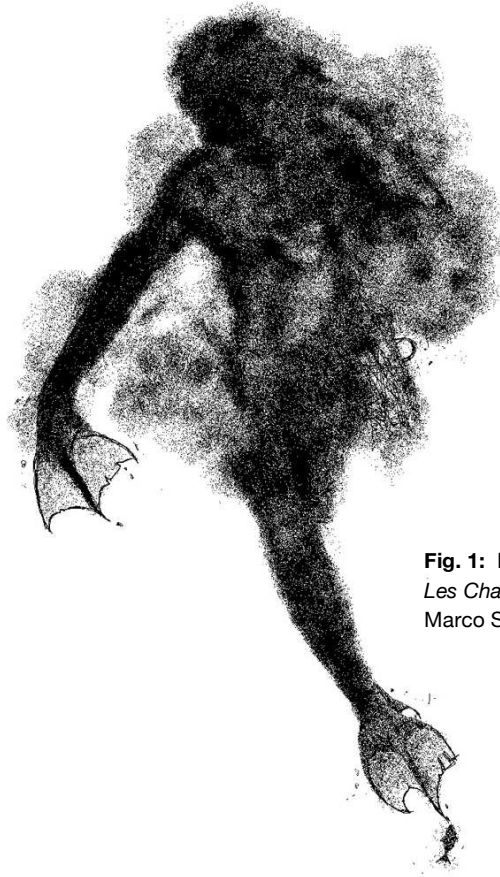




## FILTH AS NON-TECHNOLOGY

Germán Sierra



**Fig. 1:** Illustration for Lautréamont's *Les Chants de Maldoror* (1868-1869). Marco Saccaperni, 2011.

*I am filthy [Je suis sale]*—writes Lautréamont—*I am riddled with lice. Hogs, when they look at me, vomit. My skin is encrusted with the scabs and scales of leprosy, and covered with yellowish pus.*<sup>1</sup> Unlike dirt, easily washed from the surface of our skin, filth, like an accursed ointment or a recombinant agent of transgenesis, is susceptible of being absorbed and assimilated when entering in contact with the body. We fear that the filthy body will not be afterwards cleaned

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1. Comte de Lautréamont, *Maldoror and Poems*, trans. Paul Knight (London: Penguin, 1988), 1778. Kindle. Hereafter cited in the text as M.



or purified because filth might freely trespass every protective screen, all security interfaces and external membranes (like viral infections in which viruses' multiple strategies to trespass biological walls and membranes are a major concern)—and thus it must be either frantically avoided, prevented, kept away . . . or otherwise unconditionally embraced as an initial, dark-night-of-the-body stage that primes the flesh for further transformation.

Filth, then, is believed to be insidious, to infiltrate the flesh to become flesh, to renew the self in a revolutionary *nigredo rot*. Moreover, the repugnant adherence of filth reminds us of the body's own adhesiveness—its sticky, protoplasmic, fleshy, expellable and pleasurable condition—, evidencing that bodies are not just convoluted skin—*an exteriority folded upon itself*, as underlined by Jean-Luc Nancy<sup>2</sup>—, but a more problematic, deep wet interiority fighting against its own limits to pour itself out.

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We might fantasize about dirt-free bodies, as Michael Marder writes, by holding *onto an unarticulated belief that we, too, can become pure spirits and purge ourselves of all material trappings*, so *dusting and cleaning provide escape routes from our rendezvous with ourselves*.<sup>3</sup> Cleaning, says Marder, *prevents us from facing up to our desire* (D 199), but filth is hardcore dirt: its presence does not just force us to face up to our otherwise unacknowledged desires, but it also places us face to face with the loathsome horrors of death, corruption and decay—*And even you will come to this foul shame / This ultimate infection* [Et pourtant vous serez semblable à cette ordure / À cette horrible infection], wrote Baudelaire.<sup>4</sup> Dirt often appears as a solid (or solidifiable) thing. It builds up, over us and around us, in somehow quantifiable layers, as a side effect of creativity; we stain our hands from laboring, from using tools—we get dirty from our purpose-driven use of technology. Filth, however, represents a radical, “wet-waring,” flowing stream of “uncreativity”: if it comes from technology, it is technology that has started behaving “non-technically.” Nothing planned or calculated happens upon viscous contact with filth—nothing but the menace of unpredictable, ongoing transformation. Filth is a remainder of death, not as a definitive solidification into a hard

