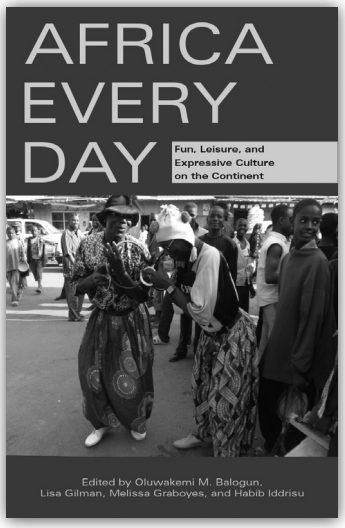
Part 3, 'The Unspoken and the Unspeakable', explores 'what happens when words fail in oral history' (p 200). The limits of oral history as an evidentiary practice are encountered when, in this section's chapters, informants refuse to cooperate, when rumour surfaces as legitimate evidence and when emotion overcomes an interviewee.

Overall, the volume's editors and contributors celebrate oral history's potential for architectural history. Oral history offers opportunities to extend the archive, vocalise neglected voices, expand topics and even revise architectural history's writing practices. As Andrea J Merrett proposes, 'Maybe our written [architectural] histories should be more like oral histories: generally structured, but fragmented, open to contradictions, and allowing for embodied subjectivities' (p 263).

What *Speaking of Buildings* has to offer those already expert in oral history is less evident. Merrett does propose that 'architectural historians can also contribute to oral history methodology by developing a way of documenting body language and gestures into transcripts, to add to the already standard practice of noting audio cues such as sighs or laughter' (p 263). But there seems to be little advanced self-understanding of oral history's foundations, for example its apparent bases in the coherence of story narratives and in experience as unambiguous evidence. These are subjects historians Hayden White and Joan Scott have long pondered. Wall's is a rare voice in the volume when she cautions that 'people do not simply recall in some spontaneous fashion the contents of a life lived but are shaping and composing their life story' (p 55). This reviewer wonders if there might be some naivety in *Speaking of Buildings*' enthusiasm for oral history.

Nevertheless, *Speaking of Buildings* is an incredibly valuable contribution to architectural history. The contents of its chapters add much new material to the field. Moreover, the book stands as an indispensable handbook for any architectural historian who wants to engage with oral history's opportunities. The volume models ways of surfacing new voices, knowledge and perspectives. It could potentially transform architectural history.

Daniel M Abramson



AFRICA EVERY DAY: FUN, LEISURE, AND EXPRESSIVE CULTURE ON THE CONTINENT

Edited by Oluwakemi M Balogun, Lisa Gilman, Melissa Graboyes and Habib Iddrisu

Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2019, 386pp, US$85/$34.95 hardback/paperback.

In the preface to *Africa Every Day*, the editors make it clear that the book is very much crafted with Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's American roommate in mind, the freshman she mentions in her 2009 TED Talk who is surprised her Nigerian roommate speaks English well, uses a stove and listens not to tribal music but to Mariah Carey. In other words, a student 'who [has] had little exposure to or direct experience with Africa' (p ix), and whose knowledge of the continent is entirely mediated by a Western portrayal of 'daily life in Africa as nothing but hardship, violence and despair' (p 1). Consisting of twenty-nine essays, the geographical reach of the collection is impressive, as is its range of topics and the ground it covers historically (p ix). The research it showcases draws on a diverse array of methods, including oral history, to create counter-narratives that challenge this homogenised, static view of the continent by placing 'multilayered stories about everyday life' centre stage (p 14). While it would be worth drawing undergraduate students' attention to all of the different research methodologies and methods used, this review will focus solely on the book's use of oral history.

Many of the chapters in the collection are ethnographic studies, and the majority of these studies use oral history interviews to aid their fieldwork. While I immensely enjoyed reading every one, there are far too many to discuss them all at length. I have therefore chosen to write on those that particularly appealed to me as a literature student, starting with Eric Debrah Otchere's work on the songs of indigenous Ghanaian fishermen and how he uses interviews to explore this oral tradition. As part of the research process, Otchere plays a song he has recorded back to the man who originally sang it, and then interviews him about word choice, structure and the intended meaning behind the song's cryptic content (pp 314-15). The value of such recordings for future scholars cannot be overstated. I was equally fascinated by Alex Perullo and James Nindi's use of oral history to show how humour helps people to navigate the challenges of modern-day Tanzania, with specific reference to the social consumption of comedy films. They not only interviewed a film comedian, King Majuto, but also a limited sample audience of a 'dozen people (six men and six women between the ages of twenty-five and forty-five)' who were familiar with his work (p 216). Focussing on a particular episode, the oral history interviews evidenced that while everyone found something to laugh at, where each individual located the

episode's comedy said much about their personal political or social views.

