

A Comprehensive Technical Analysis of Álvaro Salom Becerra's 'Al pueblo nunca le toca': Political Satire and Sociopolitical Structuralism

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The literary landscape of 20th-century Colombia is marked by a deep-seated preoccupation with the cyclical nature of political violence and institutional corruption. Among the most incisive voices of this era is **Álvaro Salom Becerra**, whose seminal work, '**Al pueblo nunca le toca**' (The People Never Get a Turn), serves as both a narrative masterpiece and a sociopolitical autopsy of the Colombian state. This article provides an in-depth technical analysis of the novel, exploring its historical context, narrative mechanics, and its enduring relevance as a critique of bipartisan power structures.

1. Theoretical Framework: The Mechanics of Political Satire

To understand '**Al pueblo nunca le toca**', one must first analyze the theoretical framework of **political satire** as a diagnostic tool for social failure. Satire, in the context of Salom Becerra, is not merely humor; it is a calculated literary mechanism designed to expose the gap between official rhetoric and material reality. The novel employs what literary theorists call '**Costumbrismo**' (sketches of customs) updated for the mid-20th century, utilizing irony to deconstruct the myths of the Colombian democratic process.

The Bipartisan Hegemony (1930–1974)

The core conflict of the novel resides in the technical execution of power between the **Liberal Party** and the **Conservative Party**. This period was characterized by '**La Violencia**' and subsequently the '**Frente Nacional**' (National Front), a power-sharing agreement that effectively excluded third-party participation. Salom Becerra uses the novel to map the **mechanistic rotation of power**, illustrating how the elite of both parties maintained a monopoly over the state apparatus while the 'pueblo' (the people) remained perpetual observers of their own disenfranchisement.

2. Technical Narrative Structure and Engineering

The architecture of the novel is structured through a series of chronological 'tableaux' or chapters that correspond to different presidential administrations. This **sequential narrative engineering** allows the author to demonstrate the repetitive nature of political failure. Each administration is presented with a standard workflow of hope, rhetoric, corruption, and eventual disillusionment.

Narrative Procedural Workflow

Salom Becerra utilizes a recurring structural loop to emphasize the futility of the common man's effort in the political sphere:

- Phase I: The Campaign (The Illusion): Political leaders employ populist rhetoric to mobilize the masses. Terminology such as 'justice,' 'equality,' and 'reform' are used as tactical linguistic tools.
- Phase II: The Ascension (The Consolidation): Once in power, the bipartisan elite consolidates resources. The 'pueblo' is relegated to the background.
- Phase III: The Bureaucratic Inertia: The implementation of clientelism and the 'spoils system' where

government positions are traded for political loyalty rather than merit.

- Phase IV: The Handover (The Rotation): The transition of power to the opposing party (or the same elite under a different name), ensuring the structural status quo remains untouched.

Quantitative Analysis of Bipartisan Dominance

The following table illustrates the technical comparison between the theoretical goals of the Colombian political system and the practical outcomes described in Salom Becerra’s narrative:

Systemic Metric	Theoretical Objective (Constitution)	Practical Implementation (Salom Becerra's Analysis)	Resulting Societal Impact
Power Distribution	Universal Suffrage and Multi-party representation.	Bipartisan Oligarchy (National Front dynamics).	Systemic exclusion of minority interests.
Economic Allocation	Equitable distribution of national wealth.	Concentration of capital within the 'Argolla' (The Ring/Elite).	Permanent poverty for the working class.
Social Mobility	Merit-based advancement.	Clientelism and political patronage.	Stagnation of the professional middle class.
Political Accountability	Checks and balances between branches.	Mutual amnesty for ruling elites.	Total institutional impunity.

3. Linguistic Mechanics: The Socio-Dialectical Approach

Salom Becerra's technical prowess is most evident in his use of **socio-dialect**. By capturing the specific linguistic markers of the '**Bogotano**' middle class and the rural migrant, he creates a linguistic map of class hierarchy. In '**Al pueblo nunca le toca**', the language of the politician is characterized by '**Grandiloquence**'—the use of complex, archaic, and overly formal structures to obscure the lack of material action.

The Formula of Political Rhetoric

We can model the effectiveness of political rhetoric in the novel using a basic communicative efficiency formula:

$E = (V * R) / A$

Where:**E** = Communicative Efficiency (The ability to maintain power).**V** = Volume of Promises (The frequency of populist claims).**R** = Rhetorical Complexity (The level of sophisticated language used to confuse).**A**= Actual Achievement (The material results delivered to the populace).

In the world of Salom Becerra, as **A** (Actual Achievement) approaches zero, the values of **V** and **R** must increase exponentially to maintain **E**(The illusion of legitimacy). This explains the verbosity of the characters representing the political elite.

