This poem is addressed — as is Idyll 11 — to Theocritus’ friend Nicias, and recounts the story of Hylas being taken by the nymphs and Heracles’ madness at losing him. Until Apollonius’ *Argonautica* and this poem the story had been a fairly obscure incident in the Argonauts’ story. Since the two poets were contemporaries scholars still debate who influenced whom.

The meter is the hexameter and the dialect is *bucolic doric*. The first time a Doric peculiarity arises I make a special note of it, but do not again if it occurs in nearby lines. I’ll let vocabulary notes handle explaining simple phonetic alterations (see θνητός/θνατός in line 4).

For these notes I have drawn on Richard L. Hunter’s *Theocritus. A Selection*, Cambridge: CUP, 1999 (Greek and Latin Classics); R.J. Cholmeley’s notes available at Perseus; and even the *Scholia in Theocritum vetera*.

οὐχ ἁμῖν τὸν Ἐρωτα μόνοις ἔτεχ᾽, ὡς ἔδοκεῦμες, ὁ Νικία, ὃτιν τούτῳ θεῶν ποκα τέκνον ἔγεντο· οὐχ ἁμῖν τὰ καλὰ πράτοις καλὰ φαίνεται ἣμεν,
οἵ θνατοὶ πελάμεσθα, τὸ δ’ αὐρινον οὐκ ἐσσαμένες
5 ἀλλὰ καὶ Ἀμφιτρύωνος ὁ χαλκοκάρδιος υἱός,
διὶ τὸν λίν ὑπὲμενε τὸν ἵππον, ἵππατο παιδός,
τοῦ χαρίστου Ἰλια, τοῦ τὰν πλοκαμίδα φορεύντος,
καὶ νιν πάντες ἐδίδαξε, πατὴρ ὁμοι φιλὸν οὐδὲν,
ὅτα μαθὼν ἄγαθός καὶ αἴσθημα αὐτὸς ἔγεντο·
χορίς δ’ οὐδέποτ’ ἢς, οὔ’ εἰ μέσον ἄμαρ ὤροιο,
οὐθ’ ὅκ’ ἄ λευκιπποι. αἰθαλόεις

ἡ ἥμαρ ἐς ὀρτάλιχοι ἂν θνατοὶ ποτὶ κοίτον ὅριζον,
σειμαμένας πτερὰ ματρὸς ἑπ’ αἴθαλόεντι πετεύρῳ,
ὡς αὐτῷ κατὰ θυμὸν ὁ παῖς πεποναμένος εἶν,

8 οἵ relative pronoun with antecedent αὐμίν. ὑπητὸς (ἡ) ὁν mortal. ἐπόμακτι to be, with Epic
mid.1st.pl. ending -μεθα. ἁυριν adv. tomorrow, nominalized by τὸ. ἐσσαμένες = ἐσσαμένε
pres.act.opt. 3pl. bird
up, rise
himself become brave and famous. "

η ἥμαρ pleasing, lovely
person, a usage known in Homer (Monro
do not confuse with
behind, endure; survive

ὡς οὔθ᾽ οὔθ᾽ χωρὶς ὅσσα καὶ τοῦ ὃς ἀλλὰ οἵ
θνατοὶ ὁπόκα χωρὶς ὅσσα καὶ τοῦ ὃς ἀλλὰ οἵ

οἵ ὁ ὑποκαίριον adv. tomorrow, normalized by τὸ. ἐσσαμένες = ἐσσαμένε
pres.act.opt. 3sg.

καὶ here even. Ἀμφιτρύων ὁ (ὁ) Amphitryon, father of Hercules. χαλκοκάρδιος
on having a heart of bronze.

6 ἥμαρ ὁ ὅκ’ ὁν ιδος ἡ braid of hair, here perhaps a sign of Hylas’ youth. ἄμαρ ὅριζον love + gen.;
do not confuse with ἐπά, the usual word in prose. παῖς παιδός ὁ boy.

