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Flaubert's 'Travail Psychologique': The Value of Distraction

A notorious fetishist of labor, Flaubert highlighted the value of literature in a paradoxical fashion: his metaphors for concentration and literary work in the correspondence, namely weaving and boot-making, become in *Madame Bovary* pretexts to represent vagabond attention. Flaubert's meditation on creative difficulty took the shape of his sustained meditations on ennui, an affective stance that simultaneously manifested and obliquely critiqued contemporary configurations of value-creation. Drawing psychological insight from what happens when the mind wanders in life, Flaubert fills moments of inattention in art with meticulous renderings of sensory experience, establishing distraction as a cornerstone of his novelistic craft.