

Samuel C. CHEW: The Pilgrimage of Life
 New Haven and London
 Yale UP 1962

Chew's posthumous book is a compulsory handbook for anybody who is engaged in iconographic studies. Ever since this approach came to be acknowledged in literature Chew's book has frequently been considered as a main source of reference for scholars in the past two decades. The originality of the subject-matter, the accurate handling of the material, the rich bibliography and the 156 illustrations make the book a classic of the discipline.

The dust-jacket provides the following information for the reader:

"In his fascinating study, the late Samuel C. Chew examines the relationship between literature and pictorial art from 1485 to 1642. This richly illustrated work is based upon the author's collection and meticulous analysis of iconological evidence from the Renaissance dealing with the concept of man as a pilgrim, journeying through the mundane world toward a heavenly destination. In his discussion of this great theme, Chew brings together masses of information buried in out-of-the-way places. He considers personified abstractions - such as The Stoic Virtuos, The Seven Deadly Sins, Time, Fate, Death, Justice, Old Age and Fidelity - and explores the corpus of symbols available to the painter, the sculptor, the engraver, the tapestry weaver, the designer of pageantry, the poet and the writer of imaginative prose, developing the idea that "painting is silent poetry and poetry is painting that speaks." The literary insights and comments on painting and engraving will be of vital interest to historians of art and literature..."

To what extent can the result of such diligent life-long research in dusty archives and libraries be considered

up-to-date? The widow of the author provides the following response in his preface:

"The great themes this book treats may satisfy that ever-present longing in man to see and feel some power greater than himself. Today's man, intent on journeys into space, may find our not-so-remote ancestors' preoccupation with personifications, allegories, iconography, symbols and emblems incomprehensible. Yet this narrative of man as pilgrim through life, in the world of time and fortune, is as applicable now as in the days when miniatures in Books of Hours, frescoes on walls of churches, figures woven into tapestries or painted on cloths, or later engravings and woodcuts taught men the eternal truths"

The book is particularly recommendable to scholars whose main concerns are such archetypal principles as "Time", "Fortune", "the Ages of Man" etc.

Tibor Fabiny