

Question:

Could you show me links to paintings from the time of Bouchor and Chausson that depict the symbolist message of the poem

Of course. The *Poème de l'amour et de la mer* is a quintessential Symbolist work, and its themes are visually mirrored in the paintings of the Symbolist movement that flourished in France and Belgium during the same period (c. 1880-1900).

Symbolist painters sought to express inner feelings, dreams, and spiritual truths through metaphor, myth, and dream-like imagery—exactly what Bouchor and Chausson achieved with music and poetry.

Here are links to paintings that capture the key messages and moods of the *Poème*, along with an explanation of why they connect.

1. The Overwhelming Power of Nature and the Sea

The sea is the central metaphor of the work: representing love, fate, eternity, and a destructive, sublime force.

- **Artist:** Pierre Puvis de Chavannes
 - **Painting:** *The Poor Fisherman* (1881)
 - **Link:** [The Poor Fisherman at Musée d'Orsay](#)
 - **Connection:** This painting captures the profound melancholy and human vulnerability against the vast, silent, and eternal presence of the sea. The mood of quiet despair and resignation perfectly matches the narrator's state in the poem *before* he finds love ("tant je souffrais du froid noir"). The sea is not raging; it is a calm, indifferent force, much like the "supreme calm" (*bonace suprême*) described in the poem.
- **Artist:** Arnold Böcklin
 - **Painting:** *The Isle of the Dead* (1880-1886)
 - **Link:** [The Isle of the Dead \(1886 version\)](#)
 - **Connection:** This is the ultimate Symbolist image of a journey across the sea to the unknown. It evokes the poem's themes of fate, death, and finality. The final lines, where the narrator sees the "pale corpse" of his love being carried out to the "high and lonely sea," could be a scene directly inspired by Böcklin's funerary voyage.

2. The Ecstasy and Idealism of Love

The first part of the cycle, "La fleur des eaux," describes an almost transcendent, idealised love.

- **Artist:** Gustave Moreau
 - **Painting:** *The Apparition* (1876)
 - **Link:** [The Apparition at Musée d'Orsay](#)
 - **Connection:** Moreau's work epitomizes the Symbolist fascination with ideal, unattainable, and visionary beauty. The glowing, bejeweled apparition of Salome is not a real woman but an *idea* of destructive beauty. This connects to how the narrator idealizes the beloved as a perfect "flower of the waters," a vision that seizes him and transforms his world.

3. Melancholy, Loss, and the "Death of Love"

The second part, "La mort de l'amour," is pure anguish and despair over the loss of this ideal.

- **Artist:** Edvard Munch
 - **Painting:** *Melancholy (The Yellow Boat)* (1891-92)
 - **Link:** [Melancholy \(The Yellow Boat\) at Munchmuseet](#)
 - **Connection:** Although Norwegian, Munch was deeply connected to the Symbolist movement. This painting depicts a figure consumed by existential angst on a shore, with a boat (a classic symbol of journey or departure) sitting idle. It visually translates the feeling of being stranded by grief, perfectly matching the poem's atmosphere of a love that has died, leaving the narrator alone by the sea.
- **Artist:** Fernand Khnopff
 - **Painting:** *Who Shall Deliver Me?* (1891)
 - **Link:** [Who Shall Deliver Me? \(Art UK\)](#)
 - **Connection:** Khnopff was a master of painting introverted, psychological states. This painting, titled after a Christina Rossetti poem, shows a woman closed in on herself, her back to the world, in a state of spiritual and emotional enclosure. This reflects the inner prison described in the poem's most famous line: "J'ai perdu la liberté d'aimer une autre que toi" (I have lost the freedom to love any other but you).

4. The Ambiguity and Mystery of the Beloved

The beloved in the poem is both human and an elemental force ("you are the sea itself").

- **Artist:** Odilon Redon
- **Painting:** *Ophelia Among the Flowers* (c. 1905-1908)
- **Link:** [Ophelia Among the Flowers at National Gallery, London](#)
- **Connection:** Redon's pastels are not literal illustrations but evocations of a state of mind. His Ophelia is not dead but dissolved into nature, becoming one with the flowers. This mirrors how the narrator's beloved is inseparable from the

natural world, particularly the sea. Her death is a dissolution into that element.

How to Explore Further:

You can find high-quality images and more information on these websites:

- **Musée d'Orsay, Paris:** Holds the world's leading collection of French Symbolist painting.
- **The Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam:** Has strong connections to the Symbolists and Post-Impressionists.
- **Digital Collections:** Sites like **Google Arts & Culture** and **Art UK** offer high-resolution images of these works.

The powerful synergy between Chausson's music, Bouchor's poetry, and the art of their Symbolist contemporaries allows us to experience the same profound *fin-de-siècle* mood through different senses.

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[Joachim Gruber](#)