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Olivier Cadiot. *Colonel Zoo*. Trans. Cole Swensen. Green Integer, 2006, 202 pp. Paper. \$11.95. ISBN: 1933382546.

It's difficult to determine what's happening in *Colonel Zoo*, due to the fact that the narrator, a butler whose name may be John Robinson, is in service /99/ to the deranged and brutal M. at an unspecified time when minced brains, D-Day, Mylar, and neutron bombs all possess equal significance. M. shouts at his oafish and boring guests, a foot buried in the compote, and the conversation around the upstairs table is often tense, if not acrimonious. If his irrational behaviour is not, in fact, invented, then it makes sense why he would employ a butler like the narrator, a cross between Ishiguro's Stevens and a budding version of Harris's Hannibal Lecter. Repeatedly, Cadiot sets up situations where the butler devises elaborate schemes—connected to fishing, safe-cracking, animal mistreatment, and various homicidal acts—that often turn out to be distinct from the assumed (by us) real world, yet true on their own terms. These reveries give the author a chance to stretch his imagination for our benefit, creating a character who can say “It's true; if you start thinking of a pine as a pile of dead cows, it changes things,” and make us believe it momentarily, confined as we are within his wet, gray world. Yet the narrator's manias, obsessions, and compulsions are too numerous, especially in such a short work. Paradoxically, this may be one of Cadiot's purposes: to show that this figure's ugliness—he has nothing to redeem him—is just another side of Everyman. The references to Mars, war, and weapons illustrate that this downstairs tyrant is as representative of the servant class as M. is of the aristocrats. Or else they've all eaten too much of the minced brains.