the crimes, they function as it were only as a confirmation of the theatrical impulse that spurred crimes of this nature in the first place. The modern confusion about Nero's relation to the theater follows the ancient one: the source of the dramatization of the crowning moments of his reign is variously identified as Nero himself, as Nero's contemporary audience at Rome, as the ancient sources by some modern ones, as some modern ones by others, or as differing combinations thereof. The suggestive power of these roles upon the tradition to the present day, it seems, has had the effect of realizing Apollonius' impossible vision: in his world, theater and reality give shape to each other in their mutual opposition and opposability, but for the Neros we have seen, the performer whom Apollonius described has in fact left the stage and, imbued with his mask, continues with his theatrical outrages.

3

OPPOSITIONAL INNUENDO: PERFORMANCE, ALLUSION, AND THE AUDIENCE

Pliny the Younger, early in the first book of his *Letters,* relates a story about the trap set for him in the days of Domitian's rule by M. Aquilius Regulus, a man notorious for his stint as informer under Nero and still active in the ruin of prominent senators. During Pliny's defense of one Arrionilla at the centumviral court, he had occasion to cite an earlier legal judgment passed by Mettius Modestus, the senator and former legate in Lycia; Mettius, however, had since been banished by Domitian, probably for treason, and was still in exile at the time of the trial.[1] The opposing counsel, none other than Regulus himself, seized on this opportunity to impugn Pliny's loyalty to the emperor in front of the gathering at the court, and Pliny emphasizes in his account the impossibility he felt of using either the truth or outright prevarication when pressed by Regulus to give his opinion on the exiled man: "So here's Regulus: 'I'd like to know, Pliny,' he said, 'what you think of Modestus.' You can see the risk, if I had answered 'I think highly of him,' and the disgrace, if I had said 'poorly' " (*Epist.* 1.5.5). In this unhappy situation Pliny tries to elude his tormentor by protesting that it is not Modestus on whom the court is passing judgment, and, when Regulus repeats his question, by remarking that questions should concern those on trial, not those already convicted. But Regulus attacks a third time: " 'I ask you then not what you think of Modestus but what you think of his loyalty' " (*Epist.* 1.5.6). And now Pliny (as he tells it) comes up with the perfect rebuttal: " 'You ask me what I think,' I said; 'but for my part I don't

consider it right even to ask such a thing about someone on whom sentence has been passed.' He fell silent; as for me, I was heaped with praise and congratulations, since I had neither marred my reputation by some reply that would have been expedient but shameful, nor snared myself in the nooses of so insidious an interrogation" (*Epist.* 1.5.7).

Pliny's final response is effective because it shuts Regulus up by impugning *his* loyalty: how could Regulus even suggest that one could feel anything but disapproval for a figure in whose sentencing (as all knew) the emperor's hostility had effected its wishes? But as Pliny would have us believe, his response operated on two levels at the same time. It conformed to the public "truth" about the exiled Modestus ("a traitor") and yet it avoided, by its ambiguity, the taint of an outright endorsement of that truth—a *responsum inhonestum.* Instead, it pointed through its very evasiveness to the existence of another current of opinion on the exiled senator, one that the listening audience had no difficulty recognizing and that the members of this audience, after the trial, even expressed approval of directly to Pliny himself. Pliny's performance before Domitian's crony, shaped as it was to suit the political dictates of that régime, meant different things to his different hearers (including Domitian, present or absent)—or at least, was easily enough understandable as the "right" answer that its element of nonconformity, in this case expressed as a shiftiness about giving a simple answer, could not be pinned down as a hostile or oppositional gesture on Pliny's part.[2]

As Pliny tells the story, he needed only to foil Regulus, not to fool him; the difficulty lay in doing this in such a manner that he could retain his self-respect and that of his peers, winning in the process a small psychological victory over the figure trying to snare him and expressing opposition without paying the penalty.[3] To accomplish this he relied on his fellows in the audience to understand his response on a level other than the literal, for although the script of his performance was one that conformed to the Domitianic version of events, its meaning was not similarly fixed. And so Pliny's description of this moment in court introduces nuances into the issue of forced performance under an absolutist régime of a sort that the Tacitus of the *Annals,* especially, as we have seen, in the case of Nero, is generally not interested in exploring. Tacitus' Nero is the sole scriptwriter of such performances, and his victims often die trying to get the script right; acts of political conformity that are recognized as polyvalent by their audiences, and hence contain subversive undertones, are difficult to accommodate in a Tacitean view of imperial oppression.[4] What Pliny's anecdote suggests, in contrast, is that the discourse used before powerful figures, especially on the occasions when it had an audience ready and willing to find unstated meanings, could undermine its own contents and the authority of the addressee. The meaning granted a given act, in interactions with emperors or their agents, was not always and not necessarily the sole province of the powerholder.[5]

Under such circumstances, the role of the audience necessarily looms large. For allusive language to have any effect on public opinion, for it to undermine successfully the authority of those it makes its target, it must be recognized for what it is; the veiled criticism that goes unnoticed by its audience enters the public record and history itself as a sample of imperial kowtowing or as pointlessly clumsy self-expression—and not only in clearly political contexts. Without the participation of its immediate audience and those who recorded its occurrence, the use of allusion in literature would pass into history as, for example, pointless variations on a mythological plot; and the performances of the stage would represent nothing but simple revivals of earlier tragedies and harmless farces, the principal forms of staged drama in the Julio-Claudian and Flavian reigns.[6] In fact unrecognized allusion in any realm would not enter the historical record at all; why should it? It is only when an audience registers that a given speech or verse contains a meaning other than the one dictated (in public life) by political convention or (in literature) by the additional factors of fictional context and literary precedent, that doublespeak is born. Its subversive content may result from an inten-

tional effort on the author's part, as Pliny claims his did; it may arise from a statement's fortuitous potential for political application, as was often the case at the theater; but in practical terms it was the audience's reaction that transformed a given statement into an act of opposition or an ad hominem slur.

Political doublespeak such as Pliny describes rarely enters the historical record, perhaps because it was harder for an audience to acknowledge an allusive insult when the emperor himself or possible informers were present, when quarters were close and the risk of retribution high; or perhaps because it had no place in the Roman theory (but not practice) of historiography, and occasions for its inclusion in other genres were few. Pliny's account is one of the exceptions; albeit retrospectively and in the first person—two conditions that often lead to a certain embellishment—it offers us under the emboldening aegis of a new emperor a description of such an incident in the political realm, and the knowing response of the audience.[7] Most of our evidence for ambiguity or allusion, however, comes from a different area: one in which the audience plays a similar role in recognizing, and sometimes creating, the subversive aspect of language addressed to, or spoken about, the emperor in public, but where there is no one-on-one exchange between two interlocutors. This source is literary performance, especially the staged dramas of the theater and those works of history, tragedy, poetry, and declamation that were recited, if not necessarily in the theater, nonetheless before a gathered audience. For in the realm of literary allusion—following Augustus' legislation, probably late in his reign, which extended the scope of *maiestas* trials to libel and slander against the emperor as well as treasonable acts[8]—the detection of double entendre by audiences and emperors and the punishment (or not) of authors and actors is attested under almost every reign from Augustus to Domitian. It is a way of listening to actors, declaimers, and reciters that became a feature of the first century, and it was shared by eager audiences and paranoid rulers alike in what was often flagrant disregard of the meaning an author might have intended for his text.

