City Research Online

City St George's, University of London

Citation: Littler, J. (2015). The new Victorians? Celebrity charity and the demise of the welfare state. Celebrity Studies, 6(4), pp. 471-485. doi: 10.1080/19392397.2015.1087213

This is the accepted version of the paper.

This version of the publication may differ from the final published version. To cite this item please consult the publisher's version.

Permanent repository link: https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/12790/

Link to published version: https://doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2015.1087213

Copyright and Reuse: Copyright and Moral Rights remain with the author(s) and/or copyright holders. Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, unless otherwise indicated, provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way. For full details of reuse please refer to City Research Online policy.

City Research Online: http://openaccess.city.ac.uk/ publications@citystgeorges.ac.uk

The New Victorians? Celebrity charity and the demise of the welfare state

Jo Littler, City University London

Jo.Littler.1@city.ac.uk

Abstract

This paper asks whether the expansion of celebrity involvement in charitable and humanitarian issues in Northern Europe and the US might be a comparable historical phenomenon to the philanthropic endeavours of prominent C19th persons. It notes that the conspicuous nature of star philanthropy in both Victorian times and the present are fairly dramatic in comparison to that of the mid twentieth century, when the welfare state and the New Deal were at their peak: a welfare-oriented era which, to some, now increasingly looks like an 'historical blip'. It asks whether the rise of contemporary celebrity involvement in charity can therefore be explained in terms of the contemporary political conjuncture, inasmuch as celebrities could be understood as individuals with large amounts of private capital seeking to intervene in - and gain forms of power through - involvement in humanitarian and charitable causes that might have formerly been the job of the state. Can celebrity involvement in charity be explained in these terms? Does the marriage of celebrity and charity today take a neoliberal form, one that parallels the liberal form of C19th interventions, bequests and donations? And what might the key differences between forms of spectacular 'philanthrocapitalism' in these eras (particularly the contemporary insistence on the confessional and intimate modes of address) reveal about its workings, its internal traditions and about the specificity of our own age? This paper draws on contemporary media discourse, debate in the voluntary sector, historical scholarship and Foucault's distinctions between liberalism and neoliberalism to argue that whereas 'celanthropy' in the Victorian period eventually came to contribute to the welfare state, today it is more involved in privatising and dismantling it.

Keywords: celebrity, charity, celanthropy, philanthropy, philanthrocapitalism

Introduction

There has been a substantial amount of noise over the past decade about celebrity involvement in the world of charity. This noise has been generated from from a range of areas: media gossip and discussion; debates within the third sector; and, most recently, academia. For academics from a number of different disciplines and perspectives, the celebrity/charity nexus has started to be deemed worthy of exploration (Brockington 2009, Chouliaraki 2012, Goodman 2011, 2012, Kapoor 2013; Littler 2008, Ouellette and Hay 2008, Richey and Ponte 2011, Wilson 2011, Wheeler 2011, 2013). Such work, as I will discuss below, has enriched understandings of why celebrities are involved with charity, how they are involved and what's at stake in their involvement. Whilst the extent to which the number of celebrities involved in charitable activity has increased is debatable (Brockington, 2011) the vigour of both commentary and argument on this issue indicate the extent to

which it is thought to matter, not only to academics, but also to wider publics through the slings and arrows of media commentary and vigorous heated debates within the third sector.

In this article I want to pick up some of the themes raised in these different areas – media commentary, academic analysis and third sector debate - in order to discuss the phenomenon from a 'long' historical-political perspective. For what strikes me about the current phenomena of celebrity involvement in charitable and humanitarian issues in Northern Europe and the US is that in some ways it seems to be a comparable historical phenomenon to the philanthropic endeavours of prominent nineteenth century persons, such as Thomas John Barnardo, Henry Tate or George Peabody. The conspicuous nature of star philanthropy in both Victorian times and the present are fairly dramatic in comparison to that of the mid twentieth century, when the welfare state and the New Deal were at their peak: a welfare-oriented era which in many respects now increasingly looks like an 'historical blip'.

This article therefore asks whether the rise of contemporary celebrity involvement in charity can be explained in terms of the contemporary political conjuncture, inasmuch as celebrities could be understood as individuals with large amounts of private capital seeking to intervene in - and gain forms of power through - involvement in humanitarian and charitable causes that might have formerly been the job of the state. Can celebrity involvement in charity be explained in these terms? Does the neoliberal marriage of celebrity and charity today parallel the liberal form of nineteenth-century interventions, bequests and donations? And what might the key differences between forms of spectacular 'philanthrocapitalism' in these eras reveal about its workings, its internal traditions and the specificity of our own age?

The article answers these questions in three parts. The first opens by considering two examples of how Victorian philanthropy is imagined in contemporary media. This section highlights the ideological significance of philanthropy for contemporary late capitalism and its naturalisation as 'beneficial' through historical anchorage. The second section historicises celebrity philanthropy by drawing on existing academic literature (in celebrity studies, histories of philanthropy and political sociology) to draw out major tendencies in the historical relationship between celebrity and philanthropy. The third, and concluding, part draws on Foucault's work on the differences between liberalism and neoliberalism to suggest how we might *theorise,* in more depth, the differences in the dynamic between celebrity and philanthropy in these eras as well as the connecting culture in between. In doing so, the article builds an argument that, whereas celebrity philanthropy in the nineteenth century primarily came to contribute to the construction of the welfare state, celebrity philanthropy in the twenty-first century primarily contributes, through marketization, to its attempted destruction.

