

W. TRAVIS HELMS



From *Sistine Blank Sonnets*
(for Ludovica)

The Drunkenness of Noah

His plow cut dry dirt. In the gathering
light of a waking dawn, his hands dug deep,
split the earth, pressed firm roots to bedded soil.
When first vines broke out into the settling air,
what could he do but taste the dripping fruit?
He drank deep the yield. The old man never
slept like this. Canvas walls swayed in the breeze.
Bare dirt clung to naked skin. Grey hair draped
from a drooping chin like vines, spread wiry roots
on a sagging chest. While he slept, exposed,
curtains in the twilight closed. The children
finished playing. One, unto two others,
beckoned — and we, unfettered in the after-laughter,
turned — as if, ever, such cover'd redress nakedness.

The Creation of Adam

His face clenched upwards ... — back twisting, neck racked,
his eyes gazed toward heaven, drew in his hell:
four years thinking, mindless muttering — four
years forcing a hand that stuttered ... those years
were lived in suspension. Did dimming eyes,
cast up in doubt, notice the light leak in
each day, each day again drain out? In the center,
the first of men reclines on high bare stone,
like lifeless flesh heaped upon lifeless bone:
genesis latent, formed yet void — a proof
or presence, like the pretense of a star ...
(he says, you cannot have planets without chaos ...) —
a spark that that gapped instance'd start dissolving what hard
earn — in words — we'd conceive (or -ceed) could come of nothing.