's life consciousness and exile literature, the academic community generally believes that his long-term political setbacks have shaped a broad-minded and detached life realm. Lin Yutang's "The Biography of Su Dongpo" presents Su Shi's rich life

experiences and personal charm in a biographical manner, emphasizing his broad-minded and optimistic attitude towards life as an important spiritual resource of Chinese traditional culture (Lin Yutang, 2017). Zhu Jinghua proposes in "New Perspectives on Su Shi" that Su Shi's thought is not simply a mixture of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, but rather a dynamic process of constantly "forming oneself" (Zhu Jinghua, 2002). Ren Beibei's "Research on Su Shi's Thoughts and Mental State during His Exile in Huangzhou and His Ci Poems" specifically examines Su Shi's spiritual transformation from depression to self-adaptation during his exile in Huangzhou (Ren Beibei, 2026). Zhang Peng's "Exploring the Construction of the Spiritual Homeland in Su Shi's 'Eight Songs of Dongpo'" discusses how Su Shi reconstructed his spiritual homeland through land reclamation, social interaction, and ideological integration from the perspective of farming and labor in Huangzhou (Zhang Peng, 2025). Overall, related research has paid more attention to Su Shi's life philosophy, adversity personality, and aesthetic spirit, but less to the overall investigation of "home" as a core thread running through his life development, with insufficient attention paid to the psychological dynamic mechanism behind his spiritual growth.

Research from the Perspective of Literary Psychology

In recent years, literary psychology has gradually become an important method in the study of ancient literature. Tong Qingbing and Cheng Zhengmin's "Course of Literary Psychology" systematically constructs the theoretical system of literary psychology, providing an important theoretical foundation for the interdisciplinary research of literature and psychology (Tong Qingbing & Cheng Zhengmin, 2011). Lu Shuyuan's "Literary Psychology" explores the psychological mechanisms of literary activities from multiple dimensions, including creative psychology and reception psychology (Lu Shuyuan, 2010). Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory, which emphasizes human growth and self-actualization, has a high explanatory power in the study of the spirit of literary characters. Maslow systematically proposed the Hierarchy of Needs theory in his classic paper "A Theory of Human Motivation", which includes five levels: physiological needs, safety needs, belonging and love needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs (Maslow, 1943). Koltko-Rivera further points out that Maslow also proposed the theory of self-transcendence in his later years, enriching the highest realm of the Hierarchy of Needs (Koltko-Rivera, 2006).

Existing research has paid insufficient attention to the dynamic generation mechanism of Su Shi's "family" thought, which is precisely the issue this article focuses on exploring.

Research Framework

Theoretical Foundation: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Its Applicability

This paper adopts Maslow's hierarchy of needs as the core analytical tool. The theory divides human needs into five tiers: physiological needs, safety needs, love and belongingness needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. It posits that individuals generally advance to higher levels only after lower-level needs are relatively satisfied (Maslow, 1943). In his later years, Maslow proposed the theory of self-transcendence, incorporating spiritual and transcendent demands as the highest stage of personality development (Koltko-Rivera, 2006). This theoretical framework provides an important reference for analyzing the hierarchical and developmental nature of Su Shi's conception of home.

It should be clarified that this paper does not mechanically apply psychological concepts. Instead, it uses the hierarchy of needs as an analytical lens to reveal the progressive logic of Su

Shi's conception of home from material survival to spiritual transcendence. The Chinese traditional notion of home integrates material sustenance, ethical bonds and spiritual destination, which bears an inherent consistency with Maslow's thinking on personality stratification. The integration of the two theories helps break the static interpretive mode prevailing in prior research.

Core Concept: The Three-Tier Structure of Su Shi's Conception of Home

The conception of home discussed in this paper is not merely a notion of family or hometown sentiment, but a dynamic system covering three dimensions: physical space, ethical relations and spiritual realm. Physical Home: Corresponding to physiological and safety needs. It refers to material anchors including tangible residences, property and official identity. Ethical Home: Corresponding to love and belongingness needs as well as esteem needs. It denotes an emotional community forged by kinship, friendship and care for the general populace. Spiritual Home: Corresponding to self-actualization and self-transcendence needs. It stands for an inner state of self-sufficiency attained through personal cultivation and literary creation.

