

We find ourselves on the edge of a terrifying precipice... the great extinction, climate catastrophe. As in any good analysis, we want to explore how we have reached this state of crisis. In what ways is our current situation the result of a cultural complex, one that, as crisis looms closer, responds with more defensive and aggressive strategies, waging war to amass further resources, willfully resisting the awareness that such actions will likely render the planet uninhabitable for even our own descendants. And, like all good analysis, we must peel back the layers and explore the relationship with our Mother.

In her wonderful presentations, Jules Cashford spoke of Owen Barfield's concept of participation. I would like to add another layer, Erich Neumann's conception of the stages of history. He posited that our early history was one in which we were fully embedded in the Self, the relationship with the Great Mother, that he likened to the experience of childhood. He saw the emergence of patriarchy, the ascendance of the masculine, as a period of individuation from the Mother, where the ego seeks primacy. Yet he saw that unchecked, this stage of development led to world wars and environmental devastation. A refugee from Nazi Germany, in the years immediately following the war, Neumann turned his attention to the great archeological explorations of the late 19th and 20th centuries.

He became fascinated with what he called the cultures of the Great Mother in Europe and the fertile Crescent area of the ancient Middle East. Neumann posited that the next stage of human evolution required a development of an ego-Self axis, where the ego becomes aware that it is part of a much larger whole, what Jung called the Self, or the totality of the psyche. As the world realizes the catastrophic limitations of an ego disconnected from the depths of the Self, we are called to enter new stage of collective consciousness—a *hieros gamos*, a sacred marriage, enacted by our ancestors in the Great Rite, showing us how to wed the masculine and feminine aspects of consciousness. In this new relationship, the ego begins to act in service to the Self, with conscious awareness, a steward of Nature.

[1] Over the past two centuries, archeological explorations are deepening our understanding of the ancient world. It is as if Gaia Herself is coming to meet us, bringing us the great wisdom and insight of our ancestral psyche. Our ancestors also lived through great periods of climactic change, their experience of it expressed in their symbolic relationship with the Great Goddess. Why now, in this era of catastrophic upheavals in our climate and our rate of species extinction, has the Goddess reappeared in our collective consciousness after millennia of Her being repressed? Does the re-emergence of the Goddess reflect a longing for something our ancients knew and lived deeply?

In the mid twentieth century, the great Lithuanian archeologist Marija Gimbutas, herself emerging from the ravages of the war in eastern Europe, began reconceptualizing our way of thinking about the ancient world. She devoted her life to exploring the rich symbolism and meaning of the Neolithic Goddess and Her omnipresent representation at the center of ancient cultures. Her work contributed significantly to the women's spirituality movement, which explored how the worship of the Goddess, deeply tied to reverence for the Earth and the natural world, had been denigrated and violently suppressed over millennia.

Jungian analysts and feminist theologians drawing on her work, have been changing the way we understand the development of western consciousness.

[2] In their book, *The Myth of the Goddess*, Anne Baring and Jules Cashford note that “The Mother Goddess, wherever she is found, is an image that inspires and focuses a perception of the universe as an organic, alive and sacred, whole in which humanity, the Earth and all life on Earth participate as ‘her children.’ Everything is woven together in one cosmic web, where all orders of manifest and unmanifest life are related, because all share in the sanctity of original source.” (B&C xi)

As this image became devalued and lost over time, we experienced a corresponding devaluation of the sanctity of the Earth, and of life. They note, “The Earth is no longer instinctively experienced as a living being as in earlier times... And now is also the time when the whole body of Earth is threatened in a way unique to the history of the planet.”

Over the past thirty years, further discoveries and advancements in archeological technology have deepened our understanding of the cultures of Old Europe and the ancient Fertile Crescent of the Middle East. We are now understanding that these stable cultures thrived for thousands of years, were non-hierarchical, based in reverence for the Goddess and Mother Earth, with women and the feminine at the center of leadership, and peaceful. The unearthing of this deeper layer of our cultural collective unconscious is showing us that for thousands of years before patriarchy and domination-driven cultures, we knew a different way of life.

We are growing in our recognition that these cultures are the true foundation upon which western civilization rests. While we may mourn the ways in which these cultures were overrun by warring tribes that sought to dominate rather than revere the earth, and women, we may also see how the inheritance these cultures gifted us with are the deep structure that underlie our conscious reality. As we explore the cultures of the ancient Goddess, we will also reflect on how She has continued to live on through subsequent layers of the collective psyche.