Romans of the period appear to have been aware of this phenomenon. Indeed, a close contemporary of Pliny's remarks upon the eagerness with which the audiences of his day listened for allusive references in speeches whose surface meanings were different. Quintilian, writing under Domitian his massive work on the education of the orator, incorporates into his discussion of figures of thought and speech a comment on the current vogue of innuendo and the popularity it enjoyed with Roman audiences.[9] Discussing the figure *schema*, "which we use extremely often today," he writes in the *Institutio Oratoria* that "now we must come to that category of figure which both occurs very frequently and also, I believe, is particularly eagerly awaited, in which we want that which we do not in fact say to be understood by exciting a certain suspicion [in the audience]; this is not necessarily the opposite of what we say, as in irony, but something hidden and to be discovered, as it were, by the audience" (9.2.65). A kind of doublespeak that leaves "something hidden" for the hearers to ferret out for themselves, the much-used and much-anticipated *schema* has moreover a special application to situations in which frank speech would be rash.[10] Quintilian appends a list of three conditions for its usage, of which the first (and the only one he goes on to discuss) is particularly reminiscent of Pliny's situation: *schema*, he says, should be used "if it is too unsafe to speak openly" (9.2.66).[11] In such a case, it is left to the audience to understand what cannot be said.

For an audience member to identify a seeming allusion as a deliberate strategy on the part of the writer, however, is never an easy matter, and the sensitivity to allusion that Quintilian attributes to Roman imperial audiences apparently gave rise to an awareness that overattentive members of an audience could discover innuendo which, as far as the author of a given text was concerned, was not there. This is a problem closely linked to the phenomenon of absolutist rule itself; the existence of a government that curtails free speech, the knowledge that libel has to be veiled, spurs audiences and readers to scrutinize texts and performances for meanings below the surface, and, in turn, this very act of looking for a hidden content

makes it more likely that it—or something will be found. It is a set of circumstances that results in a kind of Chinese box effect, in which the author's intention recedes ever further from reach; for once audiences, aware that powerful figures are on the alert for what might be construed as an insult, search the harder for it, the use of innuendo can be that much more subtle—and that much more difficult to separate from what is not allusive; and since the emperor, in turn, knows that even the most delicate references will be understood as allusive, he scrutinizes performances and texts more thoroughly himself, which leads in turn to more obscurity.

Of course, this difficulty in identifying what is allusive and what is not is precisely what modern critics have faced in identifying cases of deliberate innuendo in Roman texts, and it has entailed that such attempts can never be fully persuasive. However, the fact that the ancients shared the same difficulty, and the consequences of this joint situation, rarely receive enough emphasis. Ramsay MacMullen is surely right in noting that where moderns may exercise too much ingenuity, the ancients must have too; for example, while many of the "furtive jabs and jokes against the government" detected in poetry from Nero's reign may be the product of overingenious interpretation on the part of present readers, "it is certain that the same kind of ingenuity was exercised by contemporaries to pick up meaning in oblique references. They had been trained to the game by their experience with terror . . . Fear sharpened people's perceptions" ([1967], 44).[12]

Such a realization on the theoretical level offers us little assistance, however, in analyzing actual works that may contain anti-imperial allusions, and the debate over individual poets, especially those linked to the courts of Nero and Domitian, has been prolonged—and inconclusive, precisely because mastery of the technique involved a wielding of language such that the author could not in fact be pinned down as *definitely* practicing innuendo or insincerity.[13] Allusive language, meant to convey two messages at the same time and produced under conditions in which free speech is not safe, often includes

features that if necessary can be pointed to as "proof" that appearances are what they seem: for example, the careful avoidance of repeated or sustained correspondences between fictive text and criticized reality, the use of language conveying different things to different social classes, the retelling of conventional themes or traditional stories with only the slightest alterations, the manipulation of a rhetorical code that might or might not put into play the range of possible meanings,[14] the explicit expression of good intentions or a digression into imperial praise, even the rank or social standing of the author and his proximity to the world he criticized.[15] Nor is it invariably the case that the target of such ambiguity needs to be convinced of an author's guilelessness; it may suffice for a plausible alternative interpretation to be possible, so that the perpetrator can go unpunished without the powerholder's losing face.[16] Confronted with such a situation, it becomes very difficult for a modern critic to argue convincingly for or against the "true" (that is, intended by the author) ambiguity of any work or performance. And to some degree, the issue has received too much emphasis; with some consistency, the comments of the sources themselves during the first and early second centuries focus *not on the authorial intent behind instances of apparent innuendo but on audience reaction, on the evidence that an audience could make a performance, a recital, or a speech allusive,* thus expressing the sense that meaning was constructed in accordance with factors quite extraneous to the author.

This is a circumstance that appears to have been particularly true of the imperial theater, where the audience's ability to find allusions regardless of the question of intent is frequently attested in the sources. Here the power of a large and uninhibited audience to transform the sense of the verses spoken publicly before them was at its most evident; when the audience hooted with laughter at a given line in the play or forced the actor to repeat it, the line, willy-nilly, was allusive, gaining through their response a political charge and a political meaning. The same was true, if to a lesser extent, of other performances—poetry recitations, practice declamations—delivered

before an audience. But we also find the sense that meaning was the purview of the audience resulting from a different set of circumstances altogether: when this audience was powerful not through its numbers and an increased freedom from inhibition but through the unmatched ability of a single individual to exact punishment from authors who, deliberately or not, had made it possible for their peers to understand a passage as allusive in the first place. This figure was the emperor, who, whether present or absent at the actual moment of performance, could act with terrifying capriciousness in discovering insult and innuendo in the works of contemporary poets and historians. Once a writer had given offense, intention was irrelevant, entering the equation only as a justification (from the imperial point of view) for retributive action; it was a justification that had little to do with deliberate innuendo and more, it seems, with the existence of a *potential* for it. And this situation in turn appears to have produced a countering move in the literature of the times; disavowals of intentional allusion become public, a part of the literature itself and, of course, by their very existence a comment on the circumstances that necessitated such avowals in the first place.

In what follows, then, I am not concerned with the question of whether given texts or performances are deliberate examples of anti-imperial innuendo, except insofar as they fall into this category of disclaimers of allusion that allude as they disclaim. Rather, I consider the role of the audience in constructing allusions as represented by the ancient sources themselves, both when the audience consists of the crowds at the theater and when it is the emperor himself, and the effect that the existence of these two allusion-seeking audiences had on what authors said about their own intentions in their works and on how they said it. The fact that the role of the audience was felt to be crucial, under the empire, in making a given performance subversive was both observed and exploited by Roman writers. Thus this chapter, in describing the creation of allusion by audience response in the early empire, also establishes the conditions for the following two. In those I will turn to specific examples, first

analyzing two works controversial today for their potential nature as exercises in doublespeak, and next a public panegyric that shows the effect, upon a performance that wishes to be taken at only face value, of this prevailing readiness to find hidden criticism. Of course, since I too constitute an audience, I myself am unable to escape the problems I have outlined above, nor can I claim that what I say truly represents practice rather than theory. Yet I prefer the attempt to parallel the ancient audience in their alertness to allusion than to avoid it in the name of a search for the *single* meaning (sincere or ironic) of any imperial text.