Contemporary Victorians: mediated histories

The parallel between a re-invigorated contemporary culture of celebrity philanthropy and the cultures of star giving that existed in the nineteenth-century has been registered in recent media commentary. For instance it is used, both explicitly and implicitly, to frame two recent British documentaries, *How New Is the New*

Philanthropy?, a three-part BBC Radio 4 series, and *The Age of the Do-Gooders*, a three-part television series first broadcast on BBC2 television. These media artefacts reveal much about contemporary attitudes to the subject, and as such are worth considering here.

The Age of the Do-Gooders features Ian Hislop, editor of the satirical weekly political magazine *Private Eye* (and a well-known media figure in Britain due to his regular appearances on the UK TV comedy news quiz *Have I Got News For You*). In this documentary, Hislop singles out particular 'do-gooders' and reformers - overwhelmingly from the 19th century – to profile, including Dr Barnardo, The Earl of Shaftesbury and Octavia Hill. Their personal crusades, he argues, 'changed the face of Britain'. Comparisons are made between the 'broken Britain' of then and now, including contrasts being made between the culture of mutualism these philanthropists helped produce and the atomised individualism of the present. A segment on Birmingham's near-forgotten preacher of civic responsibility, George Dawson, once famous for successfully asking residents to 'give back' to the city, is countersliced with *vox pop* interviews with local residents who assert that they haven't heard of him, and that no-one 'looks out for' anyone else any more.

The series is lively, detailed and stirring. It consistently endorses the actions of reformers who pushed for greater social equalities (such as William Wilberforce on slavery) and regulation against exploitation (such as child prostitution). It discusses how eighteenth and nineteenth-century arguments *against* social progress can bear more than a passing resemblance to those of today (by, for example, comparing those who argued against child labour with contemporary apologists for sweatshop labour). And yet the series contains a paradox: in order to highlight achievements in moving toward social equality, mutuality and social reform, it focuses on very atomised individuals. Whilst this is a lively method for engaging in the subject, it also undeniably produces the individual as hero: as special persons worthy of celebrity, not only in their own lifetimes, but also in the present, and as cut adrift from wider social discourses and from the broader movements for social change that they were part of. In doing so it works to fête social change as a job for heroic individuals and to sediment an *Ur*-history for this process. In the process, it therefore works to uncriticially replicate the key paradox at the heart of philanthropy itself.

The BBC Radio Four programme *How New Is the New Philanthropy?,* presented by historian Hugh Cunningham, tells a much more historically integrated story in that it traces developments in philanthropic cultures between the eighteenth century and the present, this time with an Anglo-American focus. The focus here is less on individuals, and by extension, is less concerned with celebrity. As the series title suggests, it is framed by a discussion of the new mode of charitable giving that has developed over the past two decades, sometimes called 'philanthrocapitalism', whereby business leaders (such as Bill and Melinda Gates and Bono) have become involved in establishing charitable projects that are managed in a corporate fashion and usually integrated with a commercial, profit-making enterprise.

Cunningham's admirably detailed programme compares philanthrocapitalism to earlier models of philanthropy, discussing both Victorian donors and their connection to social reform. It also makes moves toward picking apart the notion of 'philanthropy' itself. For example, it includes the argument (voiced by social policy

researcher Beth Breeze) that the word 'philanthropy' is only used when *large* sums of money are donated. Breeze argues that this seems elitist given that, in the UK, the poorest 10% give more proportionally than the richest 10%, and thus the £5 donated by a hard-up pensioner has more 'sacrificial' impact and might therefore be considered a greater act of giving. In such ways 'How New Is the New Philanthropy?' includes criticisms of both 'historical' and 'new' philanthropy, and counterpoises, in its final episode, philanthropic donations by the 'super-rich' in relation to systems of mutual aid, such as friendly societies.

Yet despite such fascinating discussion, and despite analysing both the strong tradition of philanthropy before the welfare state and its reinvention since the 1980s, the series pays comparatively little attention to the significance of the dwindling social role of philanthropy in the twentieth century, except to point out that Whiggish assumptions of the success of mutuality were later to be proved wrong. Neither does it explain or consider how the resurgence in philanthropy since the 1980s might be connected to the dismantling of the welfare state to any strong degree. Cunningham's closing summary states

> Philanthropy has always been controversial and has taken many different forms. Today's new philanthropy might not have a much longer shelf life than did Eliza McAdden's in the 1930s. But social needs are never going to be met in their entirety by the state and the market. There's always going to be a role for another new philanthropy.

Despite the historical frame of the programme, then, philanthropy here becomes an almost ahistorical, timeless category. In effect, it moves back toward positioning philanthropy as inevitable, dulling the sharper political critique it started to gesture toward at the beginning of the programme. Interestingly, then, both these programmes, whilst filled with nuggets of left-liberal sentiment, end up reproducing and endorsing a mode of individualism that is far from the forms of equality they elsewhere suggest they wish to endorse.

I am arguing that these programmes, while both interesting and richly textured, are insufficiently critical of key mechanisms of political inequality. In the first programme, this is produced by fêting the *individualism* of celebrity ('do-gooders') and in the second by glossing over the scale and violence of the attacks on the welfare state through neoliberal marketisation. How might we move from a critique of such discourses to a more capacious and critical understanding of the different dynamics between celebrity and charity in these eras?

Historicising 'celanthropy'

One place to start is to consider the dynamics between philanthropy and celebrity in a longer historical frame. Celebrity itself needs to be understood as a shifting entity and historically mutable conduit. In an article in the journal *Cultural and Social History* in 2011, the historian Simon Morgan debates the usefulness of the concept of celebrity for historians, and in the process makes some useful points himself. Firstly, he argues against accounts of celebrity which posit it as a by-product of a twentieth-century mass consumer society, for 'elements of what may be termed celebrity culture may be

found in earlier periods, specifically the final third of the eighteenth century and the second third of the nineteenth' (Morgan 2011: 101). Secondly, Morgan persuasively argues against Whiggish accounts of celebrity that posit it as a quasi-transhistorical category, both part of the natural order of things and gradually increasing through time. As he points out 'it would be naïve to expect celebrity cultures to be identical in form in widely differing times and places' (Morgan 2011: 109).

