

The Lady of the Lantern



A two-act play

By

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G.K. Chesterton Plays

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THE LADY OF THE LANTERN

A SYNOPSIS

Hanora (Nano) Nagle was born in Ballygriffin, Co Cork in 1718. Due to the Penal Laws, her parents sent her to relatives in Paris to receive an education. Upon completion of her schooling, she remained in Paris.

For a number of years Nano enjoyed the good life. She became immersed in Parisian society going from the ball to the theatre to the opera. She was in her own words, “a lover of the wools, of dress, of vanity”.

One morning, returning from an all night ball, Nano observed a group of people waiting for a church to open. Among them were a number of children. This sight caused her to ponder the path she had taken as well as the condition of the poor in her native land.

Even though Nano would later enter the convent, this incident made a lasting impression. She felt a call to do something about the rampant poverty in Ireland and the loss of faith due to ignorance. She left the convent and returned to Cork.

The task before her was enormous. No Catholic could teach a child or keep a school or send children abroad to be educated. Penalties included fines, imprisonment, transportation or forfeit of property. Thus began her great work in education and as some historians have noted, her important work in saving Irish culture.

THE SET

My preference is for a single set throughout. A room with tables and chairs serves the various locations in the play. While students can bring benches on and off for classroom scenes, changes in time and place can be suggested by lighting, rather than shifting props about.

In the end, however, the set is a matter for the set designer.

TIME AND PLACE

Act 1, Paris and Cork, 1750. Act 2, twenty years later in Cork, 1770.

MUSIC

Watermusic – Part 3 Hornpipe-Menuet-Rigaudon1/11-etc. By G.F. Handel. This music accompanies the sance on page 5.

“The Credo” Hymn on page 4

“The Dawning of the Day” pages 12, 28 & 29, 44

“Old Maid in the Garret” pages 21 and 22.

“Salve Ragina” hymn on page 44 by Fatima Soriano.

CHARACTERS

Hanora (Nano) Nagle, 32, subject of the play.

Joseph Nagle, 28, Brother of Nano.

Frances Nagle, 28, Wife of Joseph.

Anne Nagle, 25, Sister of Nano.

Brigid Devereaux, 50's, Housekeeper of the Nagle's.

Emma O'Rourke, early 20's, Teacher.

Ellen Murdock, 50, Asst. Headmistress, Charter School.

Henry Granville, 50's, Magistrate and Justice of the Peace.

Richard Lewis, 40, Undersheriff, County of Cork.

Father Francis Moylan, 30, Parish Priest.

Francis Carleton, 45, Alderman, Cork Corporation.

Marie Bernal, 10, Girl in Paris Street (and again on page 77)

Mitchell Foy, age open, Constable.

Students or pupils. Total of 8. Age range 12-18. Philpot, Forestal, Ring, McNamara, O'Shea. Note: Mary Ann Collins, Elizabeth Burke and Mary Fouhy are seniors.

ALSO – Revelers, Dancers, Parents, Councillors, seen and unseen.

ACT ONE**SCENE ONE**

Cork, Ireland, Circa 1750.

Magistrate Henry Granville, centre stage, robed and wigged. He is flanked by Undersheriff Richard Lewis, stage left and Father Moylan, stage right. They address the audience.

FR MOYLAN. "It was a machine of wise and elaborate contrivance as well fitted for the impoverishment and degradation of a people, as ever proceeded from the perverted ingenuity of man." Edmund Burke. Mr. Burke was referring to the Penal Laws. What were the Penal Laws? Let's just say the people were deprived of the most basic human rights. The goal was to eradicate the ancient faith of this kingdom. This was not a good time to be a Catholic, or for that matter, a Presbyterian or a Baptist, or any religion except the religion of the State.

LEWIS: No Papist may purchase land...

FR. Moylan: Papist? Roman Catholic.

LEWIS: No Dissenter may hold any public office...

FR MOYLAN: Dissenter? Presbyterian or Baptist

LEWIS: Or enter Military Service unless he takes communion at the established church.

GRANVILLE: No person of the Roman religion shall publicly teach school.

LEWIS: Or send a child abroad to any school or university.

FR MOYLAN: The sender and the pupil shall be subject to all the provisions of William the 3rd, Chapter 4.

GRANVILLE: And forfeit all their lands and estates during their lives.

LEWIS: No Papist shall hold public office or engage in trade or commerce.

GRANVILLE: No Papist or Dissenter shall enter the legal profession

LEWIS: No Papist or Dissenter shall keep or bear arms.

GRANVILLE: No Papist shall own a horse of greater value than five pounds.

FR MOYLAN: On and on and on. A horrific code, A horrific time. For the offender? Transportation. Yes, transportation to America or the West Indies. But a greater threat awaited, more subtle, more humane; therefore more likely to achieve what the penal laws could not.

(The Guildhall, City of Cork. Magistrate Henry Granville at his desk reading a letter. Seated opposite Alderman Francis Carleton)

CARLETON: Charter Schools?

GRANVILLE: Yes. Charter Schools. Is that a surprise?

CARLETON: In Dublin, no. But Cork?

GRANVILLE: Dublin, Cork, Limerick and soon every village in this country. (Hands him letter). Read.

- CARLETON: (Reads). "The schools are designed to rescue the souls of thousands of poor children from the dangers of the Roman Catholic Religion".
- GRANVILLE: A worthy cause, don't you agree?
- CARLETON: Where will the money come from?
- GRANVILLE: Parliament. They have pledged one hundred thousand pounds.
- CARLETON: (Shocked). For Irish Schools?
- GRANVILLE: Protestant Schools.
- CARLETON: Begging your pardon Milord. Your country has never spent that kind of money on Ireland.
- GRANVILLE: All the men of rank support this great cause. And their ladies. The King himself has made a pledge. One thousand pounds per annum.
- CARLETON: What do you want from me....money?
- GRANVILLE: Land. If an Alderman of this city was to donate a building and that Alderman came from a distinguished family named Carleton, it might set a good example.
- CARLETON: The Carleton family will donate money, if the source is kept secret.
- GRANVILLE: You do support this venture, do you not?
- CARLETON: (Rises) I attended a trial last week in Limerick. A Hedge Schoolmaster named Donovan. Received four years at hard labour. This man was offered his freedom if he would take an oath...
- GRANVILLE: Against transubstantiation. Yes, I know.
- CARLETON: Then you know he refused.
- GRANVILLE: The man's a Papist.
- CARLETON: Who will not come within a mile of your Charter School
- GRANVILLE: Other men will. Men of little means. With children of little means.
- CARLETON: Hmm. A bit crafty that...don't you think?
- GRANVILLE: Indeed. Consider the end. For the first time in two hundred years, we can bring the reformation to Ireland. The Protestant Reformation. Not by force of mind, by education. A teacher in every school, in every village, in every barony throughout this Kingdom.
- CARLETON: A grand scheme Milord, if it succeeds.
- GRANVILLE: How can it not succeed? We are embarked on a great crusade. To bring these poor deluded people into the English Church. Is there any force on earth that can stop this enterprise? If there is, I should like to see it.

BLACKOUT

ACT ONE**SCENE TWO**

A Ballroom in Paris.

Upstage, masked Revelers dance a minute to the music of G.F Handel. (Watermusic – part 3

Hornpipe – Menuet – Rigaudon 1/11 – etc) When the music ends, the Revelers exit.

Two Revelers enter downstage. One male, one female. The male is masked, but not the female. This is Nano Nagle. They have exited the ballroom on to a Paris Street.

REVELER: Hedge School? Did you go there Miss Nagle?

NANO: Indeed, for one whole year.

REVELER: After that Mademoiselle?

NANO: I was instructed by Mr O'Neill at home.

REVELER: For which he could be jailed.

NANO: Or worse.

REVELER: Ireland must be the only nation in the world where learning is a crime. (Mimics) Arrest that man. On what charge Milord? The mans' a scholar. He knows too much. Homer, Aristotle, the dialogues of Plato. Put him in irons. Seven years' transportation. Where to Milord? Where any man goes who thinks he knows everything... America.

NANO: (Laughs) Unfortunately, it has happened.

REVELER: Will you be going back?

NANO: This is my home now. I love Paris.

REVELER: Good. Then you're free.

NANO: Depends what you mean by free.

REVELER: (A flourish) Free to embrace the world. To mingle with men of letters. To enter the academy. To savour the new ideas of the enlightenment. I shall gladly be your tutor.

NANO: What would you teach me sire?

REVELER: The only guide to truth is experience. What we see, what we hear, what we touch.

NANO: You call that the enlightenment?

REVELER: We are shining the light of science on the world.

NANO: What about the unseen world?

REVELER: That is religion, not science.

(A church bell tolls. A group of people, heads covered with cowls, huddle across the stage. A young Girl of 10, Marie Bernal, stands apart from the group. She is poorly dressed, thin, with eyes fixed on Nano. A strong wind is blowing).

NANO: Who are they?

REVELER: Churchgoers. A slight detour on their way to work.

NANO: Church at this hour?

REVERLER: The hour is 5.30 Miss Nagle, a.m.

NANO: What about this child?

REVERLER: What child?

NANO: Over there. Standing all alone.

(Nano stops and peers at Marie. Marie, her hair blowing in the wind, stares at Nano).

VOICE: (Off stage). Nano, come on, the carriage is waiting. You're going to catch your death out there.

REVELER: (Takes her arm). Allow me. Where were we? Oh yes, experience. What we see, or hear, or touch.

NANO: I should prefer to explore the unseen. What we don't see, or hear, or touch.

REVELER: Miss Nagle, if you wish to accomplish anything in this world. You must be rational. Otherwise, we are back to all that superstition we just left behind. That my dear is not the enlightenment.

(Lights down and up. A Convent in Paris. We hear the Latin hymn, "The Credo". A procession of Nuns pass by behind a scrim – only shadows are visible).

(The hymn ends. Nano is downstage pacing. Upstage the silhouette of a Priest behind a scrim)

PRIEST: Mother Superior tells me you feel somewhat unsettled.

NANO: I can't sleep at night Father.

