

## **CHS Open House with Seemee Ali:**

### **'Eros and Cosmos: Approaching the Golden Cloud of *Iliad* 14'**

#### **Focus Passage: *Iliad* 14 153–360**

Hera of the golden throne looked down as she stood upon a peak of Olympus and her heart was gladdened at the sight of him

[155] who was at once her brother and her brother-in-law, hurrying hither and thither amid the fighting. Then she turned her eyes to Zeus as he sat on the topmost crests of many-fountained Ida, and loathed him. She set herself to think how she might trick his thinking,

[160] and in the end she deemed that it would be best for her to go to Ida and array herself in rich attire, in the hope that Zeus might become enamored of her, and wish to embrace her. While he was thus engaged a sweet and careless sleep might be made

[165] to steal over his eyes and senses. She went, therefore, to the room which her son Hephaistos had made her, and the doors of which he had cunningly fastened by means of a secret key so that no other god could open them. Here she entered and closed the doors behind her.

[170] She cleansed all the dirt from her fair body with ambrosia, then she anointed herself with olive oil, ambrosial, very soft, and scented specially for herself—if it were so much as shaken in the bronze-floored house of Zeus, the scent pervaded the universe of heaven and earth.

[175] With this she anointed her delicate skin, and then she plaited the fair ambrosial locks that flowed in a stream of golden tresses from her immortal head. She put on the wondrous robe which Athena had worked for her with consummate art, and had embroidered with manifold devices;

[180] she fastened it about her bosom with golden clasps, and she girded herself with a girdle that had a hundred tassels: then she fastened her earrings, three brilliant pendants with much charm radiating from them, through the pierced lobes of her ears,

[185] and threw a lovely new veil over her head. She bound her sandals on to her feet, and when she had finished making herself up in perfect order, she left her room and called Aphrodite to come aside and speak to her.

[190] “My dear child, said she, will you do what I am going to ask of you, or will refuse me because you are angry at my being on the Danaan side, while you are on the Trojan?” Zeus' daughter Aphrodite answered, “Hera, august queen of goddesses, daughter of mighty Kronos,

[195] say what you want, and I will do it for at once, if I can, and if it can be done at all.” Then Hera told her a lying tale and said, “I want you to endow me with some of those fascinating charms, the spells of which bring all things mortal and immortal to your feet.

[200] I am going to the world's end to visit Okeanos (from whom all we gods proceed) and mother Tethys: they received me in their house, took care of me, and brought me up, having taken me over from Rhaea when Zeus imprisoned great Kronos in the depths that are under earth and sea.

[205] I must go and see them that I may make peace between them; they have been quarreling, and are so angry that they have not slept with one another this long while; if I can bring them round and restore them to one another's embraces,

[210] they will be grateful to me and love me for ever afterwards.” Thereon laughter-loving Aphrodite said, “I cannot and must not refuse you, for you sleep in the arms of Zeus who is our king.” As she spoke she loosed from her bosom the curiously embroidered girdle

[215] into which all her charms had been wrought – love, desire, and that sweet flattery which steals the judgment even of the most prudent. She gave the girdle to Hera and said, “Take this girdle wherein all my charms reside

[220] and lay it in your bosom. If you will wear it I promise you that your errand, be it what it may, will not be bootless.” When she heard this Hera smiled, and still smiling she laid the girdle in her bosom. Aphrodite now went back into the house of Zeus,

[225] while Hera darted down from the summits of Olympus. She passed over Pieria and fair Emathia, and went on and on till she came to the snowy ranges of the Thracian horsemen, over whose topmost crests she sped without ever setting foot to ground. When she came to Athos she went on over the waves of the sea till she reached Lemnos,

[230] the city of noble Thoas. There she met Sleep, own brother to Death, and caught him by the hand, saying, “Sleep, you who lord it alike over mortals and immortals, if you ever did me a service in times past, do one for me now,

[235] and I shall show gratitude to you ever after. Close Zeus' keen eyes for me in slumber while I hold him clasped in my embrace, and I will give you a beautiful golden seat, that can never fall to pieces; my clubfooted son Hephaistos

[240] shall make it for you, and he shall give it a footstool for you to rest your fair feet upon when you are at table." Then Sleep answered, "Hera, great queen of goddesses, daughter of mighty Kronos, I would lull any other of the gods to sleep without compunction, not even excepting the waters of Okeanos

[245] from whom all of them proceed, but I dare not go near Zeus, nor send him to sleep unless he bids me. I have had one lesson already through doing what you asked me,

[250] on the day when Zeus' mighty son Herakles set sail from Ilion after having sacked the city of the Trojans. At your bidding I suffused my sweet self over the mind of aegis-bearing Zeus, and laid him to rest; meanwhile you hatched a plot against Herakles, and set the blasts of the angry winds beating upon the sea, till you took him

[255] to the goodly city of Cos away from all his friends. Zeus was furious when he awoke, and began hurling the gods about all over the house; he was looking more particularly for myself, and would have flung me down through space into the sea where I should never have been heard of any more, had not Night who crows both men and gods protected me.

