

Science / *Christel Reges*

Of nettle butterflies, of velvet mourning cloaks and satyrs
My grandfather studied all the superficial matters,
The habits and hungers of the bright-winged races:
Sketched their larval forms, enshrined their pupal cases,
And penned their Latin names, in square, German block-letters.

At Opa's side, I watched their frail forms jerk and flutter
In Mason jars of powdered cyanide. He fettered
Their wings with pins; they dried in frozen attitudes of grace,
The nettle butterflies.

Did he know his cruelty, who so pursued his ardor
For fringed, jewel-dusty wings? No; love makes traitors
Of the kindest hearts: our passions bid us hasten
To jail the evanescent. Why are we so amazed,
If we succeed, to find its life has shattered--
Like nettle butterflies?