PRIEST: No surprise there. A woman enjoys the good life in Paris. Then decides to enter the Convent. That is a huge leap.

NANO: The woman is having second thoughts.

PRIEST: Tell me, what gave rise to your vocation?

NANO: My sister Anne in Dublin and that night at the Masquerade Ball.

PRIEST: The people outside the church.

NANO: Yes.

PRIEST: That could have been a sign Miss Nagle. Why didn't you follow it?

NANO: I did. I went to Cork. I wanted with all my heart to devote my life to the poor, but...

PRIEST: But?

NANO: You haven't been to Cork, Father. You haven't been to Ireland.

PRIEST: Abject poverty. The worst in Europe. I do read the newspapers.

NANO: I can't forget the children. They're in my thoughts. In my dreams. Every day and every night.

PRIEST: If that is so, you belong there, not here.

NANO: I thought this was my vocation, this convent. Now I don't know. I just don't know.

PRIEST: You're a postulant young lady. You are free to leave at any time.

NANO: If I do, then what? Go to Ireland again. And have it all come to naught?

PRIEST: Ever heard the passage from scripture? The harvest is great.

NANO: The labourers are few.

PRIEST: And getting fewer in your native country. Not to answer that call may endanger your immortal soul. Have you considered that?

NANO: I did go. Saw the poverty. Wanted to do something, but I felt so helpless.

PRIEST: Good.

NANO: Good?

PRIEST: When God comes into our lives, he wants humility. Not someone with all the answers. For an undertaking like this, we must depend entirely on God. If you feel helpless so much the better. There is nothing left then, is there? Nothing....but prayer. You mentioned your sister in Dublin.

NANO: Anne, yes. I went to see her before um...before she died.

(Common room of the Nagle house in Dublin. Anne Nagle enters with a basket which she lays on the Table. She is wrapping a cloth around the basket. Anne wears a hat with a veil in front)

ANNE: Nano, would you donate that red cloak you brought from Paris? We also need a warm blanket.

NANO: (Off- stage) Did you see the Doctor?

ANNE: Same old story. Bed rest for seven days and a dose of laudanum.

NANO: (Off) Which of course you will ignore...again.

ANNE: We all die sooner or later.

NANO: (Enters with blanket) I'll take it later, if you don't mind. (See's hat) What's this? The latest fashion in Dublin?

ANNE: A redness around the neck. I thought I should cover it up.

NANO: Not for me Anne. Why don't you take it off?

ANNE: No thanks. I'm going back out in a few minutes.

NANO: Have you seen the roll of silk I brought from Paris?

ANNE: Yes, I have. (Long Pause) I um....I sold it.

NANO: (Shocked) What? The silk. That was for a new dress.

ANNE: I sold it and bought a few things. Food, clothing, medicine.

NANO: That was rather bold, was it not?

- ANNE: There are greater needs. Like the poor of this city.
- NANO: I'm well aware of that, thank you.
- ANNE: What are you doing about it with your new silk dress? And all those trifles, vain trifles you brought from Paris?
- NANO: Do not lecture me please.
- ANNE: See this blanket. You know what I have in here? Apples, oysters, bread, medicine and a few pennies. For the children out there in the slums. Why am I doing it? Because this is what my sister would do. My sister Nano. That I have looked up to since I was this high. She set an example that I have tried to follow. Tried as best I could. The boys feel the same way. You know what David said at Father's funeral? Father is not gone, he's right there. (Points) There you were, all along. Hands behind your back, just like Father. (Nano turns away and sobs quietly). I still have that letter from Paris. The night you returned from the Ball. A common sight, people outside a church. They saw one thing. You saw another? (Pause)
- NANO: Children, thousands of children. Unable to read, unable to write, unable to cipher. Most of all unable to learn the rudiments of their faith. Which they will lose. Which they will lose, because these penal laws are tearing the heart and soul out of our country.
- NANO/ANNE: (Together) And the world carries on like nothing is wrong.

BLACKOUT

ACT ONE**SCENE THREE**

Two months later. The Nagle House in Cork City, Ireland. We are in the common room. Frances Nagle and Brigid Devereaux are draping a white linen tablecloth over a table.

BRIGID: Two days late is nothing new for our Nano.

FRANCES: Perhaps she stopped in Limerick

BRIGID: The Dublin coach no longer goes to Limerick. Too many brigands on that road.

FRANCES: Or else she stopped to see an old Beau.

BRIGID: Who...Master Looney?

FRANCES: Indeed, I hope not. When that fella drinks. He talks too much. He's even worse when he's sober.

FRANCES: (Laughs) Have you seen the black prayer-book?

BRIGID: Yes Mam, in the parlour. I'll go get it.

(Brigid goes off. Frances takes a chalice from a trunk and places it centre table)

FRANCES: (Calls) Brigid, don't forget the candles.

(Joseph Nagle enters. He is removing a cloak)

JOSEPH: You won't need the candles. The Stations have been called off.

FRANCES: Why?

JOSEPH: They arrested a priest near the South Gate.

FRANCES: Father Doran?

JOSEPH: Some Jesuit, just arrived from France. They also issued a warrant for a Schoolmaster. The Sheriff is going door to door with two Constables.

FRANCES: If they cancelled the Stations, we better tell the neighbours.

JOSEPH: They already know. I told the Sullivan boys to spread the news.

FRANCES: Did you say France? The priest came from France?

JOSEPH: Yes...why? (A silence)

JOSEPH: What is it?

FRANCES: Um...nothing. Not important.

JOSEPH: If you're concerned about Nano...

FRANCES: When someone is two days late, that's a good reason to be concerned.

JOSEPH: The priest got off the boat in Cork, Nano got off the boat in Dublin six weeks ago.

FRANCES: She might have known him in France.

JOSEPH: If she did, grand. There's no law against knowing a priest in France, even a Jesuit.

FRANCES: He might implicate her in some scheme.

JOSEPH: Nano is the last person in the world to get involved in any scheme. If I know my sister, all she wants to do is come home and enjoy the quiet life. Maybe go to Ballygriffin and ride her horse.

BRIGID: (At the door) Mr Nagle, a coach just turned off the main road. He's heading this way.
(Joseph hurries out. Brigid has two candles and a prayer book)

FRANCES: Quick, get rid of the candles.
(Brigid goes. Frances grabs the chalice, sweeps off the tablecloth and stuffs them in the trunk. She removes a picture of the Sacred Heart from the wall. After a while)

BRIGID: (Off) Nano, 'tis Nano Mr Nagle.

JOSEPH: (Off) Hello Sister. Welcome home.

NANO: (Off) Thank you, thank you very much. Great to be back again.

JOSEPH: (Off) Leave the bags right there, I'll take care of them later.

NANO: (Off) They're quite heavy, especially the red bag. I picked up a few books in Paris.
(Joseph, Nano and Brigid enter)

JOSEPH: She's here Frances, safe and sound. My dear wife was a bit anxious about your safety.

FRANCES: More than a bit. (They embrace) Welcome home Nano. You'll be glad to hear we fixed up your old room.

NANO: Thank you Frances. Thank you so much. When I came down the Mallow Road and caught a glimpse of the mountains, I said to myself, "how could I ever leave home?"

BRIGID: How could you indeed? How could anyone leave Cork for Paris?

JOSEPH: How could anyone leave Paris for Cork?

FRANCES: Please take a seat. You must be famished.

NANO: I'm grand. I just came from the Mardyke. Stopped at an Inn near the bridge.

BRIGID: You won't say no to a cup of tea now, will you?

NANO: A cup of tea by Brigid Devereaux, how can I refuse?
(Brigid goes out)

JOSEPH: How are they all in Dublin?

NANO: David sends his regards. Can't wait to get back to Ballygriffin.

JOSEPH: Elizabeth?

NANO: Not too well. She was very close to Mother, you know. I think she needs a holiday. A long holiday.

JOSEPH: I'll write to David and see what we can do. Maybe bring her home for the summer.

FRANCES: You mentioned the Mardyke. Did you stay there?

NANO: Yes, stayed with some friends.

FRANCES: The Hanlons?

NANO: A family near the barracks. I don't think you would know them Frances.

FRANCES: I suppose that depends on who they might be.

(A silence)

JOSEPH: So...um...ah...regarding father's will, you have been named as an heir.

NANO: David told me about it, yes.

JOSEPH: A considerable sum I might add.

FRANCES: What surprised me was the bequest to Aunt Mary.

NANO: I don't see why. Aunt Mary is father's sister.

FRANCES: Mr Burke is a wealthy man. Why give money to money?

JOSEPH: The bequest has little to do with Aunt Mary or Mr Burke. It has everything to do with his son...

FRANCES: Edmund?

JOSEPH: Father was very fond of the boy. He was quite willing to take off his coat and foot turf with the lads.

FRANCES: Edmund Burke toiling in the bog?

NANO: Indeed. Came down to Ballygriffin every summer.

(Brigid comes in with a pot of tea. Pours a cup and hands it to Nano)

FRANCES: Can't quite picture that chap footing turf. Seemed a bit soft when I met him.

BRIGID: SOFT IS IT? Go away Mam. That lad could hold his own. Mix it up with the boyos if he had to. Remember that day Nano, he came home with a black eye.

NANO: (Laughs) I do indeed

BRIGID: Looked like Blackbeard himself on the Spanish Main.

NANO: Poor Mother, she was aghast. "Master Edmund Burke, what in heaven's name happened to you". "Well Madam, my eye came in contact with a clenched fist, without my consent"
(Laughter)

BRIGID: Without my consent. That boy will make a great lawyer someday.

JOSEPH: Yes, but he'll need an interpreter.

FRANCES: Joseph, we have to get the room ready.

JOSEPH: Oh right, the bags. I almost forgot.

(Frances and Joseph exit. Nano puts down the cup of tea, looks furtively about and beckons Brigid Downstage)

NANO: Can I take you into my confidence?

BRIGID: You found a Beau and want to elope?

NANO: It may come as a bit of a shock.

BRIGID: A Frenchman?

NANO: A big shock.

