lic events. While these acts of resistance are, in a way, a critique of an unequal and oppressive system, they do not necessarily challenge the gendered division of labour, labour hierarchies, or patriarchy per se, but may nonetheless "serve as means for the women to achieve their own ends, however limited these might be" (156).

The eighth chapter focuses on activism in the everyday which means that Banerjee does not want to look at organised protests as in social movements but rather protests that occur spontaneously among local people. Traditional social movements on the plantations were trade union movements. They, however, remained alien to the workers and lost importance over the last years. Newer social movements include various NGOs that act as interest groups on behalf of the workers. NGOs help to teach workers about their labour rights and facilitate protests but workers creatively employ the strategies they learn from NGOs according to their own needs (161 f.). Banerjee then introduces four examples of everyday protest from her fieldwork that go beyond organised forms of protest. She describes a train track blockade to pressure the government to deliver provisions or women's refusal to work until a new assistant manager begged their pardon for a mistake he committed towards them (deducting too much weight from collected tea leaves). Another example of everyday protest appeared when a woman filed a complaint against men who stole a chicken from her. When the men threatened her with rape if she does not withdraw the complaint, the woman went with a group of women to a public place where the men gathered and challenged them to rape her immediately, thereby publicly shaming them and preventing any further menaces on their part. The last protest mentioned happened after an incident where a manager kicked a pregnant woman in the stomach and she lost her baby. This caused protests with speeches, songs, and street theatre against the everyday violence that workers had to bear on plantations. Banerjee wants to show with her examples of everyday protests that sometimes female bodies become a re-embodiment of patriarchy, but at other times, they "become the tools to protest against normative codes of gender performance which construct women as docile, passive and mute bodies, and provide a means of empowerment not only as women but as conscious political agents" (180). Protest brought women together across common ethnic or religious groups in building "strategic alliances" (178). Banerjee wants to go beyond measuring protest in terms of failure and success regarding changes in government policies or legislation as it is often done in protest literature to showing a transformative power of protests when women through their participation in protests reclaim their citizenship or re-establish a "political subjectivity" (179).

Finally, Banerjee's conclusion contains a passage on limitations of her study that indicates topics for further research on plantations. She mentions that future research could focus on male workers, on ethnicity as a central identity category, or on plantation as spaces of increasing mobility. Notwithstanding, Banerjee sees her study's contributions to the existing literature in four major ways. First, in overcoming the dichotomy of public and private spaces in the notion of the everyday. Second, in understanding agency and victimhood not as opposed to one another but as mutual because agency in a context of severe subordination and marginalisation is shaped by the restricting structural patterns rather than being its antithesis. Third, the author emphasises her contribution to activism and social movement literature by focusing on everyday protests rather than on organised or institutionalised forms of protest. Forth, according to the author, her main contribution is that she gives voice to women who are otherwise only displayed either as undifferentiated victims or as idealised images on tea packages. Banerjee's ethnography on activism and agency on tea plantations in Dooars is an important contribution to understand plantations as social and gendered spaces. It convinces by ethnographic depth which can be seen in the detailed and ramified ethnographic descriptions the book contains and the complexity in which the social worlds of plantations are analysed through a plethora of analytical lenses. The book is a must-read for everybody interested in the social embedding of plantation economies, for scholars on social movements, and for researchers interested in the interplay between structure and agency.

Anna-Lena Wolf

Berger, Peter, and **Justin Kroesen** (eds.): Ultimate Ambiguities. Investigating Death and Liminality. New York: Berghahn Books, 2016. 278 pp. ISBN 978-1-78238-609-4. Price: $ 105.00

"Before there was wonder at the miracle of life," wrote Hans Jonas identifying what he described as the *problem* of human finitude "there was wonder about death and what it might mean" (The Phenomenon of Life. Toward a Philosophical Biology. Evanston 2001: 8). It is a problem that has remained active throughout history and which continually challenges the combined knowledge of science, religion, and culture. Peter Berger and Justin Kroesen's excellent contribution to the debate and discussion about the shared condition of human finitude – in the form of their edited collection, "Ultimate Ambiguities. Investigating Death and Liminality" – takes as its central theme the uncertainties and ambiguities that frequently surround and mediate death and dying. The assembled authors, who are mainly drawn from social anthropology, history, and religious studies, explore the different kinds of transition and transformation that arise on the boundaries of life and death, including when confronting one's own or another person's death and dying. Death is approached as something that frequently locates persons, as well as families, societies, and cultures, at the furthest reaches of comprehension, understanding, and knowledge and in doing so is generative of different forms of ambivalence, ambiguity, and uncertainty. Individual and collective attempts to come to terms with death, including through ritual processes and when negotiating the threshold between the living and the dead, are explored in relation to a broad range of social, cultural, and religious contexts.

An important point that Berger wants to draw attention to in setting up the book in his introduction is the

paradoxical and complex amalgams of certainty and uncertainty that shape people's perceptions, understandings, and practical responses to death and dying, as articulated thus: "Sure as death." This idiom refers to the quality of inevitability of a certain phenomenon. In this sense, certainly, death is a sure thing. However, beside the fact that as humans we all share the condition of a limited lifespan, beyond the datum of inescapable annihilation at some point in our lives, death remains distressingly ambiguous.

