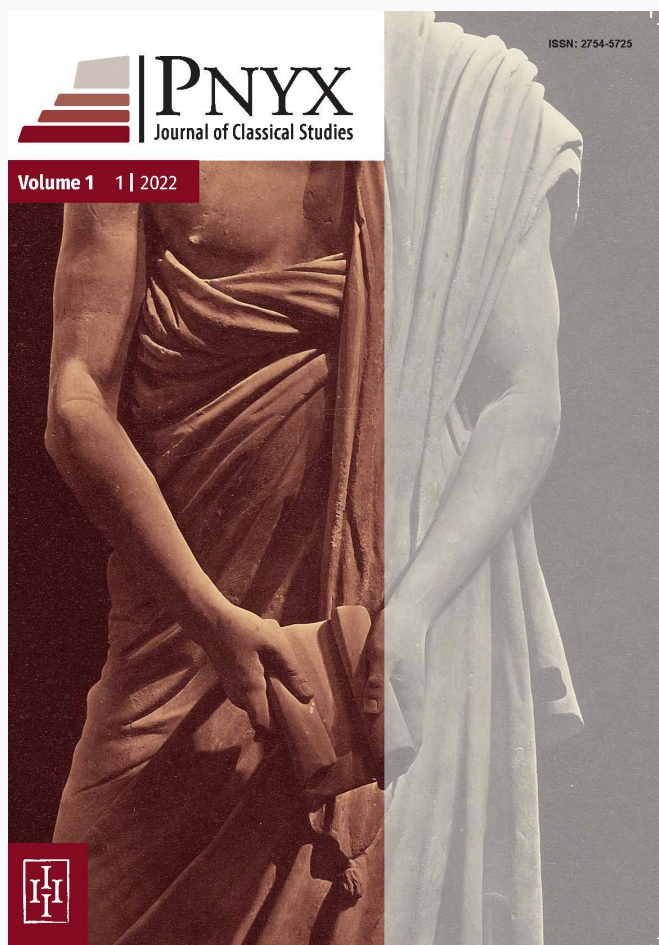


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### Miguel Antonio Caro and the (Trans)Formations of Classical Tradition in Colombia

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## Miguel Antonio Caro and the (Trans)Formations of Classical Tradition in Colombia

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### Abstract

This paper highlights a unique phenomenon in Colombia, the entanglement between Latin and power, epitomised by the pivotal role of President and Latinist Miguel Antonio Caro. The study of Classics arrived in the territory with the first conquerors from Spain at the end of the sixteenth century and Caro stands on the shoulders of a long Classical tradition in New Granada. A member of the Conservative Party and a humanist, he was widely known for his work and contribution in the Political Constitution of the Republic of Colombia of 1886 and his central role in the formation of the modern state of Colombia. Besides politics, Caro co-authored a Latin Grammar, wrote many articles on translation and Latin Literature, composed poetry in Spanish and Latin, and produced the first translation of the complete works of Vergil in Colombia. Caro's works and days aptly demonstrate the association between grammar, Classics, and state power throughout the history of Colombia. The paper contextualises the role of Classics in Colombia from the colonial period until the end of the nineteenth century and sketches Caro as an individual and a politician. It outlines his scholarly activity, which involved grammar, translation, and scholarly publishing, and underlines his influence on other scholars and his idiosyncratic interest, as a decisive political figure, in re-invigorating interest in Latin language and literature.

### Keywords

Miguel Antonio Caro, Classical Tradition, Vergil, Latin Grammar, Spanish Translations of Latin Literature, Classics and Politics, Colombia

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## The Status of Latin in New Granada and at the Beginning of the Republican Period in Colombia\*

Miguel Antonio Caro's scholarly activities built on a long tradition of classics in the country, going back centuries, in the years of colonial administration and the Viceroyalty of New Granada. Hence, the paper begins with an overview of the study of classics in the land that later became the Republic of Colombia. It will first discuss Caro as a politician involved in important milestones in Colombian politics, and then examine his manifold contributions to the study of Classics in the country. The last section of the paper explores the two aspects of Miguel Antonio Caro, the president and the Latinist, outlines the entanglement between Classics and power, and sketches the central role of Miguel Antonio Caro in this phenomenon.

The first contact with Greek and Roman authors in the territory that today is known as Colombia took place at the dawn of the sixteenth century, with the arrival of Spanish conquerors, such as Alonso de Ojeda (Torrejoncillo del Rey, 1466 – Santo Domingo, 1515) and Diego de Nicuesa (Torredonjimeno, c. 1478 – Caribbean Sea, 1511).<sup>1</sup> In 1525, conqueror Rodrigo de Bastidas (Sevilla, 1475 – Santiago de Cuba, 1527) founded Santa Marta and other cities in the Caribbean coast; among others, Pedro de Heredia (Madrid, 1484 – off the coast of Cádiz, 1554), Nicolás de Federmán (Ulm, c. 1505 – Valladolid, 1542), Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada (Córdoba, 1509 – Mariquita, 1579), and Sebastián de Belalcázar (Belalcázar, 1480 – Cartagena de Indias, 1551) explored the land and established settlements across the whole territory. This process of first settlement lasted from the arrival of Spaniards in 1499 until 1550. During this early age of exploration and colonisation, contact with Classics was mediated by individuals belonging to the military, ecclesiastical, or civil servant orders. Usually, they were born and trained in Spain but lived and worked throughout their lives, or for a substantial amount of time, in the Americas.

Well-educated individuals featured among the group of conquerors, first settlers, and government officials. Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada had studied Law at the University of Salamanca and from his extensive historical writings after his relocation to America only his *Antijovio* (1567) has been transmitted to us.<sup>2</sup> Juan de Castellanos (Alanís, 1522 – Tunja, 1606), a 'humanist conqueror',<sup>3</sup> composed *Elegías de Varones Ilustres de Indias* (*Elegies of Illustrious Men of the Indies*, 1589),<sup>4</sup> the foundational epic poem in Colombia. The elegies comprise 113,609 hendecasyllable verses, grouped mostly in real octaves and divided into four parts. As Caro pointed out, the poem mourns the death of illustrious men or painful cases of conquest.<sup>5</sup> The text incorporates elements from a variety of genres (epic, history, elegy, eulogy, oratory, ballads, and pilgrimage) and languages: it is written in Spanish but contains numerous passages in Latin and Amerindian voices, alongside several Italianisms, Gallicisms, and Arabisms, which make its classification a difficult task for researchers. A strong influence from Latin poetry, especially Vergil, Ovid, and Horace, has been detected by scholarly research in Castellanos' *Elegías* and has received

\* All English translations of verses are my own.

