Sometimes a book should be judged by its cover. Deep, intensely blue, a grid of lights lies parallel to the plane of the cover – except at the bottom, where now-diverging lines of lights along the floor of the page run out toward the reader. You’re already in the writing’s array.

At the end of the book a note explains the cover: the image is of a wall in a proton decay detector, “the deep blue is the blue of Čerenkov radiation, light produced (much as a sonic boom is) by particles travelling faster than the speed-of-light-in-water through the water of the detector.” The blue is the visible excitement of suddenly striking a different, denser medium.

1.

When I first came across Kim Maltman’s early work, the “third person dramatic monologues” of *Branch Lines*, and later, *Softened Violence*, I was immensely impressed. Their location was the prairie landscape – my landscape – and they delivered huge chunks of experience. Sometimes, often, they were maps of human misery: narrowed, collapsing horizons lived out in a land of a huge, inhumanly expanded horizon. And if their location was the prairie, they were grounded not just in that literal soil, but in *work* – the daily grind that abrades hope. That was its true soil, especially the bitter division that our generation, Maltman’s and mine, grew up with, the division of the world into women’s work and men’s work. It was an inherently political writing which often – in “Whiskey”, for example – became explicit. What made it work was that the stripped-down, prose-y voice maintained contact with the ineffable: the night’s perfume, heat, history embedded in the porch, conversations that repeat themselves to no apparent point, the sense that things will never change. It was in that intimacy with what is never said that the real comprehension – why misery perpetuates itself, how people endure – was made.

And now everything has changed. The voice is very different – by comparison with the sober early writing it could almost be said to be decorated. But it is probably more accurate now to speak of “rhetoric” than “voice”: the writing lets go of the sense that it could really have been spoken and instead extends itself, searching for very different effects, effects which are clearly those of a written discourse. A few short quotations will indicate the difference I’m trying to get at. The first is the beginning of “Long Narrow Roadway”, which is characteristic of both *Branch Lines* and *Softened Violence*.

All night the boy from Cluny has lain in the ditch, afraid, nursing the bruises from a beating. Eighteen or nineteen and all he wanted was a ride back from the city. He hardly believes it when I stop the car, the viciousness of the city is that near ...
That stripped, narratival voice rid itself of everything that might sparkle along its surface. I can feel that earlier voice, or the bones of it anyway, under the new writing, as though the earlier voice serves as an armature for the newer rhetoric, a dress-maker’s dummy over which a glittering fabric is being stitched. The opening lines of “Installation #47 (Sudden Pain)”, for instance, are unlike anything in the earlier books. They are lyric, elliptical, hermetic: it’s as though they were the feeling of significance condensing on the surface of the language. The print of their occasion is not revealed to us; we only sense it.

Bamboo rustles in the wind outside the house.
Life passes by, or death is near: which? Do you feel it?
Moonlight on the trellis, the cat twines among wisteria.
Flowering cherry, rose, the great, now nearly empty house.

This kind of writing could not have occurred in the early books without disrupting that narratival voice. But it’s not quite indicative of the busier conceptual texture – lyrical thought, I could call it – of the prose-poems which make up roughly half the book, and provide a disproportionate amount of its weight. Here’s the passage which ends “The Technology of Nausea, and Ecstasy, Which, Having Flared a Moment, Remain Like a Blue Flame Around the Body”.

What is it one imagines one desires? Often one would say: a sense of purpose. But to what end? Though the sense returns, now seen it is distrusted, longed for often, now, uncamouflaged, despised. And though one knows it is no more than the inertia of another century, the notion of some unknown but required perfection, anachronistic now, self-aggrandizing, still, and in the way one worries at a broken tooth, half with and half against the will, the disaffection turns to that desire, and turns again, like someone torn between disgust and sexual longing, sickened by it, inflamed, so that the body which, backlit now, seen from below, might be featureless, indistinguishable from the landscape, instead is imposed on it, like the figure pasted onto a collage. And though one sees how far the unhappiness has gone, though one wills it to cease, it is like water, and flows, without true shape, and one is powerless.

Even the use of the word “one” is decisive in this new sense of rhetoric. The earlier voice relied on “he”, “she”, “they”, “you” – the pronouns of day-to-day speech, that understanding of person. By comparison with that, “one” can sound arch, a tad British grammar school. In technical terms, the register is higher. I tend to be prejudiced against this, but it works here, extending the range of what is possible by lifting the foot momentarily off the gas pedal. Everything lightens slightly, we feel the momentum of the rhetoric. Suddenly everything is a tiny bit more distant; we’re no longer mired.

