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UAP 4 Literature as Discourse

Course Objectives

- In this unit, the learner will learn that literary texts are purposefully ungrammatical, and it is this deviance from the norms that make the text meaningful and suggestive.

- Literature as **Discourse**
- Lit as Discourse means that the ungrammaticalness is interpretable in literary texts and contributes to a certain communicative effect: in *Wind* by Ted Hughes (as cited in Widdowson, 1975, p. 28), for example, the author could only express the savagery and violence of the wind by using linguistic deviations. He could not rely on conventional language to express the sweeping devastation of the wind: only the violation of selection restriction rules, the device of personification could echo the extreme violence of the wind in addition to a precise use of words:

- **WIND**

- *This house has been far out at sea all night,*
- *The woods crashing through darkness, the booming hills,*
- *Winds stampeding the fields under the window*
- *Floundering black astride and blinding wet*
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- *Till day rose; then under an orange sky*
- *The hills had new places, and wind wielded*
- *Blade-light, luminous and emerald,*
- *Flexing like the lens of a mad eye.*
-

*At noon I scaled along the house-side as far as
The coal-house door. I dared once to look up-
Through the brunt wind that dented the balls of my eyes
The tent of the hills drummed and strained its guyrope.*

*The fields quivering, the skyline a grimace,
At any second to bang and vanish with a flap:
The wind flung a magpie away and a black-
Back gull bent like an iron bar slowly. The house*

*Rang like some fine green goblet in the note
That any second would shatter it. Now deep
In chairs, in front of the great fire, we grip
Our hearts and cannot entertain book, thought,*

*Or each other. We watch the fire blazing,
And feel the roots of the house move, but sit on,
Seeing the window tremble to come in,
Hearing the stones cry out under the horizons.*

- Device of Personification: *the house* is animated, compared to a sailor who has been out at sea all night.
- -...the fields quivering...
- - ...*Seeing the window tremble to come in...*
- - *Hearing the stones cry out under the horizons.*

- - Violation of selection restriction rules,
- --inanimate things become animate like *the wind* which *stampedes* normally the latter verb is used only with four-footed animals forming herds and moving together
- - the tent is made animate *by drumming and straining its guy rope*. A little later, *the wind again flings a magpie away*; the verb *to fling* is again a violent form of throwing.
- animacy and violence

- Use of precise vocabulary and *the sound seems to echo the sense*(Alexander Pope):

...*the woods crashing through darkness...* (second line); the verb *crash* means to hit and cause damage making a loud sound. It also enacts the sound.

-...the booming hills... 'to boom' suggests that

- -... *At any second to bang and vanish with a flap* ...'to bang', like to 'crash' and 'to boom' are here to suggest destruction both semantically and phonetically. -

- Inanimate things are made animate:
- the *wind* is also made animate in its association with *wield* which means *to use*. The wind is also *brunt* which suggests physical strain or stress and so is again animate and violent
- -... *And feel the roots of the house move...*
- -and animate beings become inanimate:

a black

Back gull bent like an iron bar slowly.