Preface

This book is an outgrowth of Utah State University's 1991 Feie Conference on folklore and the supernatural, with some of the articles stemming from lectures presented during the conference by guest faculty members—specifically, David Hufford, Barre Toelken, Timothy Lloyd, and James McClenon. The conference was well received and highly successful, and a book on the topic seemed a worthwhile undertaking. In addition to obtaining these essays from conference faculty, I solicited manuscripts from other scholars working on various issues of belief.

It would be close to impossible to assemble a complete, comprehensive volume on folklore and the supernatural. But this book offers a useful selection of topics, ranging from Barre Toelken's examination of Native American communication systems (which confound non-Natives) to Kenneth Pimple's account of the ramifications of possible hoaxes, the Fox sisters, and the advent of Modern Spiritualism in America; from Timothy Lloyd's interviews with Lloyd Farley about fundamental belief systems that rely on zodiac signs for determining agricultural practices to Erika Brady's exploration of exorcism and the role of Catholic priests; from David Hufford's intellectual discussion of how belief as a concept is defined and regarded to Joyce Hammond's look at tourists, Hawaii's goddess Pele, and the desire to experience "Other." As a whole, the book offers a spectrum of writing that invites questions, generates discussion, and engenders reflection.

My sincere appreciation goes to each of the authors for their industry and patience. Many of them are long-time scholars of the supernatural and have published other stimulating works on parallel topics. This project, which encouraged my own thinking about the supernatural, particularly about belief itself as a general concept, has been mentally fun and personally gratifying. It also created an opportunity to work with old friends and a framework for
meeting new ones, which has been an unexpected serendipitous benefit of the book.

I am grateful to my colleague Barre Toelken, who, as director of the folklore program at Utah State University, allowed me time to converse and gather, to think and write. Without his generosity and encouragement there would be no book. We share a multitude of impromptu discussions at work and many longer, more memorable conversations in homes, restaurants, automobiles, airports, and planes. Through tears, laughter, and even disagreements, we have a caring friendship.

It would be an oversight not to mention William A. "Bert" Wilson, who is a good friend to many of us who have written here. Although he is not a direct contributor to this book, Bert and I have worked, walked, talked, and argued together for several years over many ideas that skirt these pages, and I deeply value his keen intelligence and his great heart.

I want to thank my former and present workmates Karen Krieger, Randy Williams, and Michele Casavant, who cheerfully toast the good times and unfalteringly soothe the bad. They make Monday through Friday especially good-humored and productive.

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BARBARA WALKER
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