I don’t want to make too much of this “one”, except to point out that it is part of a newly extended vocabulary – if a computer count were done of the number of different words used in each of Maltman’s new and older books, I’d bet dollars to donuts that the count from the new book would be significantly larger. As the register shifts up, becoming more distant from actual speech, the vocabulary plausible for the writing becomes much greater, and this makes possible an
articulation of thought and sound so precise that the articulation in itself becomes a focus. The writing is displayed.

2.

Maltman likes to speak of an “acceleration” through the text, and it’s true that a momentum builds through the pages of the book. It’s odd, though – this is a quality more readily associated with page-turning fiction than poetry. Here, there’s no climax I could locate, no progress towards some cataclysmic act of violence or redemption. This acceleration seems to be one set in motion entirely by rhythm or breath. As the book progresses, more and more the dominant form becomes the prose-poem, and as these grow in length, the sentences elongate too – but are increasingly segmented into clause after clause that suspends, qualifies, or shifts the stretching sentence. All the repeated breaking of the line creates something as pliable as a snake’s skeleton. A breathlessness emerges, each new articulating element in the language only serves to reveal a still-larger, still-more-complex area that now requires its own articulation. The different levels of the writing are part of this sensation: increasingly the writing becomes one of an almost constant shifting from lyric passages to ironic sections to bad puns to bits of science to the decorous to melodrama. The attitude is being incessantly tinkered with. I find it very difficult to say what exactly is being articulated in all these surprisingly delicate shifts of level – they seem dizzying and unified at the same time, as though the writing were constantly being invented. If I choose to interpret the writing as a reflection of the writer, then it is a portrait of a mercurial mind and temper. If I choose to regard it as an attempt to depict the world, then it is a writing for a shifting, supple, iridescent world which can only be glimpsed through the incessant multiplication of new angles from which to view it.

3.

But I’d rather speak of “patterning” than acceleration – since what struck me most about the texture, or qualities, of the writing was that there was the same amount of detail everywhere. This seemed like a revelation to me. At one level, this seems foolish to say: detail in poetry can only be made of language, and since every poem by every writer is equally made of language, the amount of detail must always be the same. But still, after reading this book several times, that sensation doesn’t disappear for me. Something is occurring. Perhaps it is this: most poems have a centre – or more accurately, centres – where experiences of meaning and depth concentrate. As an analogy, think of a Rembrandt self-portrait, one in which the face is centred in the dark rectangle of the painting, where light issues from his face, or is centred on it. All the painting is painted; in painting there are no blanks. But still the painting clearly has a centre to which all its structures point. Most contemporary poetry is written and read in some similar fashion, and this seems to me to be humanist in a fairly exact sense. Reading our way toward a centre of depth, importance, or meaning, is an experience like that of passing through “empty” space on our way toward distinct objects and individuals. We’re in the space of the Renaissance, of classical physics.

Maltman’s prose-poems, and some of the more conventionally laid-out poems, are structured somewhat differently than most lyric or narrative poetry: they are like a pattern-language. Every “point” seems equally important: what I experience in his writing is not at
all that of the poem in which a word suddenly opens and reverberates. Instead the writing proceeds by accumulation, a constant piling-up of image-and-thought-material, language treated as a fabric with such a profusion of detail that it defeats any attempt to let vision or thought settle. I picture the writing not as comparable to something like a single star in space’s vast blackness, but the large-scale streaming of galaxies toward the Great Attractor, billions and billions of stars gathered in enormous clusters of clusters. Or to resort to an analogy with painting again – since that’s what I know best – I could say that Maltman’s writing reminds me of Jackson Pollock’s “drip” paintings: a skein or web of paint that seems to be taking place everywhere at once in the painting. At any rate, it seems to me that not only do Maltman’s poems read differently from the conventional lyric poem, they present a different image of the world, and make a different demand on the reader. They demand an immersion not in centres of meaning but in the grain of the picture.

4.

