

"Eating Poetry" by Mark Strand

Ink runs from the corners of my mouth.
There is no happiness like mine.
I have been eating poetry.

The librarian does not believe what she sees.
Her eyes are sad
and she walks with her hands in her dress.

The poems are gone.
The light is dim.
The dogs are on the basement stairs and coming up.

Their eyeballs roll,
their blond legs burn like brush.
The poor librarian begins to stamp her feet and weep.

She does not understand.
When I get on my knees and lick her hand,
she screams.

I am a new man.
I snarl at her and bark.
I romp with joy in the bookish dark.

1. Normally we say that we read poetry. What is Strand emphasizing by saying that the speaker is eating poetry? How is reading poetry the same as eating?
2. The librarian plays a key role in the poem, appearing several times even though the poem is short. We know also nothing about the librarian except that she's a librarian. Why could that be important?
3. Do you think the speaker of the poem and the librarian are similar? Do they both expect the same thing from poetry?
4. What happens to the speaker when he eats poetry? What does it say about an activity that has this affect?
5. For Mark Strand, what should poetry do? How is it the same or different from what you think of when you think of reading poetry?