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2. See Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus*, trans. Richard A. Rand (New York: Fordham UP, 2008), 15. There Nancy writes: “The body . . . isn't full or empty, since it doesn't have an outside or an inside. Yet, it is a skin, variously folded, refolded, unfolded, multiplied, invaginated, exogastrulated, orificed, evasive, invaded, stretched, relaxed, distressed, tied, untied” (15).

3. Michael Marder, *Dust* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 571. Kindle. Hereafter cited in the text as D.

4. Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil* (Bilingual Edition), trans. Cyril Scott (New York: New Directions, 1989), 38 (English), 264 (French). Hereafter cited in text as FE.



fossil, but, instead, as the start of a series of quasi-redundant cycles of messy chemical reactions.<sup>5</sup>

*Life decomposes into filth—writes Nick Land—as it explores the vicarious death of the universe. In no case does the heterogeneous belong to any scale, since it is “exactly” the irruption of decomposability. Heterogeneous (base) matter—“blood, sperm, urine and vomit . . .”—is characterized negatively in relation to every possible stratum of elemental organization, which is why it resists the discourse on things. Vomit, excrement, and decomposing flesh do not proffer unproblematic solidity or comprehensible form, but rather quasifluid divisibility, imprecise consistency, multiple, insufficient, and evanescent patterns of cohesion. All of which are mixed with words slimed with sanctity. “To write is to investigate chance,” but the explosive excess that breaks in the black foam of poetry is not merely a risk, because risk implies the possibility of a benign outcome. It is a “ruin without limits,” “the submission of man to [blank].” Excess is venom. (TA 204)*

From the viewpoint of evolutionary psychology, filth might represent what causes disgust because it can make us sick. Disgust, then, would be a learned bodily reaction to things that are supposed to be particularly dangerous because they can infiltrate and de-compose the body. But things are not that simple. Filth does not just threaten the body with the prospective of mutation, but it starts a never ending round of transformations: it eats out identity and structure, turning the body into an amorphous fuel (*the black matter of the nigredo alchemical step*) of constant random change. Thus it is not surprising that filth lacks a proper form—in fact, it is often understood as the pure absence of perceivable form—, consequently resisting human mediation/ technification. In his

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5. See Nick Land, *The Thirst for Annihilation: Georges Bataille and Virulent Nihilism* (London: Routledge, 1992), 89. Hereafter cited in the text as TA. On the messy figure of the decomposing corpse, Land writes:

A corpse has one preeminent and historically fateful heterogeneous distribution: that between its skeletal structure and its soft tissues. This is apprehended as a difference between what is *perdurant, dry, clean, formal*, and what is *volatile, wet, dirty, and formless*. On the basis of this resource Western civilization has been not merely thanatological, but osseological, which is something reaching beyond the fascination with the skeleton—and particularly the skull—that is distributed extremely widely across cultures. Osseology, in its deep sense, is the usage of the difference between the *hard* and *soft* parts of the body as a logical operator in the discourse on matter and death. For instance, differentiation between *eternal form* and *perishable substance, celestial purity* and *terrestrial filth, divine architecture* and *base flow*. The skeleton is thus conceived of as an invisible harmonious essence, an infrastructure beneath the disturbing tides of soft pathology. It is the prototype of intelligible form, contrasted with the decaying mass of the sensible body. (89; emphasis added).



reading of Lautréamont's *Maldoror*, Eugene Thacker insists several times on a certain dynamic relationship of amorphosis/metamorphosis:

