



# 2023

MY YEAR IN CONTENT  
AND ABSOLUTELY NOTHING ELSE

## WELCOME!

Once again it is time to reflect on the year and all the time that I wasted consuming content. 2023 was shitty for many reasons that will not be mentioned, but movies were not one of them. I watched 50 movies (34 of which premiered in 2023), with an average score of 3.18 out of 5. My most unpopular opinion was probably that Christopher Nolan's **Oppenheimer** was just ok. Also, I couldn't tell all the white men apart. :')

The absolute worst movie I've seen this year was Ari Aster's **Beau is Afraid**, which for the first time since Cannes 2017, made me walk out of the theater less than halfway through. Bummer!

Movies I liked that almost made the list include Todd Haynes's **May December**, William Oldroyd's **Eileen** (the book was better, sorry), and Sofia Coppola's **Priscilla**. I also really enjoyed the silly slasher-meets-time-travel flick **Totally Killer** on Prime Video, and the modern classics (??) **Dead Ringers** (David Cronenberg, 1988), and **For Your Consideration** (Christopher Guest, 2006). Lastly, I caught up on some 2022 critic favs: Joachim Trier's **The Worst Person in the World**, and Martin McDonagh's **Banshees of Inisherin**.

Overall, there were 12 movies from 2023 that I loved, and here they are...



# FILMS




## THE HIGH-BROW CROWD PLEASERS

There's possibly nothing more obvious than putting a Martin Scorsese film on the list, but even I have to be obvious sometimes. **Killers of the Flower Moon**, the 3+ hours' saga of "white men's blatantly obvious plot to take what isn't theirs" could only, for me, be experienced from the comfort of my couch. Nevertheless, I enjoyed it and it actually felt shorter than it actually was.

Another critic favorite this year was Justine Triet's **Anatomy of a Fall**, the story of a woman who (maybe! Heehee!) pushed her husband out of a window because he played his music too loud. Valid reason, and the dog (winner of this year's Palm Dog at Cannes) was also excellent.

Finally, Celine Song's touching and beautiful **Past Lives**, hit me like a brick wall as it did many others. Perhaps better suited for folks whose own lives are not falling apart.

A photograph of three people standing side-by-side in a dark, moody environment. The person on the left is a man with short dark hair, wearing a checkered shirt. The person in the middle is a woman with long dark hair, wearing a dark patterned top. The person on the right is a man with curly hair and a beard, wearing a light-colored button-down shirt. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights on their faces and shoulders against a dark background. A white text overlay is centered over the image.

“You make my life so much bigger. I’m just wondering if I do the same.”

## TWO -RAUNCHY COMEDIES

If there's a more awkward and confusing genre than "raunchy comedy", please LMK, although I guess it fits given that those movies are *usually* about awkward and confused teenagers... such is the case with Emma Seligman's wildly funny and hilariously bloody **Bottoms**, where two loser lesbians form a high school [fight] club to teach the "hot girls" self defense and try to get in their pants while they're at it. Messed up? go watch any 2000s teen comedy and get back to me.

For more age-appropriate raunchiness, you might enjoy Adele Lim's **Joy Ride**, a woman's journey through China to become a successful businesswoman (jk! Also to find herself!!). A fantastic ensemble cast delivers not only all the laughs, but also the BEST cover of Cardi B's WAP to date. Lisa #2, I'm your #1 fan.





## YOU ARE SO NOT INVITED TO MY BARBIE CAMP!

There is nothing that I can say about Greta Gerwig's **INSTANT CLASSIC Barbie**, that has not already been said. Whoever watched the teaser trailer and did not realize then and there that it was going to be the movie of the year... I don't know what to tell you.

For even more good times (because we all needed those) I turned to Molly Gordon and Nick Lieberman's hilarious and touching **Theater Camp** about a failing summer camp trying to stay afloat. It was the only movie I watched more than once this year.  
...aaaand cue cocaine.

