



DENVER
BRANCH

January-February 2021 Newsletter

Executive Committee

| | |
|----------------|---------------|
| President: | Kate Murphy |
| Treasurer: | Bruce Haefner |
| Program Chair: | n/a |

Board of Directors

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|------------------------|--|
| July 2018-June 2021: | Niccole Guagliardo Jeannine Mortell Lauren Wasser |
| July 2019 – June 2022: | Polly Cox Bruce Haefner Kathleen Murphy Charles Thompson |
| July 2020 – June 2023: | Heather Anderson Cynthia Poinsett Emily Pool Tom Tafoya Michael Thornton |

Committee Chairs

| | |
|-------------------------|------------|
| Finance and Governance: | Emily Pool |
| Membership: | Polly Cox |

Education Program Coordinators

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Teachers Learning | |
| Abroad UK: | Jeannine Mortell |
| Dr. Howard F. Beckley | |
| Writing Competition: | Nicole Guagliardo |
| Shakespeare Competition: | Lauren Wasser |

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Secretary/Administrator | Cami Van Anne |
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President's Corner

Ushering in a new year feels...NEEDED. While we logically know nothing magically *actually* happens at the stroke of midnight on December 31st, for centuries and centuries, we humans have been performing small rituals to mark the passage of time in hopes of better days. I wanted to share with you a few of the U.K.'s rituals that might bring you a little more light and luck in 2021:

First Footing

A first-footer is a dark-haired young man who is sent out of the house just before midnight on New Year's Eve, so he can come back in as soon as midnight has arrived, bringing gifts of bread, coin, salt, coal, or whiskey. All of which are harbingers of good fortune. In Worcestershire, the first footer role has been transferred to the first carol singer to cross the threshold in the new year. While in Yorkshire, they're less fussy about whether the arrival is dark haired or not, but he must definitely be male. But woe betide any red-head that tries to get across the threshold first. Who needs that kind of jinx on the entire year? *(As a natural red-head, I was a little taken aback by those folks in Yorkshire!)*

Calennig

In Wales, Calennig is the name of New Year's Day celebrations (particularly a parade in Cardiff), and a *calennig* is a kind of table-top sculpture made of an apple and some twigs. You basically make a tripod stand for the apple by sticking the twigs in, and coat them with dried fruit and nuts, and add a sprig from an evergreen on the top. This then becomes a decoration for windowsills and mantelpieces, to bring luck to the household in the forthcoming year.

Comrie Flambeaux

And over in Comrie, Perthshire, a procession is made through the town comprising eight torches, which are ceremonially hurled into the River Earn, to cast out evil spirits. It clearly works, too, because Comrie is a lovely place, bereft of spirits of any sort.

Black Rabbits

The tradition in Yorkshire is to say, “black rabbits, black rabbits, black rabbits,” just as the clock is about to chime midnight on New Year’s Eve. Then, as the clock strikes twelve, say, “white rabbits, white rabbits, white rabbits,” as your first utterance of the new year. Good luck will ensue.

Here in our Denver ESU community, we have much to look forward to in 2021, including the Shakespeare Competition, the Beckley Writing Competition, and sending three teachers to study at Oxford and The Globe (2020 recipients, Tom Tafoya and Heather Anderson, and our 2021 recipient, Millicent Ambroggio). Wishing you and your loved ones a Happy New Year from the ESU Denver Branch.

In Celebration,



Kate Murphy

Work Cited:
McAlpine, Fraiser. “Ten British Ways to Ring in the New Year.” *BBC America Anglophenia*. 10 DEC 2013.