*In amorphosis form is pushed to its limit, becoming either the absence of all form (the evacuation of all form) or absolute form (the devouring of all possible form). In Maldoror, these instances of formlessness can exist within a single body (as in the morphogenesis of the Maldoror character as a pack of dogs and then a miasma), or it can exist pervasively throughout multiple bodies (e.g., flocks of birds, a horde of rats, a swarm of flying squids). Amorphosis functions along the axis of humanity/divinity; its operator is that of dissipation and dissolution.*<sup>6</sup>

It is not unthinkable that the earliest human technologies—the technification of natural resources such as fire and ice into *mediators between man and nature*<sup>7</sup>—were directly related to preventing things (for instance, human bodies and food) from dissipating into amorphous filth. Filth, we might say, curses the flesh by acting as a *non-technical object*<sup>8</sup> that calls for peripheral technologies of avoidance or prevention—and, differently from trash or waste, it can never be re-entered into recycling systems.

Indeed, the non-technical consequences of human technology might well be described as filthy. If, for the Victorians, the archetypal representation of filth was *miasma*<sup>9</sup>—

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6. Eugene Thacker, *Tentacles Longer Than Night: Horror of Philosophy, Vol. 3* (Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2015), 1342. Kindle. Hereafter cited in the text as TLN.

7. Gilbert Simondon, *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects* [1958], trans. Ninian Mellamphy (Ontario: University of Western Ontario, 1980).

8. A detailed discussion of how “technology” and “technics” are defined in different disciplines—or philosophical schools—lies beyond the scope of this essay. Here, I use both terms in a transversal, “literary” context, mostly in reference to the *mediation* functions of technology—while not reducing them to what is commonly designated by “media technologies.” In a broad sense, “technology” and “technical objects” refer here to two phenomena: [1] the modes in which bodies—particularly human bodies—enact technics, and [2] the instructions and machines designed to expand human action. Thus, the proposal of a “non-technological understanding of filth” does not imply the existence of an ontological exteriority of technology or the possibility of a pre-technological state of matter, but *the existence of some intrinsic resistance in technology itself against being “technified.”* As Alexander Galloway has noted, Francois Laruelle’s use of the prefix *non-* in “non-philosophy” (like Marc Augé’s “non-places” or Dylan Trigg’s “non-phenomenology”) does not mean a supersession or dialectical negation of the concept that is following it. Paraphrasing Galloway, we might say that filth *achieves its (in)distinction not by opposing technology, but by “demilitarizing” it.* See Alexander Galloway, *Laruelle: Against the Digital* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 190.

9. As Yiannis Gabriel notes: “Miasma, like toxicity, coincides with an unconscious fantasy of being polluted by toxic substances. But miasma goes beyond mere toxicity in three significant ways: First, it is highly contagious; second, miasma, unlike toxicity, cannot be metabolized or neutralized through the deployment of suitable defensive mechanisms; and third, it generates a self-reinforcing vicious cycle, where attempts at



**Fig. 2:** A scene from *The Triumph of Death*. Pieter Bruegel the Elder, 1562.

a distributed, vaporous, infectious agent that was thought to rot the elemental components of the human body—then, for us, it is *radioactive material*—“unresting” residues that, instead of just sitting there threatening humans with a passive toxicity, are continuously performing their slow disintegration, turning into the mutagen par excellence that “never goes away.” Chernobyl and Fukushima did not just become material metaphors for the filthiest places on Earth, but they are expected to stay that way for centuries, no matter how much effort we put into cleaning them. Obstinate washing, in fact, often results in a paradoxical bounce back of the residue: *The Great Cleanup, initiated in the nineteenth century*, as Marder notes, *did nothing to stop the onslaught of dust. As dust and dirt are banished, . . . waste and garbage multiply* (D 801).

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purification deepen the condition. Thus, miasma brings about a state of moral and spiritual decay, a corruption of all values and human relations of trust, love and community—people suspect their neighbors of being the cause, scapegoating and witch hunts are rife. Toxicity may therefore be seen as a normal, if unpleasant consequence of organizational life in general, whereas miasma should be reserved for instances that involve far more extreme symptoms [. . .] The concept of miasma . . . readily accounts for the absence of resistance. External violations and threats may be resisted or fought against, but the same can hardly be said for inner violations and decay. In fact, miasma appears to infect resistance itself, compromising it, polluting it and subverting it.” See Yiannis Gabriel, “Organizations in a State of Darkness: Towards a Theory of Organizational Miasma,” *Organization Studies* 33.9 (2012): 1137-1152.





