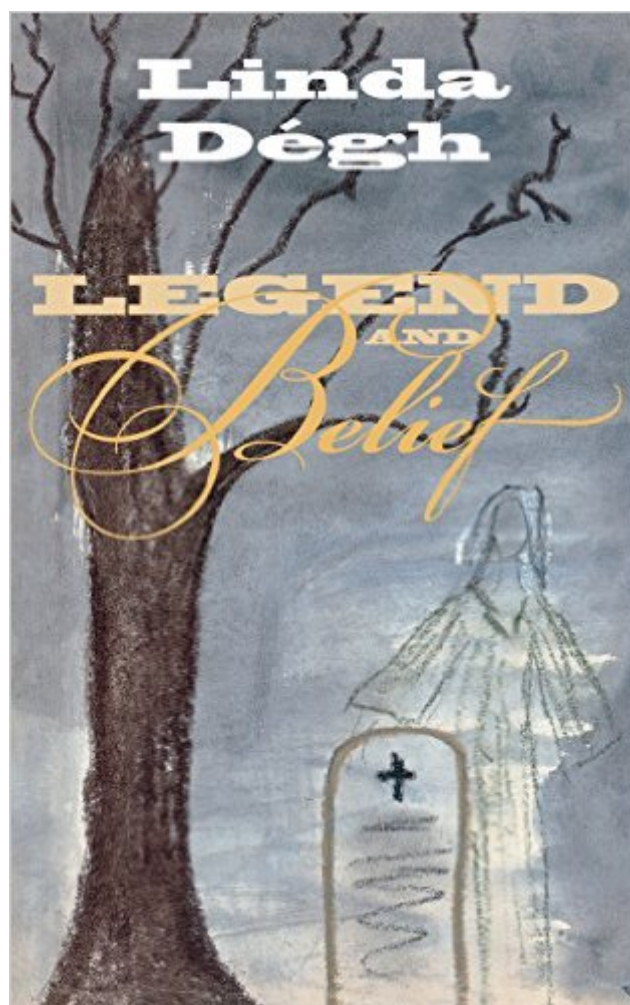


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Legend And Belief: Dialectics Of A Folklore Genre



Synopsis

Legend and Belief: Dialectics of a Folklore Genre
Linda Dowling
An acclaimed folklorist asks "What is legend?" Legend and Belief is a descriptive and analytical study of the legend, the most prolific and characteristic form of folklore in contemporary Western civilization. Not that the legend does not have ancient roots; like the tale, the joke, the ballad, the proverb, and mummery, it was also a part of an archaic preindustrial tradition. But the legend—as old as conversation and debate, and similarly questioning the human condition—was able to survive technological innovations. It has remained contemporaneous, whereas many other genres succumbed to their own anachronism. The legend's concerns are universal and eternal, touching on the most sensitive areas of our existence. That is why stories about supernatural encounters, possessions, divine and infernal miracles, evil spirits, monsters, and prophetic dreams, as well as horror stories about insane and criminal agencies, inundate the urban/industrial world. Industrial advancement does not change the basic fragility of human life, while commercialization and the consumer orientation of the mass media have helped legends travel faster and farther. Legends are not only communicated orally, face-to-face, but also appear in the press, on radio and TV, on countless internet websites, and by e-mail to keep alive new waves of the "culture of fear."
Linda Dowling, Distinguished Professor Emerita of Folklore at Indiana University, is a folklorist/ethnologist whose speciality is the analysis of personally observed creative processes of narration in both traditional and modern communities of Europe and North America. Her numerous publications include *Four Lives: People in the Tobacco Belt*; *Folktales and Society*; *American Folklore and the Mass Media*; and *Narratives in Society*.
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