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BRISBANE

There is an absence of freedom here:
you can feel it in bookshops, where certain books are missing;
you can sense it in the cinema, where certain films are not shown.
It is palpable in the streets: the same smiling police
who welcome tourists to this smug and sultry outpost
will not hesitate to kick your front door down
if you conceal abortions or are black or gay.

There is an absence of freedom here:
amid tall palm trees and the Queen Street Mall.
Here, where people do not notice what they do not have.
In this town of tall buildings built on government graft.
This town where permits are eased past the authorities,
where the rules are relaxed, bent, twisted or snapped
like the wrist of a demonstrator not allowed to march.