<sup>1</sup> The region of New Granada initially belonged to the Viceroyalty of Perú since its creation in 1542 and was re-organised as a Viceroyalty in 1717. Also known as the Viceroyalty of the New Kingdom of Granada, it was temporally dissolved and re-established in 1739.

<sup>2</sup> Rivas Sacconi, 1993: 2.

<sup>3</sup> Rivas Sacconi, 1993: 1-40.

<sup>4</sup> Caro himself, among others, took an interest in the work of Castellanos (Caro, 1921; Lida, 1946). Recent publications evidence a resurgence in the studies of Castellanos: e.g., Restrepo, 1999; 2004; Martínez Osorio, 2016, with an English translation of the exordium of *Elegía I*.

<sup>5</sup> Caro, 1921: 52-53.

considerable attention.<sup>6</sup> Cristóbal de Torres y Motones (Burgos, 1574 – Bogotá, 1654), appointed bishop of Santa Fé de Bogotá by Felipe IV in 1634, founded in 1653 the ‘Colegio Mayor del Rosario’, one of the first universities of New Granada. He brought to the land his private library comprising about 200 volumes,<sup>7</sup> most of which were written in Latin; later, they would thicken the shelves of the Colegio Mayor del Rosario university library.

Religious institutions also played a crucial role in the dissemination and knowledge of Latin and Greco-Roman culture in New Granada.<sup>8</sup> Their influence was widespread not only across cities, with the foundation of schools and universities, but also in rural and less populated territories, through the work conducted in the missions and *haciendas*. The Jesuit Order, in particular, stood out for its educational role in creating several *haciendas* – a large estate for economic exploitation in the countryside, where schools were built and indigenous, rural populations were educated and converted to Catholicism.<sup>9</sup>

This contact with classical legacy taking root in New Granada instigated a fruitful dialogue between the Classical Tradition and the new American reality. Already in the seventeenth century, a Creole elite emerged, born and educated in New Granada. This new social class was educated in private schools and the Universities of Tunja, Bogotá, and Popayán, mainly religious centres at the hands of the Jesuits, Augustinians, and Franciscans. The study of Latin grammar and the works of classical Latin authors was part of the academic curriculum since the creation of these institutions. As in the Viceroyalty of New Spain,<sup>10</sup> the University of Salamanca, which offered a program based on *trivium* and *quadrivium*, became the dominant model for institutions in New Granada.<sup>11</sup> Good knowledge of Latin was mandatory for the completion of studies, and it seems that students were able to communicate fluently in Latin (both orally and in writing). However, the use of this language was restricted to the academic field.<sup>12</sup>

Creol writer Juan Rodríguez Freyle (Bogotá, 1566-1642) authored *El Carnero*, a foundational novel of Colombian Literature, between 1636 and 1638.<sup>13</sup> Its importance resides in describing the historical background of the conquest and the early years of the Spanish settlement, and in the early development of Baroque in the Spanish Indies.<sup>14</sup> The influence of Classical Literature, especially Vergil and Horace, and the use of Latin, is clearly and firmly stated in Freyle’s work.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Lida, 1946: 111-120; Rivas Sacconi, 1993: 16-17.

<sup>7</sup> Restrepo Zapata (2015:73-70) presents a catalogue of 224 volumes. Del Rosario García (2015: 24) is more conservative and restricts the number to 175 volumes. According to the sources of the period, a standard traveller ventured to the Americas with a personal library of about 50 volumes.

<sup>8</sup> Along with the library of the Colegio Mayor del Rosario, important book collections of religious orders, some expropriated from the Jesuits after their expulsion by Carlos III in 1767, some delivered by other religious communities, such as the Augustinians, the Franciscans, the Dominicans, and the Carmelites during the nineteenth century, are preserved in the National Library of Colombia; full discussion in López Arévalo, 2011. Palomino Urbano (1989) offers a catalog of the manuscripts of the National Library of Colombia. Printed books and *mamotreto*s (handwritten volumes) provide information on the education system and knowledge of Latin. Finally, the Library of the Pontifical Xavierian University houses an important collection of ancient books; Villegas, 2010; 2011; 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Colmenares, 1969: 39-44. Most recent research focuses on specific areas of Colombia, Cúcuta Valley for instance; cf. Mantilla, 2019.

<sup>10</sup> Ortiz Dávila (2014: 42) observes that the University of Salamanca was the model for the creation of universities in New Spain. The University of Salamanca was founded by Alfonso IX in 1218. It was the first university in Spain that based its curriculum on the study of *trivium* (grammar, rhetoric, and logic) and *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy). The University of Alcalá de Henares was also a reference point for the foundation of universities in the Americas.

<sup>11</sup> Rivas Sacconi, 1993: 54-55.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Olaya Perdomo, 2018: 11.

<sup>13</sup> Romero, 1997.

<sup>14</sup> Adorno, 2009.

<sup>15</sup> Rivas Sacconi, 1993: 213, 215, 223, 227.



At the turn of the seventeenth century, more writers of theological, legal, historical, philosophical, and literary works in Latin flourished in New Granada. The vast majority of authors were clergymen, only a few were secular: Francisco del Rincón (Toledo, 1650 – Bogotá, 1723), Pedro de Solís y Valenzuela (Bogotá, 1624-1711), Lucas Fernández Piedrahita (Bogotá, 1624 – Panamá City, 1688), José Ortiz y Morales (Mariquita, 1658-c. 1727), Juan Antonio de Oviedo (Bogotá, 1670 – Mexico City, 1757). For the purpose of this paper, it is vital to highlight the works of Pedro de Solís y Valenzuela and Juan Antonio de Oviedo. The former was the author of *El desierto prodigioso el prodigio del desierto* (c. 1650), known as the first romance in the Americas. From his primary settlement in México, the latter was the precursor of a long list of Jesuit humanists in the Americas. His literary production consisted of poetry, missiology, legal, theological, and university oratory works.<sup>16</sup>

The Royal Botanical Expedition by José Celestino Mutis (Cádiz, 1769 – Bogotá, 1859), Alexander von Humboldt (Berlin, 1769-1859), and Aimé Bonpland's (La Rochelle, 1773 – Paso de los Libres, 1853) travels in the region inspired a cultural renaissance in eighteenth and nineteenth-century New Granada, and introduced the tenets of the Enlightenment in classical education.<sup>17</sup> Earlier, the foundation of the National Public Library of Colombia (1777) promoted an environment for dialogue and paved the way towards a new political order. It was a transitional period for the study of Latin and Classical authors withal,<sup>18</sup> and in that moment and circumstance, the political discourse over the inclusion or exclusion of Latin in the educational curriculum began. The influence of Classics on the education system and cultural activities remained significant after Independence and the foundation of the Republic of Colombia in 1810.<sup>19</sup> In the ensuing period of political instability, various government reforms in the educational system affected, among others, the teaching of Latin.

