

Belongin

READING THE POETRY OF DAVID CONSTANTINE

EXERCISES

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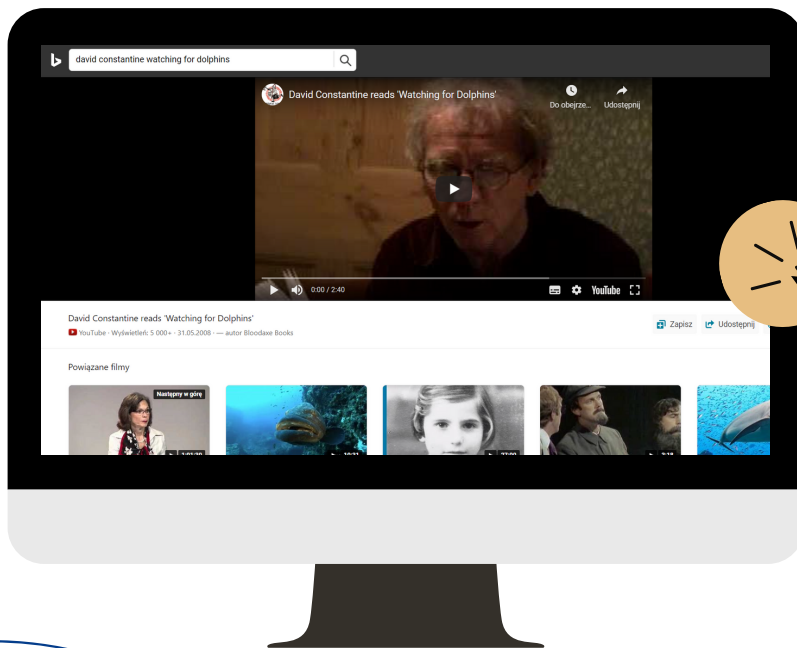
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Cover: David Constantine, *Belongings*

Exercise 1

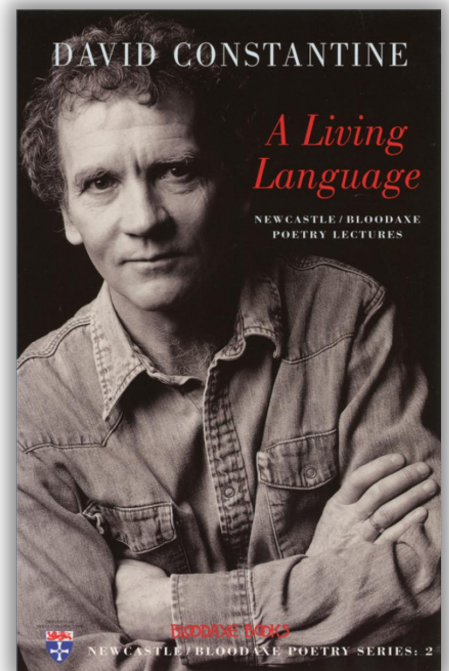
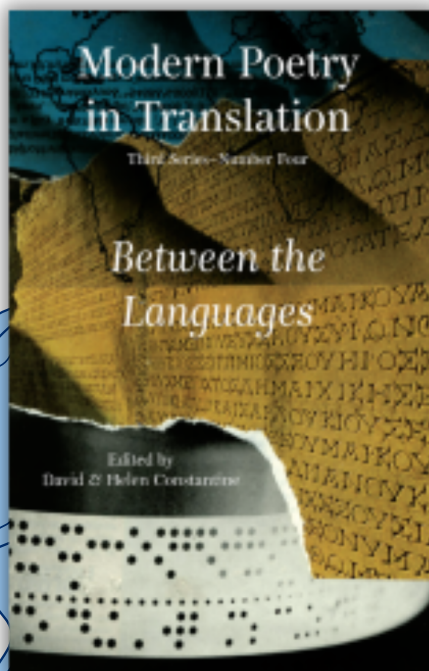
Listen to the recording of “Watching for Dolphins.” Can you think of an image from the world around you that can be equally thought-provoking? Can you describe a group experience that may overcome mundane reality? How to convey this? In a narrative? In a poem? A photograph? A film?



