That Hot Night

When the cops picked us up as law-breakers
after approaching, all guns’n’belts’n’badges,
they drove, with us behind a screen,
radio drawling static-laced jargon,
to the watchhouse with these stone cells.

They asked where we were from
so I told them, Australia,
and it turned out the aggressive one
served with Diggers in ’Nam,
said, Those guys sure could drink some,
said this as if recalling golden days
slipped away like water down a river.
We exaggerated our smiles and accents.

He drove the patrol car to a motel
where our room’s door featured a hole
the size and shape of an angry boot.
The proprietor looked away from us,
a Ry Cooder tune playing low.

This was not our intended bivouac
but we kept quiet about our camping budget.
The ’Nam cop, now our friend, had explained
how it was against the law in Maine
to hitch-hike beyond nightfall.
While I dreamed Elmore Leonard dreams
my wife wrote to her genteel parents
that hot night long ago.

Ian C Smith