

Was It Worth It?

An Epilogue.

By Eli Allan. Music by Esme.

The biggest question I've asked myself about Station Arcadia over the years is "Why am I doing this?". This is also something that Kass questions.

How do we measure the value of our actions? How do we judge if something is 'worth it'? A worthy use of time, of effort... If we can only know in retrospect, based on how it turns out, then we'll never, ever, know whether our choices in the present moment are actually "worth it". So that can't be the right way to measure...

It's intensely gratifying that as of September 2025, Station Arcadia has accumulated over 200 000 listens. We also won a few internet podcast awards, received fan-art and commentary, and even presented at a (virtual) convention once. We earned enough money through merch and our patreon to pay cast and crew members a non embarrassing honorarium. I'm extremely proud of how far we came. I tried to honour the arcpod team in wrapping up the project as I have.

Maybe that answers my question. I'm not sure.

If you've enjoyed Station Arcadia and have the means, please consider donating to our fundraiser for Trans Lifeline. <https://give.translifeline.org/fundraiser/6702350>

Social Theory Sources/Further Reading:

- Delanty, G., & Harris, N. (2021). Critical theory and the question of technology: The Frankfurt School revisited. *Thesis Eleven*, 166(1), 88-108. <https://doi.org/10.1177/07255136211002055> [Part 4 Specifically]
- Harney, Stefano, and Fred Moten. *The Undercommons : Fugitive Planning & Black Study*. Minor Compositions, 2013.

[SEASON 1 OPENING THEME PLAYS]

We soar above the world and see below us a vast land. First, we see The Empire, with its blood-soaked battlefields and radiation-filled wastes. Walled-high cities. Death weighing heavily on the still-living. Its people can't remember a time before the fighting, or picture another way of life. We see the war stretching endless. We see lives only valued as stock to the slaughter. Stick close to your friends because any day now could be the end.

We cross the sea heading West, and come to Hardizan, its myriad cities whirring with life. We hear the ever-present clicking of clock-work and the hiss of steam-power. We see, in the factories, people and gears alike grinding away for hour upon hour. They think to themselves, ‘at least we aren’t in the Empire’, when they think of the Empire at all. They look up, envious, at their northern border, at the rumours of glamour that filter through the smog. They look up, envious, at the floating district of Vanfell, where the elite of their country live it up, quite literally. But mostly they look down, watching their feet on the uneven cobblestones, watching their fingers in machinery, can’t afford a single slip. Even if you have enough, it’s never enough to guarantee that you’re safe. One slip and it’s over, there’s nothing to catch you. We hear the ever-present rattling of *money*.

Then, we look north, beyond the wall, to *Talsoria*. The first thing we notice is Deadline, a vast and sprawling city, with billboards plastered on every inch. Next we see the hovertrains that connect each city in Talsoria to The Nexus, and weave and wind through the towering mountain range. We see the multicolored lights of the cities, bright and ever-changing. We see people living intoxicated, lives lost to curated aesthetics, reputation, the need to upgrade prosthetics, the need to keep with the motion, the need to belong.

Talsoria styles itself as the most affluent of nations, most comfortable, powerful, advanced. Maybe it’s true, it’s on top of the world, but *Talsoria* as an entity is only a more algorithmic form of Hardizan. It’s nothing but a monster made from money that uses humans as a host to do its will. A beast that wants to bleed the planet dry to stay alive, to keep the line of numbers climbing ever up into the sky.

The people who *live* there are helpless, trapped in commodities, dollhouses nobody sees. They will go their whole lives with their feet never touching the earth. Not tasting food, knowing animals, or seeing real stars. The arms of the money brought them to life and will milk them for likes like cattle in a pen until they die.

If we drift back over the sea we see an archipelago of 9 small isles, each with distinct material cultures yet all united by a shared belief in caring for the land, and, in tandem, for each other. These are the Gannon islands. We see how the land has been hurt by its time under the thumb of the Empire, and how its people are hurt, and grieving, for the land, and for their lost ancestors, lifeways, and history. We see them working to heal the ecosystems and renew their cultures, but storm shadows loom on the horizon.

How much time do they have, in this last good green place? Before the storms of the Empire dash them on the rocks again? Or before the smog of the world clogs their rivers

and kills the fish. Or, most insidiously, before the threat of disaster drives the citizens to back *themselves* into small and trustless bubbles, to hoard what should be shared, and scapegoat the most vulnerable to dash on the rocks – as if that could keep the rest safe.

