



RITA GREEN BREEZE

Songs of the Sky-Line

EXTREMES AND MODERATIONS:
EARLY SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA POETRY

A TEXT-TECH PAPERS PROJECT

Extremes and Moderations

Early Southern California Poetry

Extremes and Moderations is a Text-Tech Papers project devoted to recovering poetry written, published, and circulated in Los Angeles and Southern California. Each volume brings neglected books and poems back into view through carefully prepared texts, archival images, biographical context, and a clear record of the surviving sources.

Edited by Brian Kim Stefans

The Text-Tech Papers | Los Angeles, 2026

Songs of the Sky-Line

Rita Green Breeze

A Critical Reading Edition

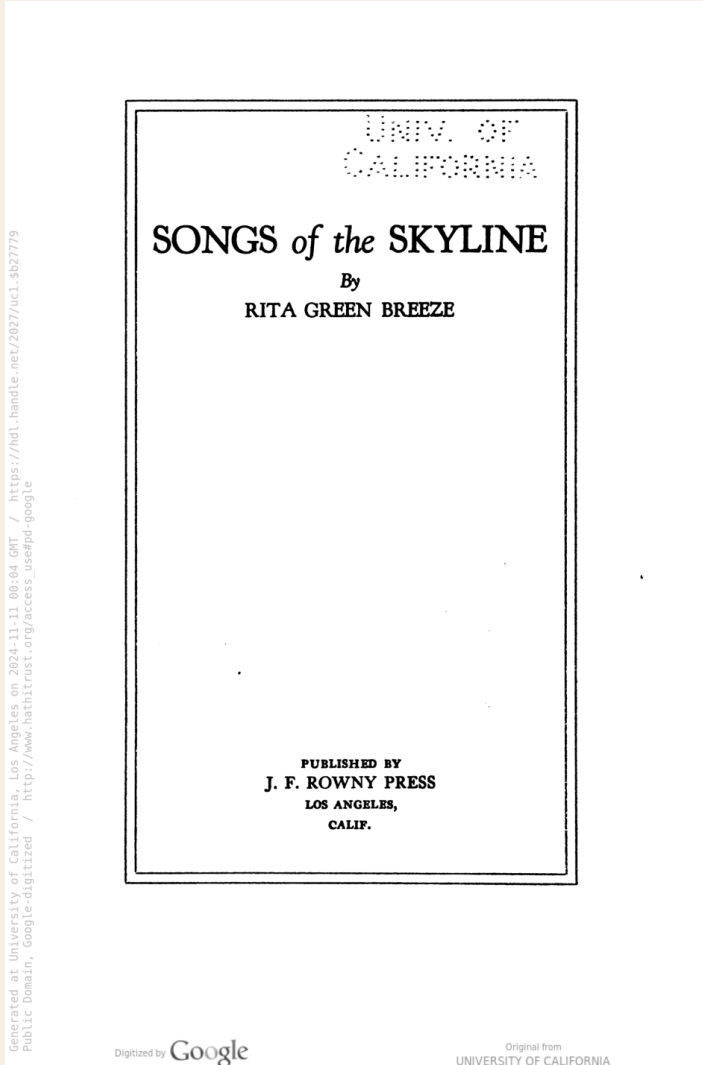
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The Text-Tech Papers

Extremes and Moderations: Early Southern California Poetry

Archival Images

A short selection from the source record



Title page or opening source witness for Songs of the Sky-Line.

Editorial Note

This is a reset reading edition, not a facsimile. The text was transcribed from the source pages in the local archive and collated against available embedded text. Physical page wraps were rejoined only when the source showed that they were typographic continuations; stanza breaks, meaningful indentation, epigraphs, subtitles, speakers, and section headings were retained. Obvious scanning debris was removed without silently modernizing diction, spelling, or punctuation. Each poem or complete sequence ends with a source note in the established Green-volume form.