Originally understood as the “unintended” (unnatural, *contra natura*) outcome of nature, filth has become the haphazardous (non-technifiable) outcome of technology, including not only dangerous industrial residues and ecological catastrophes, but also the consequence of social (the “filthy rich” as a byproduct of financial technologies) and communicational (“celebrity filth” as a byproduct of media technologies) imbalance. As non-technology, then, filth might be understood as an excess of life that poses a threat to life itself.<sup>10</sup> Filth here behaves like the “noise” of the flesh,<sup>11</sup> the formless, non-technological object that opens the way to a non-phenomenology by threatening the body with the challenge of becoming *the thing*:

*As this body withdraws from experience, so it produces an excess in the world, which must be now approached from beneath matter, or rather, from beyond matter. Devoid of subjectivity, devoid of experience, silence intervenes. In this zone, the difference in the flesh gives birth to the thing. The thing has no identity, except that of a constantly mutating process, barren of all specificity and instead able insidiously to adapt itself to the surroundings. Of it, we can say only that there is a thing.*<sup>12</sup>

Of filth, we can only say that there is *a thing*, and, as Daniel Rourke explains about John Carpenter’s homonymous film, *The Thing* performs ontogenesis (something *coming to be*) rather

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10. Thus, the life of the “filthy rich” represents the biggest threat to a teleologically-driven economy not because of their accumulation of wealth, but because of their capacity to expel vast amounts of “richness” over the market, disrupting its mechanical functioning. Similarly, on “life” in *Maldoror*, Thacker states:

*Maldoror* is a tragic type of poetry because it asserts that there is too much form in the world. This is because, as the stark, surreal scenes in the text illustrate, *there is also too much life (and there is no form without life)*. *Maldoror* attempts an impossible task, which is to actively and continually un-form all form, above all that most tiring of forms, the human form. In spite of its many invectives against God, and in spite of its many absurdist descriptions of animals, the challenge posed by *Maldoror* is not a challenge against religion or science. The real challenge posed by *Maldoror* is this: what is the most adequate form of the *anti-human*? And yet *Maldoror* can only accomplish this via some form; hence its poetics of gothic misanthropy must take on the abandoned shell of the carcass of existing forms, both of literature and of life. (TLN 1367; emphasis added)

11. As Michel Serres writes: “Noise cannot be a phenomenon; every phenomenon is separated from it, a silhouette on a backdrop, like a beacon against the fog, as every message, every cry, every call, every signal must be separated from the hubbub that occupies silence, in order to be, to be perceived, to be known . . . . As soon as a phenomenon appears, it leaves the noise; as soon as a form looms up, or pokes through, it reveals itself by veiling the noise. So noise is not a matter of phenomenology, but of being itself.” See Michel Serres, *Genesis* [1982], trans. Geneviève James, et al (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1995), 13. Hereafter cited in the text as G.

12. Dylan Trigg, *The Thing* (Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2014), 131.



than ontology (something that already *is*).<sup>13</sup> It belongs to the becoming realm, changing “the mind” and “the body” by transforming them into something filthy: *a sort of tenacious vegetation, full of filthy parasites; this vegetation no longer has anything in common with other plants, nor is it flesh* (Lautréamont, M 1772). Once flesh has been invaded by filth, it becomes filthy itself, returning to the dominion of the primordial swarm. Only a “clean” memory would be able to maintain the ideal, pristine image of “the body”: *Speak then, my Beauty, to this dire putrescence / To the worm that shall kiss your proud estate / That I have kept the divine form and essence / Of my festered loves inviolate* [Alors, ô ma beauté! dites à la vermine / Qui vous mangera de baisers, / Que j’ai gardé la forme et l’essence divine / De mes amours décomposés!] (Baudelaire, FE 39, 265). Baudelaire’s love might survive death if it succeeds in dissociating memories of the rotten corpse devoured by worms.

