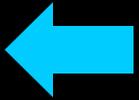
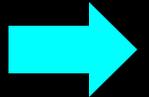


# LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD



Expressive Layers of *Braid*  
Blow on Ethical Game Design



*Braid*  
Project: Critical Game Modification

# BOGOST: PROCEDURALIST ART

## THE PROBLEM WITH “ART” AND GAMES

1. No “unified field” theories of Art
2. Apologist tradition: legitimization strategies...  
authorial, legal, or gallery status, folk art homage
3. Community-based / “Artgame” = placeholder for...
4. The needful 1: movements and styles, aesthetic trends
5. The needful 2: discussion, criticism (identifying and rendering intelligible #1)

## BOGOST'S PROPOSAL: *PROCEDURALISM*

- 5 qualities: (1) procedural rhetorics, (2) introspection,  
(3) abstraction, (4) subjective experience,  
(5) strong authorship

# PROCEDURALISM IN GAMES

“As a style, proceduralism takes a stand contrary to conventional wisdom in game design. At a time when videogames focus on realistically simulating experiences, proceduralism offers metaphoric treatments of ideas. At a time when videogames focus on player gratification, proceduralism invites player introspection. At a time when videogames focus on facilitating user creativity, proceduralism lays bare the subjective truth of an individual creator.”

# BRAID : EXPRESSIVE ELEMENTS, LAYERS

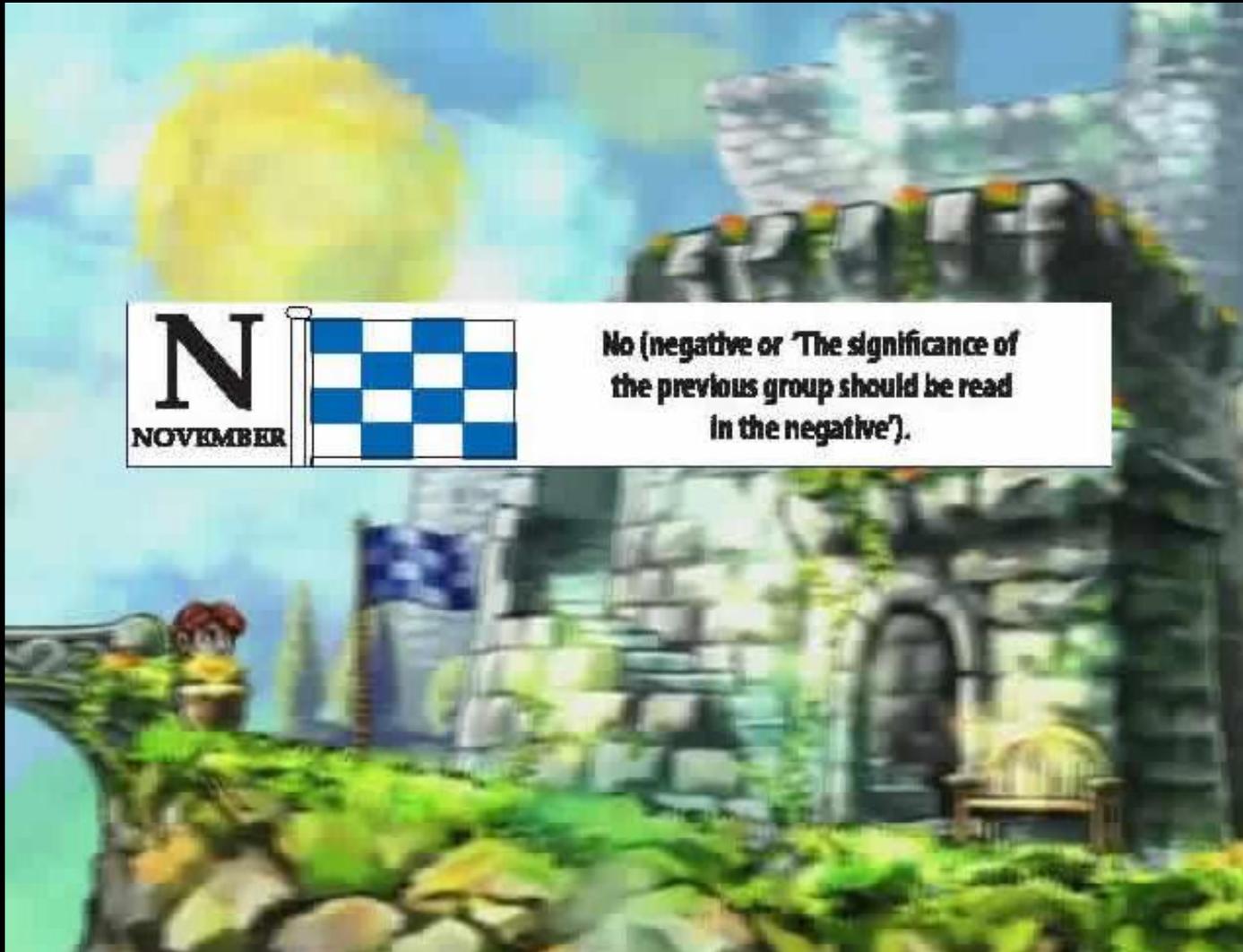
- Title Screen / House Rooms
- World Books
- Epilogue/Star Books
- World Flags
- Flag Messages
- Memory Puzzles