I

It is at the theater, a site where, more than anywhere else, the responses of a large and vociferous audience often made themselves felt and the playwright's identity and intentions had little practical impact on the reception accorded the performance, that the detection of onstage allusions to prominent political figures and to current events was a staple of audience activity.[17] This state of affairs, of course, was not limited to the empire; the business of the stage had been a vehicle for allusive political comment since the late republic, when topical references in drama and mime, whether direct or allusive, were picked up by the audience and where public opinion found a forum for the expression of its sentiments. Thus Cicero, writing to Atticus in 44 B.C., could ask him to report what had been applauded recently at the mimes and what the performers had said so that he might gauge the direction of political currents in the city (*Ad Att.* 14.3.3).[18] But the role of the audience underwent significant changes with the passage of time and the transition from republic to empire, even as productions of comedy and tragedy proper largely became, in the first century A.D., the province of the recitation-hall rather than the stage, and Atellan farces gained in popularity at the theater.[19]

The situation in Cicero's day, as portrayed by his own correspondence and his oration *Pro Sestio,* is worth a brief glance. References from the republican stage to contemporary events were not neces-

sarily *allusive;* in the case of comedy and mime they could be outright, written into the text with no attempt at subterfuge (though not always with happy results for the author). Naevius apparently wrote such comedy,[20] and the practice continued in the mime of Cicero's day; the mimograph Laberius, for example, complained bitterly about Julius Caesar in a mime he not only composed but was forced to perform in himself,[21] and the fragments from his work testify to other kinds of political pillorying.[22] And there is other evidence: Cicero, as we have seen, writes to Atticus asking him to report "the *bon mots* of the mime-players"; the *archimimus* Favor, at Vespasian's funeral, parodies the emperor by imitating his words and deeds when alive.[23] But in the genre of tragedy (and sometimes comedy), topical references were the province of allusion. A ready explanation suggests itself: since the playwrights of the tragedies and comedies for which Cicero records performances in his day were from an earlier era and long since dead, they had, naturally enough, little opportunity for direct political comment, and if any verse was to be understood as having reference to political figures or facts of the present, this reference would necessarily be indirect. In this process Cicero provides a picture of what transpired at the theater that demonstrates the pivotal function, not of the audience nor of the playwright, but of the actor:[24] it was he who indicated that a given line was to be understood in a sense other than the literal and who rendered allusive what was originally written to no such purpose.[25]

Cicero's *Pro Sestio* provides the classic locus for the discussion of onstage allusion in the first century B.C. In this speech Cicero launches into a digression on innuendo at the theater that is largely designed to demonstrate his own popularity while in exile and the disrepute of the man responsible for his banishment, P. Clodius Pulcher. Cicero focuses on the performances of a *togata,* a *praetexta,* and two tragedies at Rome during his absence in 58–57 B.C., occasions on which certain lines evoked the cheers and applause of the audience because they were understood to have reference to himself. In his preface to this discussion Cicero is careful to give equal weight to the

roles of performer and audience in the process whereby a verse became topical; "there was never any passage," he claims, "in which, if something a poet said seemed to refer to our times, the whole people did not notice or the actor himself did not insist upon this meaning" (*Pro Sest.* 118). But as he continues, it appears that the role of the audience is limited to that of recognition. In offering concrete examples of innuendo upon the stage, he identifies as the source and instigator of the audience's double understanding the techniques and intentions of the actor onstage. He thus makes clear that the audience's reaction merely follows upon the intentions of the actor, its own role being subsidiary: to grasp the meanings which the actor is doing his best to render unmistakable.

The list of examples begins with a comedy (the *Simulans*) by the defunct playwright L. Afranius. During this performance, as Cicero describes it, certain lines penned long ago were applied toward the public defamation of his enemy Publius Clodius, who was present and watching: the entire troupe of actors who were playing the comedy on the stage leaned into Clodius' face threateningly when they reached the verse "To this fellow, Titus, go the sequel and end of your depraved life" and recited it loudly and in unison; as a result, Clodius "sat stunned, and the same man who formerly was wont to make meetings rowdy with the abusive cries of his claque was driven off the scene by the speech of real performers."[26] The audience does not even figure in this account; the actors take it into their own hands to render their verses into a blatant pox upon the unsuspecting Clodius, who departs in disgrace—a man whom even actors did not spare as he sat there in their presence (*Pro Sest.* 118).

Cicero now warms to his topic and produces a whole spate of verses delivered by the famous tragic actor and a personal friend of his, Claudius Aesopus, who was performing in a tragedy penned by L. Accius (also dead, since about 86 B.C.) when news of the decree recalling Cicero was announced at the theater. Aesopus, as Cicero tells it, "weeping both with fresh happiness and with a combination of grief and longing for me, pleaded my case before the Roman

people with much weightier words than I could have used in pleading for myself" (*Pro Sest.* 120). Aesopus did this by making it clear that his lines were topical—pointing at the audience as the "Achaeans" Cicero fought for, weeping copiously, even adding an impromptu half-line to his performance because it suited the topic to hand: "the actor himself appended the following phrase through the goodwill he felt, and perhaps people approved of it because of some longing for me: 'Endowed with the loftiest talent' " (*Pro Sest.* 121).[27] Only in response to these deliberate efforts does the audience second his skewing of the tragedy's original referents, now repeating certain verses Aesopus has played up (for example, at *Pro Sest.* 120), now applauding "the poet's words and the actor's zeal and the anticipation of my return" (*Pro. Sest.* 121). But the alluder is beyond question the actor—along with the dead poet, whom Cicero includes in his climactic polishing off of this particular play:

> But the following line, that most eloquent poet wrote for me and that bravest, not merely the best, of actors performed to refer to me, when he pointed at all the orders, when he accused the senate, the Roman knights, the whole Roman people:
>
> You permit that he be an exile, you permitted that he be banished, you suffer him still to be banished!
>
> What everyone's expression of feeling [*significatio*] was at that time, what sort of good intention was made manifest by the whole Roman people for a man who did not belong to the popular party, I myself heard. (*Pro Sest.* 122)[28]

Aesopus is "the bravest of actors" because, in these dangerous times, it is Aesopus who is responsible for the bold allusions in support of Cicero that win the latter such support among the audience.

Other examples from the period confirm this view in which the actor himself is predominant in determining the actual meaning of what is spoken on the stage. When Cicero is again commenting on popular sentiment at Rome in the summer of 59 B.C., he writes to Atticus that "at the Apollinarian games the tragic actor Diphilus insolently attacked our friend Pompey" and was subsequently cheered on to repeat a thousand times the line "To our misery are you 'the Great' " (*Ad Att.* 2.19.3); other verses similarly won huge applause. Here the audience plays a very active part in showing its appreciation for the allusion—it forces the repetition of the insulting verse, it applauds other lines enthusiastically—and yet Cicero is clear that the attack is the initiative of the actor. Fifteen years later, the performance of Pacuvius' *Contest for the Arms* and Acilius' *Electra* at Julius Caesar's funeral games seems to have involved the similar exploitation of originally innocuous lines for political purposes by the actors onstage; according to Suetonius, ill will was raised against the dictator's murderers by certain verses that the performers intentionally adapted to this end (*Div. Iul.* 84.2).

When we turn to the evidence from the first century A.D., however, the incitant role of the performer on the stage in rendering allusive the libretto of his performance disappears from view. Although accounts of popular reactions to innuendo at the theater are frequent, it is the reaction of the audience that transforms into allusion the verse spoken onstage, by the simple device of showing that they so understand it. Dio's anecdote about an incident that took place at what seems to be a revival of a Menandrian comedy under Claudius (or possibly just a farce that included comic citations), which he offers as an illustration of Claudius' leniency toward his freedmen, is a typical example.[29] According to the historian, when one of the actors recited a familiar verse of Menander's, the audience turned in reponse to stare at the unpopular and wealthy freedman Polybius and thus made clear that they found applicable to him what was an originally barbless iambic trimeter; Polybius remained unfazed: "When a certain actor in the theater once spoke the following hackneyed line, 'Unbearable is a prospering scoundrel,' and the whole audience looked at Claudius' freedman Polybius, he shouted out that 'the same poet nonetheless said, "Those who once were goatherds have become kings," ' yet Claudius inflicted no punishment on him" (60.29.3).[30] Menander, of course, had been dead for over 300 years

by this time, so there could be no question of the audience's deciphering the "hidden" or "deeper" meaning of this verse as the playwright meant it. Nor is the actor described, in this case at least, as making his own allusive intentions clear by the kind of gesticulating (pointing at Polybius, imitating him, waving a freedman's cap, or the like) that would bring this individual to people's minds.[31] Instead, the audience appears deliberately to transform Menander's verse into a derogatory and double-sided comment on Claudius' favorite, thus identified as a "prospering scoundrel." Polybius is certainly quick with his own response—Dio's aim, of course, is to show the freedman's temerity in calling himself a king—but the point remains that the audience present at this performance has by its response in a sense registered, and thus created, an allusion to a powerful court figure, rendering the line a criticism expressed in the public realm and yet doing so without risk.

