

CAPSTONE PROJECT

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# MEMORIA;

OR,

*An Archive Under the Same Sky*

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H A R V A R D   U N I V E R S I T Y

## ON REFLECTIONS ABOUT THE CAPSTONE PROJECT

The Archive I have built [**available in HTML format**], entitled *MEMORIA*, is a deliberate artistic experiment in conceptualizing apocalypse not as a singular event but as a continuum of human perception across history. Structured as a solemn website, my project preserves thirty-three letters written from across time and civilizations, each responding to a catastrophic astronomical phenomenon through the lens of their cultural logic and existential horizon. Designed with an architectural solemnity, including black backgrounds, golden side columns, centered structures, and engraved references, the Archive invites the user to witness past endings and participate in the unfolding disappearance of memory itself. It is a repository of human attempts to comprehend the incomprehensible, and it is fundamentally shaped by the intellectual frameworks explored in our course *Stories from the End of the World*.

The Archive reflects the principal apocalyptic ideas discussed throughout the course: memory, fragmentation, cosmic silence, and the fading of divine presence. From the (fictitious) Sumerian scribe Enlil-zid to the modern engineer César Velázquez-Lee (equally fictitious), each letter captures an end that is culturally specific yet universally human. My decision to structure the project around personal letters arises directly from motifs we studied in the Amarna Letters, the Book of Revelation, and Borges' *Labyrinths*: the notion that apocalypse is preserved not in grand declarations but in fragments of personal testimony. Moreover, the narrative that unfolds across the Archive parallels Eliade's concept of the eternal return: each civilization attempts to interpret the collapse of its cosmic order and ritually re-anchor itself, even as the certainty of reconstitution fades.

The physical structure of the website embodies these motifs in its very design. The black backgrounds and thin white or golden side columns evoke the closing of the heavens, while the navigation between Levels represents stages of existential descent: from the initial password-protected secrecy (Level 1) through the solemn repository of letters (Levels 2–3), cosmic decision points (Levels 4–6), and ultimately

the final testament of humanity's memory loss (Level 7–8). The choice to require a password ("MEMORIA") stems from Ricoeur's reflection that memory must be actively summoned against the force of forgetting. The format of full-page transitions without reloading enacts the smooth inevitability of apocalyptic progression. Even the small, square navigation buttons, modeled as minimal white or black squares, visually mirror the reduction of human agency against overwhelming cosmic forces.

My decision to allow each letter to be accompanied by two versions (the Original with historically appropriate language and style, and the Translation with contemporary English) follows from the apocalyptic concern with the instability of language and meaning. Just as in our studies of the Babel narrative, the Archive shows that even acts of preservation are acts of loss. Fittingly, the final letter, written by "Him Who Remembers," is itself a fading recollection of what once was whole. Structurally, each letter is framed with a solemn "Let it be known" testament, a direct homage to ancient memorial practices from the Sumerians to the Christian monks we studied (and all civilizations before, inbetween, and after).

In constructing the Archive, I drew heavily from specific course materials. Borges' *Labyrinths* inspired the modular, non-linear structure of the letters: the reader can encounter any letter in any order, reflecting the labyrinthine structure of cultural memory. From Eliade, I adopted the idea that apocalypse is not destruction but the fading of sacred structure: hence, the black background extending to the bottom of every page. Ricoeur's *Memory, History, Forgetting* shaped my decision to emphasize personal voices over objective narrative. Even modern treatments of apocalypse, such as Bostrom's warnings about AI extinction, influenced the final letter's treatment of humanity's final loss of memory to machine cognition. Every aesthetic, structural, and narrative choice traces back to these intellectual foundations.

One motif that I initially considered but ultimately left out was the motif of rebirth. Throughout the course, especially in readings like *Revelation (The Book of)* and indigenous renewal myths, we encountered the theme that apocalypse is often followed by the reconstitution of a new sacred world. Early drafts of the Archive

envisioned a Level 9 that would emerge after the user completed the Works Cited page, a golden reconstruction page, symbolizing the re-founding of meaning. However, after further reflection, I chose to exclude this. In my view, adding a rebirth level would have softened the impact of the fading memory theme I sought to capture. Inspired by Ricoeur's emphasis on the silence after forgetting, and Borges' vision of the labyrinth without center, I decided that the Archive must end not with a new order, but with the silent acknowledgement that not all ends are preludes—the user himself is the End.

Another motif I decided not to incorporate was political revolution. Although our course deeply engaged with political collapses, such as the fall of monarchies or the societal upheavals by the tragedies of time, I made the deliberate decision to focus the Archive purely on cosmological and existential collapse, not political transformation. In my view, political revolution implies agency and future reconstitution; the Archive, instead, is concerned with the loss of meaning itself. Civilizations are portrayed not as agents of their rebirth but as mourners of their fading sky. This choice preserves the Archive's core philosophical motifs: solemnity, acceptance, and the preservation of broken memory.

Ultimately, *An Archive Under the Same Sky* stands as a tribute to the intellectual frameworks we explored throughout *Stories from the End of the World*. It transforms the theoretical motifs of fragmentation, memory, cosmic silence, and irretrievable loss into an architectural, navigable, experiential form. It invites the reader not merely to observe endings; notably, my Capstone Project embraces the user experience to participate in the slow and inevitable fading of worlds, eventually reaching a terminal point where the user evanesces into oblivion or becomes oblivion himself.

Through every letter, through every solemn transition, the Archive asks the same apocalyptic question we asked all semester: how do we remember when the world itself forgets? The Archive answers, in its final silence: **only by recording the breath of memory, letter after letter, fading under the same vanishing sky.**