



Steven Matthews was born and brought up in Colchester, Essex. Various of his poems have been published in magazines and journals including *Stand*, *Versus*, *Kunapipi*, *Oxford Magazine*, *Poetry and Audience*, and *Moving Worlds*. He has been a regular reviewer for *Poetry Review*, and Poetry Editor for *Dublin Quarterly Magazine*. He now lives and teaches in Oxford.

Skying emerges from an engagement with the landscape and seascape of North Essex and the Suffolk border, where Steven Matthews was brought up, and which he has always been drawn back to. It combines moments of illumination with voices remaking family and local stories, and so tunes into oral histories of place. The book's often local voices associate themselves with, but also diverge amazingly from, national versions of trauma and threat. There are also poems here about childhood, being a father, and about grief and loss. But the collection also sets those particular voices within and against the history of poetry and art which has been similarly engaged. A sequence, 'Places of Writing', and related work, explore the relation of a gallery of writers to their locale. As the title of the collection, which uses a word coined by the artist indicates, the painter John Constable stands as presiding spirit behind *Skying's* related concerns.

In my capacity as poetry editor of the Oxford Magazine, I have published several poems by Steven Matthews over recent years — in fact at every opportunity. They have a highly distinctive quality to them, a compound of clarity of intelligence and unerring verbal skill and accuracy. The appearance of *Skying* is an exciting and significant event in contemporary poetry.

Bernard O'Donoghue

Steven Matthews's first collection, *Skying*, strikes a profoundly English lyric note. Its considered music is unafraid of detail, simplicity or those quietly realist narratives whose fragmentary presence sometimes suggest a book of ghosts. Matthews's sense of history, landscape and indeed the eponymous East Anglian sky is fine-tuned, and this allows him to explore themes of continuity — which spill over to characterize his poems' very diction.

Fiona Sampson

Cover image: 'Study of Clouds', 28 July 1822 by John Constable



Steven Matthews

Skying

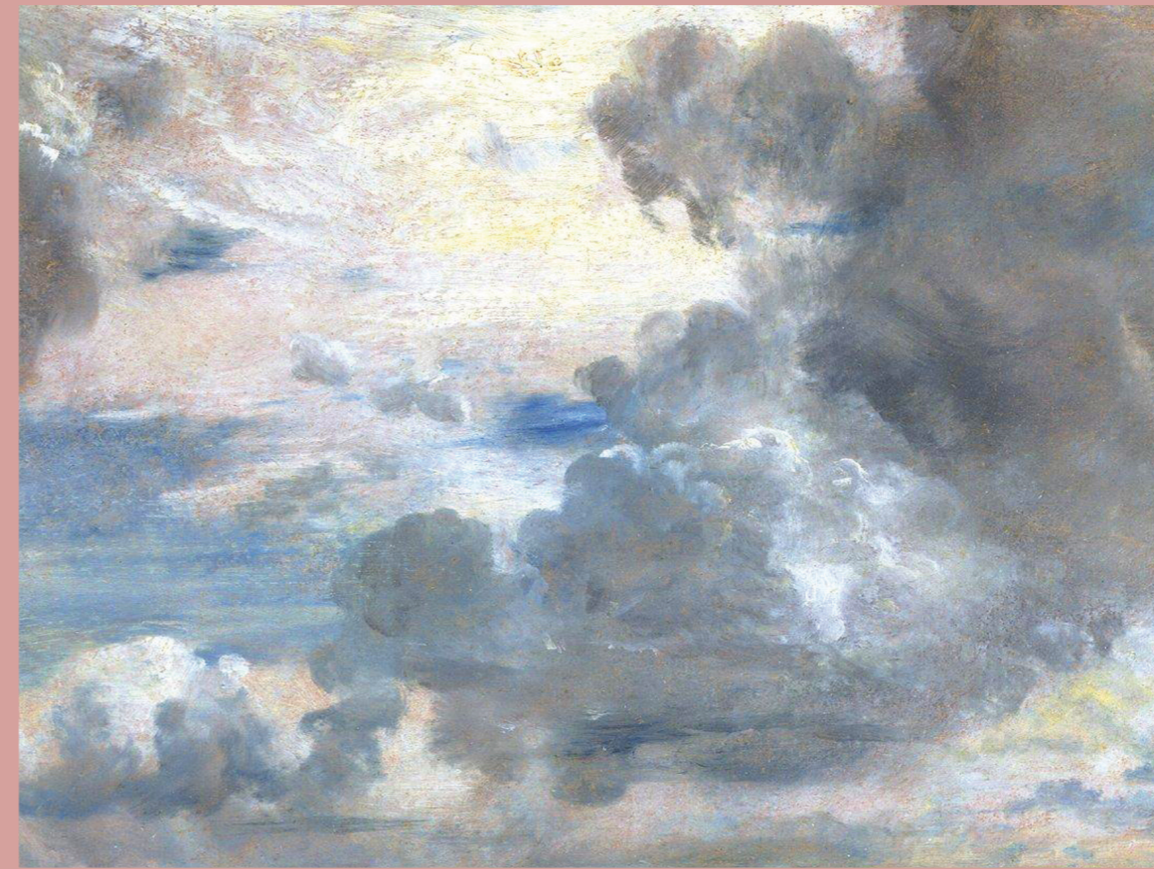
Waterloo Press



Steven Matthews



Skying



Some Very New Paintings

Winter darkness deepens quickly beyond the tall windows at Salt's Mill.

Thick brick walls keep the night out, hold the night in as our small son's eyes latch onto

Hockney's shapes, washes of colour that vibrate from the paintings' glazes rearing luminous against matt walls.

Seeing through our son's eyes, different geometries begin; we aeroplane him at speed up

and down, time and swooping motion bringing space and colour

into new conjunctions — black leaches into green purple leaps from yellow

backgrounds from foregrounds — this dark room an edge of the sea always moving.

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