Unlike México or Perú, and despite the education reform enacted by district attorney Francisco Moreno Escandón (Mariquita, 1736 – Santiago de Chile, 1792) and Viceroy Antonio Caballero y Góngora (Priego de Córdoba, 1723 – Córdoba, 1796), there were no public universities during the colonial period in New Granada. In 1824, the Secretary of the Interior and historian José Manuel Restrepo (Envigado, 1781 – Bogotá, 1863) insisted on promoting a revolution in education in line with politics, which included the precedence of the Spanish language over Latin.<sup>20</sup> In 1826, it was stated and enacted in law that Spanish would be the primary language of tuition in tertiary education, whereas Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and indigenous languages were to be used only on special occasions.<sup>21</sup> However, these stipulations were short-lived. After a turbulent period with several disruptions and many changes in higher education, by 1868 the foundation of the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, a public university, the knowledge and study of Latin were in dire straits. By then, knowledge of Latin was not a requirement for graduation for all students yet continued to be part of the teaching plan of Theology, Humanities, and Philosophy Faculties.

<sup>16</sup> Rivas Sacconi, 1993: 179-227.

<sup>17</sup> Silva, 2017.

<sup>18</sup> Rivas Sacconi, 1993: 229-280.

<sup>19</sup> For the influence of Classics during the War of Independence and in the first years after the proclamation of the Republic, del Molino García, 2007: 957-974.

<sup>20</sup> Olaya Perdomo, 2018: 11 and 15.

<sup>21</sup> Olaya Perdomo, 2018: 15-16.

## Miguel Antonio Caro: The Person and the Politician

Miguel Antonio Caro y Tobar, one of the most prominent individuals in politics and social evolution in the country, was born in Bogotá in 1843, in the independent Republic of New Granada.<sup>22</sup> Raised in a traditional and well-educated family, he first studied Spanish and Latin with his maternal grandfather, the jurist Miguel Tobar. His apprenticeship continued with private tutors, such as Thomas Jones Stevens, an Oxford-trained naturalist, and education at the schools Liceo de Familia and San Bartolomé. In the latter, run by Jesuits, he made the acquaintance of Rufino José Cuervo (Bogotá, 1844 – Paris, 1911), who would arguably become the most prominent Colombian philologist, lexicographer, and linguist of the nineteenth century.<sup>23</sup> He befriended Cuervo very early in his life, and they would work together almost uninterruptedly until Caro's death in 1909. In addition, his acquaintance with the English poet and tutor Samuel Bond introduced the 18-year-old Caro to some new interlocutors for his disquisitions. During his youth, Caro enhanced his knowledge and studied Latin grammar and Literature intensively, but also Greek, Spanish, English, French, and Italian.<sup>24</sup> During his academic training, he also became familiar with the philosophical-political texts of Jaume Balmes (Vic, 1810-1848), Juan Donoso Cortés (Valle de la Serena, 1809 – Paris, 1853), and the rhetorical works of José Gómez Hermosilla (Madrid, 1771-1837).

After Independence, the period of general instability did not allow Caro to complete his studies with formal high education. However, he was acknowledged as a trained philologist, translator, humanist and, moreover, a politician, a man of action.<sup>25</sup> His engagement with politics culminated during the drafting of Colombia's Constitution of 1886 and his modernising economic reforms when he became president of the country.<sup>26</sup> The Constitution was the turning point for the country and remained in force, with minor changes, until 1991. Among other aspects, it vested Catholicism as the official state religion and established the division of powers (executive, legislative, and judiciary).<sup>27</sup>

As a member of the conservative party that his father, poet and philosopher José Eusebio Caro (Ocaña, 1817 – Santa Marta, 1857) founded, Miguel Antonio Caro was elected vice president of the Republic of Colombia in 1892. He effectively served as president from 1892 until 1898, as the elected president, Rafael Núñez, was unable to exercise his duties due to health issues, which led to his eventual demise in 1894. As a politician, Caro was a proponent of the Regenerationism Movement, which fought for the implementation of the catholic religion and a centralist state based on the continuity of the Hispanic tradition.<sup>28</sup> The 1886 Constitution he helped draft reinforced this state model with the support of education, as it placed its system in the hands of the Catholic Church. Besides his political activity, Caro was a very active journalist. He founded and helped operate the newspaper *El Tradicionalista* (*The Traditionalist*), and frequently wrote for other newspapers. His political speeches, articles in the press about Literature, and translations made constant references to classical authors, especially Vergil.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>22</sup> For a biography and discussion on the influence of Caro, Díaz Guevara, 1984; Sierra Mejía, 2002.

<sup>23</sup> Cuervo's work is impressive and important for Hispanic Linguistics, so has thus attracted great scholarly interest. For a detailed discussion, Valencia (2012), who presents Cuervo as a disruptive character and linguist in a conservative political environment. The development of the relationship between Caro and Cuervo is very well illustrated in Vallejo (2012).

<sup>24</sup> Rivas Sacconi, 1993: 349, 376.

<sup>25</sup> Mesa Chica, 2014: 81-104.

<sup>26</sup> For politics and currency, Mesa Chica, 2014: 105-126; and 37-58, respectively.

<sup>27</sup> The text of the Constitution of Colombia of 1886 can be accessed here: <https://www.suin-juriscol.gov.co/viewDocument.asp?id=1826862>. For an introduction and contextualisation, Olano García, 2019.

<sup>28</sup> Valderrama Andrade, 1997.

<sup>29</sup> Caro, 1990-1993.

## Miguel Antonio Caro: The Classicist

Caro, ‘the prince of Spanish translators’ according to Rubió y Lluch,<sup>30</sup> approached Latin Classical authors in a quite interdisciplinary way. Indeed, he authored an important work for the study of Latin grammar and translation, mostly from Latin but also from other languages, and produced numerous articles on Latin literature, especially on Vergil, and on the art of translation, among many other literary topics.