This schema both draws on and takes issue with the classic work of Leo Braudy in *The Frenzy of Renown*; a book that considers the historical development of celebrity since the 'self-naming' that occurred in 5th-4th century Greece (Braudy 1986). Morgan's schema is also in effect endorsed by Fred Inglis in his recent book *A Short History of Celebrity* (Inglis 2010). Beginning in the eighteenth century, Inglis presents a number of scenes from different historical periods dramatising his hypothesis that 'celebrity comes into being as a portioning out of the posture and position of power', a 'portioning-out' institutionalised through consumer culture, the fashion-system and new media formations (Inglis 2010: 9). One of Inglis's most salient points is that this relationship relies on understanding 'how a powerful man or woman dramatizes and enacts, both for himself or herself and for us, values essential to the self-image and self-esteem of his, her, and our society.' (Inglis 2010: 16). Celebrity charity, or 'celanthropy' as it has more recently become known (see for example Rojek 2012) can be productively considered in this way. There are different means of considering these 'values essential to the self-image and self-esteem of his, her, and our society': by for example emphasising political, cultural, economic or affective factors. Working in the vein of the tradition of cultural studies conjunctural analysis (Hall *et al* 1978) I use a blend of these approaches to consider potential historical trajectories and political-cultural differences between the 'celanthropies' of past and present.

The argument that the contemporary upsurge in celebrity philanthropy has an intensity unmatched since the nineteenth century – as put forward by the media programmes discussed earlier - is echoed by a number of writers and academics. Historian Gertrude Himmelfarb, for example, pointed out the veritable explosion in philanthropic activity in the nineteenth century, which she influentially dubbed 'the age of philanthropy' (Himmelfarb 1997). Contemporary cheerleaders for corporate philanthropy, such as Matthew Bishop and Michael Green (whose work is discussed in more detail below) also highlight the industrial-based giving of the nineteenth century as a high watermark in philanthropic history, pointing out that by the mid 1880s 'the income of London's charities was greater than the governments of some European countries' (Bishop and Green 2008: 25). Bishop and Green locate this moment, as 'the third golden age of philanthropy,' in a longer history, the earlier two moments being in the sixteenth and eighteenth-century, and are remarkably forthright in emphasising how such apparent *largesse* was directly dependent on the expansion of both capitalism and inequality (Bishop and Green 2008 2-25).

In his suggestive examination of the historical relationship between celebrity and development, Dan Brockington argues that 'the history of advocacy by famous people for good causes' falls into three periods. First is 'Victorian times', when good causes were one of the main drivers of fame, which slowly declines until World War Two. Brockington cites such figures as Dr Barnardo, for his work with poor children and William Wilberforce's moral crusade against slavery. Brockington's second period is World War Two until the 1980s, when activism around the civil rights movement,

anti-racism and Vietnam produces ‘deep involvement in some causes, but not in development causes’; the third period is from the 1980s, when the celebrity industry and the NGO sector ‘form ever intensive relations’ (Brockington, 2011: 1). As Brockington highlights, the second period, between World War Two and the 1980s, is relatively quiet in terms of celebrity philanthropy. Brockington is concerned with the wider field of ‘good causes’, however, whereas my concern here is limited to charity and philanthropy. This remit means that much of the activity of his second period isn’t applicable here; protest songs of the mid-twentieth century, for example, are not directly connected to charity (this happens later with the emergence of pop/rock charity fests, from George Harrison’s 1971 Concert for Bangladesh to the more fully-fledged corporate charity event that was 1985’s Live Aid).

As these examples indicate, it is notable that the peak points of celanthropy are at times of pronounced market liberalism; and that they ‘slow’, or at least are less marked, during the high point of the welfare state. The welfare state is generally used as a common term for the range of systems of social provision and protection – including universal healthcare, education and pensions - that developed most markedly in Western Europe and the Nordic countries from the end of the Second World War up into the 1970s, although parts of it can be dated earlier (in the UK, for example, it is usually dated from the reforms of the Liberal government in the 1900s) (Wahl 2011: 4). These forms of provision developed to different extents in different areas and have a range of variants and fine-grained distinctions. Esping-Anderson’s typology outlines ‘three worlds of welfare capitalism’, with universal provision being most pronounced in the social-democratic Nordic countries, ‘middling’ in Christian-democratic areas like France and Germany and much weaker in liberal regimes such as the USA and Japan (Esping-Anderson 1990). Since the late 1970s, these systems have been under sustained and incremental attacks and erosion from national and international policies and marketization (Foucault 2008; Harvey 2003; Wahl 2011). As celebrity involvement in charity and philanthropy is at its most pronounced before and after the high point of the welfare state, these parallels raise interesting questions. Does celebrity philanthropy have a similar function in both these periods? Does it always mitigate *against* the role of the welfare state? What happens during the time ‘in-between’?

If there are parallels between the present and the nineteenth century in terms of conspicuous celebrity involvement in charitable and philanthropic activity, it is also notable that there are some parallels in terms of *mode* of activity. Carol Duncan’s work on the ‘donor memorial’, for instance - discussing how wealthy benefactors donated to and established art museums - draws on a number of examples, the majority of which fall in the period from the eighteenth to the early twentieth century, and then again from the 1970s. Duncan’s interest is in how such forms of art philanthropy have acted both to cleanse the names of wealthy industrialists from the taint of corruption, and to make such new connotations for their name - and indeed the name itself - last, to become ‘something eternal’ (Duncan 1995: 72-101). She writes of how, in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, this often worked so that art museums (such as the Wallace Collection or Dulwich Picture Gallery) were in effect presented as residences which museum visitors visited as guests, with the philanthropist acting as the benevolent ‘host’: a ‘meeting’ taking place on unequal terms.