Research Approach and Logical Structure

This paper combines close textual reading with literary psychology, taking Su Shi's poems, *Ci* lyrics and prose from various life stages as primary materials, and unfolds arguments following the progressive logic of physical home — ethical home — spiritual home. The research path is as follows:

First, based on survival and safety demands, this paper explores the realistic connotations of Su Shi's early conception of home. Second, starting from ethical affections and social recognition, it analyzes how Su extended the idea of home from the private sphere to public care for society. Third, from the perspective of personality growth and spiritual transcendence, it uncovers the in-depth psychological mechanism behind his famous line "Where the mind finds peace, there is my home".

The whole paper adopts an analytical route from the superficial to the profound, from the external to the internal, striving to fully demonstrate the generative logic and spiritual construction of Su Shi's conception of home.

Physical Home: The Foundational Origin of Su Shi's Conception of Home

Maslow argues that physiological and safety needs form the foundation of human personality development. For Su Shi, his early conception of home took shape at this material level, making physical home the logical starting point of his overall spiritual construction of home.

Su Shi grew up in a scholarly clan in Meishan, Sichuan. His father Su Xun, mother Lady Cheng and younger brother Su Zhe formed his original family community. Beyond material supply, his family cultivated Confucian values in him. The Confucian maxim "Self-cultivation, regulating the family, governing the state, bringing peace to the world" defined the life path of scholar-officials. Home served both the starting point of ethical order and a prerequisite for realizing political aspirations. In his youth, Su Shi eagerly pursued official careers, closely linking his life goals to family duties and national missions. For young Su Shi, home represented tangible stability: a secure livelihood, clan obligations and the possibility of meritorious service.

To My Younger Brother at Mianchi fully illustrates Su Shi's understanding of family and existential belonging. The lines "What does human life resemble? A wild goose leaving footprints on snow. The marks stay briefly, yet the goose flies east or west without lingering" use wild geese on snow as a metaphor for wandering life. Though human traces are left behind, they will eventually fade away. Still, the poem cherishes shared memories of the old days. This work reveals Su Shi's fundamental insight into home: amid the impermanence of life, fame cannot sustain life's meaning; instead, kinship and shared experience constitute lasting spiritual anchors.

As his official career progressed, Su Shi expanded the connotation of home into local governance and political practice. During his tenures in Xuzhou, Mizhou and Hangzhou, he regarded governing the people and improving their livelihood as the core duty of a literati-official. Home was no longer confined to private family spheres but acquired public significance, best manifested in *Record of the Detached Platform*. Although the essay advocates that "all things possess beauty, and beauty brings joy", it was written against the backdrop of building the Detached Platform to improve Mizhou's living environment and stabilize local residents. His "detachment" did not mean escapism from reality, but spiritual reconciliation while undertaking real-world responsibilities.

The poem *Eastern Slope* further reflects the connection between physical home and labor: "Rain cleans Eastern Slope under clear moonlight; townsfolk pass by, leaving only wanderers. Do not disdain this rugged hillside trail—I love the clacking sound of my walking cane." Demoted to Huangzhou and stripped of official rank, Su Shi had to farm wasteland to feed himself. In the preface to *Eight Poems on Eastern Slope*, he writes: "Two years after my arrival in Huangzhou, I suffered constant poverty. My old friend Ma Zhengqing took pity on my shortage of food and secured dozens of mu of abandoned official land for me to cultivate."

Farming originated out of survival pressure, yet Su Shi did not sink into despair. Labor helped him rebuild his life order. Eastern Slope became both a literal dwelling and a space to restore his sense of life. Labor endowed the land new meaning, rooting home not in official status, but in authentic bonds between humans, land and daily existence. This labor-based reconstruction of home satisfied survival needs while enabling self-affirmation of his inner self.

After the Wutai Poetry Case, Su Shi lost political standing and social identity, leaving his safety needs chronically unfulfilled. Nevertheless, instead of lingering in worldly hardships, he reconstructed life's meaning and ultimately attained spiritual freedom, which reflects the prominent transcendental dimension of personality growth within the context of traditional Chinese culture.

