

Claqueurs

Am I just one of Nero's
soldiers, chanting an encomium—
what choice did they have?
An emperor is like that. Or
maybe I'm the *chef de claque*—
I should hire myself out
as *rieur* and laugh
at jokes on cue or clap
my hands or there, I see
me with a handkerchief:
Pleureur! On the news they say
the new emperor brought
his own to fill the room.
Maybe I'll do that, too,
have them sit around me at all
times and cheer on what I do.
Or I can be the *bisseur* and call
for it all again, giving us a chance
to stop what happens next.