An imperial freedman is an unusual target; more often, it appears to have been the emperor himself who came suddenly into focus as the subject of a verse spoken onstage. Here the examples are rife, particularly in Suetonius.[32] Augustus, for example—reputed to be a man of varied sexual proclivities—was targeted by the enthusiastic response to a line describing a eunuch priest of Cybele. The biographer's account locates the site of this understanding squarely with the audience and the audience alone: on a festival day given over to the theater, the entire populace "both interpreted as a slur on Augustus, and commended with the greatest applause, the following verse recited onstage about a eunuch priest of the Mother of the Gods who was beating a timbrel: 'Do you see how that pervert controls the globe with a finger?' " (*Div. Aug.* 68). This is ratification not by pointed staring but by loud applause. As Suetonius tells it, the agent at work in making the line a slur is again the audience, which makes its interpretation public, and hence shared, by its applause; in contrast, to abstain from such a reaction would leave the line as it was, a comment on an actor got up in the outfit of a devotee of Cybele. Such allusion-detection, usually put to libelous ends, could also serve

as an audience's spontaneous expression of praise. Under the same emperor the verse "O master just and good," delivered in a mime, was greeted by the audience with wild applause; on this occasion Augustus, who was himself present, immediately checked the "unseemly flattery" and issued on the next day a stern reprimand.[33] Here again Suetonius' narrative presents the audience as the element rendering the verse allusive. All applaud it "*as if* it were said of Augustus himself," which it was not—but Augustus understands, and deplores, the meaning it has acquired only through the spectators' reaction.[34]

Suetonius relates similar stories about incidents at the theater under Tiberius and Galba. During the reign of the former, a particularly salacious line delivered from the stage in an Atellan farce[35]—"the old goat licks the privy parts of does" (*Tib.* 45)—was also greeted with "great applause" by the audience. As such it was transformed on the spot into an allusive comment on Tiberius' recent and notorious lustings after a certain Mallonia, who had repudiated his advances. The audience's response, like those described above, falls into the category of applause that creates rather than reacts to doublespeak—or, in the formulation of Henri Bardon, "applause that, at the theater, underlined allusions whether intended by the author or not" ([1940], 162). Again, and in much the same fashion, we find that shortly after Galba entered Rome as the recently acclaimed emperor, the performers of an Atellan farce, when they struck up "the well-known song 'Onesimus is coming from the farm,' " saw it picked up by the entire audience, who with one voice took up the strain and repeated that particular verse over and over (Suet. *Galba* 13). Here again the context with which the lyric in question presumably comes equipped has no effect in deterring the audience's hostile reinterpretation, which it publicizes by its repetition of the crucial verse and which Suetonius offers as an indication that Galba's accession was not equally welcome to all.[36]

These descriptions of allusion at the theater in the first century A.D. emphasize the role of the audience in transforming the unin-

tentionally ambiguous into the politically allusive; as such they provide a contrast to the earlier situation of Cicero's day, when, as we have seen above and in conformity with the view of Frank Frost Abbott ([1907], 53), "sometimes the playwright himself introduced the references, sometimes the actor applied to the local situation a passage which in the play as it came from the pen of the playwright had no such significance," but either playwright or actor is regularly identified as the source of the reference, and the task of the audience is limited to reacting to what is intentionally politicized rather than discovering allusion in which the question of intent is discarded altogether. Formerly called upon to recognize the innuendoes that issued from the stage, in Suetonius' descriptions the audience members create innuendoes that did *not* issue from the stage.

It is easy enough to understand how this shift away from the responsibility of individuals to that of a larger group might have taken place. After the fall of the republic and given the extension in the meaning of *maiestas*, it would have been risky for an actor performing under an absolutist ruler to "bring out" the meaning of any verse in so obvious a fashion as (for example) Aesopus did, and the same applied to those who penned the offending scripts. The Atellan actor Datus was exiled for making allusions to Nero from the stage in a manner that (unusually) made his intentions all too clear (Suet. *Nero* 39.3), while several playwrights appear to have paid the penalty for ambiguity without the question of intention being satisfactorily answered one way or the other, or even seeming to matter much once the emperor had taken offense: Caligula is said to have had an Atellan poet burned alive for an ambiguous verse in his play (Suet. *Cal.* 27.4), and Domitian is said to have put to death the younger Helvidius Priscus for an apparent reference to his own marital situation in a stage farce whose libretto Helvidius had written (Suet. *Dom.* 10.4). In these two cases, it is the playwright who is punished for ambiguities that presumably came to light in an actual performance, but Suetonius leaves the issue of intention untouched;[37] the point is that the playwright *could* be held responsible. He would thus

be that much the more evasive if he did try to convey veiled criticism—and this situation in turn is linked to another factor that plays into the changing role of the audience. As I have noted, imperial audiences, aware of the risks involved in innuendo and aware too that allusions would be the more arcane for it, needed less and less in the way of direct provocation to transform poetry into satire and were (manifestly) more and more willing to take matters into their own hands.

The role of audience response under the empire as Suetonius and Dio portray it was well summarized as early as 1875 by Gaston Boissier, who emphasized the public declaration constituted by these reactions to the potentially allusive verse of the theater: "When the discontented elements did not dare undertake a direct attack, and it had become too dangerous to circulate verses or pamphlets . . . they were eager to seize upon similarities to the present time in works old or new; they indicated these among themselves and made them obvious by applauding them" (p. 79).[38] As Boissier sees, an allusion became such when the audience agreed on it, and for this agreement to take place it first had to be audibly expressed. Once this had happened the content of the allusion gained through this public consensus an authority it lacked in the minds of individual audience members, a phenomenon that has been described by Pierre Bourdieu: " 'Private' experiences undergo nothing less than a *change of state* when they recognize themselves in the *public objectivity* of an already constituted discourse, the objective sign of recognition of their right to be spoken and to be spoken publicly . . . Because any language that can command attention is an 'authorized language,' invested with the authority of a group, the things it designates are not simply expressed but also authorized and legitimated" ([1977], 170; original emphasis).[39] To transform the words spoken onstage into a comment on the reigning emperor by applause or demands for repetition effects the same legitimation as that which Bourdieu describes: because such an interpretation is public and not private, its content is granted a truth value it could not gain if restrained

unexpressed within the confines of individual minds or if it resulted from a text read by individual readers.[40] It was this potential for the public expression of interpretive acts that rendered responses at the theater and also among the upper-class audiences at literary recitations a concern to those in power; this is also why the role of the audience—and not the intention of the author—becomes a significant factor in descriptions of these occasions.