At the age of 24, Caro co-authored, along with his friend Cuervo, *Gramática latina para el uso de los que hablan castellano* (*Latin Grammar for the Use of Speakers of Spanish*, 1867).<sup>31</sup> *Gramática Latina* was the product of a collaborative work of both authors: issues of morphology (*Analogía*) were assigned to Cuervo, while Caro focused on syntax (*Sintaxis*). *Gramática Latina* went on for four editions with adjustments and additions until 1886, with an addition, from the fourth edition onwards, of a part entitled ‘Exercises in Latin Composition’, authored by Cuervo. Several more editions followed without significant modifications; in 1972, more than one century after the publication of its first edition of 1867, Instituto Caro y Cuervo endorsed the tenth edition of *Gramática Latina*, prepared by Jorge Páramo, who restored some texts from previous editions and added a complete general introduction and many indexes. According to the prologue of the first and second editions, this work was the handbook used in three higher-education institutions of Colombia: Seminario Conciliar, Colegio Mayor de Nuestra Señora del Rosario, and Universidad Nacional.<sup>32</sup>

Although an early work of two young scholars, *Gramática Latina* was warmly received by reviewers of the time, indeed by prominent ones, such as Menéndez y Pelayo, who deemed it an excellent publication.<sup>33</sup> Two of its most acclaimed features were the transposition of some Latin structures into Spanish and, occasionally, French and Greek, and the inclusion of the historic and comparatist viewpoint into morphology.<sup>34</sup> Sections on morphology were the work of Cuervo and, despite his good effort and acclamation, after more careful consideration, this aspect of *Gramática Latina* appeared less groundbreaking and mostly limited to some punctual references to Bopp.<sup>35</sup> As for the part on syntax, the starting point for Caro and Cuervo was Burnouf’s *Latin Grammar* in its Spanish translation published in Caracas in 1849 and Key’s *A Latin Grammar*.<sup>36</sup> Caro relied on Burnouf’s distinction between general and particular syntax, centralised the analysis on the proposition, and considered the complement as the decisive element. *Gramática Latina* was the first Latin grammar written in Spanish to introduce this viewpoint, which is probably its most significant accomplishment.<sup>37</sup> Besides *Gramática Latina*, his lengthy article *Tratado del participio* (*Treatise on Participle*, 1870) was pivotal for the study of the participle in Spanish, its comparison to the Latin participle, and its translation from Latin

<sup>30</sup> Reference from Rivas Sacconi, 1947: 138, note 51.

<sup>31</sup> For the remainder of the paper, I will abbreviate this as *Gramática Latina*.

<sup>32</sup> Olaya Perdomo, 2018: 19.

<sup>33</sup> Briceño Jáuregui, 1972: 553, 556-568; Olaya Perdomo, 2018: 20, for details on contemporary reviews.

<sup>34</sup> Olaya Perdomo (2018: 20-23) makes an effort to better understand why this *Latin Grammar* received so many good reviews considering that nowadays it has become obsolete.

<sup>35</sup> Franz Bopp (Mainz, 1791 – Berlin, 1867), was a linguist and a forerunner of comparative linguistics. With 24 citations from the French edition, he is the most cited authority in the field in *Gramática Latina*.

<sup>36</sup> Jean Louis Burnouf (Urville, 1775 – Paris, 1844) was a French philologist, Latinist, and translator. Páramo had already pointed out the influence of Burnouf, Key, and Bello in his edition of Caro’s *Gramática Latina* (1972); cf. the last print of Páramo’s edition Caro-Cuervo, 2019: viii-xii. Caro possessed a copy of an annotated Spanish exemplar of Burnouf (1849). Published in Caracas, Burnouf’s method was used in Venezuela for Latin teaching.

<sup>37</sup> Olaya Perdomo, 2018: 21-22.

into Spanish.<sup>38</sup> It comprised eight chapters complemented with three appendices, and contained several examples that illustrate the various ways to translate, some taken from Latin, but most from Spanish literature composed either in Spain or in the Americas.

In addition to these theoretical works on linguistics, Caro proved himself a faithful yet creative translator and wrote articles on and included aspects from the theory of translation in the prologues of his translations. This reflection on translation as a mirror of the transculturation that Caro tried to impose remains controversial and must be taken into consideration when evaluating Caro's political disposition.<sup>39</sup> His translations were a very influential tool in the political order he was trying to impose mostly through education. Caro attempted to reconnect the new social order with the Spanish past and its Roman roots, providing the general populace with translations of texts which supported and reinforced this idea of continuity. It was indeed a re-utilisation of the Classical tradition and a reaction against Gallicisms and Anglicisms entering Spanish. At the same time, it was a reaction against the French and English ideological influence to the detriment of the Hispanic tradition.<sup>40</sup>

Caro translated texts from many languages, but mainly from Latin; hence, many of them reveal influences from translating into Spanish from this language. He was convinced that translations of Latin texts had been poor and widely neglected in Spanish-speaking countries. In an attempt to reverse the tide, he devoted himself to translation and reflected on the nature of the original texts.<sup>41</sup> Caro expressed his views on translation in various essays, articles, and introductory passages of his works. In the introduction of his *Versiones Latinas* (*Latin Verses*), he affirms that translations should take into consideration not only content but also, and especially, form:

Iis quod addam nihil habeo, quorum summa est: poetas, mea opinione, fideliter, ac simul, quantum fieri potest, poetice converti oportere.<sup>42</sup>

The main point [of my former theory] – to which I have nothing to add – is: poets, in my opinion, ought to be converted faithfully, and at the same time, as far as possible, poetically.

As translation was an activity Caro engaged with throughout his life, translating new texts and authors but also returning to Vergil's texts time and again, he continued theorising about translation along with his essays. For example, in his *Vergilian Essays*, he states that literary translations of poetry should be in verse, not in prose:

La prosa habla; la poesía canta. La traducción en prosa es útil a los estudiosos, porque les facilita y aclara la inteligencia del original: la traducción en verso puede ser muy provechosa a la literatura (...)<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Torres Quintero, 1979: 41, 49, 86.

<sup>39</sup> Rodríguez García, 2004: 145.

<sup>40</sup> There is a fervent discussion over Hispanicity in nineteenth-century Colombia. Padilla Chasing (2008) provides an overview of this 'debate de la Hispanidad' in some 19th-century writers, including Caro. Cardona Zuluaga (2017) analyses the 1872 controversy over the celebration of the 'fiesta nacional' between Caro and José María Quijano.

<sup>41</sup> Rivas Sacconi, 1993: 363-364.

<sup>42</sup> Caro, 1951: 11.

<sup>43</sup> Caro, 1985-1988: 147.