David Constantine reads
'Watching for Dolphins'

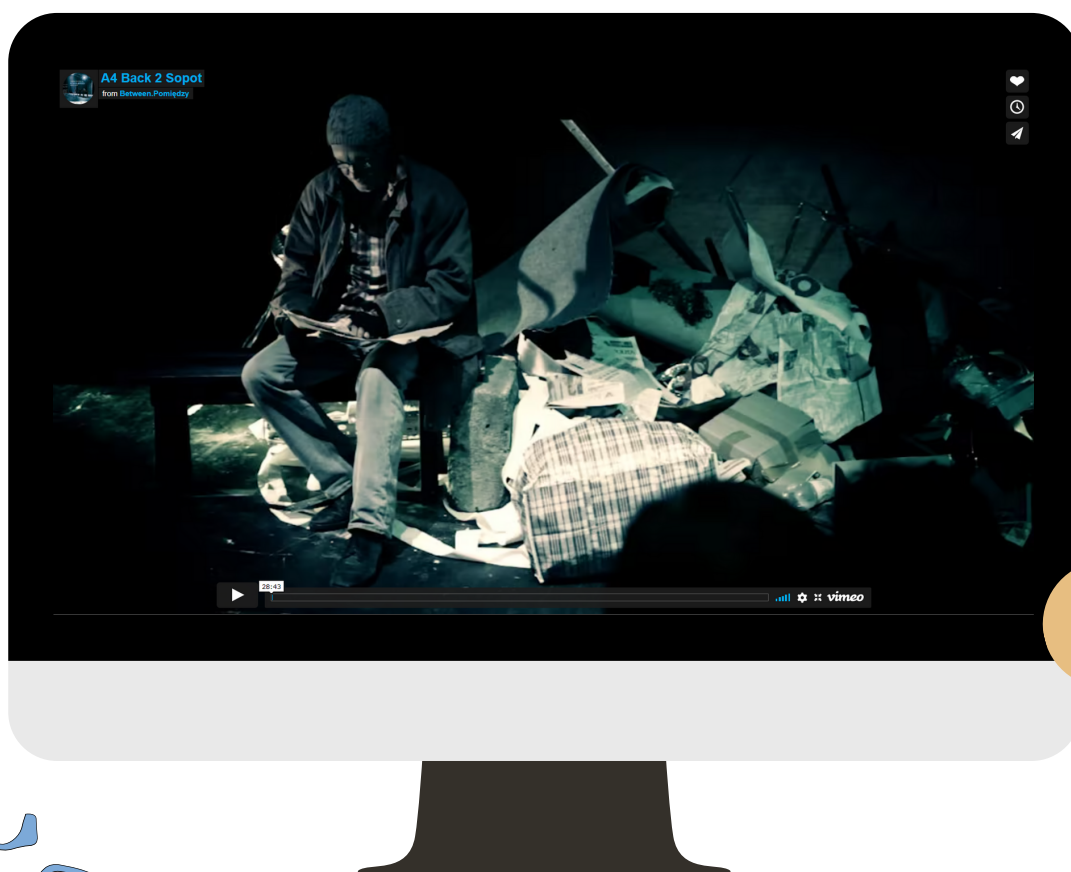
Exercise 2

When speaking about his understanding of poetry, David Constantine mentions the notion of “Extra Parliamentary Opposition.” Think about the manifesto you would build upon this concept. Remember it should be determined by neither politics nor social conditions, but refer to the autonomous freedom of art and poetry. Do you think poetry may be independent of social and political conditions?