These considerations came into play in any situation in which a gathered audience was able to express its response with relative impunity, whether through its own numbers, the vagueness of the lines it responded to, the absence of informer figures, imperial indifference or tolerance, or the tendency for punishment to fall upon the author's head. Thus, at literary recitations as well, where most imperial literature first met the light of day,[41] the audience could identify and publicize allusions as such. It is suggestive, in this context, that in distinction to the recitations of the early principate, those of the first century had become an increasingly public affair;[42] as Alex Hardie observes, "Poetic activity, due to the practice of recitation, had become a much more public business. The close-knit literary coteries of the early principate had passed, together with their exclusiveness and genuine expertise. We no longer have to do with a relatively small group of knowledgeable men, consciously participating in the creation of a new kind of literature, but with poetry as a mass activity in which all might participate, as poets or listeners" ([1983], 48–49).

Such large-scale performances of literary works must have offered, like the theater, the opportunity for the movement of individual reactions into publicly acknowledged truths, even by the smallest of mutual winks and shiftings among the audience. In contrast to the theater, however, at recitations the question of intention was not necessarily an elusive one: not only the content of the work in question but also the writer's known political stance, his social standing, and his demeanor and expression in reciting his work figured in the response of the audience, and as a result the recitation could function all the more as a site of collusion for joint (negative) comment on

those in power.[43] Indeed, since reciter and audience often came from the same social stratum, the intentional ambiguities of the performer would find ready understanding in the audience; as MacMullen remarks, "Code depends on decoders. Over the first hundred years of the principate, people lumped together as the 'opposition' shared the same kind of background in any one generation . . . It was their receptions and banquets that emperors feared" ([1967], 41).[44]

The evidence for these ramifications of performance before a recitation audience is less directly documented than those for the theater, although their importance can perhaps be deduced from the apparent connection between oral performance and imperial retribution,[45] and there exist other examples for which the orginally oral context is not specified but must have obtained, given the prevalence of recitation as the initial mode of publication.[46] Certainly Quintilian's comments on the general tendency of the imperial audience to look for, and enjoy, apparent instances of *schema* offer straightforward testimony to the potentials unleashed at a public recitation. His view, moreover, is borne out by Tacitus' description of the performance given by Britannicus, shortly before his death, at an imperial dinner party. This account (discussed already in Chapter 1) may well be fictitious; nonetheless, it strikingly demonstrates the *principle* of the importance of the audience's public reaction in ratifying allusion. Britannicus sings verses that hint at his exclusion from power, and when the audience openly demonstrates its understanding and pity, the recitation becomes a political event and a catalyst for the murder of the performer, who is now clearly revealed as a threat to the succession. Here the presence of the emperor is not inhibiting, as it usually is, since "night and revelry had done away with dissimulation" (*Ann.* 13.15.2). But if the emperor's presence had exerted its usual effect, the reaction would have been suppressed, safely confined to individual minds and not a subject for mutual acknowledgment and thus (Tacitus implies) a spur to Britannicus' assassination.[47] Even more explicit is Tacitus' description of the reaction to the tragedy recited by the playwright Curiatius Maternus in the *Dialogue on Ora-*

tors (Dialogus de Oratoribus). Here, one of Maternus' interlocutors, Marcus Aper, criticizes the poet for being swayed by the fact that anti-imperial allusion always meets with an enthusiastic response from the audience ("this is the source of loud applause, this especially wins praise in the very recitation halls," *Dial.* 10.7). A similar reaction had attended Maternus' recent recitation, and his friend Secundus urges him to disavow this public ratification of his apparent innuendos, and to mark the audience's response as a misunderstanding, by publishing his play with the ambiguous matter removed (*Dial.* 3.2). I will return to this passage, but for the time being it is noteworthy that it is his audience's response that Maternus is pressed to address, and refuses.

Maternus and Britannicus are described as reciters who intended their allusions to be understood as such. But, just as at the theater, the issue of whether innuendos were deliberate or accidental did not always matter—especially to the most powerful audience member of them all. Just as a large audience could, by dint of its numbers, render a line allusive regardless of its original meaning, so too the emperor had an authority, which he often exercised, to determine what the meaning of a fictional work might really be. This discovery of critical allusion by the emperor or an allied figure thus provides a parallel to the mass responses of the audience.

II

Seneca the Elder describes a *controversia* declaimed by Porcius Latro, an orator of Augustus' day, before an audience consisting, among others, of Augustus himself and his adopted son M. Agrippa—not figures one would wish to entertain with loaded ambiguities. Nor indeed, as Seneca portrays it, did Latro have any such thing in mind when he debated the pros and cons of his hypothetical case, "should a man adopt the grandson born to him through his disinherited son's liaison with a prostitute?":

> In this hypothetical case Latro spoke the "case against" not to the detriment of the opposing side but to his own. When he declaimed it there were, in the audience, Augustus and Agrippa, whose sons Lucius and Gaius, Augustus' own grandsons, Augustus was thought to be on the point of adopting within the next few days. M. Agrippa was one of that number who were not born nobles, but made so. When Latro was speaking the case of the son and was handling the subject of the adoption, he said: "Now that fellow is being grafted onto the nobility from the dregs of society by adoption" and other things to this effect. Maecenas by whistling indicated to Latro that Augustus was in a hurry: he should finish up his declamation. Certain people think this was malice on Maecenas' part: for he had ensured, not that Caesar would not hear what had already been said, but that he should remark on it . . . To me the divine Augustus seems worthy of admiration, under whom such liberty was allowed, but I cannot feel pity for those who think it worth the risk to give up their lives rather than a *bon mot*. Latro, who could not even apologize for his error, was deserving of pity. And in fact nothing is crueler than to give offense in such a way that you will offend all the more if you make amends. (*Contr.* 2.4.12–13)

The unfortunate Latro is thus transformed by the reaction of an audience member into a declaimer of anti-imperial doublespeak in the presence of Augustus himself; because of the carefully timed interjection of Maecenas, the emperor noticed certain phrases and, in noticing them in conjunction with Maecenas' apparent discomfort, came to understand as allusive what had not been so intended. Worse still, Latro—made aware of his own "allusion" by this same process—could not apologize, for to do so would have indicated that he himself had made the offensive association he was trying to excuse. Here, then, the hearer plays a crucial role in rendering the meaning of a performance, and Latro's protestations of innocence would have made little difference.

The incident Seneca describes is in one respect the opposite of the situation prevailing at most recitations, where the emperor himself appears to have been absent and the audience's interpretation of doublespeak as such was the freer for this fact. In Latro's case, the

individual "detecting" the allusion does so in Augustus' presence because his action is hostile to the performer and friendly (perhaps) to the emperor: Maecenas, who is himself in the upper echelons of the power structure and a close friend of Augustus, finds the allusion in order to denounce it and is understood to be acting in the emperor's interest. More often, however, the presence of the figure whom such allusions would be felt to be abusing seems to have had a deterrent effect on the detection of hostile references—understandably, for certainly at recitations, with their smaller-scale audience, the proximity of the powerholder would render inadvisable loud guffaws at ill-timed moments, and perhaps the tendency to see in the performance material for guffaws at all would be curtailed by a feeling that no reciter would take such a risk with the emperor actually present.[48] Further, the presence of powerful figures at the site of potential allusion could have a dampening influence on the detection of doublespeak not only by their effect on the audience's reaction, but also by the way they could portray, in public, their own dismissive or untroubled response to the potential slight. As the most conspicuous member of the audience, an emperor could remain unoffended in the face of speech that appeared allusive, in this way defusing the potential insult by denying its existence. After all, it was the addressee who was expected to be most on the alert for the possibility of insult, and hence the tenor of his response had a disproportionate capacity to define just what had taken place. As J. C. Scott remarks, "The question of whether a clear act of insubordination has occurred is not a simple matter, for the meaning of a given action is not given but is socially constructed . . . Between . . . extremes there is a great deal of interpretive freedom. When it suits them, the dominant may elect to ignore a symbolic challenge, pretend that they did not hear it or see it, or perhaps define the challenger as deranged. . ." ([1990], 205).[49] In Tacitus' *Annals,* Aulus Cremutius Cordus praises Julius Caesar and Augustus for a willingness to do precisely this. Cremutius, author of a history of the republic in which, according to Tacitus, he praised Brutus and called Cassius the last of the Romans, was

arraigned under Tiberius on a charge of *maiestas* for this work.[50] Cremutius notes in his defense that Julius Caesar and Augustus let pass the insulting poems of Bibaculus and Catullus without taking offense; these two emperors were wise, "for what is disdained falls out of memory; if you become angry, [the slurs] appear acknowledged as true" (Tac. *Ann.* 4.34.5).[51]