BRIGID: An Englishman?

NANO: I intend to open a school.

BRIGID: A Catholic School?

NANO: For girls.

BRIGID: I need a drink. Whiskey, Irish whiskey mixed with poteen (putcheen) otherwise known as moonshine.

NANO: You're the only person who knows.

BRIGID: Nano Nagle. That little girl who used to run into my room every time there was thunder and lightning and hide under the bed, is going to set up a school.

NANO: Shhh. Do you know a teacher?

BRIGID: Seven years transportation that's what you'll get. I'm not going with you.

NANO: Brigid....

BRIGID: There's a woman at the Mall. Her name is O'Rourke.

NANO: Good, I'd like to meet her as soon as possible.

BRIGID: What about pupils? Where will you go?

NANO: Any street in the city of Cork

BRIGID: At night?

NANO: Yes.

FRANCES: (Off) Nano, your room is ready.

NANO: Can you get me a lantern?

BRIGID: There's one in the shed. It's very dim. You'll have to get it fixed up.

FRANCES: (Calls) Nano.

NANO: (Answers) Coming. Thanks Brigid. Thanks very much.

BRIGID: (Whispers) Seven years transportation, Barbados or Jamaica. There'll be ructions in this house when they find out, ructions.

(Nano goes out. Frances enters)

FRANCES: That room is a bit chilly, we need a few sods of turf.

BRIGID: Plenty of turf out the back. I'll fetch a sod or two.

FRANCES: Before you go, who do we know in the Mardyke?

BRIGID: Hard to say. Not a part of town we know very well.

FRANCES: Exactly. Nano lodged there for 2 nights. Did she say where?

BRIGID: Didn't say a word.

FRANCES: Seems a bit odd. She takes a coach from Dublin to Cork. Supposed to come directly to her own house....

BRIGID: Yes, yes, yes, seems a bit odd all right. Our Nano is a great one for making new friends. Maybe she met someone in Paris who knew someone in the Mardyke. 'Tis a small world when you move in Nano's circle.

FRANCES: I suppose I shouldn't fret about it. As my husband said, Nano came home for a little peace and quiet and maybe a bit of a holiday.

BRIGID: You're right there Mam. A little peace and quiet is all she's after and a good cup of tea.

(Crossfade to a street in Cork)

(Lights dim. Silhouetted figures of women can be seen of a scrim. They stand about 5 feet apart. Nano enters with a lantern. She turns towards the theatre audience as she addresses the women)

NANO: My name is Nano Nagle.

WOMAN 1: What do you want?

NANO: I intend to open a school for girls.

WOMAN 1: What kind of school?

NANO: A Catholic School.

WOMAN 1: (Laughter) A Catholic School. Hear that Jack? A woman here says she wants to open a Catholic school.

JACK: I've just been crowned King of England.

WOMAN: I'm his lady in waiting.

JACK: You'll have a long wait. (More laughter)

(Nano moves to the next woman)_

NANO: Hello, my name is Nano Nagle. I intend to open a school for girls.

WOMAN 2: Why would you do that?

NANO: For the sake of the children.

WOMAN 2: Now listen. I don't know who you are or what you're up to. If I was you, I'd go home and tend to me knitting. So goodnight and don't bother me again. Girl school, huh?

(Nano moves to the next woman)

NANO: My name is Nano Nagle. I intend to open a school for girls

WOMAN 3: I haven't seen you before. Are you one of us?

NANO: Ad deum qui laificat...

WOMAN 3: Juventutem Meum. What if the law comes around?

NANO: I would be subject to arrest.

WOMAN 3: And the parents of the child?

NANO: I don't know Madam. I can make no guarantees.

WOMAN 3: How many pupils do you have?

NANO: None.

WOMAN 3: You're a brave woman, I'll say that for you. Come back when you have a full class. Maybe then we can talk.

(Nano moves to the next woman)

NANO: Hello, my name is Nano Nagle, I intend to open a school for girls.

WOMAN 4: A charter school?

NANO: A school of our own.

WOMAN 4: In a building? With a room?

NANO: Right here in Cork.

WOMAN 4: Lord save us. I do have a little girl that's school age. Mary Ann. Mary Ann Collins.

NANO: You should know I don't have any pupils...yet

WOMAN 4: My girl would be the first?

NANO: Not alone the first Mrs Collins. But the first since the old wooden schoolhouse in your grandmother's day.

WOMAN 4: Then it's up to my daughter. She's the one that must decide, not me. Mary Ann, there's a lady here to see you.

(Light fades on Nano and come up down stage)

(A young girl, shabbily dressed, enters. Her name is Mary Ann Collins. She is Nano's first student)

(After a while a 2nd student enters. She stands about 3 feet from Collins, both facing the audience.)

Students enter at intervals until they are 8 in number. They stand in line across the stage)

(A flute begins to play, "The Dawning of the Day".)

(Undersheriff Richard Lewis enters. He unfurls a parchment sheet, faces the audience and freezes)

(The music picks up. We now hear a tin whistle as well as the flute)

(As the music plays, Collins, begins to tap her left foot on the floor)

(A 2nd student follows suit, then a 3rd and a 4th until all students tap the floor with their left foot)

(After a while, the students switch to the right foot. The tapping gets louder. The music gets faster. The tapping continues to the end of the tune.)

(Note to Director. When Collins steps out on the stage, this is an historic moment; the first student to enter the first school in 200 years. Although hedge schools did exist, they were transient. Teacher and students had to flee when the law approached. Now a permanent school is established in a permanent place. This then is a "here we stand" moment which I have attempted to depict in the manner given above. Any ideas that might increase its significance would of course be welcome)

BLACKOUT

ACT ONE**SCENE FOUR**

A schoolroom in Cove Lane, Cork. Eight (8) female students stand by benches. Most are shabbily dressed and unkempt except for students Philpot, McNamara and Fouhy. They are well clad, but only by comparison. Nano and Emma O'Rourke stand in front of the class. Nearby is a table with a stack of textbooks and notebooks. Teachers and students are reciting the Lord's Prayer.

CLASS: Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, amen. (Sign of the Cross) In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, Amen.

NANO: Please be seated. Miss O'Rourke will pass out a notebook to each pupil. It is yours to keep. Please remember to bring it with you every day you come to school.

(O'Rourke distributes notebooks)

NANO: I expect your parents told you the reason we are here which does not include engaging in a tug of war Miss Burke.

(Students Burke and Collins are tussling over a satchel)

BURKE: She stole my money. (Indicating Collins)

COLLINS: I did not. I got it lost.

NANO: You mean, you found it.

COLLINS: I got it lost.

BURKE: I dropped a penny on the road. She picked it up.

COLLINS: Then it was lost, so it was.

NANO: Now it is found. Please return the coin Miss Collins.

(Collins hands the coin to Burke. Fouhy removes a coin from her purse and gives it to Collins)

NANO: Listen to me. You have all been given an opportunity that was denied to your parents and grandparents. If you wish to avail of that opportunity, you have found a home. If you do not, we shall find another pupil to take your place. Is that clear?

CLASS: Yes Miss Nagle.

NANO: I understand some of you can read, is that correct? (Three hands rise) Please come to the front of the class

(Students Fouhy, O'Shea, Forestal do so. Nano hands each of them a textbook)

NANO: Top of page seven. If you will ready the first four lines.

FOUHY: One morning early I walked out
By the margin of Lough Leane (Lock Lane)
The Sunshine dressed the trees in green
And the summer bloomed again

- O'SHEA: One morning early I walked out
By the margin of Lough Leane
The sunshine dressed the trees in green
And summer bloomed again.
- FORESTAL: (Stammers) One maw..maw..maw..earl..earl
- NANO: One morning early...I walked out.
- McNAMARA: She's got a stutter. (Laughter)
- NANO: Quiet (To Forestal) Where did you learn to read?
- FORESTAL: My maw..maw..maw..maw...
- NANO: Your Mother?
- FORESTAL: Be...be...be...be...fore...fore...fore...shhh
- McNAMARA: Before she was transported. Her mother was transported to Virginia.
- NANO: Which in many families including mine is a badge of honour. (To Forestal) We shall pray for her safe return. Miss O'Rourke will now address the class. Please listen carefully to what she has to say.
- O'ROURKE: Thank you Miss Nagle. Girls, I don't have to tell you that not everyone approves of our school. (Nano picks up textbooks and goes out)
- RING: Well I do. (Laughter)
- O'ROURKE: I'm sure you do Miss Ring. Nevertheless, certain precautions must be taken. One, all books, when not in use, will be stored in the garret. Two, a lookout will be posted at the front gate. Three, we have devised an escape route – out the back. I hope we don't have to use it. If we do, we shall make our way to the back yard and await further instructions. Remember, the books are stored in the garret. Got that, the garret.
- (A commotion, 2 students in a hair pulling contest)*
- O'ROURKE: What is it? What's the matter?
- PHILPOT: She called me a name. (Points to Ring)
- O'ROURKE: What name?
- PHILPOT: A Protestant. (Laughter)
- RING: Because she is.
- PHILPOT: I am not. My mother is Catholic. My father is Church of England.
- RING: Church of England. That means Protestant.
- PHILPOT: It means Anglican.
- O'ROURKE: Enough. (To Ring) Seems to me you did not listen to Miss Nagle this morning.
- RING: I did Miss, but that one's a spy.
- O'ROURKE: You are a gossip. Do you know what Calumny is?

RING: A disease.

O'ROURKE: A mortal sin, which you will have to confess before your first communion. Now I have work to do and I don't want any more of your antics. I would like you all to line up at the door and we shall make our way to the back yard.

*(Students rise and form a queue. As they exit, Ring grabs Philpot's hair and gives it a quick tug)
(Crossfade to Nagle House. Frances Nagle and Brigid Devereaux are rolling a ball of yarn. After a while, Joseph Nagle enters)*

JOSEPH: You won't believe this. (Laughs) Some fellow came to the door and said uh, "I want to send me daughter to your school". What school, said I? "Miss Nagle's school, he says"

FRANCES: Who was he?

