Implicating Bitzer's Rhetorical Situation in Comparative and Non-Violent Rhetoric: A Rhetorical Analysis of Three Ecofeminist Movements from East to West

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IMPLICATING BITZER’S RHETORICAL SITUATION IN COMPARATIVE AND NON-VIOLENT RHETORIC: A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF THREE ECOFEMINIST MOVEMENTS FROM EAST TO WEST.

A Dissertation

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Doctor of Philosophy

by

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Abstract

In the study of social movement rhetoric, scholars often focus on movements based in Western nations, foregoing study of social change in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and other parts of the world. Similarly, the focus on non-violent rhetoric has also been lacking, despite its use by great leaders such as Mahatma Ghandi and Martin Luther King. This dissertation contributes to the study of social change in a globalized world, by taking a comparative approach to non-violent rhetoric in three diverse case studies. As sub-areas, both comparative rhetoric and non-violent rhetoric require further deliberation due to the numerous debates concerning their meanings and approaches. Comparative and non-violent rhetoric are significant areas of study because they encourage mutual understanding by striving for common ground among people of different cultures, faith traditions, and political opinion.

In this dissertation, I will demonstrate how Western and non-Western forms of social movement rhetoric complement each other to enhance our understanding of comparative rhetoric. I turn to both Western and non-Western ecofeminists to examine how the women optimize non-violent rhetoric, and the ways in which their cultural status help advance and/or hinder their activism. I specifically turn to the Chipko movement in India, Wangari Maathai and the Green Belt Movement in Kenya, and Julia Butterfly Hill in the United States, for an in-depth understanding of non-violent rhetoric in direct action. I use rhetorical criticism and Bitzer’s (1968) rhetorical situation, to analyze the
exigency, audience, and constraints in the three case studies. I argue that Bitzer as a theoretical framework is broad enough to study a variety of cultures/situations; yet, it is sufficiently well-defined to allow for useful analysis. I also contend, non-violent rhetoric is a tactic and manifestation of a philosophy that aims to address exigencies, and amend the relationship of the adversary to an ally. Non-violent rhetoric does not only address the material conditions of a situation, but also incorporates the spiritual and/or religious as a mode of address. Including a spiritual/religious dimension in the study of social movements enhances our understanding of social movements beyond the instrumental. The case studies in this dissertation reveal that non-violent tactics are selected and practiced as they align with spiritual/moral/religious values. My analysis also demonstrates how non-violence is used in some cultures to counter irresponsible environmental practice in the name of “development.” Finally, I provide extended definitions for both comparative and non-violent rhetoric and suggestions for future research.
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Introduction: Comparative Rhetoric, Non-Violent Rhetoric, and Ecofeminist Movements

People try nonviolence for a week, and when it “doesn’t work,” they go back to violence, which hasn’t worked for centuries. ~ Theodore Roszak

In December 2011, Time magazine dedicated its “Person of the Year” cover to The Protestor. This recognition may be considered a great honor for all of those involved in movements as far as the Middle East to New York’s busy Wall Street. Waves of protest in the Middle East began in a small town in Tunisia when a fruit vendor set himself on fire to symbolize his abhorrence for abusive authority. This act of protest soon sparked other nations in the region to fight against oppressive regimes. Although the movement managed to topple some prominent leaders who were considered tyrants by the people, the success became evident after much violence and bloodshed (as apparent in the killing of Muammar Gaddafi of Libya). For some, these acts of violence may be considered “necessary” given the situation the people were in. But is it really?

The year 2011 also marked a great milestone for the people of non-Western nations when three women (two from Liberia and one from Yemen), were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition for their non-violent struggle for the safety of women and for women’s rights to full participation in peace-building work (http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/ laureates/2011/). The Nobel Peace Prize
for 2011 was divided equally between Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (the first female African president), Leymah Gbowee (a major figure that helped put an end to Liberia’s 14-year civil war), and Tawakkul Karman (a journalist and young mother of three, based in Yemen). Although these women were from two different nations, their struggles were all non-violent in nature. Concurrently, despite their choice to avoid violence, their aims were still successfully carried out. In Liberia, the civil war came to a halt. This soon led to the country’s development in infrastructure and people’s welfare. In Yemen, Tawakkul Karman led a successful movement that called for freedom of expression while demanding a stop to the abuse that journalists experienced from corrupted authorities.

Based on the examples offered thus far, one can argue that contrary to what some may believe, non-violent activism can make a difference—non-violence is not simply a weapon for the weak. Furthermore, in the study of social movement rhetoric, non-Western movements do make a significant contribution and are worthy of or greater attention. Concurrently, it is my opinion that studies on comparative rhetoric, can/should provide space for Western rhetorical concepts as long as the aim is not to generate universal claims that apply to both Western and non-Western cultures and/or situations.

If asked to describe the topic of comparative rhetoric in one word, complicated would be the expression I would use. As a sub-area, comparative rhetoric deserves more attention due to the numerous debates concerning its meaning and approach; and its potential value in a globalized world. If done attentively, comparative rhetoric encourages critics to recognize and appreciate rhetorical methods in various cultures and/or contexts. In 1998, George A. Kennedy published Comparative Rhetoric, a book that looks into the study of rhetoric from a cross-cultural perspective. Despite its
usefulness, Kennedy’s claims sparked arguments among scholars. McKeerow (2002) describes Kennedy’s book as “brilliant, but also brilliantly flawed” (p. 291). This is partly due to Kennedy’s use of Western rhetoric’s terms to analyze rhetoric in different cultures. Comparative rhetoric as an area of study is significant because it encourages mutual understanding by striving for common ground among people of different cultures. Lu (2011, p. 19) said it best when he noted:

For a better understanding between peoples and cultures, it is necessary to critique and evaluate discourse which has until now been subject to the limitations of Orientalism, on the one hand, and Occidentalism, on the other. Both Eastern and Western scholars need to challenge their own biases and assumptions of Eastern and Western cultures. Both need to learn from each other, not only in terms of subject matter but also in efforts to construct appropriate modes of inquiry.

In terms of non-violent rhetoric, scholars should not ignore the multiple versions of non-violence that help propel a movement forward. I will explain further the multiple versions of non-violence in the later section of this chapter.

In this dissertation, I will demonstrate how Western and non-Western forms of social movement rhetoric can complement each other to enhance our understanding of comparative rhetoric. Additionally, I will turn to both Western and non-Western ecofeminists to examine how these women optimize non-violent rhetoric, and the ways in which their cultural status helps advance and/or hinder their activism. It should be noted that, although I mentioned three women from non-Western nations earlier in this paper, these particular individuals are not the topic of my analysis. Besides being exceptional examples of non-Western women that made an impact, I chose to mention the three Nobel Peace Prize winners because of their persistent use of non-violent means of
protest. The three case studies in this project will provide more examples of determined women who also capitalized on non-violent methods.

While comparative rhetoric and Bitzer’s rhetorical situation may not be “in vogue” in the US, I will argue for their continued significance in rhetorical studies in a variety of contexts. On a personal note, I can attest that rhetoric is not widely perused in communication departments in Malaysian universities. Compared to the Malaysian context, where media-based research is prevalent, Rhetorical Studies is more prevalent in communication departments in American universities. I feel a rhetorical perspective will enrich the existing scholarly scene in my motherland, and that the rhetorical situation and comparative rhetoric are two important tools in furthering this process. Basically, the objectives of this project are twofold:

1) To highlight the ways in which the study of non-Western rhetoric can contribute to Western rhetoric and vice versa, especially in the context of social movement rhetoric.

2) To draw attention to the ways non-violent ecofeminist rhetoric contributes to the study of social movement rhetoric.

To address these objectives, three (3) research questions will be addressed in this project:

1) How do ecofeminist movements from different cultures situate themselves, specifically with regards to non-violence?

2) What are the important differences that non-Western rhetoric raises that add to the study of social movement rhetoric?
3) What are the implications for using Bitzer’s rhetorical situation to study rhetoric in different cultures? What are the potential advantages and disadvantages of adopting Bitzer as a framework to study comparative rhetoric?

In what follows, I highlight the definition and debates concerning comparative rhetoric. Next, I attempt to connect the area of comparative rhetoric to the study of social movements, and discuss the ways in which non-violent rhetoric and ecofeminism fit in the puzzle. The second part of this chapter will be dedicated to rhetorical criticism and Bitzer’s rhetorical situation as proposed methods for my project. I also include samples of rhetorical texts that I have chosen to analyze to gain greater insight into the study of comparative and non-violent rhetoric.

Comparative Rhetoric

What makes it a challenge to study comparative rhetoric? For starters, the definition of rhetoric itself is complex enough; adding the topic of different cultures and/or situations to rhetoric, and the task of comparing them, will surely generate more challenges. Kennedy (1998) defines comparative rhetoric as “the cross-cultural study of rhetorical traditions as they exist or have existed in different societies around the world.” (p.1) An earlier definition provided by Neher (1973) views comparative rhetoric as an area that “studies the mode of public address among a specified group of people and the theories and values governing their public address in specific cultural contexts.” (p.1) Jiao (2009) views comparative rhetoric as an area that goes beyond the written and spoken form. Jiao includes visual symbols as texts worthy of analysis in the study of comparative rhetoric. Jiao maintains that meanings in both language and images are culturally bound. In this particular study, comparative rhetoric will refer to the study of
Western and non-Western ecofeminist movements that vary in terms of context/societies, situations and the participants’ cultural status. Additionally, this study hopes to contribute to rhetorical studies by using comparative rhetoric in conversation with the rhetorical situation for the first time.

One of the challenges faced by those interested in comparative rhetoric is the language and culture barrier (Kennedy, 1998). Kennedy believes it would be difficult to give an “authoritative account” of different cultural (and rhetorical) practices because not many rhetoricians have the needed level of fluency in multiple languages, and a rich (or experiential) understanding of the many societies compared. Despite criticisms, I feel Kennedy’s efforts to explain comparative rhetoric should be lauded for generating meaningful deliberation.

Basically, Kennedy’s book looks into the study of rhetoric from a cross-cultural perspective. He specifically evaluates traditional Western rhetorical concepts in comparison to non-Western rhetoric. Comparative rhetoric, according to Kennedy has at the very least, four objectives: 1) “identify what is universal and what is distinctive about any one rhetorical tradition in comparison to others.” 2) “to formulate a general theory of rhetoric that will apply in all societies.” 3) “to develop and test structures and terminology that can be used to describe rhetorical practices cross-culturally,” and 4) “to apply what has been learned from comparative study to contemporary cross-cultural communication…” (p.1). Although I may see more or less value in each of Kennedy’s goals listed above, I do accept the worth of Kennedy’s perspective as a starting point in the study of comparative rhetoric. In this particular study, I would not restrict my definition of comparative rhetoric to the rhetoric of different cultures and/or societies.
Instead, I would broaden the definition to include the rhetoric of different situations (e.g. peaceful vs. violent situations), even within the same culture or society. I do not intend to offer a universal theory of rhetoric. Instead, I aim to examine and discuss the unique rhetorical features in the three case studies in this project.

Wang’s (2004) survey of research in Asian rhetoric offers an insightful overview of the current scholarship on non-Western rhetoric, with implications for how to view comparative rhetoric. In Wang’s survey, different voices (Vernon Jensen, Mary Garrett, Xing Lu, and LuMing Mao) offer deep reflections on the issue of non-Western rhetoric. Wang notes how important research in Asian rhetoric is wary of Orientalism, while taking into account cultural and political contexts. It is stressed that,

(R)esearchers in Asian rhetoric must challenge the fundamental assumptions about rhetoric embedded in classical Western rhetorical theories to start a conversation between East and West... we need to be cautious not to impose the Western conception of rhetoric upon the description of Asian rhetorics... relying too heavily on classical Western rhetorical theory without transforming from the perspectives on non-Western rhetorical traditions might perpetuate the idea that Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition is the only rhetorical tradition.(pp.173)

Basically, Wang’s survey illustrates the importance of analyzing non-Western rhetoric on its own terms—highlighting its distinct features while at the same time not ignoring the possible (if any) similarities that exist with the West. McKerrow’s (2002) view of comparative rhetoric aligns with Wang since he is of the opinion that applying Western rhetorical terms to study non-Western rhetoric simply “re-colonizes the Other.” (p. 291)

In addition to the concerns mentioned above, one of the debates I encountered regarding comparative rhetoric relates to the issues of accuracy and responsibility. At the risk of oversimplifying Stroud (2009, 2011) and Mao (2011), the following is a summary of the arguments between the two scholars. From what I understand, Stroud’s concern
with comparative rhetoric is not so much focused on accuracy, but is more on pragmatics or usefulness. According to Stroud (2009, 2011), a critic who is concerned with pragmatism aims to fill an area that is lacking. Stroud believes comparative rhetoric is often focused on forming “correct descriptions” of a phenomenon/text/tradition. Although Stroud does not think this is damaging, he sees this approach as limiting. He gives an example of scholars who aim to identify rhetorical theories in other cultures, or those who strive to focus on the distinctions between non-Western and Western rhetoric. Stroud is of the opinion that these two methods or goals are not the only way of “doing” comparative rhetoric. While Stroud does not dismiss the significance of translations and cultural contexts, he does take issue with the assumptions that “comparative rhetoric is a purely and exclusively descriptive endeavor” (p. 359). Stroud contends that an interest in contemporary or ancient communicative practice would require a descriptive or historical method. On the other hand, an interest in issues related to theory and practical problems call for an approach that is constructive or reconstructive. Between the two approaches, Stroud claims that the constructive or reconstructive approach “would accept some slack in historical accuracy, and instead strive for usefulness of appropriation or reconstruction in light of some pressing problem in rhetorical theory or practice…” (2009, p. 360). For Stroud, a “constructive misreading” of a rhetorical phenomenon or text would/should be tolerated. Stroud contends that openness to be corrected and being receptive to different ways of doing comparative rhetoric are crucial.

In opposition to Stroud, Mao (2011) argues that descriptive and reconstructive approaches cannot be separated. Mao places importance on accuracy and believes the lack of it results in an irresponsible approach to comparative rhetoric. Mao (2011)
highlights the importance of gathering reliable translated text, and paying attention to contexts, whether it is historical or contemporary. He insists, “I favor a way of constructing knowledge that promotes dialogism, thick description, and consciousness of the consequences of one’s own claims” (p. 68). In his essay, Mao reports how he has been reading Zhuangzi (an ancient Chinese philosopher and rhetorician) in its original form as well as translated version. Mao claims:

I put his (Zhuangzi) work in dialogue with the Analects and the Daodejing, I pay close attention to the historical context and to other contemporary schools of thought, and I further interrogate my own linguistic and ideological biases…Yes, I want to get it right – not because I am in pursuit of some transcendental truth or local expediency, but because I favor a way of constructing knowledge that promotes dialogism, thick description, and consciousness of the consequences of one’s own claims (p.68).

Based on Mao’s capacity to study Zhuangzi’s work in both its original and translated form, it is my opinion that Mao may perhaps privilege those who are fluent in diverse cultures when doing comparative rhetoric. In response to Mao (2011), Stroud (2011) posits the question related to accuracy: “what happens when someone presents a non-self-critical or ‘ethnocentric’ account. Do we reject it? Why? He (Mao) cannot reply that we should do so because it is ‘irresponsible’…” (p.72).

Although I understand Mao’s position on the importance of being accurate and responsible, I am unsure whether any work of criticism can be purely error free. After all, doesn’t rhetorical analysis require a critic to get close to the text?: Hence, having his/her influence mirrored in the analysis? Nothstine, Blair, and Copeland (2003) confirm this in the four maxims of rhetorical criticism, when they stressed on the importance of critics pursuing their own interests in the process of doing criticism. Furthermore, I do not think Stroud is dismissing the importance of gathering credible text and translation. In my
opinion, I believe Stroud is merely posing an approach to comparative rhetoric that is less restricted and open to one’s own interpretation. This does not necessarily mean one is acting “irresponsibly.” At the same time, however, I am of the opinion that to critique a specific culture, one should ideally aim to do so in a sensitive manner, and realize that “mis-reading” a culture may unnecessarily offend individuals from outside one’s own culture.

In relation to the above, I would concur with Alcoff (1991) with regard to her stance on speaking for others. According to Alcoff, speaking for those who are marginalized or oppressed is not always seen as doing good service. On the contrary, Alcoff claims it can sometimes actually be counterproductive. Alcoff claims the “practice of privileged persons speaking for or on behalf of less privileged persons has actually resulted (in many cases) in increasing or reinforcing the oppression of the group spoken for” (p.7). Another significant point raised by Alcoff concerns the speaker’s own position. What speakers say is very much influenced by their own positionality, whereby what is said will have an impact on “meaning and truth of what one says” (p.6). The speaker’s identity can influence how his/her speech is considered credible or otherwise. From Alcoff’s (1991) viewpoint, although it is not feasible for a speaker to know everything about a given situation, that does not excuse a speaker from being accountable and responsible. At the same time, a resistance to speaking for others or fear of making errors does not necessarily excuse a person of privilege from recognizing the issue faced by those who are less privileged. Alcoff asserts:

(T)he motivation is not so much to avoid criticism as to avoid errors, and the person believes that the only way to avoid errors is to avoid all speaking for
others. However, errors are unavoidable in theoretical inquiry as well as political struggle, and moreover they often make contributions. (p.22)

In a nutshell, desire to speak for others should ideally be avoided so as to not further oppress those who are already marginalized. Concurrently, one cannot ignore the fact that even having the choice not to speak is considered a privilege on its own, since some do not even have the choice to speak or remain silent (Alcoff, 1991). Therefore, when speaking for others is done, one should do so cautiously, with responsibility and accountability so as not to make the situation worse. Alcoff reminds us to not only take note of the location of the speaker or his/her credentials. Instead, we must also note the content of the speech, and where the speech goes and does.

I believe Alcoff’s take on speaking for others is what Mao (2011) may consider one of the prerequisite of doing comparative rhetoric responsibly:

In order to speak for and about others responsibly, don’t we have to seek out primary texts or reliable translated texts and to provide more complete, may I say, more accurate, account? Don’t we have to assemble and analyze necessary and sufficient data to support our arguments and claims? Don’t we have to pay close attention to both historical and contemporary contexts? Don’t we have to interrogate the location of those who are doing the speaking for/about (Alcoff 14-16)? (pp.65-66)

At this point, I feel it is appropriate to bring into the conversation the contributions of standpoint theory. One of the criteria I focused on when locating text for this study is the preference for narratives or reports from a first person standpoint. It is hoped that by doing so, the analysis done for this project will be deemed more “responsible” and “accurate.” I feel the use of standpoint theory is appropriate for this project because it will help bring to the forefront the voices of the women in the three
case studies. This will help validate the analysis, making it more about the women.

Hence, keeping more with Alcoff’s caution about speaking for/about Others.

According to Kinefuchi and Orbe (2008), standpoint theory suggests that, “the world looks different depending on your social standing” (p.72). Swigonski (1993) explains, “from a particular social standpoint, one can see some things more clearly than others” (p.172). Swigonski also mentions that this particular theory involves not only an individual’s position in the social structure, but also that position’s relation to the individual’s lived experience. One’s social position not only relates to factors such as gender, culture, race or skin color, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation—but is also related to one’s unique experiences within these locations. Because of this, a feminist standpoint does not automatically emerge from someone who is female (Wood, 2005).

Swigonski affirms that Standpoint Theory is based on the claim that those who are in a less powerful position experience a different reality as a result of their oppression. Wood (2005, p. 62) provides five claims central to feminist standpoint theory:

1) Society is structured by power relations, which result in unequal social location for women and men…the experiences that are open and closed to women and men shape what they know and how they understand cultural life.

2) Subordinate social locations are more likely than privileged social locations to generate knowledge that is “more accurate” or “less false.”

3) The outsider-within is a privileged epistemological position because it entails double consciousness…For instance, a live-in Latina maid is not a
member of the employing family that belongs to the privileged group, but she has access to the minute details of their private lives.

4) Standpoints are not automatically given based on biology or any other essential factor. Instead, they are earned through political struggle that creates oppositional stances based on recognition of and resistance to dominant worldview.

5) Any individual can have multiple standpoints.

Based on Wood’s description, bringing standpoint theory into the conversation will help respond to concerns of doing comparative rhetoric responsibly because of the major claims that highlight the importance of making space for the voices of those in less privileged groups. Additionally, by taking into consideration the arguments of standpoint theory and Alcoff, I hope to avoid imposing generalizations or stereotypes when examining the texts in this project. The significance of comparative rhetoric for social movements lies in the assessment and appreciation of social justice struggles of people from different cultures and/or situations. No two cultures and/or situations are the same. Therefore, methods of protest may vary depending on the context and individuals involved. There is no “one size fits all.”

**Connection between comparative rhetoric and social movement rhetoric.** In addition to the above statement, how exactly is comparative rhetoric related to social movement rhetoric in this project? What is the significance? Lucas (2006) contends, in the study of social movements, rhetorical scholars have mostly focused on movements in America and Great Britain. This is disadvantageous because as rhetorical scholars, we should make an effort to understand the rhetoric of non-Western movements because
unless we do so, our understanding “will remain partial and parochial.” (Lucas, p. 142) Culture and diversity in opinion are important ingredients that should not be overlooked by rhetoricians. Kirkscey’s (2007) stance is in line with Lucas. Kirkscey urges critics to increase their understanding of social movements by looking into other areas such as anthropology, folklore, and linguistics. Kirkscey believes this is especially relevant in view of recent political, gender, and economic change that occurs globally.

Furthermore, our understanding of social change may even be different if attained from different cultural and political situations. For example, our understanding of confrontation may change when viewed in different cultural contexts. From some perspectives, confrontation is not about notions of violence. Instead, it concerns symbolic displays or “dramatic form[s]” that may or may not include acts of direct action or such things as body rhetoric (Cathcart 2006). Scott (1990) maintained that in some instances, members of the subordinate class may appear to be cooperating with the dominant, even though in reality they are resisting in “safe” and subtle ways. The resistance displayed by the village folk (a Malay village to be precise) in Scott’s study may not be organized, but it was clearly a form of protest. Scott referred to their act of resistance as “hidden transcripts,” and some included gossip and sabotage; that is, discourse that happens when the dominant are not present. Acts of resistance from certain groups (i.e. those who are less privileged or those in the minority/marginalized population) are sometimes kept hidden for fear of punishment or some other negative consequences. Scott’s discussion of resistance may not be commonly studied in Western scholarship on social movements, and although this type of movement (one that lacks confrontation) may not be considered radical, or even functional for some, it may be the
only way some movements can operate. A focus on comparative rhetoric may help bring new theoretical insights into social movement rhetoric.

**Non-violent rhetoric and ecofeminism.** Besides the need to be globally aware, another contribution this project makes to social movement rhetoric deals with the notion of non-violent rhetoric. Great leaders such as Mahatma Ghandi and Martin Luther King Jr. have been known to use this form of rhetoric. Yet, despite the rhetorical value in this form of address, rhetorical theorists have yet to pay closer attention to non-violence as a rhetorical form (Gorsevski, 2004). Here, I am not implying that there is a complete absence of scholarship on non-violent rhetoric [Gorsevski (2004) and Palmer-Mehta (2009) are useful examples of work relating to nonviolence]. I am simply agreeing with Gorsevski that there are still areas for improvement.

Gorsevski believes that non-violent rhetoric is understudied mainly because using peaceful means to address conflict is all too often seen as a sign of weakness, naivety, and idealism. Furthermore, scholars (Gorsevski mentions DeLuca’s 1999 *Image Politics* as an example) have not been clear as to what they mean, or how they define non-violent rhetoric. She claims, “while the term *nonviolent* appears occasionally in DeLuca’s discussion of visual and protest rhetoric, nowhere is there to be found a clear definition of nonviolent rhetoric.” (p. 5). Gorsevski goes on to explain that while scholars in the social science (e.g. interpersonal communication) may study non-violence with regard to conflict resolution, rhetoricians are seen as “less well versed with definitions of peace and the rhetorical strategies of conflict reduction, as well as foundational concepts of nonviolence in theory and practice” (p. 6).
Murphy’s (1996) stance aligns with Gorsevski when she points out how the rhetoric of violence has gained more attention than the rhetoric of non-violence in the past few decades. Murphy claims, the little work that has been done on non-violent rhetoric have mostly been connected to non-violence as “philosophy…general theories of conflict and defense, strategies for nonviolent direct action, or methods of educating for peace” (p.11). Despite this array of topics related to non-violence, some fundamental/core questions have been missing. Murphy’s work is helpful because she offers three different types of non-violence: 1) Christian non-violence 2) pragmatic non-violence, and 3) feminist non-violence. Murphy examines the writing of Martin Luther King, Jr. as a representation of Christian non-violence. She explains, Christian non-violence stems from the Golden Rule that is to “love thy neighbor as thyself.” Murphy turns to Gene Sharp and Sissela Bok for examples of pragmatic non-violence. This form of non-violence originates from a humanist perspective that rejects violence as a strategy for conflict resolution. This perspective is less concerned with divine law. Instead, pragmatic non-violence views violence as “impractical” because of its danger to humans and the economy. Lastly, from a feminist standpoint, Murphy (1996) notes that both divine law and economy are not issues of concern. According to Murphy, feminist non-violence is concerned with the “self” or “self-others” relationship. Murphy claims, “In this view, protecting oneself and one’s own autonomy necessarily involves affording that same protection to other selves—even (perhaps especially those with whom we may be in conflict” (p. 56). Although Murphy recognizes Christian non-violence as a category of its own, I would add spirituality/religious non-violence to this group so as to widen the scope of non-violence and allow room for others who are not of the Christian faith.
Murphy’s non-violence framework will help add depth to the discussion of non-violence in this project.

Besides the need for depth and breath in the study of non-violent rhetoric, one may question the need for studying non-violence. Why study non-violent rhetoric? What do we gain? Here, I summarize Gorsevksi’s (2004, pp.7-8) justification:

1) The characteristics of non-violent rhetoric differ from conventional rhetoric. There is a need to examine how “some traditional characteristics of rhetorical approaches” generate hostility. Alternative methods of non-violence should be sought.