Here is liminality writ large and it comes as no surprise that Victor Turner emerges as a key figure throughout many of the chapters. Divided into three parts: Part I: Rituals; Part II: Concepts; Part III: Imageries, the book seeks to navigate the ethnographic, theoretical, and imaginative properties of liminality and its relationship to death and dying. Beginning with Eric de Maaker, a number of the book's chapters attend to the symbolic and material presence of the corpse in all its visible and sensorial dimensions, not least the problem of impurity and the dramatic challenge to society and religion posed by the body after death. Building on his classic ethnographic case study, "Dialogues with the Dead" (Cambridge 1993), Piers Vitebsky describes the mutually constitutive worlds of the living and the dead among Sora people in India. The dead remain active agents in the lives of the living, while the living experience something of the pain of death through illness so as to create shared forms of liminality and communitas. For Pieter Nanninga, the condition of liminality becomes attached to the figure of the suicide bomber or martyr who in many instances leaves behind no corpse and as such there is no body for ritual burial. Instead, death rites and rituals are often conducted in advance and form part of the preparation for death. Afterwards, they are remembered as a perpetual and circulating presence in graffiti, posters, audiocassettes, photos, and videos. Antonius C. G. M. Robben, whose own edited collection "Death, Mourning, and Burial. A Cross-Cultural Reader" (Malden 2004), has become a key reference point in the anthropology of death, makes use of liminality in relation to state terror practices and to understand the enduring presence of "disappeared" political actors, activists, and others. Liminality, for Robben, is a condition of social indefinition in which social categories and identities are held in abeyance and challenged. Like "matter out of place" liminality produces ambiguous dead and ambiguous living who do not fit into existing sociopolitical classifications. Roland Hardenberg's chapter on Kyrgyz death rituals argues for an ethnographic approach to liminality based on three areas: namely, the emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions, in which the disruption caused by death is mediated through mourning, sacrifice, and the sharing of food.

The book ends with a series of historical and literary accounts. Nina Mirnig explores how Shaiva tantric death rites incorporate a tension between worldly and transcendental factors, and as indicated by the chapter's title asks a critical question concerning the status of departed persons as whether they are hungry ghosts or divine souls. Justin E. A. Kroesen and Jan R. Luth consider the afterlife, and define the period between a person's death and divine judgement as a highly liminal space, including the idea of purgatory and the idea of soul entering into a state of "deep sleep" or one of "vigilance and anxiety" in anticipation of the Second Coming. Jan N. Bremmer is likewise concerned with the fate of the soul and considers how the Ancient Greek understandings of the soul and the psyche are connected etymologically to the idea of breath. On death, soul and psyche leave the body and are "breathed out" so as to escape the body's demise and decay. Yme B. Kuiper's final chapter offers a fascinating and informative account of Guiseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's first and only book "The Leopard," which he started writing shortly before his death. Liminality for Kuiper can be understood in part in relation to the state of mind evoked by the crossing of temporal thresholds such as old age, incurable illness, or the approach of death. In di Lampedusa's case, a dull and calm life was transformed by becoming a writer late in life. His only novel was published posthumously and offers a fusion of fear, tragedy, playfulness, and humour, reminding us that the encounter with mortality is situational and takes place in many different moments: when drunk, listening to music, when confined to bed, during long walks, and in laughter.

It is in the same spirit that "Ultimate Ambiguities. Investigating Death and Liminality" seeks to challenge static accounts of death and dying, including those that presuppose notions of fear, dread, and anxiety, and instead focus on the personal, social, and existential repercussions of ambiguity and liminality. It is certainly possible to take issue with the claim in the introduction that liminality is a neglected or marginal subject in the literature of death and dying. Likewise the assertion, from the perspective of a collective "we," that death entails ambivalence or is best defined in terms of ultimate ambiguity does not always hold. In some situations death can be quite straightforward and does not provoke uncertainty, and sometimes it is life and its continuation that is more troubling. But these minor quibbles aside, the book offers an engaging and timely account of the complexity and diversity of death and dying. Andrew Irving

Berman, Nina: Germans on the Kenyan Coast. Land, Charity, and Romance. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017. 269 pp. ISBN 978-0-253-02430-5. Price: £ 29.99

Using the case study of Diani area in Kenya, Nina Berman's book, "Germans on the Kenyan Coast," allows readers to inhabit the world of small cosmopolitan town of Diani: a microcosm of Kenya's ethnically and religiously diverse population. It gives a foretaste of how local Digos interact with members of ethnic communities from upcountry and European residents, who live and work in the study area. Berman's findings primarily draw from seven years of ethnographic fieldwork as well as interviews with 150 individuals from different ethnic groupings, varying ages, and diverse religious and social groups. This longitudinal study challenges assumptions that circulate, both in and outside the academy, about the exploitative nature of interactions between local populations and foreigners,