JOSEPH: Some man named Doheny. Must be daft. (Nano enters carrying a book)

FRANCES: Nano, did you hear that?

NANO: Yes (Long pause) That man whoever he was...

JOSEPH: Doheny.

NANO: Right Doheny. Umn..what he said was true. I set up a school in Cork.

JOSEPH: What kind of school?

NANO: A Catholic school for girls.

FRANCES: You're not serious?

JOSEPH: Where in Cork? Where is this school?

NANO: Cove Lane

BRIGID: (Takes yarn) I think I'll make a pot of tea or something stronger. (Brigid goes, Joseph paces)

JOSEPH: Whatever gave you that notion? A school?

NANO: Yes Joseph a school. We need to educate our children.

JOSEPH: This is a fine how do you do. Come back from France. Set up a school and not a word to anyone in the family?

NANO: If I did say something, would you consent?

JOSEPH: You'll be arrested.

NANO: Maybe

JOSEPH: No maybe about it. You couldn't have picked a worse time. Last month they had riots in Cork and they called in the Redcoats.

NANO: Joseph, I wanted to tell you. I thought it more discreet not to entangle the family in this venture.

JOSEPH: I am entangled. My name is Nagle.

FRANCES: Nano, perhaps you were led astray in France.

NANO: With respect to what prey?

FRANCES: With respect to the Penal Laws. That somehow things have changed. Yes, we can attend Mass now...

JOSEPH: Even that can be abolished.

FRANCES: To set up to a school?

JOSEPH: There are no schools, no monasteries, no convents, no nuns and no teachers in this country.

FRANCES: Excuse me I have work to do (She exits)

JOSEPH: I am a merchant in the city of Cork. I have managed to reach an accord with the gentry. The Protestant gentry. Some of whom I count among my friends.

NANO: Is that more important than the children of this city?

JOSEPH: Someday that will change.

NANO: They've been talking about change for years, which our people are subject to the most diabolical laws in Europe.

JOSEPH: (Flares up) I didn't make those laws

NANO: (Flares back) Neither did I

JOSEPH: (FUMING) You're going to change them all by yourself. You, one single solitary woman against all the forces of the Crown.

NANO: I would hope to have Joseph Nagle by my side.

JOSEPH: You won't. If they seize our land, then what. Have you thought about that?

NANO: Yes. I also think of the children of this city.

JOSEPH: Don't you realize what you're up against? All the powers of the state. The law, the judges, the courts and dare I mention the Charter Schools.

NANO: Yes, tell me about the Charter Schools.

JOSEPH: They will shut you down.

NANO: Believe it or not, I expect that.

JOSEPH: This is folly, sheer folly. Understand one thing Nano. They will strike back and I won't be there when they do.

(Joseph starts to go. Nano goes after him)

NANO: Wait. (Joseph stops) Have you seen the slums Joseph. Have you? I can take you there, if you wish. You know what you'll see? Boys and girls, ragged and hungry, surrounded by squalor, sickness and the most terrible stench. And that's just the beginning. The rulers of this city have chosen to look the other way. Does that bind you? Does that bind me? These children are the mothers of the next generation. If we do nothing, the faith we prize so highly, the faith that men and women died for, that faith will disappear never to be seen again.

JOSEPH: Al right, all right. I wish I could do something. But it's not in my power.

NANO: Nor mine.

JOSEPH: No?

NANO: No, not in my power. Not in your power. Unless, unless we turn it over to God. For I believe if we put ourselves in his hands, entirely in his hands and not look back, then God will direct the school. So long as we can lift one child up from ignorance and poverty and save that child's immortal soul, and is that not why we are here, then I think we have done something worthwhile because we tried as best we could to live the faith with deeds, not words but deeds, and because we obeyed God...rather than men.

BLACKOUT

ACT ONE**SCENE FIVE**

The Guildhall, City of Cork. Magistrate Henry Granville at a table signing a document. Undersheriff Lewis enters

LEWIS: Milord, if I may have a word.

GRANVILLE: Not a good time Master Undersheriff.

LEWIS: An urgent matter Sir.

GRANVILLE: Then arrest the man.

LEWIS: In this case the offender is a woman recently returned from France.

GRANVILLE: And the offence?

LEWIS: She has taken it upon herself to establish a school. A clandestine school for girls.

GRANVILLE: Master Lewis, we had 4 days of rioting in this city.

LEWIS: Aye sir, I'm well aware of that.

GRANVILLE: Which resulted in 2 cases of murder, 5 cases of arson, not to mention robbery, mayhem, trespass, trespass on the case and 2 horses shot dead and you come in here with this "urgent matter" of some deluded French woman teaching cookery to needlework or some frivolous subject to a band of females.

LEWIS: The woman's a Papist.

GRANVILLE: (Overlaps) Given Irish cuisine I can readily understand...what?

LEWIS: A Roman Catholic, Sir

GRANVILLE: Teaching um...?

LEWIS: Religion and other subjects.

GRANVILLE: (Sits) Look here Lewis, where is this school and who is the teacher?

LEWIS: The exact location we have yet to determine. The teacher has been identified as um...

GRANVILLE: Yes

LEWIS: One of the Nagle women. Do you know the family?

GRANVILLE: I know of them.

LEWIS: Part of the local gentry. Nevertheless, I intend to do my duty. If you would issue an arrest warrant...

GRANVILLE: Not yet Master Lewis, not yet. We must be discreet. A case like this should be settled quietly.

LEWIS: The law calls for strict enforcement of the statute

GRANVILLE: I know what the law calls for. Do you want a riot on your hands that will reach the authorities in Dublin?

LEWIS: Or London I presume?

GRANVILLE: Yes...London. Keep local matters local.

LEWIS: Not being from this country Milord, you may not be familiar with the Irish character.

GRANVILLE: Contentious?

LEWIS: Devious. They say one thing. They think another.

GRANVILLE: How do you know that Master Lewis? (A silence) Never mind. I suppose one picks these things up in your business. (Laughs) You say this woman came from France?

LEWIS: Aye sir, Paris.

GRANVILLE: The lady may be bored. Needs a diversion. After Paris, life in the city of Cork must be tedious. Women like that often want to do something for the less fortunate. A raid on the premises may convince her to quit this pastime and perhaps quit the country.

(Crossfade to schoolroom in Cove Lane. Nano is teaching the class. She is asking questions from a catechism)

NANO: The church has 6 commandments also called precepts. The first commandment is?

McNAMARA: To hear Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation

PHILPOT: To fast and abstain on the days appointed by the church

FORESTAL: To con...con...con...fef...fef...fef...fess..

FOUHY: (Jumps in) To confess at least once a year

O'SHEA: To receive the Holy Eucharist during Easter

PHILPOT: To contribute to the support of our Pastors.

RING: (Glances at Philpot) Not to marry persons outside our faith or within certain degrees of kindred

NANO: Now on Article 2, the creed. Here the questions deal with the nature of Christ. Who was he? A prophet, a moral teacher or something greater? Who was Jesus Christ?

McNAMARA: Jesus Christ is God the son made man

NANO: So he is truly man?

PHILPOT: And truly God.

NANO: Was Jesus Christ always God?

FOUHY: Jesus Christ was always God born of the Father from all eternity.

NANO: Finally, we come to confirmation. Who can tell me the meaning of confirmation?

McNAMARA: Confirmation is a sacrament....

O'SHEA: Wait a minute. Why are you always first?

McNAMARA: Because I know the answers, that's why.

O'SHEA: Then you don't need to be here. Why don't you go home and have tea and crumpets on your Papa's tennis court. (Three loud knocks)

NANO: Quickly, out the back, hurry. (Students make a hasty exit. O'Rourke enters)

NANO: (To O'Rourke) Take the books to the garret. (O'Rourke scoops up books and exits. After a while, squealing students are pushed back into the classroom by Undersheriff Lewis and Constable Foy)

LEWIS: (Walks about) Well, well, well, what do we have here?

NANO: I expect you know Master Lewis

LEWIS: For some time now. (To Foy) Check that room Mr Foy. (Foy goes off. Lewis peers at student notebooks)

NANO: What are you looking for Sir?

LEWIS: Evidence Madam, evidence that will shut down this so-called schoolhouse and send you to prison unless...unless you abandon this scheme of your own accord....well?

(Nano is silent. O'Rourke enters)

LEWIS: (To O'Rourke) What about you? Are you willing to surrender your liberty for this woman?
(No answer)

NANO: Excuse me Master Lewis, has someone lodged a complaint about what we do here?

MURDOCK: I know who you are Miss Nagle. We all do.

NANO: May I ask the purpose of your visit?

MURDOCK: To speak to the class about my school.

O'ROURKE: You have no right to come in here and address the class without permission.

NANO: Thank you Miss O'Rourke. I fear we have no choice in the matter.

LEWIS: Correct. Now come with me. I want to inspect the premises from top to bottom. (They exit. Murdock and O'Rourke remain)

MURDOCK: Good morning girls. (Silence) Yes...well. First, I wish to convey some very good news. A new school has opened in Cork. A charter school. Anyone know what a charter school is? Yes...well I shall be happy to explain. A charter school is a government supported institution that children throughout Ireland may attend free of charge. And it is also a boarding school. What does that mean? That means free room, free board and free clothes for girls and boys. With regard to religion, we are Church of England, but all creeds are welcome. (Two students whispering) Excuse me, do you have something to say?

RING: No, Miss, I do not.

MURDOCK: (To O'Rourke) Do you allow children to interrupt and adult?

O'ROURKE: Depends on what the adult is saying.

MURDOCK: You object to something I said?

O'ROURKE: Not what you said, what you did not say

MURDOCK: Oh...what did I not say?

O'ROURKE: Children are taken from their homes and never see their parents again.

MURDOCK: For their own good.

O'ROURKE: The purpose is...

MURDOCK: The purpose is to educate the child.

O'ROURKE: And deprive them of their faith. That is the real purpose.

MURDOCK: We give them what you cannot provide, a decent life. Our pupils can enter domestic service in any of the great estates of England or Ireland. Can you do that?

O'ROURKE: No, thank God.