Lastly, there's always one movie on my list that no one else would think to pick. This year it is the Netflix/Sandler (ALL the Sandlers) joint, **You Are So Not Invited to My Bat Mitzvah**. There really is something about being in your thirties and watching a movie about tween girls and their crusty crushes who will peak in high school that hits the spot. Also, I have a theory that this movie is like a parallel universe of the Safdie brothers' masterpiece *Uncut Gems*, where Adam Sandler and Idina Menzel's characters end up in LA instead of NY? Also, are the Sandler sisters like the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> members of HAIM, kind of like you had the first three amazing seasons of *Arrested Development*, and then someone made the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> seasons just to troll? I really think I'm onto something here.

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a black and white striped one-piece swimsuit, white sunglasses, and high heels, stands in the center of a desert landscape at sunset. She is looking to her right. The background features a large, dark rock formation on the left and several small figures in the distance, some sitting and some standing, on a rocky plain. The sky is filled with clouds, and the sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow.

"I want to be a part of the people that make meaning, not the thing that is made."



The background of the text is a collage of movie stills. On the left, Emerald Fennell's *Saltburn* is shown with a woman in a purple dress and a man in a green patterned suit holding a baby. In the center, Emma Stone's *Poor Things* is depicted with her in a white, ruffled, historical-style dress. On the right, Jonathan Glazer's *Zone of Interest* is shown with a man in a tuxedo and a woman in a black dress. The entire scene is set against a backdrop of a blue sky and green hills.

## THE “NOT FOR EVERYONE” CROWD

These are the movies I loved but either were too arthouse for most people I know to whole-heartedly recommend them OR there was something cringe about them that made me unsure I have good taste. Emerald Fennell’s **Saltburn** was a feast for the eyes in more ways than one, but might turn you off bathtubs for a while. The genius Yorgos Lanthimos and his muse Emma Stone gave us the vibrant, magical, profound (and basically the artsy version of Barbie), **Poor Things**. And after a full decade,

Jonathan Glazer did it again with the haunting **Zone of Interest**, loosely based on the life of Auschwitz commandant Rudolf Hoss and his wife Hedwig. With quotes like “They call me the queen of Auschwitz!”, how can it *not* be my favorite this year?

And then there was Radu Jude’s **Do Not Expect Too Much from the End of the World**, officially the story of an exhausted producer driving around Romania to collect interviews about work accidents and unofficially one of THE wildest (car) rides of 2023. There is really no other way to put it, except wow.



# TELEVISION

## MY GOLDEN AGE OF TV

I attempted to watch 39 shows this year, with an average score of 3.14 out of 5 (up from 2.9 last year!), and didn't finish 12 of them. On the other hand, there was one show I watched no less than three times. Guess which?

**Hulu** remained my top streaming service by quantity, but quality-wise, for the first time it was **Prime Video**, followed by **HBO Max** (ugh) and **Netflix**.

For some reason I finished watching all the episodes of TWO shows I absolutely hated (Apple TV+'s **Extrapolations**, and HBO's **The Idol**), and yet (thankfully!!!) couldn't get through a single episode of Hulu's **Fleishman is in Trouble**, which was equally bad. I named my plant Jessipa after the lizard on Apple TV+'s cute and entertaining **Platonic**. The plant died but Jessipa remains in my heart.

I finally quit **American Horror Story**, so I guess I can thank Kim Kardashian for something, even if it's for breaking my spirit.

Overall, there were 13 TV shows that I loved this year...

## GIRLS AND THEIR LITTLE FIGHTS

In the past couple of years there's been a growing discourse around loneliness, friendship, and community and how those concepts overarchingly differ between men and women. It is said that women's friendships can be so explosive because of how deep those emotional bonds are, and often when a female friendship comes to an end it is less a "drifting apart" and more of an "atomic bomb-like obliteration". These two shows demonstrate both the depth and the destruction.

In Peacock's **We Are Lady Parts** (not new, but was new to me this year), an all-Muslim women's punk rock band tries to find their big break while navigating the members' distinctly unique characters and value systems (while jamming to bangers like "Voldemort Under My Headscarf").

And in Prime Video's **Class of '07**, an apocalyptic event leaves a whole class of an all girls' school stranded on their old campus, trying to survive the end of the world... and living with each other again.