## *Some other elements?*

1. Allegorical: addressing player / **desire**
2. Art-Historical: addressing game / **craft**
3. Literal-Metaphorical: parallel layers based on Tim-Princess dynamic / **inquiry**

## 2. TIME AND FORGIVENESS

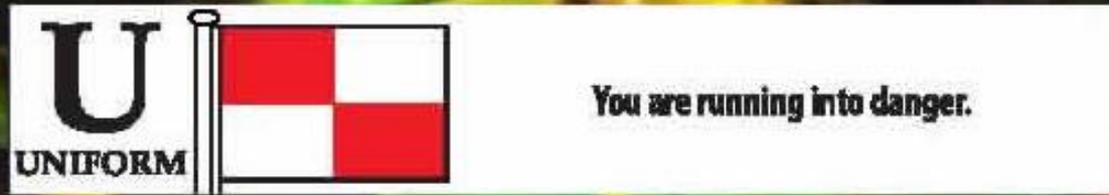


**N**  
NOVEMBER

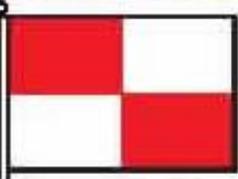


No (negative or 'The significance of the previous group should be read in the negative').

### 3. TIME AND MYSTERY



**U**  
UNIFORM

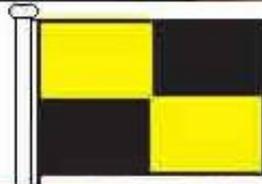


**You are running into danger.**

## 4. TIME AND PLACE



**L**  
LIMA



**You should stop your vessel instantly.**

## 5. TIME AND DECISION



## 6. HESITANCE



1.



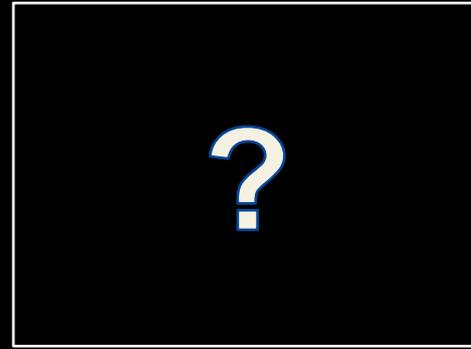
# BRAID AND PUZZLE THINKING



Despite the commonplace understanding of a PUZZLE as having a single solution, the real significance of the idea (of puzzles) for *Braid* pertains to the **mode of experience** they sustain for the player, and the **attitude toward thinking** in gameplay they require: confusion, wonder, speculative and reflective reasoning, hypothesis formation, epiphany, etc.