MURDOCK: What's the matter with you people. All you can offer is poverty and superstition.

O'ROURKE: Are you finished Madam?

MURDOCK: No, I am not finished. Girls, the school is located on Thomas Street. If you wish to attend, the door is always open. (Moves about the classroom) Strange, I don't see any books in here. No English book? No Catechism? No Irish book? Did the fairies come and snatch them away? (Laughs)

(Undersheriff Lewis and Nano enter. Constable Foy enters opposite with a statue of the Virgin Mary which he gives to Lewis)

MURDOCK: Tell me, what lesson did we learn today? Anyone? (To Burke) What about you? Reading, writing, arithmetic? Come now, have we all lost our tongues?

COLLINS: I can tell you Miss. We took a singing lesson.

MURDOCK: Singing?

COLLINS: Would you like to hear the song?

MURDOCK: Certainly not. I have no interest in your songs. I would like to know where you keep your books?

LEWIS: Just a minute. (Whispers to Murdock)

MURDOCK: Perhaps we can take the time to hear one tune.

(The class forms a line. Collins and Burke stand in front of the line facing Murdock. They sing "An Old Maid in the Garret.")

"I have often heard it said from me father and me mother,
That going to a wedding is the making of another,
Well if this be true, I will go without a bidding,
O kind providence won't you send me to a wedding."

CHORUS

And its O dear me, how would it be,
If I die an old Maid in the garret.

"Now there's me sister Jean, she's not handsome or goodlooking.
Barely sixteen and a fella she was courtin'
Now she's twenty-four with a son and a daughter,
Here am I at forty-five and never had an offer"

CHORUS

And its O dear me, how would it be,
If I die an old Maid in the garret.

“I can cook and I can sew, I can keep the house right tidy,
Rise up in the morning and get the breakfast ready,
There’s nothing in this world that makes my heart so cheery,
As a wee fat man who would call me his own dearie.”

CHORUS

And its O dear me, how would it be,
If I die an old Maid in the garret.

“Well I’m away home, ‘cause there’s nobody heeding,
There’s nobody heeding to poor old Annie’s pleading,
I’ll go away home to my wee bitty garret,
If I can’t get a man, then I’ll surely get a parrot.”

CHORUS

And its O dear me, how would it be,
If I die an old Maid in the garret.

(REPEAT)

NOTE: When they come to the words “in the garret”
Collins and Burke advance towards Murdock and then retreat to the ensemble.

BLACKOUT

ACT ONE**SCENE SIX**

A street in Cork City. Father Francis Moylan on his way to St. Finbars church. He is accosted by a student, Fouhy.

- FOUHY: Are you the new priest at St. Finbars?
- FR MOYLAN: Yes
- Fouhy: (Gives him an envelope) This lady would like to see you, if you have time.
- FR. MOYLAN: Thank you. (Moylan glances at the envelope and continues walking. Nano enters and walks by his side)
- NANO: Let's cross the street. I'm being followed.
- FR. MOYLAN: Sasanach? (Sosanuh)
- NANO: All the way from the Exchange. Why...I don't know?
- FR. MOYLAN: I do. They want to build a case. Who you see? Who you meet? Who you talk to? Expose this wicked conspiracy to teach children to read and write.
- NANO: (Laughs) Then you're in trouble Father.
- FR. MOYLAN: I need a little adventure. (Constable Foy enters)
- NANO: (Detects Foy) Parlez vous Francais?
- FR. MOYLAN: Oui Mademoiselle. Parlez vous Francais. Parlez vous Anglais. Parlez vous our Gaelic mother tongue. (Moylan and Nano exit followed by Foy. They escape his attention and re-enter)
- NANO: My greatest need, I the catechism.
- FR. MOYLAN: The douay catechism.
- NANO: 1649
- FR. MOYLAN: How many do you need?
- NANO: One hundred
- FR. MOYLAN: Oh dear, that is a tall order.
- NANO: I can't get them here.
- FR. MOYLAN: It may take a small fortune. Not for the books. For the smuggler.
- NANO: How much?
- FR. MOYLAN: Twenty pounds. I can get them on board a ship at Brest. Once they arrive someone has to pick them up.
- NANO: I know a man who works on the docks.
- FR. MOYLAN: Someone you trust?
- NANO: A friend of the family
- FR. MOYLAN: I'll write to my contacts in Paris. It may take about 6 weeks.

NANO: I must beg for one more favour, if you don't mind.

FR. MOYLAN: Money?

NANO: Something of greater value...prayers. I would like the children to attend Mass before school.

FR. MOYLAN: How often?

NANO: Every day.

FR. MOYLAN: You're welcome of course. That might pose a greater risk, don't you think?

NANO: Father, I believe this venture can only succeed if God gives it direction. Which means when prayers are said, the school will prosper. When prayers cease, then I believe, the school will cease. *(Foy enters. Nano and Moylan make a hasty exit with Foy in hot pursuit)*

(Crossfade to the Nagle house. O'Rourke is dusting off the lantern while conversing with Brigid)

O'ROURKE: This lamp is terrible. Never worked like it should.

BRIGID: I said that to Nano. I told her the lamp was useless and to get it fixed.

O'ROURKE: She did. I was there at the shop.

BRIGID: Who, old man Grafton?

O'ROURKE: Said he installed a new wick.

BRIGID: *(Peers inside lantern)* A new wick, eh? Take a look.

O'ROURKE: *(Glances)* A couple of loose threads, that's all I see.

BRIGID: Right. That light is so dim you wouldn't see an elephant if he stepped on your toes.

O'ROURKE: I'm going back to Mr Grafton. What time does he close?

BRIGID: Six O'clock. Wait a minute. You said the school was full.

O'ROURKE: So I did.

BRIGID: Why does Nano need the lamp?

O'ROURKE: To get about at night.

BRIGID: In the city?

O'Rourke: Right

BRIGID: If the school is full why um...she's not thinking of...?

O'ROURKE: Uh huh

BRIGID: Another school? After all the trouble last year. No, no, no, no, she wouldn't.

O'ROURKE: She would

BRIGID: She couldn't

O'ROURKE: She could

BRIGID: A second school? Sure isn't one enough. There'll be ructions in this house, ructions.

O'ROURKE: Then Miss Devereaux get ready for ructions.

BRIGID: When she tells her brother what she is up to, not to mention his wife, there will be such a hue and cry, that I'm going to set sail for Philadelphia even if I have to row the boat myself.

O'ROURKE: (Laughs) I think I'll go with you.

BRIGID: What about the money? I heard Nano was down to her last shilling.

O'ROURKE: She is. One thing I learned about Nano Nagle. She gets an idea into her head. Then she finds a way to bring it off. Somehow it works. Somehow or other this idea comes to life before our very eyes.

BRIGID: Just like her father, may he rest in peace.

O'ROURKE: I should be back in time for supper, bye. (O'Rourke goes out. Brigid wipes the table)

FRANCES: (Off) Brigid, did Nano get back yet?

BRIGID: Yes Mam, she's up in her room. Want me to give her a shout?

FRANCES: (Off) Please, we need to discuss a few matters, important matters

BRIGID: (Gazes up) Spare us O Lord.

(Brigid exits. Frances enters. She is reading a letter. After a while, Nano and Brigid come in).

NANO: How did it go in Mallow? Did you see the Solicitor?

FRANCES: Yes, yes, we had a very good day. Joseph has all the details.

NANO: I think we should copy David on any changes to the estate.

FRANCES: Already done. The lawyer sent him a letter in Dublin.

BRIGID: Tea Mam?

FRANCES: No thanks Brigid

BRIGID: If you need anything, let me know. (Brigid retreats to the back of the room and polishes cutlery)

FRANCES: Nano, I don't have to tell you I had misgivings when you first opened the school. I still have misgivings. But we are the Nagle family. A family that lends a hand when a hand is needed. From what I hear your greatest need is money

NANO: Indeed it is

FRANCES: I have written to all the Nagles, in England as well as Ireland. They have agreed to donate to your cause

NANO: Frances, that is so generous. I don't know how to thank you.

FRANCES: Actually, I'm surprised they haven't shut you down.

NANO: They would like to, believe me.

FRANCES: Joseph attributes your good fortune to...

JOSEPH: (Enters) To the location of the school. A back street in the great metropolis of Cork. Or as the saying goes. Out of sight, out of mind.

NANO: I hope that's true. They do know where I am.

- FRANCES: Just as long as you don't do anything reckless, Joseph, I told Nano about the will. Why don't you explain it, while Brigid and I get the supper ready.
- JOSEPH: Right, right you are. Let's take a seat. (They sit at the table. Frances exits)
- JOSEPH: (Produces document) Last will and testament of Garret Nagle, esquire. Where do I begin? First of all, every member of the family will get a copy next week. What I will do now is provide a brief summary. Title to the property is held in trust by Garret Burke. Upon his demise, title will pass to Edmund Burke resident of London. Next we have several bequests to family members in Cork, Dublin and Bath. After all bequests and claims have been satisfied, the residue of the estate shall pass to the residuary legatee Miss Honora Nagle of Ballygriffin, Co Cork, Ireland. In other words, Honora Nagle is the primary beneficiary of the last will and testament of Garret Nagle. She stands to inherit the princely sum of 12 thousand, five hundred and ninety-eight pounds, ten shillings and five pence.
- NANO: The rest of the family?
- JOSEPH: Are quite happy with the provisions of this will. If you are?
- NANO: Very much so
- JOSEPH: We all knew Father would take care of his eldest daughter. What will you do with the money?
- NANO: First, have masses said for all the family. Mother, Father, Annie and uncle Joseph. Then I hope to acquire more space for our pupils.
- JOSEPH: Oh...what do you have in mind?
- BRIGID: (At the door) Anyone care for a drink?
- JOSEPH: No thanks Brigid
- BRIGID: Maybe a wee drop. There's a terrible chill in the air.
- JOSEPH: Chill. One of the hottest days of the year
- BRIGID: Right you are, must be the ould draught in the kitchen. (Brigid eavesdrops from the door)
- JOSEPH: You said something about more space?
- NANO: I did. I've given this a lot of consideration. I would like to open a second school.
- JOSEPH: Where?
- NANO: Out by the North Gate. I already have 50 pupils. By September I expect 50 more. I would like to open a second school, not only for girls, but for boys. What do you think?
- JOSEPH: (Rises) Father once said, when a man puts his hand to the plough, he should not look back. When Honora Nagle puts her hand to the plough, not alone does she not look back, she ploughs a second field. Before she is finished, she will plough every field in this county. When they sprout up our girls will read, (emotionally) our girls will write and our boys will read and our boys will write and the faith of our fathers will be kept alive all because one woman dared to say that no child should live in ignorance in this country and I am proud to say that that woman is a member of the Nagle family who has managed somehow to give her brother what he has lacked for years – a tiny, tiny sliver of backbone. Does that answer your questions Miss Nagle? (Nano embraces Joseph)

BRIGID: (Starts for exit) No, no, it can't be. I'm feeling faint

NANO: (Going off) Brigid, what's the matter? Do you need a Doctor?