2) Global problems such as overpopulation, economic disparity and various forms of violence cannot be solved with further violence. Therefore, “while nonviolence is not a cure-all, it does offer hope and one possible way to address our current conundrums.”

3) Once we have a deeper understanding of non-violent rhetoric, principles may be applied to situations where conflict resolution is needed.

Gorsevski (1999) quotes Merton when she affirms that those who are recognized as agents of non-violent change are also those who choose to bypass violence in favor of persuasion and words to make meaningful changes in society. Besides the obvious (avoiding violence), one of the major goals of non-violent rhetoric is to promote understanding and increase awareness with regard to the issue that is being debated. Some examples of non-violent rhetoric are listed in Gorsevki’s Peaceful Persuasion (2004), as shown on the next page.
### Examples of Non-Violent Rhetoric (Sharp in Gorsevski, 2004, p. 183)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formal Statements</strong></td>
<td>Public speeches; letters of opposition or support; declarations by Organizations and institutions; signed public statement; declaration of indictment and intention; group or mass petitions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication with a Wider Audience</strong></td>
<td>Slogans, caricatures, and symbols; banners, posters, and displayed communications; leaflets, pamphlets, and books, newspapers and journals; records, radio, and television; skywriting and earthwriting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Representations</strong></td>
<td>Mock awards, group lobbying, picketing, mock elections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Symbolic Public Acts</strong></td>
<td>Displays of flags and symbolic colors; wearing of symbols; prayer and worship; delivering symbolic objects; protest disrobings; destruction of own property; symbolic lights; displays of portraits; paint as protest; new signs and names; symbolic sounds; symbolic reclamations; rude gestures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Drama and Music</strong></td>
<td>Humorous skits and pranks; performances of plays and music; singing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Processions</strong></td>
<td>Marches; parades; religious processions; pilgrimage; motocades.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
With regard to non-violent rhetoric, Sharp (1996) reminds us that “people power” and non-violent actions can be just as powerful or even more powerful and effective compared to violent means. Sharp claims that when a struggle achieves favorable outcome, it is usually the result of:

- [O]ne or a combination of four mechanisms: conversion (changing the opponents’ opinion of beliefs); accommodation (compromising to gain part of one’s objectives); nonviolent coercion (forcing the opponents to grant the demands), or disintegration (causing the opponents system or government to fall completely apart). (p. 236)

For Sharp, the power of systems or governments lies in the people. The systems only become “powerful” if people let them (via support, loyalty etc). Therefore, if the people refuse to obey, the system loses its power.

To some, non-violent rhetoric may sound uncomplicated or even effortless. In reality, it is not. Critics of non-violence are of the opinion that, anyone who wishes to endorse non-violent rhetorical strategies must be just as “saintly” as personalities like Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Ghandi. Gorsevski (2004) challenges this by revealing its disorderly human side. Gorsevski explains, “Pragmatic nonviolence is about achieving political results by using as little violence as possible, without necessarily excluding the occurrence of violence” (p. 74). In agreement with Sharp and Gorsevski, I feel the topic of non-violence is worthy of further analysis.

In this project, I chose to focus on ecofeminism because as a movement, ecofeminism is clearly marked by its non-violent tactics. The strength of ecofeminism lies not solely in its critique of injustice, but its aim to bring to the forefront the “moral value” in humanity and the compassion that humans are capable of showing.

Ecofeminism, a term short for “ecological feminism” cannot be easily defined due to the
simple fact that there is not just one “type” of feminism. In other words, comparable to feminism, ecofeminism is not unified. According to Warren (2009), the different varieties of feminism (e.g. liberal, Marxist, and radical) result in different viewpoints of ecofeminism. For instance, some ecofeminists such as Simone de Beauvoir believe that the woman-nature connection should be severed if women no longer wish to be associated with the Other (Tong, 2009). On the other hand, Tong cites Mary Daly as an example of an ecofeminist who calls for the woman-nature connection to be reaffirmed. For Daly, “the problem is not that women have a closer relationship with nature than men do, but that this relationship is undervalued” (p. 247).

Despite this haziness in viewpoint, most ecofeminist claims are similar—the natural world is a feminist issue (Warren, 2009). Karen Warren (in Tong, 2009) summarized four main assumptions of ecofeminism:

1. There are important connections between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature;
2. Understanding the nature of these connections is necessary to any adequate understanding of the oppression of women and the oppression of nature;
3. Feminist theory and practice must include an ecological perspective; and
4. Solutions to ecological problems must include a feminist perspective. (p. 242)

Something is considered a feminist issue “when understanding it helps one understand something about the social and economic status of women” (Warren, 2009, p. 228). For instance, issues such as the economic status of women, equal rights, sexism, and classism (among others) may be considered feminist issues because understanding these topics help us understand the challenges that many women face. In view of this opinion, Warren highlights ecofeminist aims that strive to seek and reveal male-bias whenever/wherever it may exist. Warren also claims there are numerous ways of linking
the environment to women. Among them are empirical and linguistic means. Basically, empirical means attempt to link the environment with women’s way of life or responsibilities. The linguistic means link environmental issues and women via linguistic connections. This includes “animalizing” or using language to make women inferior by connecting them to some aspect of the natural/environmental world (e.g. woman as “bitch” or “cougar.” Mother nature is “raped”).

As a movement, ecofeminism was first initiated in the 1970s, along with the environmental, peace, and women’s movement (Littig, 2001). There is a wide misconception that relates ecofeminism only with issues of maternalism, and maternalism to essentialism (Moore, 2008). Essentializing (e.g. reduce women to a single—typically biological—characteristic such as being a “good mother”) is considered harmful because it perpetuates stereotypes and ignores the fact that all individuals have different life experiences and should not be expected to fit the same mold. In reaction to this misconception, it is important to remember that feminist principles are not limited to gender or “women only” concerns. Ecofeminism also concerns itself with other forms of oppressions such as racism, homophobia, and environmental justice. Warren (in Cuomo, 2002) maintains that ecofeminism is a “philosophical position, ethical approach, and political movement” (p. 2). While it would be easy to simplify ecofeminism as a theory that revolves around issues of dominance, Cuomo reminds us that what ecofeminists stand for goes beyond concerns of oppression and domination. Cuomo asserts,

Ecofeminism begins with awareness of the beauty (or “moral value”) of the natural world, and the human tendency toward compassion and caring. From this awareness, ecofeminism aims not only to understand and criticize oppressive divisions, but also to revive, craft, and draw attention to alternatives. The real power and promise of ecofeminism
therefore lies not in its critique, but in what it discloses about possibilities within, beneath, and beyond domination (pp. 6-7).

Different feminist traditions actually have different viewpoints regarding violence, especially in the context of world politics. Feminist care ethics suggests women’s responsibility to care for others transcend boundaries of states and nation (Hutchings, 2007). Feminists who adopt this stance also espouse pacifism, rejecting all forms of violence regardless of the reasoning behind the act. For these feminists, values related to care ethics are relevant in all contexts. The opposition of violence by care feminists is primarily due to the argument that “any legitimization of the use of violence in politics perpetuates masculine values and legitimates the exclusion of women.” (p. 98) This position contradicts enlightenment and postcolonial feminist ethics, which believe violence (i.e. war or violent resistance) is justified under certain (limited) conditions such as humanitarian intervention and national liberation. Hutchings (2007) notes the disagreement between enlightenment and postcolonial feminist ethics, which believe largely because those in the first two groups see pacifism as another way of perpetuating women’s lack of presence or agency in the political realm. On the other hand, Hutchings notes that, from a care feminist standpoint, violence contradicts feminists’ aims.

It should also be noted that, though considered by many to be noble in cause, ecofeminism is not immune from criticisms. Besides being linked to notions of essentialism, criticism towards ecofeminism may also be due to its tie to deep ecology. As opposed to “shallow ecology” which is more human centered, “deep ecology” is nature centered whereby nature is viewed as having its own intrinsic value (Tong, 2009). According to Tong, critics of deep ecology argue that simply being in existence does not
necessarily mean something has intrinsic value. Furthermore, Tong notes that, although the critics may agree that nature has value independent from humans, “they do not agree with the view that the earth’s interests are equal to or even more important than ours” (p. 242).

In spite of criticisms, ecofeminism is an area that is wide-ranging, and has much to contribute in the study on protest rhetoric. This study hopes to participate in the conversation while enhancing existing scholarship on protest rhetoric by examining ecofeminist movements from various socio-cultural backgrounds. As I elaborate more later, the project will examine artifacts showing the rhetoric of ecofeminists, namely women of the Chipko, Green Belt Movement, and Julia Butterfly Hill. While Julia Butterfly Hill and the women of the Chipko as well as the Green Belt Movement may not have declared themselves ecofeminists, their actions and speech may be considered examples of ecofeminist thought. In the proposed study, I will discuss how the artifacts relating to these women function rhetorically in the context of environmental activism. To help make sense of the large amount of artifacts and the women’s rhetorical strategies--and to specifically contribute to comparative rhetoric and a study of non-Western, non-violent movements—I will draw upon Lloyd Bitzer’s (1968) theory of the Rhetorical Situation as my main theoretical framework.

Method: Rhetorical Analysis and Bitzer’s Rhetorical Situation. Humans use symbols to communicate (Kuypers, 2009; Foss, 2004; Griffin, 1969). Some examples of these symbols (something we use to represent something else) include spoken and written words, art, dance, clothing, and one’s body. In rhetorical criticism, scholars assume words, visuals, and actions are used as symbols to communicate and/or persuade.
Additionally, “When we critique instances of rhetoric…we are allowing ourselves to take a closer, critical, look at how rhetoric operates to persuade and influence us…it is a humanizing activity…it explores and highlights qualities that make us human” (Kuypers, 2009, p.13). Because of its humanistic dimension, rhetorical criticism may be considered an art. By “art,” I mean that criticism does not follow a scientific method to generate knowledge. It is not concerned with how a critic distances him/herself from the object of analysis. The critic is permitted—even encouraged—to include his/her own political convictions throughout the process of criticism.

At the same time, good criticism is not just about flaunting one’s personal opinion. Certain norms are to be followed to create knowledge that is relevant or applicable for others to understand. What is highly sought after are supportive arguments and appropriate justification. In other words, there is a systematic way of evaluating a text (a “text” can be in spoken, written, and visual form). Foss (2004) believes rhetorical criticism “enables us to become more sophisticated and discriminating in explaining, investigating, and understanding symbols and our responses to them” (p. 7). More importantly, it is important for the critic to highlight to the reader things that are not “obvious” in a rhetorical text (Black, 2009). Black contends good criticism is dependent on the critic (political convictions included):

It is not any external perspective or procedure or ideology, but only the convictions, values, and learning of the critic…That is why criticism, notwithstanding its obligation to be objective at crucial moments, is yet deeply subjective (p. 32).

Since the critic’s relationship to the text greatly influences the outcome of his/her work, it is absolutely paramount that the analysis is based on in-depth fact finding to
avoid doubtful results. Criticism as a method is important not only because it brings to light issues that would otherwise be unnoticed, criticism as a method also forces a critic to be thorough or knowledgeable and responsible in his/her writings.

As Nothstine, Blair, and Copeland (2003) assert: “The study of rhetoric considers talk and mediated discourse (including photographs, advertisements, musical compositions… and so on) to be consequential, to have effect in the world” (p.3). Nothstine, Blair, and Copeland (2003) believe valuable criticism generate action or thinking that is more responsible on the part of the audience. As noted above, criticism is not a totally subjective, free-for-all opinion. As a guide for critics, the three scholars offer four maxims or principles when doing rhetorical criticism: 1) Criticism calls for understanding and following one’s own interest--critics do not have to distance themselves from what is personally interesting to them. However, they must be able to justify why their work is worth understanding 2) Work of criticism is for an audience--when making decisions regarding subject matter and the value of their analysis, critics must remember that they are addressing an audience. They must be able to communicate their ideas in a way that the audience can understand and appreciate 3) Theory and method help shape work of criticism--critics must realize that although theory and method may help guide and keep their work in focus, theory and method can also be limiting because it may place restrictions on what is analyzed, questions asked, and ways of explaining 4) Work of criticism is fluid and is not linear--critics must remember that their early questions and goals are not fixed. The end result may not always be the same as what the critic initially planned for.
Unlike literary criticism which is concerned with the aesthetic values and truth in text, rhetorical criticism goes one step further by assessing a text’s rhetorical or persuasive effect on a particular audience (Burgchardt, 2005). This, however, does not necessarily mean that rhetorical criticism only concerns itself with the speaker or how s/he is effective at instrumental persuasion. The quality of the speech or rhetorical artifact is just as important to a critic.

To further introduce criticism, we may distinguish between traditional and “newer” approaches to this scholarly method. Traditional criticism generally refers to ways of critiquing that is influenced by classical Greco-Roman times (Hill, 2009). Some scholars such as Edwin Black consider the traditional or “neo-Aristotelian” approach to rhetorical criticism limiting because it primarily concerns itself with how a text fulfills a rhetor’s instrumental goals—how it has impact (or not) (Burgchardt, 2005). Besides looking at speaker/source, message, and audience, traditional criticism is also considered contextual because it takes into consideration a certain period in time (Hill, 2009). Hill, echoing Herbert Wichelns, concur that the traditional perspective is less concerned with aesthetics. Instead, it is more attentive to effect. According to Hill, one may identify a traditional perspective when the following five areas are incorporated into a work of criticism: 1) Recreating the context of rhetorical events – “what is the context in which the speech occurred?” 2) Constructing audiences for rhetorical events – from the traditional perspective, audience are considered “free agents” and may function as decision-makers 3) Describing the source of the message – the traditional perspective

1 Hill is not implying all traditional work follow this structure. She is merely listing the common features in most traditional work of criticism.
usually views the source as a singular person. Among the questions sometimes posed include “What was the nature of the orator’s unique personal charm? What was his education? What obstacles did the orator overcome?” 4) Analyzing the message – it is important that critics do not depend on only one source of rhetorical text. In the case of speeches for example, sometimes one source alone may not be sufficient or accurate. Additionally, traditional critiques also tend to look at Aristotelian “invention” such as logos, ethos, pathos etc. In addition to invention, other features analyzed include disposition (relating to arrangement), style (e.g. language choice), and summary (deliberative/forensic/epideictic?) 5) Evaluating the discourse – “How well were the arguments constructed? Was the message well organized? Was the style used appropriate for the specific audience?” (pp. 40–49).

Although there is a general assumption that traditional criticism is useful for historical texts, Hill (2009) claims this is merely a misconception. Traditional criticism may be applied for newer texts as well. The main concern for critics choosing traditional methods involves what Hill describes as “cookie-cutter” criticism, which is basically a result of someone using a sort of checklist during his/her analysis. Hill (2009) offers useful advice when she said, “To avoid formulaic criticism you need to learn as much about the perspective you intend to use as possible” (p. 59). Scholars who may want to use narratives for instance, should ideally peruse as many works of narrative as possible to ensure that his/her work of criticism is not uninspired.

In contrast to the traditional approach, newer trends in rhetorical criticisms have become more prevalent in the field of rhetoric, particularly in the Western context. What makes current work in rhetorical criticism unique is the use of artifacts beyond the
written or spoken text. Examples of such text/artifacts include visual images, practices of everyday life, and popular culture (Burgchardt, 2005). In addition to uniqueness, more importantly, contemporary works in rhetorical criticism

(R)eflect a strong interest in issues of race, ethnicity, class, gender sexuality, and material conditions, and view scholarship as means of bringing about social change, to correct inequalities and promote democracy. Drawing from postmodern theory, as well as critical and cultural studies, they recognize multiple, competing realities, rather than absolute truths or “metanarratives.” Finally, they address the construction of identity and how power is assigned and exercised in society. (Burgchardt, p. 601)

Scholarship influenced by critical rhetoric often concern issues related to social (in)justice and power. In relation to the above quote, McKerrow (2005) offers an interesting overview with regards to what is known as “critical rhetoric.” According to McKerrow, “critical rhetoric seeks to unmask or demystify the discourse of power” (p. 115). Furthermore, critical rhetoric 1) shares a ‘critical spirit’ that aligns with Horkheimer, Adorno, Habermas, and Foucault 2) performs a demystifying function with regards to issues related to power/knowledge 3) is not “detached and impersonal”; it is driven by a critic’s convictions for and/or against certain practices or ideologies, and 4) has consequences (McKerrow, p. 115). Reacting to McKerrow, Ono and Sloop (1992) are of the opinion that, in addition to being self-reflective, a critic should also call attention to his or her own beliefs. This reasoning is in part due to the fact that “the critic works within constraints…the critic must not pretend that the critical practice is separate from its cultural context. Critics must see their work in situ – related to the circumstance, situation, and history of the artifact and its world” (Ono & Sloop, 1992, p. 50).
The above statement leads me to my next point regarding rhetorical criticism--understanding our world/context increases the effectiveness of our communication.

Critics who practice rhetorical criticism help add or build on rhetorical theories (Foss, 2004). These theories in turn help improve existing research and “improve our practice of communication” (Foss, p. 8). Parrish (2005) speaks of the importance of knowing our world or our context. Since critics are concerned with interpreting speeches or rhetorical texts, the critic cannot offer a comprehensive evaluation until s/he has “learned a great about the occasion which called it forth, the speaker’s relation to the occasion, the resources available to him [or her], and the climate of opinion and current of events amidst which [she or] he operated” (p. 37). Parrish elaborates his point by emphasizing the importance of understanding the audience, the speaker’s background (e.g. character and education), and contemporary events and conditions. Critics need to know what information is relevant, not just interesting. All these elements help make a work of criticism more meaningful.

For Parrish, rhetoric is not limited to the studying of instrumental effects. The focus is more on the quality of a rhetorical act. The quality of a work of criticism is naturally dependent upon the critic him/herself. It is not enough to know speeches or artifacts. Preferably, a critic must have good general knowledge in “history, politics, literature, and all the liberal studies” since the speeches one studies “may range through all the fields of human knowledge, they may be rich in allusions to persons and events, at the critic must be able to follow all the workings of the orator’s mind” (Parrish, 2005, p. 39). Critiquing a text must include a deep understanding of the situation where the
rhetorical act took place. This leads me to my next point relating to Bitzer’s Rhetorical Situation.

Lloyd Bitzer’s (1968) theory on what constitutes a Rhetorical Situation will be used as the main theoretical framework in this study. In his essay, Bitzer describes the Rhetorical Situation as a condition where the characteristics around a rhetorical text help rhetoricians determine whether the text is forceful or inadequate. Bitzer’s theory consists of three components – exigence, audience, and constraints. Exigence, according to Bitzer is a state of imperfection, which must be addressed urgently via discourse. Discourse introduced into the situation would modify the exigence either partially or completely. Modification or change, must be positive. Situations where change via discourse is not possible (e.g. death), are not considered exigent. An example of exigence would be the rapid pace of climate change that effects all people regardless of race, class, and region. This situation requires urgent attention where discourse may play a role in changing the mindset of individuals and/or policy makers.

Audience, according to Bitzer consist of individuals who are not only free to be influenced by discourse, but also those who are capable of playing the role of moderator or change. Here, Bitzer makes a distinction between a rhetorical audience and a scientific or poetic audience. For Bitzer, although scientific and poetic works engage the mind of an audience, these works do not necessarily fashion their audiences as agents of change.

Lastly, the third component of a rhetorical situation is known as constraints, referring to “persons, events, objects, and relations which are parts of the situation because they have the power to constrain decision and action needed to modify the exigence. (S)ources of constraint include beliefs, attitudes [...] motives and the like”
(Bitzer, 1968, p. 8). Occasionally, an orator’s own personal characteristics and style may serve as a constraint. Borrowing from Aristotle, Bitzer classifies the constraints into two categories 1) “artistic proofs” (originating from the rhetor), and 2) “inartistic proofs” (originating from the situation and/or the audience). An example of “artistic proofs” would be an orator who comes from a position of privilege that finds it a challenge to relate to an audience that is from a marginalized population. An example of “inartistic proofs” would be an audience that refuses to cooperate or listen to the orator.

Although Bitzer is highly regarded by many, his viewpoint is not free from criticisms. Vatz (1999) and Biesecker (1999) are two of his main opponents. The main critiques of Bitzer’s theory have to do with his central claim that it is a given situation that produces rhetoric. Bitzer claims, for a situation to qualify as an act of rhetoric, three conditions need to exist (exigence, audience, and constraints). By placing emphasis on the situation, the rhetor and the rhetorical activity become secondary. In other words, the situation is the precondition of a given rhetorical activity. Discourse only becomes rhetorical if or when it responds to a situation. Bitzer (1968) contends:

It is clear that situations are not always accompanied by discourse. Nor should we assume that a rhetorical address gives existence to the situation; on the contrary, it is the situation which calls the discourse into existence (p.2).

An example of a situation leading to a rhetorical activity would be the recent Arab Spring, which began in Tunisia as a response to an oppressive government. In this particular situation, an oppressed society may be considered the exigency, the people of the nation may be considered the audience, and abusive authority or a government that is not willing to cooperate with its people may be seen as the main constraint.
Vatz (1999) believes the opposite to be true. For Vatz, it is rhetoric that leads to, or creates a situation. If I am reading Vatz correctly, this would indicate that some situations are more rhetorical than others. Take for example, news coverage of a protest. One news outlet (e.g. CNN) may choose to relay the story in a different manner in comparison to another news outlet (e.g. Al-Jazeera). If CNN chooses to feature the same story repeatedly throughout the day, while Al-Jazeera only allocates a small segment for the same story, the same story may differ in its “rhetorical value” depending on which station an audience chooses to view. Different ways of evaluating the situation in turn create different views on what constitutes an exigency. If we were to follow Vatz’s standpoint, a rhetor can be seen as having more agency since s/he is not restricted by a given situation. Vatz asserts:

(We) learn of facts and events through someone’s communicating them to us. This involves a two-part process. First, there is a choice of events to communicate. The world is not a plot of discrete events. The world is a scene of inexhaustible events which all compete to impinge…The facts or events communicated to us are choices, by our sources of information…Any rhetor is involved in this sifting and choosing, whether it be the newspaper editor choosing front-page stories versus comic-page stories or the speaker highlighting facts about a person in a eulogy. (p.228)

To my understanding, Biesecker’s (1999) viewpoint completely differs from Bitzer and Vatz, in the sense that she views the situation as a process whereby the rhetor and audience (or subjects), and message are not fixed entities; nor, fully existent prior to the situation. Instead, these three elements are fluid or moving “parts” that interact with each other. One element does not necessarily have to exist prior to the other—so, a situation does not produce rhetoric (or vice versa). Biesecker applies Derrida in her writing and does not see rhetorical activity as something that is “clear cut” or linear.
Simply put, it is not about one thing “causing” another, it is about all elements working or reacting at the same time. For instance, an audience is not just persuaded (i.e. by a rhetor); the audience can also be the one doing the persuading. Biesecker (1999) writes:

(T)he deconstruction of the subject opens up possibilities for the field of Rhetoric by enabling us to read the rhetorical situation as an event structured not by the logic of influence but by the logic of articulation. If the subject is shifting and unstable (constituted in and by the play of difference), then the rhetorical event may be seen as an incident that produces and reproduces the identities of subjects and constructs and reconstructs linkages between them. (pp. 242-243)

Although I can understand the different viewpoints coming from Bitzer (1968), Vatz (1999), and Biesecker (1999), I find myself leaning more towards Bitzer since I, too, subscribe to the notion that a situation possesses its own meaning, irrespective of a rhetor’s acknowledgement (e.g. humans are suffering in many places on the globe, whether we discuss or acknowledge the event or not). By giving due attention to a specific phenomenon or happening, the situation then becomes rhetorical. It is with this viewpoint that I attempt to examine the three case studies in this dissertation. Although I may incur criticism from the likes of Wang (2004) and McKerrow (2002) - scholars who are opposed to using Western rhetorical terms to study non-Western rhetoric— I am of the opinion that Bitzer’s theory on what constitutes a rhetorical situation will provide a stable framework that will allow me to compare the case studies that are situated in different situations/cultures. In my opinion, the definition of exigence, audience, and constraints are broad enough to be applied to different cultures. For me, the only characteristic that is “Western” about the Rhetorical Situation is the scholar behind it. Bitzer’s framework is ideal because it will allow me to draw distinctions with regard to specific situations so as to avoid generalization or universality. Furthermore, by including Alcoff and standpoint
theory into the conversation, it is hoped that any inclination towards a one-sided perspective may be avoided. I realize some scholars may argue that Bitzer’s theory is Western because of the assumption regarding audience (one that is influenced by discourse to make change on a situation). This may be seen to be dependent on a democratic context (i.e. democracy allows the proliferation of protest rhetoric). From my standpoint, a democratic context does not determine the agency of an audience. For instance, Scott’s (1990) case study which looked into “hidden transcripts” as a way of protest and Sharp’s (1996) views on “people power” does not regard democracy as a prerequisite in any act of protest. In other words, an audience is capable of being persuaded, and making change even in a society where democracy is not the norm. In the next section, I will include some sample texts that will be analyzed for the study.

Sample texts

Stewart, Smith, and Denton (2007) contend Social movement organizations are often confused with social movements. The National Organization for Women (NOW), the American Indian Movement (AIM), People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), and White Aryan Resistance (WAR) are organizations within social movements; they are not themselves social movements. Each is one organization striving for equality for women, Native-American rights and dignity, humane treatment of wild and domestic animals, and preservation of a way of life and the so-called Aryan race. (p. 6)

Based on this definition, it may be summarized that the case studies in this dissertation are organizations or individuals who represent the environmental/ecofeminist movements. They are not movements on their own (furthermore, Julia Butterfly Hill does not “belong” to a particular social movement group/organization, as I consider in the
dissertation). I chose the three particular case studies for this project because they offer diversity in reference to the movement/individual’s impact on the environmental movement, their context/social location, and culture i.e. Western and non-Western.

To illustrate some of the features or characteristics of non-Western and Western versions of ecofeminism, this study will evaluate both written as well as visual text. Since the women in this study did not depend on just one particular mode of delivery, artifacts will range from public statements and works of poetry, to clips of documentary film. Preference is given to texts that offer a first person account. This is in line with my use of standpoint theory and Alcoff’s (1991) take on speaking for others. The following section offers a brief overview of the sample texts that will be used in the project.