This world is big, and this world is varied, and this world is far from kind. If I was to say there's still hope for this world, how would you go about finding it? The Gannon islands sound nice but they can't save you, they can't save *themselves*, they don't stand a chance when the power that be come a callin.

Still, there *is* hope, if you know how to look. You might have to look pretty carefully. You might need some help. That's okay. If we look to the horizon, we'll see a radio tower, off in the distance, on an island in the sea. It calls us closer. We step inside. And then we look through Arcadia's eyes.

Memorie wants to save the world. A 16 year old not-girl with the weight of the world — or a 6-year-old brother, same difference — on faer shoulders.

Peaches wants life to be fair. They know they won't get there, and they'll settle for Better. Charlie loves Peaches, and that's enough of a reason.

Teddy wants a home.

and Axel didn't think it would work. Axel didn't think there was hope. Say she became Premier, then what? The Empire would always take over. Factory smoke will come to cover the skies. The global rich will live in bottled air and designer glass cages while her homelands fall to the sea, the wisdoms of how to live with the land finally fully forgotten at long last. They're already half the way there. It's already - almost - happened. She still didn't want someone like Hayyacynth Russel poisoning the well-water while it lasted.

Axel knows that a world like this doesn't allow the Gannon islands to persist. It's doomed from the very beginning. It's also the world's only hope. Say Axel became premier, could she get the world to listen? Not even the people around her are listening. And what will they do when the food runs out? When the overburdened and under-managed ecosystems collapse?

What will any of them do? When the soup kitchen runs dry. When the family table is empty. When food pills are packed with more appetite suppressants than nutrients. It's almost already happened.

Axel didn't see how her gambit could work. And she'd rather be finishing. She did what she had to do anyways.

[EP 9 MUSIC STING]. Hundreds of stories end poorly. Millions never even start. This one is only special in that — it got lucky.

Kass, Marvin, Z, Lyssel, Jo, and then Axel, on the day of the election— they all should have drowned in the ocean. But then. Was it by chance? There was an island. It was not there before. and by morning it will be gone again.

A second chance.

Marvin and Axel get to leave— get to, or have to. Call them essential workers. As for the rest of us, stuck on a miniscule island,
The world opens up to free time - but you can't go anywhere. You want to have purpose, but what can you do?

Kass with the questions, Z for camaraderie, Jo with the practical, Lyssel for tangible,

Why not tell some stories on the radio? The best they could think of was to start telling stories, in a medium most haven't heard of.

And they still don't know that it worked. They'll always be trapped in the striving-uncertainty- despair, and the ways they got through-
They'll always be trapped in not knowing.

so it still *might not work*.
Would it all be for nothing?

It might not have happened like this.

An anti-war coalition running out of a soup kitchen and a speakeasy gains power and puts an end to their country's prohibition. Behind the scenes, key players include names like Vesper, Bluebell, and Alice Harlow, but the war-sick land needs a legend, a populist leader, and they find it in the figurehead of Theodore Montgomery, a man better known as Teddy to his friends. His notorious family name makes his renouncement of the war even more convincing. He manages to convince people that there's hope.

It's arguably easiest for the Imperial revolution to get this far. It was already such an unstable setting. Power passes quickly. Little ever changes. The citizens want to stop fighting, but they don't know any other world, and they need material aid. Alone, they're at the end of the road.

It has to be Axel next to seize power. The Gannon islands will need to be ready to support the sites of cyber and steam, as strange as that sounds. They will need help imagining a different way to live. New stories to replace the old lies. Old wisdoms to replace capital's cold truths. It's through Kass's radio station building connections that Axel realizes how much the knowledge of the Gannon islands is needed, and how much she can help, and that's why she renews her radical efforts. The reason it *works* is because the citizens of the Gannon islands already care. Axel's role was only to convince them their care was useful, and vital, and could be directed for the benefit of all. And that there was hope.

Hope... if only Hardizan and Talsoria would fall to rebel forces, reform their institutions, and help rebuild the Empire whose endless conflict was funded and fueled by their nations.

It might not have happened like this.

In almost unexplainable synchronicity,

a grassroots workers rights organization in Hardizan, lead by Canned Peaches and Charlie Fowler, pulls off a french-revolution-style proletariat revolt, and seizes the means of production in the capital city, inspiring copycat revolutions throughout the country.

And,

Memorie saves the world.

Oh, Talsoria. It seems impossible, doesn't it?

Where's the heart, hidden under all the neon lights and blaring billboards? Is it too busy grasping for glimmers of meaning, like stars projected in the sky, to notice how badly it's hurting?