JOSEPH: Miss Devereaux, you're in the will too. A thousand pounds. That will get you a nice little cottage in New Ross or maybe Tramore, down by the sea.

BLACKOUT

ACT ONE**SCENE SEVEN**

The schoolroom in Cove Lane. Nano is addressing the class.

NANO: A few words about the new school. The opening date is September the 4th. The enrolment will include boys as well as girls.

CLASS: Hurrah

NANO: The North Gate building has 2 rooms. That means separate classrooms. One for girls and one for boys.

CLASS: Noooo....

NANO: The building comes equipped with a fireplace. We will ask each pupil to bring a sod of turf every Monday. (Emma O'Rourke comes in)

O'ROURKE: We have visitors. One of them is from the Council. Should I lock the door?

NANO: No, no, no, let's show a little hospitality and bid them welcome. (Nano goes out. O'Rourke speaks)

O'ROURKE: Class, we have company this morning. Please remain in your seats.

COLLINS: Excuse me, I heard Miss Nagle say we should bid them welcome.

O'ROURKE: What kind of welcome do you have in mind, Miss Collins?

COLLINS: An Irish welcome from the girls from Co. Cork

O'ROURKE: Right then, an Irish welcome from the girls from Co. Cork

(The students form a line across the stage. A flute begins to play "The Dawning of the Day")

(Collins, at one end, taps her foot. The others do likewise and tap to music)

(Granville, Lewis, Foy and Nano enter stage left. They observe from the door)

(Ita Forestal steps in front of the students)

FORESTAL: (Solo) One morning early I walked out
By the margin of Lough Leane,
The Sunshine dressed the trees in green
And summer bloomed again.
I left the town and wandered on
Through the fields without delay,
And whom should I meet but a colleen sweet
At the dawning of the day.

ALL: No cap or cloak this maiden wore
Her neck and feet were bare,
Down to the glass in ringlets fell
Her glossy golden hair.
A milking pail was in her hand
As she walked along the brae,
She wore the palm from Venus bright
By the dawning of the day.

ALL: On a mossy bank I sat me down
With the maiden by my side,
With gentle words I courted her

And asked her to be my bride.
She said young man, don't bring me blame
And swiftly turned away,
And the morning light was shining bright
At the dawning of the day.

FORESTAL:

(Solo) One morning early I walked out
By the margins of Lough Leane,
The sunshine dressed the trees in green
And summer bloomed again.
I left the town and wandered on
Through the fields without delay,
And whom should I meet but a colleen sweet
At the dawning of the day.

LIGHTS FADE SLOWLY

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO**SCENE ONE**

The Schoolroom in Cove Lane, Cork. Circa. 1770.

Students address the theatre audience.

PHILPOT: Can you believe it? One hundred pupils.

O'SHEA: Can you believe it? Two hundred pupils.

McNAMARA: And more to come.

RING: Miss Nagle will not turn anyone away.

FOUHY: School number three

PHILPOT: School number four

O'SHEA: School number five

McNAMARA: Then school number six

RING: Finally, finally...

FOUHY: Are you sure?

PHILPOT: School number seven

O'SHEA: Five for girls

McNAMARA: Two for boys

RING: (Irked) Separate classrooms

FORESTAL: For a total of 500 pupils in the City of Cork.

PHILPOT: When the law comes around

O'SHEA: We try to keep them entertained.

FOUHY: We sew, We cook, We sing.

FORESTAL: We haven't seen them lately. They've been engaged in other matters.

McNAMARA: Riots and pitched battles over the question of...

RING: Tithing. Not tiding...tithing

(Crossfade to a street in Cork. Undersheriff Richard Lewis stands on a box. He reads from a parchment sheet to an unseen audience)

LEWIS: Know all men that church rates for the support of the established church have been levied against the following subjects of the King. Each of these men have failed to tithe as required by statute.

Patrick O'Neill, Roman Catholic, Kilmallock.

William Wright, Presbyterian, Fermoy.

James Uniake, Roman Catholic, Bantry.

Norman Spenser, Baptist, Macroom.

John T. McCarthy, Roman Catholic, Kinsale

A reward of 20 pounds is offered for any information leading to their arrest and conviction.
Ten pounds to His Majesty and ten pounds to the Informer. God save the King.

BLACKOUT

ACT TWO**SCENE TWO**

The Nagle house. Brigid Devereaux sweeping the floor. Emma O'Rourke enters carrying a newspaper

O'ROURKE: Brigid, is Nano here?

BRIGID: Gone to Blackrock for the day.

O'ROURKE: Mr Quinn wants to see her tomorrow

BRIGID: The schoolmaster?

O'ROURKE: Someone broke into the boys' school. They took everything.

BRIGID: Tables, chairs?

O'ROURKE: Books. All the books including the catechisms.

BRIGID: If I may hazard a guess, you will find the goods in the custody of the Sheriff and his underlings at City Hall.

O'ROURKE: Or someone from the charter schools

BRIGID: Isn't that what I said?

O'ROURKE: (Considers this) Oh...

BRIGID: Bad cess to him, whoever he is. I hope he ends up in Van Diemens land

O'ROURKE: Make sure you tell Nano. Giver her this newspaper

BRIGID: All the way from London?

O'ROURKE: Got the latest news about her famous cousin. (Points to article)

BRIGID: (Reads) Edmund Burke re-elected to the House of Commons from the borough of Wendover

O'ROURKE: By a huge margin

BRIGID: What an awful job. I wouldn't take it for all the tea in Siam.

O'ROURKE: I don't think you meet the criterion Brigid. You would have to change your religion.

BRIGID: (Still reading) That is something I would welcome.

O'ROURKE: A new religion?

BRIGID: Rumours of rebellion in America

O'ROURKE: More than a rumour. All kinds of protests on the streets of Boston.

BRIGID: (Fist in the air) Oh...if only we had a rebellion here. I'd take up arms meself.

O'ROURKE: Where would you find them?

BRIGID: Lots of arms in this country. (Whispers) They're just in the wrong hands

O'ROURKE: Any word from Joseph in England?

BRIGID: Had a letter last week. They might stay until Christmas.

O'ROURKE: Give them my regards. Tell Frances I'll be moving to a new address in the 'fall.

BRIGID: Before you go, have you noticed any change in Nano?

O'ROURKE: What kind of change?

BRIGID: She is very quiet lately. I was wondering uh.....is something going on I don't know about?

O'ROURKE: She spends a lot of time in Church

BRIGID: By herself?

O'ROURKE: Before the Blessed Sacrament

BRIGID: Hmm. There is something going on. Only God knows what. God and a woman from Ballygriffin. Co Cork

(Crossfade to a chapel in Cork)

(A partition downstage. Nano and Fr. Moylan on opposite sides of the partition, pacing to and 'fro)

NANO: I feel duty bound to inform the Bishop

FR. MOYLAN: He may not wish to know

NANO: I find that rather odd

FR. MOYLAN: In a normal Catholic country, the approval of the Bishop must be sought. This is not a normal Catholic country.

NANO: I could raise the matter under the seal of confession

FR. MOYLAN: To protect the Bishop?

NANO: And myself

FR. MOYLAN: If he says no?

NANO: Why would he do that?

FR. MOYLAN: Fear. You are dealing with a very cautious man. Our Bishop is the type of churchman who seeks to placate the established social order.

NANO: At the expense of his own flock?

FR. MOYLAN: I'm afraid so

NANO: The people of this country have suffered for their faith. If ever they should lose it, which I believe cannot happen, but if ever we should, it will not be due to penal laws that stripped us of every vestige of our humanity, but due to churchmen who seek to placate the established social order.

FR. MOYLAN: There is another road you could take. (Pause) Advise his Lordship when the deed is done.

NANO: I don't like to act alone in this matter

FR. MOYLAN: You have to. Even if the Bishop approves, he has to seek approval of the Church of England. Do you think that Bishop will approve? (Mimics) "Yes, yes, Miss Nagle set up your convent. The charter schools do need a little competition".

NANO: (Sighs, walks away) When do you leave for Paris?

FR. MOYLAN: The end of May

NANO: I'll send a letter to Miss Fitzsimons. She can arrange an introduction to the Mother Superior

FR. MOYLAN: If they say yes...and it's a big if, but if they say yes, how many Nuns will you need?

NANO: At least four. When they arrive in Cork, I'll notify my contact at the customs office.

FR. MOYLAN: No, no, no, no. Don't do that. We have to create a little diversion.

FR. MOYLAN: (A noise) Shhh.

NANO: What is it?

FR. MOYLAN: Move closer. (Whispers) They must arrive at different ports on different boats, Dublin, Cork, Waterford. They must speak English and wear English clothes. Do you have a contact in Dublin?

NANO: My sister Elizabeth

FR. MOYLAN: Tell her to expect a letter from James Moylett

NANO: Who is James Moylett?

FR. MOYLAN: Code name for yours truly

NANO: What do you want me to do?

FR. MOYLAN: Get ready for the storm. Then passage for two on the prison ship to the West Indies.

