CONCLUSION

In this analysis of Vaugelas's work, three major and interrelated perspectives have been adopted — the historical, the linguistic, and the sociolinguistic. Here I want to draw together the major conclusions resulting from each approach, and suggest what is, in my view, the value of such a study of Vaugelas.

Three main historical questions have guided the analysis. Firstly, what development can be discerned in Vaugelas's ideas on language and the usage of French? Secondly, what is his position in the history of grammatical or linguistic treatises? Thirdly, what is his influence and lasting effect on the writing of works on language and on the development of the French language?

The examination of the early translation, the Arsenal manuscript of the *Remarques*, the published observations and the two versions of the Quintus Curtius translation in turn has shown conclusively that both Vaugelas's attitude to language and his usage of French evolved greatly between 1615 and 1650. I shall return to the changes in theory and try at least partially to explain them when we review the sociolinguistic dimension of Vaugelas's work. As for his practice, the detailed examination of the works has illustrated that the changes affect all areas of language usage — pronunciation and orthography, vocabulary and semantics, morphology, syntax and word order, and style. Further confirmation of the development can be gathered from Vaugelas's letters to various friends and acquaintances and we are fortunate that those surviving date from 1606, when Vaugelas was still living in his native Savoy, to 1645, that is, they represent well the productive period of his life. There are two letters from Annecy dated 1606, two roughly contemporary to the Fonseca translation (1616, 1620), three which date from the time when a substantial number of the observations were probably finding their first expression (1630, 1630a, 1633), and two from 1645, the period of the final work on the *Remarques* and the revision of the Quintus Curtius translation.[1] Rather than repeating examples already discussed in the treatment of the major works, I shall cite a few examples from Vaugelas's letters as further illustration of the broad line of development of his usage. As the century progresses, the discrepancies between the usage recommended in the *Remarques* and Vaugelas's practice diminish in quantitative and qualitative terms. Moreover, his style gains in clarity and elegance.

Vaugelas's orthography becomes not only more streamlined but also more consistent. For example, in the two letters of 1606 the spellings are still overloaded with extra letters, whether etymological or purely fanciful (*effects*,

faict, *ceste*, *soing*), forms later proscribed in the *Remarques* are employed (*encor*) and the form *un'* is found before feminine words beginning with a vowel (*un'autre fois*). The same applies in general to the next three letters (e.g. 1616: *nepueu*, *soing*, *encor*), but by 1630–33 the forms *fait*, *encore*, *aiouste* appear side-by-side with *Court* and *besoing*.[2] In the realm of verb morphology there are only two examples of usages later criticized by Vaugelas, both of which appear early on (*treuverez* (1606a) and *face* (1616)).

Streicher has already pointed out that even in 1606 Vaugelas is concerned to find the 'mot juste', carefully choosing *condoloir* in preference to *consoler* in a letter to his aunt (1606a).[3] Nevertheless, in the use of vocabulary there is evidence of change of usage. For instance, in 1616 the latinate *per* is used and *aucun* is still given a positive meaning. Even in the 1630s forms later censured by Vaugelas are used (*en mon endroit* (1630a), *proches* (for *parents*) (1633)), but once again by 1645 further progress has been made, and only the expression *si est-ce que* (1645a) appears dated. However, in the letters, as in the major works, the most numerous and most significant changes occur in the syntax and word order. In the early letters Vaugelas's sentences are long and rather confused in structure; he sometimes does not use articles (*par mesme moyen* (1606a)), or repeat prepositions ('toutes les puissances de l'une et l'autre Court' (1616)), he uses some archaisms like *esquels* (1606a), and the subject pronoun, notably the impersonal subject pronoun, is not consistently employed ('Et faut que . . .' (1616)). We also find an example of a *construction lousche* of the type forbidden by the *Remarques*: 'avec celuy que ie vous ay fait particulierement et a Messieurs vos enfans' (1606a). By 1630 there is much more repetition of syntactic markers and the periods are therefore more clearly articulated, although there is still the occasional example of an awkward construction: 'Je m'en entretiens quelquefois à l'hostel de Lorraine, où vous estes parfaitement chery et honoré, et avec le bon Monsieur de la Peyre' (1630a). Once again in 1645 the sentences are shorter and clarity and balance are improved, with, for instance, less use of participle clauses and use of the neater relative *dont* instead of *de laquelle*. The ordering of the words illustrates a parallel development in three broad phases. The early letters display a conservative attitude to adjective placement (*le ferme & agreable appuy* (1606a)), positioning of the negative particles around an infinitive (*pour faire iamais* (1616)), ordering of adverbs ('infailliblement cela en arresteroit le cours' (1616)), and positioning of the polite forms of address in such a way that, in the strict conditions imposed by the *Remarques*, they might be misconstrued ('Vous uoyez Monseigneur, pour finir par ou i'ay commencé . . .' (1620)). The middle period witnesses a reduction in such examples, but not their complete elimination, and there are still cases of inversion and orderings in which syntactically closely related forms are rather distant ('de ne dire pas' (1633); 'Et puis il y a si longtemps que . . .' (1633); 'à cause du grand applaudissement