## THE ONES THAT WOKE UP AND CHOSE VIOLENCE

My favorite performance in TV this year was Rachel Weisz playing the unhinged Mantle twins in Amazon Prime Video's **Dead Ringers** (based on David Cronenberg's 1988 movie). It was BREATHTAKING.

Also on Prime Video, Donald Glover's **Swarm** felt like something out of an "Atlanta-verse" but much more violent.

I loved Netflix's **Beef**, which showed how unhappiness and unresolved anger issues can *really* make things spiral. And finally, FX's **Fargo** returned (on Hulu, for me) for a solid fifth season and made me love every female character as Fargo tends to do.

I especially cannot get enough of the matriarch, Lorraine Lyon (Jennifer Jason Leigh).

So spicy!





**HERE FOR A GOOD TIME, NOT A LONG TIME** (CUZ THE EPISODES ARE SHORT, LOL)

While not always lighthearted, these shows allowed me to take a break from everything and simply watch. **Somebody Somewhere** returned to HBO for another season of me waiting for Bridget Everett to just sing. **Abbott Elementary** continued to be the most feel-good show on my screen (but I'm not on the Janine/Gregory bandwagon, sorry!).

Finally, I might be the only one who watched **Extraordinary** on Hulu (or Disney+ if you must), a British comedy about a world where all adults have superpowers, except for one girl. Lots of fun, and frankly the only superhero content I am willing to watch!

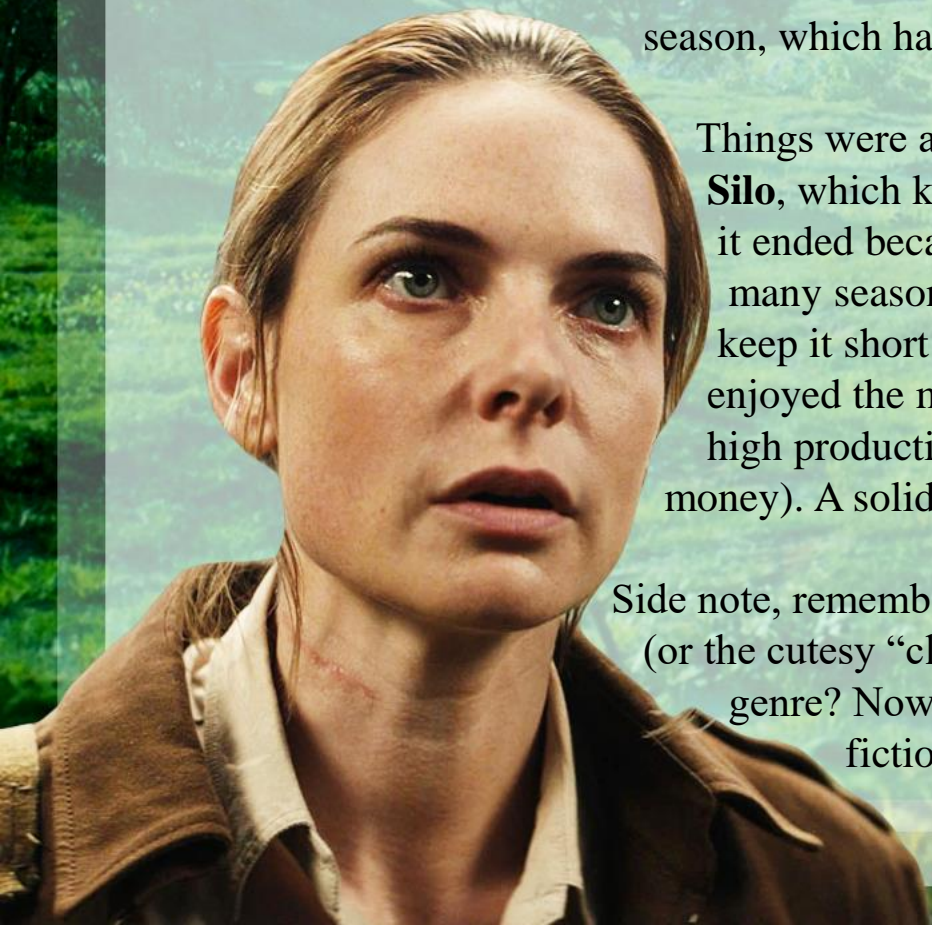
## THE ONES THAT REMIND US THAT THINGS COULD (WILL?) BE WORSE...