The *experiences* of solving the puzzles are more significant than the actual pragmatic solutions, and **they become expressive within the larger poetic arrangement / narrative economy of the game.**

# THE FIRST "PUZZLE"



We are invited, **BY DESIGN**, to imagine the significance of the pieces, both in the diegetic world and the game as a poetic collection of interactive puzzles...

# NO “SOLUTIONS,” ONLY CHOICES

## JOHN ARCHIBALD WHEELER’S “IT-FROM-BIT”

“It from bit. Otherwise put, every 'it'—every particle, every field of force, even the space-time continuum itself—derives its function, its meaning, its very existence entirely—even if in some contexts indirectly—from the apparatus-elicited answers to yes-or-no questions, binary choices, bits. 'It from bit' **symbolizes the idea that every item of the physical world has at bottom—a very deep bottom, in most instances—an immaterial source and explanation**; that which we call reality arises in the last analysis from the posing of yes–no questions and the registering of equipment-evoked responses; in short, that all things physical are information-theoretic in origin and that this is a participatory universe.”

**An old existential theme, enhanced:** *we are doomed to choose, but we can also choose to learn from our choices (ours, others, history, stories), to reflect on and make sense of our experience (acknowledge regret, error)...*

# BRAID IS A TRUE “QUEST” GAME

## PUZZLE PROBLEMS (ERGODIC OR PICTORIAL PUZZLES)

To describe the game as a “puzzle-platformer” is distracting: *explicit* puzzle-solving is what we do (to traverse gamespace), but it seems too simplistic *since we are also invited to interpret what the “problem” is, or what the “image” is that we are trying to piece together and understand.* There are given puzzles, but they are also a means for thinking about other human puzzles.

## “QUEST” (A SEARCH, INQUIRY, INVESTIGATION, PURSUIT)

Although we refer to “quests” in games as though what they ask us to do fits that description, in reality what they provide are *tasks* masked as quests via story. *Quests* are pregnant with resources for meaning beyond the immediate situation upon which we re/act.

# THE HUMANITY OF MISTAKES

## GNOSEOLOGICAL ORDER

The *slow unfolding and evolution* of understanding in time as a model for knowledge (of WORLD and SELF)

Not only does the game value providing the means and experience of sudden insight (into mechanics, diegetic order, story) *by design*, it stages a central problem of human judgment:

1. *understanding* revelation is slow, hard won, fragile, personal, and ultimately partial;
2. whereas *action* is fast (the assumed primary mode of games), absolute, irreversible (in our world) and ultimately social: it affects others, and the world.

# TIM & BAINBRIDGE (OPPENHEIMER)

## KENNETH BAINBRIDGE: *REGRET*

1. Lead of Manhattan Project
2. Conducted the “Trinity Test”
3. “Now we’re all sons-of-bitches”
4. Post-test: dedicated to ending nuclear testing
5. Argued for transparency and open, civilian control