**The Chipko Movement**

As a pledge to protect the forest, a group of women resort to embracing trees to prevent them from being felled. The women of the Chipko utilize their bodies as shields for the trees and the forest, a primary source of their livelihood. Although these women do not declare themselves “ecofeminists,” their actions, commitment, and ethics serve as an exemplar of what ecofeminism stands for.

The Chipko is also known as “Hug the Trees” movement. It is a movement primarily made up of peasant women who believed strongly in Ghandi’s non-violent philosophy. For these women, tree hugging was a form of passive resistance, as well as a strategic move they used to save their forest from irresponsible logging (Mellor, 1997). The movement’s belief in non-violence as a means to protest was very appealing to the masses, as evident by its spread to Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Bihar, and Vindhyas (areas located up north, south, west, east, and central India, respectively),
according to Mallick (2002). The movement does not just hold a historical significance. The Chipko movement is a compelling example of how a movement can be effective without involving violent or hostile actions.

*As Women See It* will be analyzed as an artifact to represent the Chipko movement’s rhetorical acts. It is a 1983 documentary film by Deepa Dhanraj. The English-speaking narrator translates the women’s voices prevalent throughout the film. These voices speak from first hand experiences. The film does not highlight a particular eloquent orator to speak on behalf of the movement. Scenes from the film show women performing back-breaking work while they spoke about the injustice they faced in their village. Villagers were shown marching and singing to express their distaste with the contractors who were destroying their forest and livelihood. For many of the women involved in the demonstrations/marching, they had nothing to lose. Irrespective of whether they were sent to prison or left to walk free, their bodies remained persistent and forceful. They marked themselves as a rhetorical instrument to oppose the contractors and authorities in the felling of the trees. The women of the Chipko did not just limit their own bodies as instruments of protest. Alternately, the activists constructed an effigy as a symbol of the contractors they wished to expel from the forest (as seen in the picture below).
In the words of one of the activists,

Whenever someone in the village is possessed by a bad spirit, we exorcise him by beating the bad spirit out of him. The contractors have possessed our forests so we made an effigy of them and chased them away.

For the Chipko protestors, opposing human-centered worldviews is not a matter of contention since humans are seen as being dependent on nature (for livelihood). Therefore, one is not seen as superior over the other. For the Chipko, putting their bodies at risk for the forest goes beyond saving nature. It was also a tactic to save themselves. The Chipko would concur with other deep ecologists in recognizing that nature has value in itself. What makes the Chipko’s performance even more intriguing is the fact that their bodies make powerful arguments not only because they move beyond speech, but beyond language. One does not need to know the native language to understand the message performed via the movement’s march, their music, and the effigy that they expelled.

With respect to Sharp’s (in Gorsevski, 2004) prerequisite to what non-violent rhetoric entails, the Chipko movement meets at least three out of the six categories of non-violent rhetoric by 1) engaging in symbolic public acts through the display of an effigy to symbolize their adversary 2) incorporating performances and music to signify a powerful yet peaceful voice of opposition, and 3) leading processions to make visible their solidarity and their discontent, while drawing attention to alternative ways of performing activism.
The Green Belt Movement

Nations that have been under colonial rule often find their spiritual and cultural values compromised. Kenya is no exception. The country’s indigenous system, such as those related to borders and self-governance, were also dismissed or purposely erased in the process of colonization. Kenya has been free from the British since 1963. Yet, it still faces many challenges in terms of development. Of course, colonialism is not the only root cause for the country’s misfortune. Corruption, lack of education, and irresponsible deforestation has also contributed greatly to the people’s declining quality of life. Even the country’s elites cannot be depended upon to solve Kenya’s community problems.

Wangari Maathai (2004), founder of the Green Belt Movement, believed that

The less exposed a rural population is to modern lifestyles and values, the more they appreciate and expect a high sense of moral justice and fair play…the greatest damage done to Africa has been by the highly educated elite, who are exposed to modern lifestyles and values and who have not adopted a culture of honesty and accountability to the people they lead. (p. 83)

Maathai formed the Green Belt Movement in response to the environmental devastation she saw in her country. For instance, in some regions of the country, women had to walk for miles just to get firewood since trees were becoming in short supply in areas where they lived. Hunger was on the rise and people had to opt for food that required less cooking, which meant that nutritious food was also becoming less common. Maathai’s tree planting project aimed to help citizens in rural areas to meet their needs since the trees serve as an affordable source of wood fuel, building, and fencing. At the same time, tree planting helped conserve soil. However, the movement is more than environmental in its cause. Soon after its inception, it also came to represent democracy
and peace in the country due to its call to eliminate corruption in government. More than just tree planting, the Green Belt Movement also seeks to empower women, improve the country’s natural environment, and overcome corruption among the powerful and the decision makers. My inclusion of the Green Belt Movement in this project will relate the ways in which Maathai’s persistence and rhetoric helped make the movement a success, particularly in light of other ecofeminist movements across the globe; and the unique rhetorical situation in which it emerged.

An academic turned activist, Wangari Maathai was the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004. Maathai was also the first woman from East Africa to obtain a doctoral degree and chair a department at the University of Nairobi. Although Maathai initially faced criticisms and mockery because of her decision to enlist villagers instead of trained foresters into her tree planting movement, Maathai was successful in proving her skeptics wrong. Maathai’s reasoning was quite simple, yet ingenious. Maathai once asserted, “If you want to save the environment you should protect the people first, because human beings are part of biological diversity. And if we can’t protect our own species, what’s the point of protecting tree species?” (in Anbarasan, 1999, p.46). Maathai’s journey was not an easy one. She went through verbal abuse, beatings, put behind bars, and even banned from leaving her country. Due to her persistence and strength, Maathai achieved great success with the Green Belt Movement. In a culture where women are required to remain dependent, submissive, and no better than their husbands, Maathai proved that women are just as capable of being empowered, if not more. Wangari Maathai founded the Green Belt Movement in 1977. The movement is,
A grassroots Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) that focuses on environment conservation and development. It does this mainly through a nationwide grassroots tree-planting campaign that is its core activity. Unlike many other organizations in Africa, it is not a branch of a foreign NGO but an indigenous initiative, registered and headquarters in Nairobi. It is wholly managed by Kenyans and deliberately prefers to rely on local capacity, knowledge, wisdom and expertise where appropriate. Although it has members in both urban and rural areas, most members are in the rural areas, and a very large majority of them are women. (Maathai, 2004, p. 6)

During her lifetime (she died of cancer in 2011), Maathai wrote numerous books on the Green Belt Movement. Additionally, the movement/organization also has its own official website at http://www.greenbeltmovement.org/. This website offers a rich collection of literature, photos, and videos on Maathai and the organization. The following is an excerpt taken from the Green Belt Movement website, intended to demonstrate the qualitative depth of Maathai’s rhetoric:

I placed my faith in the rural women of Kenya from the very beginning, and they have been key to the success of the Green Belt Movement. Through this very hands-on method of growing and planting trees, women have seen that they have real choices about whether they are going to sustain and restore the environment or destroy it. In the process of education that takes place when someone joins the Green Belt Movement, women have become aware that planting trees or fighting to save forests from being chopped down is part of a larger mission to create a society that respects democracy, decency, adherence to the rule of law, human rights, and the rights of women. Women also take on leadership roles, running nurseries, working with foresters, planning and implementing community-based projects for water harvesting and food security. All of these experiences contribute to their developing more confidence in themselves and more power over the direction of their lives. (Maathai, n.d)

The titles for Maathai’s books include *Replenishing the Earth*, *The Challenge of Africa*, *Unbowed*, and *The Green Belt Movement*. For this particular project, I will draw upon Maathai’s speeches, interviews, and segments from her books as rhetorical texts of analysis. To the best of my knowledge, few studies have looked at Maathai’s writing as a
rhetorical text, although the Green Belt Movement has been active since the 1970s, and despite Maathai’s 2004 Noble Peace Prize award. Her rhetoric, as the Chipko movement, is ripe for analysis.

**Julia Butterfly Hill**

Julia Butterfly Hill is the young woman who sat in a thousand-year-old tree named “Luna” for 738 days. While some people may deem her actions radical, Hill does not identify herself as such, nor does she associate herself with the group that first introduced her to Luna. When asked whether she was an Earth First!er, Hill (2000) professed, “How can I consider myself an Earth First!er when they didn’t want me around in the first place? How can I consider myself a member of this group when I didn’t find out until the second time I was up here that this was an Earth First! tree-sit?” (p. 85). During and after the tree-sitting endeavor, Hill had many opportunities to write and speak to a wide range of people. In addition to a number of books, she also maintains a couple of websites and a Facebook page.

Having spent 738 days of her life living 180 feet high, in a 1000-year-old tree gave Julia Butterfly Hill a new perspective. Hill’s brave act was in defense of not only an ancient tree, but also a reaction against corporate recklessness. As the daughter of a preacher, Hill traveled on the road with her family as a child. Her upbringing and childhood experience served her well. Her exposure to wilderness at such a young age gave her great appreciation for all things created by what she refers to as the “Universal Spirit.”

In the opening of her book, *The Legacy of Luna*, Hill narrates the story of the people who lived in a tiny town called Stafford (California’s Humboldt Country), whose
homes were ruined from a nearby mudslide caused by excessive logging. The massive slide miraculously killed no one. However, it did leave many people homeless and devastated. Pacific Lumber Company/Maxxam Corporation, the culprits behind the irresponsible logging, refused to change their ways. Clear cutting continued, endangering precious wildlife in the Redwoods, while leaving the people of Stafford vulnerable to future mudslides that would ultimately destroy their homes. As a result of this, a group of environmental activists decided to take stern action. Julia Butterfly Hill was one of the many individuals that decided to take matters into their own hands. The tree-sitting experience was deemed as a last resort due to the failures in part of the consumers, companies, and the government.

Hill did not set out wanting to live on a six by eight foot platform, situated 180 feet high up in a tree for so long. What started off as a matter of weeks, soon turned to months. A few months eventually turned to years. Her struggle was not an easy one. However, Hill was fortunate to have had an outstanding support crew (including steel workers and other environmentalists) that helped ensure her safety and well-being were looked after during her long ordeal. Responses from the public varied from disgust to admiration. First labeled as crazy and selfish, Hill was eventually labeled brave and heroic. Days and nights went by with much struggle, fear, and self-doubt. This, however, was overcome with the strength that Hill found in the ancient tree. Hill described Luna as her “best friend.” Luna was her savior, she possessed a “womb” that Hill found comfort in.

After countless hours of activist work coupled with media frenzy, the Luna Preservation Agreement and Deed of Covenant was finally signed. This meant that the
related parties (Pacific Lumber/Maxxam Corporation) would have to be more responsible and accountable in their logging practices. The joy and success unfortunately did not last. About a year after Hill’s descent, someone tried to bring Luna down by cutting the tree two thirds of the way. Though environmentalists managed to save the tree by using giant braces to keep it standing, Hill was emotionally wounded by the attempt to bring her friend down. In the following poem, Hill expresses the feelings she struggled with soon after she heard of the attack on Luna.

Image depicting Julia Butterfly Hill with Luna after the attempt to bring down the ancient tree (photo by Shaun Walker/OtterMedia, obtained from http://www.circleoflife.org/luna_poetry.php)

*Untitled*

I heard today...
Luna's been cut.
Two-thirds and maybe more.

Someone in their rage,
in their anger,
in their frustration struck out at Luna wanting to hurt Her...
wanting to hurt me
the way they must be hurting inside.

43
See... 
what we do to the Earth 
we do to each other. 
And how we treat the Earth 
is reflected in how we treat each other.

The pain I feel right now that threatens to rip me apart 
is the pain I feel every time I see an Ancient Elder cut... 
the pain I feel every time another species goes extinct... 
the pain I feel every time someone yells at a child... 
the pain I feel every time another woman dies of breast cancer caused by all the legal pollutants in her food, her planet, her life...
The pain I feel every time I think of Leonard Peltier locked inside our prisons of disrespect and disconnect. 
On and on and on the pain in our world grows bigger and erupts. 
Ricocheting bullets school yards and halls. 
Chainsaws to sacred beings. 
When do we begin to look at where this DIS-EASE begins? 
In the disconnection from the sacred... 
In the disconnection from the heart.

The person who ripped metal into Luna's flesh 
is just as ripped apart inside as Luna now is, as I now am, as is the world.

May the tears that pour out from the depths of my soul cleanse the sadness of any who would wish to react in rage. 
The person who so viciously attacked Luna has enough anger for the world. 
May we love ever more 
May we motivate ourselves to committed love in Action 
May we motivate ourselves to live the life we wish to see in the world. 
May we be the transformation we wish to see in the world. 
From the inside out... 
From the roots branching upwards... 
From the heart to thought to word to action. 
Through life’s trials and hardships we can arise beautiful and free.

Sunday, November 26, 2000~ julia butterfly hill
In the year 2000, Hill published a national bestseller entitled *The Legacy of Luna: The Story of a Tree, a Woman, and the Struggle to Save the Redwoods*. The book was a compelling account of her experience and a record of her feelings on what life was like living up high on a platform, overlooking a forest that was under assault. Hill’s book and work of poetry will be among the artifacts that will be examined as a means to gain greater insight into her standpoint and rhetorical situation. Other artifacts I will examine are press accounts and images of Hill as featured in the media.

**Outline of Dissertation Chapters**

This study will consist of five chapters. The first chapter will speak of comparative and non-violent rhetoric while highlighting ecofeminist individuals/movements in the West and non-Western nations. The second, third, and fourth chapter will be comparable in terms of format (following Bitzer’s 1968 framework of what constitutes a rhetorical situation), each covering the case studies presented here. However, as described earlier, each may highlight different types of artifacts (e.g. website, books, etc.) to illustrate the women’s diverse standpoints. The final chapter will combine and discuss the three case studies to illustrate whether the women’s rhetorical responses were “fitting.” Additionally, their personal standpoints and rhetorical strategies will be compared to see how their tactics contribute towards the larger discussion on social movement rhetoric.

**Discussion/Conclusion**

In terms of the material that will be used in my analysis, both contextual/historical sources as well as the texts themselves will be considered. This, I feel would be the best way to demonstrate the exigence, audience, and constraints in the three case studies. At
the same time, by focusing on texts that derive from a first person standpoint, I hope to be able to avoid being “irresponsible” and generalizing in my analysis. By looking at three different situations, I hope to be able to make a fair comparison with regards to non-violence in each of the case studies. Additionally, I would also like to look into the cultural status of the women involved and how this played a role in their activism.

Finally, I would like to end with a personal note. Venturing into this project will be more than a “partial requirement” for me. As a non-Western woman of color, I feel compelled to contribute to existing scholarship by highlighting the protest rhetoric of women in less privileged societies. While I am not downplaying the rhetoric of eco/feminists in the West, I feel that by bringing non-Western (eco/feminist) rhetoric to the forefront, students of rhetoric (from the West and non-West alike), may perhaps be able to appreciate any similarities and celebrate the uniqueness that we humans possess. Ultimately, it is hoped that this project will also be of use for future conversations on comparative and non-violent rhetoric.
Chapter 2: The Chipko Movement

As the maharajah’s axemen approached the first tree marked for felling in the heavily wooded district of Rajasthan, in India’s Himalayan foothills, Amrita Devi wrapped herself around its trunk. The inhabitants, adherents of the Bishnois religious sect, held trees as sacred. Each child, for example, had a special tree to talk to and hug. But the maharajah of Jodhpur, wishing to build himself a new palace, had dispatched a crew to chop down trees to fire his lime kiln. The axemen ignored Amrita Devi’s pleas to spare the forest. As she clung to the tree, crying “A chopped head is cheaper than a felled tree!” the axe came down. After she had crumpled to the group, her three daughters each in turn took her place defending the trees. All were killed. Then, persons from forty-nine surrounding communities responded to the villagers’ call for help. Facing a major confrontation, the axemen warned the villagers that resistance would mean death for them also. They continued to hug the trees, refusing to yield. By day’s end over three hundred and fifty women and men had been slaughtered. The maharajah, on learning why the tree cutting had been progressing so slowly, had a change of heart. He abandoned the palace building project, ordered a halt to the cutting of trees, and went to the scene of the violence to apologize to the villagers. He promised that never again would their trees be cut.

(Breton, 1998, pp.3-4)

Introduction to the Chipko Movement

The above narrative relates the first recorded Chipko protest that took place in 1730 in a Bishnoi village near Jodhpur. According to the narrative, a woman by the name of Amrita Devi led a group of three hundred and fifty men, women, and children to protect the trees in their village from being felled for the Maharaja’s new palace (Breton, 1998; Linkenbach, 2007). Although the loggers in the incident did not spare the men and women, the story of Amrita Devi and her followers has been kept alive among those in the movement. According to Breton (1998), the Bishnois (or “Vishnoi”) have been
honing Amrita Devi annually since 1978 by organizing a fair to recognize her sacrifice, and the men and women who died in the massacre. A tower now stands on the site where it is believed Amrita Devi was killed (Breton, 1998). At the same time, over three hundred and fifty trees have been planted to represent each victim that died alongside their leader.

Due to its long history, the Chipko movement is said to be “one of the most celebrated environmental movements in the world” (Bandyopadhyay, 1999, p. 881). Besides its history, one may ask, what made the movement intriguing? As I argue in this chapter, the Chipko’s unique practice of non-violent resistance and ecofeminist ethics in its context had profound effects. I begin with a brief outline of the geographical and historical context of the Chipko movement. This will be followed with details of the movement’s rhetorical situation (exigence, audience, constraints), and the women’s cultural status. Lastly, I will consider how *Satyagraha* (Ghandi’s non-violent approach) influenced the movement’s method, in response to the people’s situation. Specifically, I illustrate how the concept of *Satyagraha* and religion or spirituality contributes to our understanding of non-violent rhetoric and non-Western social movements. Later, I also describe why I identify the movement’s non-violent rhetoric as *religious-feminist non-violence*.

**Background: The Region, History, and Rhetorical Situation**

In a country of 29 states, Uttar Pradesh is considered the largest and most populated. It is also one of the poorest states in India, where the rate of literacy is among the lowest (Fredell, 1996). North of Uttar Pradesh, bordering Nepal and China, is
Uttarakhand, which is made up of Garhwal and Kumaun. In these two regions, 8 smaller regional areas are located (please see map below).

Uttarakhand is clearly defined geographically from the rest of Uttar Pradesh because of its mountain areas and foothills. These Himalayan Mountains differ from the rest of the state, which is mostly made up of plains (Fredell, 1996). Uttarakhand is also exceptionally unique in terms of the people’s relationship to their natural surrounding.

Since ancient civilization, the forests in India have been a great source for human survival (Linkenbach, 2007). The peoples’ livelihood depended on food, fuel, fodder, and water from the forest. However, colonialism changed the people’s condition dramatically.
Under colonial rule and in the name of “development,” the forests became a mere commodity to foreigners, while sidelining the local people’s needs. Of course, colonialism alone cannot be blamed since the exploitation of natural resources continued even after India gained independence in 1947. As Linkenbach maintains, the forests of India are not only of value economically. More importantly, they are of great value in terms of religious and social life.

Most Indians are religious in nature. Every person is considered a “moving temple” where the light of God is said to dwell, and serving others is considered serving God (Chidananda, 1987). This is especially true in Uttarakhand, an area in the Himalayas, which is referred to as Devabhumi (a place sanctified by Gods) and Tapobhumi (a sacred land of penance and austerities) (Chidananda, 1987). According to Chidananda, those who seek to increase their devotion to God visit the area to reside in caves and forests to meditate. The natural beauty of the area triggered many to consider the region “A land of God” that makes its visitors or residents “God-like.” The people’s deep connection to their natural surrounding was one of the main contributors of the Chipko movement’s exigency.

Exigence

An exigence, according to Bitzer (1968), is a state of imperfection that must be responded to urgently via discourse. In the case of the Chipko movement, we will see later how the participants not only addressed their exigency via verbal discourse, but also via non-verbal protests such as the act of marching and tree-hugging. The exigence for the Chipko movement may be summarized best as: irresponsible development that
sacrificed the natural environment and local ways of life. This is especially apparent in the 1970s. As I mentioned earlier, in the Chipko movement, the people’s view of their natural resources goes beyond the material. The forest is in fact viewed as sacred or holy. For instance, when speaking of the Himalayas, Chidananda (1987) insists:

   The Ganges is not merely water. The Himalayas is not a heap of rocks, stones and soil. Lord Krishna Himself declared: “I am the Ganges along the rivers; I am the Himalayas among the immovable things.” The Ganges and the Himalayas are God Himself. Any harm done to them is like harm done to God. Have you ever thought over what crimes we are committing? To serve the Himalayas is to serve God. Whatever good we do to the Himalayas is worship offered to God. (p. 3)

The above excerpt further confirms the spiritual relationship that the people had to their natural surroundings. More than spiritual, the natural surrounding is seen as divine—so sacred that it is worthy of worship and held in high esteem. The statement, “I am the Ganges along the rivers; I am the Himalayas among the immovable things” serves as evidence that the natural environment is not only seen as a divine creation, but was considered a symbol or embodiment of all that is God-like. As stated by Baker (1987), the preservation of trees and wildlife is considered one of the 29 tenets of the Vishnoi (or “Bishnoi”) faith. Trees or nature are not only divine, they are considered “family” (brothers and sisters). It is no wonder then, the people of the region feel that it is their responsibility to care for those who are a part of their family. The word “serve” (mentioned twice in the excerpt), also illustrates how protecting the forest is seen as both a responsibility and an act of religious devotion.

   Since trees are also seen as family and guardians (e.g., protecting villages from attack of sand storms), and providers (of food, water, and fodder), it seems only natural that the people who live in such an environment will want to protect what is most valued
to them. “The love for trees grows from the realization of our dependence upon them. Trees can survive without man, but man cannot survive without trees” (Baker, 1987, p. 7). Given this cultural and religious backdrop, the Chipko movement’s philosophy revolved around three main beliefs – 1) There is life in all creation, whether it be human beings, animals, plants, rivers, or mountains; 2) All life is a testimony of a higher power. All life deserves respect; and 3) Austerity is held in high regard since a desire for excessive materialism interferes with one’s path to self-realization and true happiness (Bahuguna, 1987, p. 9). Developers’ threats to the forest—which was rich in significance for its spiritual value, as well as its source for livelihood—sparked the peoples’ vigor to stand as shields for the trees.

It was also Amrita Devi’s protest in 1730 that first signaled an important milestone for the people who relied heavily on their forest for livelihood. According to Weber (1989), the story of Amrita Devi has been retold countless times to gain support from villagers. It is used as evidence that even “simple” villagers can make a difference. Early history of the movement may have begun in the 1700s, but it is the modern turn in the Chipko movement that is most widely written about. Linkenbach (2007) reported the first (modern) Chipko activities occurred between April to May 1973 as a response to the government’s (Forest Department) unjust treatment to the villagers of Mandal, an area near Gopeshwar. The villagers were denied a small number of ash trees for agricultural use, yet at the same time, a large number of trees were granted to a sporting goods company (the Simon Company). An activist by the name of Chandi Prasad Bhatt helped gather the villagers to protest against the company (Fredell, 1996). The villagers decided
to act by hugging the trees to prevent them from being felled. The protest was seen as monumental because the loggers eventually chose to withdraw. Though the company was allocated a different section of the forest, the villagers continued their act of protest, forcing the loggers to withdraw.

![Chipko members demonstrating the Chipko embrace](obtained from Shiva & Bandyopadhyay, 1986)

After the first modern Chipko protest, the movement continued to grow in nearby areas. In Tehri, another activist by the name of Sunderlal Bahuguna (along with other villagers) continued the protest against forest exploitation by hugging more trees (Fredell, 1996). One of the most well-known protests took place in March 1974, in the Raini (or “Rení”) forest (Linkenbach, 2007). While the village men were absent and occupied with other matters relating to forest management and officials, the loggers took the opportunity to head for the forest where they were spotted and reported to Gaura Devi, the head of a women’s organization in the village. Without delay, Gaura Devi marched with the other
women of the village to oppose the loggers. Gaura Devi’s words have long been used as evidence of ecological consciousness among the women in the movement:

Brothers, this forest is our maika (mother’s house). We get medical plants and vegetables from it. Do not cut the forest! If you cut the forest this hill will plunge on our village, the flood will come and the winter fields will be washed away… (Linkenbach, 2007, p. 58).

Addressing her opponents as “brothers” and referring to the forest as her maika or “mother’s house” illustrates Gaura Devi’s attempt at recreating or maintaining a relationship between her fellow humans and non-human living beings. This aligns with the Chipko’s principle that values life in all creations. Gaura Devi’s appeal to the loggers also further emphasized the exigency they were experiencing and dependency of the village folk on the forest resources.

As introduced above, the Chipko’s exigency was a result of forest exploitation and excessive development. Prior to the 1970s and before road-building began, Himalayan forests were not easily accessible to commercial loggers (Breton, 1998). However, not long after roads were built into the hillsides, logging became widespread. Insensitivity to the area’s ecosystem and local population’s needs soon led to excessive logging practices and eventually environmental disaster. Disasters in the region included massive landslides and floods that were becoming common. It was the frequent floods in mid-1970s and landslides that led to the realization of the state of exigency (Weber, 1989).

It can be said thus far, the problems of the Chipko were primarily a result of development: For the original Chipko villagers, “developing” the Maharaja’s palace created an urgent problem. Later, logging intended to develop the country, whether it was
via outside (colonialism) or local (Indian government) influence. Since the Industrial Revolution in Europe, development is defined in terms of material wealth. Changes in people’s mentality also meant that nature is seen as 1) “(A) commodity over which human beings have a birth right of exploitation;” and 2) “Society is only for human beings” (Bahuguna, 1987, p.15). As noted by Weber (1989),

The goals of modernization being pursued by the Indian Government include provision of better standards of living in the Western sense: more paper, more furniture, more building materials and more exports. These by definition, mean more wood (p. 120).

