Rutherford (R) aims at writing a book on the literary aspects of Plato’s work, intended for both a scholarly and a general audience. Although he has many interesting things to say while close-reading some of Plato’s dialogues, the total outcome is slightly disappointing. This is basically due to two facts: first, R has not always managed to strike a sensible balance in catering to the needs of his two intended groups of readers. In particular, the first part of the book (esp. chapters 2 and 3), which deals with the figure of Socrates and the Socratic question, seems oddly out of place with regard to subject-matter and has very little new to offer. It has a strong flavour of a revised general introductory lecture on Plato for undergraduates and in that sense it is a good specimen, clearly written and well organized. On the other hand, for example, the chapter dealing with the Republic presupposes a quite detailed knowledge of that work, yet remains superficial. The second problem with the book is due to R’s choice to discuss Plato’s work more or less in chronological order, each chapter focusing on a different major dialogue. While this makes sense in discussing Plato’s philosophical thought (R brings it up in this context, p. 24), it is not so obvious to me why this is the best way to structure a book on Plato’s artistic and literary side—nor does R explain this. In fact, the result of choosing this structuring principle is that one is often left with the impression of reading a collection of ‘artistic things in Plato’, rather than a synthesis of the art of Plato. It is left to the reader to piece together a more general picture. Chapter 3 on ‘Socrates at work’ does not fulfil this function (it might have been worthwhile for R to point out that, unlike chapter 2, chapter 3 is about Plato’s Socrates, i.e. the character in the dialogues).

As it is, in his introductory chapter R discusses some general problems and then focuses on the Apology, with particular reference to the problem in how far this work fits into the same genre as the ‘real’ dialogues. In chapter 3, the Laches, Charmides and (pseudo-Platonic) Clitopho are used as illustrations of Socrates’ approach, and the criticism it incurred. Ch. 4 inquires into Plato’s attitude to-
wards the sophists and the question whether Socrates was one. R argues that bringing out the contrast between Socrates and the sophists is a crucial part of Plato’s dramatic technique (p. 107). He portrays them as differing in “their methods of arguing, their style, their way of life, their mode of dress and above all their philosophic principles and priorities” (p. 108)—again, there is no systematic and synthetic illustration or discussion of these features, although they are all mentioned at one point or another in discussing features of individual dialogues. The *Euthydemus* is the example discussed in this chapter, which is followed by thematically related chapters on the *Protagoras* and the *Gorgias*. Follow separate chapters with analyses of the *Symposium*, the *Republic*, the *Phaedrus*, and a last and somewhat hasty one on the *Theaetetus*, *Timaeus*, and *Laws*. No synthesis, no summing up.

R is a perceptive close-reader, but too often his analysis comes no further than noticing single individual points of interest. This may also be caused by the inevitable conciseness—and thus the selectivity—of the discussion of each dialogue. Often these observations are valuable, as when he explores the imagery of the *Gorgias* (p. 154); sometimes they do lead to a more synthetic view of a whole dialogue, e.g. when R is able to mount an interesting defence of the unity of the *Phaedrus* on their basis (p. 260 ff.). In other instances, however, his selectivity and concentration on single details lead to unacceptable oversimplification as in his analysis of the Simonides-passage from the *Protagoras* (p. 135 ff.). Here, R upholds that Socrates’ reading of the poem turns Simonides into a somewhat Socratic figure. In particular, he sees an especially clear analogy between poet and philosopher in 344b, where Simonides’ poem is described as an elenchus of a statement by Pittacus. In itself, this is correct, but it is only half the story, and therefore not enough in a literary analysis. In fact, this reading forces R to overlook all the overt textual signals that he himself calls attention to elsewhere, viz. those that align Simonides with sophist ambition and competitiveness, e.g. the strongly agonistic εἰ καθέλοι τοῦτο τὸ ῥῆμα ὡσπερ εὐδοκιμοῦντα ἀθλητήν ... αὐτὸς εὐδοκιμήσει (if Simonides will get the better of Pittacus’ saying, he himself will be honoured instead, 343c1 ff.); φιλότιμος (concern for reputation, 343c1); κολούειν, 343c4, does not sit comfortably with the concept of Socratic elenchus either, nor does 343c4 τοῦτον ἐνέκα (i.e. τοῦ εὐδοκιμεῖν ἐνέκα) as its motivation; the same goes for 343d3 ἔρι-ζοντα. The term ἔλεγχος is not used until 344b4, and the Socratic