Contents

Archival Images	I
Editorial Note	2
Introduction	5
<i>Songs of the Sky-Line</i>	7
<i>Skylines</i>	8
<i>To the Santa Fe Trail</i>	9
<i>The Song of the Eagle</i>	10
<i>To a Western Statesman</i>	11
<i>An Indian Water-Sign</i>	12
<i>An Indian Flute Call</i>	13
<i>Desert Wind</i>	14
<i>Thistle-Down</i>	15
<i>To a Horned Toad</i>	16
<i>A Cricket Dance</i>	17
<i>Evening Sounds</i>	18
<i>Range Cattle</i>	19
<i>The Cloud-Burst</i>	20
<i>The Valley of Flame</i>	21
<i>The Prospector</i>	22
<i>Desert Heat</i>	23
<i>Roads</i>	24
<i>Joshuas</i>	25
<i>Desert Dusk</i>	26
<i>Mist Clouds</i>	27
<i>Love's Tide</i>	28
<i>Leaves</i>	29
<i>Comparison</i>	30
<i>The Pool</i>	31
<i>Taddles</i>	32
<i>Sakura</i>	33
<i>Pussy Willows</i>	34

<i>Spring Dreams</i>	35
<i>A Song of Praise</i>	36
<i>Fairies</i>	37
<i>Occult Glory</i>	38
<i>Speed</i>	39
 Bibliography	 40
 Colophon	 41

Introduction

Rita Green Breeze wrote for the page, the platform, and the concert room. Her 1924 *Songs of the Sky-Line* joins desert color, flight, city modernity, public recitation, and musical cadence; newspaper notices place her in Los Angeles clubs and programs for decades, often beside composers and performers. She also promoted herself as “Sun Rise” in Native-themed cultural programs and led an organization called the American Indian Association, claims that must be read against the era’s appetite for invented and theatrical Indigeneity. This edition resets her surviving book and recoverable uncollected pieces, while the biography follows Rita Breeze into her later life as Rita Thornton and restores the public, collaborative career around the poems.

Biography

Rita Green Breeze was born in Missouri on February 17, 1879, and died in San Joaquin County, California, on February 18, 1955. Marriage and death records identify her later as Rita Thornton, a name essential to tracing the later decades of her life.

Breeze was active in Los Angeles literary, musical, and club circles from the 1910s through the 1940s. Her 1913 aviation poem “The Dreamed Aeroplane” places her among early writers responding imaginatively to powered flight. *Songs of the Sky-Line* followed in Los Angeles in 1924 from J. F. Rowny Press.

The poems were not confined to print. Breeze read publicly, appeared on civic and club programs, and worked in musical circles that included composer Fannie Charles Dillon. Surviving notices document musical settings and performances, making her career part of Southern California’s network of poets, composers, lecturers, and recital organizations.

Breeze also appeared as “Sun Rise” in programs involving Chief Yowlache and Paramahansa Yogananda and was described as president of the American Indian Association. A 1926 account called her Miami and credited her as coauthor, with Carlos Troyer, of the music drama *Zuiana*. These identity claims require caution: publicity materials are evidence of the persona she used, not independent tribal verification.

The fullest record is therefore a double one. Breeze was a real and persistent Los Angeles poet-organizer whose work joined aviation, desert landscape,

recitation, and song; she also operated within a cultural economy that freely mixed advocacy, pageantry, and appropriated Indigenous identity. The present edition preserves the poems while keeping those historical tensions visible.

Songs of the Sky-Line

Stage 1 | 1924

The complete text of the 1924 collection, reset from the source pages.

Wind Melodies

Skylines

Cardboard mountains, pasted high
In jagged outline 'gainst the sky;
Hazy drift of distant range,
In opal hues, reflects the strange
Gleaming gold on foot-hills' rim.
O'er purple sage-strewn benches dim
Rosy clouds to amber fade
As dusk sifts down in night's soft shade.

Publication. First published in *Songs of the Sky-Line*. Los Angeles: J. F. Rowny Press, 1924, p. 16.