Classical death separates the filthy flesh from the dusty body—*dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return*—allowing the ghost to be loved, as we read in Baudelaire and Poe, if it manages to liberate itself from the viscous grasp of the corrupting flesh, preventing the return of the real by reducing itself to pure form, pure technology. Only then does it renounce its own *aesthetics* and submit itself to the logic of the other’s imagination.<sup>14</sup> The filthy corpse, we might say, represents reality’s resistance to becoming technified: a rejection of the position *which predominates in our contemporary techno-metaphysics, replete with fantasies of becoming virtual, consigning individual consciousness to cyberspace, or uploading the data of our memories onto a more durable disk than the gray mass inside our skulls* (Marder, D 199).

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Filth cannot be washed or exorcized because it is the metaphor of the most radical of radical others: *change itself*—the immanent impermanence that we cannot control and that happens for neither good nor bad. Dirt, like sin, can be ignored, forgiven, extracted, separated, exorcized, washed out of the body. Saints and workers get dirty, because dirt is the remainder of the earth’s contact with the (ideally clean) body, so it can be either technologically purified (by “running” it through physical or metaphysical systems), or proudly worn as a memory-scar, as if a permanent skin-deep mark of an adventurous life. Death is technically transformed into dust and ashes because they

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13. Daniel Rourke, “An Ontology of Everything on the Face of the Earth,” *Alluvium* 2.6 (2013). <http://dx.doi.org/10.7766/alluvium.v2.6.02>

14. I use the word “aesthetics” here in a “discognitive” sense, i.e., as prior to cognition or symbolization. As Steven Shaviro has pointed out: “Before it is cognitive, let alone conscious, thought is primordially an affective and aesthetic phenomenon.” See Steven Shaviro, *Discognition* (Winchester, UK: Repeater Books, 2016), 130. Kindle. Hereafter cited in the text as D.



symbolize a clear end, and this end is also the beginning of a definitive “self.” Rotting corpses, however, are unfinished and infested by swarming entities and invisible bacteria that expel dangerous and fetid gases. The rotting corpse reminds us that there is no “clean” end—just more messy transformation:

*Death, in the disorder which, owing to its irruption, succeeds the idea of an individual regarded as part of the coherence of things, is the appearance that the whole natural given assumes insofar as it cannot be assimilated, cannot be incorporated into the coherent and clear world. Before our eyes, death embodied by a dead person partakes of a whole sticky horror; it is of the same nature as toads, as filth, as the most dreadful spiders. It is nature, not only the nature that we have not been able to conquer, but also the one we have not even managed to face, and against which we don't even have the chance to struggle. Something awful and bloodless attaches itself to the body that decomposes, in the absence of the one who spoke to us and whose silence revolts us.<sup>15</sup>*

As something excreted from the (technical) body, filth is, in fact, the body expelling itself: *the body's non-technical performance*. This is why mainstream “pornography” is not filthy anymore: any sexual practice that has been de-contextualized, staged, and turned into a performative workout, does not have the power to question the technical functions of the body in any way, or even to depict any function that might be understood as “disgusting.”<sup>16</sup> By regulating every kind of (human, non-human and even anti-human) behavior into technology, bodies have been re-uploaded with the capacity to go functionally through most experiences without actual transformation—avoiding or marginalizing what would be felt as a real aesthetic experience. In this sense, contemporary mainstream culture has evolved to avoid filth—especially joyous *exfilthration*—by

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15. Georges Bataille, “The Schema of Sovereignty” [1953], trans. Robert Hurley, in *The Bataille Reader*, eds. Fred Botting and Scott Wilson (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1997), 315.

