

# The First Soliloquy of the Interior Zombie

*by* Gary Hardaway

Beware proximity. The odor's not  
my fault, but if you come too close,  
you'll think of death and dog shit, mixed.  
Subtly, in a stench I have to bear  
each day. My nostrils haven't yet  
grown used to it. My outward shape's  
as normal and pinkish as your own.  
My inner shape must be  
a ruin of organs, dead or dying.  
But do come close enough for me to hear.

I'm not an exterior zombie, like  
the ones in books and video  
who shuffle along in groupthink,  
moaning for brains  
that always seem to be  
the pretty ones holed up inside  
a farmhouse decrepit as the hoard  
approaching, dropping bits of body parts,  
but never detected by the smell  
so much decomposition certainly  
would generate. I guess the writers  
have but sight and sound to horrify.

Decay like mine is all interior  
and inaccessible as infection.  
First, that's what I thought was wrong-  
infection in the sinuses, or something  
festering in the lungs or bronchia.

The antibiotics didn't help.  
My stench persisted. Now,  
I just accept the thing I am.  
I feed its hunger for despair  
and sorrow, bitter disappointment, rage,  
and panic. Not the collective stuff  
of news- it's individual dismay  
that keeps this shell intact. Any fool  
could keep his outward shape  
were news the nutrient.  
Interior zombies must be stealthy things  
to get the beauty of it- human anguish- hot.