We cannot go back. We must rely on the gains that the patriarchal era of consciousness has brought us. These technological advances are needed if ours, and many other species, are to survive. But these skills must be married to the deeper awareness that our ancestors held—that the earth is our Living Mother.

A few months ago I dreamt that a friend who ran an antiquarian bookstore was showing me an illuminated manuscript, detailing the long arc of human history. Numinous images of the Goddess lifted off each page as we turned it. I understand that *She* runs all the way through. My friend says, “We are returning to Her, so She can save us.”

The Paleolithic Goddess

Modern humans first appeared about 100,000 years ago, and by 50,000 years ago, developed the capacity for culture. This was during the last great Ice Age, a time of great climactic change. It is from this time that we find the cave paintings in western Europe, and the first images of the Great Goddess.

[3] Baring and Cashford observe that for at least 20,000 years (from 30-10,000 BCE), the Paleolithic cave seems to be the most sacred place, the sanctuary of the Goddess and the source of her regenerative power. Entering one of these caves is like making a journey into another world, one which is *inside* the body of the goddess. Her all-containing womb brought forth the living and took back the dead.... On the exterior walls her image was sculpted, on the interior walls were painted the male and female animals who may have embodied the different aspects of her being, and the artist-shamans who could hear her voice in the voice of the animal. (B&C 15-16)

[4] This sacred vulva cave in Bulgaria was thought to be used for the worship of a Mother goddess, goddess of pregnancy and fertility rites or possibly initiations. The sun casts a shadow of a phallus, impregnating the womb of the Mother. Darkness and light, life and death were all held within the web of being, the goddess as giver of life, bringer of death, and regeneratrix. This is the beginning of mythos.

[5] The lunar notations found on bone, stone antler and goddess figures, laid the foundations for the discovery of agriculture, the calendar, astronomy, mathematics and writing. This is the Chokurcha Cave in Ukraine, from 45,000-40,000 BCE the most ancient settlement in Europe. Here the first celestial map and first geographical map were discovered.

[6] Gimbutas notes that "The primordial deity for our Paleolithic and Neolithic ancestors was female, reflecting the sovereignty of motherhood. In fact, there are no images that have been found of a Father god throughout the prehistoric record. Paleolithic and Neolithic symbols and images cluster around a self-generating Goddess and her basic functions as Giver-of-Life, Wielder-of-Death, and as Regeneratrix. This symbolic system represents cyclical, nonlinear, mythical time." And the notations on the bison horn may represent the moon cycles in a lunar year.

[7] A disk made from a mammoth molar found in the grave of a shaman at Brno (Moravia), Czech Republic representing an abstract vulva composed of a circle and a line. Symbols of the vulva as the source of life abound throughout the ancient world.

[8] Among the oldest Goddesses of the Central Danube

[9] Goddess of Lespugue, from southern France

[10] Triple goddess – representing the three phases of the moon, and of life – birth, death, regeneration.

[11] Baring and Cashford suggest that the fourth phase – the dark moon, when the moon could not be seen, may have given birth to the capacity for imaginal and abstract thinking

Meanders and spirals are evidence of abstract thought, and later, on Neolithic pots, images of a four-armed cross represent the four phases of the moon. (B&C 19-20) This spiral is from the temple at Malta

[12] and the neolithic village of Newgrange in Ireland,

[13] whose temple was the womb of the Mother Goddess (we also see this motif in the Native American mounds of the Mississippi)

[14] The retreat of the last ice age brought a warming of the world's climate which stimulated a rich abundance of wild plant and animal life and an increase in human populations. The transition from hunting and gathering to permanent settlements and the domestication of plants and animals was a gradual development between c. 9000 and 6500 BCE. (CG, 2) Substantial evidence for a rapidly growing Neolithic culture that began in the middle of the 7th millennium BCE exists in the Aegean area, the Balkans, and in east-central Europe and Anatolia (Turkey). A second area of focus is the central Mediterranean world, including the fertile crescent, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Palestine, Israel, Lebanon and Egypt. Recent wars have resulted in devastating losses to the peoples of those regions as well as destruction of ancient archeological sites.

