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Dear Colleague:

Flaubert came to dislike <u>Bovary</u> for overshadowing his later works. He also pondered over the irony of a creature outliving its creator. Here he was, aging; liver spots already began to appear on his hands. But that vain and deluded creature, Emma Bovary, promises to live for ever. Oscar Wilde solved the problem by making the artwork undergo steady decay rather than its creator. In 1882, while he was having his portrait painted, he said to the artist, "What a tragic thing it is. This portrait will never grow older, and I shall. If it was only the other way." Wilde was not only thinking of the sitter growing old; he was also thinking of the mortality of the artist. The writer is a more tragic figure than the painter, for painting, being a material object, does decay: think of "The Last Supper." A literary work, by contrast, can truly be forever young. You can buy a copy of <u>The Iliad</u> right now with the smell of ink still on its pages.

I only pretend a sympathy for the likes of Flaubert. We ordinary writers don't have that problem. Almost always we outlive our creations. Consider the fact that I am on the verge of 59, while almost all my brain children have failed to make it to their 'teens. My eldest would be 30 years old now if it had lived. My youngest was born only this April. Despite the gift of a silverspoon from a New York fairy godmother I doubt it will last longer than its siblings. So, when a rich Japanese couple offered to adopt it, I quickly accepted their terms. My youngest will have a Japanese name, and I'll not even recognize it should I see it in a bookstore.

These are my reflections as I make my way to Sunprint Gallery for my weekend orgy of French Toast and Columbian Coffee. I feel fit; my stomach growls in anticipation. I am very much alive while my creatures, after a short life in the bookstores, are buried in the catacombs of Memorial Library. Isn't this as it should be--this triumph of matter over mind, flesh over spirit?

Best wishes,