One of my favorite genres, Dystopia, did not disappoint yet again. Perhaps because there's so much IRL inspiration to draw from?

I did not play **The Last of Us** so I can't speak to it from a fan's perspective (and the two men in my life who are fans of the game, each gave me a different opinion). And even though I didn't get emotionally invested in the characters (and rightly so because the one I thought was going to be my fav did not survive), I did enjoy the HBO version and do not cringe at the thought of "having" to watch the next season, which happens quite often these days with other shows.

Things were a little different with Apple TV+'s **Silo**, which kind of bummed me out when it ended because of the thought of the many seasons it might have. Just keep it short!! Nonetheless, I enjoyed the mystery and frankly, the high production value (aka that Apple money). A solid choice for sci-fi fans.

Side note, remember when "climate fiction" (or the cutesy "cli-fi") was a literary genre? Now it's just climate non-fiction, I guess. Lol. ☹️



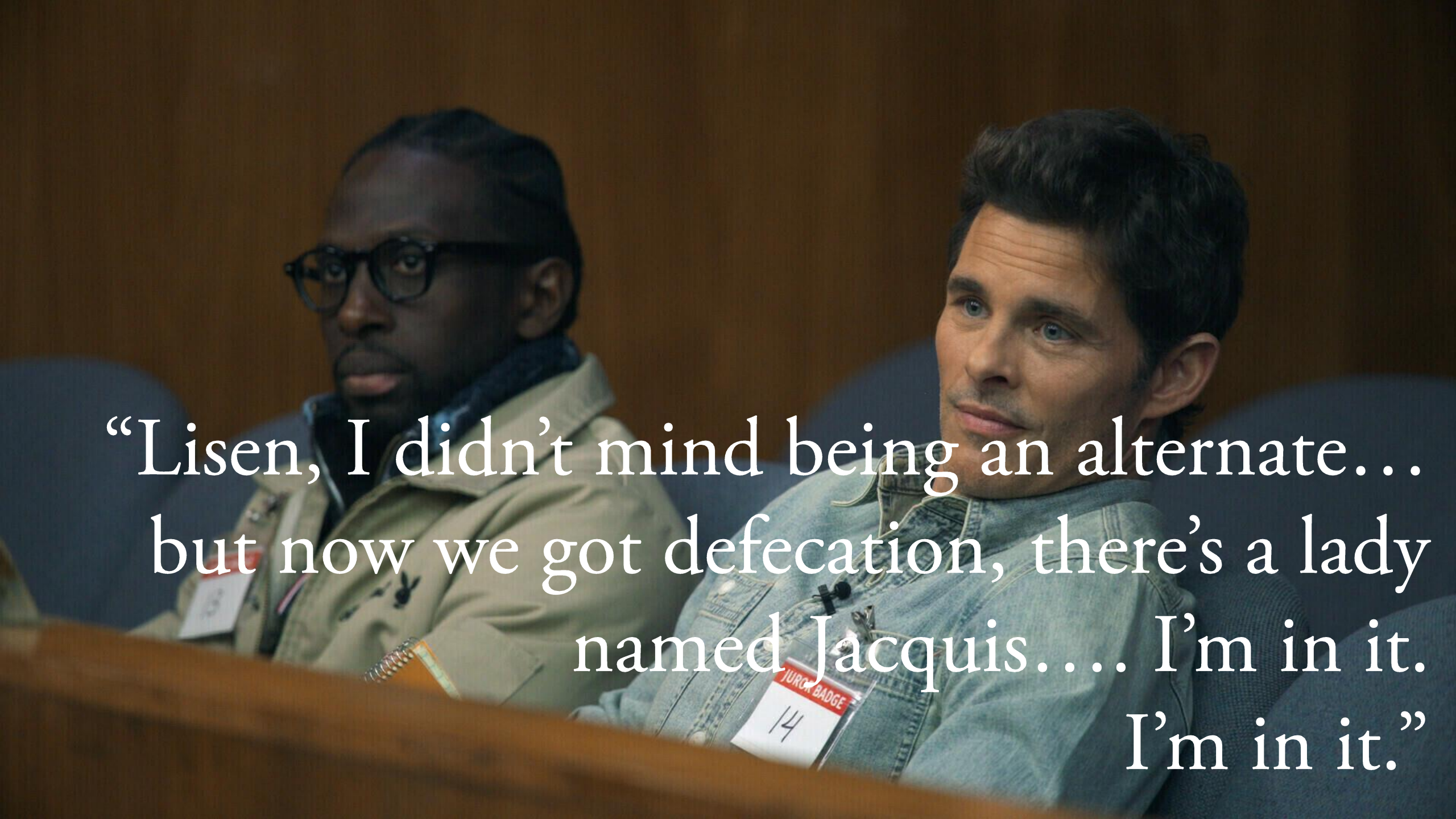
## THE ONES TO WATCH FOR ZERO CHILL

Look at any list this year and you will find these two shows on it. HBO's **Succession**, one of the best TV shows in the past few years, came to a close with what some have called "the most feel-bad ending in TV history", which one might think is a bad thing? Only we know better, because we all like stress, torture, and stealth wealth, so obviously that was a compliment.

