

Heat, Flight, and Density

Xu Jiajia's Early Poetics of Sensation, Freedom, and Associative Thought

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Abstract

This essay introduces and critically frames the early poetic works of Xu Jiajia (徐嘉佳), a young Chinese poet born in 2014. Rather than approaching her writing through the lens of age, pedagogy, or novelty, the essay reads her poems as serious lyric experiments characterized by associative thinking, sensory density, and intuitive structural intelligence. Through close readings of three short poems—“Summer vs Steak”, “Epiphany”, and “Dense”—presented in bilingual Chinese–English form, the column examines how Xu’s work mobilizes contrast, repetition, and metaphor to construct a distinctive poetic logic rooted in sensation rather than explanation. Her poems demonstrate an instinctive grasp of complementarity, freedom, and intensity, revealing a mode of lyric cognition often inaccessible to adult poetic language. Positioned within *Verse Version*’s commitment to discovering emerging poetic voices across cultures and ages, this essay argues that Xu Jiajia’s work should be read not as “children’s poetry,” but as early-stage lyric intelligence—poetry that reminds us how imagination precedes doctrine, and how genuine poetic force often appears first as heat, flight, and density.

Keywords: Xu Jiajia, lyric imagination, sensory poetics, associative thinking

Editor’s Note

Verse Version is committed not only to established poetic voices, but to the conditions under which poetry first comes into being. To discover a poet is not merely to recognize

Received 11 September 2025, Revised 9 October 2025, Accepted 1 November 2025.

Citation: Zhu, H. Y. (2025). Heat, Flight, and Density: Xu Jiajia’s Early Poetics of Sensation, Freedom, and Associative Thought. *Verse Version*, 14(2), 160-168.

<https://doi.org/10.64699/25OOFK4275>

mastery, but to recognize structural sensitivity, ethical perception, and imaginative courage at their moment of emergence.

This column presents the work of Xu Jiajia, a poet born in 2014, whose poems demonstrate an unusually concentrated lyric intelligence. We publish her work not as a pedagogical sample, nor as a novelty of youth, but as poetry—worthy of the same close attention, bilingual presentation, and critical seriousness afforded to any poet in our pages.

PART I

(Editorial Introduction · Poetic Orientation · Early Lyric Intelligence)

1. Editorial Introduction: Discovering a Poet Before the Categories Arrive

Literary history often encounters poets too late—after habits have solidified, after imagination has learned restraint, after language has learned how to behave. To encounter a poet early is rare, and to read such work seriously is rarer still.

Xu Jiajia (徐嘉佳), born in March 2014 in the Year of the Horse, writes poetry not from a position of mastery, but from risk. Her poems move with speed, leap through analogy, and refuse to remain within a single semantic frame. What distinguishes her work is not innocence, but velocity—a mind willing to test how far language can be pushed before it collapses.

Her poetry is a vivid adventure of words: innocence sharpened into blade, imagination unfolded into wings. She enters the regions the adult language often fails to reach—not by force, but by instinct. The storms that surge through her lines are not destructive; they are the raw, abundant energy of life itself, pressing against the limits of the page.

For *Verse Version*, an international journal committed to poet-centered inquiry, Xu Jiajia's poems offer a rare opportunity: to witness poetry before it learns to disguise its power.

2. Poetic Orientation: Imagination as Structural Force

Xu Jiajia's poems are built not on narrative progression, but on associative logic. Images do not explain one another; they ignite each other. Opposites do not cancel out; they intensify.

Her work demonstrates an instinctive understanding of complementarity: summer and steak, fire and deity, freedom and loss. These are not metaphors applied after thought; they are thoughts themselves, unfolding in lyric form.

This is not a learned poetics. It is a discovered one.

PART II

(*Poem Texts · Bilingual Presentation · Close Readings*)

The following poems are presented in full text. The original Chinese texts are followed by the author's own English translations (including the complete paper). No wording, imagery, or lineation have been altered.