Unfortunately, along with a shift toward Western material standards, development has been linked to “growing global poverty, wealth disparity, and environmental decay” (Fredell, 1996, p. 7). From Bahuguna’s (a Chipko activist) (1987) perspective, ever since foreign exchange became more important than God (in less affluent nations), people have not been reluctant to risk the fertility of their land to gain material mileage. This in turn, contributed to the fast-paced destruction of the forest. As opposed to development rooted in economic gains, development that is more sustainable should have been aimed.

“Sustainable development” according to Fredell, prioritizes current needs without harming future generations and the environment.

When asked about the state of the local forest, Bahuguna claimed,

We have to preserve natural forest first. Wherever clear felling has been done, they should re-stock it with the indigenous species. Otherwise they will plant those areas with eucalyptus or teak and the area will be turned into a timber mine. A forest is something else. It’s a community of living things in which big trees, small ones, bushes, birds, insects, wild animals etc. are present. Unfortunately, by turning forests into timber mines, the balance has been lost. People say that the rainfall has been very erratic. They are not getting leafy fertilizers on which their crop depended. The importance of forests is not only for the coastal region, but for the whole of South India because our rivers, unlike Himalayan ones, aren’t
snow-fed. Whatever water you get in your river is from dense forests. Forests are the mothers of rivers. They are also oxygen banks and factories of fertile soil. For oxygen, soil and water, you have to maintain the forests. (quoted in Padre, 1992, pp. 11-12).

Bahuguna’s appeal demonstrated the irreplaceable value of the forests. The forests are not just places to gain resources; they are communities of living things. One affected area will cause devastation to other areas due to their interdependence. To gain basic necessities such as oxygen, soil, and water, caring for the forests must not be undervalued. Further, while material goods may be replaced once used, natural resources cannot necessarily be restored to its original state once destroyed.

From the Chipko women’s standpoint, development was detrimental to not only the environment, but also to the people. Development resulted in male migration from the hill areas to the plains in search of better job opportunities leaving the women in charge of the households (Jain, 1984). The women tended to the family while working on agriculture and turned to the forest for supplementary sources such as food, fodder, water, and medicinal plants. Food grains such as wheat and paddy could only sustain a family of five for three to six months. As such, the forest played a major role in their survival. In agriculture, women did most of the planting, weeding, and harvesting. Men prepared the soil since it was considered a taboo for women to operate the plough. Even transporting the crops was considered a woman’s responsibility.

Particularly, one village woman (whose name was not mentioned) described the negative impact of the construction of roads. In the woman’s words,

Now outsiders are coming to sell their fancy ware to us who had never used these bright things before. The people in hill areas are now being exploited by outsiders and many people are being displaced from their land by outsiders…Come with
me to the local market and see for yourself that it is monopolised by outsiders who sell things which we have no use for except making us lazy and good for nothing. (quoted in Jain, 1984, p. 1790)

Development contributed to the displacement of local ways of life. Outside goods monopolized the market, which created in the locals the desire to acquire new material things and led them to develop undesirable attitudes and behavior.

Because of the felling of trees in the name of “development,” the daily activities and prospects for survival became complicated for the women. They had to walk long distances and over heavy slopes with heavy loads on their backs to obtain their needs. This caused some to fall to their death. In addition, irresponsible logging weakened the soil and thus, endangered their homes and source of water. The development of communication and roads also made it easier for men to leave the hills for the plains (Weber, 1989). This, too, was another source of exigency since the women were not given a choice to do the same. Instead they were forced to stay in the hills to care for the children while they were burdened with back-breaking work and managing the household.

Weber (1989) relates how the women struggled with their increasing workload while the men worked in the plains. Their overwhelming workload meant very little time was left to perform domestic chores such as cooking, cleaning, and caring for their young children. Some had to resort to locking their children in rooms or tying the children to cots while the mothers left their home to work far from their village. The situation was dire. Weber mentioned an instance wherein a child was burnt to death in the family’s hearth due to neglect, and a case wherein a group of seven village women resorted to
mass suicide (by jumping into a river) because “they could no longer bear the misery of their lives” (p. 99). In the following section, I describe in detail the situation’s audience.

Audience

For Bitzer (1968), an audience consists of those who are free or have the capacity of making (positive) change. In this situation, I contend the primary audiences were the villagers (individuals of varying age, gender, and social status), contractors and government agencies. These are the parties that had the capacity to eliminate, or at the very least lessen, the exigency in the situation, thus making a positive change. The villagers in the situation needed to realize that although they were “simple peasants,” they had the capacity to rise and defend their forests— their source of livelihood and religious connections. At the same time, while development was desired, it should not have been at the risk of their natural resources and ways of life. For the men, it was important that they saw the dire living conditions and were not blinded by excessive development or growth that is only concerned with economic gains. For the contractors and government agencies, there was a need to understand the local population’s needs and that exploitation of forest reserves had negative consequences to the country’s natural environment and the direct link it had to the people’s homes and survival. It was also important for government agencies to not give into the notion of “development” as defined in the West. Basically, all audiences needed to be convinced of the Ghandian view of development, which saw it in terms of a better quality of life that did not necessarily include material wealth. Ghandi believed there ought to be a limit to luxury where “plain living” should be encouraged to enable “high thinking” (Weber, 1989).
Before the government ban on tree felling in 1980, the Chipko movement did not escape constraints. Their constraints fell under “artistic proofs” (from the rhetor) as well as “inartistic proofs” (from the audience) (Bitzer 1968). In other words, the constraints can be said to originate from inside the Chipko (the women’s cultural status and some of the men’s attitudes were constraints in the situation). Outside of the Chipko, the government/forest agencies and the contractors’ actions/attitudes were the constraints. In relation to the constraints, Weber (1989) claims, two-thirds of the 3.2 million hectares planted between the years of 1951 and 1980 were for industrial use and not for the supply of firewood (something that, as already established, was highly needed by the locals). Moreover, forest agencies privileged the contractors and sidelined the locals in decision-making (Linkenbach, 2007).

Given these constraints, it makes sense that the Chipko movement was founded on economic injustice and human survival (Bandyopadhyay, 1999). Furthermore, given that the village men were largely absent due to development (as they left to gain employment in urban areas due to the shortage of permanent jobs in the villages), it seems only natural that the Chipko movement emerged, in part, as a women’s movement. The women did not have much choice but to rise up and protect the trees.

Although members of the movement never claimed it was a women’s movement, it is hard to ignore the ecofeminist traits that are evident in the Chipko (e.g. elements of spirituality and women’s extensive participation). Therefore, “(T)hough the visible leaders of the (Chipko) movement are men, the strength of the movement lies in the
support from women” (Shiva & Bandyopadhyay, 1986, p.133). Sunderlal Bahuguna\(^2\) (a leading Chipko activist/messenger) confirmed this when he explained:

> In our area, women are the backbone of our social and economic life. Because of soil erosion, the menfolk had to come down (to the plain) for their livelihood and women were left behind. The whole burden of managing the family fell on their shoulders. They had to collect fodder, firewood, everything…If you involve women in some movement, then they influence the whole family…If you see family life, it is women or our mothers who sacrifice more. They wake up early in the morning at 4 and go to bed at 10 or 11. Sacrifice is the first qualification for a soldier of the non-violent movement. (in Padre, 1992, pp. 6-7)

Bahuguna’s comment was an affirmation of the significance of the women’s role in the Chipko movement. The women’s role in the community was not limited to their day-to-day activities (as caretakers of their homes and families). Instead, the women also served as front liners in the struggle. Bahuguna’s statement confirmed the women’s positionality as managers of their families. Their standpoint served as a source of strength, personality traits that helped them be good participants in a social movement.

Although Bahuguna may have looked upon the womenfolk with high regard, the same cannot be said about the society in general: So while women’s standpoint served to positively enable them as rhetors, it also served as an obstacle that the women needed to overcome rhetorically to stop the felling of trees. In Jain (1984), the women’s domain in the Chipko was said to be mostly domestic. Matters relating to leadership, authority, and government were considered men’s domain. Sources of control for women were limited.

\(^2\) According to Breton (1998), the Chipko movement did not have a formal organizational structure or headquarters. Therefore, it did not also have an elected leader or official members. The movement operates mainly by word of mouth and is connected “horizontally”, not “vertically” (p. 6). Though it operates without any formal structures, a few names such as Sunderlal Bahuguna, Chandi Prasad Bhatt, and Gaura Devi often arise when one locates material on the movement. Still, Bahuguna sees himself more as a messenger, and not so much as a leader.
In Jain’s words, “Women[,] by granting or withholding food and sometimes also sexual accessibility use[d] their rights as sources of control” (p. 1790). Traditional practices such as dowry, patrilocality (i.e. moving in the husband’s home or community after marriage), and patrilineality (i.e. inheritance privileging the male line) played a role in the lesser status of women in the society (Fredell, 1996). There was clearly a separation of political and domestic spheres. Men were discouraged from tending to domestic chores such as caring for children and farming because it was considered “women’s work.” Jain (1984) noted, the men who were more involved in village councils or village bodies tend to look upon government officials with high opinion and apprehension. Whereas, for the women, no such concern was relevant to them since their interaction with government officials were very rare, if any. The women simply knew that the felling of trees had a negative impact on their family’s well-being. On the contrary, the men were certain that the government was powerful and was not to be questioned. This was especially true for the educated few. Jain claimed, “(M)en belonging to educated and progressive class simply follow[ed] the pattern in taking the Western model of development as an ideal” (p. 1793).

Essentially, the culture and environment at the time encouraged women to focus on livelihood and family life, while the men focused on public power/governance and authority. The success of the movement forced men to reconsider the women’s social status, allowing more space for their involvement in forest issues and decision-making. This was especially apparent after the successful Reni (or “Raini”) protest when more women who were rarely involved in issues of governance were asked to attend meetings, which they did in large numbers (Jain, 1984).
Though it may have been a constraint with negative implications, the women’s social status and domestic burden may have also contributed to their drive or motivation to protest. In some instances, joining the protest was actually recognized as “time off from work.” Restricted involvement in village bodies and limited exposure to government officials also meant the women were fearless. In Linkenbach (2007), the women confessed,

We were happy in those days, when we could go to the demonstrations in Raini. We thought we’d get two hours off. We did not basically think we’d go to save the forest, or make an end to the cutting of trees. In our innocence, we thought we would get some rest [from work]. (p. 66)

Such a standpoint can also be seen in *As Women See It* (Hoffmann & Dhanraj, 1983), when one of the protestors proudly shared her fourteen-day ordeal in prison by narrating,

I tell you, it was the happiest time of my life. There was no housework to do, not even dishes to wash. Even in your mother’s house you had to at least wash dishes. Cooked food arrived. We ate and slept. I tell you, the only place I was really happy was in jail.

The women’s involvement in the movement did not just help in maintaining the community’s survival, it also helped shed the women’s social status in a new light where their roles as members of society moved beyond the domestic domain. Though not totally free from traditional constraints, at the very least, the women’s involvement marked a period where their voices or sense of agency was more visible in the community.

In the following section, I discuss the influence of *Satyagraha* in the movement’s non-violent response to the situation. I also draw upon some of the movement’s songs and poetry as evidence of the Chipko’s non-violent methods.
Satyagraha and the Chipko’s non-violent response to the situation

Bahuguna (1987) believed, for sustainable development to be realized, a fusion between the “mysticism of the East and science and technology of the West” should be sought after (p.18). Bahuguna mentioned one tenet of Chipko movement’s philosophy known as ayajyan (noble objective), which requires the “working of the head” (knowledge) to be in sync with one’s hands (action) and heart (devotion) (pp.18-19). It was not enough for humans to be advanced in scientific knowledge. Instead, this strength should also be followed with the awareness for others’ needs. Bahuguna (1987) insists, “(T)here is no dearth of dedicated people, who are working in this direction; but their energies are being wasted in theoretical work […] Chipko did nothing of these… they reached to (people’s) hearts through footmarches” (p. 19).

The Chipko movement reached a significant milestone in 1980 when a government ban (under Prime Minister Indira Ghandi) was placed on the felling of trees in all parts of Uttarakhand. This also led to the recognition of two Chipko figures: Sunderlal Bahuguna (who aimed to establish the human-nature relationship), and Chandi Prasad Bhatt (who aimed to encourage the people’s participation in forest conservation, to help them gain more share of forest products). Between the two figures, Bahuguna gained more popularity both locally and abroad for his spiritual approach to ecology. This was especially apparent when he undertook a 4870 km (3026 mile) padayatra (long footmarch) from Kashmir to Kohima in the 1980s, followed by another padayatra overseas (Switzerland); as well as numerous protests, fastings, writings, speeches, and petitions (Linkenbach, 2007).
While these leaders’ highly visible responses served the Chipko movement well, we may also view the significance of non-violent responses through more grassroots rhetoric of women in the villages. In the documentary As Women See It (Hoffmann & Dhanraj, 1983), early scenes show a group of women singing while they walked through the forest to collect firewood and fodder. It is obvious from the scenes that, while the women were highly committed to the welfare of their families, they were also tired and frustrated with their quality of life. They seemed resentful with the fact that the men were not more involved in their daily tasks. Singing while working seemed to be common practice among the women. It served as a source of solidarity, and as a method of activism. In Weber (1989), for example, folksongs are said to be one of the most effective method for educating the masses.

Chipko activist, Ghanshyam Sailani, wrote one of the well-known folksongs. It speaks of the relationship between humans and nature:

*I have been standing for ages,*
*I wish to live for you.*
*Do not chop me, I am yours.*
*I wish to give you something in future.*
*I am milk and water for you.*
*I am thick shade and showers.*
*I manufacture soil and manure.*
*I wish to give you foodgrains.*
*Some of my kind bear fruits.*
*They ripen for you.*
*I wish to ripen with sweetness.*
*I wish to bow down for you.*
*I am the pleasant season.*
*I am spring, I am rains.*
*I am with Earth and life.*
*I am everything for you.*
*Do not cut me, I have life.*
*I feel pain, so my name is tree.*
Rolling of logs will create landslides.
Remember. I stand on slopes and below is the village.
Where we were destroyed.
Dust is flying there.
The hill tops have become barren.
All the water sources have been dried up.
Do not cut us, save us.
Plant us, decorate the Earth.
What is ours, everything is ours.
Leave something for posterity.
Such is the Chipko movement.
(in Weber, 1989, p. 80)

What makes the above folksong compelling is the standpoint whereby it was written in such a way to illustrate how or what a tree may be saying if it had the ability to speak.

The human-nature connection the folksong expressed further enhances the belief that the Chipko is ecological in origin, and not just economical. In other words, development in the Chipko situation posed ecological, economical, and spiritual threats to the people of the village. The folksong may have begun as an appeal (citing how the tree serves as a provider). However, towards the end, the folksong seems more of a warning that destruction will follow if its life (the tree) is put to an end.

In some ways, the song’s positioning of the tree aligns with the position of women participants in the Chipko. On one hand, the women may be seen as care-givers of their family. Yet, if treated wrongly or if threatened, the women can also rise-up as protestors against the government and loggers.

Villagers in the 1974 Raini protest (headed by Gaura Devi, leader of a women’s organization) reportedly moved to the forest while they played drums, shout slogans and sang songs such as the one below written by the women in Lata:
Hey, didi [elder sister], hey bhulli [younger sister], let us all unite and with our own efforts let us save our jungle. The maldars [rich people] and thekedars [contractors] want to make money. Our cows and our cattle, they go to the jungle And with them our young people.
Hey, Rishi Maharaj [a local form of address to a god or supreme being], come and show yourself with your real power.
Chase far away the 600 trucks heavily loaded, and along with them drive back the strangers.
Hey, Lata Bhagvati [addressing the goddess of Lata (Nanda Devi)], come and show yourself with your real power, chase far away the malders [rich people] and thekedars [contractors].
When our jungle is saved, only then will we return [to our villages].

The above song seems particularly striking because of its reference to Rishi Maharaj and the goddess Nanda Devi (names referring to supreme beings). While the previous folksong can be read as coming from the standpoint of a non-human being, this folksong appears to call out to or summon a non-human, a divine entity to be more specific. “Hey, didi [elder sister], hey bhulli [younger sister], let us all unite and with our own efforts let us save our jungle.” This line specifically calls out to the women to display solidarity, encouraging them to stand up as agents of change. Calling out to a goddess also extended the notion of sisterhood and a strong bond with nature. Again, this illustrates the movement’s focus on relations and care, whether it was between humans or non-humans.

In the movement’s protests, songs did not exist on their own. Marches or processions were often accompanied music, as evident in one of the scenes in As Women See It. One particular scene featured villagers marching and singing to express their outrage for the contractors. These protestors did not restrict their instruments of protests to their own bodies. Alternately, they constructed an effigy and threw it over a bridge (as seen below), symbolizing the contractors they wished to expel.
In the words of one of the activists, “Whenever someone in the village is possessed by a bad spirit, we exorcise him by beating the bad spirit out of him. The contractors have possessed our forests so we made an effigy of them and chased them away.”

What made the above action interesting was the protestors’ choice to avoid physical violence (unto the loggers) by creating an effigy to communicate their fury. The reference to “bad spirits” and “exorcism” implies the people’s dependence on divine intervention to solve their misfortune. At the same time however, the villagers did not depend on prayers alone. Instead, the choice to stage a protest also served as evidence of the people’s collective agency.

Besides music and marches or processions, it is evident from literature on the Chipko that Padayatras (journey by foot, especially one that is long in distance) are common in the Chipko movement. According to Weber (1989) padayatras helped deliver the Chipko movement to remote areas. Weber claims, “the aim (of padayatras) is to communicate with the villagers in the villages visited and more so to raise the political awareness in the country” (p. 87). Further, padayatras not only served as means of
communicating face to face with the people, it was also means of recruiting new members.

**Concluding Thoughts: Non-Violence and Eco-Feminism**

Tree-hugging, singing, use of effigy, processions and *padayatras* are non-violent. These methods align with *satyagraha*, a branch of thought from Ghandi that was supported by members of the Chipko movement. We may view *satyagraha* as another constraint enabling the rhetorical responses to the Chipko exigency; here, I treat it more as a conceptual framework from which to make sense of the Chipko’s rhetoric (because it is so significant to the research questions of this dissertation). One of the aims of *satyagraha* (according to Weber, 1989) is to convert the opponent into a friend. It is an approach that must be used *with* someone, instead of *against*. For example, Weber reports that in many instances, the activists not only managed to put a stop to tree felling, they also took the time to explain to the contractors the reasoning behind the protest. The protesters informed the contractors the importance of the trees for survival and “remind[ed] them that they too were (generally) mountain people who would experience the same problems…if they did not protect the forests” (Weber, 1989, p. 80). Essentially, *satyagraha* places the importance of the interrelationship between “faith in the goodness of [people], truth, non-violence, self-suffering, the relationship of the means to the end, a rejection of coercion, and fearlessness…” (Weber, 1989, p. 83). *Satyagraha* also influenced the Chipko members’ acts of fasting and negotiating (in addition to the singing, processions, *padayatras*, and hugging of trees).
I would like to add that discussions on non-violent rhetoric in the context of the Chipko movement would not be complete without offering more details on Mahatma Ghandi. For many, Ghandi is seen as a pioneer in the fight against racism, colonialism, the caste system, economic exploitation, religious and ethnic supremacy, and degradation of women (King, 1999). Additionally, Ghandi was a great supporter of popular democratic participation and non-violent methods of social and political transformations (King, 1999).

In addition to satyagraha, another well-known concept identified with Ghandi is ahimsa. As a believer of Jainism (a sect of Hinduism), Ghandi practiced “total renunciation of violence in word, thought and deed” (King, 1999, p. 13). For Ghandi, it is acceptable to despise the sin, but not the one who commits it. The influence of ahimsa is evident in the Chipko movement where protests against tree felling did not include any physical acts of violence against the contractors. King defines ahimsa as “noninjury, nonviolence, harmlessness; renunciation of the will to kill and the intention to harm; abstention from any hostile thought, word or act; noncoercion” (p. 527). While some may argue that the use of the protestors’ bodies can be considered a form of coercion, I do not think it is “coercion” in the Ghandian sense. As long as the protestors abstained from hostile action, words, and thought (e.g. by participating in processions and singing folksongs), then the use of their bodies, I believe, may still stay true to what Ghandi means by satyagraha. Further, the protestor’s choice to engage in dialogue (with the contractors) also serves as evidence that they were not only doing the persuading, but were also open to be persuaded.
Prior to conceiving the term *satyagraha*, Ghandi used “passive resistance” to describe his method of observing *ahimsa*. This phrase, however, did not sit well with Ghandi because the term implied a concept that was submissive or unassertive. To resolve this issue, Ghandi actually offered a small reward for anyone who could suggest a single term that would best describe his nonviolent approach. The winner came up with *sadagraha*, which translates to “firmness in good conduct.” Ghandi later revised *sadagraha* to *satyagraha*, meaning “holding onto Truth,” “firmness in Truth,” “a relentless search for Truth,” and “Truth force” (King, 1999; Ghandi 2001). This new terminology was seen as a method of transforming *ahimsa* (nonviolence) into action. King proclaims, while *ahimsa* constituted the basis of Ghandi’s search for Truth, *satyagraha* was the tool to which to achieve it. Ghandi’s *satyagraha* combined principled non-violence with shrewd techniques of resistance to subjugation (p. 15). The way I see it, Ghandi’s attention to “truth” aligns with Bitzer’s views on the rhetorical situation because what is viewed as Truth exists independently of human perception (i.e. just because one is not aware of a given situation, does not mean that situation does not exist or is not “true”).

Although some would understandably equate *satyagraha* with civil disobedience, Ghandi (2001) maintained that civil disobedience and non-cooperation are *branches* of *satyagraha*. King (1999) defines *civil disobedience* as “deliberate, peaceful and open violations of statutes, laws, orders, decrees, or military or police directives, accompanied by willingness to accept all of the penalties” (p. 527). For Ghandi (2001),
Complete civil disobedience is a state of peaceful rebellion...It is certainly more dangerous than an armed rebellion. For it can never be put down if the civil resisters are prepared to face extreme hardships (p. 172).

While civil disobedience relates to the refusal to obey human/state law (Ghandi, 2001), the concept of satyagraha relates to a deeper, spiritual meaning. According to Ghandi, belief in God or a “higher being” is a prerequisite to satyagraha. How one defines God is not relevant. What is more important is that one believes in a Supreme Power. Ghandi insists, “To bear all kinds of tortures without a murmur of resentment is impossible for a human being without the strength that comes from God” (p. 364). It is useful to view Ghandi’s conceptualization of non-violence through its relationships to ecofeminism and pragmatic nonviolence.

In the previous chapter, I discussed how Murphy (1996) defined non-violence and categorized it into three genres. Murphy listed Christian non-violence, pragmatic non-violence, and feminist non-violence as three different types of non-violence. In the Chipko situation, I would classify the movement’s rhetoric as religious-feminist non-violence. This rationale is due to the protestors’ religious connection to their natural environment (e.g. all of nature as an embodiment of Lord Krishna). The large participation of women in the movement also plays a role in this justification. To speak in more detail about feminist non-violence, I turn to Petra Kelly.

Petra Kelly (1947-1992) was a German activist, ecofeminist and an admirer of Ghandi. In her 1994 book, Thinking Green!, Kelly (one of the founders of the German Green Party) spoke in great detail about non-violence as an alternative. Kelly incorporated Ghandi’s ahimsa and satyagraha as foundations for some of her ideas.
Comparable to Ghandi, Kelly’s lens for seeing the world was also spiritual in nature. Kelly held the opinion that, grassroots politics is superior in comparison to politics from the top that is almost always corrupt. She believed “change in politics at the top will come only when there is enough pressure from below” (p. 38). Though spiritual in her rhetoric, Kelly did not speak of God or organized religions. Kelly shared some of her fellow Greens’ criticisms on religion. Kelly maintained, “The long work of bringing harmony to the Earth requires a holistic vision based on mature values and deep intuitions… A few new ideas are not enough. We need an entirely new way of thinking” (p. 40). Kelly’s perspective on feminism is compelling because she did not preach the notion of women being “better.” Instead, Kelly saw both women and men as valuable beings, having their own place in society. Kelly (1994) believed, “Overturning patriarchy does not mean replacing men’s dominance with women’s dominance. That would merely maintain the patriarchal pattern of dominance…” (p. 12). While Kelly may be considered one prime example of an ecofeminist figure, Karen Warren may also be considered an influential scholar in ecofeminism.

According to Karen Warren (2000), there is no consensus among ecofeminists with regard to the role of spirituality in ecofeminist politics. Some ecofeminists see spirituality (not necessarily religion) as a necessity, while others claim that ecofeminist spirituality does more harm than good because it strengthens gender stereotypes (i.e. women being “closer to nature”). For Kelly (1994) and Warren (2000), spirituality is an important element in ecofeminism. Warren (2000) cites the Chipko movement of India
and the Women of all Red Nations (WARN)\(^3\) as two examples of ecofeminist movements that gain their “strength” from spiritual traditions such as Ghandi’s satyagraha. In *Ecofeminist Philosophy* (2000), Warren explores the possibilities of ecofeminist spiritualities as a means to overcome systems of oppression. When defining spirituality, Warren contends that it involves the process of letting go the familiar and leaving one’s comfort zone. One must be willing to accept the fact that humans have limitations and also realize that there are some qualities that can easily be obtained, such as knowledge, reading, and self-assertion. At the same time however, there are some qualities that cannot be easily achieved such as faith, humility, and courage. These are qualities that one must consciously show effort for. Warren explains why she believes those in the West do not easily accept the concept of spirituality. She says in her book,

> Since the understanding of spirituality, faith, and grace turns on a distinction between what humans can and cannot successfully will, it is no surprise that Western philosophy often places spirituality outside the province of Western philosophy. Discussions of spirituality are placed outside Western philosophy not only because they are not amenable to philosophical proof; they are placed outside also because such claims challenge the rationalist foundation of much of Western philosophy. Talk of spirituality as a fundamental part of “human nature” is at odds with these rationalist assumptions. (p. 198)

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\(^3\) Women of All Red Nations (WARN) is an American organization founded in 1974. Though developed primarily by a group of women supporting the American Indian Movement (AIM), this organization consists of both men and women. Since only the men were being punished for their acts of protest, the women (perceived to be “powerless”) took that as an opportunity to further strengthen their cause. While the group initially focused on issues that affect the American Indian women, their fight eventually included issues affecting Indian men too. Besides issues that affected the women and men directly, the group also aimed to improve education opportunities, health care, and reproductive rights, while eliminating violence against women, stereotyping/exploiting American Indians. The group also sought to protect the people’s land and natural environment (from *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*. Retrieved November 23, 2010).
Based on Kelly (1994) and Warren’s (2000) perspective, one may summarize that the notion of spirituality is something that must be consciously sought after. It does not appear in an individual without effort. In the case of the Chipko, the protestors’ state of spirituality or piety was clearly obtained via their focus on non-violent means. The protestors’ inclusion of songs, poetry, fasting and *padayatras* were conscious efforts to increase their spiritual commitment/connections to both humans and non-humans (nature)—particularly as Westernized notions of development threatened to reduce the value of the forest to economics.