Continuing the feel-bad (that-feels-so-good) trend we had another stellar season of FX's **The Bear**, which, if you thought last season's single-take episode was stressful, WAIT 'till you watch this season's Christmas episode. Also, *the* best cameos. Also, can I just say how much I love cousin Richie and Ebon Moss-Bachrach and how funny (aka sad?) it is that all the men from *Girls* have acclaimed careers while the most acclaimed work we've seen from a *Girls* actress lately... was M3GAN??





A still from the movie 'Juror 12' showing two men sitting in a courtroom. The man on the left is Black, wearing glasses and a tan jacket. The man on the right is white, wearing a denim jacket. Both have 'JUROR BADGE' tags with numbers pinned to their chests. The man on the right has the number '14' on his badge. The background is a wood-paneled wall.

“Lisen, I didn’t mind being an alternate...  
but now we got defecation, there’s a lady  
named Jacquis.... I’m in it.  
I’m in it.”

THE SHOW SO NICE I WATCHED IT THRICE (WITH ADS!)

## JURY DUTY

Amazon Freevee's fake courtroom documentary where everyone is an actor except for the main character is by far my favorite 2023 show. Hilarious, unexpected, and heartwarming, it reminded me not only that TV can still be original but also that there's still good out there in the world.

I cannot recommend it enough. PLEASE WATCH IT.





# BOOKS

## BAD AT READING (AGAIN)

**“The whole town’s talking about it. It’s not right for a woman to read. Soon she starts getting ideas and thinking...”** (Gaston, *Beauty and the Beast*)

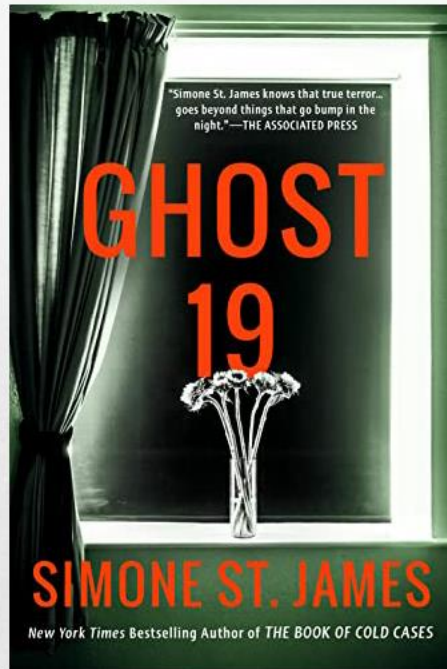
I started 25 books (one up from last year, at least, but sure as hell far from 2021’s 44 titles) and finished 20 of them. I only REALLY liked about five.

I once knew a man who was only willing to read classics and I am starting to slowly understand where he was coming from.