16. As Adrian West points out:

Georges Bataille argues for a chain of associations linking the anus to feces, feces to putrefaction, and putrefaction to the useless, excessive, or unproductive, which must be eschewed in societies based in accumulation. This [...] line of reasoning leaves much aside, [...] such as the generalized prohibition of any trace of excrement in filmed depictions of anal sex, which nominally exempts it from inclusion among those deviant cravings provoked, paradoxically, by disgust (indeed, with the exception of videos made to appeal to a small fetish market, pornography proffers an idealized concept of the anus as a sex organ, and its excretory functions are suppressed).

See Adrian West, *The Aesthetics of Degradation* (Winchester, UK: Repeater Books, 2016), 37.





locking it up in “experimental” art and “avant-garde” fiction.<sup>17</sup> And because of this, one of the most pervasive myths of the modern human is the nightmarish scenario of being labeled—maybe by some future machinic intelligence—as a disposable non-technology.

And yet, socially, filth has been addressed in ways closely related to the mythological discourse of “addiction.” According to this discourse, a person who has become “an addict” remains one for life. And since “addiction”—understood as either an inborn or an acquired quality—means compulsively consuming one specific thing instead of the variety of products prescribed by the market, it is something that cannot be reversed. “Addicts,” then, are left with one possibility: that of substituting one repetitive, ritualistic behavior for another (socially-accepted) repetitive, ritualistic behavior, i.e., one legitimized during the mechanical process of rehabilitation. Since “addiction,” like filth, sticks to the body and might be contagious, the purpose of these socially-organized, ritualistic behaviors of rehabilitation is to cancel the body’s transformative capabilities—as if to avoid the social spread of filth.<sup>18</sup>

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The French philosopher François Laruelle has utilized the term “non-philosophy”<sup>19</sup> to designate a style of thinking that *would examine those aspects of philosophy that philosophy itself cannot examine, without becoming something else* (Thacker, TLN 1390). Following Laruelle and Thacker, I’ve been using the term “non-technology” here to designate an assemblage of processes that perform those acts technology itself cannot perform without becoming something else, i.e., without becoming filthy. As Thacker has shown, in *Maldoror* (and in the majority of modern fiction) filth is

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17. Thus a recent example of joyous *exfiltration* is found in Lidia Yuknavitch’s novel, *The Small Backs of Children* (New York: HarperCollins, 2015):

He presses himself against the canvas and pieces of a body smudge random chaotic forms onto white. He paints wildly, physically, with his body, his hands, brushes, oils, fluids, blood. For this is part of his claim to fame—his use of bodily fluids mixed with paint to paint giant abstract faces. He paints with the fluids of a self outside language and thought, he paints in barbaric attacks of color on the canvas of white—fight back black or blood-born Alizarin crimson, Prussian blue, burnt sienna. (Kindle 1227)

18. This is particularly evident in the media phenomenon of “filthy celebrities,” where the ceremony of “celebrity rehabilitation” works to re-mediatize the meme-body previously de-mediatized by filth.

19. François Laruelle, *Dictionary of Non-Philosophy*, trans. Taylor Adkins (Paris: Editions Kimé, 1998). See, in particular, Laruelle’s own idiosyncratic entry on “Non-Technology” (49-51).



indistinguishable from the horror of falling into amorphosis.<sup>20</sup> By posing a challenge to the *cogito*—to the principle of sufficient reason, “a moral and theological principle that the world is well formed, and that the form of the world is necessary to the world” (Thacker, TLN 1422)—*Maldoror* opens the door for 20th-21st centuries’ experimental literatures, which, recognizing Lautréamont’s role in pioneering *the negation of the bodies in the text and the auto-negation of the body of the text itself*, continue the exploration of literary anti-forms. And yet, in the end, *Maldoror*, as a book, remains a challenge not because of its *anti-human negations*, but because it escapes the bounds of a supposedly “realistic” techno-narrativity. *It negates all form—including literary form*. It does not simply represent filth; it *is* filthy.