Upcoming ESU Calendar

Wednesday
Jan. 13, 2021
4:00pm EST

Virtual Happy Hour
Topsy-Turvey World
of Gilbert & Sullivan

Saturday
Jan. 16, 2021
9:30-11:30 am

Board of Directors Meeting

Wednesday
Jan. 27, 2021
5:00pm EST

Virtual Happy Hour
Private Showing: Churchill
and the Movie Mogul

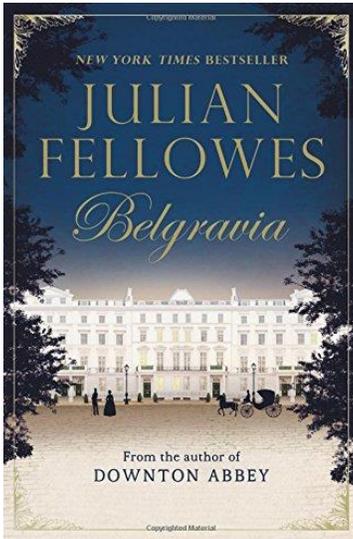
Wednesday
Feb. 10, 2021
4:00pm EST

Virtual Happy Hour
Creole Food: America’s
Oldest Cuisine



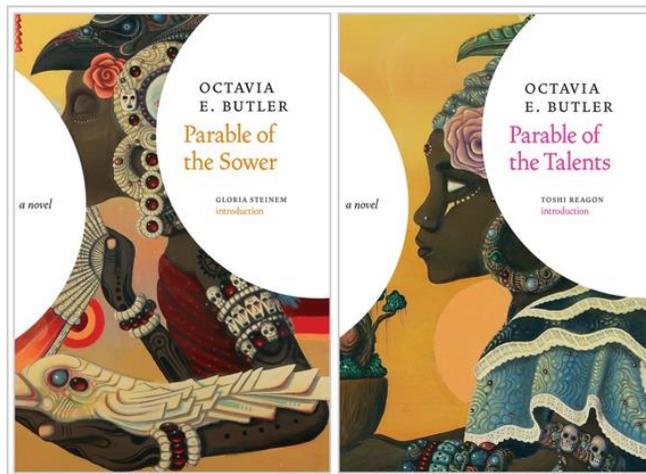
Recommended Reads

As we put 2020 behind us it is time let's take a look at some books that helped get Denver Branch members through the challenging year



Board Member Tom Tafoya recommends *Belgravia* by Julian Fellowes. Tom describes Fellowes' post-Downton Abbey project as a great page turner. This historical fiction work, set in Victorian London, begins around the time of the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 yet most of the novel is set in the early 1840s. Serving up a mixture of mystery and romance the plot focuses on two families, the old money Bellasises and the new rich Trenchards who are considered socially worlds apart. Despite their differences, the lives of these two families become intertwined with some unexpected twists and turns. The writing is an homage to the Victorian serial novel and the cliffhanging chapters keep the reader coming back for more. Action-packed and character-rich, *Belgravia* is sure to provide the escapism to get you through the remaining winter months.

If you haven't read Nicci Guagliardo's picks, Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Talents* and *Parable of the Sower*, now is definitely the time. Butler won the MacArthur Genius grant and wrote this two-part series in the mid 90's, but it could not be more applicable than now. The main character is a young black woman who becomes a leader in her small community during the apocalypse (and the apocalypse is caused by a deadly virus which leads to a collapsed economy and the world is on fire due to global warming - sound familiar?). The book follows our young heroine as she works to create her own religion complete with followers during a time when people need a leader. Butler's writing is straightforward and powerful. There is adventure and excitement and a lot of spiritual pondering. If you really like the style and ideas presented then you can go a step further and look into the Afro-futuristic elements of the book, but it's just as good if you want to read for enjoyment alone. Butler's work seems almost prophetic, as in the second book, one of the out-of-touch ridiculous politicians trying to rule a crumbling society, uses the slogan "Make America Great Again." Nicci emphasized that she really enjoyed these books, and the good news is that Butler has more books if you like her style.





Happy Hour Season Two

Follow the link below for more information and to register
<https://www.esuus.org/esu/activities/happy-hour/>

Wednesday, January 13th at 4:00 PM (EST)

**The Topsy-Turvey World of Gilbert and Sullivan:
Their World, Their Lives and Their Music**

James Stebbings

Wednesday, January 27th at 5:00 PM (EST)

**Private Showing: Churchill and the Movie Mogul
The Untold Story of How Britain's Wartime Prime Minister and
Its Greatest Filmmaker Turned Drama into Victory**

Lee Pollock and Justin Reash

Wednesday, February 10th at 4:00 PM (EST)

Creole Food: America's Oldest Cuisine

Liz Williams



Spread Some Warmth and Extend the Gift of
Expanding minds, Sustaining friendships,
and Unlocking opportunities with a yearlong ESU membership for
friends and family members.

Although COVID restrictions have limited the ability to hold many annual Denver Branch events, the National English-Speaking Union has offered innovative online programming including fun, engaging virtual Happy Hours on a wide variety of topics. The first season of Happy Hours included such varied titles as “Regency and Gothic Revival: Architecture of the South,” “Shakespeare Scandals and Scoundrel,” and “Downton Abbey in the Kitchen.” Members are also invited to attend special digital programs free of charge. Recent special events have included The Queen’s Six, talking about their experiences as Lay Clerks and of Windsor Castle during the holidays and Wrench Speaker: Hilary Davidson, exploring the world of Regency clothing in the age of Jane Austen.

To purchase a gift membership

1. Notify the Denver Branch regarding your intent to purchase a gift membership with the name, address, and email of the intended recipient.
2. Then navigate to the Membership Form on our Branch website: <https://www.esuus.org/denver/membership/form/>

Once the Denver Branch receives notification of the membership, a Gift Card will be sent out directly to your gift membership recipient.