Taming the Spider Man:

From Anti-Colonial Hero to Neoliberal Icon

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Abstract:

Anancy the spider man is a distinctly Creole Caribbean folk-tale hero. Born a deity in West Africa and transformed by 'the middle passage' into the folk tale trickster of Caribbean slaves; he survives to the present day in the popular imagination of the Caribbean and its diaspora. Growing out of the privations of slavery his antics have traditionally embodied an anti-colonial subaltern ethic of autonomy, adaptivity and cunning. These 'Anancy tactics' have for centuries underpinned the 'reputation' orientated informal economic activities of market 'higglers', 'hucksters', 'hustlers' and 'middlemen', exchanging goods and services on the margins of the market, outside of the regulatory gaze of Caribbean states. However, in the paradoxical millennial age of private microfinance and the downsizing of state budgets, Anancy tactics are becoming co-opted, *captured* and *tamed* to further the elaboration of neoliberal logic into the Caribbean region. Despite their utopian claims, the effects of private microfinance initiatives are ambivalent at best: offering recognition of female higgling, yet indebting and disciplining the cultural practices of those they claim to help. However, amidst this perplexing moment of neoliberal contradiction, a genuine spirit of subaltern Caribbean autonomy does continue to live on.

Keywords: Anancy, Neoliberalism, Microfinance, Informal Economy, Reputation, Subaltern, Anti-Colonial, Folk-Tale, Resistance, Slavery, Hustler.

Introduction

> People need to carve out a space for themselves. If they have no education they use their wits and brains for other things. They need to carve out a space of their own, something which belongs to them, and using Anansi tactics is the only way they can get it.
>
> (Edward Seaga, former president of Jamaica, in Marshall 2001: 134)

'Anansi tactics', as Seaga refers to them, are traditionally the survival strategies of Caribbean subaltern[1] groups. Modelled upon the popular Creole folk hero of Anancy the Spider Man, this diverse range of adaptations enable impoverished Caribbean subjects to eke-out a living in the face of harsh structural realities. Anancy was born a deity in West Africa and transformed by 'the middle passage' into the folk tale trickster of Caribbean slaves; he survives to the present day in the popular

[1] I deploy Subaltern as a term 'drawn from Antonio Gramsci's writings, [which] refers to subordination in terms of class, caste, gender, race, language, and culture and was used to signify the centrality of dominant/ dominated relationships in history' (Prakash 1994: 1477). But, more specifically here I wish to use the term subaltern to describe a group of people that historically, politically and culturally occupy 'an autonomous domain... [that] neither originated from elite politics nor did its existence depend on the latter' (Gupta in Prakash 1994: 1478).

imagination of the Caribbean and its diaspora. Using cunning, intelligence and wit to outsmart larger more powerful opponents, this wily fictional actor embodies a Creole countercultural system of values and mores. This subaltern system is posited in opposition to the hegemonic Eurocentric codes of respectable Caribbean society, from which the large majority of Afro-Caribbean subjects have been historically excluded. The independent, adaptive and flexible figure of the spider man is always willing to bend the rules, and if necessary limbo-dance under laws he views as oppressive and constraining to his freedom.

As a product of the oratory faculty of Afro-Caribbean slaves, Anansi stories provided an escape from the dehumanization and brutality of plantation labour regimes. Firstly, they provided a space of freedom in the imagination where negated personhood and identity could be reclaimed through situating the self in narratives of Anansi's daring acts (Marshall 2001: 128). Second, this imaginary space could also constitute the ideological base for the materialisation of acts of defiance such as 'theft'[2], 'maroonage' (escape), and the exchange of 'licitly' and 'illicitly' procured goods (Eggleston 2001: 4). Such strategies or 'Anancyisms', as Eggleston terms them, are not merely relics of a pre-emancipation past. Rather, in the contemporary Caribbean context of high (formal) unemployment, low state welfare budgets and low private sector wages (McMichael 1998: 107-8), Anancy tactics remain critical for the survival of a large proportion of the Caribbean population. Anansi thus lives on in the informal activities of market 'higglers',' hucksters', 'hustlers' and 'middlemen', exchanging goods and services on the margins of the market, outside of the regulatory gaze of Caribbean states.

Before I go on, let us briefly digress by returning to Edward Seaga for a moment. Given Seaga's position as a conservative politician from the elite stratum of Jamaican society, a figurehead of Caribbean codes of respectability, and staunch advocate of tight labour and criminal laws (Headley 1985: 40); is it not fair to have assumed him an unlikely fan of Anancy's wily ways? Why would a strong supporter of the rule of law later come out and celebrate those operating outside of the very same legal structures he helped create? Surely his ministerial speech in the summer of 1984 on the need for "more discipline in the society" (Headley 1985: 40) contradicts his support for the untamed trickery of Jamaica's 'unofficial national hero' (Eggleston 2001: 5) in 2003. It may therefore be easy to dismiss this contradiction by suggesting we are simply dealing with the bipolar personality of a politician. However, to suggest this (as true as it might be to some extent) is to obscure two very important details which are central to this discussion.

The first is that some important shifts have taken place in the global political economy between the early 1980s and early 21st century. In this perplexing new age of messianic 'millennial capitalism' such contradictions are commonplace; with simultaneous processes of inclusion and marginalisation; the production of immediate wealth and inequalities; and the effects of increased freedoms and insecurity (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000: 298). I shall elaborate on these themes below, but it remains to say in the meantime that in the neoliberal moment old taken-for-granted positions become obscured (Elyachar 2002: 496). Yesterday's 'criminal' is transformed into

[2] Words such as 'theft' must be problematised in the context of plantation slavery, where brutally exploitative relations of production render illegitimate any claims to the products of stolen labour by plantation heads.

tomorrow's 'entrepreneur'; and contemporary capitalism with its friendly new 'human face'[3] looks 'down' (to impoverished consumers) almost as much as 'up' (Cross and Street 2009: 5). In short, what is produced is a paradoxical contemporary neoliberal moment into which Seaga's comments in 2003 must be contextualised.

The second important detail concerns not the character of Seaga, but of Anansi. Anansi may himself be described as a paradox. Anansi in his dynamism and liminality becomes the embodiment Creole syncretism. Both 'betwixt' and 'between', he is part spider, part man; part European, part African; part hero, part hustler; part empowered, part selfish; all depending on your particular perspective (Marshall 2001). He therefore occupies anarchic spaces beneath the rules, laws and controls of the state (Jonas 1990). From this he draws a liminal potency (Harris 1981): to gain access to goods and creatures which he may not otherwise have the opportunity to manipulate and meet; and to capture the imaginations of all those who tell and hear of his exploits. And in the minds of latter two – both teller and listener - his dynamism becomes a malleability. Thus carried through an oral tradition[4] Anansi will manifest himself (or occasionally *herself)* differently from teller to teller, locale to locale, and thus be thrust unto the listener in different lights. In turn, those listening will perceive his exploits in different subjective ways, and evaluate him with reference to their own culturally informed values and morals. In other words, Anansi and hence the practices based on him are regarded in diverse ways by the multiplicity of different actors who encounter him; thus Seaga's comments reflect a particular millennial perception of Anansi and his tactics.

