

2005 (2009 forthcoming) “The Craving for Intelligibility”. Speech and Silence on the Economy under Structural Adjustment and Military Rule in Nigeria.” In Steven Gudeman (ed.) *Economic Persuasions*. Oxford: Berghan Books. With LaRay Denzer.

The most familiar rhetorics of democratic accountability concern the fiscal system: the contributions made by citizens to support those duties of government that they, through their representatives, have ceded to them. Under monetarist economic policy the engagement of government and governed in the public sphere – the nature of public sphere itself, the admissibility of conversations of different kinds, the terms of engagement, the legitimate participants and the kinds and timeframes of accountability – is much less clear in its logic. For example, benefits are benchmarked to future dates which may extend beyond the constitutional mandate of the current administration. While this is a problem in general, it is particularly acute for governments and citizens in countries where the basic assumption of monetarism – that the government can in some sense control the money supply – does not accord with their real situation in global financial circuits. Autocratic rule abrogates some of these difficulties of representation. And yet some of the routines of engagement do continue, even then. Throughout the military period the Nigerian government issued intermittent reports, annual budgets and visionary plans. The national newspapers analyzed and editorialized. So the performance of sovereignty over a national economy was enacted, albeit intermittently and – for most – unconvincingly. Using both the political theory of sovereignty and the public sphere and the anthropology of time and morality, and drawing on an archive of newspaper and other coverage of Nigeria under military rule, this paper analyzes the rhetorics and responses around macro-economic policy. Particular attention is paid to the temporalities: of pronouncement, of projection into the future, and of popular action.