To the Santa Fe Trail

The Path of the Holy Fire

Spirit trail of the souls of men
Westward your windings lead,
On past the rim of the world's wide swing
Through the silence of boundless space.
Claiming life's joy with throbbing hearts,
Singing, the host moves on,
Marching into the realms of light,
"Holy Fire."

Publication. First published in *Songs of the Sky-Line*. Los Angeles: J. F. Rowny Press, 1924, p. 17.

The Song of the Eagle

Ya-he! I am the eagle, yi! The mighty one!
I soar aloft! I look upon the sun!
Unto the four world-points I fare, calling,
And as I wheel athwart the soundless blue,
Up from the east and the white dawn riseth, faint.
On, steadily, I soar to greet the Day-God—
The Sun, Life-Giver, beams upon my pride.
On conquering wings the teeming earth I circle
To cry the glory of all things growing;
The forest's whisper, the voices of the sea.
The scudding clouds I spurn!
I spread my rain-plumes proudly!
Fearless and swift I journey to the westward,
Fearless and swift I glide upon the rainbow.
Yi, triumphant, straight and high my pinions bear me
To joy unchanging, and beyond!
Then, call I farewell to Day.
Ya-he! I am the eagle, yi! The mighty one!
I soar aloft! I look upon the sun!

Publication. First published in *Songs of the Sky-Line*. Los Angeles: J. F. Rowny Press, 1924, p. 18.

To a Western Statesman

Respectfully dedicated to Emmet D. Boyle, Governor of Nevada

On cloud-paths Chance has thrust his spirit bold.
He knows the vibrant thrill of rising suns;
He feels the sap as through the boughs it runs;
The rugged ranges 'gainst the sky have rolled
Their splendor—scudding haze on mountain's gold,
And gleaming hues of foothills softened duns—
They multiply his joys, for Nature's sons
Respond to all her moods. In plastic mold
Both heart and purpose sway his active mind
To guide his people through the fields of night,
To tear the film from eyes that else were blind,
And urge the recompense of peace and light.
With understanding soul and wisdom's fire
He soars toward untried heights of faith's desire.

Publication. First published in *Songs of the Sky-Line*. Los Angeles: J. F. Rowny Press, 1924, p. 19.

An Indian Water-Sign

A water-sign the Pahutes made—
Two rocks upon a ledge.
They pointed toward a drift of shade
'Neath cliffs, at moisture's edge.
A hundred miles the runners fleet
Must face the desert's glare
With parching throats and swollen feet.
They drink, then onward fare.

Publication. First published in *Songs of the Sky-Line*. Los Angeles: J. F. Rowny Press, 1924, p. 20.

An Indian Flute Call

Lightly sway the willow-branches in the breath of spring,
Swiftly glides the rippling river, murmuring.
Yellow plumes of bending grasses fringe the margin sere,
While from out the deep wood calling sounds my lover's flute-song clear,
Waz-lu, wa-lu, Dha-le-ee, Dha-lee,
Wa-lu, Dha-lee, Dha-lee!
Set to music by Fannie Charles Dillon.

Publication. First published in *Songs of the Sky-Line*. Los Angeles: J. F. Rowny Press, 1924, p. 21.

Desert Wind

Wind, o'er the desert land, wildly you sweep,
Swirling the sand-dunes to hollow and heap;
Wind, o'er the grease-wood and tamarack pale,
Bearing their perfume as onward you sail;
Wind, through the open land desolate, bare—
Waste of unthinkable greyness and glare—
Oh, on your ravishing lash, as you roam
Bring me a whisper of greenness and home!

Publication. First published in *Songs of the Sky-Line*. Los Angeles: J. F. Rowny Press, 1924, p. 22.

Thistle-Down

The desert thistle, gaunt and white,
Nods, dreaming in the dazzling light,
A wraithlike spirit of the land.
Its down drifts o'er the parching sand
Like lives that wander in the night.
Set to music by Benedict Bantley.

Publication. First published in *Songs of the Sky-Line*. Los Angeles: J. F. Rowny Press, 1924, p. 22.