Philanthropy working to 'cleanse' tainted celebrity-corporate power is of course still very much in evidence today. In the nineteenth century Henry Tate founded a gallery that added new connotations to his name other than that of sugar magnate who acquired companies and associated wealth through slavery. In the twenty-first century the National Gallery in London has a 'Sainsbury Wing' whilst Lord and Lady Sainsbury & Co are criticised for the conditions its clothing manufacturers work in; Apple's founder Steve Jobs was became a major contributor to the *One* charity project whilst exploited Apple employees worked excess hours in Foxconn factories in China (Ethical Consumer 2012; Maxwell and Miller 2012; Sandoval 2013). That celebrity industrialists used philanthropy strategically by as a means to bring greater recognition to their name, and to rid it from the smell of exploitation, was recognised a century ago, just as it is today. As Olivier Zunz points out in his history of *Philanthropy in America*, for instance, in the 1890s many communities, with the memories of the tough labor lockouts the company had practiced fresh in their minds, 'were reluctant to accept Carnegie libraries' (Zunz 2012: 20).

However, the similarities that exist between celebrity-charity cultures at these different points do not necessarily mean they took exactly the same shape. For instance, Gertrude Himmelfarb highlights the combination of religiosity and rationality which tended to inform nineteenth-century celebrity philanthropy (Himmelfarb 1995, 1997). Critiquing those who find a 'self-serving' dimension in its practice, she highlights its 'self-sacrificing', self-abasing' note. Himmelfarb emphasises that this was 'not professional philanthropy in the current sense, where everyone from the director of the charity to fundraisers, social workers and clerks is a salaried employee, paid to do a job like any other' (Himmelfarb 1997). Daniel Seigel extends this account by showing how during the Victorian period that 'condescension' became a derogatory term - rather than the more neutral or positive term it had been in the eighteenth century – because of the collision between liberalism and paternalism in this period. For Seigel, debates over condescension are a means of understanding the dynamics of charity in this period (Seigel 2012).

Himmelfarb's work is interesting for a number of reasons, not least because she is a neoconservative historian whose work is noted as having a certain synchronicity with the right-wing 1980s rhetoric of 'Victorian values' beloved of the UK Conservative Party. Interestingly, former Labour Prime Minister Gordon Brown is also a fan of her work and wrote the introduction to her 2004 book *Roads to Modernity* (and her emphasis on individual heroism also seems to have been one influence on Ian Hislop's TV series). Her emphasis on the self-abasing affect of nineteenth-century philanthropy marks one distinction from contemporary celebrity philanthropy. As recent work has shown, celebrity charity today usually has a far more secular and indeed often 'post-humanitarian', overtly narcissistic, bent (Wilson 2011, Chouliaraki 2012). Lilie Chouliaraki's work shows how celebrity charity has in recent decades moved from performing humanitarian compassion (as exemplified by Audrey Hepburn) to post-humanitarian narcissism (as exemplified by Angelina Jolie) (Chouliaraki 2012).

We can therefore note both similar and different tendencies between the celebrity-charity nexus in the nineteenth century and today. But what happens during the time 'in-between'? In the mid twentieth century, clearly such activity becomes less noticeable at the time when the social divisions between rich and poor become less

pronounced and the state adopts many of the activities formerly provided by charity, such as pension provision and healthcare. Even pro-philanthrocapitalist zealots Bishop and Green note that the decline of rich giving at this point was due to how

> government was increasingly persuaded that poverty and inequality posed a threat and that state-led universal welfare was the only way of buying off the working classes to defeat the revolutionary appeal of the growing socialist movment (Bishop and Green 2008: 25)

Equally interestingly, there is evidence of a celebrity-charity dynamic existing in a more covert vein at this time if we look for it; and the specific forms it takes are telling.

One of the key developments in this relationship between celebrity and philanthropy from the mid-twentieth century - from the high point of the welfare state - was the gradual formalisation of the role of celebrity UN Goodwill Ambassadors. Mark Wheeler's historical excavation of this process traces it from its early days, when Danny Kaye became involved with promoting the UNICEF Children's Fund in 1953 - gradually followed by Audrey Hepburn and Peter Ustinov - to its more glitzy development as a star vehicle in the 1990s. This was when the then Secretary-General Kofi Anan expanded the celebrity scope of what had become known as the 'Goodwill Ambassador' scheme, in the process creating celebrity 'Messengers of Peace' such as Angelina Jolie, Celine Dion and Jeremy Irons (Wheeler 2011; Wheeler 2013). This is interesting in terms of historical development, because they chart a process through which transnational governmental structures are dominant in celanthropy, but then gradually become zones through which celebrity capital develops and gains a broader leverage of its own. It also indicates how, the connection between *entertainment-based* celebrity and charity became more firmly rooted at this moment. Celebrity industrialists already had a strong history of involvement with charity, but the involvement of entertainment-based celebrity with charity is, with a few exceptions, largely a product of the modern era.

A second key development is how the relationships between celebrity industrialists and the state become subject to integration, negotiation and struggle for control. In the US in the post-war period, there was the development of the idea of an 'associative state' in which corporations gave money to education and the arts. And so establishments such as the Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Institute and the Rockerfeller Foundation, as recent work by Inderjeet Parmar has shown, continued the corporate cleansing model in covert vein, developing a form of 'soft power' within the contours of postwar welfarism (Parmar 2012).

