



# Four French Symbolists: A Sourcebook on Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, Gustave Moreau, Odilon Redon, and Maurice Denis (Art Reference Collection)

*Russell T. Clement*

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The first comprehensive, scholarly sourcebook/research guide/bibliography on the major French Symbolist painters, this work includes nearly 3,000 entries covering a variety of materials. Each artist receives a primary and secondary bibliography with many annotated entries. Art works, personal names, and subject indexes facilitate easy access. The volume is designed for art historians, art students, museum and gallery curators, and others interested in this major art style of the last half of the 19th century and the first quarter of the 20th century. Art museums and art libraries in both the United States and abroad were gleaned for sources. This is a unique and substantial research tool.

Symbolism is one of the most difficult art movements to define. Its primary meaning is the representation of things by symbols, by the imaginative suggestion of dreams and the subconscious through symbolic allusion and luxuriant decoration. The writings of Charles Baudelaire on the arts powerfully influenced the aesthetic theories of Symbolist artists and critics from 1860-1900, much as Baudelaire's poetics were the root of Symbolist literature. The Symbolist work, be it painting or poem, is above all personal and revelatory, precious not commonplace, reflecting and evoking a journey of the imagination. French Symbolist artists explored this style, attitude, and atmosphere from the 1880s to the early twentieth century. This sourcebook organizes biographical, historical, and critical information on four major French Symbolist artists: Pierre Puvis de Chavannes (1824-98), Gustave Moreau (1826-98), Odilon Redon (1840-1916), and Maurice Denis (1870-1943). The first three artists are recognized as originators of the movement. Denis is regarded as Symbolism's foremost theorist and profoundly religious practitioner. Although all four artists have been the focus of major retrospective exhibitions since 1990, no comprehensive sourcebook/bibliography exists.

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