

# TRANSFERRED EPITHET

Transferred Epithet is a figure of speech that refers to the shifting or transfer of an epithet from its proper subject to another associated with it. The transfer is the result of the mental operation of the writer or speaker.

Thus, the expression, “a sleepless pillow”, contains the epithet ‘sleepless’. But the epithet is not appropriate to the noun pillow, for sleepless is not the pillow, but the person lying on the pillow. Thus, the epithet “sleepless”, which is applicable to the man, is transferred to the noun pillow. A relation, however, exists between ‘man’ and ‘pillow’, as the person, who is sleepless, is lying on the pillow. This is an instance of the transferred epithet.

The transferred epithet is also designated as hypallage. This is a Greek word that means ‘interchange’. The implication is the interchange of the position of a word or words.

Characteristics of Transferred Epithet:

The essential marks of the transferred epithet are, thus, the following:

- (i) An epithet is transferred.
- (ii) The epithet is transferred from its proper subject to another accompanying thing.
- (iii) The proper subject and the accompanying thing are associated in the mind of the speaker or author.
- (iv) In the transferred epithet, an epithet or adjective is generally transferred from the proper subject to those which are inanimate or abstract.

Examples:-

(i) ) The ploughman homeward plods his weary way.  
This is a transferred epithet. Here the epithet 'weary', which properly belongs to the noun 'ploughman', is transferred to 'way'. The noun 'way' is associated with the 'ploughman', who plods over it.

(ii) In holy anger and pious grief.  
He solemnly cursed that rascally thief.  
This is a transferred epithet. Here the epithets 'holy' and 'pious', which properly belong to the 'man', are transferred to 'anger' and 'grief', respectively.

'Anger' and 'grief', which the man feels, are certainly associated with him.