Project interviews might also be used to recover forgotten and overlooked histories, as Emily Callaci's, Charlotte Grabli's and Joshua Grace's essays show. Through a series of author interviews Callaci gives a fascinating account of the popularity of the Swahili detective novella in the 1970s. She locates this literary movement in a specific group of ten to fifteen men who levy their writing and their friendships to survive in an increasingly competitive and urbanised Dar es Salaam. Grabli likewise interviews a number of Congolese musicians to uncover how radio, introduced as a colonial tool, became the medium through which the Congolese people gained a sense of autonomy and 'cultural sovereignty' even before the country gained independence from Belgium (p 281). In his essay, Grace uses oral history interviews to expand upon conventional notions of art and to explore the concept of 'mechanical expression' while also tracing a history of automobiles, garages and car repairs 'from [the] mechanic's perspective' (p 287). Beginning from the days of a colonised Tanzania where the majority of garages were British-owned, the collected oral histories reveal the slow but steady rise of independent shops before independence was even officially declared, to the very real struggles faced by unregistered garages (*gereji bubu*) in the present day (p 291). The real strength of Grace's essay, however, is not that it harnesses oral history to produce a historical account or an accurate summary of what is typical of garages in Tanzania. Instead, his writing's mixture of paraphrases, embedded fragments and longer quotations from in-depth interviews with Saidi and Kondo makes for excellent story-telling, and transforms what we see when we imagine a *gereji bubu*. Through these striking voices we no longer see low-skilled young men eking out a living amidst useless scrap metal, but incredible artists expressing themselves creatively, while having fun as they learn and innovate on the job.

Memorable and compelling stories like these are at the very heart of the collection. Another I found particularly striking was Paolo Israel's chapter, entitled 'Portrait of a Playful Man: Mustafa, Master of *Mapiko*'. While over a hundred interviews form the basis of Israel's now-published research into Mozambiquan *mapiko* (traditional masquerade), his paper in this collection distils these interviews to provide the background for 'the life story of one of its practitioners', a man named Mustafa (pp 239, 229). Israel draws on three interviews 'with the protagonist of the story in 2003, 2004 and 2005' in order to celebrate both the legacy of *mapiko* as well as the man (p 239). His recounting of Mustafa's life reveals how it is through 'daring, visionary individuals' that cultural practices are continually transformed and innovated (p 239). This powerful retelling of one's man life, as well as all of the accounts mentioned above, uses oral history to emphasise the agency of ordinary men and women as historical and cultural actors, even in colonial times.

Yet, given the project's emphasis on story-telling, it is disappointing that very few researchers provided citations with exact dates. To do so is in line with best practice, but it is also a recognition that each individual's words, and their stories, belong to them, even if they form part of a summary or are paraphrased by a researcher. It also helpfully directs the reader to the location of the full oral history. Although some researchers did manage, for the most part, through skilful writing to ensure words stayed connected with speakers and gave the readers an approximate timeline (the year the interview took place), this was more difficult to do in ethnographic studies that used oral history as one method among many. Without citations, it is difficult to tell if a quotation came from an oral source or a written one. Readers also cannot always differentiate between recorded interviews and the informal conversations researchers had or heard as part of their fieldwork. Examples of best practice can be found in Steven Van Wolputte's, Maya Angela Smith's and Lisa Gilman's chapters. Moreover, not all researchers indicated in their introduction that they used oral history interviews, even when they did. And even those who did use them did not always provide sufficient evidence about how interview candidates were chosen. I would have therefore welcomed more information about the interview process and the interviewees themselves. For instance, although Perullo and Nindi indicate in their chapter on Tanzanian humour both the gender and age of the interviewees they directly quote, additional information such as whether the person had grown up or currently lives in a rural or urban area, or even their religious beliefs to highlight their cultural background, would have given their readers a fuller picture. Admittedly, this may have been difficult for contributors to do if faced with strict word limits. Nevertheless, the criticism stands.

To conclude, if a more rigorous oral methodology had been followed, *Africa Every Day* would have been an exemplar of how oral history enables and empowers individual and corporate voices to cut through the noise of media outlets and macro-histories. In spite of this shortcoming, however, it remains an excellent contribution to the field of African studies. I would go so far as to say its editors are overly modest in their assessment of what the collection achieves, for it not only challenges the views of those who have not had any experience of the continent, but also those who have. Suffice to say, I will never be able to look at a Tanzanian garage in the same way again.

Siobhan Dooley