

Billy Collins

Budapest

My pen moves along the page
like the snout of a strange animal
shaped like a human arm
and dressed in the sleeve of a loose green sweater.

I watch it sniffing the paper ceaselessly
intent as any forager that has nothing
on its mind but the grubs and insects
that will allow it to live another day.

It wants only to be here tomorrow,
dressed perhaps in the sleeve of a plaid shirt,
nose pressed against the page,
writing a few more dutiful lines

while I gaze out of the window and imagine Budapest
or some other city where I have never been.

Taking Off Emily Dickinson's Clothes
London, Picador 2000:81