

Claire Cesarz
English 104
Ratcliffe
Fall 2008
“Shouts and Murmurs”

The Theatre

What is it with movie theaters that they seem to draw the rudest group of people in America? All manners and common courtesies seem to fly down the lit-up exit aisles as soon as the screen goes dark. It is the very atmosphere of the theatre that keeps me coming back, but sometimes the behavior is appalling. Never mind the general clichéd annoyances of sticky floors, spilled popcorn, and lumpy seats. I’m talking about serious offences here. Like, who brings a seven-year-old to *Casino Royale*? It’s bad enough your kid is seeing some other guy’s head being smashed in to a sink—which shouldn’t surprise you considering the movie’s PG-13 rating—but then you have to make a big stink as you hurriedly stumble over seats to get out of the theatre. Oh thanks, now I just missed the intro. Or how about the infant that started crying during *The Dark Knight*? Mom’s solution? Constant “shushing” for the next fifteen minutes as the baby kept making noise. Mix that in with the half dead guy who wheeled himself in in an iron lung (or oxygen tank, same difference, whatever) so while I’m trying to focus on the Joker blowing up a hospital, I’m listening to a screaming baby while Darth Vader breathes down my neck.

I get it. The general population wants to see a film. Do it with decency. And don’t be stupid. Don’t *run* to get “your seat.” Holy moly. You’re going to find a chair just fine without playing Speed Racer and running over half of the other people waiting in line. Once the movie starts, stay seated. I don’t care what you do during the twenty minutes of bogus soft drink, car, and army commercials. I mean as soon as the previews begin, act decently. You know when the little clip comes on screen that says “shut off your cell phones and be quiet?” It means shut off your cell phones and be quiet! It’s hard enough for me to get used to going into public restrooms

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and hearing the lady in the stall next to me answering her phone mid-stream (seriously?) Please don't shine your laser light cell phone in my face during the film. In case you didn't realize, it's pitch dark and the screen from your cellular device is a tad distracting. I'm sure that Bobby's texting you about the rad party at midnight isn't so important that you just have to know about it now. And if it is so important, you shouldn't be watching the movie in the first place.

By the way, aside from the collective gasps, groans, and laughter from the audience, don't make other sounds. I'm talking to you, Loud Laughers. Something's funny. I get it. Ha-ha-ha. Don't HA-HA-HA your way to China, man. Don't you realize the caliber of your laugh can be heard three states away from Wisconsin? Don't you know how to control the volume of your own vocal chords? One more thing. It might be a perfectly fine practice for you to talk to the movie when you are watching it at home. But old grandma sitting next to me during the *Da Vinci Code*, don't keep sitting there going, “No, no, no” as they talk about Jesus and Mary being married. I don't really care what you believe; stop objecting to something that you can't change. Don't summarize the film as it goes on. Or tell the person sitting next to you when a REALLY SCARY PART is about to come on because this is the FIFTH TIME you've seen it. Hello! I haven't ever seen it, and now I know when the REALLY SCARY PART is happening thanks to your big mouth.

Back to children: don't kick the backs of chairs. Parents: watch your kid. If the person your kid is sitting behind keeps turning around and glaring at them probably they are doing something wrong. If the person they are sitting behind starts hitting the back of their own chair in response to the kid's kicking, probably the kid is doing something wrong. Tell your kid to quit kicking the chair! Of course then there are people like me who notice every detail at the

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theatre and let it bug them to no end. Then again, I don't talk or laugh loudly or bring babies or kick the back of the chair in front of me. I'm a good theatre guest just as most people who go to the movies are. Probably what's most irritating is that the people who are annoying aren't annoyed by their own behavior. In fact, they have a grand ol' time in the theatre acting like complete slobs with no manners and barely notice everyone else telling them to shut up. Then the rest of us are left to keep going to the movies and being perpetually bothered by the chick behind us who thinks it's a good idea to yap on her phone as the film is going on and get up every two seconds to refill her drink.

What am I doing this weekend? Going to the movies.