CITTA DEL VATICANO

Tony Curtis

He showed us Michaelangelo's Pietà, explained the Virgin's averted gaze.
In amaze, we stretched our necks up to the Creation:

God's finger
crossing a narrow and infinite gap
to loath and lifeless Man.

An Eighth-Century Bible intrigues
with its painstaking script,
its detail of illumination:

Christ
dies before a simple-faced group of serfs.

But what brings gasps,

an eager pressing,
is Nixon's present to the Pope:
four fragments of Moon rock,
set beside the Papal medal those astronauts wore.
Protected thus, they returned with these black scrapings, sealed now in the archive's glass,
set between the blue porcelain of Sévres and stiffly-sequined Papal robes.

If Michaelangelo's dying, dim eyes
had seen beyond St. Peter's Dome
then could he have reached out
for these nail-parings of the Moon.