



Garbage in ...

I read a magazine article the other day that discussed some of the problems facing our society, and among those was the question of resource usage and sustainability. The author talked about the goods we use in our daily life in terms of a 'cycle' - from production, through use, then ending up as garbage. She described our factories - without much exaggeration - as 'factories for the production of garbage', which is basically what they are. Pretty much all the things produced in our society today, with the exception of consumables like the bread created by my friend and collector Cho-san the baker, will end up as garbage, to be disposed of either by incineration, or burying in a landfill, or perhaps - for the fortunate ones - to be recycled, at least in part.

The beautiful computer on which I am writing this story, and which I also use to create the accompanying audio files and web pages, will - probably in a few short years - end up being callously disposed. Even if I try to stretch its life as long as possible, there is no way that it will be usable more than say, 10 years. After that, it will be junk.

But its not just modern high-tech products which end up as garbage, nor am I trying to specifically call out our contemporary society for this. Simply most things made by people - in any era - just don't last all that long, coming to the end of their life either by wearing out, or by being made redundant by more modern versions.

As I read that article, I couldn't help but think about how this applied to my own work, and I realized something very interesting. I don't make 'garbage'. Not at all. My work is almost completely immune from the factors that cause most objects to become garbage.

- my prints do not 'wear out'. Although they seem on the face of it to be quite flimsy - just pieces of paper - they are actually very long lasting. The paper they are made from is completely acid free, and thus does not become browned and brittle as time goes by. Two hundred years from now, they will look a bit faded, but will be as 'healthy' as the day they were made. Two hundred years! *Nothing* we make these days lasts that long.

- they will never be superseded by something newer and more fashionable. Of course newer prints will be made, but these will not replace older ones; they will live comfortably together.

- who would ever throw away one of these prints? The people collecting my work of course have an interest in it, but even if those who will inherit it may have no particular interest, they will almost certainly just send the work on to a new home, either through giving it away, or selling it. Nobody would ever put such a thing in the garbage.

Now I'm not about to claim that my work is 'immortal', because that would be foolish - but without question, nearly every one of the tens of thousands of prints that I have made over the years will still be giving people pleasure long after I am gone. And I mean *long* after!

How many people can claim that? Me, with my old fashioned two hundred year old technology, am making things that will be used and enjoyed far longer than all the shiny products from ultra-modern factories!

I win!

David Bull
Seseragi Studio
Nagabuchi 8-4-5 Ome City
Tokyo Japan 198-0052
<http://astoryaweek.com>