Prose talks; poetry sings. Translation of poems in prose is useful to scholars because it facilitates and clarifies the subtleties of the original: verse translation can be very helpful to literature (...)

Concerned and preoccupied with translation in verse, Caro delved into Spanish metrics to inform and improve his translations, and he produced important theoretical works throughout his life. He published a commentary of Bello's study on metrics and orthology entitled *Notas a la "Ortología y métrica" de Don Andrés Bello*,<sup>44</sup> as well as several articles on metrics.

Between 1869 and 1875, Caro produced a magnificent Spanish translation in verse of Vergil's *Bucolica*, *Georgica*, and the *Aeneid*. These were the first complete translations of Vergil published in Colombia,<sup>45</sup> where only partial translations were previously published (one must also bear in mind that printing arrived rather belatedly in New Granada, in 1735).<sup>46</sup> Caro busied himself improving, revising, restructuring, and reformulating his translations for the rest of his life. His definitive one, his revised general introduction on his translation, his commentary on the Latin text, and his Vergilian concordances were published posthumously.

Due to his constant reflection and theoretical work on versification, Caro's decision to translate Virgil's hexameters into real octaves (the *Bucolica* in various meters of poetry, the *Georgica* in 'silva', and the *Aeneid* in 'ottava rima') was met with significant criticism.<sup>47</sup> Nonetheless, Cuervo, Gutiérrez, and González Suárez, among other scholars, wrote enthusiastic reviews of Caro's translation and, in a private communication to Caro, Menéndez Pelayo hailed it as 'la más bella' (the most beautiful) of the works of Vergil into Spanish:<sup>48</sup>

Tengo resueltamente la traducción virgiliana de usted (mirada en conjunto) por la más bella que poseemos en castellano, y creo que con algunos retoques en la segunda edición, quedará perfectísima.<sup>49</sup>

I resolutely hold your overall Virgilian translation as the most beautiful that we have in Spanish, and I think that with some tweaks in the second edition, it will be irreproachable.

'Octava real', a stanza form of Italian origin composed of eight hendecasyllable verses comprising the rhyme scheme ABABABCC, was widely used in Renaissance Epic. It is also the verse employed by the sixteenth-century author Alonso de Ercilla in his *La Araucana*, an epic song of the Spanish Conquest of Chile, and was primarily used in Castellano's *Elegías de varones ilustres de Indias*. Caro's translation of the *Aeneid* spans 15,776 verses, evidently exceeding by almost 50% the number of verses in the original poem. The first 'octava real' in the Spanish translation of the *Aeneid* reveals how the expansion in length involves the addition of text which usually implies addition of content. In the preamble of the *Aeneid*, the inclusion of concepts and words that do not feature in the Latin text, such as 'conquistador' (conqueror), 'país latino' (the Latin country), 'templo' (temple), immediately

<sup>44</sup> Caro, 1980. Andrés Bello (Caracas, 1781 – Santiago de Chile, 1865) was an important figure for the development of Spanish Linguistics in the Americas.

<sup>45</sup> Olaya Perdomo, 2018: 23-24, with n. 33.

<sup>46</sup> Larrañaga (1787) is the first complete translation of Vergil's works published in the Americas.

<sup>47</sup> Rivas Sacconi, 1993: 365-366.

<sup>48</sup> For all and full references, Rivas Sacconi, 1993: 361-363.

<sup>49</sup> In Rivas Sacconi, 1947: 127, n. 17.

capture the reader's attention. These first two additions might have functioned as a link between two different 'pasts', the classical and the subsequent Spanish one, and the third one could also attempt to smooth out the ubiquitous paganism from the epic:<sup>50</sup>

Canto asunto marcial; al héroe canto	Arma uirumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris
Que, de Troya lanzado, á Italia vino;	Italiam fato profugus Lauiniaque uenit
Que ora en mar, ora en tierra, sufrió tanto	litora, multum ille et terris iactatus et alto
De Juno rencorosa y del destino;	ui superum, saeuae memorem Iunonis ob iram
5 Que en guerras luégo padeció quebranto,	multa quoque et bello passus, dum conderet urbem
Conquistador en el país latino,	inferretque deos Latio;
Canto asunto marcial; al héroe canto	
Hasta fundar, en fin, con alto ejemplo,	
Muro á sus armas, y á sus dioses templo	

I sing of martial matters; for the hero I sing  
 who, hurled from Troy, to Italy he arrived;  
 Who now on sea, now on land, suffered so much  
 From resentful Juno and from fate;  
 5 Who in wars he suffered brokenness,  
 Conqueror in the Latin country,  
 Until founding, finally, with high example,  
 Wall to their arms, and temple to their gods.

Caro complemented his accurate verse translation of Vergil's works with a series of articles on various aspects of Virgilian works. His *Vergilian Studies*<sup>51</sup> comprised three volumes, included many articles mostly written before 1890, the year of his Presidency, and discussed the broadest range of topics: a study of the character of Camilla; commentaries on his own translations of Vergil that addressed various issues of translation and contextualisation; an appraisal of all Spanish translators and commentators of Vergil; a reading of the *Aeneid* that tried to offer a religious interpretation of Vergil predating that of Boissier;<sup>52</sup> and many others. It is important to note that, until today, no other Hispanophone author has composed as many essays on Vergil as Caro,<sup>53</sup> and this extensive engagement is indicative of his extraordinary capacity for work and production. The following passage from Caro's *Vergilian Essays* highlights his preference for Vergil over other Latin authors, how his political ideas intertwined with his study of poetry, how classical tradition nurtured notions of continuity from Ancient Rome into the Americas through Spain, and how much Caro valued the idea of belonging to Spain despite Independence:

<sup>50</sup> Caro, 1873: 11 (*II.Eneida*); text of Verg. *Aen.* 1.1-6 as in Mynors, 1969.

<sup>51</sup> Caro, 1985-1988.

<sup>52</sup> Rivas Sacconi, 1993: 383, note 72. The omnipresent paganism in Vergil's works was an inconvenience and a disruption to the coherence of Caro's political and educative programs. It is important to stress at least the possibility of a reading of Vergil's works from a religious viewpoint. Boissier (1874) acknowledged the religious connotations in the *Aeneid* and developed the subject more widely than Caro, just a year after Caro's translation.

<sup>53</sup> Rivas Sacconi, 1993: 383.

