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"Some people feel this kind of approach can lead to a loss of rigor and discipline, and indeed there are fraudulent forms of interactivity out there. But MIT has found that discipline in these kids flips from the external, oppressing, 'Get it right!' to the internal, intellectual, 'Make it work!'"

There's no telling how far youngsters trained this way might go, Brand mused. "As adults they may taking on world problems as exercises in debugging rather than what some institution accepts as right or wrong behavior, which is what school teaches us."

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J. G. Ballard interviewed in *Rolling Stone* (November 19, 1987):

Oddly, I feel that the 1980s are a good time to be alive, because the consumer conformism — "the suburbanization of the soul" — on the one hand and the gathering ecological and other crises on the other do force the individual to recognize that he or she is alone or she has got. And this sharpens the eye and the imagination. The challenge is for each of us to respond, to remake as much as we can of the world around us, because no one else will do it for us. We have to find a core within us and get to work. Don't worry about worldly rewards. Just get on with it!

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I learned, the last time I was trying to keep up with a miniseries, that you have to schedule your videotape watching just as if you were a station planning a broadcast. You have to select a starting time and pick the amount of time you're going to spend on watching the tape at that time. Otherwise, if you just figure you'll watch the tape when you get around to it, it doesn't work.

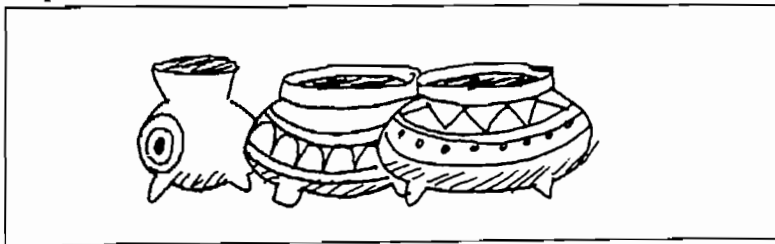
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Any time questions of taste in fiction are reduced to an either/or level, both sides are likely to be wrong. Personally, I can't make myself read a book, no matter how beautifully written or how highly praised by scholars and critics, that doesn't keep me interested with a pretty good story. On the other hand, I can't make myself read badly written books no matter how much vitality the plot may have. But I can tolerate a certain degree of bad writing if the story is gripping, and I can tolerate a relatively uneventful story, if the writing is good enough.

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Natalie Goldberg in *Writing Down the Bones*, (Shambhala, 1987) a Zen approach to writing, says, "If someone writes something great, it's just more clarity in the world for all of us. Don't make writers 'other,' different from you: 'They are good and I am bad.' Don't create that dichotomy. It makes it hard to become good if you create that duality. The opposite, of course, is also true: if you say, 'I am great and they aren't,' then you become too proud, unable to grow as a writer or hear criticism of your work. Just: 'They are good and I am good.' That statement gives a lot of space. 'They have been at it longer, and I can walk their path for a while and learn from them.'"

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It's never too late. When you catch yourself thinking that it's too late to do something you want to do, or to make some improvement, recognize that this is self-defeating thinking. You don't know how much time you may have left to you, or how much good you can accomplish by making a new beginning now. So go ahead and do the constructive thing.

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