In the course of this paper I wish to trace how the traditional subaltern figure of the Caribbean small trader - apparently operating informally on the margins of the global market - has been discursively re-positioned at the centre of neoliberalism's articulation in the Caribbean context. This repositioning, I suggest, serves to culturally embed a neoliberal logic in local subjectivities -thus giving neoliberalism in the Caribbean context a distinctly Creole 'twist' (Freeman 2005: 3). More specifically I wish to look at how the proliferation of 'micro-enterprise' initiatives across the Caribbean region, initiated by international donors and Caribbean governments, have aimed to create whole 'nation[s] of entrepreneurs' (Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Trade and Industry 1997). Further I wish focus on how this cooption, taming and honing of the Anancy survival strategies of Caribbean subaltern subjects– despite its supposedly 'benevolent' intentions to reduce poverty (Dolan 2005) – has at best been ambivalent in its implications for those it claims to serve.

On the one hand such initiatives can undeniably offer some level of public recognition and economic empowerment to women entrepreneurs traditionally excluded from male dominated public realms of counter-cultural economic activity. However, shifting dominant perceptions of Anancy tactics have conveniently coincided with the rolling back of state services and lowering of real wages in the corporate led export sector (Black 1997: 348; McMichael 1998: 107-8). Therefore, in the post-structural-adjustment era, universal state coverage and citizenship rights to basic goods and services have become a forgotten dream. Thus the attentions of development institutions and finance

[3] I wish her not to reify capitalism, endow it with human qualities, nor present it as a single monolithic entity; but instead simply illustrate a prevalent shift in the orientations of actors operating within and guiding global capitalist markets.

[4] Also known as "Orature" – 'the system of traditional word-of-mouth transmission of folkways, folktales and other cultural verbal art forms such as riddles, parables and proverbs in anecdotal form' (James 2004: 2).

ministries turn towards the most impoverished sectors of society to not only "fend for themselves"; but also I argue to subsidise private formal sectors that parasitically profit from 'the poor'. Furthermore, the extension of credit services to the most disadvantaged sectors of society produce relationships of debt and dependency between individuals and microfinance agencies. These relations produce new modes of discipline ensuring self-exploitation by entrepreneurs. This situation of self exploitation makes sure surplus value can be extracted by microfinance agencies in the form of interest - thus converting cultural forms (i.e. Anansi tactics) into capital to be accumulated (Elyachar 2005: 27-30). In short, I argue that in effect such Caribbean microfinance initiatives - despite dominant representations of them - are riddled with contradictions.

In what follows I will begin by briefly situating my argument in scholarly debates concerning the meaning and form of 'informality'. This will not be a comprehensive literature review, but shall instead simply introduce some key working themes in order to clearly orientate my argument. Next I shall offer an introduction to our protagonist – Anancy– discussing his historical emergence, the values he embodies and what he represents to different people. I will then go on to highlight the Creole traditions of trading and 'hustling', as counter-cultural practices largely associated with anti-colonial male dominated realms of 'reputation' (Wilson 1969; 1973). Here, I will draw a clear conceptual overlap between Anancy tactics and reputation oriented practices. In the final section I will fast forward to the present, describing and analysing the contradictory implications of Caribbean 'microenterprise' initiatives as a central feature of neoliberalism's articulation in the region.

Conceptualising 'Informality'

Informal economic activity has been framed by social scientists in a multiplicity of different ways. Terms such as 'the informal economy', 'underground economy' (Portes et al 1989: 3), 'second economy' (MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga 2000), 'hidden economy', 'black economy' (Harding and Jenkins 1989) and 'shadow economy' (Schneider and Enste1999*;* Duffy 2007*:* 188; Hart forthcoming); are used synonymously to refer to economic 'activities that are unmeasured, unrecorded and, in varying degrees, outside or on the margins of the law' (MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga 2000: 5). In other words, such terms refer to those 'undeclared' economic practises that are seen to exist in a realm outside of the regulatory gaze (and reach) of the state (Hart forthcoming).

Early anthropological conceptions of informality derived from a classical concern with objectively distinct economic 'spheres of exchange' (Kopytoff 1986: 71-2; Firth 1967). Such structuralist compartmentalisations of economic practice suggested a separate conceptual space of informality existed in capitalist, centrally planned and later 'third world' countries. Such studies around the 1960s and 1970s, viewed 'the informal economy' as 'somehow isolated or critically different from the economic mainstream' (Harding and Jenkins: 1989).

However, in the 1980s with the influence of post-structuralism, there came significant transformations in anthropological theory. More specifically for this discussion, there took place a shift away from anthropological focus on the objective structures and rigid conceptual boundaries that enable economic systems to exist. To instead, emphasis being placed on the diverse processes

and agencies that produce those systems. Therefore, to Portes et al. informality is 'a process of income generation' (1989: 12), 'a heterogeneous universe... irreducible to any subset of specific rules of economic calculation' (1989: 25). Furthermore, Harding and Jenkins assert that the formal-informal dichotomy is based on a 'sociological construct':

> Between the formal and the informal, we do not believe that it is possible to draw a firm, sharp line... as separate domains of social experience. There is, to be sure a distinction to be made, but it is a distinction between ends of a continuum (1989: 174).

Therefore, it is important that we see informality as not an epiphenomenal economic process, but 'an integral component of total...economies, rather than a marginal appendix to them' (Portes 1989: 13). Thus, rather than referring below to 'the informal economy' as an objective '*thing*', I choose instead to deploy 'informality' as a heuristic theoretical tool to describe a range of economic *processes* that evade the regulatory optics of the state.

Following from this 'hybrid economies' perspective (Yang 2000), it becomes possible to trace important linkages between formality and informality. Once rendered visible these linkages enable us to see how - contrary to dominant narratives – informality often supports and complements formal economic activity (Harrison 1988: 107-8). Thus, rather than seeing informality as a 'parasitic' (Arthur Lewis in Karides 2005) 'drag on growth and rising social well being... [to be] viewed with concern' (World Bank 2007). We may instead see informal activity as subsidizing the low wages of deregulated private industry. Hence enabling the reproduction of an overexploited and increasingly casualised labour force, and contributing to formal corporate growth (Harrison 1988: 107).

