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| Cunard, Nancy (1896-1965) |
| **[Enter any *variant forms* of your headword – OPTIONAL]** |
| A poet, journalist, publisher, radical intellectual, and political activist, Nancy Cunard operated at or near the centre of multiple modernist discourses. Her early poetry, especially the long poem *Parallax*, was deeply engaged with experimental forms and themes characteristic of high modernism. In 1928, she became a noteworthy figure in the small press movement, establishing the Hours Press and publishing work by avant-garde and modernist writers including Samuel Beckett, Laura Riding, and Ezra Pound. Cunard conceived the *Negro* anthology in 1930, eventually closing her press to focus on compiling this monumental exploration of transnational black culture. Published in 1934, the oversized volume included key figures of the Harlem Renaissance among its 150 contributors, but it proved controversial and sold poorly. As war threatened Europe, Cunard joined the anti-Fascist struggle, exposing atrocities as a reporter during the Spanish Civil War, publishing a political pamphlet called *Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War*, and working during World War II as a translator and publisher for the French Resistance. |
| A poet, journalist, publisher, radical intellectual, and political activist, Nancy Cunard operated at or near the centre of multiple modernist discourses. Her early poetry, especially the long poem *Parallax*, was deeply engaged with experimental forms and themes characteristic of high modernism. In 1928, she became a noteworthy figure in the small press movement, establishing the Hours Press and publishing work by avant-garde and modernist writers including Samuel Beckett, Laura Riding, and Ezra Pound. Cunard conceived the *Negro* anthology in 1930, eventually closing her press to focus on compiling this monumental exploration of transnational black culture. Published in 1934, the oversized volume included key figures of the Harlem Renaissance among its 150 contributors, but it proved controversial and sold poorly. As war threatened Europe, Cunard joined the anti-Fascist struggle, exposing atrocities as a reporter during the Spanish Civil War, publishing a political pamphlet called *Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War*, and working during World War II as a translator and publisher for the French Resistance.  The only child of British shipping magnate Sir Bache Cunard and leading society hostess Lady Emerald Cunard (Maud Burke), Cunard was born on 10 March 1896. Following a brief marriage to Sidney Fairbairn in 1916, she broke away from her family’s social circle and formed her own friendships with avant-garde writers and artists. Her London connections included Edith Sitwell, Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, Virginia Woolf, and T.S. Eliot. She settled in Paris in 1920, forming friendships with Janet Flanner, Richard Aldington, Samuel Beckett, William Carlos Williams, Tristan Tzara, and Louis Aragon, among others. Associated with literary modernism, Dada, Surrealism, and Communism, Cunard was embedded in numerous modernist networks. She was the model for characters in novels, plays, and films, as well as the subject of photographs by Man Ray and Cecil Beaton. After meeting African-American jazz musician Henry Crowder in 1928, Cunard became one of the few figures linking white and black modernism. Charismatic, glamorously unconventional, and sexually adventurous, Cunard became an icon of the Jazz Age, but her own work was often overshadowed by her dazzling image. Her writing and political activism largely unrecognized, she died alone in Paris on 17 March 1965.  Selected Works  *Outlaws* (1921), London: Elkin Matthews and Marrot.  *Sublunary* (1923), London: Hodder and Stoughton.  *Parallax* (1925), London: Hogarth Press.  *These Were the Hours* (1966), Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.  As editor:  *Negro: An Anthology* (1934), London: Wishart.  *Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War* (1937), London: Left Review. |
| Further reading:  (Benstock)  (Gordon)  (Kaplan)  (Marcus) |