The Princess, frankly, was a disappointment. Flatulant and gauche, she seemed most passionate to uncoif her fall of golden hair, smear ointment on her pimples, don dungarees, and rendezvous before the TV with potato chips.

But her wicked stepmother -- a dark exotic thing: sloe eyes of Sheba, Cleopatra's lips, hair black and glossy as a raven's wing.

I was not forty; she was not thirteen; all place this palace. Who would not kill a clown -- that sniggering King -- to win such a witching Queen? like Antony, choose to lose a real world's crown?

-- John Wheatcroft
Lewisburg, Pennsylvania

Amerika -- or Franz Doe

It's like when you're saying something And someone interrupts you to point Out the butterflies in a passage of Bovary, Or when your best friend won't tell you Who knows something's rotten in Denmark. Or when your nephew who's ever so young Vomits on your new bought business suit Spotting it chalky white against the gray. When some professor who really knows it all Expects you to get excited over a word Written in German seventeen letters long Resembling nothing like the liverwurst you Ate for lunch enjoying its taste And forgetting the sound of its word. Or like the last time you were swimming In the ocean and a glob of something You'd rather forget floated languidly along side As if to say I'm here and as much a part of this As you'll ever be.

And you wonder about the globby butterflies That fly out of infant mouths which Reject the best years you've given to Feed those gaping gulfs and you laughingly scream A seventeen letter English word that Is no more than a taste you remember And a meaning you have forgotten.

-- Chris Hargrove
Long Beach, California