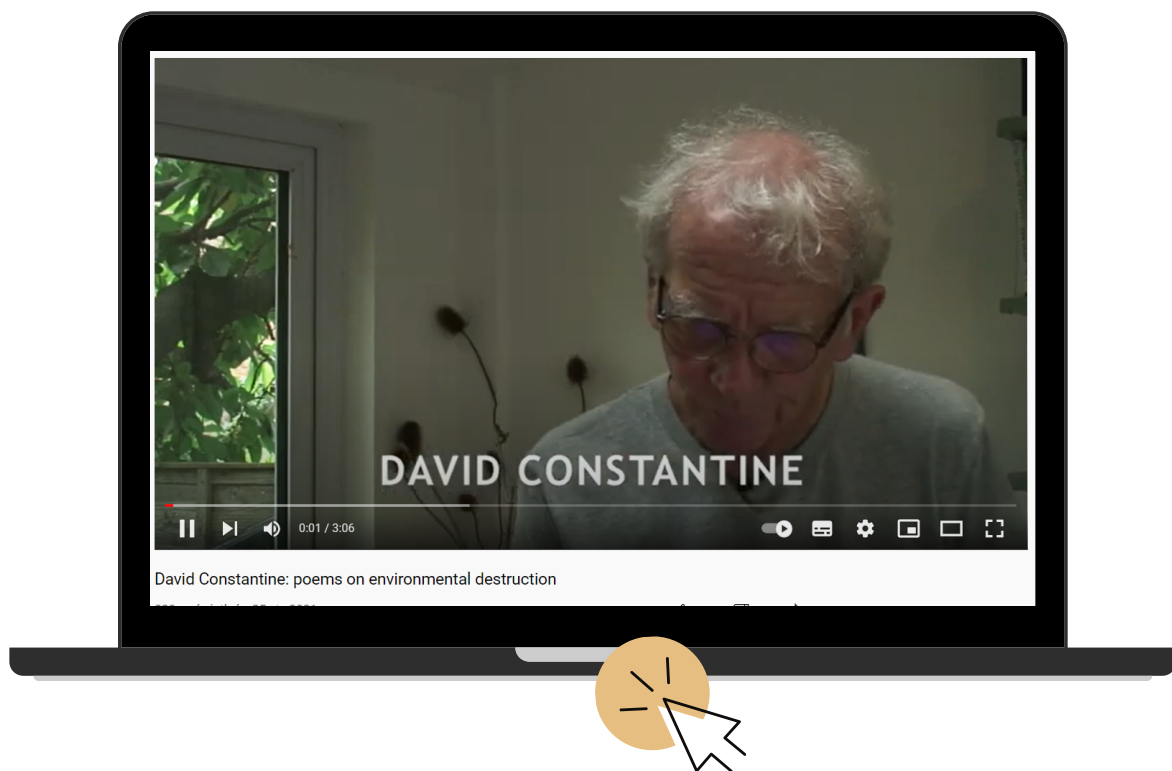
Exercise 3

There is a section in the film *Back 2 Sopot* when David Constantine says that “At one point in your life you realise you are paradigmatic, absolutely typical,” which is to say that everyone falls into certain patterns. Do you agree with his opinion? How can we live in an independent way? Is it more difficult at present that it was in the past? Do social media impose on us certain patterns that we cannot avoid? Do you see ways in which we can avoid following patterns imposed by others? Can poetry, literature – art in a more general sense – help us in pursuing our most personal, independent, and original self? Perhaps watching the documentary may inspire your thoughts, especially the passage from 16:19 to 18:15.



Exercise 4

In the following film David Constantine reads poems that deal with environmental destruction. The one titled “Pity” begins with the line: “Pity we killed all the monsters...” What kind of monsters can he possibly be thinking about? Why should we pity this? Think about this before listening to the poems and then write a letter to one of the monsters the poet refers to. Or, alternatively, record a short video message directed to the monster you choose.



Project

These are the poems David Constantine has sent us to accompany "Watching for Dolphins" in this resource pack. Can you write a 250 essay inspired by one of them? Create a film? Take a sequence of 7 photographs? We would be delighted to receive your response at: between.pomiedzy@gmail.com

GA VII, no. 215; Loeb II, p. 122
Anyte of Tegea

Dolphin

She flung up here on the dirty tideline, those
Are bloody holes that were her eyes
And that encrusted spattering of white is where
The gulls perched hacking at them and the rest of her.

Another subtracted from the cheerful company
Of creatures who seemed once to love humanity
And surfaced, smiling, snorting, leaped and played
Around our prows that once were dolphin-eyed.

With them, warm blood in common, we had access
To the ancient depths. The loss, the loss!
She lies now stranded under the sun and moon
Eyeless, ripped to the bone, not fit to be seen
Among our trash that will live for ever.

