

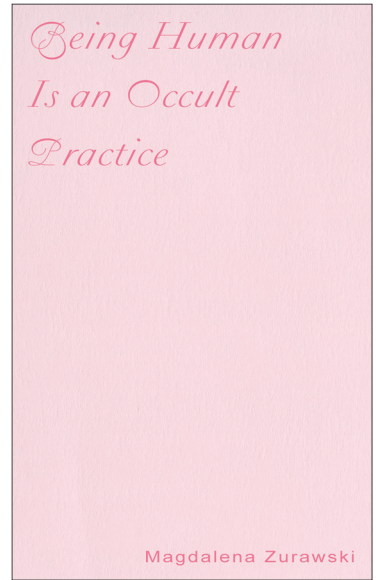
# Magdalena Zurawski

## *Being Human Is an Occult Practice*

In the essay *Being Human Is an Occult Practice*, Zurawski argues that studying and sharing literature can function as a means of enriching the impoverished definition of “human” created by capitalist social relations. Beginning with an analysis of Robert Duncan’s description of the moment in his high school classroom when he finds himself called into a life in poetry, this essay explores the possibilities of the literature classroom at the very moment that it’s being dismantled by the neoliberalization of our university systems.

Zurawski argues that the literary holds a revitalizing potential precisely because of its capacity of exceeding the narrow imaginative aims of life within our contemporary social order.

*“The poem in its willingness to display emotional integrity demands in turn such integrity of its readers: ‘To articulate the feeling, putting it forth in a poem like this, brought others into the challenge.’ But why? Why is one poet’s articulation of a particular affective reality via a poem a challenge to the reader’s life in Duncan’s view? The answer is that the poem is a site of self-recognition. It occasions in the reader the realization of ‘belonging to a community of feeling.’ To understand the poem is to see one’s self in the experience and for this reason the poem becomes a means of species identification. To understand oneself as human in the moment of the poem is to understand oneself as sharing in the emotional life revealed therein. The poem teaches that there are others who feel as we do and it is to those others that we belong.”*



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