qu'a eu avec toutes sortes de raisons sa premiere partie' (1630a)). By 1645 we see the disappearance of such infringements of Vaugelas's conception of a 'natural' word order, in which all the elements are immediately comprehensible in the linear sequence of the sentence, and morphologically and syntactically related forms are kept close together; now we find the type of balanced and clearly articulated period associated with Classical usage (e.g. 'Puis que je ne saurais assez vous remercier, de la Lettre que vous m'avez fait l'honneur de m'écrire, ni assez vous temoigner à quel point elle m'a ravi, & par son éloquence, & par les marques de vôtre bonté dont elle est toute pleine . . .' (1645a)).

The letters therefore illustrate three broad phases of development towards the usage favoured in the *Remarques* and traditionally associated with Vaugelas — the early period up to about 1620 when Vaugelas was still probably greatly influenced by his provincial background, the 1630s when Vaugelas's ideas on language were beginning to crystallize and he was becoming increasingly aware of the importance of purity and clarity of language usage, and the last period when his ideas were fully mature. These periods are represented by the Fonseca translation, the manuscript of the *Remarques*, and the published observations together with the Quintus Curtius translation respectively.

The problem of determining Vaugelas's predecessors, always a hazardous task, is in part lessened by additional information furnished by the Arsenal manuscript. His written sources are wide-ranging, but are primarily Classical Latin authors and French writers from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The principal classical sources of inspiration — Quintilian, Cicero and Varro — indicate clearly where Vaugelas stands in the tradition of rhetoric: not only does he derive much of his terminology and the key concepts of the work, *pureté, netteté* etc. from this tradition, but his views on the role of usage, reason, authority and antiquity also closely mirror and indeed imitate Quintilian's formulations. On the other hand, Vaugelas's classical grammatical predecessors are largely ignored. The main French written sources are Malherbe, Coeffeteau and Amyot. It has been suggested that criticism of Malherbe's use of French may well have been the starting point for the observations; only later did Vaugelas attach primary importance to the spoken usage of the Court as he himself became more involved with the life of the Court and salons. Coeffeteau and above all d'Ablancourt are key figures for the crystallization and development of Vaugelas's ideas on translation procedure. While few French grammatical sources are acknowledged in the *Remarques*, the manuscript suggests, as does the content of some of the observations, that Vaugelas was familiar with the grammars of his two immediate predecessors, Maupas and Oudin. However, as we have seen, Vaugelas was not only inspired by written material, he was also greatly influenced by the comments and criticisms of his friends and colleagues — notably of certain

fellow members of the Academy and salon milieu, Conrart, Chapelain, Patru and Ménage, to whom he showed his observations before publication. Their comments may well have played a significant role in the elaboration of the *Remarques* and their advice accounts for some of the modifications made both to the general theory of the work and to the detail of the discussion in individual observations.

All this raises the question of the degree of Vaugelas's originality in the *Remarques*. If much of his theory is derived from Quintilian and his information about the details of French usage is gathered from consultation with contemporaries, should the work be considered the result of the efforts of a collectivity? To some extent, certainly, the *Remarques* are clearly representative of current opinion in Court circles, Vaugelas representing his age in underlining the importance of clarity and purity of language; indeed, the topicality of the comments accounts in no small way for the success of the *Remarques*. Nevertheless, the work does have an original value, which lies partly in the unique combination of ideas Vaugelas put forward, and partly in the fact that it appeared modern and new at that time to stress the importance of a contemporary spoken, albeit elitist, norm for good usage, to underline the value of usage over reason, and to express a flexible attitude to language change and a clear methodology for eliciting a naïve judgement about details of French. The most striking new feature is the presentation of the material; the random ordering suited perfectly the audience for whom the work was intended and reflected accurately current hostility to anything considered overtly scholarly or pedantic.