To a Horned Toad

Little spikey-headed creature,
With your wide eyes, glittering, gold-rimmed,
When I whistle softly—shyly
From beneath the sage-brush peeping
Out into the sun you sidle.
Fascinated by the whistling,
Nearer now you edge toward me.
Blinking, frightened, charmed to frenzy,
On you glide, until my fingers
Gently stroke your horny crestlet.
Set to music by Fannie Charles Dillon.

Publication. First published in *Songs of the Sky-Line*. Los Angeles: J. F. Rowny Press, 1924, p. 23.

A Cricket Dance

Overhead gleams the light of the moon's dim rising.
Through the dusk of evening's veil,
Chirp and twitter as they creep
From the grass-root tendrils frail,
Tiny songsters of the twilight.
Pre-e-t! Pre-e-t! Pre-e-t!
'Neath the clumps of the sage fringing silvery sand-dunes—
Fiddler's tuning, soft he sings,
As the leg-bows swift and light
Glide across the drooping wings
Of this leader and his minstrels.
Pre-e-t! Pre-e-t! Pre-e-t!
Hopping free, skipping high as the song soars louder;
Crickets young and crickets old
Whirl and dart in antics gay;
Then at sign from leader bold
Elfin dancers chant the chorus.
Pre-e-t! Pre-e-t! Pre-e-t!

Publication. First published in *Songs of the Sky-Line*. Los Angeles: J. F. Rowny Press, 1924, p. 24.

Evening Sounds

In memory of my dear father, who loved the open

In the lazy light of evening when the quails begin to call
And the hush of night comes creeping down the canyon like a sigh,
From the rabbit-brush that's gleaming, yellow-gold, against the wall
Of the rock-ribbed mountain ramparts where the bats begin to fly,
Trills a sleepy-witted larklet, dreaming still he's on the wing;
Bees well laden, buzzing, whirring, as they drone in homeward line
Lull the twilight into darkness, softening the sounds that fling
Strange dim echoes on the silence, from the valley to the pine.
Set to music by Charles Wakefield Cadman.

Publication. First published in *Songs of the Sky-Line*. Los Angeles: J. F. Rowny Press, 1924, p. 25.

Desert Moods

Range Cattle

When the grazing is good at the water-hole's rim
And the herd, straying peacefully, nips the lush grass,
Then the distance is short to the quenching of thirst,
While the cloud-shadows dapple the earth as they pass.
But when distance is long to the quenching of thirst,
When the grass is bleached grey in the wavering heat
And the lizards lie panting, too sluggish to move,
Then the long-horns, that lead on their worn stumbling feet,
Coax the yearlings, alag with their heads to the earth,
And the calves, blinded, wobbling far out of the trail—
So the herd wanders listlessly, silently back
To the rim of the water-hole, barren and stale.

Publication. First published in *Songs of the Sky-Line*. Los Angeles: J. F. Rowny Press, 1924, p. 26.

The Cloud-Burst

Down the deep wid'ning gorge leaped the cloud-burst in fury.
O'er the far-spreading plain raged the flood's devastation.
While the flame-riven sky crashed its wild roar of thunder
From the cliff's dark'ning crag shrilled the scream of an eagle.
Set to music by Fannie Charles Dillon.

Publication. First published in *Songs of the Sky-Line*. Los Angeles: J. F. Rowny Press, 1924, p. 27.

The Valley of Flame

The hills lay folded red and bare,
Jagged and furrowed by winds that beat
O'er the scorching waste of the desert sand.
Heat! heat! oh, burning heat.
A weary miner, weak and gaunt,
Fell, where the hills and the desert meet,
With his brain in a whirl from the sun's fierce glare.
Heat! heat! oh, burning heat.
A vulture soared the hard bright blue,
Keen was his vision, his wings were fleet,
Then a raucous cry as he circling wheeled—
Heat! heat! oh, burning heat.

Publication. First published in *Songs of the Sky-Line*. Los Angeles: J. F. Rowny Press, 1924, p. 28.