However, industrialists who sought to 'celebrify' their name and status could also be thwarted by the increasing power of the public sector. For instance, in the 1930s the financier and ex-US Secretary of the Treasury Andrew W. Mellon, disgraced after allegations of tax fraud, trustbuilding, and other illegal business practices resolved to 'leave behind a monument that would recapture his lost national stature' (Duncan 1995: 96-7). Mellon became the major benefactor of the National Gallery in Washington DC, his donation becoming incorporated into public spending on the arts at the moment when Roosevelt's New Deal was beginning to gather speed. However Roosevelt, whose policies emphasised social provision for citizens as a right rather

than a gift, thwarted his plan by conducting a searing investigation into Mellon's personal financial irregularities. On opening the gallery, Roosevelt then described him - having forced his hand - as a 'giver who has stipulated that the gallery shall be known not by his name but by the nation's' (Zunz 2012: 170). Mellon's plan to monumentalize himself was blown: his name wasn't given to the institution.

Now and then: liberalism and neoliberalism

In such ways, celebrity philanthropy continued in the mid-twentieth century in a more muted form, and in effect, we might say, these gradual changes around cultural institutions echo the constraints placed on capital by state welfarism. Importantly, it was the site of a struggle for power, in which the state asserted its authority and control over corporate capitalists, as the FDR/Mellon example shows. And yet, at the same time corporations found new forms of 'soft power' through philanthropic work, and celebrities were brought into the fold of the UN, gaining the authority, at one remove, of governments and a 'transnational' mission. These subtle but important developments laid the groundwork for the development of 'celanthropy' in the present neoliberal era.

A fruitful way to further extend understanding of the difference between the mode of celebrity charity valorised in these periods is to consider the political-cultural-economic values of liberalism and neoliberalism in more depth. I am not suggesting that we simply valorise one lens, or that we apply 'a crude commodification thesis' (Chouliaraki 2012). But it is necessary to consider how processes of commodification interconnect or articulate to a multiplicity of factors including the changing modes of media communication, gender dynamics, the shifting cultural emphases on modes of religiosity and humanitarianism in both crude and subtle ways. As such, the liberalism/neoliberalism dynamic is an important prism through which the relationship between celebrity and philanthropy can be understood.

Michel Foucault's 1978-9 College de France lecture series, which forms the backdrop to his account of biopolitics (and which was, finally, published in French in 2004 and English in 2008) provides a useful series of distinctions between liberalism and neo-liberalism. Neoliberalism to Foucualt is, emphatically, not simply a 'revival' of liberalism -- he is very scathing of such an interpretation – but is rather a *transformation* of it. It is not simply the case that the market has become 'dominant' once again, but what is important is how, since the 1970s, it has begun to structure the way political power itself works, so that 'the overall exercise of political power can be modelled on the principles of a market economy' (Foucault 2008: 130). Under neoliberalism, social policy can no longer be a *counterweight* to the brutality of capitalism, with equality as its objective. The only 'true' social policy for neoliberalism can be economic growth and privatisation; and so the multiplication of the 'enterprise' form within the social body, Foucault states, is what is at stake in neoliberalism, and it is what constitutes its 'formative power' (Foucault 2008: 148).

This theorisation provides a useful means for interpreting the differences between the different models of philanthropy in the two eras. For the modes of celebrity charity in the nineteenth century can often convincingly be understood as providing a 'counterweight to the brutality of capitalism'. Hislop, Cunningham and Himmelfarb's accounts, for example, emphasise the role of charity, and celebrity charity, in building

structures and organisations which 'paved the way' for wider forms of social organisation and welfarism (BBC 2010, 2011a, 2011b; Himmelfarb 1995, 1997). The kind of activities undertaken by Octavia Hill in terms of housing provision, Charles Dickens' work with the home for 'fallen women' Urania House, and Sarah Bernhardt's establishment of *Les Enfants des Arts*, a school for orphans, can be quite readily comprehended in this vein. Such projects were to become subsumed into systems of welfare, and as such might be understood as contributing to the establishment of welfare states more than than mitigating against them.

By contrast - and ignored in Hislop, Cunningham and Himmelfarb's accounts - contemporary modes of celebrity philanthropy are not always but often involved in the gradual privatisation and dismantling of the forms of collective provision fundamental to the welfare state. The 'multiplication of the "enterprise" form within the social body', as Foucault puts it, can be seen at work in a large number of contemporary projects in which charitable endeavours are simultaneously hitched to star vehicles and corporate profitability. In order to comprehend how this works, we can turn to a zone where the political consequences of the connection between celebrity and charity is subject to far more stinging critique - as well as even more hype and gung-ho encouragement: the third, voluntary or charity sector. For there has been an extremely heated debate in this area over the impact and effectiveness of what has become known as the 'new philanthropy', or 'philanthrocapitalism', in which celebrities often play a pivotal role.

Philanthrocapitalism and its discontents

'Philanthrocapitalism' is generally understood as both a new mode of philanthropy in which the very wealthy become involved in charitable projects in a 'hands-on' way (often through setting up projects), and as a mode of charity that uses business methods with a claim that these can achieve beneficial and superior social transformation. There is also argument over the exact parameters of philanthrocapitalism: for instance, whilst corporate social responsibility (CSR) always tends to be included, the role of social entrepreneurialism is more debatable (Bishop and Green 2008; Edwards 2008).

One of the most evangelical books on the subject is by the US business editor of *The Economist* magazine, Matthew Bishop, and Michael Green, a freelance journalist and ex-UK Government official. *Philanthrocapitalism: How the rich can save the world and why we should let them* was initially published in 2008. Two years later, presumably in the wake of the recession, and the rich not having 'saved the world', it was somewhat tellingly re-subtitled *Philanthrocapitalism: How giving can save the world* (Bishop and Green 2008, 2010).

