A Provencal Shit Lyric

a marriage of tasks: Gay Science (Astrid, December)
& Shit (Eddie, January)

There are around
eight million people
in New York City, and half
of this population, four million,
takes a dump each day.

Let's assume that each dump
consists of a half pound of solids.
That means that New York
City produces 2 million pounds,
or 1,000 tons, of shit each day.
My question is: after this 1,000 tons
of shit goes down the bowl,
where does it go? And what is
done with it after it gets there?

I. Faitz es lo vers totz a randa

Primary screens remove
the largest items in sewage.
They generally consist of large
bars spaced from 1 to 6 inches
apart to catch such items as
boards, rags, large plastic items,
sanitary pads, and condoms.
The screens are regularly
cleaned and the collected trash
is sent to a landfill.

II. Si que motz no y descapduelha

Secondary screens are often fine
meshes or moving mesh belts
with a much tighter spacing than
the primary screens. The finer material
they gather is also sent to a landfill.

III. E si m suy de midons lunhans

Sedimentation is the removal
of suspended particles by allowing
the water to either flow slowly
through a large tank or rest
for a time in settling basins or ponds.
Sometimes a chemical such as
alum is added to the water to improve
the efficiency of the settling process.

IV. Yes si m tira cum diamans

Flotation involves injecting air
into the water in the form of
tiny bubbles. Suspended particles
that are too fine to settle
will attach to the bubbles and
rise to the surface of the water,
where they can be skimmed off.

V. Si l reys engles el dux normans

Aerobic biological treatment
is a process that uses bacteria
that thrive in oxygen-containing
air to break down some of the
biological compounds in sewage,
producing carbon dioxide and water.
To assist this process, sometimes
the waste is aerated (has air injected into it).

VI. O vol, ieu la veirai, abans

Anaerobic biological treatment
is sometimes used instead of
or in conjunction with aerobic
biological treatment—this process
uses bacteria that thrive in

the absence of oxygen to break down
the biological compounds in sewage.
The results of this process are
methane, carbon dioxide, and
other simple, organic compounds.

Anaerobic treatment is sometimes
used when you want methane, e.g.,
for use as fuel, but generally the methane
must be collected even if
there isn't an end use for it.

VII. Que l'iverns nos sobreprenda

After these common treatments,
additional filtering, chemical, and
biological techniques can be used
to give a final *polishing* to the water
before it is discharged to the environment.
Despite all of these steps, some
organic compounds and bacteria
wind up in the environment.
However, most of the solid waste
is collected as sludge during processing,
and this sludge must be disposed of
or things will quickly pile up.

Biosolids, as they are called,
were once routinely landfilled
or even dumped into the ocean.
With the advent of modern
environmental regulation, this is
no longer an option for many
municipalities, so other methods
of disposal have been developed.
For example, biosolids can be
used for fertilizer, soil reclamation,
and stabilization, and may even be
dried out and burned as a solid fuel.

Let's look at New York City
as a large-scale example.
New York residents and businesses
discharge about 1.4 billion gallons
of waste into the sewers each day,

which is treated by 14 sewage
treatment plants. While no two
treatment plants are exactly the same,
they use similar techniques.

According to the City of New York
Department of Environmental Protection
(DEP), the North River treatment plant
utilizes large bar screens, settling ponds,
aeration and biological treatment,
settling tanks, and treatment with
sodium hypochlorite. The sludge
that remains undergoes further settling,
anaerobic digestion by bacteria, and
dewatering to turn the sludge into biosolids.

DEP figures indicate that your guess
of 1,000 tons per day is a little high—
in fact New York generates about 1,200
tons of biosolids from all sources (human,
food, plant, alligator, and other biological wastes).
This lovely fragrant mass was once
dumped into the ocean, but since 1988
the city has been prohibited from doing this.
As a result, New York has developed
a biosolids program that uses the final
removed organics for such things as
composting, fertilizer, and agricultural lime.