This line amplifies l.6 παιδός with two phrases in apposition. τοῦ here marking a known
person, a usage known in Homer (Monro §261.3) and Attic (Smyth §1120a) both.
χαρίεις εσσα εν
pleasing, lovely. "Ὑλᾶς ὁ ὖ Hylas; the -is is Doric gen. for 1st decl. masc. τὰν = τῆν. πλοκαμίσ

8 νιν 3sg.acc. pronoun, “him.” πάντα everything. διδάσκει διδάσω διδάξω teach. φίλος
ἡ ὁν here an Epic use, “his own.” ὁμοί = ὥς εἰ as if, just as. ὁμοί πατὴρ (ἐδίδαξε) φιλὸν οὐδὲν

9 ὤν σοι ὃς ὁν as great as, as much/many as. μανθάτε μεθανάμεν learn; know. ἀγαθός ἢ
ὁν good, noble, brave. ἀοίδημου ὁν sung of, famous in song. “as much as he had learned and had
himself become brave and famous.”

10 χαρίς adv. apart, separately. οὐδέποτα = οὐδέποτε never. ἥς = ἦν Doric 3rd.sg.impf. of
εἰμί to be. μέσος ὃν οὗ middle (of). ἁμαρ = ἁμαρ ἡματος τὸ day. ὄρνυμι, ὤρσα (2. ὥρόμην)
aor.mid.opt. make rise; urge on, stir up.

11 ὁδικὲν = ὥτε when... ὁ = ἦν ὁν ὁρτάλιχος ὁν riding shining horses. ἀνα-τρέχω return, run
up, rise. ἦς - gen. to the house of. Ζεὺς Δίας ὁ Zeus. Ἀώς = Ἅως ἀνομ. sg. Dawn.

12 ὁπότε = ὥτε technically indefinite but usually = ὥτε when. ὀρτάλιχος ἢ chick; any young
bird. μινυρὸς ὁ ὄν whimpering; chirping. ποτὶ = πρόκ. κοίτος ὁ resting place; bed. ὅραω
pres.act.opt. 3pl. see; ὅραω πρὸς look toward.

13 σεῖον σεῖω ἦσσα ἦσσα aor.mid.part. gen.sg.f. shake, move back and forth; mid. shake sth. attached
to one. πτερόν τὸ feather. ματρὸς = μητρός; the entire line is a gen. absolute. αἰθαλόεις

14 ὑς here so that. ἀὐτὸν dat. of interest. κατὰ θυμὸν common Homeric phrase, in mind, in
spirit. πεποναμένος = πεποναμένος from πονέω work hard, exert, suffer; pass. be trained, educated.
εἶθ pres.act.opt. 3sg. εἶθ; here forming the perf.pass. optative of πονέω.
15 ἄντω δ' εὖ Ἐλκων ὑς ἀλαθινὸν ἀνδρ' ἀποβαίη.

15. Scholars offer many interpretations of the text between cruces, which may be corrupt. One scholion says it is metaphorical of an ox that, used to it since young, plows well — εἴρηται δὲ μεταφορικῶς ἀπὸ τῶν βοῶν τῶν ἐκ νέου εἰθισμένων καλῶς ἐλκειν.

άλλα ὅτε τὸ χρύσειον ἐπλεὶ μετὰ κώας ἱάσων Ἀισονίδας, οἱ δ' αὐτῷ ἀριστήςες συνέποντο πασῶν ἐκ πολίων προλελεγμένοι ὡν δρᾶμος τι, ἵκετο χω ταλαιργος ἁνὶ ἐς ἄφενι ἴωλκόν.

Ἀλκιμηνῆς ὑς Ἱωλκόν ἀριστήςες ἱασων, σὺν δ' αὐτῷ κατεβαῖνεν “Ὑλαις εὐδρον ἐπ’ Ἀργῷ, ἅτις κυανεᾶν ὡν ἁφαιτός Συνδρομάδων ναῦς, ἀλλὰ διεξάετε βαθῶν δ' εἰσδραμε θάσιν, αἰετὸς ὲς μέγα λαίτμα, ἁφ' οὖ τότε χοιράδες ἔσταν.