The Prospector

A drizzling mist falls o'er the camp
As through the twilight shadows damp
A burro pack-train winds its way
Toward distant foot-hills coldly grey.
Its driver, stumbling in its wake,
He murmurs softly of his "stake";
His wandering mind with one thought teems,
To find the gold he's panned in dreams.

Publication. First published in *Songs of the Sky-Line*. Los Angeles: J. F. Rowny Press, 1924, p. 29.

Desert Heat

Stifling waves of suffocation
Rising from the scorching sand-wastes;
Shriveled tufts of yellow bunch-grass
Fringing dunes forever wind-blown;
Lifeless span of vaulted azure—
Over all oppressive silence.

Publication. First published in *Songs of the Sky-Line*. Los Angeles: J. F. Rowny Press, 1924, p. 29.

Roads

Roads of the desert, winding and dim,
Shaggy with sage-brush, empty and grim,
Sand-blown and time-scarred in faintly lined sketch—
Over the dead lands your grey length you stretch
Out to the world of the birds and the trees,
Into the fog of a bracing sea-breeze.
Set to music by Benedict Bantley.

Publication. First published in *Songs of the Sky-Line*. Los Angeles: J. F. Rowny Press, 1924, p. 30.

Joshuas

Sprangled and ghostly and grey-green they stand,
Clutching the desert waste, lonely and bare;
Twisted and gnarled—a pitiless band—
Ruthlessly numbering with poignant despair
Those who would valiantly brave for the land,
Hunger and drought and the sun's searing glare.

Publication. First published in *Songs of the Sky-Line*. Los Angeles: J. F. Rowny Press, 1924, p. 30.

Desert Dusk

Rippling sand-dunes, gold at twilight
In the radiant afterglow;
Tufts of sage-brush glistening dimly
Where the shadows waver slow;
Jagged bayonets of yucca,
Straight and still against the sky,
While from out the deep'ning silence
Shrills a lone coyote's cry!

Publication. First published in *Songs of the Sky-Line*. Los Angeles: J. F. Rowny Press, 1924, p. 31.

Whims

Mist Clouds

A Chinese Folk-Song from "Ping"

Above the rice-field floats the drifting mist—
The billowing white mist;
And overhead the silver river spans the sky
A-glimmer in the twilight;
Far up the mountainside the whispering bamboos
Entice my soul to wing along the ways of fancy.
Above the rice-field floats the drifting mist—
The billowing white mist.

Publication. First published in *Songs of the Sky-Line*. Los Angeles: J. F. Rowny Press, 1924, p. 32.

Love's Tide

Sweeping o'er my heart's horizon,
Thrilling deep my eager soul,
Comes the surge of Love's strange yearnings—
Swirling onward let it roll!
Sweet new fancies born of dreaming
Gild the tide with glory bright.
Swift, it bears us in rare splendor
To the port of Love's delight!
Set to music by Charles Wakefield Cadman.

Publication. First published in *Songs of the Sky-Line*. Los Angeles: J. F. Rowny Press, 1924, p. 33.

Leaves

Leaves that sing, leaves that sing—
Stirred on the breath of spring—
Deep in the canyons and high on the hills
You flutter with joy that thrills!
Dreams of love, dreams of love,
Waft from the blue above
Glories of rapture alit in the breeze,
On leaves of the springtime trees!

Publication. First published in *Songs of the Sky-Line*. Los Angeles: J. F. Rowny Press, 1924, p. 34.

Comparison

Bright plumed birds, though they be songless, charm the eye,
Gorgeous flowers, lacking fragrance, beautify.
Luring women, empty-hearted, crucify.

Publication. First published in *Songs of the Sky-Line*. Los Angeles: J. F. Rowny Press, 1924, p. 35.

The Pool

A dragon-fly went darting o'er a pool
That shimmered in the noontime sun.
His gauzy wings he folded in the cool
Of shady rushes where a spider spun
Her silken web in glistening threads. A school
Of darting fish the wavering shadows shun.
Set to music by Benedict Bantley.