Furthermore, with Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) being commonplace across the Caribbean, reductions in welfare spending and government provision of public goods have placed increased pressure on informality to maintain social wellbeing. Finally, shifts in development discourse towards celebrating informal microenterprise as a 'panacea for Third World poverty' reduction (Karides 2005: 30), also challenge the above statements of The World Bank. In short, we must invert the orthodox view that informality parasitically feeds on formal economic practice. We must instead see the undeclared incomes of informal traders as attempting to keep poverty at bay; trying to plug gaps in state provision of services/goods; and maintaining formal economic growth.

Central to informal economic practice is the small trader. The figure of the informal small trader is a transnational one. From Kinshasa (MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga 2000) to New York (Sassen 1988) to Accra (Hart 1973) similar economic actors participate in unregulated trade. However, due to diversities in the historical, cultural, social and political contexts in which economic practices are embedded; from locale to locale informality will have its own distinct 'flavour'. Here I focus on informality in the Anglophone Caribbean focusing on some of its own distinctly Creole particularities. However, since we can assume some common experiences of informality from context to context, I wish to draw (where relevant) on some of the theoretical insights of scholars working elsewhere within and beyond the Caribbean.

Now that I have offered a basic conceptual mapping of informality I wish in what follows to introduce Anancy, and locate those economic activities based upon him within that conceptual cartography.

An ('informal') introduction to an anti-colonial hero

> He was a man and he was a spider... Anansi's home was the villages and forests of West Africa. From there long years ago thousands of men and women came to the islands of the Caribbean. They brought with them the stories that they loved, the stories about clever Br'er Anansi and his friends... Today the people of the islands still tell these stories to each other. So in some country village in Jamaica when the sun goes down the children gather round... In the dim light they see the animals ...behaving like men and women. They see how excited everyone becomes as soon as Anansi appears. They laugh at the ways in which he tricks all the strong animals and gets the better of those who are much bigger than himself.
>
> (Chapter entitled 'Who Was Anansi?' in Sherlock 1964: 1-2)

> Culture must be viewed historically if it is to be understood at all
>
> (Sidney Mintz 1982: 508)

If we take this assertion by Sydney Mintz to be true, then it follows that we must historicise the Creole figure of Anancy the Spider Man if we are to attempt to truly understand who he is, what he does, and what he represents. The origins of Jamaican Anancy have been traced back to those identified as Akan peoples, from what is today Ghana, West Africa (Yankah 1983; Eggleston 2001). 'The Akan' 'constitute a cluster of ethnic groups' speaking different *Twi* dialects, of which Ashanti, Fanti and Akwapem make up the numerical majority (Yankah 1983: 2-3). *Ananse Krokroko* – 'the great spider' – has traditionally occupied the position of a god within Akan cosmologies (Marshall 2001: 128). Second only to (and regularly outsmarting) the 'supreme being' - *Nyame* (Eggleston 2001: 6) - this trickster of divine status is oft considered a symbol of great knowledge, and referred to as 'the wise one' by believers (Marshall 2001: 128). Also in this context (as a divine mirror of the human self) Ananse is situated within a family, with a wife and four children (Yankah 1983: 7). However, Ananse's position as household-head and symbol of wisdom does not stop him from being 'always on the move and commuting between the human, non-human and supernatural worlds, cheating... committing adultery, fooling, and being fooled' (Yankah 1983: 7). Thus, despite differences in spiritual significance and social context, Ananse in his trickery and cunning bears a clear resemblance to his New World descendant.

However, the popular association of the spider with trickery is/was not only common amongst the Akan, but also elsewhere across Central and West Africa. The folk figures of *Tule/Ture* in Azande and Ngbandi culture (DR Congo and The Congo); *Wosi* amongst the Limba (Cameroon); and *Gisso* in Hausa culture (Niger, Nigeria); are all spiders who represent trickery, craftiness and cunning (Yankah 1983: 10). As well as all sharing the association of spiders with such attributes (as mentioned), each of these populations also shares another common historical feature of importance to this discussion. All of these groups have had members of their populations taken as slaves to the 'New World'. Therefore, despite attempts by slave traders and plantation owners to divide up linguistic /ethnic groups upon arrival in the Caribbean, in order to undermine slave solidarities and capacities to

collectively organise (Mintz 1971); traces of some shared cultural forms did 'survive'[5] the 'middle passage' in order to be reinvented in the Caribbean context. Anancy[6] of the Caribbean - as descendant of Akan Ananse/ Anansi (and the other African trickster spiders) - was one such 'survivor'. Thus, Anancy was (re)born amidst the brutality of plantation labour and complex syncretic intermingling of African, European and Amerindian cultures. Therefore, 'As the situation of his people changed, Anansi changed too and he was transformed from the deity of the Asante to the folk hero of Jamaican slaves' (Marshall 2001: 128).

Still revered, but transformed to the status of mortal/spider, Anancy became 'a symbolic representation', a mirror of the self to the slaves who told and heard of his antics (Marshall 2001: 128). Within the dehumanisation and extreme violence of plantation slavery regimes, stories of Anancy's triumph over larger and stronger opponents enabled imagined spaces of reclaimed selfhood to emerge amongst Caribbean slaves. But, although *imagined* (i.e. originating in the imagination) the exploits of Anansi were not simply *imaginary*. They underpinned a whole 'ethos of survival' that became prevalent in the region (James 2004: 2). Thus, 'Anancyism' as a Creole disposition, an orientation unto the world, materialised as

> ...a guide to surviving adversity... a pattern of behaviour which involves being able to find a loophole in every situation so that the apparently disempowered individual manages to come out on top. It is also a philosophy of resilience which encourages the individual to meet hardship with humour thereby avoiding bitterness (Eggleston 2001: 3).

In other words, what emerged was a culturally embedded subaltern 'hunger' – in two senses of the word (Eggleston 2001: 8).On the one hand, a 'hunger of every type' (e.g. material, spiritual, existential, political) produced by abuses, violence and privations - the inherent negations of the plantation slavery system(Eggleston 2001: 8). And on the other, a positive 'hunger', a drive that develops within subjects faced by such regimes of brutality. A hunger to creatively unlock spaces of freedom and agency through the use of whatever 'tactics' or 'tools' individuals have disposable to them.

Anancy's 'tools' – in the absence of physical strength and weapons - are his intelligence, adaptability and cunning:

> The Anansi born in Africa but raised on Jamaican plantations is a hoaxter, he tricks us all; a seemingly innocent spider with a secret might. He can be many things – and he is not what

[5] I problematize the word 'survive' here because I wish to step away from an excessive Caribbeanist concern with the tracing of 'pristine' and 'authentic' African cultural forms back across the 'middle passage'. Whilst acknowledging the ontological and epistemological desire to "recover what has been lost" (heritage, culture, religion, 'roots'...etc) amongst the decedents of African slaves. I feel it is important to acknowledge culture as a continually changing and shifting concept. Therefore, I wish instead to invoke here some of the complex, shifting and fragmented historico-cultural trajectories, or 'routes' that span the 'Black Atlantic' (Gilroy 1993: 4); which in turn produce a diverse range of syncretisms (e.g. Anancy) across different Caribbean locales.