Ethical Home: The Ethical Construction of Su Shi's Conception of Home

As Su Shi's life circumstances changed, his understanding of home transcended physical dwellings and blood ties, entering a new phase centered on emotional bonds and ethical responsibility. After the Wutai Poetry Case, drastic shifts in daily life disintegrated traditional family spaces, while kinship, friendship and compassion for ordinary people became the pillars sustaining his inner world. Home transformed from physical residence into an emotional and ethical community, corresponding to Maslow's love and belongingness needs as well as esteem needs.

The construction of Su Shi's ethical home first stems from fraternal affection. Su Zhe was not merely a blood brother, but his most vital spiritual confidant. Raised side by side, they passed the imperial examinations together and endured political turmoil as a pair, forging an unbreakable emotional bond. Su Shi's numerous responsive poems to Su Zhe are far more than routine literary exchanges; through writing, they continuously affirmed their spiritual connection, rendering fraternity a core component of home.

To My Younger Brother at Mianchi embodies this bond. The wild goose metaphor laments drifting official life and the transience of human existence. Yet the spiritual support sustaining Su amid impermanence lies not in pursuit of fame, but shared memories with his brother. For Su Shi, fraternal love surpassed blood relations and became the most stable anchor amid wandering. Home first took shape as an ethical community that shared memories and endured hardships together.

Conjugal affection infused deeper warmth into his ethical home. *Jiangchengzi: Dreaming of My Late Wife on the Tenth Anniversary of Her Death*, an elegy dedicated to Wang Fu, opens with "Ten years separate the living and the dead; I never intentionally dwell on you, yet you never fade from my mind". The line "Last night I dreamed of returning home: by the small window, she combs her hair" depicts "returning home" not as a literal trip to his hometown, but a retreat into their shared spiritual world. Though physical separation by death is irreversible, emotional memory persists eternally. In Su Shi's mind, home does not vanish with the passing of loved ones but continues to exist through remembrance and longing.

Spiritual communion with friends further expanded the ethical boundaries of home. Su Shi maintained extensive friendships with literati and monks including Huang Tingjian, Qin Guan and Fo Yin. During exile, companionship relieved loneliness and helped him rebuild spiritual order. Though *Xijiangyue: The World Is But a Dream* sighs over the fleeting autumn chills of mortal life, its closing line "Who shall share this lonely Mid-Autumn moon? I lift my wine cup and gaze sorrowfully northward" directs personal sentiment toward distant relatives and friends. Here, home extends beyond nuclear families to all those who resonate spiritually with him.

Su Shi's ethical home also manifests in his people-centered governance philosophy. As a local magistrate, he prioritized public welfare. During the Yellow River flood in Xuzhou, the river burst its banks and submerged the city. Su Shi camped on the city wall and refused to return home, placing all townsfolk's safety above his own life. In Hangzhou, he dredged West Lake and built the Su Causeway to solve irrigation and drinking water problems. These practices reflect his governance ideology of treating the whole locality as his family and all civilians as his kin.

In Su Shi's view, common people were not mere governing subjects, but fellow residents of the same social sphere; hence local governance equated to governing an extended family. Whether depicting rural labor, village customs or urban life, he observed ordinary folks with equal sincerity. He integrated his personal fate with that of the masses, shifting the value of home from private ethics to public ethics and realizing the transition from "small family" to "universal family". This ethos of "all people are my siblings" represents the core spirit of traditional Chinese literati-officials, endowing Su Shi's conception of home with universal value beyond individual experience and his era.

From Maslow's perspective, love and belongingness needs rely on stable interpersonal bonds, while esteem needs center on self-worth affirmation. Plagued by political setbacks and constant displacement, Su Shi repeatedly lost tangible home, yet the ethical network of his brother, wife, friends and townsfolk granted him new belonging and reaffirmed his existential value. The ethical home acts as a vital bridge linking physical dwelling and spiritual refuge, laying solid groundwork for Su Shi's ultimate spiritual transcendence encapsulated in "Where the heart finds peace lies my hometown".

