The volume is rather well put together, with a useful index that helps navigate such heterogeneous material. Birberick does admit that "each section, in many ways, may be viewed a discrete unit," yet still hopes that "the essays of one section enter into dialogue with those of the others, creating thematic leitfmotifs that give shape and focus to the volume as a whole" (xii). Its diversity within loosely defined categories is one of its main assets.

The articles are all quite good; nonetheless, this reviewer found the volume a bit lopsided. It is unfortunate that Zalloua's essay should be the only one that deals with the sixteenth century in a series devoted to early modern France—and not one article is devoted to the eighteenth century. That Koch's essay is not accompanied by an article on optics and the burgeoning revolutions in the science of vision, for example, is also regrettable, for it would have resulted in a more balanced final section. Finally, the volume is also heavily literary; yet with such a rich and complex theme, it may have been advantageous had the editor included some more disciplines, notably art history or musicology. Overall, though, *Perfection* is an accessible volume that speaks well of the health of seventeenth-century French studies, in which there is something for any seventeenth-century French student and specialist.

Hannah Dawson. *Locke, Language and Early-Modern Philosophy*. (Ideas in Context Series) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. xii + 361 pp. $90.00. Review by KARIN SUSAN FESTER, UNIVERSITY OF WALES.

Hannah Dawson's book is an impressive work about John Locke's philosophy of language, in particular his critique of words, making it a valuable contribution to the field of seventeenth century studies and philosophy. The book is eloquent in style and rigorous and enduring in its presentation. Dawson makes extensive use of Locke's original manuscripts, as well as engaging with works from various English, French and other European philosophers. The book is an excellent reference text for those requiring a specialist treatment of seventeenth century philosophy of language, especially where it concerns the development of moral language in political philosophical thought during Locke's time.

Dawson begins her book by stating: "Language was a problem for early-modern philosophers" (1). For Locke, as well as most philosophers, language obstructed philosophy—they worried about the misuse of words, their ambiguity, and their "corruptible nature" (5). Locke especially was disenchanted with the way words were used in discourses about nature, morality and politics of his time, therefore he turned his attention to not only words but in how they generated moral language as a whole. Locke challenged the commonly held assumption that a universal language existed for communication among philosophers (see Chapters Eight and Nine), arguing that *semantic diversity*—through private language and cultural attachments—was ultimately manifested in *moral language* and ideas.

The book is composed of three parts. Part One, "Language in the Trivium," consists of three chapters concerned with the Aristotelian trivium of logic, grammar and rhetoric, which formed the basis of early-modern philosophy of language. Dawson discusses the theories of language, elucidating how logic was used to facilitate the relationship between words, things and concepts, detailing the disputation among the grammarians of whether or not languages could be reduced to fixed rules or whether they were irregular and mutable. Finally, she points to how words could be used to disguise, manipulate and contradict, especially in how "rhetoric further diffracts language—particularly moral language—which is to be the major location of philosophical anxiety about semantic instability" (130).

Part Two, "Philosophical Developments of the Problem of Language," is presented in Chapters Four, Five, and Six. In Chapter Four Dawson expounds on the incompatibility between language and science, and philosophers were constantly "engaged in bringing language into congruence with things" (107). Dawson proceeds to invoke the thinking of Francis Bacon who held a culturally specific view of grammar/culturally relative view of semantics. Here she also considers the works of Descartes, Wilkins, Lodwick, Montaigne, Gassendi, Malebranche, and Hobbes to indicate that there was not such a clear cut distinction between the empiricists and the rationalists. Dawson considers these philosophers "to demonstrate the pervasive inclusion of thoughts and things in early-modern theories of language, whilst exploring the differences, developments and doubts therein" (92). In

Chapter Five the focus is on how *semantic instability* disrupted the general assumption that language is universal. Early-modern philosophers relied on semantic universalism as a foundation for communication (130). Dawson points to the different currents that swept into philosophical dialogues, such as the historicist grammarians who claimed that languages were "diverse and mutating" rather than adhering to fixed rules and how "rhetoric further diffracts language—particularly moral language—which is to be the major location of philosophical anxiety about semantic instability" (130). Skepticism about semantic universality and recognition of instability, Dawson points out, was addressed by only a few philosophers: Montaigne, Hobbes, Pascal, Spinoza, and Pufendorf. In Chapter Six Dawson focuses on the *semantic opacity* of words (155), drawing attention to how words engender ambiguity, persuasiveness and emotion—ultimately affecting development of moral language, which Dawson detailed in the final part of the book.

Part Three, "Locke on Language," is composed of Chapters Seven, Eight, Nine and Ten. It is in the final part of the book where Dawson expounds on Locke's individualism and private language theory and where she makes an excellent connection to her discussions on semantic instability, especially where it concerns moral language in earlier chapters. Dawson draws attention to one essential point pertinent to Locke's private language theory—where critics often attempt to undermine his inherent individualism—that Locke was not a theorist who denied the possibility "of a common mental discourse and communication," rather he used "the axiomatic premise of semantic individualism to prove that words are connected to their meanings arbitrarily" (219). Dawson expounds on how Locke viewed moral language as being connected to the culture of the individual person. Thus, for Locke, the individual was an important contributor to semantic instability and "Locke's radical contribution was to systematise this deep form of semantic instability" (227). In Chapter Nine, Dawson expounds on Locke's view that words essentially produce morality, that is language seems to have power in the moral sphere.

The final chapter of the book is where Dawson elucidates the contradictions she noted in the coherence of Locke's thought (277). Dawson points to these inconsistencies in the context of the three

social aspects of Locke's semantic theory. The first social aspect concerns the individual: "only when individuals have the same ideas in their heads do they properly communicate" (295). Second, "it is the community, not individuals, that dictates which words and meanings are in common use" (297). The second social aspect contradicts the first; it was expounded upon in earlier chapters regarding moral language. Finally, the third social aspect *is* the "pull of society on individuals," that is in how individuals strive to be virtuous and always "want to be liked by other men […] They are fixated on others as a result of being centered on themselves" (297). Dawson's discussion of the inconsistencies inherent to the three social aspects in Locke's semantic theory are especially thought provoking for anyone interested in analyzing Locke's political theory.

John Locke is eminent for his epistemology and ethico-political theory, however this book demonstrates that he has also made a great contribution to the philosophy of language. Dawson has presented a thorough account of Locke's philosophy of language. The only weakness to be found is in the latter portion of the book where the author could have delved deeper into Locke's individualistic private language argument and its generation of moral language—especially important for Locke's political philosophical thought; Locke's critique of words is most essential in this regard. The book's bibliography includes an extensive manuscript list, as well as a comprehensive subject index. Dawson's book is not only a specialist text for seventeenth century scholars, but is also a valuable source for philosophers specializing in Locke's political theory and philosophy of language. Dawson's book is a definite must read, as it is an ambitious journey detailing Locke's philosophy of language within the wider framework of seventeenth century philosophy.