[6] *Anancy* is the distinctly Creole, 'indigenous' Caribbean spelling of the name, deriving from how it is spoken in Anglophone Caribbean vernaculars. *Anansi* derives from the African spelling of the term adopted in the Caribbean in the latter half if the 20th century, coinciding with the re-emergence of Pan-Africanist politics. I choose to use Anancy because I am referring here to the Spider Man in his Creole form (Berry 1991: VI).

> meets the eye. He is a trickster extraordinaire, constantly outwitting larger animals and stopping at nothing to get his own way (Marshall 2001: 128).

Hence, Anansi in his autonomous actions is very much driven towards achieving his own goals, by both 'licit' and 'illicitly' defined means.

However, although he is an individual, Anancy is more than that. Anancy is part of an 'ancestral package' (2001: 131) which celebrates the counter-cultural 'protest morality' he embodies (2001: 132). This moral system is 'based on a coherent order of values; [and] it assumes that laws that are oppressive and immoral should not be obeyed' (2001: 132). Furthermore, this subaltern ideological framework has been historically posited in direct opposition to the hegemonic Eurocentric codes and values of respectable colonial (and post-colonial) society (See Wilson 1969 below). Therefore,

> in the plantation environment stealing, cheating and lying for your own benefit and preservation would be reflected and rationalised in Anansi's behaviour[7]. Anansi combated guilt and embodied the different standards of living the enslaved were forced to adopt (Marshall 2001: 129).

Furthermore, the valorisation of Anansi, his actions and the anti-colonial protest morality he represents; also serves to confer a sense of subaltern solidarity amongst all those who see a little of themselves in the actions of Jamaica's 'unofficial national hero' (Eggleston 2001: 5). The metaphor of Anansi's web may be fitting here, since in Jamaica - a society 'fragmented from its inception' (Eggleston 2001: 15; Mintz 1971) - Anancy acts as an agent of unity[8]. The processes of listening and telling (as well as now watching and reading) of Anancy's daring exploits serve to spin webs of solidarity that bind Caribbean kin, local groupings, and even national and transnational diasporic communities[9]. In the post-colonial period where political divisions often make projects of creating national and regional pan-Caribbean unity strained. Anancy 'fashioned out of the particular West Indian landscape where he has become a synecdoche for Caribbean ingenuity, endurance, and commitment to self-preservation' (James 2004: 3) can become an adhesive folk symbol that serves to bring together national and transnational Caribbean communities in processes of collective imagining.

Thus far, I have introduced Anancy the spider man, his history and the value system he embodies. Next I shall discuss the long tradition of informal small scale trading in the Caribbean, and highlight

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[7] For an example of Anancy's trickery see the story of 'The Gold Rush' in which Anansi finds out the whereabouts of Brer Rabbit's buried treasure and manages to outsmart Brer Rabbit, Brer Bear and the farmer (who's land it is buried under) in order to make-off with the treasure and become rich (Makhanlall 1973: 14-18).

[8] Much like what Chavannes documents with reference to Rastafarian beliefs. Chavannes highlights a similar counter cultural, reputation oriented rejection of colonial codes of respectability amongst the Rastafari of Jamaica, to that of the Anansi ethos. As Chevannes illustrates, in the context of political violence and racism in post-independence in Jamaica, the Rasta movement helps to contribute towards - the 'healing [of] the nation' (Chevannes 1990).

[9] Theoretical links between the collective national imaginings produced by Anansi orature and Benedict Anderson's 'print capitalism' in 'imagined communities' could be made (Anderson [1983] 2006). However, due to insufficient space and limited relevance (to the specificities of this discussion) I choose not to develop such theoretical links here. But, this window of inquiry does remain open for future exploration elsewhere.

overlaps between 'Anancyisms' and these economic survival strategies. In other words, I will highlight how situated within the same counter-cultural scheme of 'reputation', these informal trading practices constitute the real-world *factual* manifestations of the *figurative* Anancy ethos.

Caribbean informal traders and the 'reputation' of Anancy

Much like Anancy, subaltern informal trading practices have a long and deep history in the Caribbean region. Thus, in line with Mintz's above quote on the need to historicize culture, Katherine Browne asserts: 'In the Caribbean cultural area, the historical particularity of slavery and sugar plantations conditions the form and scale of informal economic activity found here' (1996: 226). Let us therefore return now to focus on the plantation -the home of 'New World' Anancy - in order to locate the emergence of the adaptive Caribbean small trader, 'higgler[10], or middleman... [who] finds his/her prototype in slave society' (Mintz 1974: 195); and has a lot in common with Anancy.

In his seminal study on the post-emancipation emergence of the Jamaican peasantry, entitled *Caribbean Transformations*, Sydney Mintz locates slave marketing activity as far back as the 17th century (1974: 196). Slaves were allocated 'provision plots' on which they were allowed to engage in 'unsupervised production', to cultivate foodstuffs outside of formal labour time (1974: 194-5). Although allocated primarily to transfer the costs of feeding the workforce *to the workforce,* this system also enabled any surplus production by slaves to be independently traded at markets. Legislative attacks on slave marketing were common from the Jamaican colonial government and the church: the former wanting to maintain European monopoly over island economic activity; and the latter condemning Sunday marketing as unholy (Mintz 1974: 197-8). However, population increases on the island from the late 17th century created rising demand for such marketing. Furthermore, tenacious slave resistance to any legislation attempting to stop their trading activities forced the colonial governments of Jamaica and Barbados to allow for the selling of specific provisions at market places (Mintz 1974: 197-8; Beckles 1999: 141). Therefore, by the latter part of the 18th century,

> One century after the first ...Jamaican market was created, the slaves had made a place for themselves in the free economic activity of the country which would never thereafter be challenged (Mintz 1974: 201).

From this we can see that - much like informality in the contemporary moment - the informal practices of Caribbean slaves rendered visible important contradictions in the dominant economic system of the time. Not only (as mentioned above) did unsupervised production help to maintain and support the plantation economy; but at the very same time it resisted that system of bondage, as it gave the slaves a sense of economic autonomy and empowerment. Hence, slave marketing and provisioning constituted 'adaptive patterns ... which might be said to have contributed both to the effective operation of the [plantation] system on the one hand and to its progressive weakening on the other' (Mintz 1974: 211-2).

[10] I use the terms 'huckstering' (Beckles 1999), 'higgling' (Mintz 1974; Besson 1993: 25), and 'scuffing' (Harrison 1988: 109) interchangeably to refer to 'the distributive dimension of small scale productive domestic activity' (Beckles 1999: 141).