[260] I fled to her and Zeus left off looking for me in spite of his being so angry, for he did not dare do anything to displease Night. And now you are again asking me to do something on which I cannot venture." And Hera said, "Sleep, why do you take such notions as those into your head?

[265] Do you think Zeus will be as anxious to help the Trojans, as he was about his own son? Come, I will marry you to one of the youngest of the Graces, and she shall be your own—Pasi<sup>thea</sup>, whom you have always wanted to marry."

[270] Sleep was pleased when he heard this, and answered, "Then swear it to me by the dread waters of the river Styx; lay one hand on the bounteous earth, and the other on the sheen of the sea, so that all the gods who dwell down below with Kronos may be our witnesses,

[275] and see that you really do give me one of the youngest of the Graces [*kharites*—Pasi<sup>thea</sup>, whom I have always wanted to marry." Hera did as he had said. She swore, and invoked all the gods of the nether world, who are called Titans, to witness.

[280] When she had completed her oath, the two enshrouded themselves in a thick mist and sped lightly forward, leaving Lemnos and Imbros behind them. Presently they reached many-fountained Ida, mother of wild beasts, and Lectum where they left the sea to go on by land,

[285] and the tops of the trees of the forest souged under the going of their feet. Here Sleep halted, and ere Zeus caught sight of him he climbed a lofty pine-tree—the tallest that reared its head towards heaven on all Ida. He hid himself behind the branches and sat there

[290] in the semblance of the sweet-singing bird that haunts the mountains and is called Khalkis by the gods, but men call it Kymindis. Hera then went to Gargaros, the topmost peak of Ida, and Zeus, driver of the clouds, set eyes upon her. As soon as he did so he became inflamed with the same passionate desire for her that he had felt

[295] when they had first enjoyed each other's embraces, and slept with one another without their dear parents knowing anything about it. He went up to her and said, “What do you want that you have come hither from Olympus—and that too with neither chariot nor horses to convey you?”

[300] Then Hera told him a lying tale and said, “I am going to the world's end, to visit Okeanos, from whom all we gods proceed, and mother Tethys; they received me into their house, took care of me, and brought me up. I must go and see them that I may make peace between them:

[305] they have been quarreling, and are so angry that they have not slept with one another this long time. The horses that will take me over land and sea are stationed on the lowermost spurs of many-fountained Ida, and I have come here from Olympus on purpose to consult you.

[310] I was afraid you might be angry with me later on, if I went to the house of Okeanos without letting you know.” And Zeus said, “Hera, you can choose some other time for paying your visit to Okeanos—for the present let us devote ourselves to love and to the enjoyment of one another.

[315] Never yet have I been so overpowered by passion neither for goddess nor mortal woman as I am at this moment for yourself—not even when I was in love with the wife of Ixion who bore me Peirithoos, peer of gods in counsel, nor yet with Danae the daintily-ankled daughter of Acrisius,

[320] who bore me the famed hero Perseus. Then there was the daughter of Phoenix, who bore me Minos and Rhadamanthus: there was Semele, and Alkmene in Thebes by whom I begot my lion-hearted son Herakles,

[325] while Semele became mother to Bacchus the comforter of humankind. There was queen Demeter again, and lovely Leto, and yourself—but with none of these was I ever so much enamored as I now am with you.” Hera again answered him with a lying tale.

[330] “Most dread son of Kronos, she exclaimed, what are you talking about? Would you have us enjoy one another here on the top of Mount Ida, where everything can be seen? What if one of the ever-living gods should see us sleeping together, and tell the others?

[335] It would be such a scandal that when I had risen from your embraces I could never show myself inside your house again; but if you are so minded, there is a room which your son Hephaistos has made me, and he has given it good strong doors;

[340] if you would so have it, let us go thither and lie down.” And Zeus answered, “Hera, you need not be afraid that either god or man will see you, for I will enshroud both of us in such a dense golden cloud, that the very sun

[345] for all his bright piercing beams shall not see through it.” With this the son of Kronos caught his wife in his embrace; whereon the earth sprouted them a cushion of young grass, with dew-bespangled lotus, crocus, and hyacinth, so soft and thick that it raised them well above the ground.

[350] Here they laid themselves down and overhead they were covered by a fair cloud of gold, from which there fell glittering dew-drops. Thus, then, did the sire of all things repose peacefully on the crest of Ida, overcome at once by sleep and love, and he held his spouse in his arms. Meanwhile Sleep made off to the ships of the Achaeans,

[355] to tell earth-encircling Poseidon, lord of the earthquake. When he had found him he said, “Now, Poseidon, you can help the Danaans with a will, and give them victory though it be only for a short time while Zeus is still sleeping. I have sent him into a sweet slumber,

[360] and Hera has beguiled him into going to bed with her.”