

Ní Chuilleanáin's collection *The Brazen Serpent* is fascinating on many levels and deserves a broad readership. However, due to the author's reputation for elusive and impenetrable poetry, the collection has not been as widely appreciated as it could have been had the readers been brave enough to flip and rotate the cover and dedicate to the collection the time and effort which the poems call for. The main dissuasion may seem to be the fact that the collection is deeply inspired by religious imagery and faith. However, in the analysis of the collection, it has been shown that although the poems are connected to the theme of religion, including topics such as nuns, the sacred versus the secular, saints and relics and other similar themes, there are many other layers of meaning which are hidden and have been excavated with the help of critical publications, interviews with the author and systematic close reading of the texts. This analysis of *The Brazen Serpent*, which incorporated biographical information, the Irish context, the feminine and feminist aspect, history – both personal and religious, aspires to be a useful tool for the better understanding of the rich symbolism contained in the poetry in its many layers of meaning. As was evident in the personal interview which I conducted with Ní Chuilleanáin, the poet is open to new interpretations of her work and encourages the reader to find their own symbolism in her poetry as well as generously explaining her own motives and inspirations.

An exploration of themes such as Ní Chuilleanáin's elusiveness, elements of folklore, the gender of the speaker, the concept of memory, or the typical perception of femininity have led to a better understanding and perhaps to some sort of grasp of Ní Chuilleanáin's aesthetic which is projected into the type of poetry which she writes. Topics which she delves into are the female empowerment of nuns in connection to her family situation and history, she explores the brazen serpent as an entity which holds the poems together and works as a metaphor for the collection and the various cultural motifs which are connected to it, she is fascinated with religious allusions, looks to fragmentation as a connecting principle and explores memory, truth and perspective in her poems.