**Bunting, Basil (1900-1985)**

Basil Cheesman Bunting was born in Scotswood-on-Tyne, Northumberland, on March 1st, 1900, the son of Thomas Lowe Bunting, a local doctor, and Annie Cheesman, from a local mining family, and was educated at the Quaker schools of Ackworth and Leighton Park. This early pacifist background saw him arrested at 18 as a conscientious objector, and sentenced to imprisonment at Wormwood Scrubs and Winchester prisons. In the early ‘twenties Bunting studied at the London School of Economics, but left without a qualification, though he began to experience London literary life. In 1923 his influential friendship with Ezra Pound began, while in Paris he worked on the *Transatlantic Review* under Ford Madox Ford.

The death of Bunting’s father in 1925 saw him return to England where he then worked as a music journalist in London. His itinerant existence saw him work for a period on his writing back in his native Northumberland before returning to Rapallo in Italy to assist Pound. In 1930 his first pamphlet collection of poetry, *Redimiculum Matellarum*, was privately published in Milan, but in the following year his poetry was included in Louis Zukofsky's “Objectivists” issue of *Poetry*, and subsequently in *An “Objectivists” Anthology*. In the late 1930s Bunting returned to England and studied seamanship at Nellist's Nautical School in Newcastle upon Tyne. His detestation of fascism saw him enlist in the RAF in the Second World War, but his poor eyesight meant he was transferred, and worked in Persia as a translator due to his knowledge of classical Persian. His services there were retained by the British Embassy in Tehran at the end of the 1940s until he left to work for *The Times*. Though still publishing individual poems, mainly in the US, it was not until 1950 that his first full-length collection of poetry, *Poems 1950*, was published by The Cleaners Press, Galveston, Texas. His return to England with his family in 1952 saw him struggle to support them as he took on a variety of jobs, but it was also the start of his late emergence from a dungeon of neglect within British letters through his association with a young generation of poets, including Jonathan Williams and Gael Turnbull, who had sought him out, and his friendship with Tom Pickard, which saw him stimulated to publish his most enduring works.

This period is thus marked by the belated publication in 1965 of T*he Spoils* (Morden Tower Book Room), which had first appeared in the November 1951 issue of *Poetry*. Additionally, Fulcrum Press also brought out Bunting’s *First Book of Odes* and *Loquitur*, before in 1966 the same publisher oversaw what John Seed has termed “one of the most important events in postwar British poetry” (114) as *Briggflatts* appeared. Funding and teaching posts followed before his *Collected Poems* was published in 1968, but it was another decade before Oxford University Press republished his collected poems.

The ‘eighties saw him return to his Quaker roots in Whitley Chapel, near Hexham, Northumberland, where he died on 17th April 1985.

**References and Further Reading**

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