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As I watched the summer Olympics, a Best Buy commercial began playing in heavy rotation that, had I not read The Megarhetorics of Global Development, I might not have given a second thought. The advertisement features Kiva.org founder, Jessica Jackley, and her father, David, telling how the laptop he bought his daughter allowed her to start the first peer-to-peer micro-lending site “to lend twenty-five dollars or more to entrepreneurs around the world” (Future Innovators). The 30-second commercial features a few quick flashes of still photographs of these entrepreneurs—a group of Africans, a Latino man on what appears to be a farm, a single African woman standing in a muddy field and other people of color. This combination of understated corporate involvement, social responsibility and decontextualization of foreign aid in the commercial encapsulates what editors and contributors to The Megarhetorics of Development seek to unravel through rhetorical analysis: to challenge the commonplace assumption that “development always leads to growth, progress, one-way assistance, and empowerment” (3). This volume not only succeeds in providing new models for applying rhetorical analysis of contemporary texts but also effectively serves as a counter-rhetoric of its own.

After reading Rebecca Dingo’s chapter titled “Turning the Tables on the Megarhetoric of Women’s Empowerment,” I began to understand the power of the rhetorical unraveling of megarhetorics the authors engage in. Dingo’s analysis of CARE, another micro-lender, and Kiva.org reveals that both organizations provide little, if any, context for who their donations support nor do they educate donors about the limits of economic exchange to empower entrepreneurs. She argues that the megarhetoric of empowerment used in micro-lending is “short-lived” because it is uni-directional and simply reinforces a neocolonialist approach of white, wealthy Westerners helping impoverished people of color (196). In their introduction, Scott and Dingo appropriate anthropologist Arjun Appuradurai’s term “megarhetorics of development” to describe a commonly accepted view “that wealthier nations will not be secured financially or geopolitically if the poor are not part of the modern, global, and capitalist economy” (2). These megarhetorics include God-terms such as “empowerment,” “inclusion,” “fair trade,” “corporate social responsibility,” and “sustainability,” all taken up and taken apart by this volume’s contributors.

A major strength of Megarhetorics is its intertextuality. Inspired by a 2009 CCCC workshop on transnational rhetorics, the contributors continually reference and link across the texts to develop a continuity among subject
matter that on the surface might appear disparate but nevertheless remains interconnected.

*Megarhetorics* is divided into two sections. The first half of the book, titled “Extending Rhetorical Concepts and Methods,” applies classical theories of rhetoric in novel ways. For example, Robert DeChaine examines Ethos Water’s marketing campaign as a “humanitarian doxa, or structure of beliefs” around the megarhetoric of corporate social responsibility (77). His analysis advances a more complex understanding of ethos in the context of increasingly corporatized world. Matt Newcomb, in a chapter titled “Development Shifts: Changing Feelings about Compassion in Korea,” expands the role of affect in rhetorical analysis of categories such as “developing countries” (109) used by NGOs that may shape the identity of a nation. The idea of extending rhetorical concepts also is evident in Jason A. Edwards and Jaime Wright’s analysis of President Clinton’s addresses on globalization. They not only examine the discourse he engages in, but also contrast it with the material consequences of his policies. The second half of the book, titled “Building Counter-Rhetorics of Resistance,” helps cement it as a direct challenge to the assumption that development is inherently good. For example, Robert McRuer’s “Enfreakment; or, Aliens of Extraordinary Disability,” is perhaps the most powerful and entertaining example of complicating the megarhetorics of “inclusion” and “accessibility” through his reading of the 9-minute film *The Chain South*, produced by performance artist Nao Bustamente and videographer Rafael Calderon. In stark contrast to the mostly somber tone of other chapters in this volume, McRuer’s writing as well as his subject matter is an energetic exploration of convivial rhetoric.

