

GRAHAM ROWLANDS

DON'T TRY TO TELL ME

Thank God the Brisbane *Courier-Mail* doesn't run poetry.
Once, without even trying, I reduced Mummy to tears
with a Metaphysical slice of my sex life exposed
in the Weekend Review pages of the Melbourne *Age*.
She was there on holidays at the Chevron-Hilton.
Then there were those ever-so-delicate *Quadrants*
answering the question of why I stopped loving Mummy
which was in the beginning, is now & ever shall be
why I never started. She learned to expect the worst
but what she *couldn't* forgive were the cheques.
How could she know I sent them to the Gurindjis?
Poor bugger me. Don't even have to be Gurindji.
Anything about the old folks at home, now, I
whizz off to Perth or Hobart Priority Paid.
Of course, I had to be careful with Sydney
until the wills were written, signed & witnessed
& the relies went through with their last obligation.
Even those who can't read newspapers, can be read to.
Even if they can't follow, a niece or nephew just might.
I've polished off I can't remember how many liaisons
with a poem — sometimes even before they began.
One married man gave me a poem in his own words —
this affair he was having & how tickled pink &
then wanted it back, took it away from me —
the only copy, for safe keeping, he said
knowing I believe in art as nothing but action
he didn't want any part of. No siree.
Not forgetting the one about the unmarried man
who said there was plenty of room at his place,
especially in his bed for the one night.
Well, you can't be rude. Can you?
That one's locked in a bank vault in Adelaide
along with a few others — possibly, possibly not
posthumous — those memories I couldn't deface by
putting rinses of poetic licence through their hair.

Don't try to tell me, sonnyboy,
don't try to tell me, honeychild,
don't try to tell me Art is Art for Art's sake.