BLACKOUT

ACT TWO**SCENE THREE**

The Guildhall, City of Cork. Undersheriff Richard Lewis and Ellen Murdock are present

- LEWIS: Nuns?
- MURDOCK: French nuns.
- LEWIS: Who is the source for this intelligence?
- MURDOCK: Any tavern or shebeen in the city of Cork
- LEWIS: I have my own sources right on the Docks. They have never let me down
- MURDOCK: They have been outwitted Master Lewis. So, have you. I should like to know why...why this woman wasn't arrested years ago?
- LEWIS: A question for the Corporation, not me.
- MURDOCK: We do nothing, is that it?
- LEWIS: You know what they told me? The Magistrates and Aldermen of the Council. This mud cabin school cannot survive. It will die out within a year.
- MURDOCK: Die out? I'll tell you what's dying out, the charter schools
- LEWIS: That is your domain Miss Murdock
- MURDOCK: And yours. You must realise these people have no respect for King or Country. Every maid as good as her Mistress. Jack up there with his Master. They're full of back talk and impudence. They have no...no...no...sense of place. They're...they're....they're...rude
- LEWIS: Where are these nuns?
- MURDOCK: Where do you think? Cove Lane
- LEWIS: That new building?
- MURDOCK: Yes, right beside the old school. If we don't take action now, these schools will spread like weeds throughout the country
- LEWIS: Action will be taken. Rest assured of that. Don't forget we have the law on our side. This time the law will be enforced.
- MURDOCK: One more thing. An enterprise like this takes money. Are you aware of the source?
- LEWIS: Aye. The woman received a legacy
- MURDOCK: She also receives a collection from the family. Delivered by courier to a teacher named O'Rourke
- LEWIS: I must say, you have been quite thorough, Miss Murdock
- MURDOCK: Considering what's at stake, I am merely doing my duty Master Lewis. Which the esteemed guardians of this city should have done. Good day sir.

(Murdock goes out. Lewis stares after her)

(Crossfade to a street in Cork. Nano and Brigid walking side by side, speaking in pantomime. Nano carries a lantern)

(Brigid comes to a sudden stop. She backs up a few paces and makes the sign of the cross)

BRIGID: (State of shock) France?

NANO: The nuns are Irish

BRIGID: You know what they'll do. They'll have you hanged, drawn and quartered like that poor priest up in Clonmel, whatever his name was.

NANO: Father Sheehy

BRIGID: Does your brother know?

NANO: Not yet. I'm off to England next week. Then I'll present my case..

BRIGID: Nano Nagle, you've done it this time. A backstreet school is one thing, but a convent? A convent with nuns?

NANO: (Raises lantern) This lamp is still not right. Must be the wick. People don't realise how dark it is out there.

BRIGID: Wait till the boyos downtown hear about this. Our friends at City hall. Those lads will have a fit, a conniption fit. The Lord between us and all harm.

BLACKOUT

ACT TWO**SCENE FOUR**

The Guildhall, City of Cork. Magistrate Granville paces back and forth, waving a newspaper. Standing opposite in Alderman Carleton.

- GRANVILLE: (Fuming) "Cork woman defies the penal laws". How do you like the sound of that Mr. Carleton?
- CARLETON: No more than you do sir
- GRANVILLE: This is a Dublin newspaper. Know what that means? Dublin today. London tomorrow. Then Paris, Rome, Philadelphia and soon every city in the western world. A lone woman defeats the entire British Empire
- CARLETON: Who is responsible for that?
- GRANVILLE: I take some of the blame
- CARLETON: Thank you
- GRANVILLE: The Corporation, of which you are a prominent member, did absolutely nothing
- CARLETON: Just one minute. The Nagle woman triumphed because your Charter Schools failed
- GRANVILLE: The King's Charter Schools
- CARLETON: Which of course would sweep this country. But never did. Ever ask yourself why?
- GRANVILLE: Why a man won't bring his child to school?
- CARLETON: A Protestant School.
- GRANVILLE: (Calmer) A decent school
- CARLETON: Provided they convert, which they will not do
- GRANVILLE: The question is why?
- CARLETON: Simple matter. The Irishman believes the English Church is false
- GRANVILLE: You seem to know a lot about these people
- CARLETON: I try to keep my ears open
- GRANVILLE: Then it is time to invoke the sanctions of the law. A Court of Oyer will assemble next month
- CARLETON: Who will sit on this Court?
- GRANVILLE: The Sheriff is making up a panel as we speak. I expect we shall know on Monday
- CARLETON: I see
- GRANVILLE: Do you know how much they cost...the Charter Schools?
- CARLETON: I heard a figure of one million.
- GRANVILLE: 1.25 million. Why? To educate a nation. To rescue them from ignorance and bring them into the modern world. If the Lord returned today, would he not say, well done? Would he not

favour men who love their country, honour the King, and distinguish themselves in some field of endeavour?

CARLETON: (Starts to go) Perhaps. Perhaps not

GRANVILLE: Why not?

CARLETON: HE didn't do it last time (Carleton exits. Lewis enters)

GRANVILLE: (TO LEWIS) I don't like that fellow Lewis. You never quite know where he stands

LEWIS: I could have him followed, Milord

GRANVILLE: No. The man enjoys great favour...at home and more to the point...in Dublin

(Crossfade to the Schoolroom in Cove Lane. Present, Frances and Nano)

FRANCES: David said, a special court is being convened. Some of the most powerful men in Cork

NANO: Can I appear before this special court?

FRANCES: No. The whole thing is behind closed doors. The boys want you to leave

NANO: Where shall I go?

FRANCES: Joseph found a safe house in Dublin. The woman knows Elizabeth and is well aware of your situation.

NANO: The Nuns will move to Kinsale

FRANCES: And you?

NANO: I'm staying. I will not abandon the children

FRANCES: No one is saying abandon the children

NANO: What are they saying?

FRANCES: Take refuge

NANO: How long?

FRANCES: Until the winds change

NANO: I would rather face the storm now

FRANCES: Anyone ever tell you, you have a stubborn streak, Nano Nagle?

NANO: Father said I was single minded. That sounds better.

FRANCES: I'm just the messenger for your two brothers. What shall I tell them?

NANO: I miss them. I look forward to Christmas in Ballygriffin. Once upon a time we all sat around a roaring fire. Anne would play the harp and the evening always ended with Father's rendition of Panis Angelicus. That I do miss.

BLACKOUT

ACT TWO**SCENE FOUR**

The Guildhall, City of Cork. A Court of Oyer & Terminer.

The Trial. Downstage left and right are Richard Lewis and Henry Granville. Nano is at a desk upstage, writing. Granville is in Magistrate's attire, robed and wigged

LEWIS: Hear ye, hear ye, this court of Oyer and Terminer is now in session

GRANVILLE: Milords and gentlemen of the court. We meet today to hear and determine the case of the Cove Lane Nunnery, the property of one Honora Nagle of Co. Cork

LEWIS: The first statute in question is William the 3rd, Chapter one Section 8, enacted in the year of our Lord, 1695.

GRANVILLE: Which binds the Magistrates of this body to suppress the convent and to expel the nuns from this City.

LEWIS: And should it be deemed necessary to proceed by bill of indictment against the accused, one and all.

GRANVILLE: Mark you the reason for this statute. To retain subjects in due obedience to the laws of the realm.

NANO: Dear Sisters, when God invited you to leave France and toil among the children of Cork, you did not waver. For that I am deeply grateful. Who would come to a city that was destitute and ground down by the penal laws?

(While Nano is speaking, both Granville and Lewis freeze in place)

LEWIS: (Reads) No person of the Roman religion shall publicly teach or school or instruct children in private homes or any chamber attached hereto.

GRANVILLE: (Moves about) Milords, some years ago in the reign of our gracious sovereign Elizabeth, much admired throughout the world, except for this kingdom, where she is reviled, during her reign Parliament enacted several laws touching on religion. The purpose of these laws was to establish a single church. I will admit coercion was used, yet the object was a worthy one, was it not? One church, one creed, one religion. (Shouts of hear, hear...hear, hear) Do we have one creed? I ask you. Do we Master Lewis?

LEWIS: No, Sir. We do not. (Raises book) A catechism used by the Nuns. In this catechism you will find prayers to the saints, invocation of the Virgin Mary and other heresies.

GRANVILLE: The greatest heresy is The Lord's Supper. They believe and they teach the bread is the body of Christ. (Voice rising) This heresy is taught to children which can only give rise to division, disloyalty and rebellion.

(A PROLONGED HUBBUB)

NANO: You ask what will happen to the convent? The answer, no one knows. We live in a city where we cannot do as we please. Yet we can do a great deal. For God chooses the weakest among us to do what we cannot do for ourselves.

GRANVILLE: Gentlemen, in case you don't know. Dublin has taken notice. They wonder how one person and a woman at that, can flout the law with impunity. How did this occur?

- LEWIS: I did seek a warrant for her arrest.
- GRANVILLE: So you did Master Lewis, so you did. I chide myself. I took no account of this woman. A mere nuisance I thought. Besides, we have the charter schools which are fully supported by the Crown. What can a lone woman do?
- LEWIS: They are losing pupils to the Papists every week Milord
- GRANVILLE: Therein lies the danger. That instead of rule by Parliament, we will find this country once again ruled by Priests, Bishops and the Church of Rome.
- (HUBBUB)
- NANO: There is one more thing we can do – pray. Did He not say where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them? If He is with us today, why are we afraid for tomorrow. (Nano exits)
- LEWIS: Gentlemen, are we ready to take a vote?
- CARLETON: (Enters) Before we take a vote, the custom in this hall was to ask, if anyone wished to address the Court?
- LEWIS: Well, do you?
- CARLETON: Yes. (HUBBUB) Gentlemen, we meet here today, because a group of women dare to teach religion.
- GRANVILLE: Do you know what they teach?
- CARLETON: Indeed. The body of Christ is the Lord himself.
- GRANVILLE: There is not one teacher in England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, or America that teaches this doctrine.
- CARLETON: There is now. (LAUGHTER IN THE COURT)
- GRANVILLE: We call them heretics
- CARLETON: What do we call our forefathers? They believed the same thing. Were they heretics? Gentlemen, we punish people for that they teach. They teach it because they believe it. If we fling them into prison, will they cease to believe? Or will they find refuge in a barn, a shed, a ditch, a field or a bog as they have done for 200 years pursued in vain by spies, informers and jackanapes as we now pursue them under colour of law. (HUBBUB)
- GRANVILLE: You tread on dangerous ground, sir.
- CARLETON: Do I? Then I'll watch my step. What are we afraid of? A few pious ladies who live under one roof, teach the poor, drink tea, and say their prayers. Does that pose a threat to the constitution? Will his Majesty's Government suddenly collapse? (Laughter in the court)
- If you believe it will, have them arrested and jailed and transported beyond the seas. Don't ask me to join you. I shall not do so. Now Master Lewis, you wish to take a vote.
- GRANVILLE: When you take that vote, consider well what you do. For if this woman triumphs, we lose not just the Charter Schools. If this woman triumphs....we lose a nation.

