

## **“Their Finest Hour”**

by Thomas Turman

The Spitfire mounted in full flight  
tells us we're in the right place.  
The Royal Air Force museum in Croydon.  
A war's history in a few cold metal buildings.  
The cathedral-like silence is right.

Alone with the imagined silent roar of World War II  
Pratt & Whitneys and Rolls-Royces.  
I can touch the fast, deadly beauties  
smelling still of aviation fuel and sweat.

Two English couples enter behind me.  
The women go to the teashop.  
The men shuffle straight to the dark German planes.  
Their hatred of former death machines surrounds us all.

Standing as tall as he can under a DeHavilland Mosquito,  
an 80-year-old explains his life in this bomber to  
his vacant nephew who wanders off to the jets.  
His ancient story fades into the lack-of-interest fog.  
Touching the trailing edge, the former pilot can't leave the Mosquito.

There are tears in both his eyes and mine.