The significance of slave 'higgler' practices as a site of resistance must not be underestimated. As Jean Besson notes, the Jamaican marketing system 'is rooted in the proto-peasant adaptation...of plantation slaves, established in resistant response to the slave plantation system' (1993: 25). The cultivation and selling of produce that was *their own* property, was of critical importance in an environment where not even their own material bodies were considered (by dominant society) to belong to them. 'Higgling' generated monetary incomes, which conferred consumption power to slaves. Hence, 'Higglers' through the purchase of foodstuffs were able to gain access to sufficient nourishment, in a context where plantation rations (if available) often failed to meet basic nutritional needs. They were also able to access manufactured goods otherwise unattainable to slaves, such as European clothing (Beckles 1999: 141-2). Manufactured goods became signifiers of distinction and prestige amongst those slaves who acquired them. They communicated that the owner had used dynamism and taken risks to procure them. Such goods also became the symbolic elements from which new selves could be individually and innovatively 'fashioned' by slaves, in the face of 'the most dehumanizing assault on selfhood imaginable' (Mintz and Price 1992: 50-1). Therefore, the ability to exercise 'managerial authority' over goods and services outside of the view of the 'massa' or colonial officials, created necessary spaces of freedom for slaves struggling to claim a sense of self, and survive the extreme violence of plantation regimes (Beckles 199: 141).

In addition to 'higgling', the clandestine appropriation of goods - or 'theft' as it was framed by dominant society - also constituted a risky economic survival strategy by bonded, freed and 'marooned' (escaped) slaves (Beckles 1999: 145-6). Beckles cites an interesting story of 'cunning' and 'deviousness' on the 18th century Newton plantation, Barbados (1999: 145-6). He describes how a house-slave with a freed aunt who worked as a 'higgler' would covertly channel supplies (rum, sugar...etc) from the 'Massa's' house store to the aunt to be sold informally (Beckles 1999: 146). Such acts were criminalised by colonial government, who characterised 'hucksters' as 'thieves' and 'plunderers', as if feeding parasitically from the formal and 'legitimate' economic activity of planters. However, slaves of course often rationalised these actions differently, since these products were seen as their own rightful property. Such goods were the fruits of their own labour, the rights to which they had been violently denied. Therefore, taking them back was considered logical and just. This logic is exemplified by the words of one slave accused of 'stealing' from a plantation, who asserted '*me no tief him; me take him from mass*' (Beckles 1999: 145). In other words, where indicted for 'theft' of an object considered be the property of his master, the enslaved man responded by asserting that the object was not stolen, but taken *back* from the master. Therefore, we can see such acts of appropriation as crucial assertions of economic autonomy, in conditions where such avenues independence are limited and often deemed illegitimate.

However, much like Anancy's actions we cannot simply view illicitly defined economic practices as isolated acts of defiance. We must instead situate these assertions of agency within the counter-cultural system of values in which they operate in opposition to the formal laws of dominant society. Indeed, Peter Wilson suggests that such acts are central to the oppositional Caribbean 'value complex' he famously refers to as 'reputation' (1969: 76; 1973). He goes on to assert that,

> ...the very activities most central to the achievement and maintenance of ... reputation are those proclaimed illegal by the total society.... In fact, in its most general sense a reputation

> is gained according to the degree to which a man is proficient in undermining, disobeying or circumventing the legal system (1969: 81).

Wilson suggests that this informal 'egalitarian system of reputation' emerges as a direct 'rejection of colonial orthodoxy' - otherwise known as 'respectability' (Besson 1993: 17; Wilson 1973). For Wilson, reputation is rooted in notions of personal proficiency (e.g. individual skills, knowledge, adaptability...etc) rather than social worth (e.g. class position, wealth, formal schooling...etc). Reputation is thus constructed in dialectical opposition to the Eurocentric values of the dominant society from which Caribbean subaltern males have been historically excluded. Furthermore, this informal counter-cultural orientation produces a sense of subaltern *communitas*- a loosely structured community spirit which defines all members as socially equal. A collective subaltern identity is thus produced which enables the simultaneous 'attainment of individual identity and social relatedness through activities and behaviour accessible to these people' (Wilson 1969: 82). Therefore, similarly to the power of Anancy to bring Jamaican, and more generally Caribbean communities together, informal reputation-oriented economic activity 'occupies an especially potent place' in the Caribbean subaltern's cultural landscape (Freeman 2005: 2).

At this point the conceptual overlap between 'Anancy tactics' and Caribbean informal economic activity should be much clearer. However, before continuing I shall briefly bring together Anancy and the Caribbean small trader, in order to explicitly (re)articulate some of their common characteristics. Firstly, both 'Anancy tactics' and 'higgling' practices have a common history emerging as acts of resistance amidst the routine violence of plantation regimes. They both enabled a positive self identity to be constructed by slaves in opposition to colonial regimes that negated their humanity. Secondly, both Anancyisms and Informal economic activities were/are situated within subaltern counter-cultural value system. They both draw legitimacy and valorisation from oppositional moralities which celebrate autonomy, individual skill, risk taking and flexibility. Finally, both Anancy and small informal traders - through the value systems they represent - are able to bring together subaltern communities on a local, national and transnational scale. Based on all of these commonalities it is logical to draw together the intimately tied Anancy tactics and 'higgling' practices of subaltern groups into a single conceptual complex. *Anancyist Informality* may therefore like informality (above) be utilised to refer heuristically to the informal, cunning, reputation-oriented tactics outlined in this and the previous section.

In what follows I highlight how the informal Anancy tactics of small Caribbean traders take on new significance in the neoliberal moment, inform neoliberalism's articulation in the Caribbean context, and produce contradictory effects.

The ambivalences of neoliberalism and 'microenterprise' initiatives

As Rebecca Prentice asserts, we live in the 'the age of the daring individual' (2009: 138). This latest moment in the evolution of global capitalism known as Neoliberalism, was set in motion from the late 1970s by the Thatcher-Reagan regimes, and elaborated globally thereafter by the IMF, World Bank and other International Financial Institutions (IFIs) (Harvey 2007: 23). This new orthodoxy places at its centre the entrepreneur – neoliberalism's 'quintessential actor' (Freeman 2007: 252). It

follows then that neoliberalism as a 'hegemonic discourse' (Harvey 2007; Bourdieu 1998) advocates for 'the maximization of entrepreneurial freedoms... [through an] institutional framework characterized by private property rights, individual liberty, unencumbered markets, and free trade' (Harvey 2007: 22). This neoliberal doxa has come to constitute an unquestioned logic based on a 'dehistoricised' and 'desocialised' theory (Bourdieu 1998). It has become 'a mathematical fiction' naturalized and accepted as a universal common-sense view of the world (Bourdieu 1998: 1). Further, this theory makes the 'utopian' (Bourdieu 1998) claim that unfettered markets left to their own devices will ensure the most efficient and beneficial allocation of wealth to *all* those who participate in 'casino capitalism' (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000: 298).

