themselves as framing myths. Burnyeat shows that Timaeus' cosmogony is as much a myth as Critias' tale of the flood, or Socrates' narrative of an ideal city (all three are called *mythos* without any discrepancy). What is distinctive about Timaeus' cosmogony is rather the qualification, *eikōs*: it is a *reasonable* or *appropriate* myth. Meeting the standard of reasonableness makes an *eikōs mythos* also a *logos,* but a *logos* distinct from that of a mathematical demonstration or deductive argument. Instead, Timaeus' tale of cosmogony meets a *practical* standard. For all its apparently scientific detail, it is no more than the 'modest and reasonable pastime' of a modest and reasonable man (181). It is possible to extend Burnyeat's view and treat each Platonic dialogue as a practical *mythos* along the same lines. Indeed, if we are to believe the peculiar self-referential message embedded in the *Phaedrus*, this is exactly how Plato thinks of his own dialogues: as the pastime of a modest writer (see *Phaedrus* 275c-276e, esp. 276d-e). Again, the connection between myth and dialogue beckons.

Plato's Myths is a very fine collection of articles about specific myths, or specific themes in myths, found in the Platonic dialogues. Indeed, the standard of scholarship is uniformly excellent. For all that, the collection lacks a genuine organising principle, and fails to provide much insight into either the meaning or the function of myth in Platonic philosophy. Of course, that is all too easy to say with hindsight.

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Mark Payne, *Theocritus and the Invention of Fiction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 183 + viii pages. ISBN 3978-0-521-86577-7.

Mark Payne's book, based on his Columbia University doctoral dissertation, is a virtuoso analysis of the imaginative role play in which the characters of Theocritus' *Idylls* find themselves engaged. It consists of Introduction, four chapters ('The Pleasures of the Imaginary', 'The Presence of the Fictional World', 'Becoming Bucolic', 'From Fiction to Metafiction') and Conclusion ('The Future of a Fiction'). While there is no doubt that the book makes an important contribution to the study of Theocritus and bucolic poetry as a whole, its main interest, at least in the eyes of this reader, lies in general rather than in particular issues, and it is on these general issues that the present review is focused.

'Each age possesses its own idea of fiction' — this is the first thing to spring to mind upon reading *Theocritus and the Invention of Fiction*. For the idea of fiction with which the book is permeated is not the one that would embrace the novels of Dickens or Dostoyevsky nor even those of Joyce or Virginia Woolf. It takes the reader to the realm of the postmodern novel with its possible worlds, retellings of previous fictions by marginal characters, author's encounters with his/her own characters, and its endless role play. Small wonder, therefore, that the modern authors whose names are encountered throughout the book are Henry Darger, J. M. Coetzee, Christa Wolf, John Gardner, Fernando Pessoa, Timothy Findley. Theocritus, the world of whose *Idylls* is, as is emphasised more than once, 'fully fictional' rather than simply 'mimetic' (cf. e.g. 91), is this fiction's founding father.

The programmatic distinction between the 'mimetic' fiction on the one hand and the 'fully fictional' fiction on the other is made explicit on the very first pages of the book. 'At this point then', Payne writes, 'I want to distinguish between two kinds of fiction: on the one hand, fictions that are a useful model for understanding the reality that we ourselves inhabit, and, on the other, fictions that offer an alternative to it' (1-2). Needless to say, the quintessential partisan of the former, conspicuous as he is for his 'pro-mimetic prejudice' (Gérard Genette's expression, quoted on 57), is Aristotle.

As Payne aptly remarks, Aristotle would have had little time for such literary genres as the ancient novel with its 'contingent detail, chance events, and perfect heroes and heroines who make no mistakes we would learn from' (7). The same would be true of the pastoral or bucolic fiction, another literary genre for which Aristotle's *Poetics* would have hardly made any provision. The reason is clear: as Payne emphasises over and over again, this is a genre whose characters are self-conscious enough to be 'fully in command of their mimetic choices' and whose *sine qua non* is 'the freedom to have whatever kind of imaginative life one desires' (112, 158). In other words, unlike the characters in Attic tragedy, Theocritus' herdsmen are not locked up in the illusionary world they inhabit but, rather, merely play with this world, always keeping their options open and being free to leave it whenever they wish. Nothing could take us farther away from Aristotle's model of a real-world verisimilitude as manifested above all in his principles of probability and necessity, the cornerstones of the *Poetics*.

The 'mimetic' fiction as envisaged by Aristotle and the 'fully fictional' fiction as exemplified by Theocritus' *Idylls* and other bucolic poetry thus offer two mutually incompatible models of literary representation. It is not difficult to discern which one of the models in question is regarded by Payne as the embodiment of fiction in the true sense of the word. The problem however is that if, as Payne's book seems to propose, we place the mimetic variety outside the field of fiction proper, this would create a methodological difficulty in that the mimetic fiction would be denied a semiotic status of its own and thereby pushed into the same ontological realm as the real world. It is not only that such merging of fiction with 'truth' is untenable: in fact, it is rather the non-mimetic variety, conscious as it is of its being a conventionalised role play and consistently avoiding being fully committed to the world of illusion, that would more properly belong there.

It seems at the same time that in so far as both the mimetic and the non-mimetic fiction are firmly embedded within the same cultural space of literary production, the question which of the two should be labelled as fiction in the proper sense of the word is hardly one of great consequence. In the last analysis, one's answer to this question would depend on one's methodological preferences, literary taste, and personal predilections. An additional *caveat* stems from the fact that "fiction" is a highly conventional term not available in languages other than English. All in all, however, it is rather comforting to learn that postmodern fiction is yet another thing that has been invented by the Greeks.

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Nina Otto, *Enargeia. Untersuchung zur charakteristik alexandrinischer Dichtung,* Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2009. 254 pp. ISBN 10: 3515093354.

One of the welcome recent developments in the study of Hellenistic poetry is a willingness to explore possible links between poetry and Hellenistic philosophy and literary and rhetorical criticism, beyond some of the more obvious uses of 'scholarship' by the great poets of the third century. The pursuit is a difficult one and there is a particular danger of building great edifices from very fragile straws (in the wind), but there are also real potential gains; the more we learn, for example, about the poetics of Philodemus and those he criticises, the greater the temptation to test these ideas against the poetry which survives, and of course the greater too the hazards and dangers.

Otto (henceforth O.) has, though not I think consciously, set herself within this developing trend, but has opted for the less novel end of the market. Her book, a revised version of a Münster thesis, considers the theme of *enargeia* in philosophy and rhetoric alongside the 'realism' of Hellenistic poetry. These subjects have aroused a great deal of interest in the last few decades: book length studies include Alessandra Manieri's *L'immagine poetica nella teoria degli antichi:*