**EARTH-CROÍ - STEP THREE – DÚCHAS**

**DÚCHAS MEANS ANCESTRAL HERITAGE, NATIVE PLACE, TRADITIONAL CONNECTION.**

Wherever we live out our days, there is history, story, energy and memory – if we have the openness to intuit the layers of mystery that are held in a place.

For example, have you ever had a ‘feeling’ that a particular place holds a strong energy for you, whether that energy is positive or not so positive? It may be an obviously atmospheric place such as a church or an old graveyard or a place associated with your ancestors or childhood memories.

Our ancestors had a name for special places like that – they called them ‘Thin Places.’ In other words, places where the veil between this world and the Otherworld is very thin. So thin, that you feel as if you could reach out your hand and pass it through that veil and so touch and experience the mystery of the Otherworld. Those are dúchas places and experiences.

To intuit the dúchas of a place requires deep listening and plenty of time. The Irish poet Patrick Kavanagh, put it like this – ‘To know fully even one field or land is a lifetime’s experience……it is depth that counts, not width.’[[1]](#footnote-1) So the experience of dúchas isn’t something that can be entered into by a tourist’s approach to travel, spending a day or two in a place. It requires a long and aware relationship with a place, because dúchas is always shy to open her secrets to the unconnected heart.

I know the dúchas of this place where I live because I have lived here my whole life and my ancestors before me. I know the stories of its history and all of the trees on the acres where I walk often with the dog. I know the places that speak to me, the ‘thin places’ here where I have encountered the Spirit of the land in special ways. And the place knows me and has listened to my outpourings of prayer and joy and grief over the long years. To know the dúchas of a place is to enter into the magic of its deep life. I love how Patrick Kavanagh also said – ‘I wasn’t really a writer. I had seen a strange beautiful light on the hills and that was all.’[[2]](#footnote-2)

We are surrounded by Presence. If we have the time to be still in a place – and listen with respect – the mystery of its magic will open up to us, like a portal into the mound of the Sidhe. Every place has its magic and its dúchas. And our being in that place can bring new energy to it and vice versa. For dúchas is not static but, like life itself, can change over time, so that even places that are heavy with dark energy because of events that have happened there, can be cleansed and cleared and set free.

These ‘thin place’ discoveries and experiences require time, genuine commitment, respect and love for the dúchas of a place.

**WAYS TO PRACTICE DÚCHAS IN YOUR LIFE**

1. Look with fresh eyes at the place you live in and ask yourself – how do I feel about this place? What do I know about this place? Practice relationship with your home. Be aware of all its life and its memories held in the walls and outdoor spaces. Be open to the mystery in what might seem homely and familiar. Dúchas calls us to see the magic in the ‘ordinary.’
2. Practice daily ‘space clearing’ at the beginning or at the end of your day. You could create your own prayer or words of invocation/blessing. Invite in peace and healing love to your home. You might want to do this in each room of your house annually, perhaps at a sacred time like Imbolc. (see step seven).
3. Be aware, in the journeys of your life, of the dúchas in the places where life takes you. There might be a country in the world or a region that calls to you. You may have something to experience in that place. Or a place that is sacred for you nearer home. That is a power place for you. Visit that place and be receptive to its dúchas. Every place has its magic, memories and mystery.
1. From *Collected Pruse* by Patrick Kavanagh, Macgibbon and Kee, 1967. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. From *The Green Fool* by Patrick Kavanagh, Michael Jospeh Ltd., originally published 1938. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)