For Bishop and Green, 'philanthrocapitalism' describes entrepreneurial, frequently star-based projects which are framed around their charitable impact, such as Bono's involvement in the RED campaign or the Bill and Melinda Gates Global Development Programme. At the same time the term enshrines their idea that capitalism can itself be a structural force for social good:

> First, a micro-level definition: it is a new way of doing philanthropy, which mirrors the way that business is done in the for-profit capitalist world.

> Entrepreneurs don't just want to write cheques. They want to be hands on, bringing innovative ideas to scale by investing their time and energy.
>
> Second, philanthrocapitalism describes at the macro level the ways in which capitalism itself can be philanthropic, working for the good of mankind.[1]

The 2010 edition features a foreword by former US President Bill Clinton, which begins to indicate something of how this concept has won a relatively wide range of support. The idea of using some of the wealth of 'the super-rich' to try to produce positive social benefits has even been pursued by veteran green-left consumer rights activist and former Presidential hopeful Ralph Nader in his book *Only the super-rich can save us* (Nader 2009). This self-proclaimed 'fictional vision' depicts what might happen if a cadre of wealthy individuals got together to fight corporate power, support unions, and promote clean energy. Nader's vision is substantially different from that espoused by Bishop and Green in that capitalism is here attempted to be used to 'de-fuse' itself and return power to the people as a shared property. And yet its motif of the rich 'saving us' connects it to this formation of philanthrocapitalism via its landscape of using corporate aid – channelled through the vision of CEOs - to effect social change (Nader 2009). Similarly, the British left-wing *Guardian* journalist Zoe Williams ended a recent article exploring the phenomenon of philanthrocapitalism in conventional liberal celebratory mode, by hoping that it must do some good, as it might be 'the future' (Williams 2011).

Not all celebrity philanthropy fits into the philanthrocapitalism mould. But much of it does; and indeed, for Bishop and Green, celebrity philanthropy, or what they term -- after the term was coined in a *Time* magazine -- 'celanthropy', is a prime plank of philanthrocapitalism (Bishop and Green 2010: 195-214). There are a number of different potential configurations of 'celanthropy'; key distinctions that can be made are over the genre of celebrity, the extent and shape of their fame, and the mode of their involvement with charity. Those stars who do squarely fit into the philanthrocapitialist 'celanthropy' mould include CEOs who have become celebrities beyond the industry they are in (such as Richard Branson or Bill Gates[2]) as well as entertainment-based celebrities who become involved with charitable ventures (such as Sting or Annie Lennox). The actions involved are varied. The first type includes celebrity-backed ventures coupling profit-oriented enterprise with charity, otherwise known as celebrity cause-related marketing, such as the RED products promoted by Bono and friends. The second includes top-down business projects parachuted into 'problem' areas through the conduit of celebrity money, such as *The Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy* in South Africa – criticised by some as an elitist response to the area's problems - and Madonna's *Raising Malawi* project, which collapsed in 2010-11 amidst claims of corruption and legal challenges over labour disputes (Bishop and Green 212-3; Smith 2011).

The third form of philanthrocapitalist celanthropy is the celebrity 'steering' of a cause or campaign. Sharon Stone's notorious commandeering of a UN meeting to encourage financial pledges later backfired when large swathes of the pledged money failed to materialise (Littler 2008; Bishop and Green 2010). William Easterly has memorably termed such actors 'celebrity wonks' (Easterly 2010). Equally, in the UK the *Make Poverty History* campaign was widely perceived in the third sector to have been depoliticised by celebrity involvement (Gopal 2006). Interestingly, the *Make*

Poverty History campaign was heavily shaped by the organisation *One*, which was itself established in 2002 by Bono and Bill Gates, and co-funded by investment trader George Soros and software tycoon Ed Scott. As such it was a marriage between entertainment celebrity and CEO celebrity, and it is such partnerships and feedback loops which for Bishop and Green are key to both celanthropy and philanthrocapitalism.

Philanthrocapitalism has been the subject of stinging critique from the voluntary/third sector. Perhaps the most well-known was the broadside issued by Michael Edwards, a voluntary sector veteran who has worked in senior management positions at Oxfam, the VSO, Save the Children, the World Bank and the Ford Foundation. Edwards' pamphlet for Demos/The Young Foundation, *Just Another Emperor,* generated considerable debate within the voluntary sector, particularly on the website *Open Democracy*, from which a range of contributions were later collected into a book; Edwards also produced a longer work on the subject, *Small Change: Why Business Won't Save the World* (Edwards 2008, 2010; Hayes and Price, 2009).

As the book titles indicate, Edwards argues that philanthrocapitalism is not only ineffective but also destructive. The problems he finds are multiple. He argues that it has produced a flurry of weak projects that tend to be small-scale, few of which are truly self-sustaining, and in which 'mission drift' is common. More damningly, he argues that these projects serve corporations more than their intended beneficiaries. Citing a survey of 25 joint ventures in the US between charity and business, he points out that in 22 cases there were 'significant conflicts between mission and the demands of corporate stakeholders' (Edwards 2009: 13). Moreover, he writes, on a larger scale philanthrocapitalism has weakened the third sector and civil society 'through co-optation instead of equal partnership' (Edwards 2009: 15). His argument is therefore to 'reaffirm the importance of a 'civil-society-strong' perspective in face of 'a tsunami of pro-business thinking' (Edwards 2009: 55). For there is, Edwards writes, a fundamental problem with philanthrocapitalism: if it really wanted to achieve its ostensible goals, it would reform its own working practices.