BLACKOUT

ACT TWO**SCENE FIVE**

The Nagle House. Fr Moylan enters with Brigid and Emma O'Rourke. Fr Moylan is speaking in Pantomime

BRIGID: (An outcry – she runs off) Honora Nagle, Honora Nano Nagle, daughter of Garret Nagle that I helped raise from the age of five, so you know what happened today....?

(O'Rourke follows Brigid off. Fr Moylan stays)

NANO: (Enters) Father, I just had two very excited women tell me I'm free, before they rushed off to tell the neighbours. Dare I ask what happened?

FR. MOYLAN: A miracle. His majesty's Court of Oyer and Terminer decided the Ursuline Convent should cease to exist with one dissenting voice

NANO: Oh...who was this gentleman?

FR. MOYLAN: Carleton. Alderman Francis Carleton

NANO: How does one man sway the entire Court?

FR. MOYLAN: A weapon called ridicule. The alderman persuaded the gentlemen on the council that he could not foresee any danger in a few pious ladies teaching the poor, drinking tea and saying a few prayers

NANO: (Laughs) I don't know Mr Carleton. I would certainly like to meet him

FR. MOYLAN: Maybe I can arrange that

NANO: This calls for a celebration. Will you stay for dinner?

FR. MOYLAN: No, no, I'm away at 7 o'clock. However, I could return on Sunday

NANO: Good. When you do, I wish to discuss a matter of some importance

FR. MOYLAN: Why not do so now?

NANO: Very well. I think you know Daniel Cronin, do you not?

FR. MOYLAN: The Blacksmith, yes

NANO: He brought his daughter to the convent on Friday, I'm afraid she was turned away.

FR. MOYLAN: For a very good reason, the Convent is full.

NANO: Father, we are taking pupils from Blackrock, Waterford and Kilkenny, but not poor girls from right down the lane.

FR. MOYLAN: What do you propose?

NANO: The Corporal and Spiritual works of Mercy. The Sisters go out and instruct the poor.

FR. MOYLAN: In their homes?

NANO: Yes.

FR. MOYLAN: When?

- NANO: After school, weekends, summertime.
- FR. MOYLAN: May I remind you the Ursuline convent is a cloister.
- NANO: In France. If we petition the Mother Superior perhaps we can have a separate branch in Ireland.
- FR. MOYLAN: (Rises) Change the rule?
- NANO: For this country, yes. If you would approach the Bishop and urge him to write a letter....
- FR. MOYLAN: No, no, no, I cannot do that. Besides he will not agree. Nano, we are in the business of saving souls, not changing the rule for this foundation.
- NANO: For every soul we save, ten are lost. Where are they? In the cabins and hovels of this city. Boys and girls, abandoned, debased and degraded. You and I were born into better circumstances, but to whom much is given much is required. The least we can do is go out and bring them the light of learning. When the day comes to give an account to our Maker, we can stand in his presence and say, we did the best we could with what..we..were..given.
- FR. MOYLAN: What were we given? Four nuns. Four enclosed nuns.
- NANO: Who can serve a greater need
- FR. MOYLAN: They have taken vows
- NANO: We can get a dispensation.
- FR. MOYLAN: No, no, no, that will never happen, I for one, will not pursue it. Neither should you.
- BRIGID: (At the door) Father, your coach is here.
- FR. MOYLAN: Thank you. (They move towards the door) Nano, this is a glorious day for your country. You have done what the church couldn't do. What the state wouldn't do. If bells could ring tonight, you would hear them all over the City. (Pause) On this other matter, you must learn that some things are not possible. Good night.

(Fr Moylan is gone. Nano returns centre stage. Enter Emma O'Rourke)

- O'ROURKE: (Jubilant) Nano, the celebrations have begun. I saw two huge bonfires. One across the bridge. Another one down by the green

(Nano looks away – preoccupied. Sensing something wrong, O'Rourke suddenly stops)

- O'ROURKE: Is something the matter? (A long silence)
- O'ROURKE: (Cont'd) Perhaps I can return some other time
- NANO: (Whispers to herself) When a man puts his hand to the plough. He should not look back.
- O'ROURKE: Mam?
- NANO: (Ruminating) I have been rebuked Miss O'Rourke. And rightfully so. It appears I have taken the wrong road. If that is true, we must turn back.
- O'ROURKE: You had a quarrel?
- NANO: A difference of opinion. I cannot do, what I wish to do. No matter how good or how noble the work.

- O'ROURKE: I would think saving the children of Cork is good work. What can be better?
- NANO: Doing what we are called to do. Not what we wish. People say the schools are a great success. They are. That success is not due to Nano Nagle, but to the grace of God. We had our share of trials and setbacks, as well you know.
- O'ROURKE: I do indeed
- NANO: Yet, every trial was turned to our advantage, was it not? Even though it seemed impossible at the time. Now we have another setback. I wish it was otherwise. If this is God's will, so be it. Our job is to carry on and do the next best thing.
- O'ROURKE: You had your heart set on going out to the people. What will you do?
- NANO: What I've always done Miss O'Rourke. What I have always done.

BLACKOUT

ACT TWO**SCENE SIX**

Stage in Darkness

Nano, downstage right, kneeling in prayer. Marie Bernal, downstage left, standing still.

We hear the hymn "Salve Regina" by Fatima Soriano. Note: The entire hymn should be played. Lights up to dim.

Nano rises. A spotlight alternates from Nano to Marie.

Marie has a white bonnet which she places on her head. Nano turns and watches Marie as she ties the bonnet under her chin.

(Lights fade to black)

(Lights come up on the school in Cove Lane. Enter O'Rourke, Collins, Fouhy and Burke)

COLLINS: Did Miss Nagle say what this meeting was about?

O'ROURKE: Your future

BURKE: What exactly are we supposed to do?

O'ROURKE: The impossible. (A silence)

O'ROURKE: (Cont'd) All right, she said we are going to plough new ground and plant a new seed.

BURKE: I've never used a plough.

COLLINS: I have. I plough my father's patch every spring.

BURKE: Where is this field?

FOUHY: Miss Nagle is not talking about ploughing a field.

O'ROURKE: Thank you Miss Fouhy

COLLINS: What is she talking about?

FOUHY: Planting seed.

BURKE: Like wheat?

FOUHY: Like wheat. But not wheat. The seed stands for something else.

COLLINS: Like wheat, but not wheat? I got it, Barley.

BURKE: You know what they make from Barley? Whiskey.

COLLINS: Miss Nagle is making whiskey? That's illegal

BURKE: In this country everything is illegal. The only thing we are allowed to do is die.

COLLINS: So long as we don't have a wake.

(Crossfade to a street in Cork. Nano and Joseph in conversation)

NANO: What did Elizabeth say?

JOSEPH: That you founded a new religious order. This religious order goes out about the city.

NANO: To instruct the poor

JOSEPH: Why don't they come to you?

NANO: They can't. Do you know the Crotty family?

JOSEPH: I know the father

NANO: Five boys, three girls. Can't read, can't write and the boys have never been confirmed.

JOSEPH: You're talking about working people

NANO: Thousands of them throughout the city. The new rule will enable us to teach them in their homes

JOSEPH: Which the Ursuline Sisters cannot do?

NANO: Correct. Then in time we can build a hospital

JOSEPH: Oh lord. And then what?

NANO: I don't know. Maybe an orphanage.

JOSEPH: You have to look after yourself. Are you still fasting?

NANO: Not as much as I should

JOSEPH: (Stops) Wait a minute, wait a minute. You establish a new foundation. Which means you establish a new convent. But a new convent takes nuns. So where um...

NANO: Where do the nuns come from?

JOSEPH: Exactly

NANO: Right here

JOSEPH: Cork? The only nuns in Cork are the ones that came from France.

NANO: Until now Mr Nagle.

(The Curtain opens. The schoolroom in Cove Lane. The students enter one by one singing, "The Dawning of the Day". The last three students to enter are Collins, Burke and Fouhy. They wear the habit of the Presentation Order, without the headdress)
(Each student carries a sign. Written on the sign is the city or country where Presentation Schools were founded. One by one, the students show the signs to the theatre audience)

STUDENTS: (With signs) Cork – England – Romania – Slovakia – India – Pakistan – Israel – Ghana – Uganda – Zambia – Zimbabwe – Thailand – Philippines – New Guinea – Australia – New Zealand – Chile – Bolivia – Peru – Ecuador – Guatemala – Bahamas – Dominican Republic – Canada – Newfoundland – New York – Los Angeles – San Francisco

MARIE: (Last sign) The venue of play: Cork, Sydney, San Jose

(The song ends. Everyone exits the stage, except Nano. Brigid stands at the door)

(Lights dim. Nano goes to a table and picks up the lantern. She turns the wick up. The stage begins to light up, very slowly at first. The light continues until it reaches a dazzling brightness)
(Nano takes the lantern in hand, looks about the schoolroom – the same schoolroom where it all began. For a moment she is still, pensive, lost in thought. After a while, she crosses briskly to the exit where Brigid is waiting. They both go out into the night)

CURTAIN