This patterning, at odds with making centres of meaning and depth, has something in common with Erin Moure’s poetry. Hers, too, dissipates centres – even though the poems can begin sometimes in something like a remnant of that flat anecdotal voice, usually so tied to explorations of the self and its history. But her way is almost the exact opposite of Maltman’s, a poetry that dissolves itself. In earlier poems, I can see that dissolution most at the end of poems or sections: instead of a sense of closure, the writing frays and unweaves itself. (Like the beautiful paintings on fabric by the Calgary artist, Mary Scott.) And now that diffusion seems to be being internalized everywhere by the poems: the boundaries of the voice have become too permeable, the “I” at the centre of the poem no longer quite capable of maintaining itself. Maltman’s writing instead piles up detail everywhere, so that it’s no longer possible to settle into the depth of language and meaning – the result of either path is there is little investment in the “I” that gathers the world around it like a form of property.

5.

This immersion in the grain of the picture accounts, I think, for a strange effect the book has on me – I can’t see the book from a distance and encapsulate it. (Bad news for a reviewer.) It’s odd: the writing is a continuous thinking about mortality, the body, Klaus Barbie, technology, happiness, memory, the desire to be remembered, freedom, wood and its properties, pleasure, doubt – a thousand bees in the bonnet; and yet I find it impossible to pluck myself mentally out of the mesh of the writing so I can consider simply what is being said. I can’t get out of the writing, can’t tell the difference between imagery and things that should be abstractions. “Now one remembers only the cacophony, how close to pleasure, how intoxicating the faint ontological shadows that filled the fields of the head.” The writing somehow is able not to subordinate the sensible to the intelligible, perception to meaning; somehow they’re equalized. Or more accurately, they transmute into each other; instead of thought thinning-out the writing, it becomes part of its patterned detail, part of the array.

And this grainy-ness is part of the writing’s palpable hatred of every transcendent notion. Thought is not treated as something abstracted, or “higher”; it is lived out, embodied. “When I talk to Felicia of romance, for instance, I think of beauty, self-loathing and the like as smooth and
weighty, like beautiful but useless rocks. But to her these are concepts!” The writing isn’t treated simply as a vehicle for meaning, for something higher than the writing. Everything that removes us from this world, this moment, this life is scorched. “Do not despise the body”, it says. “The body will not run on sorrow/ It will not bear it.”

the smell of metal, freshly lathed,  
is tinged still with the smell of blood.  
It says the soul does not exist,  
that there is nothing to diminish pain,  
or pleasure,  
or to give it permanence.

6.

An artist-friend of mine – famous in our circle for her flat rejection of religion offered as a form of solace – told me she was a little shocked to read this and similar passages. Even though she had expressed similar notions herself, she was still dismayed to see things put so baldly. It’s as though we’re being abandoned to our lives, without the benefit of pain-killing notions like “the soul”. I was surprised by “the soul” putting in an appearance, that Maltman had felt it necessary to return again to that body/soul opposition. But I suppose the truth is we’re still living it out – in this “culture of redemption” as Leo Bersani called it – even those who believe they’ve rejected it. So perhaps it is necessary to return to it, in order to take it up again instead of pretending it is behind us.

And those brief moments of ecstasy – they hardly exist at all! – though they imbue the whole of a life with their presence, sometimes mar it with the yearning to repeat, unvaried, the precise delineation of a given favored moment.

7.

For a writing which refuses transcendent notions and gestures, insisting on the body and on this life, mortality will be the central problem – and so it is with the Technologies. The breathlessness, or acceleration in the writing increases toward the book’s end, where the poems which explicitly treat mortality are concentrated: consciously or unconsciously, an equation is made between death and the end of the reading process, where the book is extinguished.

But whatever mortality is for the Technologies, it is not something which can be seized through language. Perhaps this is why it is often approached via a cliché. If death can’t be pictured in language or thought, the most sedimented conventions can still be seized upon, the false face of the real.

I feel as if mortality were a big old Caddy with darkened windows parked out by the curb: suddenly the lights flick on, it gets behind us, and we’re like one of those ridiculous victims from B movies –
all we’ve got to do is step out of the way, but instead we go running down the street, rolling our eyes, stopping now and again to look back over our shoulders and make sure it’s still gaining on us.

It’s not quite right to call it a “false face”. Better simply to call it “a face”, and to realize that saying that is to admit that what language can work with is the human face we’ve projected onto the world. Writing can take back its own projections, or claim them. The cliché that’s evident now as one, is a convention of seeing we can now see through; that’s what it offers to the writer – a certain distance, a specificity of disbelief. So the space in which these figures occur in Maltman’s poetry can be called ironic – the writing putting to use figures it no longer believes in, because they are attached to everything which can’t be stated, their exterior coating, a shell.