(granted, he was unwilling to read even the likes of Sylvia Plath, or any other classic by a woman, citing “not classic enough”, so let’s use our discernment, ok...)

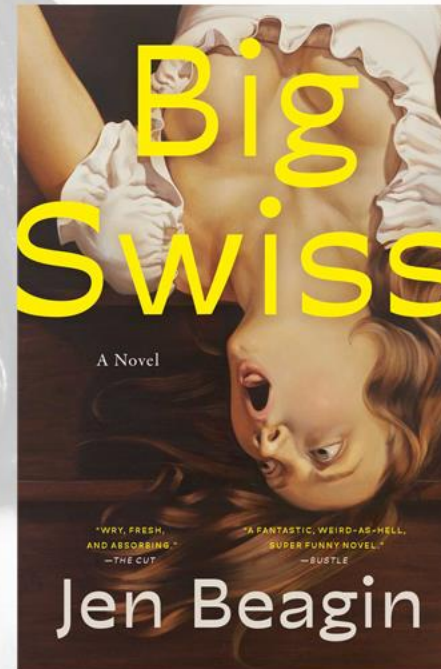
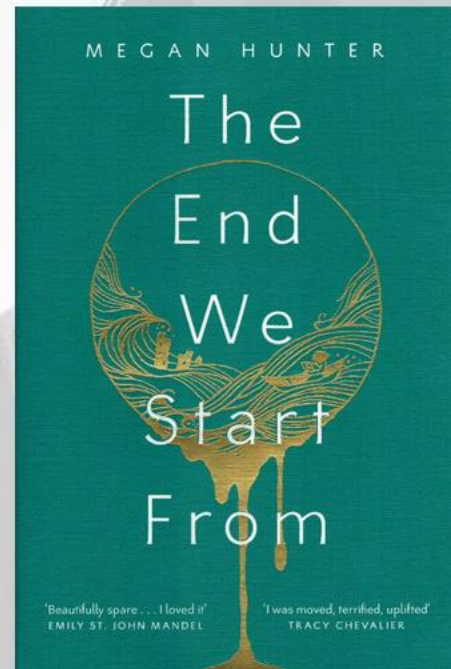


## THE CONTEMPORARIES



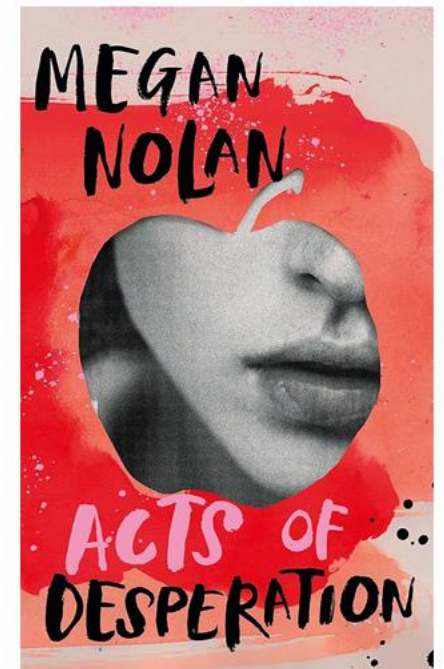
Simone St. James returns with **Ghost 19** (2023), a spooky short story about a failing actress who moves into a new house and finds herself unable to leave.

Megan Hunter's **The End We Start From** (2017) is the only cli-fi on my list this year, telling the story of a woman and her newborn escaping a mysterious flood that hits London.

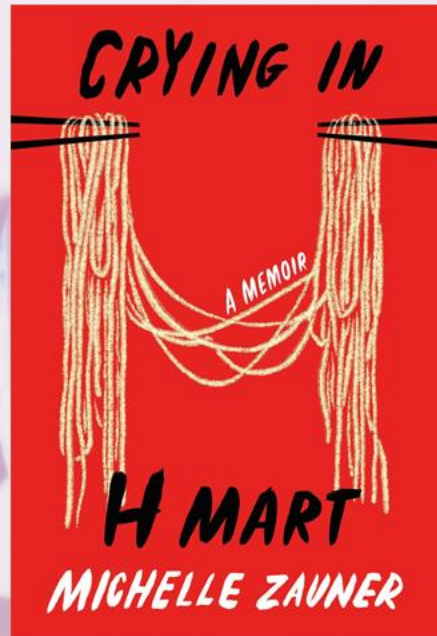


In Jen Beagin's **Big Swiss** (2023), Greta lives in a crumbling farmhouse in upstate NY, and obsesses over the enigmatic client of a local sex therapist, whose sessions she is hired to transcribe.

