

Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones. By Carole Boyce Davies. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008. xxviii, 311 pp. Cloth, \$79.95, ISBN 978-0-8223-4096-6. Paper, \$22.95, ISBN 978-0-8223-4116-1.)

On December 9, 1955, Claudia Jones, a leading black Communist activist, writer, journalist, and political theorist, left New York City for London on the ss *Queen Elizabeth*. Jones had been indicted, imprisoned, and ultimately deported under the Smith and McCarran-Walters acts, and this journey to Britain began a life of forced exile from the United States that, according to Carole Boyce Davies, mirrors Jones's exclusion from political and intellectual histories of the American left, black radicalism, black feminism, and the freedom struggles of the 1930s–1960s. Using a range of Jones's writings, including articles and columns published in the *Daily Worker*, poetry, and short autobiographical sketches, Davies works to counter Jones's invisibility and give Jones her rightful place in the movements and intellectual traditions that her ideas helped create.

The title of the book, *Left of Karl Marx*, refers to the physical location of Jones's grave, immediately to the left of Karl Marx's tomb in London's Highgate Cemetery, and to the analytical framework that Davies deploys to explain Jones's contributions to twentieth-century black radical thought. Like many other American blacks who joined the depression-era Communist party in pursuit of justice and freedom, Jones interpreted Marxist-Leninism through the lens of her particular life experiences. Suffering through the hardships of childhood immigration from Trinidad to Harlem, a young adulthood marked by urban poverty and menial low-wage jobs, and the inescapable noose of American racism, all gave Jones a distinct perspective on the meaning of class struggle. She became an intellectual trailblazer who linked class consciousness to the realities of gender and race by theorizing on the "super-exploitation" of black women, thus laying the groundwork for the rise of 1970s black feminism. Jones's deportation to London, where, as one of the founders of the London Carnival, she placed herself at the cultural center of a

burgeoning Caribbean immigrant community, added a transnational African and Afro-Caribbean diasporic perspective to the Left's understanding of cultural and political resistance. As Davies forcefully asserts, Jones's combined commitment to class struggle, antiracism, feminism, pan-Africanism, and anti-imperialism, "advanced Marxist-Leninist positions beyond their apparent limitations" (p. 2).

Davies makes a strong case for taking Jones seriously as a militant intellectual whose work shaped radical thought in her lifetime and prefigured the currents of change in the decades after her death in 1964. The book could have done more, however, to support Davies's central claim that what made Jones noteworthy was her ability to link "activism with intellectuality" (p. 23). Davies focuses almost exclusively on Jones's writing, emphasizing Jones's journalism as an important form of activism and advocacy. But such efforts do not represent the full complexity of Jones's work. Davies presents a compelling account of Jones's organizing efforts in London's Caribbean community, but gives very little information about the decades of her work in the United States for the Young Communist League and the National Negro Congress. A sharper focus on what Jones did as well as wrote would have provided a stronger context for her intellectual work and showcased how radical theory and practice came together in her life.

Marian B. Mollin
Virginia Tech
Blacksburg, Virginia

The Sixties Unplugged: A Kaleidoscopic History of a Disorderly Decade. By Gerard J. DeGroot. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008. xiv, 508 pp. \$29.95, ISBN 978-0-674-02786-2.)

There is an old saying: nothing is new under the sun except arrangement. By that definition, Gerard J. DeGroot's fascinating book on the 1960s qualifies as "new." DeGroot, a professor of history at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, resisted the "temptation to impose order" on his material. Instead, he presents sixty-seven brief portraits of the decade "not linked by continuous narrative," with only a