

# International Linguistic Association

## Monthly Lecture Series

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### Indo-European and Homer's 'delicate feasting of dogs, of all birds' (*Iliad* 1.5)

A question that I frequently face, when introduced as "specializing in Homer", is "What is the best translation?" The assumption seems to be that a Homerist's main function is to choose between translations - and that has long annoyed me, as relegating any really scholarly engagement with Homer to some secondary status.

Approaching the problem head-on, my talk considers more than 70 English versions of *Iliad* 1.1-7, along with more than 30 French ones. (Those numbers may seem excessive, but they are literally correct.) My main focus is whether one reads *pasi* "all" or *daita* "feast" in line 5. The reading "all", although generally considered more authentic, nevertheless seems pretty colorless; in fact, more than half of my translators seem to wish it weren't there, since they do not directly translate either *pasi* or *daita*. Conversely, Lattimore, in the translation included in the title of my lecture, includes *both* "feasting" and "all".

Traditional scholarly wisdom holds that only one of the two Greek words could be Homer's original text. Actually, though, Lattimore's approach (also adopted, more recently, by Muirden and Powell) is not so wishy-washy: both texts are somehow "Homeric". *Daita* resonates with the funeral feast for Hector (24.802), and *pasi* is crucially associated with an Indo-European phrase for heavenly rivers, *diipeteos*, found at *Il.* 17.263-265. Moreover, about a dozen translations, by mentioning "birds of the air" or "oiseaux du ciel" or the like at 1.5, adumbrate some connection, apparently missed by previous scholarly commentary, of 1.5 with 17.263-265. I did not expect such a result; however, as Lombardo (citing Ezra Pound) suggests in the preface to his own *Iliad* translation, the translator may usefully complement the scholar's understanding of a Greek text.

**Saturday, March 14, 2015**  
**11 AM - 12 PM**  
**Borough of Manhattan Community College**  
**Room: Richard Harris Terrace (next to the bookstore)**  
**199 Chambers Street, New York, NY 10007**