Cremutius is an illuminating example, for Suetonius too employs him for an observation on the nature of allusion-detection. A historian, he tells us without mentioning any names, had recited his work before Augustus without giving offense, only to be indicted for its contents under Tiberius—presumably following a second recitation, or an informer's report: "a poet was accused of having attacked Agamemnon with insults in a tragedy; a historian too was accused, because he had called Brutus and Cassius the last of the Romans; the authors were punished at once and their writings were destroyed, although these had won approval several years earlier when they were recited with even Augustus in the audience" (*Tib.* 61.3). The introduction of Augustus provides the point by supplying a contrast: the former emperor did not ratify, by his response, the offensive quality of the history; Tiberius did (on the poet, more below). The import of Suetonius' notice on the fate of these two literary figures is presented in more general terms by Dio, who makes of it the defining characteristic of Tiberius' reaction to potentially critical language. Tiberius, "in scrutinizing in great detail and accuracy everything that people were accused of having said about him slanderously, reviled *himself* with all the bad things people were saying" (57.23.1; my emphasis). In Dio's formulation, it is precisely by the act of oversuspicious scrutiny that Tiberius condemns himself, effectively saying about his own character all the things he searches for in the speech of others; the emperor, as he is here portrayed, fails to realize what Dio and Cremutius consider a basic truth about reactions to potential criticism: to find an insult is to show one's consciousness of its applicability and, by implication, one's guilt.[52]

Cremutius' case, however, is not strictly one in which ambiguous

language is at issue; his praise of Brutus and Cassius is only suggestive in that it casts an unfavorable light, by force of contrast, on Julius Caesar and hence on the principate. But Suetonius mentions Cremutius' punishment in the same breath as that of an unspecified tragic playwright, who had also recited before Augustus without giving offense, and here the issue of the ratification of criticism by the emperor's discovery of it is crucial—not only in the biographer, but also in Dio and Tacitus. Suetonius notes that the charge against the playwright was insulting the figure of Agamemnon in a tragedy, which presumably means that a character in the play voiced criticism of that ruler (with precedents, of course, since the first epic in the West) that had the potential to be understood topically, despite the fact that Augustus, who had been present the first time, had found no matter for offense.[53] But it follows from this observation that the play had been composed and recited before an audience during the reign of Augustus and before Tiberius became ruler; it would seem that any topicality detected by its audience then and its readers later would have to be understood in reference to the former ruler. Here, then, the inclusion of Augustus not only provides a contrast but has drastic implications for the way an emperor can construct, not find, allusion. If we accept Suetonius' version of the incident, it is hard to see how Tiberius could have accused the poet of using innuendo about himself in criticizing Agamemnon—yet Suetonius views him as quite capable of so doing. The biographer simultaneously highlights (with his qualifying "although these had won approval several years earlier when they were recited with even Augustus in the audience") Tiberius' paranoia and the irrelevancy of authorial intention. It is as at the theater, but here the emperor is the sole audience member whose opinion counts.[54]

Tacitus and Dio tell a similar story about the fate of one Mamercus Aemilius Scaurus, a writer of tragedy who forestalled his condemnation by suicide; and indeed this man may well be the unnamed playwright of Suetonius' notice.[55] Here, however, the earlier recitation has dropped from sight, although once again it is an interpretation of Aemilius Scaurus' play that does him in, with little attention paid by his persecutors to the question of the victim's intentions. In Tacitus, Aemilius Scaurus is denounced for his tragedy by the praetorian prefect Sutorius Macro: in 34 A.D. Macro "laid information on the plot of a tragedy written by Scaurus, citing verses that were supposedly directed against Tiberius" (*Ann.* 6.29.3). This was enough, Tacitus implies, to estrange Tiberius, although he notes that the formal charges against the playwright were different and were laid by other people.[56] In Dio, on the other hand, it is Tiberius and not Macro who sees the emperor reflected in Aemilius Scaurus' play, here identified as the *Atreus*. In this account the nature of Tiberius' interpretive act as both self-indictment and construction is highlighted not, as in Suetonius, by mention of a past recitation, but by the fact that Tiberius takes offense at a quotation taken from Euripides. As Dio tells it, it was precisely in these lines that Tiberius saw too much truth; the playwright

> was convicted for his tragedy and met with suffering worse than that he had written about. The play was the *Atreus,* and in it [the playwright], following Euripides, advises one of those under Atreus' rule to "bear with the folly of the ruler." Learning about this, then, Tiberius, claiming he was Atreus because of Atreus' bloodthirstiness, said that this verse had been spoken against himself and, adding the comment "I in turn, then, will make of him Ajax," forced him to die by his own hand. (58.24.3–5)

Dio says nothing about the author's intentions, but his specific comment on the Euripidean origin of the line that gave offense (Eur. *Phoen.* 393) suggests an understated criticism of Tiberius' "reading." What follows is another example of an emperor who singlehandedly determines the "truth" of a given allusion and thus "reviled *himself* with all the bad things people were saying."[57] Tiberius, transforming *dicta* into *adgnita*, identifies himself with the fictional Atreus because they share the trait of bloodthirstiness; he takes revenge by falling in

with the mythological doublespeak and transforming the writer into the famous suicide Ajax.

III

Not all emperors are seen as sharing this tendency to punish on the basis of any potential for a hostile interpretation. Nero's exile of the Atellan actor who alluded to his murders of family members is seen by Suetonius as a mitigated penalty, inflicted in this form by the emperor "either through disdain of all insult or lest he spur on such cleverness by showing his displeasure" (*Nero* 39.3). One imagines that exile would serve as spur enough, but as Suetonius interprets the incident, Nero's refusal to exact some greater punishment is a refusal to reveal he is the victim of allusions that his anger would identify as in some sense applicable; such a disclosure would encourage others both to make allusions and to look for them. However, there was always the chance that a user of innuendo could meet the fate of Hermogenes of Tarsus, whom Domitian executed "for certain allusions in his history," even crucifying the scribes who copied out the work (Suet. *Dom.* 10.1). And in fact when we turn from the views of the historical sources to the literature itself, the conditions that these sources have described—the possibility that the audience and especially the emperor could identify or construct allusions—have left a recognizable imprint. At least in those genres in which the author was free to comment on the interpretation he deemed appropriate to his work, there appear what can only be construed as deliberate precautionary measures against the act of constructing allusion.

