



# **The Meanings of Magic: From the Bible to Buffalo Bill (Polygons: Cultural Diversities & Intersections)**

*Amy Wygant*

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The notion of "magic" is a current popular culture phenomenon. "Harry Potter", "The Lord of the Rings", the commercial glamour of the footballer and the pop idol surround us with their charisma, enchantment, and charm. But magic also exerts a terrifying political hold upon us: Bin Laden's alleged March 28 e-mail message spoke of the attacks on America in form of "crushing its towers, disgracing its arrogance, undoing its magic." The nine scholars included in this volume consider the cultural power of magic, from early Christianity and the ancient Mediterranean to the curious film career of Buffalo Bill, focusing on topics such as Surrealism, France in the classical age, alchemy, and American fundamentalism, ranging from popular to elite magic, from theory to practice, from demonology to exoticism, from the magic of memory to the magic of the stage. As these essays show, magic defines the limit of both science and religion but as such remains indefinable.

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