24. ὡς postpositive, Smyth §3002. Take μέγα λαίτμα as an accusative with an unspecified preposition, “like an eagle over a great abyss.” || The combination of ἁφ’ οὖ from which (time), since (then) with τότε then is unusual,
which leads some editors to omit the line entirely, suspecting it was added by a scribe who felt it necessary to work in that the Clashing Rocks never moved again after the Argo passed.

25 ἄμος δ᾽ ἀντέλλοντι Πελειάδες, ἐσχαταί δὲ ἄρνα νέον βόσκοντι, τετραμένου εἴαρος ἡδή,

25–26. The rising of the Pleiades here refers to their reappearance in April (to May) after being out of sight for winter. ||τετραμένου εἴαρος: the spring had turned to summer. These seasonal signs point to prime sailing time.

tάμος ναυτιλίας μιμνάσκετο θείος ἄωτος ἡρώων,

26 ἀρήν ἀρνός ὁ/ἡ ἄρνα νέον βόσκοντι,

τε τρέπω perf.mid.part. gen.sg.n. turn, forming genitive absolute with εἴαρος.

εἴαρος ἐαρ ἔαρος τό, poet. gen. spring.

27 τᾶμος = τῆμος then, correlative with l.25 ἆμος.

ναυτιλίαἡ gen.sg. sailing, voyage; ship.

μιμνήσκομαι impf.mid.3sg. call to mind, remember + gen. θεῖος ὁ/ἡ divine, godlike.

28 ἥρως ἡρώος ὁ warrior; hero.

κοῖλος ἡ/ον acc.sg.f. hollow, a common Homeric epithet of ships, here agreeing with Ἀργώ.

καθιδρύω aor.pass.pcpl nom.pl.m. sit down, take a seat; ἱδρύνθην Epic form. Though θεῖος ἄωτος ἡρώων is singular, T. shifts into the logical number.

29 Ἑλλήσποντος ὁ the Hellespont.

ἱκνέομαι ἵξομαι ἱκόμην come, arrive; reach. νότος ὁ the south wind, dat. of means.

τρίτος ἡ/ον the third.

ἦμαρ ἤματος ἡδή day, take the acc. of time with ἵκοντο.

30 εἴσω in(wards); within + gen. ὅρμος ὁ/ἡ cord; anchorage.

πένομαι Epic unaugmented impf. work, labor; get ready.

δειελινός ἡ/όν at evening.

στορέννυμι aor. ἐστόρεσα, here unaug. aor. smooth, to spread or prepare a bed. χαμεύνη ὁ/ἡ a bed on the ground.
35 εὖθεν βούτομον ὁδὸν βαθὸν τ’ ἐτάμοντο κύπειρον. κόψει. "Υλας ὁ ξανθὸς ὑδωρ ἐπιδόρπιον οἰών ἀυτῷ θ’ Ἡρακλῆι καὶ ἀστεμεῖ Τελαμόνι, οἱ μίσαν ἄμφερο ἐταῖροί ἀεὶ δαινύντο τράπεζαν, χάλκεον ἄγγος ἔχον. τάχα δὲ κράναν ἐνόησεν ἡμένῳ ἐν χώρῳ περὶ δὲ θρύι πολλὰ περφύκει, κυνεόν τε χελιδόνιν χλωρόν τ’ ἀδίαντον καὶ θάλλοντα σέλινα καὶ εἴλτενης ἁγρωστίς. ὦδατί δ’ ἐν μέσῳ Νύμφαι χορὸν ἄρτιζοντο, Νύμφαι ἀκοίμητοι, δειναι θεῖ άγροιῶταις,

40–44. Theocritus appears to be painting the overgrown lushness of the scene even with the meter. The caesura of line 41 is displaced, and lines 42–44 are all spondaic. ||The identification of plants in most of our Greek dictionaries is famously unreliable. I have followed the LSJ anyway.