8.

“The Technology of Mortality”, the second-to-last poem, can be read as the central one for the book, since it explicitly takes mortality as its subject – except that, as is typical here, everything is mercurial. The poem slips without apparent transition from the memory of walking out onto the prairie to an odd speculation about familiarity and the edges of one’s existence, back to the prairie and a prairie fire that threatened the village, then suddenly into an amazing passage where walking – its rhythm – becomes the chance to come “upon the presence of one’s death – in the far distance, in-the-rhythm”, to walk it through for a moment. It’s really quite strange, and I have to admit I don’t understand it, though it seems to me that I am comprehending something when I’m actually in the process of reading the long-ish prose-poem. Or perhaps to say “comprehend” is wrong. It would be better to say that I can feel something occurring in the strange specific music that articulates – what? Not a thought exactly, not an understanding, but a relation to extinction. I don’t think I’ve expressed that very well.

To be walking then, beneath those trees, or under the glaring summer prairie sky against which each hill takes on the shimmering aura of those lazy halcyon days preceding the first war, and enter that rhythm. How one accelerates toward it, enters a state of being in which the abyss which separates existence and perception is made barely visible. Or, shoulder to shoulder – as my father often spoke of it – before the wall of flame: ‘fighting fire with fire’ – and the marvelous image that phrase created for me, being only six at the time, and pretty much of a literalist – shoulder to shoulder, becoming one larger organism, slipping into it, because to will it to happen would be to prevent it from doing so, and, in any case, be a great embarrassment to all, the sort which is felt, not by masters stooping to bestow their beneficence on servants and field-hands, but by those below them who know the feel of a hammer or of the soil in the fields when the crops are rotting, or scorched where they stand. To enter that rhythm, humming a little tune, ‘K-K-K-Katy’ or ‘Sweet Georgia Brown’. And though Death stands, liveried and ridiculous at the door, and one knows one must pass, to do it, as they say, with style, so He must say, politely, ignoring
the shoes and dusty cuffs which have seen so much walking, ‘Good evening, Sir’, and hold out his hand for payment.

9.

It interests me, that peculiar decorousness with which death is approached: it is personified, then ordered to do this, and that, and to stand here, and to say this, like a child tells a playmate what role they must play out in the game. And that decorousness appears throughout the book; it’s integral to the writing. I find it curious; it’s not a note I recognize in Maltman’s earlier writing, or for that matter, in much writing here. It’s something I associate instead with certain Japanese writers and film-makers – but not our contemporaries. I think of Kawabata’s novels or Ozu’s films, where that decorousness involves a carefully delimited reticence, a contemplative approach, a tendency toward that which is tiny and delimited and modest, and whose effect is slow, precise, and cumulative. I’m not speaking of understatement – this decorousness is something quite different, polite but highly specific. It seems to be a way of limiting passion in the writing, restricting its occasions, and thereby displacing the self and its tidal expression from the centre. “It is not true sorrow that you feel, and you have not earned the right to pity.” The poetry enacts a code of conduct, an ethic opposed to those galvanic moments where the self can wash out over the world, reaching for catharsis.

A woman in the blue haze of the north Pacific mourning her husband stretched out in the aisle of the 747 amid 300 strangers. ‘Yes?’ says the dog, ‘where are you going?’ ‘Up there again,’ I say, ‘into the sky.’ The clouds are immense, blazing. A thunderhead is forming toward the mountains. I want to weep and there’s no great sorrow to weep at.

10.

Things are simply as they are – they come into being without yearning. Only then does yearning begin to attach itself to them, like barnacles to the bottom of a ship.

What death is can’t be said. The world can’t be spoken, or described. But a cliché can still be useful, or a line from a dream scripted like some bad production of Ibsen – “I vant to die, Edvard, I vant to die” – these are the fossils of our yearning, points where an attachment was made. They keep us at language’s surface, keep language’s failure in mind, so it can become one of the poetry’s materials. “We are suspended in language,” Niels Bohr said.