Geared toward students and teachers of transnational rhetoric, *Megarhetorics* illustrates the complex intertextual and “intercontextual” (Scott 18) layers of global rhetoric—Scott borrows media theorist Lev Manovich’s “drifting ‘global media cloud’ of rhetoric” to describe the dynamics of tracking transnational rhetorics in his chapter titled “Tracking ‘Transglocal’ Risks in Pharmaceutical Development” (38). In Scott’s analysis of pharmaceutical giant Novartis and its lawsuit to reverse the Indian government’s rejection of its patent request for an anti-cancer drug called Glivec, there is no clear victor in the debate over issues of fair trade, sovereignty, and international patent law. Scott highlights a simple dichotomy that forms the basis for arguments surrounding various rhetorical events: patients versus patents. Drawing on the classical concept of *metis*, Scott’s analysis traces the way that various parties shift and adjust this dichotomous phrase to their advantage. Similarly, Tim Jensen and Wendy S. Hesford discuss the shifting rhetoric employed by the Chinese government to win the bid to host the 2008 Olympic Games through appeals to human rights and their efforts to de-politicize and distance themselves from human rights issues once awarded host status. Their chapter, titled “Staging the Beijing Olympics: Intersecting Human Rights and Economic Development Narratives,” provides examples of effective counter-rhetorics, particularly shaming tactics (human rights
groups branded the 2008 Olympic Games as the Genocide Olympics), which succeeded in influencing China to change its policy toward human rights issues in Darfur, Sudan (134-36). These kinds of contrasts between megarhetorics and their counter-rhetorics are frequently juxtaposed in the book.

Moreover, many of the contributors focus on the visual as central to their rhetorical analysis. Scott and Dingo foreshadow this focus in their introduction through a description of a scene from the documentary *Life and Debt*, which focuses on Jamaica’s economic troubles since the 1960s. Eileen Schell’s chapter, titled “Framing the Megarhetorics of Agricultural Development,” compares and contrasts the visual rhetoric of agribusiness giant Archer Daniels Midland (ADM) and the rhetoric used by feminist activist Vandana Shiva to promote sustainable agricultural development. Schell takes apart the visual rhetoric employed by ADM in its television and online marketing, demonstrating how the company relies on an epideictic approach, one of praising farmers, as its chief rhetorical strategy. Schell, however, highlights ADM’s role in price fixing in the 1990s, an “act . . . in direct contrast to ADM’s rhetoric of partnerships” with farmers (157). She then turns to contrast ADM’s epideictic rhetoric with Shiva’s strategies of rhetorical identification through book publishing, online grassroots advocacy, and non-violent protests. Schell describes the Shiva-led protest against an act of “bio-piracy” in which a Texas company attempting to patent a species of Basmati rice native to India (166). Schell describes the cover of Shiva’s casebook *Campaign against Biopiracy*, which uses the synecdochal symbol of a “fat, top-hatted white capitalist man in tux and tails running full speed with a bag of seeds in his hands” (167). Schell argues that this synecdochal image is an attempt to reveal a history of colonialism “continued under a new neoliberal ‘hat’” and not simply target one company but the history of Western colonialism “as manifested in U.S. patent laws and WTO agreements” (167). Bret Benjamin’s chapter “Making the Case: Bamako and the Problem of Anti-Imperial Art,” focuses exclusively on analysis of the critically acclaimed film *Bamako*. *Bamako* is set in a Malian courtyard, where the World Bank and other institutions are put on trial for destroying Africa’s social fabric. Building on literary theorist Frederic Jameson’s Marxian analytical methods, Benjamin spends considerable time framing a theory of “imperialism” in historical and analytical terms, “rather than merely as a pejorative descriptor” (203). At the risk of oversimplifying, the problem with imperial art, in my read of Benjamin, is that it appears to be limited primarily to a role of provocation. “One film,” he concedes, “cannot, of course, bring down the World Bank” (229). Benjamin’s critique raises the question of how effectively art serves as counter-rhetorics. Of the more successful examples of counter-rhetorics described in this volume, those that actually appear to provoke action involve networks of campaigning activists and varying rhetorical strategies from re-branding and appropriating logos (Jensen and Hesford’s description of activist tactics at the 2008 Olympics) or engaging in rhetorical events (Shiva’s protest at the U.S. embassy in Delhi).
As a former marketer for an international non-governmental organization and now a teacher of rhetoric, I found *Megarhetorics* to be consciousness-raising. I found myself arguing aloud with Dingo and her critique of micro-lending and its role in empowerment, laughing at McRuer’s celebration of “freakery,” and contemplating whether I might have been complicit in perpetuating a neoliberal development agenda (243). *Megarhetorics* provides models for how other scholars might extend rhetorical concepts to a range of new media discourses. More importantly, what makes the book worth reading is its deft deconstruction of common assumptions about global development.

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**Works Cited**