45 Εὐνείκα καὶ Μαλίς ἔαρ θ’ ὀρᾶσσα Νύχεια
ήτοι ὁ κοῦρος ἐπείξε ποτῷ πολυχανδέα κρωσόν, 
βάφαι ἐπειγόμενος ταῖς δ’ ἐν χερὶ πᾶσαι ἔφυσαν. 
παλάκον γὰρ ἔρως ἀπαλάς φρένας ἐξεφόβησεν 
Ἀργεῖῳ ἐπὶ παιδί. κατήριπο χεὶρ ἐς μέλαν ὕδωρ

50 ἀθρόος, ὡς ὄτε πυρός ἀπ᾿ ὀφρανοῦ ἤριπεν ἀστήρ
ἀθρόος ἐν πόντῳ, ναύτας δὲ τὶς εἶπεν ἐταῖρος
“κοῦρότερ᾿, ὥ παῖδες, ποιεῖσθ᾿ ὁπλα ἀλλοιοτικὸς ὀφρος.”

51–52. The falling star was evidently a portent of weather. ὄφρος often means 
fair wind but it can mean a storm. Some manuscripts instead of ἀλλοιοτικὸς 
have πνευτικὸς, “blowing,” which favors the stormy interpretation.

Νύμφαι μὲν ὀφετέροις ἐπὶ γούνασι κοῦρον ἔχοσαι 
δακρύσεντ᾿ ἄγανοις παρεψύχοντ᾿ ἐπέσοιν.

55 Ἀμφιτρωσίνας δὲ ταράσσομενος περὶ παιδί 
ὠχεῖτο, Μαιωτισσὶ λαβὼν εὐκαμπέα τόξα 
καὶ ῥόπαλον, τὸ οἱ αἰεῖ ἔχόνδανε δεξιτερὰ χείρ.

66 ἦτοι now surely, now truly. 
κοῦρος ὁ boy, young man. 
ἔπ-ἔχω hold out; aim at, reach over.
ποτῶν τὸ drinking water ἀπολυχανδέας ἐσ wide-yawning.
κρωσός ὁ pitcher, jar. 
ἐπείξε hold out potovi to/over the water κρωσόν the pitcher.

67 βάπτω aor.act.inf. dip in water. 
ἐπείγω drive on, urge; pass, hurry, make haste (to).
ταί = αἱ.
χεῖρ χείρός ᾃ hand; arm; alternate poet stem χείρ.
ἐμ-φώ in tmesis grow upon; cling to.

68 πᾶς πᾶσα πᾶν Epic gen.pl.f. all. ἔρως ὁ ὀφρός ὁ love; Eros. 
ἄπαλος ὁ ὀφρός soft, tender, delicate.
φρήν φρήν ὁ diaphragm; metaphor. for heart, soul, mind. 
ἐκ-φοβέω frighten, alarm.

69 Ἀργεῖς αὐς ὁ ὁ Argive, from Argos but in Homer just Greek.
ἐπὶ “(with desire) for.” κατ- 
ἐρείπω -ἐρείπω  ἤριπτον throw down; 2nd.aor. intr. fall down.

50 ἀθρόος αὐς ὁ together, at once, as a whole. 
πυρός ὁ ὁ (Attic ὑπρός) flame-colored, red.

65 ἔριπτεν picks up καταγίον from the previous line. 
ἀστήρ ἔρως ὁ star; falling star; meteor.

51 πόντον ὁ the sea. 
ναῦτης ὁ Doric nom.sg. sailor.

52 κοῦρος ὁ ὁ comp. acc.pl.n. light, nimble. 
ποιεῖσθ ἔρως ὁ pres.mid.2pl. do, make. 
ὄπλον τὸ 
took; ship’s tackle; armor.

53 πλευστικὸς ὁ ὁ favorable for sailing. 
οὖρος ὁ fair wind.

54 σφέτερος αὐς ὁ their (own). 
γόνυ γούνατος τὸ knee. 
ἐχὼ Aeolic pres.act.part. nom.pl.f. 
διακρούσεις ἔσσα ἐν tearful, agreeing with l.53 κοῦρον. 
ἀγάνης ὁ ὁ ὁ gentile, mild; soothing. 