Lo que sí puede afirmarse sin temeridad, porque esta es cuestión de hecho y no de derecho, es que el modo de ser de tal poeta es más conforme que el de tal otro, con las tradiciones y gustos de determinada nación o raza. Para nosotros, para los pueblos meridionales de Europa y América, para Italia lo mismo que para Francia y para la España de ambos mundos, Virgilio fue, es y será más simpático que Homero.<sup>54</sup>

What can be affirmed without doubt, because this is a matter of fact and not of law, is that the state of being such a poet is more consistent than that of any other, with the traditions and tastes of a certain nation or race. For us, for the southern peoples of Europe and America, for Italy as well as for France and for the Spain of both worlds, Vergil was, is, and will be more likeable than Homer.

After he withdrew from politics, Caro devoted himself entirely to Latin literature and translations of Horace, Lucan, Ovid, Tibullus, Propertius, Pseudo-Gallus, and Catullus, collected in a work entitled *Flos Poetarum*. In addition, he dedicated a second volume to the Latin poets of the Renaissance.<sup>55</sup>

Besides his translations, since early childhood and until his death, Caro also wrote poetry. He composed prose and poetry in Spanish and Latin, occasionally providing a Spanish rendition, as in the following poem, *Patria*, where Caro pays homage in, and declares his devotion to, his homeland, a country recently created, and the connection between his political ideas and his poetical compositions is clearly stated:<sup>56</sup>

Te toto, patria, ex animo veneramur amantes; Tu nostro fixum pectore ines. Per te, multa dies quae dulcia miscet amaris, Libavi, plusquam voce referre datur.	¡Patria! te adoro en mi silencio mudo, y temo profanar tu nombre santo. Por ti he gozado y padecido tanto cuanto lengua mortal decir no pudo.
5 Non ego te clypeum dextramque rogabo potentem; Nam satis umbra sinus hospitiumque mihi est. Hoc tantum liceat, lacrimas tibi fundere ad aras, Nudum posse domi vivere, posse mori. Non vis, non splendor, non gignunt munera amorem;	No te pido el amparo de tu escudo, sino la dulce sombra de tu manto: quiero en tu seno derramar mi llanto, vivir, morir en ti pobre y desnudo. Ni poder, ni esplendor, ni lozanía,
10 Ex alia noster stipite floret amor, Longe alia hi nostri formantur origine nexus, Vincula quae poterit rumpere nulla manus. Ad matrem iniussi nullaque ambages venimus; Sentio me partem sanguinis ese tui.	son razones de amar. Otro es el lazo que nadie, nunca, desatar podría. Amo yo por instinto tu regazo, Madre eres tú de la familia mía; ¡Patria! de tus entrañas soy pedazo.

Homeland! I adore you in my bare silence  
and I dread to profane your holy name;  
for you I have enjoyed and suffered so much  
how much, a mortal tongue could not say.  
5 I do not ask for the protection of your shield,  
but the sweet shadow of your mantle;

<sup>54</sup> Caro, 1985-1988: 23 (2).

<sup>55</sup> Rivas Sacconi (1993: 370-376) discusses in detail these translations and their characteristics.

<sup>56</sup> Latin and Spanish text in Caro, 1951: 28.

I want to pour my tears into your bosom,  
 live, die in you, poor and naked  
 Neither power, nor splendor, nor vigour  
 10 are reasons to love. Elsewhere lies the tie  
 that no one can ever undo.  
 I instinctively love your lap;  
 You are mother to my family;  
 Homeland! Of your torso I am a part.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that Caro co-founded in 1871, along with Rufino José Cuervo, José Marroquín, and others, the Academia Colombiana de la Lengua, the oldest of all the Spanish Language Academies in America that paved the way for several similar associations in Latin American countries. Above the entrance to the cluster of the Spanish Language Academies, in line with the peninsular Real Academia Española de la Lengua, there was a declaration of intentions: to mark the continuation and connection with Spanish tradition and to create an institution for the regulation and normalisation of a living language for the first time in the Americas.

### The Influence of the Latinist Miguel Antonio Caro on the Shaping of a Nation

Grammar and state power have been associated throughout the history of Colombia.<sup>57</sup> This idiosyncratic characteristic makes Colombia a unique case not only in Latin America, but potentially in the whole world.<sup>58</sup> While Plato envisioned a city ruled by philosopher-kings, Colombia during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had been governed by five grammarians, authors, and humanists with a solid background in Latin: Rafael Núñez (four terms: twice as President of the United States of Colombia from 1880 to 1882 and 1884 to 1886; twice as President of the Republic of Colombia from 1887 to 1888 and 1892 to 1894), Miguel Antonio Caro (1894-1898), José Manuel Marroquín (1900-1904), Marco Fidel Suárez (1918-1921), and Miguel Abadía Méndez (1926-1930). Bogotá, the capital and the centre of power of these grammarian-presidents, was often hailed as the ‘Athens of South America’, with the Argentinian writer and politician Miguel Cané being the first to compare Bogotá to Athens in *En Viaje*.<sup>59</sup> Thereafter, this appellation was widely employed to refer to the capital of Colombia, and it remained in use for an extended period of time.

This association of grammar and politics in Colombia has received the attention of several scholars, from Ángel Rama in the second half of the twentieth century to the work of recent scholars. In 1984, a posthumous publication in Spanish of Rama’s *La ciudad letrada* was published in the United States. It was a decisive work for literary and cultural studies in Latin America. Rama (1926-1983) suggests that a cultivated elite, distanced from the mostly rural, from different cultural backgrounds, and illiterate still at the end of the nineteenth century general populace, had created and organised the cities in Latin America; even more so, he claimed that it had ruled the State as a ‘lettered city’.<sup>60</sup> Unlike European cities in the Middle Ages that grew without an organic plan, this literate elite sought

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<sup>57</sup> Deas, 1992; 1993.

<sup>58</sup> Rodríguez García, 2004: 145.

<sup>59</sup> *En viaje* was first published in 1893, the second edition – with suppressions and changes made by Cané – was published in 1903.

<sup>60</sup> Rama, 1998.



to conform urban development not only according to an ideal model, to an urban planification,<sup>61</sup> but also to a social order ruled by a lettered elite, who drew legitimisation for itself and its ideals from the power of their discourses and of scripturality.<sup>62</sup> In addition, this lettered city grew to become a symbolic space for modelling new societies in forming new communities, nations, and political order after Independence.<sup>63</sup> Rama opened pathways to broader research fields in Latin America, such as cultural studies.