Recourse to claims about innocence of intention, made possible in the first place by an awareness that a disparity between authorial intention and the audience's discovery of allusion was by no means impossible, was an option even when allusion was intentional. In fact the more potentially or actually allusive a work, the more need it had for such comment, which might then seem a mark of seditious purpose. The important point, however, was that such precaution could *pose* as a badge of innocence, and that even posturing might tilt the

balance in one's favor with one audience while not suppressing the interpretation of the other. It is a ploy, for example, that the friends of the tragic playwright Curiatius Maternus of Tacitus' *Dialogus de Oratoribus* urge him to use until he states clearly that his intentions are critical. Only the day before, Maternus had given a public recital of his *praetexta Cato,* a performance through which "he was said to have offended the sensibilities of those in power . . . and about which the town was abuzz" (Tac. *Dial.* 2.1). As Marcus Aper points out later in the same dialogue, Maternus, who has given offense not on behalf of a friend "but, what is more dangerous, on behalf of Cato," seems to have picked this controversial figure intentionally in order to excite the applause and comment that followed his recitation; hence he has made an enemy of a man more powerful than himself: "You seem to have deliberately selected a noted figure who would speak with weight. I know what one could say in reply: from this comes huge applause, it is this that is praised in the recital-halls themselves and then bandied about on everyone's lips. So give up then your plea that you want peace and quiet, since you choose an adversary more powerful than yourself [*adversarium superiorem*]" (*Dial.* 10.6–7). Aper's criticism of Maternus' deliberate choice of Cato as a vehicle for anti-imperial comment comes after the poet rejects the escape route suggested by his other interlocutor, Julius Secundus. In his pleas to Maternus not to court danger, Secundus makes explicit the possibility of using the audience's incorrect detection of allusion as a self-defense; he speaks as if the enthusiastic response to Maternus' recitation (produced, of course, in the absence of the "adversarium superiorem") had nothing to do with Maternus' own wishes but arose merely as the result of certain passages that had offered an opportunity for audience *mis*interpretation and had thus spurred the inventions spread by Maternus' enemies. "Don't the tales spread by the spiteful, Maternus, scare you off in the least from being so fond of the offenses of your Cato? Or have you taken up that script of yours to edit it more carefully and publish, after you have removed anything that supplied material for a misguided interpretation, a *Cato*

that may not be better but will at least be safer?" (*Dial.* 3.2). This, then, was a possible self-defense: appeal to the facts that wild applause may merely be a response based on a "misguided interpretation" and that gossip about anti-imperial allusions may be the malicious tactic of one's enemies. But Maternus rejects this ploy and openly states that whatever his *Cato* left out, his next play, *Thyestes,* will include—thus displaying the intentions about which Aper complains above.[58]

Other writers, however, were more than willing to resort to the defense of "it's all in your head," which appears to have been a familiar, if not always effective, attempt to safeguard some space for literary doublespeak. Phaedrus, for example, who had already fallen on Sejanus' bad side once despite a disclaimer attached to the first book of his fables that emphasizes their nature as fiction (1.prol.6–7; ed. Postgate), used in the prologue to the third book a more elaborate precaution—one that is reminiscent, for us, of Dio's description of Tiberius' reactions to apparently allusive passages. Phaedrus claims that if anyone should err through an excess of suspicion and apply to himself what is meant as a comment on mankind in general, he would merely be exposing his own conscience; but he, the author, would like to absolve himself beforehand of all responsibility:

> If anyone should err through his suspicions
> and hastily apply to himself what is common to all,
> he will stupidly lay bare his own guilty conscience;
> nonetheless I wish to absolve myself to him.
> For it is not my intention to criticize individuals,
> but rather to show life itself and the ways of men. (3.prol.45–50)

Phaedrus was in fact writing and reciting his fables under Tiberius, and thus provides a certain corroboration of the later writers who describe literary activity under Tiberius as plagued by the risk of imperial self-discovery: in Phaedrus' contemporary echo, he who detects doublespeak "will stupidly lay bare his own guilty conscience."[59]

Juvenal carries such a disclaimer one step further. In the first

Satire, he puts in the mouth of his fictional interlocutor a warning about the end of the conditions of free speech that had obtained when earlier satirists were at work. Anyone now who discusses "Tigellinus" (joint prefect of the praetorian guard under Nero) will be burned alive in the amphitheater; moreover, the satirist's criticism of human vice can set off a sense of self-recognition in the guilty—and thence to "rage" (the auditor's) and "tears" (the satirist's):

> "Describe Tigellinus and you'll blaze on that pyre
> where men stand and burn who smoke fastened by the neck,
> where you trace [*deducis*][60] a broad furrow in the middle
> of the arena."
> *So should the man who's given three uncles poison*
> *be carried on lofty down cushions and look down on us thence?*
> "When he approaches, stop your lips with a finger:
> to say the phrase 'it's him [*hic est*]' will make you an accuser.
> You can safely match in battle Aeneas and the fierce
> Rutulian; Achilles stricken is offensive to no one,
> nor Hylas sought long, who followed his pitcher:
> but whenever zealous Lucilius, as if with bared sword,
> bellows, the listener blushes whose conscience is chilly
> with crimes, and his heart sweats with silent guilt.
> Hence, anger and tears. So consider this first in your mind
> before the trumpets sound; once you've donned the helmet
> it's too late to repent the battle." *I'll try what's permitted*
> *against those*
> *whose ash is covered by the Flaminian and Latin roads.*
> (*Sat.* 1.155–171)

Juvenal's tack here is not to profess that anyone who sees himself pilloried in his work is "stupidly laying bare his own guilty conscience." Instead, he has the interlocutor warn him that those with crimes on their conscience *will* find themselves in his satire, for whenever "zealous Lucilius"—the early satirist is used by metonymy for genre itself—belts out the trenchant criticism of satire, "the listener blushes whose conscience is chilly with crimes, and his heart

sweats with silent guilt."[61] And this listener will exact revenge, if he can (as Tigellinus can). So Juvenal's response is to publicize what is essentially another variety of precaution.[62] Rather than risk that powerful figures should find their crimes mirrored in his work, he says, he will make only the dead the butt of his satires—the first satirist ever to spell out that his victims are not his contemporaries.[63]

Here an obvious problem presents itself. How is it that the satirist shows so little concern over the offensive content of what he has just said? The graphic picture of what happens to a poet who criticizes political figures, after all, is itself a critical comment on the oppressive climate of the day.[64] Or, if the literary expression of one's views under Trajan and Hadrian was, on the contrary, as free of risk as many modern scholars have assumed, what need is there of so elaborate a statement signaling the avoidance of contemporary references? Even Juvenal's particular choice of punishment may be suggestive as a comment on his situation, given that it occurs in Suetonius as the fate of an earlier literary alluder. As we have seen, the biographer records that Caligula turned a writer of Atellan farce into a human torch for writing an ambiguous verse: "[Caligula] burnt alive an Atellan poet in the middle of the amphitheater's arena for a verselet of amusing ambiguity" (*Cal.* 27.4). Furthermore, as G. B. Townend notes, the names Juvenal mentions in this programmatic satire are already figures from the past. The satirist has located himself with some consistency in a Domitianic context, and "Mevia, Crispinus, Matho are all Flavian figures from Martial, as Massa and Carus are informers from Domitian's last years" ([1973], 149). Even the reference to Marius Priscus' trial at 1.49, an apparent exception because it took place in 100 A.D., concerns a man who was "nonetheless a creature of Domitian's reign."[65]

