

# The New Criterion

## Letters

June 2005

### Hylas who? - A response

by [Daniel Mark Epstein](#)

*Daniel Mark Epstein replies.*

Many thanks to the poet and philosopher John Koethe for applying Ockham's razor to the Hylas reference in Wilbur's poem, and reminding us that Berkeley's "Three Dialogues" is the likely source of the allusion. I went far afield in linking the image to the *Argonautica*, without, I think, doing violence to Wilbur's theme. I maintain that by the end of the poem Wilbur has identified with Hylas' tree, fearing that he "Will fall to nothing and without a sound." I do wonder if Berkeley named Hylas for that bold Argonaut who is the symbol of impartial investigation.

**Daniel Mark Epstein** wrote the libretto for the opera *Jefferson and Poe*, with music by Damon Ferrante.

[more from this author](#)

This article originally appeared in The New Criterion, Volume 23 June 2005, on page 98

Copyright © 2009 The New Criterion | [www.newcriterion.com](http://www.newcriterion.com)

<http://www.newcriterion.com/articles.cfm/Hylas-who----A-response-1344>