In **Acts of Desperation** (2021) by Megan Nolan, obsession is mistaken for love when the protagonist meets a man who she believes would be the answer to all her problems.



## SPEAKING OF LOSS

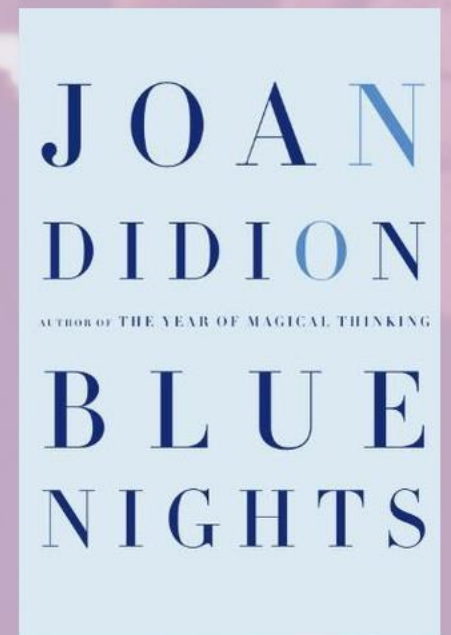
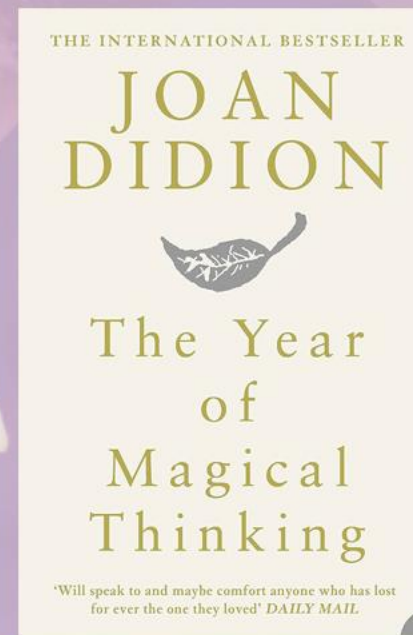


Three of the most stunning books I have read this year (as always, fashionably late) were about the loss of a mother, a daughter, and a husband.

In **Crying in H Mart** (2021), Michelle Zauner revisits the devastating loss of her mother, choosing to use stories about food (and the titular H Mart, that yes, I did go to after reading the book) to open up about their intricate relationship.

I continued expanding my Joan Didion bibliography with **The Year of Magical Thinking** and **Blue Nights**, the powerful accounts of Didion's loss of her husband, John Gregory Dunne, and their daughter Quintana Roo shortly thereafter.

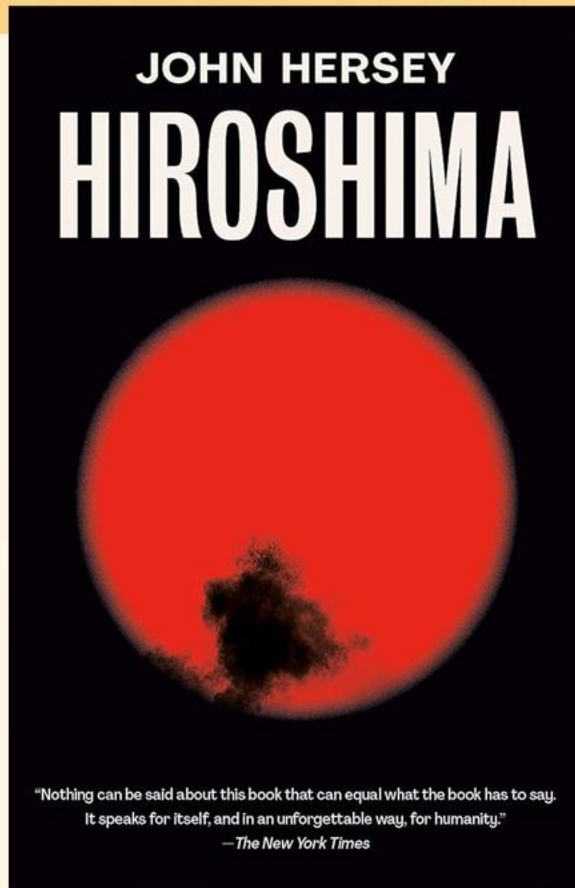
It is difficult to speak to these works objectively, or unemotionally, given their autobiographical nature, and everything I'm thinking sounds overly clinical. All I will say is that these memoirs were the most powerful books I have read in 2023 and I am grateful that these talented women chose to share their most personal stories with the world.