While Kelly (1994) and Warren (2000) mentioned issues of spirituality in their writing, Sharp’s (1996) standpoint is more pragmatic in approach. Professor Gene Sharp, founder of the Albert Einstein Institution in Cambridge, Massachusetts, is known for his work on promoting strategic non-violent action to overcome conflicts around the globe. In his 1996 essay, Sharp clearly outlines concepts related to non-violent struggles. Sharp contends that freedom involves democratic involvement in “decision-making, personal and civil liberties and respect for others. It is always imperfectly achieved” (p. 234). For Sharp, maintaining this condition is not an easy task since there are always unexpected hazards that may arise, even in the best of democracies. *Peace*, for Sharp, is “the absence of or the ending of military hostilities between contending states or other fighting units…A society at peace will be imperfect and usually will encompass internal conflicts and efforts to improve the society while preserving its meritorious qualities” (p. 234).

Sharp maintains that defense is crucial to protect the people from any form of violation. At the same time, he raises critical questions:
(1) How can defense be achieved without contributing to massive slaughters and violating religious and humane barriers against massive violence?

(2) How can attacks be prevented and defeated and peace be restored which is compatible with justice and freedom?
(p. 234)

Sharp (1996) believes that “people power” and non-violent actions can be just as powerful or even more powerful and effective compared to violent means. He claims that when a struggle achieves favorable outcome, it is usually the result of:

[O]ne or a combination of four mechanisms: conversion (changing the opponents’ opinion of beliefs); accommodation (compromising to gain part of one’s objectives); nonviolent coercion (forcing the opponents to grant the demands), or disintegration (causing the opponents system or government to fall completely apart) (p. 236).

Though he makes no mention of a spiritual perspective, Sharp’s four mechanisms align with Ghandi’s practice of non-violence, especially in reference to its aim to “convert” the opponent. However, for Sharp, if conversion is not possible, “non-violent coercion” is an option. Non-violent coercion does not require the adversary to be converted. Instead, the change in power-status (as a result of protests for instance) may “force” the adversary to change their position. In Weber (1989), it is noted that “moral appeal to the heart or conscience is… more effective than an appeal based on threat or bodily pain…While the satyagrahi tries to convert, he must himself also remain open to persuasion” (p. 82). This is the ideal situation.

Non-violent rhetorical resistance has many advantages, and yet it does not exist without criticisms. Among the many identified are (1) non-violent rhetoric is only for the “saintly” (Gorsevski, 2004); (2) nonviolent rhetoric interrupts and dampens more radical forms of resistance (which are often mistakenly seen as more “effective”) (Palmer-Nehta,
2009); and (3) nonviolent rhetoric is only applicable in certain cultures (King, 1999, p. 177). In the coming chapters, I will attempt to challenge these assumptions. Further, discussions on the spiritual or religious aspects of non-violent rhetoric show the importance of studying the essence or origin of non-violent struggle, and not just the act. This, too, I will address more in the coming chapters.

The Chipko movement began as a result of conflicts over forest resources. Although colonial impact played a role in the inception of the movement, the people’s growing needs, and the government’s ignorance of the population’s dire living conditions, resulted in conflict and struggles. Despite (or due to) their non-violent approach and strong religious principles, the women of the Chipko (along with the men and children), managed to overcome their hardship. The movement’s fitting response to the situation serves as a fine example for other activists or movements struggling for the same justice. In the following chapters and analysis, I will continue to examine the issue of women’s cultural status, and the notion of non-violence in the context of the Green Belt Movement and the activist Julia Butterfly Hill.
Chapter 3: The Green Belt Movement

I placed my faith in the rural women of Kenya from the very beginning, and they have been key to the success of the Green Belt Movement. Through this very hands-on method of growing and planting trees, women have seen that they have real choices about whether they are going to sustain and restore the environment or destroy it. In the process of education that takes place when someone joins the Green Belt Movement, women have become aware that planting trees or fighting to save forests from being chopped down is part of a larger mission to create a society that respects democracy, decency, adherence to the rule of law, human rights, and the rights of women. Women also take on leadership roles, running nurseries, working with foresters, planning and implementing community-based projects for water harvesting and food security. All of these experiences contribute to their developing more confidence in themselves and more power over the direction of their lives. (Maathai, n.d)

Introduction to Wangari Maathai and the Green Belt Movement

The above epigraph was obtained from the official website of the Green Belt Movement, a grassroots Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) in Kenya. What is the significance of this movement? Who was the person responsible behind its initiation? Wangari Maathai, the leading figure behind the Green Belt Movement was a woman of great merit. Not only did she found the Green Belt Movement, Maathai was also the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize, and the first woman from East Africa to obtain a doctoral degree (and chair a department at the University of Nairobi). In addition to these achievements, Wangari Mattahi was also a notable political activist, environmentalist, and single mother of three.
Indeed, Maathai was a woman of many strengths. However, she was most noted as the leading figure behind the Green Belt Movement. Wangari Maathai passed away of cancer in 2011. Though she is no longer present physically, her work continues to live in the movement that she founded. Despite being famous for their focus on tree planting, the Green Belt Movement is more than an environmental NGO; it is a movement that employs non-violent means, specifically tree planting, to address environmental exigencies and political oppression. Further, though its members are from both urban and rural areas, most participants are women from rural areas (Maathai, 2004). In a nation where the rural population is less educated, and where women are often perceived as second-class citizens, this is noteworthy.

In some ways, the history of the Green Belt Movement is comparable to the Chipko movement. Both are made up of mostly women members, both movements address an environmental exigency, both convey the objectivist materialist stance toward Bitzer’s rhetorical situation, and both movements employed non-violent rhetorical methods. What differs slightly from the Chipko is the fact that the Green Belt Movement is more “organized” in its structure, i.e. it includes a headquarters; and of course, the movement’s inception occurred at a different time than the original Chipko.

In this chapter, I begin with an overview of Wangari Maathai and the Green Belt Movement. Much like the previous chapter, I explore the rhetoric of the Green Belt

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4 The triumph of the Green Belt situation was especially noticed when Maathai was appointed a position in parliament in December 2002. In 2003, Maathai was appointed as Assistant Minister for Environment, Natural Resources and Wildlife in Kenya’s ninth parliament (The Nobel Peace Prize 2004 Wangari Maathai, n.d). This post allowed Maathai the capacity to focus on restoring the country’s forest while also working on other environmental-related issues.
Movement using Bitzer’s (1968) rhetorical situation. This will be followed with specifics about the women’s cultural status, and a discussion on non-violence in the movement. I also offer an alternative genre of non-violence that I feel is relevant to the Green Belt situation, and which has evolved from the discussion of non-violence in the Chipko Chapter. I contend that the genre of non-violent rhetoric in this particular situation is not restricted to spiritual-feminist non-violence. Rather, it may be regarded as non-violent spiritual-anarcha feminism (I will offer more details about this term in the second half of this chapter). Lastly, I will consider how the Harambee spirit influenced the movement’s activism, in response to the people’s situation. Specifically, I illustrate how Maathai’s spiritual standpoint, coupled with the Harambee spirit, contributes to our understanding of non-violent rhetoric and non-Western social movements.

**Background: Kenya, Wangari Maathai and the Green Belt’s Rhetorical Situation**

Kenya is a nation with a population of approximately 28.4 million. It is located east of Africa, with an area size of about 582,646 km². Its capital city is Nairobi. The country’s altitude ranges from sea-level to about 5,000 meters and includes plateaus, plains, highlands, lake basins, and valleys (Anbarasan, 1999; Maathai, 2004). At the time of Maathai’s (2004) writing, Kenya’s forested area was less than two percent of the country’s total land mass. The largest areas were covered with scrub, semi-desert and savanna grassland. Kenya is also made up of 42 communities. Kenya’s (and most other African countries’) borders were drawn during colonial rule from the late 19th century to early 1960s. The nation gained independence from the British in 1963. During British rule, Kenya was divided into regions to make the control of indigenous people
manageable. The regions remained the same even after Kenya gained independence (Maathai, 2004).

Prior to their independence from the British, Kenya’s indigenous system (including management of matters related to self-governance and borders) were compromised under colonial rule. Though the country gained independence in 1963, Kenya continued to face developmental challenges. Comparable to India, the country’s misfortune is not rooted solely in colonialism. Instead, corruption, lack of education, and irresponsible management of deforestation, were also to blame for the people’s suffering. While the lack of education among the population can be seen as one of the problems the country faced, the presence of the educated elite served as no guarantee to help the state of affairs. Wangari Maathai (2004) confirmed this when she insisted:

The less exposed a rural population is to modern lifestyles and values, the more they appreciate and expect a high sense of moral justice and fair play…the greatest damage done to Africa has been by the highly educated elite, who are exposed to modern lifestyles and values and have not adopted a culture of honesty and accountability to the people they lead. (p. 83, emphasis added)

Comparable to the Chipko in India, Kenya’s “development” was defined from a Western standpoint where material wealth or a luxurious lifestyle was used as a yardstick to assess the growth of the nation. “Sustainable development” took a back seat to make way for modern lifestyles that displaced local ways of life. I will provide more details on this when I touch on the topic of exigency in the situation, below.

Today, one common way rural areas are developed in Kenya is through the formation of government-registered development groups. Projects managed by these groups help raise money for projects as well as activities to strengthen ties between
members of the community. Since the majority of its members are women, these development groups are often referred to as women’s groups (Maathai, 2004). Maathai explained, unlike many organizations in Africa, the Green Belt Movement is not a branch of a foreign NGO. It is an indigenous initiative and wholly managed by locals and prefers to depend on local resources. While members include both men and women from both local and urban areas, most are women from the rural areas.

Wangari Maathai was the first woman in East Africa to earn a Masters in Biological Science (Breton, 1998). It was Maathai’s training in biology and her background as the daughter of a peasant farmer that played a role in her interest and commitment to environmental sustainability. Before Maathai left her hometown of Nyeri to pursue her studies in the United States, the people’s quality of life was considered sufficient or even comfortable—there were no slums and no starvation among the people (Breton, 1998). However, this condition changed during her six-year absence from 1960 to 1966. The grim living conditions of the people soon led to the establishment of the Green Belt Movement.

The Green Belt Movement was first incepted on World Environment Day in June 1977 with the planting of seven trees by a small group of women (Breton, 1998). One of the major goals of the Green Belt Movement was (and still is) to address issues related to the desertification of Kenyan land due to irresponsible environmental decision-making in the name of development. As a result of the reduction in natural resources, the quality of life among the people of Kenya (especially those who are less privileged) was greatly altered. Maathai’s tree planting project aimed to help citizens in rural areas to meet their
needs. At the same time, tree planting helped conserve soil. Maathai (2004) described the movement’s goals as follows: 1) to help community members establish a sustainable source of wood fuel; 2) to generate income for rural women; 3) to promote environmental consciousness among the youth; 4) to empower people at the grass roots; 5) to demonstrate the capacity of women in development; 5) to curb soil erosion; 6) to disseminate information on environment conservation; 7) to establish food security and water harvesting at the household level; 8) to promote sustainable farming methods; and 9) to promote civic education (e.g. culture, spirituality, human and environmental rights) (pp. 35-49).

Maathai was leader of the National Council of Women of Kenya (NCWK)—an umbrella organization of women’s groups (Breton, 1998). Maathai wanted to help rural women (mostly farmers) to elevate their economic and daily lives both for short-term and long-term success. Tree planting was considered the best solution because it was an affordable, practical way of providing resources for the people. Initially, the Kenyan government supported the movement and its tree planting project by providing office space. Unfortunately, this soon changed in 1989 when Maathai voiced her disagreement with (then) President Daniel arap Moi’s plan to start construction in the middle of Uhuru Park—one of the last remaining green areas in Nairobi. Among the “development” planned included a sixty-story office tower, hotels, theaters, a conference center, shopping mall, and a four-story statue of the president himself (Breton, 1998; Heyman, Polier, Tumposky, & Green, 2004). This plan would not only risk or limit the availability of a green haven for the people in nearby areas (especially those living in slums), but also
require the country to owe foreign investors $200 million, hence worsening the country’s
debt situation. The international community, which included the World Bank, withdrew
from the initial plans and did not provide the financial assistance that was sought by
President Moi. The project did not materialize. “The policy of the Moi government was
no different in terms of forestry or natural resources, from the colonials,” said
environmental activist Kamoji Wachiira (Dater & Merton, 2008).

Breton (1998) further reported that, as a result of Maathai’s resistance, the Green
Belt Movement was given twenty-four hours to vacate their office space (Maathai and
her staff had to move everything in the office into her personal residence). Maathai soon
came to the realization that her country needed more than environmental restoration. The
movement’s agenda later included human rights and democracy.

Exigence

An exigence, following Bitzer (1968), is an urgently flawed state that must be
corrected or responded to via discourse. The state of exigency in Maathai’s rhetorical
situation was clear and multifaceted. Here, I discuss how the situation’s exigence
included malnutrition, environmental decay and political oppression. Similar to the
Chipko’s situation in India, Kenya’s forests were also being destroyed to make way for
quick profits and crops such as coffee and tea. The emphasis on such crops not only
sidelined the local food harvest, it may be seen as “an inheritance of colonialism
reinforced by International Monetary Fund policies” (Lappe & Lappe, 2004, p. 30).
Although the cash crops may have helped bring in money into the country, they led to
problems such as reducing the availability of natural energy (i.e., fuel wood for cooking).
Concurrently, planting cash crops also resulted in the destruction of topsoil, leading to dirty rivers and the elimination of coastal marine life (Breton, 1998).

Initially, cash crop farming aimed to generate enough income for a family to purchase not only basic needs such as food, but also other expenses like education, clothing, and future investments. However, due to mismanagement by some government organizations, cooperatives, and local committees, farmers faced difficulty in receiving wages (some were unpaid, some underpaid, and some received payment not on a regular basis). As a result, not only did the people remain poor—the lack of unprocessed food such as sweet potatoes, yams, and other indigenous plants, made it difficult for people to feed their families with nutritious food. Many ended up changing their diet to less healthy options (e.g. carbohydrates or other food that did not require cooking due to lack of firewood). To make matters worse, sustainable agriculture such as organic farming was highly discouraged by the government because it was seen as an obstacle to the government’s moneymaking contracts with major chemical agriculture companies (Lappe & Lappe, 2004).

Individuals who promoted sustainable farming were met with threats of imprisonment (Lappe & Lappe, 2004). Maathai (quoted in Anbarasan, 1999) emphasized the state of exigency when she described how the East African environment, more broadly, was at risk. She reported,

We are very close to the Sahara desert, and experts have been warning that the desert would expand southwards like a flood if we keep on felling trees indiscriminately, since trees prevent soil erosion caused by rain and wind. By clearing remaining patches of forests we are in essence creating many micro-Sahara deserts (p. 46)
Soil erosion also resulted in dirty rivers and the destruction of coastal marine life (Breton, 1998).

It is no surprise that the state of environmental decay led to other problems in the community. Lack of nutritious food and a clean supply of water were only two of the many issues the people faced. Human rights and corruption in the government were also issues that needed to be addressed. Besides moneymaking contracts with major chemical agriculture companies (which contributed to the hostile treatment of farmers involved in sustainable farming), the government was also known to be involved with destroying (supposedly) protected forests to make way for marijuana for export. This confirmed Maathai’s belief that government misconduct is the basis of environmental decay in the country (Motavalli, 2002).

As a response to the state of exigency, Maathai proposed to the National Council of Women of Kenya (NCWK) a project that aimed to help members in the rural areas. The inexpensive tree-planting project would help them by providing wood fuel, building and fencing material, and at the same time help soil conservation (Maathai, 2004). Tree-planting was an ideal project because seeds were easily accessible from forest departments. At the same time, it met the immediate and basic needs of rural communities (Anbarasan, 1999). Tree planting differed from planting cash crops, because the latter not only sidelined a local harvest, but were also more valuable for export purposes. For Maathai, planting trees conveyed a simple message: “It suggests that at the very least you can plant a tree and improve your habitat. It increases people’s awareness that they can take control of their environment…” (quoted in Anbarasan, 1999, p. 46).
Maathai (in her interview with Anbarasan) also mentioned that since the trees were “visible,” they served as significant “ambassadors” for the movement.

Although Maathai’s idea to begin a tree-planting project was seen as an inexpensive long-term solution, members of NCWK were a little apprehensive because they felt foresters (not the people) should carry out such a project. However, since the project was the only obtainable idea at the time, the committee eventually agreed to Maathai’s plans. Maathai later came up with the idea to promote the tree-planting mission through the *Harambee* spirit. The NCWK campaign was named “Save the Land Harambee” (Maathai, 2004). I will offer more details on the *Harambee* spirit in later sections.

*Audience*

Besides the state of exigency, Maathai’s rhetorical situation also included a rhetorical audience. If we follow Bitzer (1968), an audience must be free or have the capability of making a change. In the Green Belt situation, the audience consisted primarily of the people, the leaders, as well as the movement’s own members. During the earlier years of the movement, Maathai related how seminars were organized to teach the basics of tree nursery management to women (most of the men moved to urban areas to seek formal employment). Government foresters were invited to teach nursery management and tree planting to semi-literate women. Although it was expected that the foresters would use language that was more suited for a semi-literate audience, they decided to use technical terms instead. The women deemed their approach unsatisfactory and took matters into their own hands when they decided to dismiss the professional
approach to forestry and plant trees using their own methods and common sense. After all, as Maathai (2004) expressed, “What was so difficult about applying this knowledge to tree planting? The campaign encouraged [rural women] to use their traditional skills, wisdom and plain common—-and perhaps women—sense” (p. 27).

The audience in Maathai’s rhetorical audience can be divided into two groups – the people (those who are members as well as non-members of the movement), and the leaders. The people, from Maathai’s narratives, were seen as very capable of displaying agency and resistance. The leaders, on the other hand, were a bit more challenging to grapple with. In the words of human rights activist, Ngorongo Makanga (Dater & Merton, 2008), “What the government at that particular time did not want is anybody who is trying to educate the common people.” According to Abercrombie (2011), one government official told Maathai, “If you would only plant trees, we wouldn’t bother you. But because you are talking about corruption and misgovernance, we don’t like you.” I will elaborate more on these audiences in the next section on constraints.

**Constraints**

Bitzer (1968) divides constraints into “artistic proofs” (originating from the rhetor), and “inartistic proofs” (originating from the situation and/or the audience). In Maathai’s case, the constraints she faced were both from the outside as well as inside the movement. Maathai (2004) mentioned, “It is indeed a terrible shame that it is mainly bad governance that has led to several blemishes that taint the image of Mother Africa today and consequently disempowered many of her people” (p.75). Africans are not poverty-
stricken because they are unproductive. Most of their problems are rooted in poor governance. Lack of (good) leadership and corruption are great barriers to success.

Maathai (2004) grouped her constraints into three. First, the government: for not implementing its policies, failing to attend to development and maintenance of infrastructure, introducing poor economic policies, mishandling funds, and failing to cooperate with NGOs who have been outspoken about government malpractice (officials did not want to be associated with NGOs such as the Green Belt Movement because they feared losing their jobs if found to be cooperating with those who thought differently from the ruling government). It is worth noting that political constraints did not come from the Kenyan government alone. In Motavalli (2002), Maathai spoke of the lack of funds from overseas as a result of her criticisms of the government. She claimed, “Many of the people who could support us monetarily are tied in with that government, or represent international organizations that want favors from the government” (p. 20).

According to Maathai (2004), the movement’s second constraint is the community, for thinking environmental conservation is solely the government’s responsibility. Poor education meant the community failed to see the connection between their daily problems and environmental decay. Also, some continued to live in areas where wildlife and their own livestock fed on the tree seedlings. Most community members preferred to focus on activities that met their immediate needs. There was an inability to see the effects of long-term environmental degradation. Ultimately, living in poverty also meant that some people were less concerned for the environment because they felt it did not immediately address their needs. In Maathai’s words, “People are
afraid. Their fear and their hopelessness and their ignorance make them very heavy. It takes a lot to get them to lift themselves up” (Abercrombie, 2011).

The third constraint Maathai described occurred at the Green Belt Headquarters: Support staff (mostly poor) lacked educational training, self-confidence, experience, exposure, and commitment. Although the support staff performed relatively well, professionals undervalued their contributions and did not offer deserved credit (Maathai, 2004).

Based on the summary above, one may presume that constraints in the Green Belt Movement can be addressed not just by addressing the people’s material situation, but also their ideals—in other words, the people’s ideals/ideas about what makes a nation “developed” should not be limited to their material surroundings, but should also address the issue of the people’s confidence in their own capabilities. From the constraints, we can also see that Maathai’s challenge was not limited to enlightening the less-educated, but also creating some common ground that would bring together those from the less privileged and those from the more professional or governmental groups.

Although Maathai initially faced criticisms and mockery because of her decision to enlist villagers instead of trained foresters into her tree planting movement, Maathai was successful in proving her skeptics wrong. Maathai’s reasoning was quite simple, yet ingenious. For Maathai, “If you want to save the environment you should protect the people first, because human beings are part of biological diversity. And if we can’t

5 According to Maathai (2004), many of the younger generation did not appreciate the work done or sacrifices made by the previous generation. She said, “many in my generation marginalized (the previous generation) and disregarded their achievements. This was partly as a result of colonialism, which condemned our heroes and role models and instead praised those who collaborated with them.” (p.22)
protect our own species, what’s the point of protecting tree species?” (in Anbarasan, 1999, p. 46).

Besides the constraints Maathai faced at the movement level, she also faced constraints at a personal level—but such constraints are reflective of broader forces related to the cultural status of women in the society. On a personal level, Maathai went through much resistance and abuse. Government officials and officers from the police department verbally and physically attacked Maathai, put her behind bars, and prohibited her from leaving her country (Anbarasan, 1999; Lappe & Lappe, 2004). Maathai’s involvement in the movement and her fearless attitude not only irritated the ruling government. Her husband (with whom she had three children) also eventually resented her work of activism. The fact that Maathai had a doctoral degree, and her husband a bachelor’s degree, did not help the situation. According to Breton (1998), “African culture expects women to be submissive and dependent, in no way ‘better’ than their husbands. Unable to accommodate his wife’s advanced academic achievement, Maathai’s husband filed for divorce, falsely accusing her of adultery” (p. 17). On top of the false accusation, Maathai’s husband also called her “too educated, too strong, too successful, too stubborn and too hard to control” (Abercombe, 2011).

In reality, Maathai’s mission began rather innocently: to improve the quality of life of the rural population. Unfortunately, this mission eventually led to resentment among the men in the community (including her own husband) because the eventual rise of women’s empowerment was seen as a threat to the men’s position in society. Women were required to “never dispute the judgment of men” (Breton, 1998, p. 11). Instead, the
women in the culture were expected to remain dependent, submissive, and no better than their husbands.

Government officials, too, were furious because Maathai brought a local issue to the attention of a developed country. This occurred when Maathai wrote to the British High Commission relating the problem of environmental destruction in the Third World that occurs with the full knowledge and support of the developed countries. She urged the countries not to support dictators. Maathai highlighted the injustice that continues when developed nations support these dictators. In the end, it is the poor people that would have to face the consequences (Dater & Merton, 2008). Maathai’s gesture tarnished the government’s image to the outside world, which resulted in the government’s adverse reaction. In 1992, Maathai was physically assaulted by the police during a hunger strike and hospitalized for serious injuries. Then President, Danial arap Moi, labeled Maathai a “mad woman” and a security threat to the country. Due to Maathai’s correspondence and links with other governments such as Great Britain and the United States, she was also accused of being a “puppet of foreign masters” (Motavalli, 2002). In Dater and Merton (2008), Maathai said,

They [the government] want to get personal. They want to debase your womanhood. So I said, now...don’t give me that. Just use the anatomy that matters right now. And that is from the neck up! I remember friends walking across the street so that we would not meet. And I remember some friends meeting me and not wanting to stand and talk because they did not want to be associated [with me].

Clearly, Maathai had great faith in her own people, especially the women (although some did not want to be associated with her). She was not one to bow to authorities and was not the type to wait for others to change the people’s fate. Needless to
say, Maathai was an unconventional woman of Kenya that believed a person’s agency is not dependent on gender. Much like her standpoint, Maathai’s response to the exigency was also unconventional in manner.

**Non-violent Response, Harambee, and Anarcha-feminism**

Material conditions, including deforestation, may have been the primary source of the Green Belt Movement’s exigency; but the fitting response (Bitzer, 1968) mainly originated from the non-material condition, particularly the ideas of the movement members. In Maathai’s words: “The movement started as a tree-planting campaign, but it is a little more than the planting of trees, [it is a] planting of ideas” (Dater & Merton, 2008). The women’s activism did not just respond to an immediate, objective, material exigency: Their rhetoric helped decolonize the people’s mind. This was done by helping members gain faith in their own country and people, via the popularizing of the *Harambee* spirit.