After Rama's thesis, which examined the Americas in general, Malcolm Deas focused his research on Colombia and the strong connection between grammar and power. He observed that this entanglement proved particularly fruitful between 1885 and 1930, during the hegemony of the Conservative Party,<sup>64</sup> and identified the characteristics of the Colombian situation. First, Bogotá became the centre of power and all decision-making for the whole country.<sup>65</sup> Although Colombia was, and remains to this day, a vast and heterogeneous country in terms of physical landscape, biosphere, and language, Bogotá was fashioned as the standard for politics, language, and for all things Colombian. Second, Deas emphasised the strong links between the Catholic Church and power.<sup>66</sup> Third, this lettered elite, primarily members of the conservative party<sup>67</sup>, fought for the purity of the Spanish language. They used it as a means to show and strengthen the country's and the group's connection with the Spanish past.<sup>68</sup> Not only indigenous languages and Afro-American variants were banned, but also any feature that could be perceived as a deviation from Spanish peninsular norms. In a nutshell, the Colombian lettered city was catholic, conservative with the Hispanic tradition; thus, they proposed an alternative model for the modernisation of the country, less open to changes and external influences than the neighbouring nations, also in their formative stages at the time, were. In the last part of the nineteenth century, knowledge of Latin grammar and literature allowed access to an active role in Colombian politics. Interest in language and lexicography also grew in North America together with English, but, unlike Colombia, they were not linked to an idea of a nation.<sup>69</sup>

Besides Deas' influential theories, von der Walde moved a step further and explored the acceptance of the hegemony of the Conservative party and of the restoration of Catholicism after a period when Colombia was governed by Liberals.<sup>70</sup> She concluded that the Conservative Party reinforced the desire for unification of the country through Catholicism and linguistic standardisation as paradigms of Regenerationism, and that this project of a lettered elite must be understood within the context of national fragmentation. Von der Walde also explored the centrality of Bogotá, already noted by Deas, as a leading aspect of this model.<sup>71</sup>

Many scholars have highlighted the connection between grammar and politics and marked Caro as the leading proponent of this phenomenon. However, it is noteworthy to remark that Caro not only was involved in Grammatics, but also and especially in Classics. Besides his political activity, he remained active in a wide range of fields as a scholar, translator, poet, and cultural journalist. He belonged to

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<sup>61</sup> Rama, 1998: 17-30.

<sup>62</sup> Rama, 1998: 31-60.

<sup>63</sup> Rama, 1998: 61-82.

<sup>64</sup> Deas, 1992: 49; 1993: 28.

<sup>65</sup> Deas, 1992: 53; 1993: 34.

<sup>66</sup> Deas, 1992: 49, 53, 63; 1993: 28, 33, 47.

<sup>67</sup> With exceptions, such as the liberal politician Rafael Uribe Uribe.

<sup>68</sup> Deas, 1992: 54-57; 1993: 35-39.

<sup>69</sup> Deas, 1992: 48-49; 1993: 27-28.

<sup>70</sup> von der Walde, 1997; especially, 2002.

<sup>71</sup> von der Walde, 2002.

a Colombian tradition of politicians with a strong interest in language and literature, which started in the colonial period and reached its zenith at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. Caro, an excellent scholar of Vergil and a proponent of political reforms aiming to perpetuate this empowerment of Latin grammar, language, and literature, played a crucial role in consolidating this tradition. Several others were active in his time in similar manner, as evidenced in Cuervo's *Apuntaciones críticas sobre el lenguaje bogotano* (1867); Rafael Uribe's *Diccionario abreviado de galicismos, provincialismos y correcciones de lenguaje: con trescientas notas explicativas* (1887); José Manuel Marroquín's *Tratados de ortología y ortografía castellana* (1869); Marco Fidel Suárez *Nociones de prosodia latina* (1893). These politicians and humanists, not only the ones who became presidents, but also their colleagues and opponents, composed works that proved to be typical examples of a period of intense engagement with rules, authoritative handbooks, and also an attempt to refine the study of the language of power.

These men not only rose to and exercised power, but also fortified it and embedded it with the use of Latin language, grammar, and lexicography, thus depriving of access to power to those who did not master this code. For Deas, the main characters that embody this paradigm are Miguel Antonio Caro (most prominently), José Marroquín, and Marco Fidel Suárez.<sup>72</sup> It goes without saying that other disruptive figures supported this cast and introduced nuances in the configuration of the paradigm, with Rufino José Cuervo the most prominent among them. Valencia has already noticed such nuances and important aspects of this disruptive force.<sup>73</sup> The linguistic and grammatical works of Cuervo, who never engaged in politics but spent many years in Paris and is buried in Père Lachaise cemetery, do not always conform with this fixation to regulate a language. On the contrary, he often acknowledged linguistic change as the cause of the evolution of languages.<sup>74</sup> According to Deas, Caro's abundant references to the classics and his frequent use of Latin forced his most determined adversary, the liberal Rafael Uribe, to learn Latin in order to address him in Congress.<sup>75</sup>

A remarkable consequence of articulating this notion of state is that many of these men were also engaged in education. Caro, for instance, founded a school after he left the Presidency, and Marroquín did so in his Hacienda Yerbabuena.<sup>76</sup> Education was the mechanism that provided the country with institutions for the exaltation of their values, embodying and perpetuating elite perceptions of an ideal state.

Vergil was the decisive author in Caro's perception of the nation, a concept he would introduce later during his political engagement.<sup>77</sup> Caro was a conservative party member, but above all, a Catholic activist. Hence, it was essential for the coherence of his political programme to reconcile Catholicism with Vergil's beliefs in pagan gods. To this end, Caro suggested a different interpretation and an alternative reading that portrayed Vergil as a prophet of Catholicism. Caro was also forming part of a tradition that began with the allegorical interpretation of the *Ecloga IV* from a Christian point of view. He devoted several articles to the interpretation of the *Ecloga IV*, reunited in his *Vergilian Essays*,<sup>78</sup> daring to suggest that the text prophesied the birth of Jesus Christ. Moreover, in

<sup>72</sup> Deas, 1992: 47-48; 1993: 26.

<sup>73</sup> Valencia (2012: 80-81) notices such nuances and important aspects of this disruptive force.

<sup>74</sup> Valencia (2012: 74-79) offers several examples of Cuervo's broader perspective in the study of language.

<sup>75</sup> Deas, 1992: 47-48; 1993: 26.

<sup>76</sup> Deas, 1992: 51; 1993: 31.

<sup>77</sup> This use of Vergil can be read in his *Escritos Políticos*; Caro (1990-1993; 1: 168, 264; 2: 489), and in his own private volumes of Vergil reunited in the Fondo Caro in the National Library of Colombia detailed in Caro (1985-1988; Vol. 2: 326-329).