Spiritual Home: The Transcendental Construction of Su Shi's Conception of Home

Spiritual home represents the highest form of Su Shi's conception of home. Unlike Maslow's classic linear model, Su Shi did not regress to survival pursuits when his safety needs were chronically unmet; instead, he took the initiative to perfect his personality through inner spiritual construction.

Huangzhou: Seeking Spiritual Home Amid Adversity

Demoted to Huangzhou in the third year of the Yuanfeng reign (1080), Su Shi encountered a pivotal turning point marking the shift from physical to spiritual home. In Huangzhou, his tangible home collapsed completely: stripped of official rank, impoverished, separated from relatives, he sank to the lowest point of his life. Amid total loss, he began to seek spiritual sustenance anew.

Song of the Wind and Rain best illustrates this transformation: "Do not heed rain beating through the woods; why not stroll forward chanting aloud?/A bamboo cane and straw sandals surpass horse and saddle—what fear have I?/A straw raincoat suffices to brave a lifetime of wind and rain."

Successive rhetorical questions liberate Su Shi from external constraints. Wind and rain symbolize both natural storms and political persecution. Adopting the identity of an ordinary man with cane and sandals, Su Shi reaffirms his intrinsic value. "A straw raincoat suffices to brave a lifetime of wind and rain" responds to hardship while declaring his spiritual stance: true home resides in inner stability and freedom, not external shelter. The closing lines "I turn back to the wind-swept path; I return—no wind, no rain, no sunshine remains" dissolve the significance of worldly gain and loss. "Returning" means retreating into one's inner mind, not a specific residence. At this stage, home no longer depends on physical space and exists purely as spiritual refuge.

Bu Suanzi: Residing at Dinghui Temple in Huangzhou deepens this construction: "A waning moon hangs over sparse parasol trees; the water clock fades, all human sound fades. Who sees a lonely hermit wandering, the faint shadow of a solitary swan?" The lone swan serves as Su Shi's spiritual self-portrait. The second stanza reads "It inspects every cold branch yet refuses to settle, lingering on the cold sandbar". "Inspecting all cold branches" signifies no viable physical dwelling in reality; "refuses to settle" embodies independent character and spiritual integrity. Though stripped of tangible home, Su Shi gained spiritual autonomy. The Huangzhou period witnessed Su's first breakthrough beyond physical limitations toward spiritual construction.

Huizhou: Shifting Spiritual Home From Outer Space to Inner Mind

Relegated to Huizhou in the first year of the Shaosheng reign (1094), over a decade after his Huangzhou exile, Su Shi endured relentless political persecution and gradually abandoned

obsession with official fame, turning greater attention to life's essence. The meaning of home evolved from searching for spiritual shelter to constructing inner consciousness.

His poem *Eating Lychees* states: "I feast on lychees three hundred a day and would never wish to leave Lingnan." Lingnan was deemed a remote, miasma-ridden frontier in the Song Dynasty, yet Su Shi willingly embraced permanent residence there. This reflected psychological reconstruction of regional identity rather than genuine fondness for Lingnan. Instead of resenting exile, he discovered beauty in ordinary life and redefined unfamiliar territory as spiritual space, embodying the traditional Chinese wisdom of finding peace wherever one dwells. Home broke geographical confinement and traveled alongside his inner mind.

Casual Verse further captures his transcendence: "White hair flutters in frost wind; I lean on a rattan bed, frail and ill. Tell the master he sleeps soundly through spring dawn; the Taoist monk strikes the midnight bell softly." The poem contains no grief or complaint, only tranquil depictions of sickly rest and distant temple bells. The phrase "sleeps soundly through spring dawn" is striking: Su Shi's happiness no longer relied on political success, but inner serenity. This mental state proves home was fully internalized—spiritual freedom renders any place a hometown.

Hainan: Final Completion of Transcendental Spiritual Home

Before receiving amnesty and traveling north, Su Shi was exiled to Danzhou on Hainan Island, the remotest banishment land of the Song Dynasty. Historical records note Lingnan suffered sweltering rain and toxic fog, with nine out of ten northerners perishing there; Danzhou offered "no meat, no medicine, no housing, no companions, no charcoal in winter, no cool spring in summer", with extremely harsh living conditions. From a worldly perspective, Su Shi lost all secular forms of home, yet he finalized his spiritual home on Hainan.