Maathai (2004) explained, *Harambee* literally means, “Let us all pull together!” in Swahili. It is widely used in Kenya to boost morale and encourage people to work together to achieve the community’s goals. Distinct from the Chipko’s *Satyagraha* approach, which focuses on the interrelationship between “faith in the goodness of [people], truth, non-violence, self-suffering […] and fearlessness…” (Weber, 1989, p. 83), the *Harambee* concept does not address the issue of self-suffering, nor does it specifically focus on non-violence. Rather, one may maintain that it is more about self-governing for the benefit of a community. It shares a similar quality to *Satyagraha* in that the *Harambee* spirit, too, believes in the goodness of others. The *Harambee* spirit,
according to Chieni (1999), “embodies the ideas of assistance, joint effort, mutual self-responsibility and community self-reliance.” According to Chieni, the Harambee concept is not a new invention. During colonial times, Kenyans opposed missionary/colonial education because they felt African culture was being undermined to make way for the colonial government’s control of education and local ways of life. In response to their discontent, the people of Kenya began to build their own (independent) schools that were managed by locals. By working together for the wider community, the people managed to be “free” in terms of education, even though they were still under colonial rule at the time.

After Kenya’s independence from the British in 1963, the philosophy of Harambee remained as a rhetorical tool to unite the people. Mzee Jomo Kenyatta (the first president of Kenya) was the first person to make the slogan popular. He reportedly said on Madaraka Day (Kenya’s Independence Day) on June 1, 1963: “We must work harder to fight our enemies, ignorance, sickness and poverty. Therefore [I] give you the call HARAMBEE. Let us all work harder together for our country Kenya” (Chieni, 1999). Before the movement was known as “The Green Belt Movement,” Maathai referred to the tree campaign as “Save the Land Harambee” to initiate favorable response from the people. She also used the term to create a common goal for citizens of various backgrounds.

In line with the Harambee spirit (that encourages collective agency), tree planting was used as the primary rhetorical method available to the activists. The movement’s tree planting project aimed to serve multiple purposes, meeting the complex exigencies and
constraints described in the previous section. Besides conserving soil, the availability of more trees also meant more sources of energy (wood fuel), and more materials for building and fencing. Soon, the movement also came to represent democracy and peace due to its aim to wipe out corruption in the government. Maathai confirmed this when she said: “Few environmentalists today are worried about the welfare of bees, butterflies and trees alone. They know that it is not possible to keep the environment pure if you have a government that does not control polluting industries and deforestation” (Anbarasan, 1999, p.46).

In addition to improving the environment and state of democracy in the nation, the movement also had one more important aim, and that was (and still is) to empower the women in the nation. According to Abercrombie (2011), Maathai would tell the women to “meet and decide what you want to do. Elect your leaders. Plant the trees only as far as you can walk. Teach the women in the next village to plant the trees. In this way, we are teaching one another to rise up and walk.” Due to her tireless efforts, the women of Kenya saw their lives in a different perspective. No longer were they overly focused on finding husbands and having children. Maathai made the women realize that they could “fight for other things [they] believed were important” (True Calling, 2004).

Maathai (2004) reported that Save the Land Harambee soon spread to other parts of Kenya with eager participation from the public. The campaign initially received support in the form of seedlings and office space from the Department of Forestry. However, the growing support from the people made the officers in the Department of Forestry resentful because of the direct contact that Maathai established with the farmers.
Foresters discouraged farmers from planting trees because the tree-planting mission was seen as an effort to discredit the authority and expertise of the forestry department. The forestry department did not try to hide their dislike for the campaign, nor were they professional in their work. For instance, after the distribution of seedlings, no one from the department verified whether the seedlings grew or survived. Maathai (2004) noted, “In a society where some of those in authority assume that they are not subject to question, especially by those ranked below them, procedures frequently get implemented inefficiently” (p. 26). Members soon started their own nurseries so that they could be self-sufficient in producing seedlings for the farmers. This act also meant less dependency on the forestry department. Additionally, movement members also organized seminars and invited government foresters to teach farmers about the basics of starting a tree nursery. Unfortunately, since the foresters insisted on using technical terms that were foreign to the semi-literate women, the sessions were not a success. This only changed when the women resorted to using their own common sense: “After all, they had for a long time successfully cultivated various crops on their farms. What was so difficult about applying this knowledge to tree planting?” (Maathai, 2004, p. 27)

The women showed resistance and collective agency by using their own techniques to start their own nurseries. For instance, broken pots were used instead of seedbeds, raised ground was used to keep the seeds safe from animals, and flowering cycles were observed to enable seed harvesting. The women also learned to distinguish weeds and seedlings so they would not mistakenly get rid of the trees. All these efforts made the foresters even more resentful. The foresters complained the women were
tarnishing their profession by simplifying the process of tree planting. Besides providing wood energy and food, seedlings that later grew into trees for the community helped provide shade, served as wind-breakers, conserved soil, and improve the beauty of the land: “To conceptualize this fast-paced activity of creating belts of trees to adorn the naked land, the name Green Belt Movement was used” (Maathai, 2004, p. 28).

By the year 1995 (since its inception in 1977), it was reported that Wangari Maathai had the support of over sixty thousand women. The women helped her in the process of reforesting and rejuvenating the land by planting over seventeen million trees (Breton, 1998). Further, instead of giving the women seeds, movement members told the women that for every tree that they planted (that survived) a small amount of money would be rewarded (about 4 cents per living tree). Maintaining their own nurseries helped ensure the women would not need to depend on others for seeds. Due to their persistence, by the year 2004, Kenya had 30 million more trees (Lappe & Lappe, 2004).

While the movement members were active in their tree-planting campaign, the verbal and protest rhetoric accompanying it was never violent in nature. One such example can be seen in the 1998 Karura Forest incident. In the documentary Taking Root (Dater & Merton, 2008), one of the scenes depicted a movement activity in Karura Forest (an area not far from the capital Nairobi). The scenes showed men cutting down trees using chain saws with open burning fire in the backdrop. Maathai narrates:

Somebody came to me and told me that [they had seen] trucks [at] Karura Forest, which was public land. [The president] had decided to give it to his political friends and cronies and supporters…so as usual we decided that we would go on a tree-planting mission to reclaim Karura Forest.
Later segments showed Maathai and her supporters facing armed guards who wanted to stop the movement members from their tree-planting mission. Maathai confronted the guards saying, “I’d like you young men to understand, we want to protect the forests because the forests are our lives.” We then see the guards starting to beat the movement members while shouting. Maathai insists, “If we’re going to (have to) shed (our own) blood for our land, we will.” Subsequent scenes show movement members marching while they carried small trees, sang songs and chanted “no more grabbing! No more grabbing!” Maathai asserted, “It became a national issue. Ordinary people, university students, everybody wanted to save the forests.” People marched and chanted: “Moi must go! Moi must go!” The protest involved people from all walks of life speaking up against the government and urging the president to step down. Eventually, after about a year of protest, all construction work in Karura Forest was brought to a stop. Ultimately, after 24 years in power, President Moi finally stepped down in 2002.

Going back to the first chapter of this study, I provided details on the different types of non-violence. Murphy (1996) offers three different types of non-violence. The first is Christian non-violence, which stems from the Golden Rule that is to “love thy neighbor as thyself.” The second type of non-violence is described as pragmatic non-violence, which originates from a humanist perspective that views violence as “impractical” because of its danger to humans and the economy. The third genre of non-violence is feminist violence which is concerned with the “self” or “self-others” relationship. Although Murphy recognizes Christian non-violence as a category of its own, I add spirituality/religious non-violence to this group so as to widen the scope of
non-violence and allow room for others who are not of the Christian faith. In reference to
the three categories, although the Green Belt Movement’s genre of non-violent rhetoric
may be perceived as pragmatic and feminist at face value, elements of spirituality were
not completely absent from the movement’s rhetoric. Walsh (2010) confirms this when
he reported that, although Maathai was educated in the Catholic faith, she (initially)
pREFERRED a pragmatic approach to help the women of Kenya with their daily needs. The
SIGNIFICANCE of spirituality to Maathai came later when she realized that the
environmental cause is more than a focus on the material. According to Walsh, Maathai
believed that humans can feel the loss when their natural environment is being destroyed.
The feeling of loss is not limited to a physical level, but also includes loss at the
psychological and spiritual levels.

When discussing the topic of religion and spirituality in the movement, Maathai
insisted:

Even though, initially, I didn’t conceive of our activism in spiritual terms, I came
to see that the values that animated our work had a spiritual component that
encouraged us to continue, even when we were vilified or ridiculed. We saw that
honesty, accountability, hard work, and so on, were very important. However, we
realized that there were four core values that underlay these other virtues. These
were: love for the environment, respect and gratitude for Earth’s resources, self-
empowerment and self-betterment, and cultivating the spirit of service and
volunteerism. I should emphasize that none of these core values belongs to one
faith tradition more than any other; indeed, someone can adhere to these values
without being particularly religious or holding onto one particular creed.
However, I believe these values are spiritual in that they foster the aspects of us
that seek more than material comfort, power, or worldly success. They are what
give our lives value and meaning, and inspire us.(in Maathai, September 9, 2010,
emphasis my own)

In a different interview with MacDonald (2005), Maathai again commented on the topic
of spirituality. She claimed,
I would say I am a good student of Jesus Christ. I read the Bible and am inspired by it. I use it a lot in my environmental work. But I also listen to what the Buddhists tell us. I listen to what the Qu’ran tells us about God and life and values, about how we should relate to each other and the environment. We are all part of nature. I remember something somebody said (it’s not my idea) that, except for our energies, which could be the soul, our bodies have sometimes been the trees, the water, or the animals. We don’t know what we have been in the past. We are all part of each other […] I’m very aware that I cannot live without the green trees. I’m humbled by the understanding that they can do very well without me! I’m also humbled by the fact that they sustain me, and not the other way around. (MacDonald, May 16, 2005, emphasis my own)

What makes the above two quotes significant is Maathai’s emphasis on spirituality (and not religion) operates as a prerequisite to realizing the human-nature relationship. By not restricting her rhetoric to one faith tradition or organized religion, Maathai opens the space for dialogue and action with those from different belief systems. In doing so, she is asserting that just about anybody can be an activist. One does not have to be of a specific faith to see that the human-nature connection is not a relationship that can be taken for granted. Maathai’s rhetoric centers on basic qualities such as honesty, accountability, hard work, love, and respect to draw attention to the fact that caring for the environment does not require a person to be of high qualification or privilege. The need to share and care is essential to ensure the survival of both human and nature.

Maathai’s view that sees human bodies as (possibly) a reincarnation of nature is comparable to the Chipko movement that see the forest as family and an embodiment of all things sacred. Maathai’s standpoint from the above quotes also serve as evidence of the ecofeminist traits in her rhetoric. In other words, Maathai does not only address issues
of injustice, she also brought to the forefront the moral value in humanity and the compassion that humans are capable of showing.

Further, Maathai’s comments above not only illustrate her position on spirituality or religion, but also the movement’s focus on accountability and hard work. This, I contend, aligns with the notion of anarcha-feminism as discussed by de Heredia (2007), Harrell Jr. (2012), and MAF(I)A (2009). Compared to what was discussed in the Chipko Chapter, this chapter brings into the conversation a different take on non-violence. I offer an alternative category to non-violent rhetoric by including anarcha-feminism.

Essentially, anarchism originates from the uneven power relations between the government and citizen. Advocates of anarchism believe that “individuals must be free (from forced authority) in order to develop their fullest potential” (Harrell Jr., 2012, p.2). Since anarchists oppose hierarchal institutions, the authoritarianism of religion, too, is generally disapproved. Seeing that Maathai’s rhetoric is more spiritual than religious, I believe proponents of anarchism would not object to her rhetoric as exemplifying anarchist traits. Maathai’s opposition to political oppression, too, can be seen as an anarchist quality in her rhetoric.

In relation to anarcha-feminism, de Heredia (2007) posits that anarcha-feminism “is not a separate body of theory but rather integral to anarchism” (p.2). Anarcha-feminism is inherent in anarchism, which not only opposes all forms of hierarchal oppression. Anarchism also supports the principle of acting for oneself (while rejecting charity), promotes solidarity and the ability to empathize with other people’s oppression, and believes that “one’s freedom is enhanced and expanded with another’s freedom” (de
The significance of anarcha-feminism lies in the fact that it not only espouses all the qualities of anarchism, but it also rejects patriarchy while promoting feminist/women’s solidarity.

In many ways, the Green Belt Movement’s work aligns with what is meant by anarcha-feminism primarily because the activists did not wait for the government or authorities to solve their dire situation. Instead, they took on active roles to overcome their exigency, reflecting other anarcha-feminist methods of “DIY and direction action principles to achieve liberation for all” [MAF(I)A, 2009, p. 13]. More importantly, the movement members rejected political and patriarchal oppression, while declining the notion that they must comply with officials or foresters to gain what is rightfully theirs. By focusing on taking active roles to address their exigencies, movement members also avoided methods that may be deemed violent in nature. Further, Maathai’s views on spirituality, too, I believe played a significant role in the movement’s perception or practice with regards to non-violence. It is because of these factors that I suggest the genre of non-violence practiced by the movement to be labeled non-violent spiritual-anarcha feminism.

Concluding Thoughts

The Green Belt Movement was formed as a response to the dire environmental conditions and political oppression in Kenya. It is a movement that employs local resources, motivates its people to be independent, and intentionally discourages direct involvement by high-powered officials from the outside. This strategy helped create confidence among the people: Especially among those who are looked down upon by
“experts” who believed they were incapable of meeting their own needs (Breton, 1998). Comparable to the Chipko, the Green Belt Movement helped reposition the women in society, from second-class citizens to agents of change. In the Chipko situation however, the villagers were just beginning to confront the transition from their local folkways into a kind of colonial development regime. They didn’t have a notion of “sustainable development,” but the way they related to the forest (religious-practical) was sustainable (even though they didn’t have to call it such through that language). Whereas in Kenya, the country was so far into Moi’s despotic post-colonial rule, that they couldn’t rely upon traditional (sustainable) folkways for their relationship with trees—or even, judging by grazing practices for instance, they didn’t have a traditional sustainable folkway to begin with. Thus, part of Maathai’s burden was to invoke Harambee to “create” a spiritual-practical, sustainable consciousness that the rural folks could relate to (because they lacked the indigenous consciousness that the Chipko had resource to). Maathai claimed, “In Africa, we’re busy trying to catch up with the West and live the same kind of life that we see on TV…But we end up destroying the environment to get the things that we perceive as development” (Walsh, 2010). Also distinct from the Chipko, the rhetoric of Maathai and the Green Belt Movement may be viewed as less religious and more spiritual. More precisely, it is spiritual in the sense that a specific faith was not focused in any of Maathai’s rhetoric. By being strategically ambiguous, Maathai was able to broaden her rhetoric to be more inclusive of people of different belief systems.

In the previous chapter I spoke of the importance of not only identifying the genre of non-violence in a movement, but also the significance of taking into account the
“essence” or origins of non-violent principles in a movement. In comparison to the Chipko movement (which I claimed aligned more with religious-feminist non-violence), the Green Belt Movement aligns more with a non-violent, spiritual-anarcha feminism. This type of non-violence not only encompasses elements of spirituality (as opposed to religiosity), but also holds an individual accountable for his/her own fate. The Harambee spirit, which Maathai capitalized on during her tree planting campaign, helped the people realize that they are responsible for their own lives and are capable of improving their quality of life and overturning political oppression if they worked collectively.

Bitzer (1968), in his article on the rhetorical situation states, “Any exigence is an imperfection marked by urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be” (p. 6). In the case of the Green Belt Movement, the people of Kenya (especially the women) saw deforestation as an exigency that required urgent attention because it directly related to their basic needs such as food, water, and wood fuel. With the realization that a diploma is not needed to plant trees, and corrupted government officials can be disempowered, the members stayed true to the spirit of Harambee by taking it upon themselves to make change.

In the previous chapter, I discussed how the Chipko’s non-violent rhetoric fits well with a religious-feminist genre. In this chapter, I expanded the notion of non-violent rhetoric by aligning the Green Belt Movement with spiritual-anarcha feminism. In the next chapter, I will draw upon Julia Butterfly Hill’s rhetorical situation to establish a connection between the three case studies.
Chapter 4: Julia Butterfly Hill

I KNEW THAT if I continued to debate politics and science—and stayed in the mind instead of the heart and the spirit—it would always be about one side versus the other. We all understand love, however; we all understand respect, we all understand dignity, and we all understand compassion up to a certain point. But how could I convince the loggers to transfer those feelings that they might have for a human being to the forest? (Hill, 2000, p. 69)

Imagine sitting 180 feet above solid terrain, in a thousand-year-old tree, while fierce winds ripped through the branches. Some can only imagine. For 23-year-old Julia Butterfly Hill, an environmental activist, it was an experience she lived through for 738 days. During her tree-sit, Hill braved through the “harshest winter in recorded history for Northern California,” verbal abuse/threats from loggers, and a ten-day siege that cut her off from all supplies. It was also during this challenging period that Hill was forced to bear sirens and flood lights that prevented her from sleeping for days (Fox & Frye, 2010, p.430). Such determination, naturally, did not go unnoticed. Fox and Frye reported that during her historic tree-sitting experience, Hill “gave dozens of cell phone interviews, was the subject of several films, received more than 300 letters per week, and was interviewed by national and international journalists” (p. 430). Hill’s “celebrity” status also caught the attention of celebrity environmentalists such as Bonnie Raitt, Joan Baez, and Woody Harrelson when they paid personal visits to her and organized tours/concerts to help spread the environmental message (Eisert, 2003; Fox and Frye, 2010; Hill, 2000).
While Hill’s appeal to the mass public has been noteworthy, more importantly, is her standpoint and approach to environmental activism that embraces non-violence and spirituality. In this particular case study, I discuss in detail texts showing Julia Butterfly Hill’s rhetorical situation that includes the human-nature and human-human dis/connections as exigency. Besides her untitled poem, I also draw upon Hill’s 2000 bestseller *The Legacy of Luna*, excerpts from a documentary entitled *Adventures in Tree Sitting* (Angelo, 1999) and press accounts to examine the rhetorical situation. In the texts that I have chosen to analyze, I highlight how Hill chooses to embrace a universal language of love and respect, instead of adopting the typical tone of an angry activist. Her use of unbiased speech and her repetitive use of certain words such as “pain” and “disconnections” help illuminate the exigencies. In her speech, Hill articulates not only the violent acts that are imposed upon nature, but also the injustice that is widespread among the human race. Hill capitalizes on the use of poetry to create a powerful narrative while interlacing her message with engaging and forceful language. Her poem gives prominence to the spiritual value that is clearly evident from her standpoint. It is also Hill’s poem that I refer to, to illustrate the situation’s exigency.

What exactly was the situation that called for Julia Butterfly Hill’s involvement in environmental activism? How did her act of tree-sitting and symbolic action (e.g. poem) fare as a response? In this chapter, I draw upon the rhetorical situation of Julia Butterfly Hill to further examine non-violent ecofeminist rhetoric. I begin by offering a brief background on Julia Butterfly Hill, followed with details of the rhetorical situation (exigency, audience, constraints) she faced. I include in the discussion of the rhetorical
situation an analysis of her protest rhetoric, Hill’s cultural status as a woman in the US environmental movement, and the non-violent rhetoric that is prevalent throughout her rhetoric. Further, I also compare Hill’s situation with the previous analysis I have done on the Chipko and Green Belt Movement, while I expand on Bitzer by including the rhetoric of Luna (the tree, a non-human) as it was perceived by Hill. While Bitzer’s framework is still relevant in examining the texts, the greater significance of this chapter’s analysis lies in the human-nature connections and the rhetorical capacity of a non-human (specifically, a tree) to act as a symbolic agent of change.

**Julia Butterfly Hill and her Rhetorical Situation**

Julia Butterfly Hill is the daughter of an evangelical minister. A great deal of her childhood was spent travelling with her siblings and parents for missionary work. Although Hill is not currently a follower of any organized religion, she believes strongly in the spirituality of the universe. Hill’s rhetoric is unique because she not only tolerates, but identifies with, a universal spirit (Hill, 2000). She believes that all of nature is a manifestation or embodiment of the creator. Comparable to the Chipko, Hill sees value in all creation whether human or non-human. However, distinct from the Chipko, she does not subscribe to just one particular faith tradition. Hill’s standpoint is a reflection of her belief in the goodness inherent in humankind. Though she does not make any reference to a specific faith in her rhetoric, much like her father, Hill sees her work akin to spreading an important message. She insists, “I never planned on following in my father’s footsteps, but, yes, in many ways, that’s what’s happening;” she says, ”For me, this is my gospel” (Eisert, 2003). In her book, Hill (2000) relates her life-changing experience as a survivor
of a serious automobile accident. She insists, “When your life is threatened, nothing is ever the same…our value as people is not in our stock portfolios and bank accounts but in the legacies we leave behind” (p. 5). For Hill, the tree sitting experience was a spiritual one. It was a mission as well as a calling.

In Chapter Two, I mentioned Warren’s (2000) claims that those in the West do not easily accept the concept of spirituality. Warren believes that spirituality is placed outside of Western philosophy, primarily because it is not compliant to philosophical or logical evidence. Instead, spirituality is set aside because claims related to spirituality “challenge the rationalist foundation of much of Western philosophy. Talk of spirituality as a fundamental part of ‘human nature’ is at odds with these rationalist assumptions” (p. 198). If we consider Warren’s claims to be true, then the rhetoric of Julia Butterfly Hill can be said to be more Eastern in its philosophy. This is primarily due to Hill’s distinct tone of spirituality in her activism, which I consider in more depth below.

In 1996, Hill was involved in a near-fatal car accident, which later prompted her to reassess and reprioritize her life. In a journey of self-discovery, Hill headed west, where she eventually ended up in the Redwoods and came in contact with a group of EarthFirst! activists (although at this time, Hill was not familiar with the group or movement). Her first experience in the Redwoods motivated Hill to protect the forest and encourage others to value all life, whether human or otherwise. In her words:

When I walked into the Redwoods, I walked into a cathedral that was more majestic than any man-made church I’ve ever been in, and when I found out what was happening, it was a calling I couldn’t turn away from. (in Angelo, 1999)
Here, Hill refers to feeling called to the Redwoods due to the destruction caused by Pacific Lumber Company/Maxxam Corporation, which I detail below in the exigency section.

In many ways, Hill’s tone of speech mirrors that of deep ecology, which believes nature has value that is independent from human existence (Brulle, 2000). In describing deep ecology, Brulle maintains that when nature is seen as an independent entity with its own worth, humanity no longer holds any privilege. Instead, humans are, “only one species among many, and ha[ve] no right to dominate the Earth” (p. 196). For deep ecologists, humans endanger the diversity that exists in all creations. In this regard, ecofeminist philosophy may be seen as an extension of deep ecology. The strength of ecofeminism, however, lies in the fact that it attends more to the critique of patriarchy and honoring the feminine than does deep ecology. Ecofeminist Petra Kelly (1997) summarized it best when she said, “The liberation of women and men from the bonds of patriarchy is essential to the work of building a peaceful, just, and ecological society” (p. 118). Interestingly, while Hill holds the belief that nature has intrinsic worth and is often subject to abuse by humans, she does not ignore the fact that humans, too, suffer from the injustice in the world. This is yet another reason why she avoids violence in word, thought, and action.

_Exigence_

Unlike the Chipko and the Green Belt Movement, from an objectivist perspective, Hill’s exigency did not directly connect to her identity or experiential standpoint. The Chipko and the Green Belt Movement depended on the forest for their daily survival (i.e.
for firewood, fodder, and food). Hill rhetorically connected herself to the needs of the forest (specifically, represented by Luna), since surviving on a daily basis was not her main worry. Hill had the support of activist-friends who sent her regular supply of food and water. She even had access to a cell phone. Yet, when living in a tree in danger of immanent felling, her own life could be viewed as also at stake.

In the opening of her book, *The Legacy of Luna* (2000), Hill narrates the story of the people who lived in a tiny town called Stafford (in Humboldt County, of northwest California), whose homes were ruined by a nearby mudslide caused by excessive logging. The massive slide miraculously killed no one. However, it did leave many people homeless and devastated. Pacific Lumber Company/Maxxam Corporation, the culprit behind the irresponsible logging, refused to change its ways. Clear cutting continued, endangering precious wildlife in the Redwoods, while leaving the people of Stafford vulnerable to future mudslides that would ultimately destroy their homes. As a result of this, a group of environmental activists decided to take stern action to help eradicate corporate recklessness. Julia Butterfly Hill was one of the many individuals that decided to take matters into their own hands.

Angelo (1999) reported that the late 1990s marked the beginning of a culture of brutality in the forest of northern California. Encounters between environmental activists

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6 Pacific Lumber was initially a family owned company for over 100 years. In the beginning, the company was widely praised for its sustainable forestry practices. However, in 1985, Charles Hurwitz—a Texas billionaire and head of Maxxam Corporation acquired Pacific Lumber in a buyout. In order to finance 800 million dollars in debt incurred in the take-over, Pacific Lumber aggressively stepped up its rate of logging increasing the stress on the region’s eco-system (Angelo, 1999).
and loggers were increasingly hostile with threats and intimidation becoming the norm. Some demonstrators even had pepper spray applied directly to their eyes to prevent them from continuing their work of activism. It was also around this time that activists of EarthFirst! discovered an ancient tree (later named Luna), marked with blue paint, which meant that it was due to be felled. This climate of hostility surrounded Hill when she began her tree-sitting mission on December 10, 1997.

Hill did not set out wanting to live on a six by eight foot platform, situated 180 feet high up in a tree for so long. What started as weeks, soon turned to months. A few months eventually turned to years (or 738 days to be exact). Hill’s struggle was not an easy one. However, she was fortunate to have had an outstanding support crew (environmental activists) that helped ensure her safety and well-being during her long ordeal. At one point during Hill’s tree-sit, her adversaries (loggers from Pacific Lumber/Maxxam Corporation) attempted to demoralize her by putting a blockade for ten days. Security guards roped off the area and shined bright lights on where Hill was sitting to provoke and weaken her both mentally and physically. However, due to some strange turn of events, one of the security guards actually developed a crush on Hill over the time he was responsible for guarding the area. This made it somewhat easier for the ground-activists to send supplies up to Hill.