However, given the lofty claims of this supposedly messianic master discourse, it is unsurprising that the perplexing new world it produces is fraught with contradictions: simultaneously including and marginalising; producing vast wealth and inequalities; and creating new freedoms and insecurities all at the same time (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000: 298). Nowhere are these contradictions more visible than the Caribbean region: where small island economies historically oriented towards monocrop production and highly dependent on imports, are extremely vulnerable to the insecurities and vagaries of unregulated trade (Green 2007). Hence, as a direct result of the soaring global oil prices of the 1970s, Caribbean governments accrued great debts from international donors. To service such debts they were forced to take loans from the IMF and other IFIs who imposed upon them strict Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) (McMichael 1998). These SAPs demanded the privatisation of public assets; the stripping back of public expenditure; the removal of legal 'barriers' to free trade (e.g. import tariffs and taxes on trade); and the devaluation of the currency to promote foreign direct investment; all producing devastating effects (McMichael 1998: 107).

Take Jamaica for example. In the 1970-90 period the proportion of the national budget for public infrastructure, agriculture, youth and community plummeted by 50%; and health and education by 20% (McMichael 1998: 108). With Caribbean governments significantly reducing their provision of public goods to their populations, alongside lowered individual purchasing power due to removal of minimum wage regulations and the devalued Jamaican dollar; the effects were unsurprising. Rising economic insecurity, 'growing poverty, desperation and disenfranchisement' followed for local populations (Klak and Myers 1998: 106; echoed by Black 1997: 238) For many Caribbean - like their slave ancestors – taking risks (or 'gambling') became a necessary part of day-to-day survival. Therefore, contrary to claims by the World Bank that 'in most countries, trade liberalization appears to have modest or no effects on informality' (World Bank 2007); I argue that reductions in government spending on public goods and services transfers the costs of the provision of those goods and services to the public themselves. Those most impoverished within society who cannot meet these costs with formal earnings, often engage in informal activity to cushion this burden (Harrison 1988).

However, from the 1990s - once the 'lost decade' of the 80s had drawn to a welcome close (Barbero in Canclini 2000: 41) - it is possible to witness a seemingly dramatic twist in the neoliberal narrative. A new friendly-faced neoliberal capitalism appeared, making the same lofty salvational claims, but supposedly without the inherent contradictions (Cross and Street 2009: 4-5; Prahalad 2004). The IFIs (and transnational corporations standing alongside them) began using such words as 'partnerships', 'participation' and 'dialogue' (The IMF 2000); appropriating the language 'grassroots globalisation'

(Appadurai 2000) to depoliticising effect. 'The Poor' - talked about as if one homogenous group - became positioned in mainstream development discourse (and business discourse with which it had begun to converge) as the drivers of future growth in the 'Global South'. Yesterdays assumption that 'market based solutions cannot lead to poverty reduction and economic development' (Prahalad 2004: 33) was apparently replaced by 'sustainable win-win scenarios' (2004: 27) that aimed to unlock the benevolent potential of 'the market' (as if itself a misunderstood animate entity).

At the centre of this new neoliberal agenda we find the 'micro-entrepreneur', who - to elaborate on Freeman above (2005: 252) - we might refer to as: neoliberalism's quintessential *post-structural adjustment* actor. Microenterprise and Microfinance initiatives modelled on the award winning[11] Grameen bank of Bangladesh, have in recent years proliferated globally. Furthermore, with their widespread popularity, many have lauded microenterprise initiatives as a 'Panacea for Third World poverty' (Karides 2005: 30). Their stated aim has been to 'empower' and support emerging micro-entrepreneurs from impoverished communities (Hume and Moore 2006). Microenterprise initiatives, often funded by multilateral and bilateral international donors, also seek to promote 'benevolent' 'pro-poor' growth by positioning the impoverished individual 'entrepreneur' under their 'trusteeship'- as both 'object' and 'means' of development (Dolan 2005: 417). Therefore, through 'the provision of banking services', as well as 'capacity building' and other forms of training (Knight et al. 2008); microenterprise initiatives hope to release the 'hidden entrepreneurial qualities of the third world poor – especially women' (Elyacher 2002: 496). Thus, transforming 'the poor' into empowered entrepreneurial subjects - the vanguard of future growth in the 'Global South' - in order for the 'poor to help themselves *and* the economy' (i.e. 'win-win') (Elyacher 2002: 500).

In the Caribbean region Microenterprise initiatives supported by The Inter American Development Bank, USAID, The World Bank and other IFIs, have been enthusiastically adopted[12] by many island governments (Knight et al. 2008; Karides 2005). As we have already seen the implications of Caribbean SAPs were devastating, thus government calls to assimilate 'the genius for survival of the poor' (Elyachar 2002: 508) into their official attempts to 'cushion' the 'temporary suffering' produced by SAPs is unsurprising (2002: 501). It follows then that neoliberalism with its essential demand for 'flexibility' (Bourdieu 1998), looks to the Caribbean subaltern system of 'reputation' - and its traditional valorisation of individual adaptiveness - to find its local rooting. Furthermore, much like we saw above with Seaga's millennial perception of Anancyisms – all across the Caribbean (and beyond) – 'practices once dismissed as "backward"...have become the vanguard of entrepreneurial savvy in the global age'(Elyachar 2002: 496). The longstanding Caribbean subaltern tradition of Anancyist informal activity (as discussed above) – with the great political and cultural significance it bears – is thus seen by Caribbean Ministries of Finance as the fertile cultural ground in which to embed new neoliberal entrepreneurial orientations. And also means of simultaneously absorbing the destructive effects of SAPs. In other words, the pure logics of rational calculation and entrepreneurial freedom can be readily instilled at the level of subjectivity by simply *capturing* and

[11] I refer here to the 2006 Nobel Peace prize being awarded the Muhammad Yunus and the Grameen Bank (Knight et al. 2008: 10)

[12] See for example 2005-25 National Strategic Plan of the Barbadian government (2005) in which firm commitments to prioritise 'entrepreneurial development' were made. Also see *Caribbean Net News* (August 24, 2006) for Jamaican ministers support for microenterprise initiatives. .

taming the pre-existing figure of the informal trader/ Anancy tactician (we shall return to this below).