And “the mystery is there for itself”, Sven Birkerts said inaccurately of Transtromer, “the poet will put no higher interpretation on it.” We can’t enter it by acts of will, “because to will it to happen would be to prevent it from doing so”. We can only take part in it by not trying to take part – walking, fighting a fire together, accepting what the moment offers up, or does not offer. Since the writing cannot penetrate the mystery, it doesn’t try. It moves along the surface of language, sideways to the thing it wants to reach. In the process, the poetry becomes something different – not a means of referring to the world, or even of embodying it, but a fabric flexible enough to
throw over it. The fabric that mutes the shapes of the objects under it still partly discloses them. We read and guess what is hidden underneath.

If anywhere, it’s here that the influence of Maltman’s work as a physicist is having its effect. That sense – which I can only guess at – which quantum mechanics must force upon you – of there being no things, no fundamental objects, no qualities that exist before our measurements create them, no possibility of containing the quantum world within one grand description. “There is no formula that can deliver all truth, all harmony, all simplicity”, writes John Barrow in *Theories of Everything*. “No non-poetic account of reality can be complete.” But Maltman’s poetry might argue that no poetic account of reality can be complete either.

11.

Technologies and installations. The basic conceit of the book is that the writing will be a dispassionate description of various technological systems: sorrow, inertia, the persistence of memory, the narcissus, sheep, terror, the hostility of objects, history, yellow butterflies, arrogance which enters the mind unasked and poisons it with visions of paradise, industry, miracles, the woman in the dunes, the day of the dead, “romance”, affection, salvation, god, and mortality – to list only some of the topics. Most of them obviously are not what we ordinarily think of as technological systems, but part of our common human inheritance. Nonetheless, the writing will be applied to them all the same; they are simply part of the terrain to be surveyed.

In spite of what the conceit suggests, the writing itself is *not* dispassionate, and plays against what might be expected. What the conceit makes possible is a certain distance, a gap between the writer and his subjects, a certain degree of play – much more than is possible within the voice of the plain-spoken anecdotal poetry. The approach no longer has to be restricted to the truth, or “heart-felt”; it can move a little bit past the limits and conventions of what might be called “a conventionally humane understanding”. Things which would have been implausible in the earlier voice now can occur: a dead dog speaks, also machines. The eugenia moves of its own volition. Melodramatic speech and bad puns are possible now, and also the dreaded exclamation mark, poetry’s helium-filled balloon, which destroys that sonorous sense of closure and depth upon which so much poetry depends. Language is no longer experienced as tied directly to the self (or “the soul”, I could also say.) That tie is, if not broken, attenuated. Instead, the writing is language thoroughly soaked in social roles.

12.

The installations shift throughout the book, but initially at least, they seem to be the most “heartless” bits where the machines speak. “Happiness is a lie, they say,/you will not find it,/it will defeat you.” Or they serve as the most “objective” writing – and so open a new space in the rhetoric, slower in pace, distant-but-accepting, a non-judgemental recording device. Soon, however, they begin to be the most lyric sections of the writing. Later still they will be submerged into the general flow of the writing and almost disappear into the technologies.

It’s possible to understand a certain amount about the two different modes simply from the titles. The technologies are always “The Technology of ...” whatever, as though this formula can simply be applied to anything. But this is undercut in practice by the quality of many of the titles:
for example “The Technology of Nausea, and Ecstasy, Which, Having Flared a Moment, Remain like a Blue Flame Around the Body” – the supposedly factual title is long past simple naming. The installations, by contrast, are merely numbered – except that the numbering is not simple, since the first installation is #4, the last #67, and only nineteen appear in the book. What happened to the rest is withheld from the reader. And they appear at erratic intervals; I could find no numerical scheme that determined where they would appear. The mathematical objectivity supplied by the titles is never delivered, and the installations play against that expectation. Most of their weight or structure lies below the surface, like an iceberg around which all the rest of the writing has to navigate.

13.

The funny thing, though, is that to a certain degree, the writing does live out the demands of the conceit, actually taking apart and displaying the mechanism of its subjects – for example, in “The Technology of the Metal at the Heart of Sorrow”. Reading it one day, it struck me that I’d never before seen how a mood or moment is made up of so many constituent particles. Here – perhaps it’s simply demanded by the conceit structuring the book – a moment or memory is carefully dismantled, its components displayed. The poems don’t string out a sequence of imagery, as most lyric poems will – (though of course, one image still must follow another on the page). Instead the poem, its images and thoughts, are the register of some faintly analytic movement whereby the stitching of an occasion was loosened; it came apart, and a rain of thoughts, memories, feelings, sensations – the apparatus of that moment – fell on the page.