> After all, if business and the super-rich are serious about their social responsibilities there is plenty of work to be done in changing the way that wealth is produced and distributed without the smokescreen of philanthropy. Taking the right steps on wages, working conditions, benefits, consumer standards, tax obligations, political lobbying, monopolies and competition at the heart of business would have a huge social impact. As Daniel Lubetzky (a leading social entrepreneur himself) put it: 'what most resonates with me about the unexamined 'noise' surrounding philanthrocapitalism is that it is often used to mask dishonest or noxious behaviour from corporations (Edwards 2009: 63)

In these terms, philanthrocapitalism is primarily a 'smokescreen' for corporations encroaching on areas which were previously non-profit. Or to put it another way, it is a neoliberal practice, in which 'charitable' activity becomes a means to increase corporate power – by stealth, and with an ostensibly moral alibi.

Philanthrocapitalism in these terms is an arch example of the 'multiplication of the "enterprise" form within the social body', as Foucault puts it; a means through which

charitable endeavours are simultaneously hitched to celebrity vehicles and corporate profitability. As Samantha King's book *Pink Ribbons* on the breast cancer charity industry shows, the US government has expected corporations to intervene in social issues whilst cutting national funding for welfare (King 2008; see also Ouellette and Hay 2008: 32-62 for a discussion of how this process has been mobilised through charity TV). Breast cancer is often the subject of CRM campaigns that are regularly endorsed by celebrities; the Pink Ribbon Foundation, to take but one example, has included commercial collaborations with AGA, Betty Barclay and American Express amongst many others and has a number of celebrity partners including Anthea Turner, Joan Collins and Sting.[3]

But celebrities who set up or become involved with charity projects that are simultaneously designed to make private profit, otherwise known as 'cause-related marketing' perhaps provide the most vivid example of the 'multiplication of the "enterprise" form within the social body'. One of the most graphic instances is Bono's involvement in establishing Product RED, the brand which has been stamped across a range of products from companies like Armani, Gap and Apple and from which 1% of profits go towards his co-created anti-AIDS charity 'The Global Fund' (Littler 2008; Richey and Ponte 2008). As Richey and Ponte point out in their book-length study of the RED campaign, this is a means through which wealthy corporations become divested from responsibility for global poverty and its associated problems, a world in which it seems 'possible to have as much as you want without depriving anyone else' (Richey and Ponte 2011: 188). It is through such routes that what Mike Goodman calls '*celebritus politicus'* are made part of a regime of celebrity governance within neoliberalism (Goodman 2012).

Conclusion

Clearly, then, the connection between celebrity and charity at the present is a complex and differentiated field, just as it was in the nineteenth century. Yet here I am suggesting that one important way to try to grapple with its significance is to examine it in terms of a longer historical timeframe and to read its activities in relation to a broader political-cultural context. In these terms it is, I suggest, important to emphasise that in both periods the diverse forms of capital involved in celebrity-charity promotion do not innocently exist alongside larger systems of inequality, but are rather imbricated with and generated out of them.

This article has attempted to sketch the contours of a 'long history' of celebrity involvement with charity and philanthropy - or celanthropy - in order to understand the texture of these processes, their geneaologies, in more detail. Its account of nineteenth-century celebrity and philanthropy highlighted how for wealthy philanthropists aiding charity or 'good causes' often engendered fame and worked to cleanse the capitalist industrialist from the unsavoury stench of exploitation; and how other-directed initiatives by the already-famous to aid the inflicted later became incorporated into welfare policies. It then emphasised how, in the mid-twentieth century, the establishment of different forms of national welfare states was accompanied by a 'dropping off' in the more flamboyant manifestations of celanthropy. This was a moment when celebrity philanthropists could directly be squeezed out of the picture (*a la* Mellon) as the state asserted its collective power and sought to provide more of a social safety net for a wider public. However, this mid

twentieth-century period was also the time when the UN began to *sanction* celanthropy, in the form of ambassadors; and the 'associative state's' use of corporate money via foundations provided an opening corporatons gleefully seized upon in the later neoliberal decades of the twentieth century. Contemporary celanthropy, often more narcissistic in mode than its predecessor, has drawn on these foundations, developing its capacity to brand celebrity across a wider range of media channels and to construct new varieties of enterprise through which charity can be sold as a 'caring', profit-making and consumer-oriented venture.

Both the celebrity philanthrocapitalism that has emerged since the development of contemporary neoliberalism and the earlier forms of celebrity philanthropy which emerged during Victorian liberalism can be understood, therefore, as dependent on widening chasms between rich and poor and a lack of social safety nets through collective forms of welfarism. The key difference, however, is that whereas many 'celanthropy' projects in the nineteenth century were, eventually, to become involved in building up what was to become the welfare state, in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries this nexus is more active in helping destroy it.

References

BBC (2010) *Age of the Do-Gooders: Part 1, Britain's Moral Makeover; Part 2, Suffer the Little Children; Part 3, Sinful Sex and Demon Drink.* Presented by Ian Hislop. First broadcast on BBC 2

BBC (2011a) 'How New Is the New Philanthropy?' Three-part radio series (.'New Philanthropies') presented by Hugh Cunningham, First broadcast on BBC Radio 4

BBC (2011b) 'When bankers were good' Presented by Ian Hislop. First broadcast on BBC 2

Bishop, Matthew and Michael Green (2008) *Philanthrocapitalism: How the Rich can save the world and why we should let them.* A&C Black Publishers

Bishop, Matthew and Michael Green (2010) *Philanthrocapitalism: How giving can save the world.* A&C Black Publishers

Braudy, Leo (1986) *The Frenzy of Renown*. Oxford University Press.

Brockington, Dan (2009) *Celebrity and the Environment*. Zed Books.

Brockington, Dan (2011) 'A History of Celebrity and Development'. Unpublished paper.

Chouliaraki, Lilie (2012) 'The Theatricality of Humanitarianism: A Critique of Celebrity Advocacy', *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 9:1 pp1-21

Cooper, Andrew F. (2008) *Celebrity Diplomacy*. Boulder: Paradigm Press.