[15] As the glaciers retreated, and caves were abandoned, temples arose to support the worship of the Goddess, appearing as early as the 7th millennium BCE. One of the earliest temple complexes was found at Catal Huyuk, in Turkey. The bucranium (bull's head and horns) which appear throughout the temple complex, have been interpreted as the symbol of the son and lover of the Great Mother Goddess, and as a symbol of the uterus of the Goddess, representing life and regeneration.

[16] Malta Hypogeum, from the 4th century BCE.

[17] Great Goddess of Malta, sleeping lady of Malta

[18] Neolithic Europe was not a time before civilization, but a true civilization in the best meaning of the word.

[19] As early as the 3rd millennium BC, Thera had established itself as a thriving Mediterranean trading centre with links to the peoples of Crete, the Cyclades, mainland Greece, and Egypt, and this is reflected in the subject of some of the frescoes and in their style which displays many similarities to frescoes on Minoan Crete and in Egypt.

[20] In the 5th and early 4th millennia BCE, just before its demise in east-central Europe, Old Europeans had towns with a considerable concentration of population, temples several stories high, a sacred script, spacious houses of four or five rooms, professional ceramicists, weavers, copper and gold metallurgists, and other artisans producing a wide range of

sophisticated goods. A flourishing network of trade routes existed that circulated items such as obsidian, shells, marble, copper, and salt over hundreds of kilometers.

[21] A matrifocal tradition continued throughout the early agricultural societies of Europe, Anatolia, and the Near East, as well as Minoan Crete.

[22] The emphasis in these cultures was on technologies that nourished people's lives, in contrast to the androcratic focus on domination." (CG, x-xi)

[23] "Old European society was organized around a theocratic, communal temple community, guided by a queen-priestess, her brother or uncle, and a council of women as the governing body.

[24] In spite of the revered status of women in religious life, the cemetery evidence throughout the 5th and most of the 4th millennia BCE does not suggest any imbalance between the sexes or subservience of one sex to the other. It suggests, instead, a condition of mutual respect. The primary grave goods for both sexes are symbolic of the sacred cycles of regeneration, although burial goods also honor personal achievements in the arts, crafts, trades and other professions. (CG, xi)

[25] In Anatolia, a multitude of temples appeared in the town of Çatal Hüyük, present day Turkey dated to 7000 BCE, a thousand years earlier than the high level architecture, and wall paintings of Europe. In the three millennia from 10,000 BCE to its founding, evolutionary transition to agriculture and settled civilized life took place. Gimbutas notes that "The rich display of religious symbolism which flowered in central Anatolia and Old Europe is part of an unbroken continuity from Upper Paleolithic times." (CG, viii)

The excavation of Çatal Hüyük by James Mellaart in 1961-1965 revolutionized our view of the ancient world, showing that the practice of religion was integrated into people's daily lives. (James Mellaart, *The Goddess of Anatolia*, vol. 1) (8)

[26] One of the most ancient Goddesses whose names we know is the divinity whom the Greeks called Cybele. This Goddess became famous as the Great Mother of Anatolia, and by this name she is still referred to by the Turks who call her Ana Tanrıça. Worship of Cybele may descend from worship of the goddess in Catalhoyuk. (49)

[27] Recently discovered Goddess from Catal Huyuk

[28] There are no depictions of arms (weapons used against other humans) in Paleolithic cave paintings, nor are there remains of weapons used by man against man in the Neolithic of Old Europe. From some hundred and fifty paintings that survived at Çatal Hüyük, there is not one depicting a scene of conflict or fighting, or war or torture. (CG, ix-x)

[29] Joan Marler and Harald Haarmann note that, in old Europe, "it follows from the acceptance of the idea of the deep structure as being One that all elements of the deep structure are aspects of the One." "The oneness of the generative forces is depicted, featuring the Mistress of Nature in an anthropomorphic appearance, with the central

animals as her epiphanies.” Here is a winged goddess from Switzerland, flanked by four lions, the upper two resting on two snakes that emerge from her head. An eagle sits on her head, and she holds two hares in her hands. (Mythological Crescent, 87.)

