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## Introductory Comments

The third issue of the annual journal “Colloquia Humanistica” turns largely around the theme of *Multiple Biographies*. The readings section, devoted to the Hebrew poet Saul Tchernichovski, corresponds ideally with the main topic of the number. Born in Russia and speaking fluent Russian, writing in Hebrew but also with an excellent knowledge of the Polish language and fascinated by Polish culture, Tchernichowski is a perfect illustration of the journal’s title theme.

The key to understanding the multi-faceted definitions of one’s own identity may be the concept formulated by Victor Turner and presented in such works as *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors. Symbolic Action in Human Society* (1974). Referring to the pre-war studies of the French ethnographer Arnold van Gennep on the three-fold structure of rites of passage, Turner concentrates his interests on the liminal phase (in Gennep the middle phase). Turner focuses on the transitional (liminal) state and notes that participants in the ritual are as if “betwixt and between”, they no longer belong to the society of which they were a part, but have not yet become a part of the new community. Liminality, according to Turner, is a limbo between two ordered worlds, an ambiguous period during which almost anything can happen.

The proposal to distinguish the liminal phase as a research topic turns out to be extremely inspiring in studies of biography at every interface of cultures, from the Balkans through the Finnish-Norwegian, Kazach-

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-Soviet, to the Jewish or Gypsy multi-level identity. Because the liminal phase, as a passage between worlds, creates, at the same time, an offer of ready scenarios of behaviour, aiding individuals in their choices between competing interests.

It would also seem that the borderland of culture creates a specifically Turner-like semantic structure in a state of permanent tension between opposing poles of meanings. The borderlands of culture appear to be inexhaustible producers of biographies that are rooted on many planes and have various, sometimes opposing points of reference.

In this third issue of “*Colloquia Humanistica*” both the individuals and described communities are interesting, as are the clear, well-defined contexts. We are convinced that its perusal will be a satisfying experience for our readers.

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