1. 夏日与牛排 (Original)

夏日与牛排互补

牛排柔嫩慰藉苦夏

苦夏诉诸牛排柔嫩

如火与灶神

彩线与百纳

感情与故事

妙在异曲同工

一颗星在夜晚中兀自明亮

夜晚却仍往星的一旁

点亮月光

不为掩盖，相得益彰

牛排是一阵清风

吹散夏日烦恼

牛排是一道强光

对抗夏日炽焰燎阳

English Translation:

Summer VS Steak

The summer and the steak compensate to each other as a Janus-faced whole

The tender steak soothes out bitterness of summer

While the summer praised the delectable steak by grilling summer's own rich aroma

Fire constantly asks for Vesta

Colorful threads complete the quilts

Emotions weave stories

The beauty lies in the mutual fulfillment

A bright moon needs no dimmer stars

No one overshadows

They highlight each other

Steak breezes away daft summer

Steak is a beam of light shining ever brightly

Fighting against the scorching summer flames

Commentary

This poem stages a sophisticated meditation on mutual fulfilment. Summer and steak are not symbols but forces—each gaining intensity through the other's presence. The repeated logic of reciprocity structures the poem's ethical imagination.

What is striking is the refusal of hierarchy. Neither element dominates. Fire needs Vesta. Threads need quilts. Emotion needs story. This is relational thinking at its most intuitive and poetic.

The poem's final movement—meeting heat with abundance—articulates an aesthetic courage rare even in mature poets.

2. 悟歌 (Original)

我的鸟飞走了

留给我一声叹息

今天

一滴酸奶在地上溅开

一个陨落的彩虹精灵

从天上逃逸

追求自由

这让我想起了

丢失的鸟

她向往自由

向着自由的方向

而飞

English Translation:

Epiphany

My bird has flown away

Leaving me only a shuddering sigh

Today

A drop of yogurt rippled away on the floor

A fallen angel

Breaking through the cages of heaven

Longing for the other worlds

Had that reminded me

of my lost bird

She, too, finding the trace of direction

Flying towards that vast and vague

Freedom

Commentary

This poem demonstrates Xu Jiajia's instinctive mastery of associative memory.

A spilled drop of yogurt opens onto flight, loss, and freedom. The logic is not explanatory but emotional.

Freedom here is double-edged. The bird's flight leaves absence behind. This ethical complexity—freedom as both liberation and loss—emerges without sentimentality or instruction.

3. 浓味 (Original)

夏天需要牛排就像

花朵至夏才绚烂

浆果至夏才喷薄

牛排之于夏天就像

色彩之于夏加尔

疯狂之于马蒂斯

烈日起火

烧得皮开肉绽

方为浓中之最浓

以浓烈烘托浓烈

以热情激发热情

以丰盛对抗炽焰

English Translation

Dense

Summer calls out for steak a need as true

As blossoms waiting for the sun to blaze their petals

Or berries holding their burst of the delectable juice

Steak in summer is what color

Is to Chagall—a vivid, wild stroke

What savage, raw madness

Is to Matisse

The sun itself has been a grill, a fierce delight

That sears the skin until the flavor tops its peak

And condensation finds its deepest abyss

To sharpen heat with heat

To defeat fever with fever itself, in abundance

That asserts its name

Commentary

“Dense” functions as a manifesto of intensity. It argues—implicitly—that abundance itself can be form. By invoking Chagall and Matisse, the poem situates itself intuitively within expressionist aesthetics.

The poem’s insistence on saturation—heat against heat, fullness against excess—reveals a fearless lyric temperament, one that refuses dilution.

PART III

(*Thematic Synthesis · Early Poetic Intelligence · Future Trajectories*)

1. Sensation Before Explanation

Xu Jiajia’s poems consistently privilege sensation over explanation. Meaning arises through pressure rather than definition, through collision rather than clarity.

2. Freedom as Motion, Not Resolution

Birds fly. Hearts move ahead of bodies. Freedom is directional, not terminal. This understanding grants the poems emotional honesty without closure.

3. Discovering a Poet, Not a Category

These poems should not be reduced to “children’s poetry.” They are not simplified; they are **unfiltered**. They show what lyric thinking looks like before it learns restraint.

Conclusion: Waiting for the Storm

Xu Jiajia’s poetry does not ask to be protected. It asks to be read. With heat, flight, and density, her poems carry energies that many poets have spent a lifetime trying to recover. *Verse Version* publishes her works not as prediction, but as recognition: a promising poet already imprinting the lightning of future literature.