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## Space in the Construct of a Revolutionary

With Omar Cabezas' *Fire from the Mountain* and Che Guevara's *Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War*

### ABSTRACT

This poster investigates how space impacts and influences the construct of a revolutionary by analyzing Che Guevara and Omar Cabezas' personal accounts of the Cuban Revolution (1953-1959) and the Nicaraguan Revolution (1961-1990) respectively. Revolutionary narratives studied, *Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War* (Guevara 2005) and *Fire from the Mountain* (Cabezas 1985), are primarily masculine dominated ones. These personal accounts depict physical landscapes as a means of reshaping revolution participants and constructing the revolutionary ideal. In particular, mountain ranges provided a place of refuge and growth for the rebels as they transformed from inexperienced participants to revolutionary vanguards. In analyzing the works with a literary-focused lens, this poster asks the following questions:

- How do the mountains serve as a metaphor of the revolution and its participants?
- How do the mountains impact the construct of the revolutionary figure as a physical surrounding?

To conclude, as the mountains isolate the rebels and challenges them physically and emotionally, this physical landscape becomes a place of refuge and growth. In doing so, the mountains shape the construct of the revolutionary figure through the process of enduring hardships on the mountains as depicted in Guevara and Cabezas' work. Hence spatial environment plays an important role in these revolutionary works of literature as it not only serves as a metaphor but also a factor in shaping these ideas of a revolutionary figure.

Key Words: Revolution, Latin American Literature, Omar Cabezas, Che Guevara, Space

### RELATED THEORIES

- Revolutionary Vanguard
  - Stemmed from Marxist-Leninist theories
  - Proletariats with special responsibility as Leaders
- New Man Theory (*El Hombre Nuevo*)
  - Formed from Marxist thinking
  - Liberate from economic and spiritual framework
  - Sacrifices; for the greater good of everyone First presented in *El Socialismo y el hombre nuevo* (Guevara 1962)
- Friedrich Nietzsche's Übermensch "Superman" theory
  - The man needs to retreat and enters isolation to evoke new change
  - Only way become a new self is to go up to mountain and come down with a revised sense of who you are

### MOUNTAIN AS A METAPHOR

We can view the mountains as a metaphor for the revolutionary mission – it is an upward climb and only allows the survival of the fittest. In the constrained spaces of the mountains, the rebels are reconfigured through physical sufferings of blisters and hunger, and emotional hardship of loneliness. As Nietzsche suggested, men in isolated quarters seem to reveal their true characters as they are faced with nothing but themselves. As the revolutionary forces make their way up the mountain, it is an upward climb and only the ones with the purest intentions and best qualities are able to overcome this obstacle.

### MOUNTAIN AS PHYSICAL SURROUNDINGS

Other than as a metaphor, we can also view the mountains as a physical surrounding that shape the construct of a revolutionary. Our surroundings play a role in shaping us into who we are. In these works, the mountains not only serve as a combating field but also as a hiding ground and breeding ground for the rebels. The landscape nourishes and sustains the rebels and allows them to develop into experienced bearded men from cleanly shaved boys. Both works show a progression of moving from the urban city to rural mountains. This transition of landscape provides a space for self-reflection and growth. In the constrained spaces of the mountains, the rebels are reconfigured through the physical suffering of blisters and hunger and emotional hardship of loneliness. Both works use the idea of "trials by fire" as a way to break down existing components of self and rebuild the ideals of a revolutionary as a part of a larger shared collective. Cabezas and Guevara show that there is a need to break down and reconfigure the old construct of self in order to become the "new man" and work towards the ideals of a revolutionary.

### CONCLUSION

The mountains serve beyond a backdrop in Cabezas and Guevara's respective works. The physical landscape serves as a literary metaphor of the journey these young men embarked on and plays a role in their evolution in developing ideal revolutionary qualities. As a place of refuge and growth, the mountains shape the construct of the revolutionary figure through the process of enduring hardships on the mountains. Hence spatial environment plays a role beyond the setting of the literary works, but as an irreplaceable factor in shaping these men from fresh-faced youth to hardened revolutionary vanguards.



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