However, despite the 'win-win' rhetoric of those celebrating these 'empowering' new initiatives; like the naked free market fundamentalism of the 1980s, this new model of cuddly capitalism also produces contradictory consequences. As Freeman highlights for women workers in the informatics industry (1998; 2000) and middle class female entrepreneurs in Barbados (2005; 2007), neoliberalism *can* (for all of its failings) bring with it some very empowering effects for women. Microenterprise initiatives as manifestation of Caribbean neoliberalism are in this respect no different. Amidst the flux and change that characterises the millennial reconfiguration of global capital, some spaces of freedom from the gendered parochialisms of the past can be unlocked. Subaltern Caribbean women as informal economic agents have been historically excluded from many of the 'reputation' coded spaces of economic practice (e.g. the street corner or sum shop) (Wilson 1973). Therefore, microenterprise can contribute to a discursive and practical centring of female informality.

Associated more commonly with the domestic domains of 'respectability' (e.g. home and yard) – due to a history as house slaves and sometimes planter concubines (Besson 1993: 16) – female informality was generally associated with income generating practices such as seamstressing (Prentice 2008: 113), washing and cleaning (Harrison 1989: 119). Furthermore, where female informality did exist it was often not adequately recognized or given sufficient scholarly attention (See Beckles 1999: 140 for pre-emancipation era; see Besson 1993 from pre-emancipation to the 1990s). Besson for example is highly critical of Wilson's lack of focus on the reputation-oriented practices of female 'higglers'; who she rightly claims are not given enough attention by Wilson for their counter-cultural economic practices: such as owning rum shops, grocery stores and market stalls that compete with their male counterparts (Besson 1993: 25-7). In addition, the figure of Anansi - to which much the informal practices of Caribbean subaltern subjects are closely tied – is usually *himself* gendered ('Uncle 'Nancy', 'Br'er Anancy', 'Ceiling Thomas'...etc as he is variably titled). Therefore, informality can be seen across much of the region to be a gendered phenomenon, characterised by the spatial segregation and under-recognition of women's higgling practices.

Microenterprise initiatives where they exist have been seen to offer significant levels of empowerment to some women, who view them as a route towards economic success, improved self esteem and improved status/ social worth (see Dolan and Scott 2009 for contemporary South African equivalent). This is no different for some Caribbean women who - historically excluded from the empowering effects of Anancyist informality - are offered by microenterprise initiatives a new means accessing them. Success stories about women who have dragged themselves out of poverty with the help of micro-credit and micro-entrepreneurial training schemes, are common in much of the promotional literature of such initiatives (see USAID 2009; Microfinance Focus 2009; Blim 2005: 262). A typical example of such a story comes from The Foundation for International Community Assistance (FINCA International). FINCA is a transnational microfinance lending company which is founded on 'commercial principles' and aims to 'provide financial services to the world's lowest-income entrepreneurs' (FINCA 2010a). FINCA feature in their 'client stories' section of their website Nicole Moise of Haiti, who after receiving a loan of 2,000 Haitian Gourdes (Approx £30) in 2000 was

able to start up a small business selling cosmetics, clothing and other manufactured products in order to support her four children. She is quoted on the FINCA website as saying:

> FINCA Haiti is my rock, my father and my best friend. This organization helped me take care of my kids and also empowered me financially in a way most of us Haitian women only dream of. FINCA Haiti is my everything! (FINCA 2010b)

Of course it would be easy to cynically dismiss such an enthusiastic celebration of FINCA's work as purely part of the branding campaign of a commercially run NGO. However, unless Nicole Moise has been (even more cynically) misquoted by FINCA, to dismiss her words in this way could serve to discursively disempower her; and suggest without substantiating evidence that hers is a 'false consciousness'[13]. Rather, by accepting her words at face-value we can recognize that by being given the chance to become an informal trader she is simply one of the lucky 'winners' in the Caribbean neoliberal 'casino'.

However, the less positive stories of other impoverished Caribbean women documented by Karides (2005) confirm the contradictory effects produced by microenterprise initiatives; and serve to undermine any suggestions that these programmes present 'win-win' outcomes for all parties involved (2005: 31). Indeed, Karides suggests that the Trinidadian street vendors she interviewed often regarded the schemes as burdensome: increasing their workload and constraining their individual freedom; without addressing the patriarchal basis of the inequalities they claim to remedy (Karides 2005). By unquestioningly positioning women entrepreneurs as heads of households - responsible for their economic survival – microfinance professionals in many cases neglected women's domestic labour. Thus, with the pressure of loan repayment, 'self-exploitation' (working longer hours to repay debts) inevitably occurred alongside household labour. These schemes consequently placed a 'double burden' on women, without locating men or patriarchal domestic relations in the equation at all. Therefore, despite the claims of microfinance initiatives to empower women, they often have the opposite effects of disempowering, indebting and overworking female traders: as they unfairly expect 'Shoeless women [to] lift... themselves up by their bootstraps' (Aslam in Karides 2005: 35).

The relations of indebtedness and dependency produced by the Caribbean microfinance schemes such as those described above, can be understood as what Elyachar calls 'dispossession through empowerment' (2005: 217). This oxymoronic concept embodies the paradoxical effects that lie at the heart of neoliberal transformation. It suggests that Microenterprise initiatives attempting to *incorporate* the once neglected informality of subaltern communities into dominant markets; at the same time *dispossess* those very communities of the value produced by their culturally defined informal practices (Elyachar 2005: 8-30). Drawing on Harvey's notion of 'accumulation by dispossession' (Harvey 2003) Elyachar suggests Microfinance is a means through which the social practices and cultural values of 'the poor' can be 'financialized', thus converted into market exchange value. This example of what Marx refers to as *Kapitalverwertung* – making-into-capital-value (there is no direct English translation) (K Marx [1867] 1990) – opens up 'Bottom of the Pyramid' (BOP) financial markets (Prahalad 2004: 115) from which profits can be extracted by

[13] For a similar discussion on women and false consciousness in the neoliberal Caribbean see Freeman (2000: 260-1)

lenders in the form of interest. Therefore, microfinance initiatives through 'empowerment debt' serve to extend the reach of dominant neoliberal Caribbean markets into subaltern communities; and to dispossess those communities of social and cultural resources (we shall return to this below). Therefore, again formal economic markets can be observed to parasitically profit from informality.

'Empowerment debt' in the Caribbean is made possible by two popularisations. The first is the pervasion of the popular notion that NGOs are by default not-for-profit organisations (Willetts 2002: 2). Since microfinance agencies are commonly marketed as NGOs, they are often presumed not to be driven by a profit motive. However, as the example of FINCA and those documented by Michael Blim illustrate: the model of the commercially oriented microloan agency – 'established for the market' (Elyachar 2005: 10) - is 'leading the way in the transformation of microlending into a profitable, private banking business' (Blim 2005: 267).Therefore, this assumption of non-profit orientation endows microfinance initiatives with a moral authority which is rarely commanded by "openly private" financial enterprises. The second popularisation is the romantic veneration of the informal trader by scholars. This 'populist celebration' of informality is notably the pursuit of anthropologists, who are often in admiration of informal traders' determinism, hard-work, autonomy and willingness to take risks (Blim 2005: 258). However, the idealised cultural representations of informality prevalent in the works of anthropologists such as MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga (2000), or Katherine Browne (2002), provide the empirical (and even ideological) foundations upon which microfinance initiatives claiming to "help the little man" can be built. Therefore, despite these scholars' good intentions to enthusiastically document the agencies of marginalised groups; in their lack of neoliberal contextualisation of informality, they fail to see how their work could contribute to the 'dispossession' of those they intended to celebrate.