Sailing Homeward on the Twentieth Night of the Sixth Month reads: "I bear no grudge for venturing to this remote southern wilderness, for this journey offers matchless wonders." "Venturing to this remote southern wilderness" encapsulates Hainan's hardships, while "I bear no grudge" subverts the sorrowful tone of traditional exile literature. Instead of wallowing in suffering, Su deemed this journey life's greatest achievement, transforming hardship into spiritual wealth. The closing couplet "When clouds disperse and the moon shines clear, who needs adornment? Heaven and sea are inherently pure" depicts natural scenery as a metaphor for purified inner mind. True clarity lies within oneself; spiritual freedom is attainable anywhere once the heart reaches a translucent state.

Self-Inscription at Jinshan Portrait Hall summarizes Su's lifelong spiritual journey: "My heart is charred ash; my body an unmoored boat/If you ask of my life's great achievements—Huangzhou, Huizhou, Danzhou."

The poem omits milestones such as imperial examination success and Hanlin Academy service, framing three demotions as his life's true accomplishments. This confirms Su's personality was shaped by spiritual growth amid suffering rather than official glory. The line "my body an unmoored boat" carries special significance: "unmoored" symbolizes liberation from external fetters. Though the boat drifts without anchorage, it moves freely; home exists fully in spirit despite lacking physical form. This marks the ultimate completion of Su's spiritual home.

Su Shi's conception of home evolved from physical space to inner self-sufficiency: he sought spiritual refuge amid Huangzhou's suffering, shifted home's locus to inner mind in Huizhou, and finalized transcendental spiritual construction on Hainan, reconciling spirit and reality when planning Yixing settlement. Contrary to Maslow's linear model, Su advanced toward spiritual freedom even with chronically unmet safety needs, demonstrating the unique power of Chinese traditional wisdom to overcome adversity and reconstruct subjectivity. For Su, home ultimately transcended houses and regions, evolving into a spiritual realm that shelters life, surmounts suffering and perfects human character.

Methodological Significance

Systematic examination of Su Shi's conception of home through Maslow's hierarchy of needs, combined with his poetry and prose, yields insights for literary research methodologies.

Application Value of Maslow's Theory in Literary Studies

Though originating from modern Western psychology, Maslow's theory focuses on human growth, personality development and spiritual refinement, aligning closely with literary studies centered on writers' life experience. For classical Chinese poetry and prose, literary works serve as carriers of poets' life trajectories, mental states and spiritual pursuits. Maslow's framework breaks the limits of static ideological interpretation in traditional intellectual history, enabling reinterpretation of literary generative mechanisms from personality and psychological dimensions (Tong & Cheng, 2011).

This paper does not mechanically apply Western psychology to redefine Su Shi, but uses the hierarchy of needs as an interpretive lens to trace how Su's conception of home evolved and spiritually elevated amid shifting life circumstances. Such cross-disciplinary perspectives offer new lenses for classical literary research and facilitate constructive dialogue between traditional literature and modern humanistic disciplines.

Theoretical Contribution of the Su Shi Need-Transcendence Model

Maslow's hierarchy posits needs progress linearly from lower to higher tiers, with higher needs predicated on prior satisfaction of basic demands. Yet Su Shi's life proves individuals supported by unique cultural and spiritual beliefs are not bound to this linear progression.

After the Wutai Poetry Case, Su Shi lost political standing, social identity and material security, leaving his safety needs chronically unfulfilled. Per Maslow's logic, individuals would regress to pursue survival and safety; yet Su Shi continuously reconstructed life meaning and attained spiritual freedom without fixating on hardship. This reveals the prominent transcendental dimension of personality growth within Chinese cultural context.

Accordingly, this paper proposes the Su Shi Need-Transcendence Model:

Loss of Real-World Safety → Reconstruction of Life Meaning → Attainment of Spiritual Freedom

The model argues real adversity may catalyze spiritual maturation rather than terminate personal growth. Drawing on Confucian sense of responsibility, Taoist reverence for nature and Buddhist transcendental wisdom, Su Shi transformed external suffering into opportunities for self-cultivation, redirecting life's value from worldly achievement to spiritual fulfillment. Home shifted from tangible possession to inner state, completing the fundamental transition from "owning a home" to "being a home". Retaining Maslow's core insight of progressive

personality growth while embodying Chinese culture's emphasis on inner cultivation and spiritual peace, this model supplements localized applications of the hierarchy of needs in literary studies.