Curzon Price, Tony and David Hayes (2009) *The Power of Giving: Philanthrocapitalism Debated* London: Open Democracy.

'Does Star Power do any good? A Q&A on celebrity diplomacy' (2012) *LA Times*, March 20. http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/world_now/2012/03/george-clooney-sudan-celebrities-foreign.html

Duncan, Carol (1995) *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums*. Routledge.

Easterly, William (2010) 'John Lennon vs Bono: The Death of the Celebrity Activist'. December 10, *Washington Post*. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/12/09/AR2010120904262_2.html

Edwards, Michael (2008) *Just Another Emperor* Demos: A Network for Ideas & Action and The Young Foundation.

Edwards, Michael (2009) 'Philanthrocapitalism: After the Gold Rush' in Tony Curzon Price and David Hayes (2009) *The Power of Giving: Philanthrocapitalism Debated* London: Open Democracy, pp11-21.

Edwards, Michael (2010) *Small Change: Why Business won't save the world*. Berrett-Koehler.

Esping-Anderson, Gosta (1990) *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Princeton University Press.

Foucault, Michel (2010) *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France, 1978-9* translated by Graham Burchell. Palgrave MacMillan.

Goodman, Michael K. and Christine Barnes, (2011) 'Star/Poverty Space: the making of the 'development celebrity', *Celebrity Studies* 2:1 69-85

Goodman, Michael K. (2012) 'Celebritus Politicus, neoliberal sustainabilities and the terrains of care'.

Gopal, Priya (2006). 'The ''Moral Empire'': Africa, globalisation and the politics of conscience'. *New Formations* 59: 81-97.

Hall, Stuart, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, Jon Clarke, and Brian Roberts (1978) *Policing the Crisis*. Macmillan.

Harvey, David (2003) *The New Imperialism*. Oxford University Press.

Himmelfarb, Gertrude (1997) 'The Age of Philanthropy', *Wilson Quarterly*, Spring, 21:2, 48-56.

Himmelfarb, Gertrude (1995) *The de-moralization of society.* Institute of Economic Affairs.

Inglis, Fred (2010) *A Short History of Celebrity*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Kapoor, Ilan (2013). *Celebrity Humanitarianism. Routledge*.

Littler, Jo (2007) 'Celebrity CEOs and the cultural economy of tabloid intimacy' in Su Holmes and Sean Redmond, *A Reader in Stardom and Celebrity.* Sage.

Littler, Jo (2008) 'I feel your pain: Cosmopolitan charity and the public fashioning of the celebrity soul', *Social Semiotics*, 18:2, 237-251.

Littler, Jo (2009) *Radical Consumption: Shopping for change in contemporary culture*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Maxwell, Richard and Toby Miller (2012) *Greening the Media*. Oxford University Press.

Morgan, Simon (2011) 'Celebrity: Academic 'pseudo-event' or a useful concept for historians? In *Cultural and Social History* 8:1, 95-114

Nader, Ralph (2009) *Only the Super-rich can save us*. Seven Stories Press.

Ouellette, Laurie and James Hay (2008) *Better Living Through Reality TV*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Parmar, Inderjeet (2012) *Foundations of the American Century: The Ford, Carnegie and Rockerfeller Foundations in the Rise of American Power.* Columbia University Press.

Richey, Lisa Ann and Stefano Ponte (2008) 'Better RED than dead? Celebrities, consumption and international aid.' *Third Word Quarterly*, 29:4, 711-729.

Richey, Lisa Ann and Stefano Ponte (2011) *Brand Aid: Shopping Well to Save the World.* University of Minnesota Press.

Rojek, Chris (2012) Fame Attack. Bloomsbury.

Sandoval, Marisol (Aug 2013). 'Foxconned Labour as the Dark Side of the Information Age: Working Conditions at Apple's Contract Manufacturers in China' TripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique, 11(2), 318-347.

Seigel, Daniel (2012) *Charity and Condescension: Victorian Literature and the Dilemmas of Philanthropy.* Ohio University Press.

Smith, David (2011) 'Madonna sued by charity workers over scrapped Malawi school. *The Guardian*, 28 March. Accessed at http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/mar/28/charity-workers-sue-madonna-malawi-school?intcmp=239

Wahl, Asbjorn (2011) *The Rise and Fall of the Welfare State*. Pluto Press.

Williams, Zoe (2011) ‘Philanthro-capitalism may sound ugly, but it could be the future’ *The Guardian*, 30 March

Wilson, Julie (2011) ‘A new kind of star is born: Audrey Hepburn and the global governmentalization of female stardom’, *Celebrity Studies* 2:1, 56-68

Wheeler, Mark (2011) ‘Celebrity Diplomacy: United Nations Goodwill Ambassadors and Messengers of Peace’ *Celebrity Studies* 2:1, 6-18

Wheeler, Mark (2013) *Celebrity Politics.* Polity.

Zunz, Olivier (2012) *Philanthropy in America: A history*. Princeton University Press.

[1] http://www.philanthrocapitalism.net/about/faq/. Accessed 17 May 2012.

[2] As I have discussed elsewhere, the contemporary formation of the CEO-celebrity can be traced through a number of interconnecting routes, from ‘soft capitalist’ imperatives on compulsory casualization at work, through to the shifting modes of post-Fordist promotional culture and changes in ways stock market cultures value corporations (Littler 2007). The inclusion of Gates wife, Melinda, in the framing of this charitable project highlights the private-into-public dimension of CEO philanthrocapitalism as well as using the longstanding connection between femininity and charity.

[3] http://www.pinkribbonfoundation.org.uk/about-us/patrons-and-celebrity-supporters/