[30] We see how the motif of the Mistress of all the animals comes through Artemis in classical Greece

[31] The Cucuteni Trypillia culture in Ukraine and eastern Europe, c. 4000-3500 BCE, reached an urban stage with towns of up to 10,000 inhabitants at the center or a district surrounded by medium and smaller size villages. (CG, xi)

[32] Bird goddess from Cucuteni culture. In many Bronze Age myths the cosmic egg of the Universe was laid by the Cosmic Mother Bird, and its cracking open was the beginning of time and space.

New discoveries over the past two decades from archaeology and anthropology are inviting us to rethink pre-Greek cultures. Linguist Harald Haarmann notes that new evidence suggests that writing started in Old Europe, some two thousand years earlier than in Egypt or Mesopotamia. Democracy, often credited to the early Greeks, may have likely derived from the earlier cultures of Old Europe, a society with egalitarian structures, social and economic equality, with all members of the community sharing in the profits from the agrarian surplus and trade.”

[33] The ancient Greek language absorbed many hundreds of words from the language of those who had lived in Greece before the advent of Greek tribes... including key concepts that testify to the appreciation, among the Greeks, of their high symbolic value, such as Eirene, the old European word for peace of harmony, that became the Goddess Eirene. (Haarmann, Old Europe and its Legacy: Major Trajectories of Continuity in Subsequent Cultures)

[34] Motifs of the Goddess that span both old Europe and the fertile crescent, include the bird and snake goddesses, reflecting the continuum of life, death and rebirth. Miriam Dexter Robbins notes that birds represented two phenomena: birds such as the dove personified the breath of life and perhaps the soul.

[35] Raptors such as the vulture, owl and crow, were representatives of the death aspect, of the goddess. The vulture goddess her shown as Nekhbet in Egypt, represents the death goddess that excarnates the flesh of what has died, gestating it in her womb to transform into new life.

[36] Birds also represent the martial aspect of the Goddess. Birds mediate both heaven and earth and are potent icons of life, death, and rebirth. (186) We will revisit these motifs as we move through the various cultures of Minoan Crete and Santorini and the Fertile Crescent.

[37] At the beginning of the Bronze Age (ca. 3500 BCE) new waves of population came to Crete from Anatolia and from Libya. Together they created Minoan culture, the first great

civilization of Europe. As Gimbutas has shown, Crete was the direct inheritor of the Neolithic culture of Old Europe.

[38] The apogee of Goddess culture was Minoan Crete (3000-1500 BCE). The whole of life was pervaded by an ardent faith in the Goddess, which reflected and reinforced a woman-centered society.

[39] Ancient Crete celebrated sexuality in images of compelling beauty and power. Jacquetta Hawkes writes, "The Cretans saw the supreme divine power in terms of the feminine principle, and incarnate in a woman whom they portrayed exactly like one of themselves... comfortable with her beauty, her body and her power."

[40] Baring & Cashford note, "The goddess is holding a snake high in each hand. Are these the snakes of life and death, which belong to her as manifestations of her power to give and withdraw life? The lion cub that sits tamely on her head is also the guardian, as a full grown lion, to the Goddess of the Animals in Anatolia, Sumeria and Egypt. The net pattern on her skirt, which gathers significance from its Paleolithic and Neolithic ancestry, suggests she is the weaver of the web of life, which is perpetually woven from her womb. Her skirt has seven layers, the number of the days of the moon's four quarters, which divide into two the waxing and waning halves of the cycle, like the Neolithic cross inside the circle. (B&C 112) Although seven was also the number of the visible planets, this is probably a lunar notation, so that sitting in the lap of the goddess ... would be to experience time supported by eternity, and eternity clothed in time. (B&C 112.)

[41] – the regenerative power of the snake is carried in classical Greece by Hygeia, healing goddess

[42] We see the bird goddess motif widely represented throughout the fertile crescent. Here she is in Cyprus

[43] Sanctuary of Aphrodite in Cyprus, with megaliths. Scholars believe that Aphrodite arose from a Cypriot goddess Kypris, who was inspired by the Fertile Crescent goddesses Astarte, and Ishtar, who embodied qualities of powerful sexuality and sovereignty

[44] Aphrodite arising from the Sea perhaps reflects her arrival from neighboring Mesopotamian cultures. Baring and Cashford write, "Aphrodite came to Greece from Cyprus and, before that, from Mesopotamia, and so she was a goddess who was very old—as old as time— and in Olympia, very new, inhabiting a diminished role. But when she is sculpted and painted with her animals and birds—the dolphin, goat, goose, swan and dove—her earlier lineage shines through. As Goddess of the Sea, she skims through the waves on the backs of dolphins,

[45] as Goddess of the Animals, she moves them with longing, drawing them to each other; and as Goddess of Earth in her aspect of fertility, she gathers Heaven to Earth as falling rain and impels the seeds of the moistened earth to open into roots and shoots.

