

Rutgers since 1945: A History of the State University of New Jersey**Paul G.E. Clemens with an essay by Carla Gianni****Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick, NJ, 2015****368 pages + xv, 38 photographs, 1 map, 1 table, index****Hardcover, \$34.95****ISBN: 9780813564210****DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14713/njs.v2i2.52>**

Rutgers University, the jewel that became a juggernaut, is clearly a microcosm, but a microcosm, precisely, of what? From one point of view, it resembles nothing so much as a miniature New Jersey, with its assertiveness and variety, its protean sprawl, its sense of self-worth, its demand to be taken seriously on a national and international stage. Even its motto – “Sun of righteousness, shine also upon the West” – enshrines a kind of Jersey attitude, being part prayer, part promise, part boast. From another perspective, though, Rutgers tells an institutional story, typical in some ways, untypical in others, of how a number of smaller colleges amalgamated to form a larger university that was, and remained, greater than the sum of its parts; of how that university was transformed from one dedicated to undergraduate teaching and the formation of character to one in which research and publication came to feature ever more prominently in its understanding of itself; and of how, even now, that university exhibits a public-private hybridity making it hard to categorize among American institutions of higher learning. If New Jersey is neither one thing nor another, a barrel tapped at both ends, a strange compound of opposites, then Rutgers may be its finest creation, the state in synecdoche. As a famous Camden resident once put it, thinking of himself, it is large, it contains multitudes. Rutgers tells so many stories other than its own.

How large it is, and how miraculous is its containment of those multitudes, is the subject of Paul Clemens’s very fine monograph, the product of a long career at Rutgers and, latterly, of complete submersion in its archives and in the secondary literature that helps to explain them. Building on Richard McCormick’s classic bicentennial history of 1966, Clemens (with a good

chapter from Carla Yanni on residence hall architecture) brings the Rutgers story from 1945 to the present day. The cover of McCormick's book shows leafy, sepia-tinted Rutgers College, an image of academia as arcadia. The cover of Clemens's shows a couple of buses, one from 1976, the other from 2014. There is the difference between the two volumes in a wordless, eloquent photograph.

Clemens has four unifying themes. The first is that the postwar development of Rutgers parallels the development of other public universities and are themselves linked "more generally to the nation's history and ...to the globalization of modern culture." The second is that money matters, making possible (or impossible) all sorts of dreams and projects and taking up vast amounts of administrative and faculty time in its getting and spending. Commercial exigencies may cause queasiness among purists but (as a recent Seton Hall president used to say), "there's no mission without a margin." The third theme is that student culture deserves to be taken seriously as a subject of analysis – a rather obvious idea, one might think, but one oddly absent from other institutional histories. The fourth is that individuals matter, too, and in particular Edward J. Bloustein, the transformative president who turned Rutgers into a major research university and who oversaw the admission of Rutgers into the highly selective Association of American Universities (AAU) where it kept company with the likes of Harvard, Stanford, North Carolina, and Wisconsin.

Structured upon these framing notions, the book is at once chronological and conceptual. Robert Clothier, Lewis Webster Jones, Mason Gross, Edward J. Bloustein, Francis Lawrence, and Richard McCormick, the six presidents who made Rutgers the school it is today, are each given their due, their administrations used to illustrate the institutional transformations of the last seventy years. Their differing personalities are nicely on display, making them at once

individuals and representative types. If this is history from above, the monograph is none the worse for it. On the contrary, it is probably the most efficient way of making sense of a story otherwise diffuse and confusing. Indeed, even presidents could be confused at times. “Administering a college today is like playing chess on the open deck of the sinking *Titanic*,” Bloustein is quoted as saying. “To make matters worse, the chess rules seem to be changing as the game proceeds.” A sense of humor clearly helped.

Student life is nicely evoked in the middle section of the book, as are the rhythms and rituals of the dorms, those staging-posts between adolescent and adult life. Student protest is also given its due (at times, it seemed to this reviewer, with a little too much by way of editorial approval). Research, athletics, newspapers, museums, the Glee Club, Rutgers University Press: all have their moment in the sun. Clemens has mastered his material brilliantly. A university historian has to know a bit about everything, and this one certainly does.

The errors are trivial. The co-operative food store on what is now the Busch campus did not sell “diary products” (p.123). Twice (pp.73, 339) announcements are made “publically.” Even Homer nods. Professor Clemens has covered a vast amount of material with complete confidence and authority. This is a splendid book.

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