55 ἀμφιτρωσινάς ὁ son of Amphitryon, Hercules. 
ταράσσω stir up, muddy, trouble; mid. be troubled. 
περὶ + dat. about, concerning.

56 ὀφρομαί to be/have gone, depart. 
Μαιωτισσὶ adv. in Scythian fashion, modifying εὐκαμπέα.

57 ῥόπαλον τὸ club, cudgel, mace. 
τὸ here relative. 
οἶχομαι to be/have gone, depart. 
ὁς ὁ ὁ (on the) right. 
χεῖρ χείρός ᾃ hand; arm.
τρίς μὲν "Υλαν ὕψεν, ὅσον βαθύς ἤρυγε λαιμός
τρίς δ’ ἀρ’ ὁ παῖς ὑπάκουσεν, ἀραιά δ’ ἱκότο φωνά
ἐξ ὑδάτος, παρεόν δὲ μᾶλλα σχέδον εἴδετο πόρρω.
[ὡς δ’ ὀπότ’ ἡγύγειος ἀπόπτριψις λις ἐσακούσας]

Line 61 is thought to be an interpolation to ease the way into what would otherwise be an unprepared simile (lacking “as when” or the like) on line 62, though some scholars feel the line is merely very corrupt.

νεβροῦ φθεγξαμένας τις ἐν οὐρεων ὑμοφάγος λίς
ἐξ εὐνᾶ ἔσπευσεν ἔτοιμοτάταν ἐπὶ δαίτα.
'Ἡρακλῆς τοιούτος ἐν ἀτρίπτοισιν ἀκάνθα
65 παῖδα ποθῶν δεδόνητο, πολὸν δ’ ἐπελάμβανε χώρων-
σχέτλιοι οἱ φιλέοντες· ἀλώμενος δυο’ ἐμόγησεν
οὖρεα καὶ δρυμοῦς, τὰ δ’ ἱάσονος ύστερα πάντ’ ἡς.

58 βαθύς : βαρύς cod. Ambrosianus.

58 τρίς adv. three times. ὀώς aor. ἡμᾶς Doric aor.act.3sg. cry, shout, call to. ὅσος η on as great (as), as much/many (as); here adv. βαθύς είς ὅ deep, thick; high; wide. ἑρυγόμαι ἐρυγάμαι ἕρυγον belch out, blurt out. λαιμός ὁ throat.
59 ὑπ-ακούω unaug. aor.3sg. listen; answer a call. ἀραιός ὁ ἀν thin, slender, scanty. ἰκνίομαι aor.3sg. come, arrive at, reach.
60 τόρρω (εἰμὶ) Epic pres.part. nom.sg.m. be present, be near; take παρεόν... σχέδον as a concessive participle clause. μάλα much, very much. σχέδον adv. near, close by. εἶδον aor. to see; mid. to appear, seem; subject is Hylas. πόρρω further, onwards; far away, far from.
61 ἡγύγειος on having a good mane/beard. ἀπόπτριψις far away. ἔς see l.6. ἐσ-ακούω aor.act.part. nom.sg.m. listen to, give heed to.
62 νεβροῦ ὡς fawn. φθέγγομαι Doric aor.mid.part. gen.sg.f. make a sound, utter; if you think l.61 is on the right track, take this gen. phrase as the object of ἔσακοεσθως, otherwise take as gen. absolute. τις with λίς. ὅσος ἐστ’ τὸ with Epic lengthening οὖρ- mountain; hill. ὑμοφάγος on eating raw flesh, carnivorous.
63 εὐνᾶς gen. σε κύριος Homer. σπεύδω σάι Doric gen.σε. bed, bedding; of animals, abode, lair. σπεύδω trans. urge on; intrans. press on, hasten; strive; also with εἰς, εἰπ. ἐτοίμος (ны) on acc.sg.f. ready, at hand, prepared; absolute superlative (Smyth §1085), “very” or the like. δαίς δαίτος ὁ feast, meal.
64 Ἡρακλῆς nom. Heracles. τοιούτος τοιούτα τοιούτο of such a kind/quality, just such; here completing the simile of ll.62–63. ἀτρίπτος on Epic dat.pl.f. not worked, not threshed, not walked upon. ἀπακάνθα η is any thorny plant; spine.
65 ποθῶν long for, yearn for. δονεῖν p.lpf.mid.3sg. shake; disturb, agitate. ἐπι-λαμβάνω lay hold of; reach; of ground, cover, traverse. χορός ο piece of ground, place, ground.
66 σχέτλιος ε on unwearying, headstrong; miserable. ἀλάσσαι wander (over), stray, with acc. of place. ὅσσα = ὅτι Tony. τόσας η on so much/many/great, so much, so very. Take ὅσσα as explaining T’s statement σχέτλιοι οἱ φιλέοντες: “lovers are headstrong, because he suffered/toiled so much wandering over...” μογέω toil, suffer.
67 οὔρεος see l.62. ὁμοίος ὁ an oak thicket. ύστερος o on latter, following; younger; secondary (in quality or worth). ἔς = ἡν Doric 3rd.sg.impf. of εἰμί to be. τὰ δὲ πάντα ἱάσονος ἡς ύστερα — i.e., he no longer worried about Jason’s quest.
As transmitted lines 68–69 offer numerous difficulties — oddities in scan-
sion, suspicious phrasing and unknown words. I have taken Gow’s readings
here.

