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The New Hennessy Book of Irish Fiction

Ed. Dermot Bolger and Ciaran Carty

New Island €14.99

A decade later and the same editors have packaged a second collection of short stories first published by first-time writers in the New Irish Writing page of *The Sunday Tribune*. Thankfully ordered chronologically rather than bunched - as is frequent with such collections - according to prevailing commonalities the editors might descry, six of the stories are from the 1990s (1999 alone is not sampled) and fifteen are from the noughts. "It is the job of writers to confront the times they live in, to give no echo to the worn-out", Colum McCann insists in his Introduction, and the selection, while admitted to be "subjective", illustrates striking originalities of theme and voice, if not always of form. While the concluding list of all previous winners of the Hennessy Awards, like the list of contributors itself, is punctuated by unfamiliar names, the roll call of appointed judges (from Elizabeth Bowen to Ronan Bennett) is itself testament to the venerability of the ongoing New Irish Writing project.

John Kenny