Come soon, spring tide, recover what's left of her.

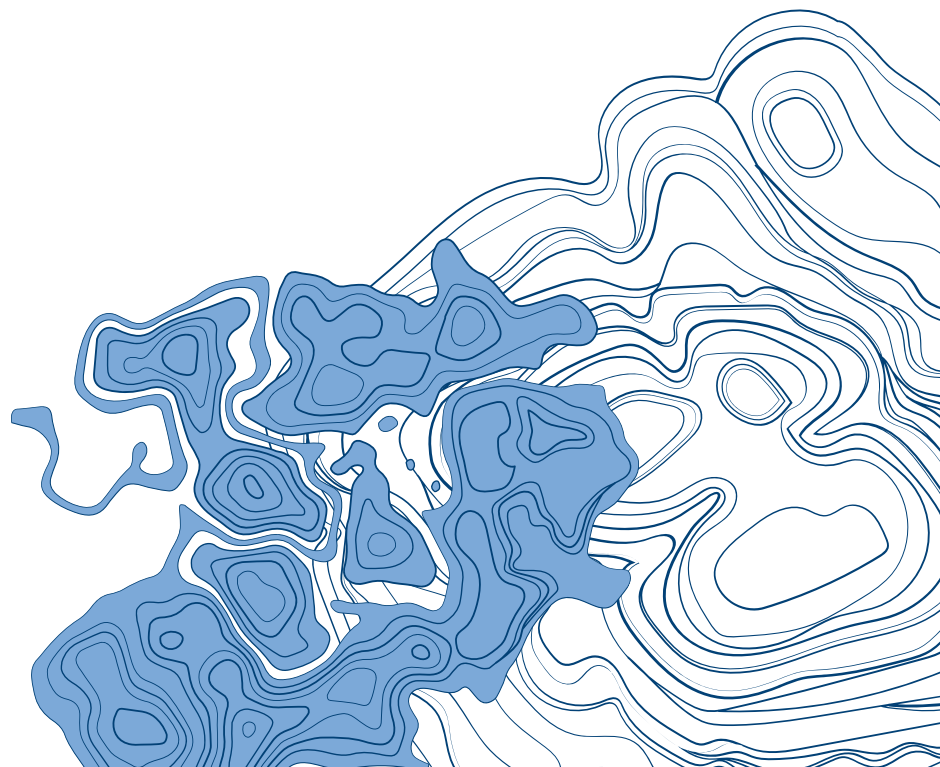
GA VII, nos. 214 and 216; Loeb II, pp. 120 and 122

After Antipater of Thessalonica and Archias,

Burial of a beached dolphin

Dolphin, flung up here on sharp rocks high above high tide
We who drag a scant living out of the dangerous sea
Having witnessed your agony and lamenting
The loss of one more of your companionable kind
Who dance in rainbowed water either side our bows
To a music we cannot hear, who obligingly ferry the Nereids
All the far way to the deep pool of Tethys, over you

Leaper and diver, show-off, smiling entertainer
Wiping the warm blood off you, mending you as best we can
Now above the highest high water with the stones that gashed you
Against the rats and the black-backs we raise this tomb
Adding you to our beloved ghosts. Quicken our hearing
Friendly dolphin, let us into your deep-sea conversations
In the time we have left help us teach our children.



GA IX, no. 88; Loeb III, p. 46

Philippus of Thessalonica

They get blown off course, the singletons, they fall
As foreigners in some unwelcoming place
But one, a nightingale, cursing the wind of Thrace
From where no good had come to her, so small
Between the black sky and the unending sea
Failing, falling, her long trajectory
Was well judged by a dolphin. He met its point of entry
And days and nights then was her trusted ferryman.
She, close at his ear, above his smile, paid him his due
Of thanks with singing. But dolphins quite often
As lovers of music, singers themselves in the deep blue
Have served the Muses, after human savagery
Arion, like Philomela, ferrying to safety.

GA XVI, no. 276; Loeb V, p. 324

Bianor, On a statue of Arion

Periander set up the statue of Arion on this shore
And of the dolphin who swam him to safety here
When he was in peril of death. My fellow humans, says Arion
Would have murdered me. A fish was my salvation.