70 Ἡρακλῆα μένοντες. δ’ δ’ πόδες ἄγον ἔχωρει
μαίνομενος χαλεπός γὰρ ἐσώ θεός ἦπαρ ἀμύσσεν.
οὔτω μὲν κάλλιστος Ὄλας μακάρων ἀριθμεῖται·
Ἡρακλέην δ’ ἢρως ἐκερτόμεον λιποναύταν,
οὔνεκεν ἡρώησε τριακοντάζυγον Ἀργώ·

75 πεζῇ δ’ ἐς Κόλχους τε καὶ ἄξενον ἰκετο Φάσιν.

68 γέμεν : μέν codd : μέν γ’ scholia.
69 ἡμίθεοι : ἠθεοι codd. αὖτε καθαίρουν : ἐξεκάθαιρον codd.

68 γέμω Epic unaugmented impf. be full (of) + gen. ἄρμενα τά ship’s tackle, here evidently including the sails. ἔχω Aeolic pres.act.part. nom.sg.f. have. μετάρσιος (α) on raised from the ground, into the air. πάρειμι (εἰμί) Epic pres.part. gen.pl.m. be present, be near.
69 ἰστίον τὸ sail. ἡμίθεος ὁ demigod. μεσονύκτιος on of/at midnight; here adv. αὖτε again. καθαίρω Epic unaugmented impf. take down.
70 μένω remain; wait (for). ὃ = rel. ἣ in the special sense where, whither. πούς ποδός ὁ foot ὑπέρειον ἄγον, or as the scholion says, ὃ δ’ Ἡρακλῆς, ὥσπερ οἱ πόδες αὐτὸν ἦγον, ἐκεῖ ἐπορεύετο.
71 μαίνομαι rage, rave, be mad. ἐσώ in(wards); within. χαλεπός θεός i.e., Eros. ἦπαρ ἠπατος τὸ liver, the seat of passions. ἀμύσσω tear, mangle, scratch.
72 μάκαρ ἀρός ὁ blest, fortunate, esp. gods and heros. ἀριθμέω count, account; pass. be counted, here with gen. “be counted among.”
73 κερτομέω launt, scoff at. λιποναύτης on ὁ leaving the sailors.
74 οὔνεκεν because. ἐρωτίω rush; leave. τριακοντάζυγος on with thirty benches. Ἀργώ acc.
75 πεζῇ adv. on foot. ἄξενος on inhospitable. Φάσις see l.23.