[46] As Goddess of Heaven, she rides through the air on chariots of swans and geese, and she sits upon a throne of swans. Like Inanna-Ishtar, Aphrodite was embodied in the brightest star in Heaven, the morning and evening star we call by her Roman name of Venus. (B&C 358.)

[47] Around 3500 BCE, Gimbutas notes the decline of Neolithic goddess-based culture due to "intrusions of alien people with a totally different economic, social, and ideological structure that gradually changed the face of the Old European world. "These events not only explain the disintegration of the civilization of old Europe but define the transition to patriarchal and belligerent societies. This transition coincides the Indo-Europeanization of Europe. (CG, vii-viii).

Christine Downing writes, The dominion and powers of each goddess are considerably more narrowly delimited than was true earlier. Aphrodite is now only the goddess of physical beauty and human sexual love; Artemis is primarily the goddess of the hunt; Athene is the protectress of cities and patron of the arts. Not only is each given a distinct sphere of power but the worst fantasies about how patriarchy leads women to distrust and betray one another are realized in Homer's representations of the implacable hostilities among the goddesses. It is only as we recognize their presence and seek to know them as fully as possible, to reimagine them, that their power to open up new dimensions of feminine life is released. Only then can they become life-giving archetypes. (Goddesses, 21-23)

[48] Fertile Crescent - In the fertile crescent, we see in the cultures of ancient Sumer in Mesopotamia, the Syro-Palestinian Canaanite cultures, the Levant, and ancient Egypt, and the emergent cultures of ancient Israel. We may reflect on the wars of our time, and the impact these have had on these peoples, as well as on destruction of ancient archeological treasures, some now lost forever. In this section we will explore the Goddesses of ancient Sumer and the ancient Canaanite and Hebrews Goddesses.

During the era of the third millennium BCE, ascendancy of the masculine transcendent, meets the abiding power of the ancient goddesses, Inanna, Astarte, Asherah, Anat. The first poet, Enheduanna, daughter of Sargon the Great in Mesopotamia, details the life of Inanna, Queen of Heaven, in 2500 BCE.

[49] As Sumer came under subsequent Babylonian rule, Inanna became Ishtar. Here She is clutching a pair of serpents with dragon-heads, gaping mouths and spotted bodies, and the tails of what may be other serpents, a pair of lions, a pair of humped bulls

[50] Inanna with foot resting on a lion

[51] Inanna with her consort Dumuzi by the huluppu tree. The snake eats the plant of eternal life from the Huluppu Tree, in the Gilgamesh Epic, sloughing its skin and gaining "immortality."

[52] Here is the Goddess Asherah, worshipped by the Canaanite and ancient Israelites. Ugaritic texts found in Ras Shamra, Syria, in 1929, dated to about 1500 BCE, describe the Canaanite religion, including major figures who are referenced in the Bible but whose qualities we previously knew little about. The supreme Deity is named El, and his wife is Asherah, who appears continuously in Bible narrative.

[53] fertile crescent Goddesses in the motif of Asherah, Mother of All the gods.

[54] Asherah was worshiped among the ancient Israelites as the wife of Yuh-Hei-Vav-Hei. God was a holy couple made up YHVH and his Asherah. Asherah was also called “She Who Walks on the Sea,” and Lady of the Lions. In the Biblical Text, Eve is called, “Mother of All Living.”