First labeled as crazy and selfish for getting in the way of profitable logging practices on private property, Hill’s labels eventually evolved to “brave and heroic.” Days and nights went by with much struggle, fear, and self-doubt. These, however, were overcome with the strength that Hill found in the ancient tree. In her own words, Luna
was Hill’s “best friend.” Luna was her savior. She possessed a “womb” that Hill found comfort in. Hill claimed:

I had to give my word, to Luna, to the forest, to myself, to the world, that I wouldn’t come down to the ground again, I wouldn’t walk on the earth again, until I’ve done everything I possibly could to make the world aware and bring about some change. (Angelo, 1999)

After countless hours of activist work coupled with media frenzy, the Luna Preservation Agreement and Deed of Covenant was finally signed on December 18, 1999. This meant that the related parties (Pacific Lumber/Maxxam Corporation) would have to be more responsible and accountable in their logging practices. The joy and success unfortunately did not last. About a year after Hill’s descent, someone tried to bring Luna down by cutting the tree part-way up its trunk. Though environmentalists managed to save the tree by using giant braces to keep it standing, Hill was emotionally wounded by the attempt to bring her friend down. The poetry she composed following this incident reveals the uniqueness of her use of rhetoric to craft an exigency.

Distinct from the Chipko and Green Belt Movement, Hill’s exigency did not immediately impact her (e.g., she did not have to rely on the forest for food, water, etc). Hence, Hill’s writing was a way for her to rhetorically construct the situation’s exigency. However, comparable to the Chipko and Green Belt situation, Hill still needed to extend her environmental message to her audience to enhance their awareness of the situation, and to motivate them to act more responsibly towards nature. As we saw in previous chapters, although the exigency was perhaps more immediate for members of the Chipko and Green Belt Movement, the villagers still needed some convincing to join the environmental movement. Folk songs, poetry, and marches helped motivate the people.
The environmental rhetoric in the previous case studies helped uncover the women’s common sense, which led them to care for trees despite the disapproval from government officials and some of the men. Similarly, in Hill’s continuous efforts, her environmental message has been vital in bringing awareness and prompting action by people from all walks of life.

As Hill cast it, the source of exigency in her situation was not limited to corporate recklessness: It also included the sense of disconnection that exists among humans and nature, and humans with other humans. In the following poem, Hill highlights the situation’s exigency and expresses the feelings she was struggling with soon after she heard of the attack on Luna.

![Image depicting Julia Butterfly Hill with Luna after the attempt to bring down the ancient tree (photo by Shaun Walker/ OtterMedia, obtained from http://www.circleoflife.org/luna_poetry.php)](image.jpg)

**Untitled**

1. I heard today...
2. Luna’s been cut.
3. Two-thirds and maybe more.
In this poem, Luna—defined as “moon” in Spanish—is also the main rhetor (alongside Hill). Here, we see Hill identifying Luna as the one who is transmitting the message of exigency. She mentions in Angelo (1999),

I’m living with an ancient being, I tell people that I’m living in the world’s most amazing radio tower, that receives and transmits all the messages of the universe and I’ve just been blessed to be the microphone.

In much of Hill’s narrative, she speaks of Luna as a companion, or a friend—someone who guides her. From Hill’s standpoint, Luna is not just a tree. Rather, for Hill, Luna is the embodiment of wisdom and strength. These qualities, Hill believes, are what makes Luna exceptional and deserving of respect. Hill has great admiration for the trees of the Redwoods. She sees forests as “majestic,” “holy,” and “housing more spirituality than any church” (2000, p. 9). By looking at the forest in such religious terms, Hill perhaps sees her struggle as a religious responsibility, even a crusade.

4. Someone in their rage,
5. in their anger,
6. in their frustration
7. struck out at Luna
8. wanting to hurt Her...
9. wanting to hurt me
10. the way they must be hurting inside.

Hill sees herself as being one with Luna. By hurting what is dear to her, the loggers (Pacific Lumber/Maxxam Corporation) have also intentionally caused anguish on Hill. In contrast to Luna, which is depicted as ancient and wise, Hill is young, passionate, and
disheartened with the state of humanity and the destruction that humans dispense on other forms of living creatures. Hill’s decision to sit in Luna for years went beyond trying to save nature. She saw it as a means to justify her own existence.

11. See...
12. what we do to the Earth
13. we do to each other.
14. And how we treat the Earth
15. is reflected in how we treat each other.

**Lines 11-15**

If humans cannot see the value and cherish something as important as Earth, the only planet we have, how can we expect people to be fair to one another? If we can inflict pain and generate devastation on our one and only source of life, is it any wonder that there are so many wars and so much suffering among our fellow human beings? For Hill, “Earth” is not just another term to call our planet. Neither is it a huge stock house we can consume without a care. It symbolizes an entity that deserves high regard as our provider and our refuge.

16. The pain I feel right now that threatens to rip me apart
17. is the pain I feel every time I see an Ancient Elder cut...
18. the pain I feel every time another species goes extinct...
19. the pain I feel every time someone yells at a child...
20. the pain I feel every time another woman dies of breast cancer
21. caused by all the legal pollutants in her food,
22. her planet,
23. her life...
24. The pain I feel every time I think of Leonard Peltier locked inside
25. our prisons of disrespect and disconnect.
26. On and on and on
27. the pain in our world grows bigger and erupts.
28. Ricocheting bullets school yards and halls.
29. Chainsaws to sacred beings.
30. When do we begin to look at where this DIS-EASE begins?
31. In the disconnection from the sacred...
32. In the disconnection from the heart.

**Lines 16-32**

Hill uses “pain” repeatedly and speaks of suffering and disease to create a tone of persistence, highlighting the urgency present in environmentalist struggle. “Ancient Elder,” for Hill, represents all that is wise, superior and deserving of admiration. However, she does not forget that there are other beings, too, that are just as worthy. This is evident via the words “child,” “woman,” “her,” and “Leonard Peltier”—an activist and member of the American Indian Movement (AIM), jailed for a crime he did not commit. The fact that Hill mentions people of diverse genders, races, and ages, shows that she does not favor just one gender, race, or even ranking in age. In many ways, Hill does not discriminate with the use of her language and recognizes the fact that humans, too, suffer from acts of irresponsibility—particularly related to their attempts to save the environment.

This strategy of including imagery from many genders, according to Stearney (1994), is a powerful way of unifying the movement. Instead of rigidly linking nature and the maternal archetype (a strategy that can be seen as limiting women only to motherhood), Hill looks beyond the gender and addresses all individuals as Humans, who
suffer a harmful distance from nature and each other: “Our prisons of disrespect and 
disconnect,” “In the disconnection from the sacred...” “In the disconnection from the 
heart.” (italics my own). The sense of disconnection is a great source of anguish, another 
reason why humans can inflict harm on other beings without feeling suffering or pain on 
their own bodies and spirit.

Yet, people do not realize that this disconnection and pain does not just evaporate 
into thin air. Whatever is bottled up inside will only build-up and overflow, until it causes 
even more irreversible decay. In Hill’s personal account, she sees disconnections as both 
evil, as well as a necessity. While disconnections may be one of the reasons why humans 
act irresponsibly towards nature and other humans, disconnections with worldly life is 
sometimes necessary if one wants to fully be in touch with nature or one’s spirituality.

Hill’s view on the importance of connections is evidence of ecofeminist thought, 
which places value in the relationship of humans to nature, as well as each other (Littig, 
2001). Hill (2000) relates her realization with this when she wrote of her experience free-
climbing Luna,

(W)hen I climb around Luna, I do so in bare feet…I couldn’t stand the feeling of 
separation from the tree. With all that stuff between my foot and the branches…I 
couldn’t feel Luna’s life force or take instruction from her about how to climb. 
So I took off my shoes after the first few days and hung them from a branch, 
where they have stayed. (p. 95)

Staying both spiritually and physically connected to Luna was important for Hill because 
it played a role in her sense of safety and survival. By relying on Luna for her own 
survival, Hill humanizes the tree by highlighting its capacity to protect and provide. In
doing so, Hill encourages her audience to extend the compassion that they have for humans, unto other living creations (the forest).

33. The person who ripped metal into Luna’s flesh
34. is just as ripped apart inside as Luna now is,
35. as I now am,
36. as is the world.

Lines 33-36

Those who cause pain and suffering unto others do so because they embody anger. Whether they realize it or not, their action does not justify anything, nor will it give them inner peace. It will only inflame the rage and aggravate what is already ugly to begin with. Hill does not believe there is justification for violence. Instead, she believes in the universal language of love. The fact that Hill refers to Luna as having “flesh” (instead of wood or pulp) further confirms the fact that she was trying to add a human quality to the tree. By doing this, Luna was seen as an extension of the human race. This too, may encourage others in viewing Luna as a life form worthy of protection. “(A)s I now am” signifies how Hill is personally affected by the exigency. Though not objectively “immediate” like the women of the Chipko and Green Belt Movement, Hill’s interpretation of the exigency nonetheless had a significant impact on the situation.

During her two-year ordeal, Hill faced a myriad of abuse. She suffered physically, mentally, and was on the brink of losing herself. Hill persevered while she endured 90 mile per hour winds, two harsh winters, harassment from a helicopter, and verbal abuse from the loggers who wanted her to leave the site. Furthermore, the view of the mudslide from her tree-sit served as a constant reminder that the state of environment is in decay.
Yet, in spite of her weakened emotional and physical state of being, Hill survived the beating because of the strength that she found in Luna and her faith. The loggers may have ripped through Luna’s flesh and Hill’s soul, but her faith kept her whole.

37. May the tears that pour out from the depths of my soul
38. cleanse the sadness of any who would wish to react in rage.
39. The person who so viciously attacked Luna
40. has enough anger for the world.
41. May we love ever more
42. May we motivate ourselves to committed love in Action
43. May we motivate ourselves to live the life we wish to see in the world.
44. May we be the transformation we wish to see in the world.
45. From the inside out...
46. From the roots branching upwards...
47. From the heart
48. to thought
49. to word
50. to action.
51. Through life’s trials and hardships
52. we can arise beautiful and free.

*Sunday, November 26, 2000~ julia butterfly hill*

**Lines 37-52**

The use of “may…” seems hopeful, almost like a prayer (asking for the situation to be made better). Though she and Luna were attacked viciously, Hill does not believe in responding with violence. She sees tree-sitting as a peaceful form of civil disobedience
against the commodification of nature. “Love,” “tears,” “heart,” signify her passion for all living beings: There is enough anger and violence in our world, it should not be made worse by aggressive retaliation. As a person in touch with her spirituality, Hill rarely shows signs of rage; and albeit often disheartened, Hill continuously preaches the message of love and respect (Satyagraha). “From the heart, to thought, to word, to action,” these words especially, align with Ghandi’s non-violent rhetoric that practiced “total renunciation of violence in word, thought and deed” (King, 1999, p. 13). The only way to end the vicious cycle of hate and rage, is by showing compassion and love. Such qualities need to come from within, they are not something that one should expect from others or even those in power.

Audience, Cultural Status, and Constraints

In this Chapter, I see two parties as the audience in this situation: Hill herself, and mainstream society. An audience, according to Bitzer (1968), is someone who has the capacity to make a change in responding to the exigency. Throughout her writings, Hill has mentioned time and time again, how she heard Luna’s “voice” and how the strength she received from Luna helped her stay persistent with her tree sit. Recall Hill’s discussion of her need to remove her shoes when climbing Luna, to stay in constant connection with, and thus feel the messages of, her friend. Furthermore, During a storm, when she was feeling afraid and helpless, Luna’s message kept Hill strong. She recalls Luna’s “voice” saying:

Julia, think of the trees in the storm… The trees in the storm don’t try to stand up straight and tall and erect. They allow themselves to bend and be blown with the wind. They understand the power of letting go… Those trees and those branches that try too hard to stand up strong and straight are the ones that break. Now is not
the time for you to be strong, Julia, or you, too, will break. Learn the power of the
trees. Let it flow. Let it go. That is the way you are going to make it through this
storm. And that is the way to make it through the storms of life. (2000, p. 113-
114)

Regardless of whether Luna’s “voice” was really heard or not, it was Hill’s interpretation
of the connection, or Hill’s interpretation of Luna’s messages that helped her remain
persistent.

Mainstream society, too, was (and still is) an audience in Hill’s situation. By
using the media as an outlet, Hill was able to spread the message of forest protection to a
large number of people. This scenario aligns with DeLuca’s discussion of body rhetoric
of activists in Earth First!, Act Up, and Queer Nation. He discussed the ways in which
movements used their bodies as a form of passive resistance to speak against the
dominant social order. DeLuca (1999) affirms,

Unable to buy t
ime like corporations and mainstream political parties do, groups
such as Earth First!, ACT UP, and Queer Nation ‘buy’ air time through using their
bodies to create compelling imag
es that attract media attention (p.10).

Much like the protestors in Deluca’s (1999) essay, the body rhetoric of Julia Butterfly
Hill extends the definition of passive resistance. Not only did Hill highlight her objection
by means of her body, she managed to achieve favorable outcomes without capitalizing
on violent methods and/or conventional tactics.

For Hill it is the “disease of disconnect” that leads to forest exploitation. While
Hill’s situation resonated with the Chipko and Green Belt Movement in terms of
(environmental) exigency, distinctions lie in terms of constraints (e.g. government
oppression), and audience (e.g. citizens from a developed country with a stable
economy). Additionally, in comparison to the women of the Chipko and the Green Belt Movement, Julia Butterfly Hill had two main advantages in her rhetorical situation, pertaining to her standpoint. First, Hill lives in a Western society at a time when both men as well as women are not alien to the concept of individual agency. Though supported by other activists during her tree sit, Hill acted (and continues to act) mostly alone in her interviews and in her writings. Hill does not have to rely on a large number of “members” or supporters to advance her mission. This is different from the Chipko and the Green Belt Movement, where most of the activism was actively done as a collective group. Of course, one may argue that bigger groups may help strengthen a movement. However, Hill’s situation may be used as a lesson to inspire others, to show that even one person can make a difference.

Lastly, the fact that Hill was/is not viewed as a subordinate citizen in society also means that she had (and continues to have) access to free speech. This is clearly different from what Wangari Maathai and other members of the Green Belt Movement had to endure. Access to freedom of expression and unregulated information from the public helped Hill spread her message of activism. This benefit influenced Hill’s ability to participate as an active member of society, because the quality and flow of information in a democratic society greatly influences a person’s capacity to participate in their community (Carlsson, 2007).

Furthermore, based on Bitzer’s (1968) categorization of “artistic proofs” and “inartistic proofs,” I would maintain that the constraints in this rhetorical situation mainly originate from the audience (inartistic proofs). Since nature or trees are not usually
thought of as living beings that can communicate or “speak” (particularly in a Western context such as the US), most humans fail to see a tree such as Luna, or forests as having its own worth. This sense of disconnection further aggravates the exigency. To the loggers, for example, old growth trees are destined to die and fall. Therefore, the loggers see no wrong in speeding up this process by cutting the trees down since it would eventually happen naturally. Hill’s aim was to make the loggers realize that all trees, especially old growth, have a purpose, an intrinsic value: “Creation wouldn’t have made things to grow old if they weren’t meant to grow old” (Hill, 2000, p. 68).

The second constraint I identified is mainstream society. Living in a society that is not considered undeveloped also makes it more difficult for some individuals to see or feel the exigency of deforestation, in an objective material way. For many, tree felling in large numbers does not have an immediate impact on their daily lives. It is not an urgent situation. After all, how can a situation be seen as an exigency when it is not related to food, cooking, and water? For most individuals living in advanced societies, a short walk or drive to a store around the corner is all that is required to obtain affordable food or necessities. In a society that many would consider developed and “advanced” in its standard of living (especially when compared to other countries such as India and Kenya), perhaps the forest may not be viewed as a means for survival. This, too, posed as a challenge in the situation.

Hill faced this challenge by illuminating the significance of mutual respect and getting in touch with one’s spiritual side. As has been discussed, Hill strives for mutual respect by focusing on what most individuals understand or have in common: love,
respect, dignity, and compassion. Further, by trying to humanize Luna in her rhetoric, Hill strives to encourage others to view the forest with compassion, and even see themselves as connected to the forest as she was during her tree-sit, and continues to be through her poetry.

The third constraint I identified in the situation is the involvement of mass media. While Hill does not disregard the media as a tool to spread Luna’s message, she also realizes that she herself was used as a tool to gain attention and sell news. In addition to their shallow concerns, such as how she maintained personal hygiene in Luna, Hill relates how a local paper (The Times-Standard) mistakenly labeled her tree-sit as “an open-ended endurance test.” The paper printed:

Six months in a tree is an astonishing physical accomplishment, which hardly needs to be prolonged. There is a curve of diminishing effect in attention-seeking—the most arresting novelty eventually becomes stale news. A year in a tree is not necessarily a bigger story than six months in a tree, and two or three years ceases to be news at all. (quoted in Hill, 2000, p. 149)

In recognizing the constraints, Hill was able to overcome the obstacles by committing to her message of peace and mutual respect. While she recognized that the media may not always be on her side, Hill still used whatever exposure she got to her (and Luna’s) full advantage.

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7 It was one of the media personnel who interviewed Hill that suggested she beat the world record for sitting in a tree for ninety days. From her many interactions with the media, Hill realized that “it takes a human interest angle to get the media interested” (2000, p.125), and since the fight to save the Redwoods would not be known to the public without media assistance, Hill remained persistent in her tree-sit.
Non-violence in the Situation

Much like the Chipko movement, the non-violent rhetoric of Julia Butterfly Hill also resonates with Satyagraha. Her renunciation of violence in word, thought, and deed is very much apparent throughout the poem. Hill’s standpoint on “truth” (as seen in the quote below) also aligns with Ghandi’s definition of satyagraha – meaning “holding onto Truth,” “firmness in Truth,” a “relentless search for Truth,” and “Truth force” (King, 1999; Ghandi, 2001). At the same time, much like the rhetoric of Wangari Maathai and the Green Belt Movement, Hill does not appear to subscribe to any organized religion, even though elements of spirituality are prevalent in her speech. When asked by Awehali (2005) why she thought unifying spirituality and political activism is important, Hill answered:

My experience in my activism has been that grassroots activism is the roots, spirituality/faith/religion is the branches, and we’ve been missing the trunk…I feel the same about Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam and you name it. Every faith-based tradition I’ve studied has powerful, enduring truths. But the problem is that we take those powerful truths and we keep them stuck in the time in which they were translated, and say that that is the whole truth, instead of letting the truth grow from the historical context and continue to grow as life does. I think that’s why a lot of activists can’t relate to [religion]. They see it as this dead and dying thing…(L)ife is not only a gift from God, it’s a gift of God. A lot of my interactions have been with people saying, “You need to worship the creator, not the creation, Julia.” But if they read their text—their own text—there was nothing but God in the beginning, and then God created. So everything—the trees, the flies, the frogs, the mosquitoes—I hate mosquitoes—even the mosquito is a form of God. And that’s hard to take on, but I’m willing to try! (p. 29)

Clearly, for Hill, all creations, and not just the Creator, must be respected, because all living creations are the embodiment of a universal spirit.

In addition to satyagraha or spirituality, I also see Hill’s work of activism encompassing many of the traits of feminist care ethics or the ethics of care. Ethics of
care is a branch of feminist thought that considers a woman’s capability to care for others as strength, not a weakness (Tong, 2009). Tong mentions two pioneers in care ethics, Gilligan and Noddings, when she noted how the two scholars believe men and women speak different “moral languages” where masculine notions of ethics is often privileged over more “feminine” ethics. Relational concern is one of the features that characterize care ethics. In the words of Wilkins (2009), “The ethic of care is distinguished from the ethic of justice in that it focuses on relationships…The ethics of care values loyalty, responsibility, self-sacrifice, and interpersonal involvement” (pp. 36-37). Hill reflects the ethics of care, as opposed to the ethics of justice, in her rhetoric because the ethics of justice actually failed in the situation. This is evident since the loggers violated their legal contract to not hurt Luna; and how Hill continued to stand by the tree that she had set herself in relation to.

It should be noted that different feminist traditions have different viewpoints regarding violence. Feminist care ethics suggests women’s responsibility to care for others transcends boundaries such states and nation (Hutchings, 2007). Feminists who adopt this stance also espouse pacifism, rejecting all forms of violence regardless of the reasoning behind the act. For these feminists, values related to care ethics are relevant in all contexts, and therefore, should be applied across the board. To a certain extent, care ethics resembles Levinas’s support of the Other. From the philosophical standpoint of Levinas, humans are social creatures. “I” cannot exist without the Other. One fails to be human if one fails to care for the Other (Arnett, 2009). According to Arnett, Levinas’s philosophy emphasizes the ability to listen to an “ethical echo” that calls for an
individual’s sense of responsibility for the Other. Bookman and Aboulafia (2000) confirm this when they explain how Levinas encourages “responsibility for the other…and away from self-interest in the domain of the ethical” (p. 169).

Bookman and Aboulafia compare Gilligan’s work and Levinas’ thought. According to the scholars, Levinas does not use language that refers to community because solidarity for him is not based on “what we have in common,” but simply on “my obligation to you” (p. 171). In comparison to Gilligan, care ethics is not based on empathy. Instead, “it is a genuine disinterested response and responsibility to another simply rooted in need” (p. 171). In other words, care ethics does not necessarily require one to understand the feelings of another person. What is more important is what Bookman and Aboulafia (2000) refer to as the “human response” and “a response of care.” (p. 171). It goes beyond the notion of feelings. It highlights the importance of human responsibility.

Hill emphasized the issue of dis/connections between humans, as well as humans-and-nature in her rhetorical situation. Hill exhibits not only a spiritual connection to nature, but also a great responsibility for the welfare of other humans. Hill could have easily chosen to ignore the exigency since it did not affect her directly (after all, it was not her home that was lost in the mud slide). Instead, Hill chose to take action to prevent further environmental exploitation that would naturally affect humans as well. Due to the spiritual traits that are prevalent in her speech, as well as the characteristics of care ethics in her activism, I propose the genre of non-violence in this particular rhetorical situation to be classified as spiritual-care non-violence.
Concluding Thoughts

Early in the dissertation, I noted that feminists debate the premise that “women are closer to nature,” because equating nature to women endorses women’s inferiority. Even so, one cannot ignore the fact that the environmental movement involving women has commenced a long time ago, evident in struggles such as the Chipko Movement and Green Belt Movement. Furthermore, although Hill uses tactics that are similar to radical environmentalists, she avoids using language that is angry in tone. Drawing from the choice of words in the untitled poem, the personal accounts narrated in the Legacy of Luna (2000), and excerpts from the documentary/press accounts, we may unravel not only the state of exigency, but also the ethics or moral codes that Hill conveys in response to her rhetorical situation. She does not speak to only a certain segment of people, nor does she sound preachy in her writings. Hill avoids privileging a gender, race, social class, and steers clear of coarse discourse. In other words, by emphasizing the message of love and respect, Julia Butterfly Hill was able to send a successful message that connected nature and humans. Her choice of words and the tone of her writing clearly matched her act of peaceful resistance. Her choice of words can also be seen as an attempt to humanize Luna, so as to encourage others to see nature as an existence that is worthy of compassion, just like the human race.

Additionally, by sharing her experiences, personal beliefs and dreams for the future, Hill simultaneously spreads a universal message that speaks from within. Hill’s book became a success when it was proclaimed a national bestseller and was described by the Los Angeles Times as “An Inspiring, Great, True Tale.” Her role as a writer, poet,
and activist caught the attention of many. As an established speaker for the environment and social justice, Hill continues to spread her message of love and respect for all creations, unceasingly. All the pursuits that Hill did, and continue to do, may be seen as a fitting response to the situation.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

If we don’t pay attention to [nonviolent protests], they are invisible, and it’s as if they never happened. But I have seen first hand that if we do, they will multiply (Bacha, 2011).

In the year 2003, a village in the West Bank of Palestine organized a ten month long non-violent protest to prevent a barrier from being built across their olive groves (Bacha, 2011). In March 2012, an Israeli graphic designer and teacher initiated a campaign called “Israel loves Iran” to merge the peaceful voices of Israelis and Iranians, in the face of violent discourse proliferated by leaders of their countries (Namazikhah, 2012). In 2002, Leymah Gbowee of Liberia, encouraged thousands of Christian and Muslim women to “peacefully protest and pressure religious and political leaders to stop the 14-year war that had led to mass gang rapes of an estimated three-fourths of the country’s women and girls” (Schulte, 2011). Clearly, based on these examples, non-violent rhetoric is not alien in today’s age. Yet, despite its widespread presence, rarely are we exposed to such peaceful narratives. Instead, news of violence and injustice seem to saturate our daily lives. While revealing the pains of life is significant to ensure that we are not oblivious to the suffering of Others, peaceful events and discourse—particularly in response to injustice and oppression—are also part of our realities. If we do not give these occurrences due attention, then we render them invisible (Bacha, 2011).

In addition to the events mentioned above, the three case studies presented in this project also serve as lessons of non-violent rhetoric in action. To meet the objectives of
this study, I purposely used case studies featuring activists in India, Kenya, and the United States to highlight the ways in which non-Western contexts can contribute to Western understandings of rhetoric (and vice versa), specifically within social movement rhetoric. This research, I hope, will contribute to the on-going conversation on comparative rhetoric. Further, the three case studies I analyzed were also intended to draw attention to the ways non-violent ecofeminist rhetoric contributes to the study of social movements. In doing so, I hope to strengthen the relevancy of non-violence in the study of social movement rhetoric.

I begin this chapter by addressing the three research questions I posed in Chapter One:

• How do ecofeminist movements from different cultures situate themselves, specifically with regards to non-violence?

• What are the important differences that non-Western rhetoric raises that add to the study of social movement rhetoric?

• What are the implications for using Bitzer’s rhetorical situation to study rhetoric in different cultures? What are the potential advantages and disadvantages of adopting Bitzer as a framework to study comparative rhetoric?

I answer these questions by highlighting the themes evident in my analysis of the case studies. Later, I revisit the definitions of comparative and non-violent rhetoric based on the findings from my inquiry. Lastly, I conclude with suggestions for future research.
Establishing Connections, Self-Accountability, and Religious/Spiritual Awareness in Non-violent Rhetoric

The first theme I would like to raise relates to my first question that links ecofeminist movements with non-violence. In an effort to address Mao’s (2011) and Stroud’s (2011) concern relating to accuracy and responsibility in doing comparative rhetoric, I included Alcoff’s (1991) notion of speaking for Others, and standpoint theory (Kinefuchi & Orbe, 2008; Swigonski, 1993) in the conversation. Particularly, I incorporated texts that highlighted narratives or reports from a first person standpoint, for all three case studies in my project. In doing so, my aim was to address the issue of speaking for Others responsibly. Additionally, bringing to the forefront the voices of the women/activists in the study would hopefully help make the analysis more “responsible.”

