Just off the A9, en route to Port Arthur,
Here close by the Blowhole,
Tasman’s Arch and the Devil’s Kitchen,
the little settlement of Doo
revels in its punning nomenclature.
The vying houses try to outdo one
another: Doo Drop In, Nothing to Doo,
Diggery Doo, Morning Doo —
we are the punning species,
looking for ways to escape
enclosures of language,
the incarcerations of identity:
give us a gap in commonsense
and we’re quick to brave chained
dogs of earnest and deadly probity.
At Port Arthur, only eleven
men ever escaped, though one at least
perished in the Bush, the leg irons
still fixed to his skeleton.
They were poets every one.
Guarded by the criminally sane,
we go about our business in the modern
panopticon, while miles of video tape
record inanities in the bank,
the supermarket, outside the apartments
of the wealthy, before the consulates
of the civilized nation states.
In the unconsecrated church at
Port Arthur — built by those hardened
boy criminals from Point Puer,
who cut the stone, fashioned
the bricks and carved the woodwork —
we stand in the open space (the roof
burnt down from a trash fire
next door) thinking, what
at this point in this anomalous
place, can one do? Our escapes —
our escapades — may be momentary
freedoms, but this place seethes
with unlawful provocation.
It is no nightmare from which
we simply awake — and for those in
hammocks slung low across the cells
the morning sun was the eye
of despair. Do unto others, the
golden rule of Tasmania. One could
do worse than live in the village of Doo.