

# Kicking Off 2017

*I posted this one late. It looks like I didn't really feel that it was finished, and intended to come back to it. Then several months went by, during which I started another post. So anyway, here it is, not very long, and very late, but better late than never, I suppose!*

Today is Friday, January 6th, 2017. It's a new year!

## On Tenterhooks

The home-buying process is moving along. Grace and I are in constant touch with our buyer's agent. Right now we are just continuing to pack, while waiting for news. The next critical step is the appraisal — will the house we're trying to buy appraise out for the price we've negotiated? And if not, what happens then?

If all goes well and everything stays on schedule, we will close in about three weeks.

## Packing

Over my vacation, we began a push to finish packing all the books. We started by bringing all the remaining books in the house into the family room and purging and sorting them. I started boxing them up, continuing the process of cataloging everything going into each box.

Unfortunately we never have had enough free time or space to really sort all the books, and so this results in a situation where books are not truly organized as well as we'd like. For example, I have New York Review Books Classics in various boxes: one box is entirely full of them, another box is half-full of them, and there are a few more NYRB Classics in each of three different boxes. The situation with Library of America books is similar. I packed most of them last September. But we have found more, and gotten more in the mail, so these are not packed with the others. Earlier I was packing Childcraft books and Stone Soup magazines. I put a box into storage that was entirely full of these. As we've gone on, we've found a few more. So they are in a later box.

If, and this is a pretty big "if," we can get sufficient shelf space set up in the

new house, we have hope of being able to really sort everything, which will help us do more purging, since it will be possible to find all the duplicates, especially among children's books.

Speaking of children's books, these are really time-consuming. A box might hold only a dozen large textbook-sized hardcovers, and those won't take me very long to catalog. But another box might hold sixty or even more paperback children's books. We have acquired these over the years at library book sales, and some of them are quite obscure. Adding entries for them to the Delicious Library database often isn't simply a case of typing in a few keywords from the title and the author's last name, to successfully find a match, and clicking the "add" button to indicate the book is in our library. In many cases I just have to put in a blank record in the database and type in the title and author myself, or at least what identifying information I can find.

We also discovered that we had even more books remaining than I thought. We had books in boxes in the garage, books in the kids' rooms, books in closets, and even books in drawers. We're giving lots of books away.

We ran out of boxes again, so I ordered more boxes. I may be able to get most of the remaining books packed this weekend. I don't want to try to put more than eight or ten boxes in my car at a time, sometimes because of the weight, but also because I need to see out the back window. So I will have to take these boxes down to Ann Arbor over the course of the next couple of weeks, but I think the end is in sight. At least I hope the end is in sight.

## Notes on *Great Expectations*

I hadn't managed to finish *Great Expectations* in paper form, but I did finish reading it in the form of an unabridged audiobook from the iTunes store. I did not want to pay for the highest-priced version, so I purchased the version from Trout Lake Media, read by Peter Batchelor. This version is not very good. There are some editing blunders, with sections of the text repeated (either that, or the iPad iBooks app is acting up again). The compression and volume level is uneven — some passages are very quiet and hard to hear. Batchelor's microphone isn't the best. But I got through it.

*Great Expectations* has a slightly weak ending, as I discussed before. It's a bit anti-climactic. There is beautiful writing, and moving writing, and funny writing, in many passages, but that's true of many books. *This* book is a classic in large part because of its characters. My favorite characters are Mrs. Havisham, Abel Magwich, and Joe Gargery. All three are amazingly vivid and portrayed in such strangeness and depth that it is almost impossible to believe they weren't drawn from life.

Many minor characters are also hugely entertaining and amusing too, especially Mr. Jaggers and John Wemmick. Wemmick's home life is absolutely hilarious.

The dialogue between Wemmick and Jagers reminds us that the struggle for work/life balance is far from new.

I recommend this book, and recommend reading it in unabridged audiobook form, but I *don't* recommend the Trout Lake Media production. If I hadn't already paid for this one, and knew then of its flaws, I'd have spent a little more for a better version. At present I haven't listened to any other versions and so I can't recommend any other version in particular.

### ***Washington: A Life* by Ron Chernow**

I picked up an abridged audiobook (on CD) of Ron Chernow's biography of George Washington, simply called *Washington: A Life*. I have the book in print form and started to read it, but at 904 pages, I just wasn't up to Chernow's level of excruciating detail. The unabridged Audible version runs for over 40 hours and costs almost \$50. I paid \$25 for the CD version that runs for 12 hours and so far I don't feel like I'm missing much. Washington's story is amazing.

### ***The Hamilton Mixtape***

Last night I found myself explaining to my kids that hip-hop is not just a genre of music, but a type of music creation workflow, involving sampling and remixing. I picked up my copy of *The Hamilton Mixtape* at Nicola's Books, one of my favorite independent bookstores, and I'm glad I did. There are some songs from the full musical that were not included on the original cast album. There are songs that sample *Hamilton*, the album. There are songs that are mostly covers. Some of them are very beautiful. If you like the original cast album, I think you'll like the mixtape.

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