

20 - 22 June 2025

Nice, France

Visual and Literary Representations of Social Inequality in Brazil: A Comparative Analysis of Sebastião Salgado's *Workers* (1993) and Graciliano Ramos' *Barren Lives* (1938)

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Abstract

This study examines the representation of Brazilian working-class struggles and social inequality through a comparative analysis of Sebastião Salgado's *Workers* (1993) and Graciliano Ramos' *Barren Lives* (1938). Both works depict marginalized laborers, exposing the structural hardships they endure. By combining literary and visual analysis, this research explores how Salgado's black-and-white photographs and Ramos' stark prose construct narratives of resilience and deprivation. The study highlights the aesthetic and rhetorical strategies employed to evoke empathy and political awareness, including visual composition, narrative economy, and symbolic imagery. The findings suggest that, despite differences in medium, both *Workers* and *Barren Lives* function as potent social commentaries, challenging dominant discourses on labor, poverty, and economic progress in Brazil. The analysis also underscores the historical continuity of inequality, revealing how artistic representations contribute to critical discourses on dignity and survival. Ultimately, this comparative reading demonstrates that Salgado and Ramos, through their respective forms, amplify the voices of the working class and provoke reflections on the enduring struggles of laborers in Brazil.

Keywords: Brazilian literature; labor representation; photography; Sebastião Salgado; social inequality