“She knocked me out. I mean it. I was half in love with her by the time we sat down. That's the thing about girls. Every time they do something pretty, even if they're not much to look at, or even if they're sort of stupid, you fall half in love with them, and then you never know where the hell you are. Girls. Jesus Christ. They can drive you crazy. They really can.”

-- Holden Caulfield, *The Catcher in the Rye*





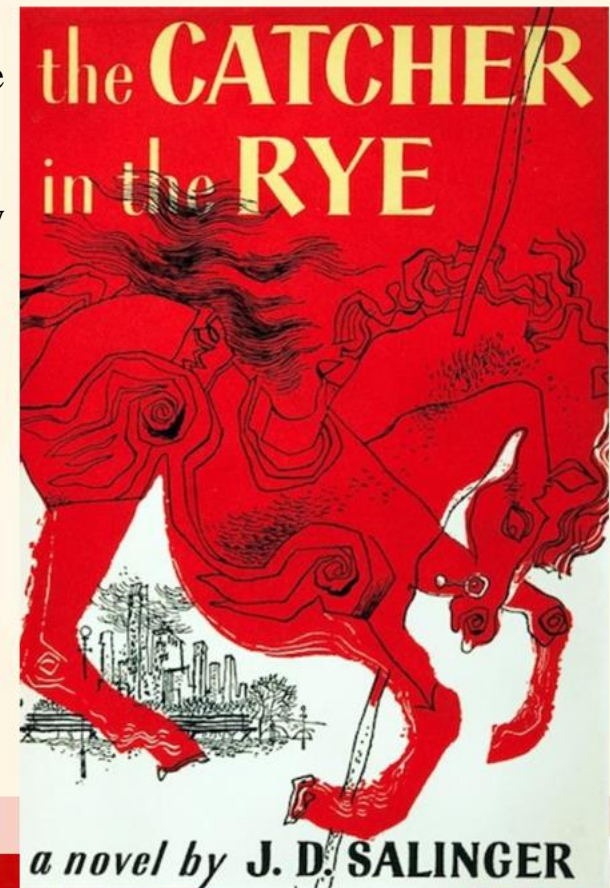
## THE CLASSICS

Whenever I get tired of literature from the past decade I like to fall back on my favorite books from when I was in my teens and twenties.

In case anyone was still wondering about **Oppenheimer**, I chose to replace it with John Hersey's stunning **Hiroshima** (1946). I was taught by a great film critic that you cannot review a movie based on what you *hoped* it to be so I chose to not address Oppenheimer at all, and instead re-read this chilling account of the Hiroshima bombing. In my opinion, the more valuable story to tell.

The second book I re-read this year remains one of my favorite books of all time, J.D. Salinger's **The Catcher in the Rye** (1951). Even after two decades, whenever I come back to this book (which I do often, in my desperation to read something good for a change!), it still feels fresh and magical, funny and touching.

In shitty times like the entirety of 2023 (and who know, maybe even beyond!) it is these books (and movies, and TV shows) that make my days a little bit brighter, so as always, I truly hope you may have found something here that you love too. Please let me know! And with that...





GOODBYE 2023...  
AND GOOD RIDDANCE!