Cross-Disciplinary Enlightenments of Literary Psychology

This paper further highlights literature's active role in personality construction. Literary psychology research long regarded writing as a passive reflection of inner mental activity, yet Su Shi's conception of home proves literature deeply participates in personality shaping and life meaning reconstruction beyond mere emotional recording.

Works including *Song of the Wind and Rain* and *Bu Suanzi* (Huangzhou), *Eating Lychees and Casual Verse* (Huizhou), *Sailing Homeward* and *Self-Inscription at Jinshan Portrait Hall* (Hainan) record Su's emotional fluctuations while reshaping his outlook on life and spiritual horizon through sustained composition. Poetic creation became Su's primary medium for psychological adjustment, self-reinvention and overcoming hardship, forming bidirectional interaction between literary practice and personal growth.

Literature constitutes an active practice of life construction rather than passive reproduction of reality. For Su, writing functioned as emotional expression, self-healing, self-education and spiritual refinement. By endowing suffering new meaning through composition, individuals achieve personality reconstruction and value affirmation in writing and reading processes. This expands literary psychology's comprehension of literary functions and uncovers abundant life education and psychological resources embedded within classical Chinese literature. Future classical literary research may adopt more psychological perspectives for cross-disciplinary dialogue. Meanwhile, ancient literature provides valuable cultural wisdom to address modern spiritual anxiety and displacement.

Conclusion

Systematically investigating Su Shi's generative logic of home with Maslow's hierarchy of needs and his cross-stage literary works, this paper draws three core conclusions.

First, Su Shi's conception of home follows a progressive generative law evolving from physical home to ethical home and finally spiritual home, corresponding respectively to physiological & safety needs, love & esteem needs, and self-transcendence needs.

Second, Su's life trajectory breaks Maslow's linear need progression model, demonstrating the transcendental character of personality growth within Chinese traditional culture. When safety and survival needs sustained collapse, individuals may reconstruct life meaning and attain personal freedom and spiritual transcendence via cultural faith, literary creation and self-cultivation. The proposed "Loss of Real-World Safety → Reconstruction of Life Meaning → Attainment of Spiritual Freedom" model illustrates Chinese culture's alternative growth path prioritizing inner cultivation and spiritual peace, offering new perspectives for localized interpretation of Maslow's theory.

Third, the formation of Su's conception of home highlights literature's vital function in personality construction and life education. Literary works truthfully reflect writers' mental states while actively participating in character shaping and life meaning reconstruction through sustained creation. Su's poems and essays written during his exile periods document his circumstances and emotions while acting as mediums for self-adjustment and transcendence.

Literature thus bears aesthetic value alongside psychological healing, personality construction and cultural inheritance functions.

It should be noted that this study still has certain limitations. Firstly, in terms of research materials, this paper primarily analyzes Su Shi's poetry creations, and the exploration of materials related to the concept of "family" in his prose works such as letters, memorials, and prefaces is not sufficient. Future research can further expand the scope of literature to form a more complete evidence chain. Secondly, in terms of theoretical application, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory, as a framework of Western psychology, differs culturally from the traditional Chinese scholar's path of personality development, which involves "self-cultivation, family regulation, country governance, and world peace." Although this paper attempts to provide a localized interpretation, there is still room for deepening the cross-theoretical adaptability. Thirdly, in terms of research time period, this paper focuses on the evolution of Su Shi's "family" thought during his exile period, with less emphasis on his early career aspirations and the formation of his "family" concept during the Yuanyou period, failing to fully reflect the continuity and complexity of his ideological development throughout his life.

Overall, this article dynamically interprets Su Shi's "family" thought from the perspective of combining literary psychology with literary research, attempting to construct a theoretical framework for its generative logic and spiritual construction. In the future, more comprehensive research on the spiritual world of ancient Chinese literati can be conducted by combining digital humanities and cross-cultural comparison approaches.

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