Our satirist, then, in attacking individuals prominent in the bygone days of Domitian, is warned by his interlocutor to abandon his risky course and to attack only dead figures. In this warning, the terrible example of Tigellinus is brought in for its persuasive power. Tigillinus, however, the single figure most representative of the risk

taken by a satirist who addresses the present, is out of place among the Domitianic personages; he was an official under Nero, and he had died in 69 A.D. Why is it the consequence of reference to a dead man that persuades the poet to attack only the dead? The explanation for this could be, as Jean Gérard ([1976], 26) argues, that Tigellinus takes on here a symbolic value as any imperial protégé. But it is also possible, since Juvenal has adopted a Domitianic setting for his own voice, that mention of Nero's favorite Tigellinus could have something to do with what appears to have been an unspoken understanding, under Domitian, that criticism of Nero and his reign could serve as veiled criticism of the ruling emperor (although it was not suppressed on this ground).[66] If this suggestion is correct, an authorial voice that concerns itself with figures from Domitian's reign could introduce the caution "describe Tigellinus, and you'll burn" as a comment on the dangers of poetic doublespeak. Moreover, the Domitianic setting itself provides an answer to the difficulty of a precaution against offense that is itself offensive. Juvenal places himself in the past even as he resolves to address the dead alone, rendering his comments about the dangers of allusion as the comments of a poet writing under Domitian—and knowing what criticism of Tigellinus might bring. Perhaps no more foolproof a precautionary measure than any other, it was such a measure nonetheless.[67] Moreover, its very existence served to make the most important point: that its author was including it at all because he felt it was in some sense necessary.[68]

The same problem with pointing out the need for allusive language applies in the case of Quintilian's discussion of the figure he calls *schema*. Here we have yet another example of how comment on allusion itself acts as a kind of doublespeak commenting on the need for allusion in the first place, and the subtle contortions of a text engaging with several levels of reference corroborates this impression. After observing the popularity and frequency of *schema* in his own day, Quintilian describes the threefold conditions under which such a figure is adopted by a speaker: "one, if speaking openly is not safe

enough; second, if it is unbecoming; and third, when it is applied for the sake of charm alone and delights more by its novelty and variety than a direct reference would" (9.2.66). Now, to comment that allusion is popular in one's own day because speaking openly is dangerous might seem a rash statement if the statement is true, that is, if free speech is in fact dangerous. Quintilian, however, further limits this particular usage of *schema* by confining it to the practice declamations of the schools and their cleverly ambiguous speeches addressed to imaginary tyrants (9.2.67).

Quintilian's rationale for suggesting one should limit innuendo to this one context is that innuendo in real life can be dangerous; once offense is taken by the powerful it matters little if a speaker has veiled his criticism in language that *could* be construed as ambiguous: "it makes no difference how you offend, and a figure that is obvious loses this very quality, that it *is* a figure" (9.2.69). Best to save such cleverness for the fictional tyrants one addressed in rhetorical exercises, where nonexistent rulers could take offense all they liked as long as one observed the technical necessity that one's language have a potentially inoffensive meaning as well: "Consider well said anything you say against those tyrants, no matter how frank, as long as it can be understood in another way as well—because it is only the danger, not the offense, that is being avoided. And if the former can be eluded by the ambiguity of the expression, no one will not applaud that escape" (9.2.67).

However, the declamations that Quintilian identifies as safe grounds for insults directed at fictional tyrants were not necessarily safe. Seneca's story about Latro, for one, shows that even when the context was fictional the line between imaginary addressee and real ruler did not necessarily protect the speaker or the emperor—or any other individual who was *potentially* targeted by the topic of a particular declamation—and there were apparently other cases in which an emperor was less lenient than Augustus. Dio records that Caligula exiled one Carrinas Secundus for a display declamation against tyrants (59.20.6) and that a sophist named Maternus (probably not

the playwright Maternus of Tacitus' *Dialogus*) was put to death by Domitian for declaiming an exercise against tyrants (67.12.5).[69] Much earlier, Cicero had noted the pertinence of declamation topics to current political developments: writing to Atticus in 49 B.C., he remarked that he had been practicing certain declamation topics that were both political and topical (*Ad Att.* 9.4.1). The issue is not, then, one of free speech in fictional declamations and caution in the real-life context of the law courts; Quintilian's own caution as he notes the popularity of allusion prevents him from noting that to be clumsy in any genre brought danger if it brought offense.

On the other hand, once Quintilian turns to *vera negotia,* the real-life business in which "it makes no difference how you offend," we find no more talk of tyrants, only of the difficulties one experiences in the law courts because of the existence of "powerful figures" ("personae potentes"). So the tyrant who was the target of doublespeak in Quintilian's explanation of the conditions appropriate to allusion has metamorphosed into the unnamed "personae" of the law courts—where it is still unsafe to speak openly, and even allusive language is dangerous because its targets are real. As F. M. Ahl well comments of this passage, "the orator may have to censure *personae potentes,* 'powerful [living] personages' (9.2.68), to make his case, even though this is not his direct or desired goal. He has a triple audience: the judge, his opponent, and external powerful people who may be offended" ([1984b], 194).[70] But who are these unspecified powerful figures? As Quintilian says, their identity remains "something hidden and to be discovered, as it were, by the audience"; and for the reader the most obvious choice is the emperor and his court.[71] In this light, it is noteworthy that the other usages for allusive language on Quintilian's list—the applications of *schema* in the interest of decorum or decoration—are never mentioned again. As a result, the fact that Quintilian should adduce such a list appears itself a somewhat decorative move, or rather, a precautionary one.[72]

A final point throws further illumination on Quintilian's indirection in his treatment of this topic. Quintilian's discussion of *schema*

was not without literary precedent; he himself offers testimony to one such source, commenting that the narrow definition of the term as "a figure in which what appears to be said is other than what is said" originated with a contemporary of Aristotle's, the rhetorician Zoilus.[73] More interesting is the discussion of allusive speech in Demetrius' *On Style*, a treatment that is closer to Quintilian's both in its time of composition and in its content.[74] It is striking that in this work the connection between the use of *schema* and the conditions of tyranny is not dressed up in the garb of declamation,[75] and that Demetrius comments outright, as Quintilian does only in the context of declamations, that allusive language is used before those in power when free speech is not safe:

> Often when we converse with a tyrant or someone violent in some other way and we set out to reproach them we use allusive speech of necessity [a list of examples follows] . . . I have spoken of these because I wished especially to demonstrate of the true despotic character how it particularly requires the wary speech that is called allusive . . . For flattery is shameful, criticism is dangerous, but the best is the middle path, that is, allusive speech. (*On Style* 289, 294)

The differences in Quintilian's treatment are surely not to be understood as an indication that Demetrius' definition had no pertinence to conditions under Domitian: Pliny, after all, took Demetrius' "middle path" in the centumviral court, and for the same reasons. Nor should we forget that declamations against tyrants involved real risk, and that Seneca the Elder, writing under Tiberius, expressed impatience with declaimers who were "willing to lose their life rather than pass over a witty double entendre" (*Contr.* 2.4.13). No; Quintilian, like Juvenal after him, is just framing his comments with the caution demanded by his time and trusting to his audience to understand.[76]

The disclaimers that writers incorporated into their texts, from Phaedrus under Tiberius to Juvenal under Trajan, were attempts to

stem and spur simultaneously the interpretive processes of different audiences. Understanding that punishment could follow allusion whether intended or not, they made public statements on the innocence of their motives that were meant to provoke suspicion in audiences eager for allusion even as they provided some modicum of safety from an emperor who might claim that the innuendo was deliberate—a disclaimer that would help not because emperors were credulous, but because it was public. At all times, the blend of allusion, obscurity, and disclaimers was a delicate balancing act that could go wrong and sometimes did, since there were innumerable factors involved in the outcome—the strength of the audience's reaction, the known political stance of the author, the character of the emperor in question, the transparency of the anti-imperial allusions, the use to which others might put the same work, the sites of performance, and many others. And although there was risk, allusion continued, perhaps, as Seneca the Elder commented, because it exerted its own pleasurable pull on the author, perhaps because expressing oneself truthfully even as one lied was a game vital to self-respect. And there were other safeguards besides those we have considered. In the next chapter I consider two works that use one of the most popular: praise of the régime.

ACTORS IN THE AUDIENCE

THEATRICALITY AND DOUBLESPEAK FROM NERO TO HADRIAN

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