From the analysis of the three case studies in this project, I discovered three themes that relate to how ecofeminists from different cultures situate themselves with regards to non-violence. In other words, how did they view non-violence? What element(s) did they recognize as the source and/or remedy for violence? The three themes I noted relate to the ways in which ecofeminists established connections to eliminate violence. The second theme touches upon the issue of self-accountability and/or direct action as a means to overcome exigencies and violence. The third and final theme concerns the issue of spiritual and/or religious awareness as a motivating factor for non-violence.
Establishing connections to eliminate non-violence

The term “connections” in this context refers to both the connections that exist (or that are lacking) between humans and other humans, or humans and non-humans. The absence or paucity in strong connections contributes greatly to the exploitation of natural resources and the oppression of women and/or those in marginalized positions in society. Recall Julia Butterfly Hill’s (2000b) words: “Our prisons of disrespect and disconnect,” “In the disconnection from the sacred…,” “In the disconnection from the heart.” From Hill’s standpoint, the root of all oppression lies in the sense of disconnection between living beings, and the excess of connection to worldly materialism such as consumer products and assets/wealth. From Wangari Maathai’s standpoint, the more “advanced” the society, the more disconnected individuals become from one another. At the same time, the less developed a population, the more individuals expect moral responsibility (Maathai, 2004). Comparable to Hill and Maathai, from the Chipko’s standpoint, connections lie in the belief that there is life in all creation: Humans, animals, plants, rivers, and mountains are all affirmation of a higher (divine) power. Hence, these connections deserve respect.

The issue of respect (or lack of) is especially relevant in the context of development. In all three case studies, “development” was used to justify the exploitation of natural resources. From the standpoint of comparative rhetoric, we may conclude, then, that the notion of connections became a valuable way to respond to such an exigency. The idea of respect for the environment was used to reject the definition of “development,” which was mostly rooted in the Western sense (e.g., nature as a resource
for humans to improve their standard of living). In the Chipko situation, development was not measured by how many possessions a person had. Instead, what was strived for was “plain living” that would encourage “high thinking” (Weber, 1989). For the Chipko protestors, the forest was not just a source for their basic needs; it was a source for all things spiritual and “God-like” (Chidananda, 1987).

As opposed to the Chipko’s religious commitment to nature, the meaning of nature for the Green Belt Movement and Julia Butterfly Hill was more pragmatic and spiritual. For the Green Belt Movement, nature was a major source for the people’s daily needs (fuel, food, etc.). For Julia Butterfly, trees were a source of protection and spirituality. Irrespective of their stance with regard to the natural environment (religious/resource/spiritual), though, it is safe to say that all the protestors had/have a high regard for nature as a source of life. Further it is interesting to compare how both Wangari Maathai and Julia Butterfly Hill used spirituality (akin to the Chipko) in their rhetoric. For Wangari Maathai the Harambee spirit was a useful rhetorical tool. For Julia Butterfly Hill, spirituality was openly supported to establish a common ground with others.

*Self-accountability and/or direct action as a means to overcome exigencies and violence.*

Besides the notion of dis/connections, ecofeminists in the three case studies share another common position. This relates to their belief in self-accountability, which led to their non-violent direct action and/or protests. The women in the movements did not rely on others such as politicians or leaders to help them in their state of exigency. Rather, they took it upon themselves to act accordingly. In the Chipko situation, the women
displayed accountability to themselves, their families and the natural environment by going against traditional norms that sidelined women’s agency. Instead of waiting for the men to take action (by negotiating or working with government officials), the women actively involved themselves with direct action which included tactics such as footmarches, singing, destroying an effigy, and, most famously, using their own bodies to protect the trees. Wangari Maathai and members of the Green Belt Movement exhibited accountability by not relying on government official and foresters to address their state of exigency. Rather, the women defied the men and traditional norms that placed women as second-class citizens by they using common sense to start their own tree nurseries. By doing so, not only did the women take matters into their own hands, they proved that one does not need special skills or a high-ranking position in society to make a positive change. Finally, Julia Butterfly Hill’s solo direct action of living in a tree for two years not only placed herself in harm’s way, her self-less act successfully stopped Maxxam Corporation from felling the ancient tree (Luna). Hill’s act serve as evidence that change and self-accountability does not necessarily have to rely on a large number of people. Many great achievements can begin with small efforts and ideas.

Furthermore, for these women, non-violent rhetoric was not just a mode of protest; it was a necessity. In the case of the Chipko in India, the use of non-violent means not only helped the people address their immediate needs; their non-violent approach was also seen as an act that aligned with their religious beliefs (Vishnoi), that placed value in all creations. Non-violent action also aligned with the spirit of Satyagraha that emphasizes the need for a person to recognize the interrelationship between “faith in
the goodness of [people], truth, non-violence, self-suffering, the relationship of the means to the end, a rejection of coercion, and fearlessness…” (Weber, 1989, p. 83). In the Green Belt Movement of Kenya, non-violence was not only necessary to address the people’s exigency, it was an approach that was based on common-sense. For the Green Belt members, a non-violent mode of protest was something that was available to anybody, regardless of the person’s social position in society. Maintaining a peaceful atmosphere allowed the members to begin their own nurseries and increase the number of trees planted to meet the needs of their daily lives. The movement was also evidence that violence was not necessary to overthrow a dictator. The pragmatic need for non-violence and the simplicity of tree-planting, at least initially, was used to avoid facing the wrath of Moi (former President).

Last, but not least, in the case of Julia Butterfly Hill, a non-violent protest was necessary to prevent further environmental catastrophe (such as the mudslide that ruined homes in California’s Humboldt County). For Hill, non-violent means was also a way of maintaining and building connections between humans and the natural environment. Comparable to the Chipko, Hill also emphasized the purity of thought and deed. Hill’s act of self-sacrifice (living in a tree for two years), helped prove her point that nature is not a mere commodity. Rather, it is a source of life and protection, worthy of admiration.

_Spiritual/religious awareness as a motivating factor for non-violence_

Judging by the rhetoric in each case, elements of spiritual and/or religious obligation played a major role in motivating the movement members to see non-violence as an option for protest. The main distinction between spirituality and religion, I would
contend, lies in the fact that latter relates to an “organized faith” that recognizes a hierarchy in creations (e.g. God as creator, humans as followers). Whereas not all religions have the same tenets (e.g. Jesus as Prophet versus Jesus as God), all major faiths do subscribe to the Golden Rule, that dictates that we should treat others as we would like others to treat us (Armstrong, 2009). While religion may have played a major role in the Chipko’s situation (i.e., nature as an embodiment of God), the element of spirituality was notable in both the rhetoric of the Wangari Maathai and Julia Butterfly Hill. Recall Maathai’s words in An Interview About Replenishing the Earth:

(L)ove for the environment, respect and gratitude for Earth’s resources, self-empowerment and self-betterment, and cultivating the spirit of service and volunteerism. I should emphasize that none of these core values belongs to one faith tradition more than any other; indeed, someone can adhere to these values without being particularly religious or holding onto one particular creed. However, I believe these values are spiritual in that they foster the aspects of us that seek more than material comfort, power, or worldly success. They are what give our lives value and meaning, and inspire us (in Maathai, September 9, 2010).

Comparable to the rhetoric of Maathai on spirituality, Hill embraces spirituality and rejects violence as a means. In her narratives, Hill relates how living in Luna was a spiritual experience. She also emphasized in her Untitled poem (Hill, 2000) how the lack of spiritual connections/awareness play a part in people’s mistreatment of the Other. In her words,

See...  
what we do to the Earth  
we do to each other.  
And how we treat the Earth  
is reflected in how we treat each other.

Neither Maathai, nor Hill explicitly mentioned Satyagraha. But it is hard to ignore the inherent meaning of their rhetoric, which relates to non-violence. Distinct from
the pragmatic view of non-violence, which disregards the significance of religion and spirituality, the notion of non-violence in Ghandi’s *Satyagraha* recognizes the intrinsic worth or goodness in humans. Further, from a Ghandian spiritual standpoint, belief in God or a “higher being” is a prerequisite to non-violence. How one defines God is irrelevant. Rather, what remains significant is a person’s belief in a Supreme Power (Ghandi, 2001).

**Spirituality and Egalitarian Societies**

In the study of social movements, I have observed that the topic of spirituality is minimally addressed. Hart (1996) maintains that religion or “movement culture” has much to add to the study of social movements. In agreement with Hart, I would add, spirituality too (not just religion), warrants more attention. While scholars such as Leff and Utley (2004), Mahmood (2005), Levine (2008), and Hirschkind (2006) have discussed the influence of religion in the context of social movements, the topic of spirituality has not be given sufficient attention. Spirituality in this project refers to a viewpoint that embraces the belief in a higher power, without subscribing to an organized faith. The lack of attention to the subject of spirituality relates to the second theme that I would like to highlight. Specifically, it relates to the second research question that seeks to identify how non-Western rhetoric adds to the study of social movement rhetoric.

Based on my analysis, one main distinction that non-Western rhetoric raises, which adds to the conversation of social movement rhetoric, is linked to the answer given in the preceding question: That is, the question of spirituality in ecofeminist social movements. Spirituality, according to ecofeminists such as Karen Warren (2000) and
Petra Kelly (1994), is an important element in ecofeminism even though it is often
“placed outside of the province of Western philosophy (…) not only because they are not
amenable to philosophical proof (but also because) such claims challenge the rationalist
foundation of much of Western philosophy” (Warren, 2000, p. 198). Echoing Warren
(2000) and Kelly (1994), hooks (2000) contends, “Feminism has been and continues to
be a resistance movement which valorizes spiritual practice” (p. 105). According to
hooks, in opposition to organized religions which are often seen as patriarchal in nature,
many feminists turn to “new age spirituality” and Eastern traditions such as Hinduism,
Buddhism and other sources of spirituality as alternatives.

Elements of spirituality are especially evident in the rhetoric of Wangari Maathai
and Julia Butterfly Hill. As for the Chipko, although I contend the rhetoric is more
“religious” than spiritual, the religion of the activists is not Western in origin. The
inclusion of gods and goddesses in the rhetoric of the Chipko serve as support that their
belief-system is not necessarily rooted in patriarchy. Based on my analysis thus far, I
would say, including a spiritual dimension (in the study of social movements), does not
limit our understanding of certain tactics to the instrumental—in other words, certain
tactics aren’t just chosen to “get goals accomplished,” they are selected and practiced as
they align with spiritual/moral/religious values.

Another distinction that non-Western rhetoric raises that adds to the study of
social movement rhetoric relates to the issue of exigency and tactics used in egalitarian or
democratic societies. Looking back at the Chipko and the Green Belt situations as
examples, one may note how their exigencies were more “immediate” in the sense that
the exigencies related to the people’s basic needs for human survival. Hence, the
exigencies required the people to take prompt action with very little (if any) planning in
advance. Without the access to freedom of expression (Green Belt Movement), and direct
contact with government officials (Chipko), the movement members had to rely on
unconventional (and non-violent) means of protest.

Additionally, in the Chipko situation, the act of tree hugging and using bodies as
instruments of protest resulted in the men’s realization that women, too, are capable of
acting as agents of change. The women’s lack of dealings or communication with
government officials meant that the government’s authority had very little effect on the
women (they were not fearful of the officials). Whereas the government officials in the
Chipko situation eventually saw the significant role of the women in the movement, the
government officials in the Green Belt Movement saw the Kenyan women’s tree-planting
efforts as a tactic to undermine their authority. The women’s display of agency angered
the government and forest officials who felt that only they were entitled to address the
country’s needs.

Although Julia Butterfly Hill’s situation also required great sacrifices (living in a
tree for two years is no easy task), her less-than-immediate exigency allowed her more
room for organizing or planning the protest along with other activists from Earth First!.
Further, media exposure (something that the other two situations lacked), may have also
contributed to the favorable outcome of Hill’s situation. In other words, media attention
not only helped call attention to the tree-sitting protest, public views and concern with
regard to the state of exigency also put pressure on Pacific Lumber Company/Maxxam to reevaluate their logging practices.

The fact that no government bodies mingled in the situation or supported Maxxam, also allowed room for Hill to be varied with her tactics. Not only did she physically present herself as an obstacle to her adversaries, her access to both traditional and new media outlets gave her (and continues to give her) an upper hand. Till this day, Hill is still very much active in environmental activism via her public appearances, blog (http://juliabutterflyhill.wordpress.com/), official website (http://www.juliabutterfly.com/en/), and official Facebook page.

An essential lesson that can be learned from Hill’s case study relates to the significance of freedom of speech in a democratic society. Gunilla Carlsson, Minister for International Development Cooperation (Sweden), in her 2007 speech at the University of Social Science and Humanity (Vietnam), highlighted the importance of the “quality of information” an individual has access to and how this influences the person’s ability to participate as a member of society. This, in a way, may also be seen as a contributing factor with regard to what choices are available for a person who wishes to engage in some form of protest. Carlsson contends,

The principles of democracy, the rule of law, good governance and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are interlinked with one another but are also closely to poverty. Poverty is not only about lack of material resources. It is also about lack of power, opportunities, choice and security (...) Lively and independent media are essential components of the complex system of checks and balances that characterizes democratic societies. No one, and in particular politicians and civil servants, should be above the law and exempt from scrutiny.
In reference to the quote above, we may summarize that in the case of the Chipko and Green Belt Movement, not only were the members deficient in their basic needs, the lack of access to freedom of expression and unregulated information posed a barrier for the activists. This, perhaps, led them to engage in more direct action tactics.

**Bitzer’s Comparative Capacities**

Using Bitzer (1968) as a theoretical framework for this project has confirmed my earlier belief with regard to the theory’s comparative capacities. Bitzer’s theory is broad enough to study a variety of cultures/situations. Yet, it is sufficiently well-defined to allow for useful analysis. Hence the use of Bitzer in comparative rhetoric, I believe, is appropriate because it made the task of analyzing three case studies from different cultural backdrops manageable. Further, Bitzer’s theory that relates to people’s exigencies (hardship), audiences (friends/rivals), and constraints (challenges) adds an element of humanness to the analysis. Features such as exigence, audience, and constraints are elements that can be found in almost all situations, regardless of one’s cultural context. Bitzer’s theory implicates the area of comparative rhetoric by offering a method to analyze multiple texts from different cultural backgrounds. Simply put, Bitzer provides a practical way of “doing” comparative rhetoric. Additionally, not only is it a practical way of doing comparative rhetoric, Bitzer offers an objective-materialist theory that poses interesting advantages and disadvantages. I discuss this in the following section.

Bitzer’s theory aligns with an objective materialist view for the following reasons. Objectivity, according to Mulder (2004) is, “typically associated with ideas such as
reality, truth, and reliability.” Something that exists is believed to be unrelated to any conscious awareness of it: for example, a situation or exigency exists, whether people are aware of it or otherwise. In terms of materialism, Novack (1965) summarizes this philosophical concept through four principles. The first and basic premise refers to the nature of reality, irrespective of the existence of humankind. In this regard, matter is the substance that makes up our reality. Everything originates from matter, such as the phrase “Mother Nature,” which serves as evidence that “nature is the ultimate source of everything” (p. 24). The second principle of materialism relates to matter and mind. “According to materialism, matter produces mind and mind never exists apart from matter” (p. 24). The third principle of materialism is the one I feel aligns most with Bitzer (1968). According to Novack, the third premise of materialism acknowledges that “nature exists independently of mind” (p. 24). Bitzer’s recognition of a situation existing prior to, or independently of, rhetoric corresponds to this principle of materialism. Lastly, the fourth and last premise of materialism according to Novack, relates to the nonexistence of “immaterial entities, which are alleged to direct or influence the operations of nature, society and the inner man” (p. 24).

If we go by Novack’s explanation, we may qualify ecofeminists as materialist because of their strong association with the natural environment or “Mother Nature.” This further strengthens Bitzer’s fitting use in studying the texts in this project. Including an objective materialist perspective in this study enabled me to understand how the ecofeminist/protestors in the three case studies viewed nature as a separate entity with its own worth. Interestingly, though, this view was not reason for the protestors to view
nature as mere commodity. Instead, activists in all cases connected the distinct existences between nature and human via religious and/or spiritual rhetoric.

This leads to the main disadvantages I see in Bitzer’s theory. Although Bitzer provided me with a stable framework to study different cultures/situations, does Bitzer provide space for the non-material/spiritual? Is it a contradiction to use Bitzer’s theory in this project when ecofeminists speak of spirituality with such high regard? What about the fluidity of a situation—how do we account for the idea that what is considered an exigency today may not be an exigency ten to twenty years later?

Hence, while Bitzer provided me with a stable framework to go by, the rhetorical situation can also be seen as somewhat restrictive. Since my main focus was to identify the text(s) exigency, audience, and constraints, I may have unintentionally missed other details that were significant to the analysis: e.g. how did time influence the exigencies? If I were to revisit the Chipko’s situation again in India today, would it be the same? It would interesting to see the type of analysis that can be produced if one were to use Vatz (1999) or Biesecker (1999) as a framework for comparative analysis.

Another disadvantage of using Bitzer relates to his objective standpoint—specifically, that it may be too strict, as it does not allow room for addressing multiple layers of a situation. If we take an exigency as one example, one may argue that the urgency of a specific exigency may not be equal in all situations—for instance, famine in under-developed countries may need more urgent attention in comparison to the need for free speech in developing countries. Despite its limitations, however, I maintain that
Bitzer’s rhetorical situation is a worthy theory to consider in the conversation on comparative rhetoric.

(Re)Defining Comparative and Non-Violent Rhetoric.

In Chapter One, I offered three definitions of comparative rhetoric from Kennedy (1998), Neher (1973), and Jiao (2009). Kennedy (1998) defines comparative rhetoric as “the cross-cultural study of rhetorical traditions as they exist or have existed in different societies around the world” (p. 1, emphasis added). Neher (1973) provided an earlier definition when he asserted that comparative rhetoric “studies the mode of public address among a specified group of people and the theories and values governing their public address in specific cultural contexts” (p. 1, emphasis added). Lastly, Jiao (2009) offered a different view when he included not just written and spoken text, but also visual symbols as text worthy of analysis. From the definitions provided, one may note the emphasis given to the origin/source of text (e.g., from different “rhetorical traditions”), and method/technique (e.g. mode of public address, visuals, etc).

However, based on the analysis conducted in this project, I would expand these definitions by adding the element of evolution, which I feel is important for the critic to consider. The element of evolution specifically relates to synchrony and/or diachrony of an event or situation. Specifically, synchrony would allow analysis based on contemporary political context, while diachrony looks into the historical context. Examples of questions posed below may be usefully answered with a synchronic and diachronic analysis of the situation’s evolution: For instance, would a predicament that occurred in the 1700s still be considered an exigency if it occurred today? Would the
activists still be considered second-class citizens if they were to protest in this modern age? How did the movement member’s protest rhetoric evolve from the beginning of the movement’s inception to the present scenario? How did the evolution of protest rhetoric in the Chipko compare to that of the Green Belt Movement? In summary, Comparative Rhetoric, from my standpoint, would be both a method and an area of study that encompasses and addresses not only different cultural traditions, and their mode of public address, but also the evolution (synchrony/diachrony) of a rhetorical situation.

In reference to the second area of focus for this study, I contend the definition of non-violent rhetoric has long been taken for granted. For instance, though the term non-violent appeared numerous times in DeLuca’s (1999) analysis of visual and protest rhetoric, nowhere in his text can the reader find an explicit definition of non-violent rhetoric. Gorsevski (2004) maintains that scholars in the social sciences (e.g. interpersonal communication) usually analyze non-violence in reference to conflict resolution. Scholars of rhetoric, however, are seen as “less versed with definitions of peace and rhetorical strategies of conflict resolution” (p. 6). In my opinion, non-violent rhetoric should be further highlighted and promoted as an alternative form of protest not only because it is an approach easily accessible to anybody (regardless of one’s social status or position in society); non-violent rhetoric brings forth people’s capacity to address their needs while not disregarding compassion for Others. It is an act that must be practiced constantly, and not just when it is “convenient.” To borrow from Armstrong (2009),

(P)eople have emphasized the importance of compassion, not just because it sounds good, but because it works. People have found that when they have
implemented the Golden Rule as Confucius said, “all day and every day,” not just a question of doing your good deed for the day and then returning to a life of greed and egotism, but to do it all day and every day, you dethrone yourself from the center of your world, put another there, and you transcend yourself. And it brings you into the presence of what’s been called God, Nirvana, Rama, Tao. Something that goes beyond what we know in our ego-bound existence.

While Murphy’s (1996) work has aided my starting point in defining non-violence, I feel her classification of the three types of non-violence warrant further analysis—hence, the case studies in this project. Reviewing Murphy, non-violence was categorized into three genres: Christian, Pragmatic, and Feminist non-violence. Although these distinctions proved to be useful for analysis, they did not address the fact that Christianity or religion alone does not dictate a person’s moral standards. One who is not religious, but spiritual, can be just as passionate about non-violence compared to those who are religiously devoted.

Interestingly, for Gene Sharp, non-violence is more about technique rather than philosophy. For Sharp, non-violent action is:

a technique of action for applying power in a conflict by using symbolic protests, noncooperation, and defiance, but not physical violence. Nonviolent action may involve: 1. Acts of omission—that is, people may refuse to perform acts that they usually perform, are expected by custom to perform, or are required by law or regulation to perform; 2. Acts of commission—that is, people may perform acts that they do not usually perform, are not expected by custom to perform, or are forbidden to perform; or 3. A combination of the two. As a technique, therefore, nonviolent action is not passive. It is not inaction. It is action that is nonviolent (Albert Einstein Institution, n.d.)

Furthermore, from Sharp’s viewpoint, individuals engaged in non-violent action need not subscribe to any particular religion, moral, or ethical beliefs. “Ordinary” people, including those who believe violence to be morally acceptable, can also practice non-violent action. In this regard, Gorsevski’s (2004) definition of non-violence can be seen
as more pragmatic, because for Gorsevski, “(Non-violence) is about achieving political results by using as little violence as possible, without necessarily excluding the occurrence of violence” (p. 74). Comparable to Sharp, Gorsevski argues that purity in thought or action is not a prerequisite to non-violence.

Though I initially found veracity in this definition, my perspective has been altered after analyzing the protest rhetoric in the three case studies. As opposed to the pragmatic approach, my stance has shifted from being indefinite, to more spiritual. From my standpoint, non-violent rhetoric is not just a technique/tactic. Rather, it is also the manifestation of a philosophy that aims to not only address exigencies, but also to amend the relationship of the adversary to becoming an ally. Non-violent rhetoric does not only address the material conditions of a situation, but also incorporates the spiritual and/or religious as a mode of address. Incorporating the spiritual, or recognizing that one is accountable for Others (whether human or non-human) helps solidify a person’s commitment to non-violence. True practice of non-violent rhetoric shuns brutality in any shape or form. While some may question how we can recognize a person’s spirituality as “sincere,” I turn to Ghandi (2001) and Weber (1989) for support. Ghandi insists, “To bear [withstand] all kinds of tortures without a murmur of resentment is impossible for a human being without the strength that comes from God” (p. 364). “(M)oral appeal to the heart or conscience is… more effective than an appeal based on threat …While the satyagrahi tries to convert, he must himself also remain open to persuasion” (Weber, 1989, p. 82, emphasis added). Simply put, based on these viewpoints, we may determine a person’s sincerity via their willingness to not just persuade, but be persuaded. Further,
s/he would also be willing to withstand sacrifice without any feeling of bitterness.

Patience and faith are paramount.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

While this project has been an eye-opening experience for me, I cannot ignore the fact that there is much room for improvement. However, due to time constraints and my own lack of fluency in doing comparative rhetoric, only three case studies were able to be completed. This may be seen as limiting for critics who wish to formulate a solid theory for comparative and non-violent rhetoric. The second limitation of this study relates to the issue of standpoint. Although I had given priority to texts from a first person standpoint (such as interviews or direct quotations), I feel a primary interview with an ecofeminist such as Julia Butterfly Hill would have helped strengthen the arguments in this study. Unfortunately, I did not have the luxury of time to conduct such an interview. For those who wish to engage in comparative rhetoric, I would encourage the inclusion of interview transcripts that may highlight recurring themes that can help contribute to the theorizing of comparative and non-violent rhetoric.

Lastly, if the situation permits, I would also encourage critics interested in comparative rhetoric to engage in archival research to further enrich their analysis. Between the three case studies that I conducted for this project, I found researching for the Chipko to be the most challenging because of its rich history. Much of the material I managed to locate was in the form of microfiches, dated government documents, worn out books and documentaries encased in dusty (and bulky) VHS-cassettes. Though it was not an easy task, I found great contentment in researching for that particular chapter.
There were times when I felt like setting up camp in the library! I hope other scholars wishing to do comparative rhetoric will find the same satisfaction in their efforts.

**Final Thoughts**

Efforts shown by the activists in the three case studies serve as evidence that those at the grassroots level, no matter how marginalized, are capable of overcoming environmental and political exigencies without relying on violent means of protest. On the contrary, by using their bodies and their voices in non-violent ways, the people exhibit a genre of direct action that is just as powerful (if not more powerful) to defeat their adversaries. Though the case studies explored in this project originate from different cultural contexts, the ecofeminist philosophy of non-violence served as a common theme throughout the analysis. By making their protest rhetoric visible and accessible for all individuals regardless of their position in society, the members of ecofeminist movements call attention to the oppression practiced by corporations and corrupted government(s). Studying the rhetoric of non-violent movements not only helps us understand their strengths and possible limitations. At the same time, it will also help to further advance this type of rhetoric as a leading mode of rhetoric, and not just an alternative. In conclusion, this dissertation has been an introductory analysis of non-violent protest to add to the conversation on comparative rhetoric. It is hoped that this humble attempt will help strengthen the relevancy of non-violence while highlighting its value in the context of social movements.
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