Indebting and Taming Anancy

The final and most important negative implications of Caribbean microfinance initiatives (to this discussion), directly follow from the notion of 'empowerment through dispossession' described above. As already discussed here at length, Anancy tactics and the reputation oriented informal practices with which they overlap - have a deep cultural and social significance to many subaltern Caribbean communities. The value systems in which these practices are located (as we have seen) are also central to the identities of these communities. It follows then that we must reiterate the question posed by Elyacher in *Markets of Dispossession*: 'what happens when [*these*] cultural practices of the poor are financialized through debt, and tapped as a source of profit for banks?' (2005: 191).

To turn again to Elyachar, it is clear that what occurs is the 'indebting of culture'. This 'entails the appropriation and cooption of pre-existing cultural and social achievements' (2002: 511; 2005: 29). The 'indebting of culture' leads also to the production of a 'field of power', in which of the income generating practices of 'the poor' are subordinated to the microfinance agencies to which they are indebted (Elyachar 2002: 511). These income generating practices thus act as the creative labour that enables surpluses to be extracted by microfinance agencies in the form of interest. This 'indebting of culture' is thus by logical extension the *indebting of Anancy,* as the cultural figure behind the tactics used to generate the profits expropriated by microfinance bodies.

The' field of power' produced by the *indebting of Anancy,* also serves to *tame him*. Loved by many Caribbean subaltern people for his autonomy and independence; the disciplining power of debt serves to render Anancy docile[14]. Microcredit agencies use of group lending and collateral secured lending mechanisms, serves to ensure that peer pressure and fear of loss of property combine so that credit recipients endeavour to repay loans (Montgomery 1996). Thus, the 'soft', or dormant violence inherently present in unpaid debt (Bourdieu 1990: 122-34), functions to channel the fruits of formerly autonomous acts of deviance into the pockets of commercial lenders. Therefore, from being the wily and cunning actor who outsmarts and resists the dominant economic system; Anancy and his informal tactics, in the contemporary moment serve to support and maintain the hegemonic neoliberal order of things.

Concluding Remarks

In the preceding discussion I have attempted to situate the informal economic practices of Caribbean subaltern groups within the perplexing neoliberal present. First, I sketched a conceptual map of informality as a *process*, as a set of unregulated economic practices outside of the regulatory gaze of the state. However, I asserted that informality at the same time paradoxically supports the formal neoliberal rolling back of the state; and subsidizes the formal growth of private corporate enterprise. In what followed I situated Anancy tactics within that conceptual cartography. I argued that Anancy as a folktale hero has deep historical significance in the Caribbean region (and beyond), where he represents an ethic of creative, adaptive and cunning resistance to the abuses of slavery and colonisation. Following from this, I outlined the parallel history and significance of informal 'higgling' as a set distinctly Creole 'reputation' oriented practices. I then drew several conceptual overlaps between Anancyisms and subaltern 'higgling' practices. I highlighted both as crucial modes of resistance to the routine violence of plantation slavery: as avenues for the assertion of selfhood in the midst of negated humanity. I illustrated how both Anancyisms and 'higgling' are situated in common counter-cultural systems of morality and values. Finally, I advanced that both Anancy and small informal traders - with the common Creole values they represent – have the power to bring together subaltern communities on a local, national and transnational level. In short I presented an *Anancyist-informality complex* to be situated within the contemporary neoliberal moment.

In the final sections – the crux of my argument – I proposed that in the neoliberal moment informal Anancy tactics take on new significance. I asserted that the effects of structural adjustment and the reduction in spending on public goods and services by Caribbean governments - caused devastating effects for many subaltern communities. From this situation emerged a new 'human faced' pro-poor brand of neoliberal capitalism that looked to the informal economy to ease the suffering produced by SAPs; and produce 'win-win' initiatives to fulfil neoliberalism's utopian promises. I therefore attempted to inquire into the effects of one such "win-win solution" – the Caribbean microenterprise initiative. I found that microenterprises in the Caribbean context produced contradictory effects. They offered empowerment for some women historically excluded from male dominated realms of informality. However, for others they simply exacerbated suffering by

[14] Here I refer to docility as the effect of 'micro-technologies of power', subtle exercising of power to ensure discipline and subjugation. For a background on my use of docility see (Foucault 1975: 138).

increasing workloads; without challenging patriarchal domestic labour relations. Further to this, more generally I argued that the private microfinance institutions focused upon attempted to expropriate profits from borrowers in the form of interest. Therefore, in the process such initiatives served to 'dispossess' subaltern communities of cultural and social resources through the 'indebting of culture'. More specifically for this discussion, I have argued that this constituted the *indebting of Anancy*; which produces a 'field of power' that renders a once canny and cunning spider - docile and *tamed.*

The criticisms of the for-profit microenterprise initiatives offered above, are not designed to suggest to the reader that all micro-enterprise initiatives bring negative effects for impoverished communities. Rather, I should hope that the reflections offered will simply urge readers (especially those working in the development industry) to assume a critical gaze when approaching microfinance schemes, and position them contextually within broader economic trends. This will enable a wider awareness of their often unintended or unaddressed negative implications. As for those participating in *Anancyist informality,* I have not intended by any means to present them as passive victims of such not-so-benevolent microfinance projects. In fact, the tenacity with which many informal traders resist the *capturing and taming* of their economic practices is testament to the extent to which Creole subaltern values concerning autonomy and freedom continue to be very much alive today. Thus, those who serve to 'win' often opt-in and those who serve to 'lose' often opt-out of such microfinance programs. Therefore, Karides' informants Sondra and another street vendor (who chose to remain anonymous), are astutely aware of the propensity of such initiatives to *capture* and *tame*, as they choose not to be tempted by the offer of such loans:

> You can get loans, ok, you can go to a small financial business, or whatever they call theirselves, and them giving you a loan. But then you come in here, you are borrowing loan from them, you are coming out, and the police are running ya. How you going to make back the money to pay back the loans? It's best you leave them people with the loan
>
> (Sondra in Karides 2005: 49)
>
> I don't want the loan, I need assistance
>
> (Anonymous in Karides 2005: 48)

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