4. Case Study: The Character of Baltasar as a Proxy for the Proletariat

The protagonist, or rather the central figure representing the common man, serves as a **case study in psychological conditioning**. Through the lens of this character, we see the '**Sunk Cost Fallacy**' in action. Despite decades of evidence that the political system will not benefit him, the character remains loyal to his party colors (either Blue or Red), illustrating how **ideological branding** can override rational self-interest.

Behavioral Mapping of Political Loyalty

1. Conditioning: Family heritage dictates party alignment (Liberal or Conservative) from birth.
2. Confirmation Bias: The subject ignores the corruption of their own party while hyper-focusing on the failures of the opposition.
3. The Cycle of Hope: Every four years, the subject believes the 'new' candidate will be the exception to the rule.
4. Outcome: The subject remains in the same socioeconomic strata regardless of which party wins.

5. Comparative Analysis: Salom Becerra vs. Magical Realism

While his contemporaries like Gabriel García Márquez explored **Magical Realism**, Salom Becerra adhered to a style often termed '**Critical Realism**' or '**Urban Costumbrismo**.' The technical difference lies in the treatment of the 'impossible.' In Magical Realism, the supernatural is accepted as ordinary. In Salom Becerra's work, the 'impossible' is the notion that a common citizen could ever achieve justice within the existing system.

Feature	Magical Realism (García Márquez)	Critical Realism (Salom Becerra)
Narrative Focus	Mythical, ancestral, and psychological.	Political, structural, and sociological.
Treatment of Time	Circular and mythical.	Linear, historical, and repetitive.
Protagonist Type	Larger-than-life figures (e.g., Colonel Aureliano Buendía).	The 'Average Joe' (The marginalized citizen).
Primary Device	Hyperbole and fantasy.	Irony, satire, and caricature.

6. Practical Implementation: How to Analyze the Novel in a Modern Context

For students of political science and literature, **‘Al pueblo nunca le toca’** serves as a manual for identifying **systemic exclusion**. To conduct a modern analysis of the text, follow these procedural steps:

Step 1: Historical Mapping

Identify the specific presidential term being satirized in the chapter. Cross-reference the fictional events with the historical reality of the **Lleras, Pastrana, or Valencia** administrations. This technical alignment reveals the depth of Salom Becerra’s research.

Step 2: Identification of Clientelistic Networks

Trace the movement of minor characters. How do they obtain jobs? How do they lose them? This maps the **‘political payroll’** system that sustained the Colombian state for decades.

Step 3: Linguistic Analysis

Analyze the **‘Speech Acts’** of the political figures. Differentiate between **Constative Utterances** (describing the world) and **Performative Utterances** (changing the world). In the novel, most political speech is **Pseudo-Performative**: it sounds like it’s changing things, but it is technically hollow.

7. Troubleshooting the Colombian Political ‘Engine’

Within the narrative, the political system is described as a machine that is ‘broken’ for the people but ‘perfect’ for the operators. The common ‘failure modes’ identified by Salom Becerra include:

- The 'Alternation' Failure: When the two parties agree to stop fighting each other to collectively exploit the state (The National Front).
- The 'Populist' Short Circuit: When a leader gains too much genuine support from the people, the bipartisan machine works to neutralize them (e.g., the shadow of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán).
- The 'Apathy' Result: The final state of the citizen after realizing that their vote has no technical impact on the distribution of power.

8. Summary and Broader Implications

The work of **Álvaro Salom Becerra** remains a cornerstone of Colombian literature precisely because its technical diagnosis of the state remains alarmingly accurate. **‘Al pueblo nunca le toca’** is not just a title; it is a mathematical constant in the equation of Colombian power dynamics. Through his masterful use of satire, structural repetition, and socio-dialectical accuracy, Salom Becerra creates a permanent record of the frustrations of the 20th-century

citizen.

The novel's ultimate contribution is the stripping away of the 'mystique' of the ruling class. By showing the mundane, often petty motivations behind high-level political decisions, Salom Becerra democratizes the understanding of power. He proves that the exclusion of the 'pueblo' is not an accident of history, but a **deliberate engineering requirement** of the bipartisan model. As modern readers engage with this text, the challenge remains to find a way to break the cyclical loop he so vividly described and finally allow the people their 'turn' in the narrative of history.

Ultimately, the enduring legacy of **Al pueblo nunca le toca** lies in its ability to transcend its specific historical moment. While the names of the parties may change and the faces of the politicians may evolve, the underlying mechanisms of **exclusionary power** and **rhetorical manipulation** continue to resonate in contemporary political systems across the globe. Salom Becerra provides the diagnostic tools; the task of reform, however, remains with the reader.

Baca Juga (Artikel Terkait)

• [Post-Colonial Political Dynamics: A Comprehensive Technical Analysis of Chinua Achebe's A Man of the People](http://alghafgolden.com/analysis-chinua-achebe-a-man-of-the-people.pdf)

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