The last chapter has clearly illustrated the extent and variety of Vaugelas's influence, ranging from the creation of a new genre of observations on language to material influence on the content not only of usage-based grammars, but also of rhetorics and even of the grammars of the *philosophes*, who, rationalizing Vaugelas's pronouncements, ensured their survival. The paradoxical fact has been indicated that where Vaugelas's influence seems most obvious, for example, in the work of Bouhours, the author is often less faithful to Vaugelas's ideas, for here, while Vaugelas's authority is explicitly acknowledged, the norm for good usage is no longer flexible or based on spoken usage, but fixed and reliant on the written language. Strange too is the fact that even today when the society forming the basis of the *Remarques* has disappeared and the *Remarques* are little read, Vaugelas's name is still honoured and his influence felt in various areas — such as the writing of *chroniques de langage*, and the stressing of the importance of good language usage, as well as, more obviously, in the principles underlying usage-based works. All this, together with the influence of Vaugelas on the development of the French language, surely makes him a figure worthy of study. As we have seen, the contents of the *Remarques* were repeated and reworked in various guises in the eighteenth

century and many of his pronouncements are still considered valid. This fact may be explained in part by the predictive power of the *Remarques*, by Vaugelas's ability to sense the trend of the evolution of French, but account must also be taken of the prescriptive nature of some of the observations, of Vaugelas's tendency not always to record good usage faithfully and his desire to make the language more regular and 'more perfect' than it actually was. Subsequent grammarians, neglecting the fundamental need to observe current usage, then merely regurgitated his pronouncements unthinkingly.

My second line of enquiry has been linguistic. Vaugelas's observations have been analysed, compared and contrasted with a view to distilling a clear idea of his views about various aspects of language behaviour and his overall concept of language. In this analysis I have centred on the tension between theory and practice in Vaugelas's work both in terms of the relationship between declared aims and intended methodology in the *Remarques* and actual realization in the observations themselves, and in terms of the relationship between Vaugelas the grammarian and Vaugelas the translator. This, of course, has necessitated addressing the question of whether there is indeed any coherent theory of language in the *Remarques*. In Chapter 2 I highlighted the numerous and often major discrepancies between stated aims and actual practice, the problems of doubtful usage, of the notion of *la plus saine partie*, of the relationship between usage and reason, of the indeterminate status of analogy, and of Vaugelas's grasp of history. All these difficulties are compounded by the vagueness of much of the presentation, the lack of definitions and explanations making it difficult to pin down precisely Vaugelas's meaning. From this discussion it became clear that while the Preface might superficially suggest that Vaugelas has a clear concept of language behaviour and of his intention in the *Remarques*, in practice the interpretation of the theory is problematic, since the theory allows for flexibility of application and manipulation and is consequently heavily weighted in Vaugelas's favour. Chevalier may then be justified in doubting whether Vaugelas has any coherent overall linguistic theory, but on points of detail Vaugelas does have some clear ideas of how language behaves, or how it should behave in his view, although these ideas are not always consistently followed. Underlying them there is a keynote of moderation. For example, Vaugelas is in favour of removing any obviously extraneous letters (*vng*, *escripre*) and aligning the spelling and pronunciation to some extent, but his reliance on usage prevents him from allowing such orthographies as *orthografe* and forces him to retain etymological letters and accepted non-phonological spellings. He is not totally averse to neologisms provided they are well-formed and useful, and he allows a moderate use of synonyms although he is also concerned to give words a clear and precise meaning and to make sure that the correct word for the register, style and context is always selected. His decisions in the realm of verb morphology are far more problematic: Vaugelas

does not seem to grasp the competition between forms created by sound laws and analogically created forms and his decisions are therefore unsystematic and contradictory. On the other hand, clear principles guide his pronouncements on syntax and word order: a sentence must be clearly and unambiguously constructed so that all the syntactic relations are made explicit, and the words are immediately comprehensible as they are read in the linear sequence of the sentence. All this then finds its justification when the sociolinguistic dimension of the work is considered.