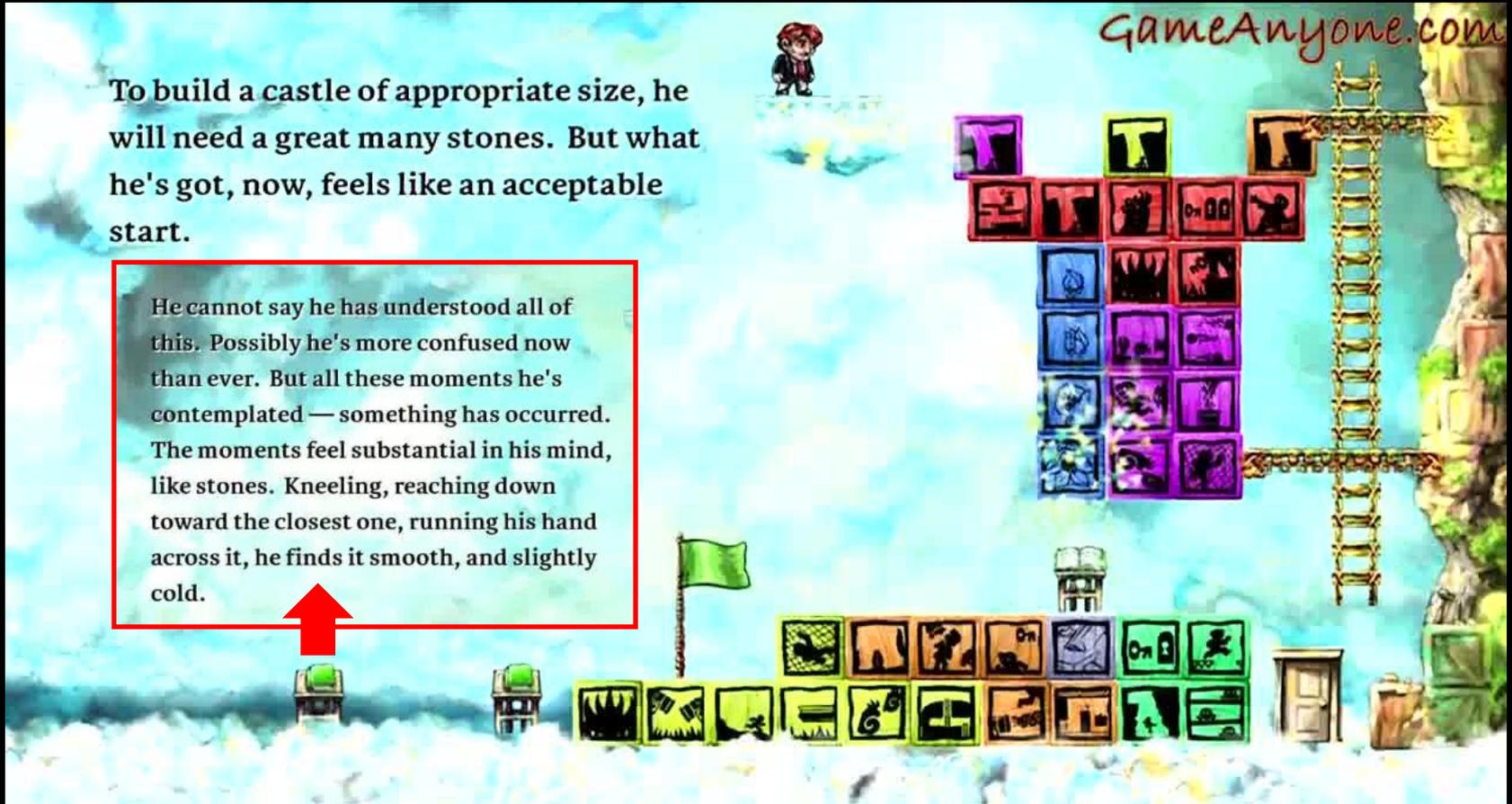


**IMPLICATIONS:** this research and *related choices* should not be conducted in isolation and **without regard to human impact**. Mistakes, to be fully acknowledged, must be reflected on, *learned from*. **We must CHANGE OURSELVES.**

# A FIGURE OF REFLECTION

To build a castle of appropriate size, he will need a great many stones. But what he's got, now, feels like an acceptable start.

He cannot say he has understood all of this. Possibly he's more confused now than ever. But all these moments he's contemplated — something has occurred. The moments feel substantial in his mind, like stones. Kneeling, reaching down toward the closest one, running his hand across it, he finds it smooth, and slightly cold.



Learning from experience / A new foundation

# NEXT TIME

1. Read: Game Mod Assignment document
2. Read: Schrank's "Against Procedurality"