Who wants to *restructure* Talsoria,

Oh who has the time! Scarcely a boot on the ground in the Nexus, where the wind whips bitterly between the towering buildings, too fast and unforgiving to light so much as a cigarette, so how could a revolutionary spark ever gain enough momentum to cover the nation? Talsoria.

Where monsoons wash away memories in a tide of new trends. Where nothing ever hurts, only as long as you never stop dancing.

Nevermind if you have all the right arguments, WHO'S LISTENING?

Other than the government, of course.

Sorry, did I say government? I meant the megacorporations who are more powerful than any government, who have taken over every role in our lives that real people used to have, who see us as targets to farm for money, who keep us distracted by any means necessary while raping the planet for the profit. I mean the corporations more powerful than any government and the humans hiding behind them, pulling the strings, who by and large seem to HATE us and want us to live miserably and or die. We're caught in a web, of objects, ads and algorithms. How does Memorie win? How the fuck do we take back power?

[breathe.]

I'm sorry. I know this is supposed to be fantasy. You're probably here because you wanted a break from thinking about it.

(You know, *it*. The problems~)

In the five years since we started Arcpod, the world has gotten worse.

Not in every way... but overall. In America and beyond, it's a scarier place to be genderqueer than it used to be. It's a scarier place to be disabled, or a person of colour, especially depending on your situation. Our screens are sapping our spirits. And everyone who cares about the earth can feel her crying for help. I can't keep listing the problems. You know.

and, it's gonna keep getting worse. For now, at least. At *least* for now.

[sigh.]

Chat, I *don't know* how we're gonna get out of this one.

I want to believe that there's hope.

I *want* to. [...but do i?]

[arcadia's hope music]

I don't have any answers. But there are, a few things, I do know.

One. There's an undercommons. And you're part of it right now. Listening to this weird queer show, with its neopronouns and at times inconsistent audio quality, and only one season. Heck, listening to audio drama podcasts in general. And a lot of good work happens here in the undercommons, down where not many people are listening. Academics set seeds deep underground, in almost-undecipherable papers. Lux scavenges parts in the Nexus. Trans people make each other lunch. I know people who choose to not have cell phones. I know people who will always be pedestrians. It may seem insignificant, but it isn't. The undercommons encompasses a lot of things. And a lot of good work happens here. Where the big eyes aren't watching.

Two. *Memorie* doesn't have to be the first spark, to light impossible tinder. There's already Nikki. There's others. And they weren't the first either. Things have been fucked up for a long time, and there have always been the few who pay attention. There's a looong tradition of resistance. So, we take up our stretch of a relay. We do our best to learn theory, we do our best to walk the walk, and we carry it forwards. There will be people after us too.

Three. The people of Talsoria are not happy. They are scared, ignorant, and lonely. And *complacent* because they are by and large hopeless, and tired, and can't imagine that things could be better. They *would* care, if only they could think it'd make a difference, or imagine what they'd stand to gain through a bit of discomfort. But they don't.

I know that sounds negative, but one theory says it means that the potential for change is already present, latent, within the population. The first step to activating this potential is they have to *realize* the contradiction between their ideals and sense of self, and the actual reality in which they live. For example, say they value love, yet due to their society's work culture they don't actually find time to *nurture* love and connection... they'd need to accept that. Then, second step, if they suddenly become aware of a less contradictory possibility... yeah, change can happen quickly.

Theoretically.

It might not have happened like this. We'll always be trapped in not knowing.

that when Memorie grabbed for the microphone, fae got it. And people listened to a 17-year-old kid and faer nerdy friends. And took something serious from the words they heard.

And it made the world better, at least in some way.

Memorie couldn't have done it alone, of course. Not with Nikki Soma ERIS, Kass, Axel, everyone you know and so many others. Not without *thousands* of hours of volunteered effort.

Not without sacrifice. Not without pain.

And all for what?

Why?

Was it worth it?

[SEASON 1 CLOSING THEME PLAYS]

Station Arcadia is a podcast by Metal Steve Productions, run by Eli Allan and J.R. Steele. It is produced by Eli Allan, with creative direction by Tovah Brantner.

Station Arcadia features original worldbuilding and characters by Becker Hoang, Tovah Brantner, C.V.V.M, Emily Bennet, Quinn O.A Feinburg, Avery R.C, J.R Steele, Eli Allan, Sin, Logan-Alexis H, Esme Goodwin, Riz, Shay Topaz, and Kay Maurer.

Today's answer of the week is: yes, duh.