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| Bunting, Basil (1900-1985) |
| Bunting, Basil Cheesman |
| Basil Cheesman Bunting was a British poet, closely associated with Northern England and with late modernist poetics. A close friend of Ezra Pound’s, Bunting worked on the *Transatlantic Review* with Ford Madox Ford, but did not achieve widespread literary recognition until the 1950s and 60s. His most celebrated work is *Briggflatts*, an autobiographical long poem published in 1966. |
| 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 1920s, Bunting studied at the London School of Economics and began to experience London literary life (he left the School without a qualification). In 1923, while he was working on the *Transatlantic Review* under Ford Madox Ford, his influential friendship with Ezra Pound began.  Upon the death of his father in 1925, Bunting returned to England, working 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. Detesting fascism, Bunting enlisted in the RAF in the Second World War. He was transferred because of his poor eyesight, 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 through the end of the 1940s until he left to work for *The Times*. Though he was 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. After his return to England with his family in 1952, Bunting struggled to support them, taking on a variety of jobs. However, this was also the start of his late emergence from neglect within British letters through his association with a young generation of poets. These included Jonathan Williams and Gael Turnbull, who had sought him out; further, his friendship with Tom Pickard saw him stimulated to publish his most enduring works.  In 1965, *The Spoils*, which had first appeared in the November 1951 issue of *Poetry*, was finally published by Morden Tower Book Room. Fulcrum Press also brought out Bunting’s *First Book of Odes* and *Loquitur*, and in 1966 oversaw what John Seed has termed “one of the most important events in postwar British poetry” (114), the production of *Briggflatts*. Funding and teaching posts followed. Bunting’s *Collected Poems* was published in 1968, although it was another decade before Oxford University Press republished his collected poems. The 1980s saw him return to his Quaker roots in Whitley Chapel, near Hexham, Northumberland, where he died on 17th April 1985. |
| Further reading:  (Alldritt)  (Bunting)  (Bunting, Briggflatts)  (Burton)  (Makin)  (Seed)  (Terrell) |