BOOK REVIEWS

GOLIATH: Britain's Dangerous Classes. B Campbell. Methuen 1993
The various media reports of the riots which took place in Cardiff, Oxford and Tyneside in 1991 had a number of things in common. They played down the racist and sexist undertones of the riots; they failed to see how these events were linked to new patterns of work and consumption and they generally offered little appreciation of the differences between these riots and those of the previous decade.

These accounts Beatrix Campbell claims are less than adequate and even the more 'sophisticated' explanations which have developed which centre around the notion of the 'underclass' have failed to grasp the specific characteristics of the decade and the diverse subjectives and relations which underpinned these events.

For Campbell the distinctive feature of the riots of 1991 was that they were not so much an expression of the collective frustration but were rather an expression of deepening divisions within the community. They represented an inflection in the curve of hostilities, shifting antagonisms, and new forms of opposition. Significantly she argues, they expressed a changed relation both within what are loosely referred to as 'communities' and between these communities and the police. Unfortunately the newly developed 'community policing' strategies appeared to have little relevance in these run-down estates. These areas were in the period prior to riots characterised not be consultation and co-operation between the police and the public but by neglect and indifference. This indifference tended to be followed by overreaction once any kind of riot or disturbance broke out! Unable to mobilise local social networks and community organisers the police inevitably adopted militaristic styles of control which in turn often fuelled local antagonisms.

Left and right responses to these events have tended to offer explanations in terms of unemployment or wilful violence. Both these explanations grasp an element of the process Campbell argues, but both sides fail to fully appreciate that the mediation in the equation is masculinity. The focus on youth and even on the racist dimension of riots has failed to recognise that rioting is a predominantly male activity and that women's response to unemployment and deprivation is very different to that of men. It is a cruel irony

that poor and single mothers are held responsible for the growth of crime and disorder, when it is they, Campbell maintains, who keep going, and continue to take responsibility for their children. It is not the single parent mum who needs to be reminded of her responsibilities and duties. Rather the problem lies with the ways in which males have adapted to changing circumstances. It is this issue which needs to be addressed if crime and disorder are to be reduced.

This book which has already been through one reprint has stimulated discussion and stirred up considerable controversy. The three main issues which have emerged are; first, the relevance of the term 'underclass'. Campbell argues that this concept is too abstract and unspecific and glosses over the complexity of life on poor estates. Secondly, there is an implication that 'the breakdown of the family' which is often referred to by liberal and conservative critics ultimately expresses a romantic nostalgia for an era which is now passed and a family form which is becoming anachronistic. The implications of Campbell's thesis is that this breakdown of the family has had a liberating effect on many women who are no longer burdened by male partners who were never very good at parenting and are now not very good as providers. The third and related issue centres around the notion of masculinity. Although she wants to avoid the simple dichotomy that women are good and men are bad she does suggest that women's responses to troubles have in the majority of cases been more positive and constructive than that of males experiencing the same social and economic problems. Whereas young men in particular engage in activities aimed at recapturing a lost public space and engage in destructive and dangerous behaviour (i.e. crime, joyriding etc), women have worked to stabilise these damaged communities and continued to provide for their children as best they can.

Roger Matthews

RACE, RIOTING AND POLICING: Lore and Disorder in a Multi-racist Society. Keith, M. (1993). London UCL Press.
Race, Rioting and Policing traces the impact of popular, official and academic interpretations of the riots in reproducing representations of black communities as 'innately criminal'. For Keith, the

dominant accounts of rioting in British cities and the subsequent policy responses to them, have taken black criminality as a given, natural, aspect of urban life which has, in turn, exacerbated the precarious state of police-black relations. Keith sees this assumption of black criminality as an outcome of the tendency amongst both academics and practitioners to search for 'generalised truths' about police-black relations.

To examine the temporal and spatial 'specificity' of police-black antagonism, Keith has conducted a comparative ethnographic study of three locations in London: Railton Road in Brixton; Sandringham Road in Hackney; and All Saints Road in Notting Hill. The riots which have occurred in these locations are explained in terms of deep-rooted antagonisms which have evolved over decades and which have consequently generated a legacy of mutual suspicion and hostility between local black communities and law enforcement agencies. Earlier studies of policing in these areas combined with the recollections of local residents, reveal the prevalence of this hostility well before 'black criminality' became a high profile issue in the contemporary politics of law and order in Britain.

In contrast to interpretations of urban disorder which, from the Scarman report onwards, have explained police-black antagonism as an outcome of either black criminality, the racist attitude of particular 'rotten' officers or some mixture of the two, Keith suggests the relationship between black communities and the police must be understood as a process of 'criminalisation'. The targeting of black people by local law enforcement agencies is not just a product of racist police officers, but an outcome of the institutionally racist practices of the police in areas such as Railton Road. The criminalisation of such areas and the communities which inhabit them, are explained, in turn, as an outcome of the 'racialising discourses' which permeate the criminal justice system and have dominated the policing strategies of key policy-makers. It is these discourses, prevalent within the 'multi-racist' character of 'lore and disorder' in Britain, which have established the 'general truth' of a relationship between race, crime and public order and which explain the long-term decline of police-black relations.

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