<sup>78</sup> Caro, 1985-1988: 13-72 (Vol. 4).

*Vergilian Essays*, Caro emphasised other aspects of the poet's works that appealed to his conservative ideals: purity of language, *pietas* or respect and devotion for the ancestors, preservation of order, and craving for peace.

## Final Considerations

In Spanish-speaking countries, knowledge of Latin has always tended to be associated with a cultural and political elite. Latin has generally been linked to conservatism and Conservative Parties in the post-colonial Americas, after Independence and during a period of fervent constitutional transformations. As this paper argues, it is necessary to consider the influence of Classics on the presidents of the Republic of Colombia, because they constitute the turning point in the paradigm.

Colombia is no exception to this Latin American panorama. In a transitional period, the need to keep alive the knowledge of classical languages and culture, this ideal of Classics as a continuation of the so-called Western Civilisation, and of the Hispanic tradition, worked very well for the creation and (trans)formation of tradition. This tradition strove to sustain the bond with Rome through the Spanish language, history, and state, instead of building a new paradigm inclusive of all cultural substrates, especially the indigenous and Afro-American ones. Classics became an ideological tool and politicians used it for their own purposes, mainly to imbue and ensure conformity on the new nation. Therefore, the inclusion or not of Latin in education was a decisive matter for continuing this cultural and social sovereignty. The Conservative Party preferred to form a traditional educational system with subjects such as Law, Theology, Medicine, Grammar with a wide knowledge of Latin, following the colonial system, a model based on the ideal of the nation-state. The Liberal Party, on the contrary, worked towards an educational model based on practical studies in order to respond to the requirements of the modern world. Spanish was the vehicular language, but other European languages began to surpass Latin and undermined its entanglement with power. The Liberal Party envisaged a less privileged position for Latin in the educational system but took little action to precipitate change.

Latin in Colombia was not only a matter of education but also of great political significance. The lack of knowledge of Latin became a restriction to accessing politics and other spheres of the public domain, as well as an impediment for many individuals exercise their rights as full citizens. Miguel Antonio Caro aptly epitomises this convergence of grammar and power. He remains a very controversial figure in the history of Colombia and the evaluation of his humanistic work has been affected by his political affiliation and action. However, we must not lose sight of his effort to spread the study of Classics. Indeed, he wrote a *Gramática Latina* for speakers of Spanish and other articles that elaborated on difficult syntactic structures and promoted the study of metrics. He also translated Vergil into Spanish, making this author accessible for people with no knowledge of Latin, providing them with a translation that purported not only to translate a language but also to transpose a reality. Moreover, he made frequent use of references to classical authors in his political essays, most of them published in popular journals. Overall, Caro contributed to the dissemination of Classics not only in Colombia, but also across the Hispanophone Americas and had an active role in the attempt to reconstruct a classical utopia. His impact survived the passage of time in institutions such as the Academia Colombiana de la Lengua. In 1942, the Ministry of Culture founded the Instituto Caro y Cuervo as a tribute to Miguel Antonio Caro and his beloved friend and colleague, Rufino José Cuervo. It is a well-known institution for the promotion of the study of Language, Linguistics, and Literature of Spanish and of the indigenous languages in Colombia. Not coincidentally, the Main Room of its Headquarters, the colonial house of the Cuervo family, is presided by a bust of Vergil.

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## Abstract (Spanish) | Resumen

Este artículo explora un fenómeno único en Colombia: la relación que se establece entre el poder político y los clásicos, personificada en el presidente de la República y latinista Miguel Antonio Caro (Bogotá, 1843-1909).

A modo de introducción se ofrece un panorama general de la difusión de los autores clásicos y del estudio del latín en la Nueva Granada y en los inicios de la República. En efecto, Caro se sitúa en una larga tradición de conocimiento y diálogo con los clásicos en Colombia. La transmisión e interacción con los clásicos se inició con la llegada de los primeros conquistadores de España a finales del siglo XVI y fue evolucionando hasta tiempos de Caro.

En primer lugar, se presenta brevemente la biografía de Caro -con énfasis en su formación- y su contribución a la arena política. Miembro del Partido Conservador y representante del movimiento Regeneracionista, fue elegido Vicepresidente de la República de Colombia el 1882. Fungió, no obstante, como Presidente desde poco después de su elección hasta el 1898. Como político, fue ampliamente conocido por sus reformas económicas y su aporte a la *Constitución Política de la República de Colombia de 1886*.

En segundo lugar, se examinan las múltiples contribuciones de Caro, como humanista, al estudio de la lengua y autores clásicos latinos, en Colombia. Caro fue coautor, junto con Rufino José Cuervo (Bogotá, 1844 – Paris, 1911) de *Gramática latina para el uso de los que hablan castellano* (1867). Escribió más adelante un *Tratado del participio* (1870), así como también múltiples artículos sobre traducción y literatura latina en general. Compuso poesía en español y latín a lo largo de su vida. Se dedicó también a la traducción, especialmente del latín al español, pero también de otras lenguas modernas al español. Entre 1869 y 1875, Caro produjo la primera traducción integral de Virgilio en Colombia. Siguió ocupado en el perfeccionamiento, reelaboración y reformulación de esta traducción virgiliana hasta su muerte. Caro tradujo en verso a Virgilio: *Bucólicas* en metros variados, *Geórgicas* en silva y *Eneida* en octava real. Completó su traducción con una serie de artículos sobre varios aspectos de la traducción, interpretación y contextualización que han sido reunidos en tres volúmenes de *Estudios Virgilianos*. Finalmente, cabe destacar que Caro fue uno de los fundadores de la Academia Colombiana de la Lengua el 1871.

La última sección del artículo profundiza en la interacción entre estas dos facetas de Miguel Antonio Caro, el Presidente y el latinista. Se esboza la relación entre poder político y clásicas en Colombia con base a *La ciudad letrada* (1984) de Ángel Rama, *Del poder y la gramática* (1993) de Malcolm Deas y otros ensayos. Las obras de Caro, en tanto que político e intelectual, ilustran la asociación entre gramática, clásicos y poder estatal a lo largo de la historia de Colombia. Ciertamente su actividad humanística en conjunto, que abarcó el estudio de la gramática, la traducción, la publicación académica, el periodismo y la creación poética, subraya su influencia en otros académicos y su rol político decisivo para revigorizar el interés por la lengua y la literatura latinas en Colombia.