Filth, however, is neither necessarily associated with metaphysical horror, nor is it a simple metaphor of the apophatic ways of the body.<sup>21</sup> Although contemporary popular culture has a tendency to represent human bodies as *originally clean*,<sup>22</sup> *operationally-enclosed entities*,<sup>23</sup> thereby limiting inter-body relationships to the exchange of different kinds of “information,” the fact remains that filth is what the body expels—gives away without permission—outside all social rules of exchange, following an “energetic” rather than “semiotic” logic.<sup>24</sup> The recognition of the other as

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20. There is an interesting parallelism between Thacker’s *Maldoror* and Serres’ *Proteus*. For Serres:

Proteus undergoes *metamorphoses*: he is animal, he can be element, water, or fire. He’s inert, he’s alive . . . He contains all information, admits no information. He’s the possible, he’s chaos, he’s cloud, he’s background noise . . . The chain that steadies the phenomenal must be found. Chained, motionless, Proteus speaks . . . Physics is Proteus chained. Background noise is this Proteus badly bound . . . Behold a myth, barely a myth, which grants us an epistemology . . . but through a channel full of noise. (G 14; emphasis added)

21. An exception, perhaps, would be H. P. Lovecraft’s “apophatic method.” According to David Roden, this apophatic method “discloses a dark, unknowable cosmos that is, however, devoid of transcendence. The Azathothic other would be, in this sense, an example of ‘filthy horror,’ being not beyond or ‘higher’ than matter but intimately involved and active in a unitary, if ultimately chaotic and meaningless, universe [...] The radical alien can be encountered, then, but the encounter breaks the orderly procession of historical time and knowledge production. It leaves its mark in irreducible affects—terror, madness and physical desolation.” See David Roden, “Metaphor at the Edge of the Human” <http://enemyindustry.net/blog/?p=6059>

22. In part, as a reaction to traditional Western religious representations of the body as “originally filthy” in the sense of being the bearer of sin.

23. Due in part to the replacement of mythico-religious representations of the body by technological ones.

24. As Steven Shaviro argues:

Responsive entities are energetic before they are semiotic. This is why they cannot be adequately described in the terms of information theory and systems theory. Concepts like Maturana and Varela’s “autopoiesis” and Luhman’s “operational closure” [...] are overly static. They assume that responsive entities are characterized by an underlying drive to persist in being [...] And so they ignore the ways these entities, with their enormous energy flows and energy expenditures, are equally driven by a will to change, a drive to reduce energy gradients, and thereby to push at their own limits. (D 679)



a “real other” requires the acknowledgement of its filthy nature—different from the ideal image that, as in Baudelaire’s example, might remain unaffected by the passing of time and the corruption of the flesh. This acceptance of filth signifies a willingness to accept risk—to recognize that the other’s flesh might become something very different from what we were expecting it to be, and that its otherness resides in our awareness of that filthy non-identity. Identity, as currently understood, derives mainly from a technically-described operational enclosure of the self, but non-technology, as if a distorted mirror, responds to the incessant interrogation—*How does it work?*—with a de-formed, impossible question—*How does it filth?*

While many current theories of the “posthuman” are based on the cyborg model, in which the human body is expected to merge with digital technology, this model of human/machine coalescence often assumes a series of “common technical purposes” shared by the human body and the (human-imagined) machines.<sup>25</sup> The problem with this assumption of the cyborg model, at least for theoretical purposes, is that it excludes all the non-technical aspects of both human bodies and digital objects, i.e., *all those filthy aspects that are often overlooked in order to facilitate a proper, symbolic, human-machine communication*. Even writers speculating about the possibility of a complete incommunicability between humans and future intelligent machines seem to consider that any byproduct of technology is necessarily technological. But, as I have attempted to show here, this exclusion of non-technical aspects undermines any speculation regarding the transition to a posthuman condition. Perhaps the theoretical study of “filth”—as both a non-technical “flesh-invader”/transformer, and as “the thing” that unintentionally pours out of the body—will help provoke complementary, non-technological approaches to the posthuman.

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25. See, for example, David Roden, *Posthuman Life: Philosophy at the Edge of the Human* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 166-193. For critiques and complications of this cyborg model, see Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991); N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