Publication. First published in *Songs of the Sky-Line*. Los Angeles: J. F. Rowny Press, 1924, p. 35.

Taddles

A Silver Persian

In the family of cats
I'm the dainty patrician;
I disdain roaming rats.
In the family of cats
I'm not fed on gross fats.
An accomplished musician
In the family of cats,
I'm the dainty patrician.

Publication. First published in *Songs of the Sky-Line*. Los Angeles: J. F. Rowny Press, 1924, p. 36.

Sakura

Cherry Bloom. To the People of "Pan"

Petals of cherry-blooms bright,
Joyous with odors of spring
Flutter; oh petals of light
Wide o'er the meadows and fling
Rose-clouds of loveliness. Sing,
Rollicking couriers of grace,
Symbol of essence bring—
Soul of the Japanese race.
Radiance that sways in its flight,
Song of the birds as they wing,
Fill with ecstatic delight
Butterflies. Gently they cling
Close to the blossoms that swing
Free o'er the land's smiling face.
Cherry-bloom—exquisite thing—
Soul of the Japanese race.
Art cannot picture the sight;
Delicate blossoms that swing
Veils o'er a mystical rite.
Subtle the spell that you fling
Over the earth as you wing,
Exquisite tracings of lace
Tinting the shadows that cling—
Soul of the Japanese race.

ENVOY

Blooms that are mete for a king,
Fruitage of boughs in their place;
These are the treasures you bring—
Soul of the Japanese race.

Publication. First published in *Songs of the Sky-Line*. Los Angeles: J. F. Rowny Press, 1924, p. 37.

Pussy Willows

Mocking-bird is faintly warbling,
Calling low the crooning wind;
Sedges floating, idly drifting
At the river's placid margin
Where the pussy-willows dream.
Waters lapping, gently singing—
In their currents roots adrift—
Purl their melody of welcome
To the pussies perched demurely
On the swaying branch above.

Publication. First published in *Songs of the Sky-Line*. Los Angeles: J. F. Rowny Press, 1924, p. 38.

Spring Dreams

To the "Daddy-Man"

The fluff from cottonwoods of early spring
Floats softly down like dream-mists from the sky,
But from my heart a song that thrills with joy
Soars upward, love, in ecstasy, to you.

Publication. First published in *Songs of the Sky-Line*. Los Angeles: J. F. Rowny Press, 1924, p. 39.

A Song of Praise

For "Skooter Baby"—to Bring the Angels

Heavenly angels, hov'ring near,
Chant your praises sweet and clear;
Waft our souls on shimm'ring wings
Up to Him who made all things.

Publication. First published in *Songs of the Sky-Line*. Los Angeles: J. F. Rowny Press, 1924, p. 39.

Fairies

When dandelions' yellow heads
Are sprinkled o'er the grass
And tree frogs call from boughs outspread
The fairy children pass.

Publication. First published in *Songs of the Sky-Line*. Los Angeles: J. F. Rowny Press, 1924, p. 40.

Occult Glory

To "Budie"

Dew in the meadows of light,
Close to the waters of peace,
There shall the dreamers unite
Planning the races' release.

Publication. First published in *Songs of the Sky-Line*. Los Angeles: J. F. Rowny Press, 1924, p. 40.

Speed

Purr motor! purr motor! urge the spinning wheels.
Fling the dust in spurting sprays,
Cleave the road in skillful ways.
Purr motor! purr motor! race the flying fields.

Publication. First published in *Songs of the Sky-Line*. Los Angeles: J. F. Rowny Press, 1924, p. 41.

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Colophon

Publication and production notes

This critical reading edition was edited by Brian Kim Stefans for The Text-Tech Papers, Los Angeles, in 2026, as part of *Extremes and Moderations: Early Southern California Poetry*. The poems were reset from the source pages identified in the publication notes and datasheet. The book was composed in EB Garamond on a cream field at 6 × 9 inches. The cover uses original abstract artwork prepared for this edition.