

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.