[55] As a Mother goddess she was also widely worshiped throughout the fertile crescent as Ashtoreth, and Astarte, Queen of Heaven

[56] bird goddess motif – Goddess Astarte, Queen of Heaven

[57] Anat, daughter of Asherah, was the Goddess of love and war

[58] worship of the Goddess extended back to 10,000 BCE in ancient Israel/Palestine

[59] Clay fertility statues which were found in abundance in ancient Israel/Palestine are usually assumed to be representations of one of the Canaanite or ancient Hebrew Goddesses —Asherah, Anat, or Astarte. Recent archeological finds indicate that ancient Hebrews were not, as in the Biblical narrative, a separate or warring culture from the Canaanites. Around 1200 BCE, a dramatic cultural transformation took place. In the formerly sparsely populated highlands, far from the Canaanite cities that were in the process of collapse, about 250 fifty hilltop communities suddenly sprang up. Here were the first Israelites. Modern scholars therefore see Israel arising peacefully and internally from existing people in the highlands of Canaan. This changes the Biblical narrative of the worship of the Goddesses Asherah and Astarte as coming from foreign influences to a recognition that they derive from the ancestral lineages of the Hebrews themselves. (Finkelstein and Silberman)

[60] This cult stand from Jerusalem in the 11th c BCE is reflective of the worship of the Goddess Asherah, Lady of the Lions, among these hilltop villagers. Her symbol is the Tree of Life, the Asherah groves of sacred trees and wooden poles.

Jonathan Dubé observes, “That the Goddess Asherah is symbolized as a tree resonates profoundly with the religious intuition that the archetypal feminine is a mediatrix, in the image of the Tree of Life that stands at the ‘centre of the world’, conjoining heaven and earth. In this light, the Goddess thus mediates in herself the relationships between immanence and transcendence, human and divine, masculine and feminine, self and other, wisdom and folly, life and death, and so on—.” Dubé, Uprooting the Tree of Life.

Israeli anthropologist Raphael Patai notes that for the 370 years during which the Solomonic Temple stood in Jerusalem, from 1200-586 BCE, the Goddess Asherah was present in the Temple for the majority of that period; her worship part of the legitimate religion approved and led by king, court, and priesthood.

When the First Temple was destroyed in 586 BCE, the Hebrews were exiled to Babylon. Returning to Jerusalem after 30 years of exile, worship of Asherah became widely condemned, and her sacred groves and sites were ordered to be destroyed. Priestly elites scapegoated the Goddess, and women's sexuality, as the reason for the exile. As the Goddess and her devotees were removed from the Temple, women also lost their status as priestesses.

[61] In subsequent centuries, the Tree of Life that had been associated with Asherah, was associated with the Torah itself, and with the central symbol of Jewish mysticism or kabbalah. Jewish mysticism places the Tree of Life at the center of its cosmology, an axis mundi uniting the immanent feminine with the transcendent masculine. In kabbalah, Asherah is recognized as being part of the godhead, which is both male and female. The unity of the world that existed when the Temple in Jerusalem stood, was shattered by the separation of the Divine couple when the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, perhaps a reflection of the devaluation of the feminine after the destruction of the first temple. It is our work as humans to repair the shattered cosmos, restoring the Shekhinah to her Holy Place alongside the male aspect of the Divine, who is eternally mourning her absence.

I'd like to close with a reflection on one of the Myths of Inanna and what it may have to offer us in our own time.

[62] In the Sumerian "Descent of Inanna," Inanna, Queen of Heaven, has been gifted powers, called *mes*, by her grandfather, the sky god Enlil. Her sister, Ereshkigal, queen of earth, has been devalued by the gods and banished to the underworld. Ereshkigal is in the throes of grief after losing her husband, and is simultaneously giving birth--the Earth Goddess suffering in her body the agony of death and rebirth.

Inanna queen of heaven, in order to make the descent to her sister's realm, has to surrender all the powers of the sky gods, the *mes*, one at each of seven gates. Stripped bare, she descends to meet her sister, who immediately has her hung upon a meat hook, where she dies to her former self. Her beloved friend Ninshubur pleads with the gods, who send helpers to reclaim Inanna from the underworld.

As they enter Ereshkigal's realm, the helpers, *kurgarra* and the *galatur*, neither and both male and female, hear Ereshkigal crying out in pain "oh, my insides." And they respond, "oh, your insides." She cries out, "oh my outsides," and they respond, "Oh your outsides."

[63] We, like Inanna are witnessing the agony of our Mother, our Sister, goddess of Earth, simultaneously in the throes of unbearable grief and the birth pangs of new life. Inanna teaches us that we too need to turn towards the pain of mother earth, of our own suffering as her children, to allow what needs to die to be devoured by the vulture goddesses, eating

the rotting flesh of what must be shed. We suffer the death of our former selves, as we witness our mother giving birth to a new reality, one that is born from the depths of Her pain, and the honoring of her power.