This book is an important contribution to the understanding of the role that censorship has played in the development of popular music in both the colonial and independent eras of African countries – though here it pays to be more specific. While the book’s title identifies the contributions as covering Africa, the content actually covers countries colonised by Britain, with a further contribution on Algeria. Thus, there are chapters on South Africa, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Malawi, Kenya and Ghana, among others. While such a focus could be considered to be limiting, given the book’s title, it actually makes for a fascinating account of the impact of British colonial practices in respect of censorship and the variety of ways that the post-independence regimes in these countries have reworked this particular aspect of their colonial inheritance.

Martin Cloonan provides a useful Introduction, placing censorship in its western history, first as an aspect of religion, specifically the hegemony of Catholicism in medieval Europe, and then as an element in the establishment of the nation-state. In Britain, the touchstone for arguments about censorship is John Milton’s *Areopagitica* which he published in 1644. In *Areopagitica*, Milton argues against censorship prior to printing, suggesting that it would be impossible to stop works being published. Milton is often taken as arguing for a free press but his point was that censorship should take place after publication when authors and publishers could be held accountable for their writings. In the Anglophone world this distinction is now commonly used to distinguish countries that have greater, or less, freedom of expression.

In *Popular Music Censorship in Africa* there is, for the authors, a correspondence between the identification of repressive dictatorships and the use of pre-publication censorship. Thus, Kelly Askew and John Kitime explain how, under Tanzanian state socialism, on the mainland all song lyrics had to be approved by a committee of the state-run broadcasting organisation before they could be either recorded or played on the radio. This, though, would seem to be the exception rather than the rule. These countries inherited from Britain the system advocated by Milton and, even in increasingly repressive Zimbabwe, as Diane Thram describes, censorship continues to be based on laws passed during the continuing British colonial hegemony after the Unilateral Declaration of Independence. The consequence in Zimbabwe is that musicians can, technically, play and sing what they like but if the government doesn’t approve, then the artists may be
threatened, beaten up, and their music refused airplay on the government-run radio and television system. Indeed, what comes through in so many of these chapters is that the key to music censorship in these nation-states where Britain was the dominant coloniser has to do not with the oversight of music before it is recorded but with the distribution of music through the mass media. For example, Wilson Akpan explains that, in Nigeria under the military regime, censorship consisted of both intimidation and violence against the artist as well as the banning of songs from airplay. As it happens, when radio in Britain was limited to the centralised system of the government-funded British Broadcasting Corporation, the banning of a song from airplay had the same effect – that is, that it would not be heard by the majority of the population.

One thing that comes through all the chapters in this book is the importance of censorship in some form to the cultural formation and reproduction of the nation-state. The formation of African countries has not been built on long standing socio-cultural entities. Rather, they are the result of colonial exploitation. The consequence is that post-independence governments have had lengthy struggles to try to make these countries politically viable, which the governments have often taken to mean that they need to impose some common values or culture. Often this has entailed the championing of a government-imposed ideology. For better or worse, censorship has played a crucial part in this process. While this is a common theme of the authors of this book the complexity of this practice is, perhaps, best brought out in the three chapters devoted to South Africa. Michael Drewett’s chapter examines the musical boycott from outside the country against the apartheid regime; Gary Baines considers the problem of censoring hate speech; and Drewett has worked with Johnny Clegg to outline and contextualise his experience as a musician working with an integrated group during the time of apartheid.

All in all, this is an important collection that marks a start at examining the complex intersection between music and politics in postcolonial Africa.

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*Bounty Chords* is a book with ‘attitude’, originality and both scholarly and moral integrity: a sometimes melancholy but utterly fascinating account of the music, dance and related heritage of Norfolk and Pitcairn Islanders of Bounty mutineer-related descent. It also contains a deeply personal and thought provoking account of how the author fearlessly negotiated the treacherous shoals awaiting the scholar who dares to deviate from the orthodoxy of traditional scholarship in basing their study on a methodology that is both boldly progressive and ideo-