14.

Something happens to poetry in translation, no matter how successful the translation. It thins out, becomes slightly more generalized or abstract, the sound patterns always less precise. And translators – more often than good poets writing in their mother tongues – use somewhat arch rhetorical figures, as though trying to add back in a measure of “poetry” to balance out what is evaporating. We depend on the work of translation to open world literature to us, but in itself it is not a good model for other writing. And yet it seems to me that in this book Maltman’s writing has been deeply influenced by reading translations, and that this, in part, is what makes it distinctive. One result of this influence is that the rhetorical level has been pushed far from the colloquial, far from everything that his earlier poetry was grounded in. (And this is usually a mistake, since it is that intimate, living relation to the spoken language of one’s time that tends to ensure the vitality of written language.) But colloquial speech is decaying in its ability to articulate thought or feeling, and perhaps it is in response to this decay that Maltman’s writing has moved toward certain possibilities that surface in poetry-in-translation. But there’s something else, which comes up in a useful distinction which the American critic, Sven Birkerts, made in discussing poetry’s chance of surviving translation.

... we find among different kinds of poetry different degrees of translatability. Some poetry grows out of the secret life of language; it derives its main power, interest, and importance from its stirring
up of the linguistic depths of words. We can think of Mallarme, Mandelstam, Holderlin. On the other extreme are poets whose central force arises from image creation or the juxtaposition of ideas and perspectives. Tomas Transtromer could be said to exemplify the former, Zbigniew Herbert the latter. This does not mean that these poets are any less careful in their use of language. It does mean, though, that less is lost through translation. The poetry uses words, but it does not originate phonically in the word.

Maltman’s new poetry emerges from both sides of that second, more translatable stream. The particular way in which he uses imagery – while being almost entirely unlike Transtromer, where the image is the dominant element of the poem, and is used to create moments of shock, elliptical and disjunctive – should still, like Transtromer, be able to survive translation, since it is a poetry which is not “in the word.” And the Technologies can be even more strongly related to the example of Herbert (or Milosz, or Cavafy). It is not an image-dominant poetry, but a poetry of ideas. But it’s unlike Herbert in this way: the language is not stripped bare to create the sensation that you could lift the ideas right out of the writing. In Maltman’s writing the thought is more embedded: there is less of the illusion that it could be transplanted, more of the effect of language soaking in thought. Still, Maltman’s writing has moved considerably toward a sensibility which is far more prevalent in Eastern Europe, or in Italy, than here – a poetry that could sustain ideas, political discussion, real and impossible events. In short, a philosophical poetry.

And to go out on a limb: it may be that the thinned-out quality of translated poetry is what Maltman’s writing has most absorbed, and that soaking in that dilute solution is exactly what has allowed it to spread its detail out everywhere across the written surface – since the writing now has no sense of poetic density, no centres. And for the same reason, thought can now be everywhere in the writing. I think this is very far from the roots of poetry; but it works.

15.

The poems, taken together, constitute a genuine world-view. It’s odd, though, I didn’t realize it until I had already begun this review – by now I’ve come to expect that each book of poetry is simply a collection of poems, a few years’ production gathered up. But I don’t mean just that there is a world-view implicit in the writing – as there must always be. This really is an explicit world-view, one specifically embarked on, a comprehensive and deepening survey – though not one which can be extracted from the writing like a fishbone, leaving the writing behind on the plate. It only exists in being read.

16.

Have you ever seen a snake that’s just shed its skin? The milky tube of the discarded skin shrugged off is almost transparent, the new scales glisten like a discovered mosaic. Czeslaw Milosz said that poetry is separated from reality by a glass wall of conventions – conventions that only become visible as such when they recede into the past. Perhaps one reason for the apparent lack of response
with which the *Technologies* have been received is that, in reinventing itself at every point, the
poetry has lost the audience the earlier books had found – an audience which like those earlier
poems is still living out a series of conventions, and categories through which to see the world, by
which the *Technologies* are no longer bound.

And if Maltman made a mistake in writing this book it is less in the writing itself than in
seeing, a little too early, that the sort of anecdotal voice with a truth to tell, with a stable reality
capable of being written – that those conventions were exhausting themselves, receding more and
more quickly now, their red-shifts becoming suddenly huge. As much as I admired his earlier
poems, they are entirely eclipsed by this new, much more supple comprehension, writing which is
its own special case, an example only of itself.

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