I have also concentrated on the differences between theory in the *Remarques* and practice as illustrated in the two translations. While the contradictions between the Fonseca translation and the *Remarques* have largely been explained in terms of historical evolution and of Vaugelas's move to Paris, those between the Quintus Curtius translation and the *Remarques*, works which may be viewed as roughly contemporary, can perhaps best be accounted for in terms of the different aims and purposes of the works.

This leads on to the third major perspective, for in considering Vaugelas's work two broadly sociological or sociolinguistic questions have been addressed. The importance and impact of the *Remarques* may be explained to no small degree by the purpose of the work: to provide a means of succeeding in society, especially with the ladies at Court. But more than this, the linguistic content of the *Remarques* can only be fully appreciated and evaluated when viewed in the light of the sociological goal of the observations. The revisions between the Arsenal manuscript and the published observations illustrate the growing importance of the spoken language of the Court to Vaugelas which came with the realization of the power and advantage gained by a good command of language use. Ultimately then the linguistic is subsumed by the sociolinguistic, Vaugelas's theory of language depending on the desire to make communication as quick and easy as possible in order not to cause the listener any displeasure or make the interlocutor appear ridiculous, the worst possible fate to befall the *honnête homme*. Avoiding such ridicule would especially be the concern of the *nouveau riche* or the upper middle class man trying to rise in society and hoping to be accepted socially by the existing nobility, and there are indications that such men did indeed read the *Remarques* as an aid to self- betterment. The vocabulary used must therefore be familiar to the reader or hearer, and this accounts for the exhortation to avoid any word which is *bas*, too old or too new, over-technical or of the wrong register. Again, a clear and unambiguous syntax is vital, for if there is any difficulty of comprehension, the hearer will lose interest not only in the conversation, but in the speaker himself. The definitions of *pureté* and *netteté*, relying on such notions as *barbarisme*, are again dictated by the values of the society. Vaugelas is aware of variation in usage, that there is no one fixed standard, but he chooses to restrict himself to consideration, at least in the

published observations, of rather formal interpersonal communication at Court and rather elevated written style.

Vaugelas's growing interest in the spoken language of the Court reflects too his own situation. Coming from the provinces and from a family involved in the legal profession, he himself had to learn to adopt the ways and manners of the Parisian Court. His own desire to please and his deferential attitude to his 'betters' led him to preach a doctrine of linguistic deference, of conformism to the standard of the Court, of denying originality and self-expression in favour of imitation of accepted norms. From time to time I have pointed out that the difference between Vaugelas's work and that of Arnauld and Lancelot can be explained to some extent in terms of the different goals and intended audience of the two works. Vaugelas's letters add confirmation of the importance of the Court and the Academy to him, for he states proudly in 1645 that he has passed all his life at the Court, and in a letter of 1630 he stresses the attitude required in order to succeed there: 'Monseigneur se fait extremement aimer et estimer icy par sa sage conduite, et par la grande discretion dont il use enuers les Dames' (1630).

Secondly, a sociolinguistic viewpoint helps to account for the differences between the usage recommended in the *Remarques* and the actual usage of the Quintus Curtius translation. Vaugelas's choice of vocabulary is broader and more tolerant in the Quintus Curtius translation than the pronouncements of the *Remarques* would lead us to expect, for he uses words which the Academy criticizes, for example, as *bas*, archaic, not noble enough or not suitable for the context. Again, consideration of the different purposes of the work is instructive. Whereas in the *Remarques* Vaugelas is concerned to mark all potential nuances of meaning and to allow only words of a restricted register and currency, in order to ensure that his reader will not run the risk of being misunderstood, in the translations Vaugelas is the stylist anxious to produce a varied, lively and pleasant-sounding piece of prose, and the translator aware of the need to be flexible in the choice and combination of lexical items in order to render the original successfully.

Adoption of a sociological viewpoint is doubly valuable. Not only does it explain much of Vaugelas's theory and practice and align the work to the tradition of courtesy book writing, but it also provides valuable information in turn about the functioning of seventeenth-century society, underlining the importance of adopting acceptable behaviour, and notably linguistic behaviour, as a means of social assimilation in a period of rapid social mobility. The motto 'by his language you shall know him' seems to have been the keynote of the day. A study of Vaugelas therefore has wider resonances than the purely linguistic ones already mentioned. And indeed the social prestige attached to a good use of language and exploitation of the manipulative and persuasive power of language are still very much features of language usage in France today.