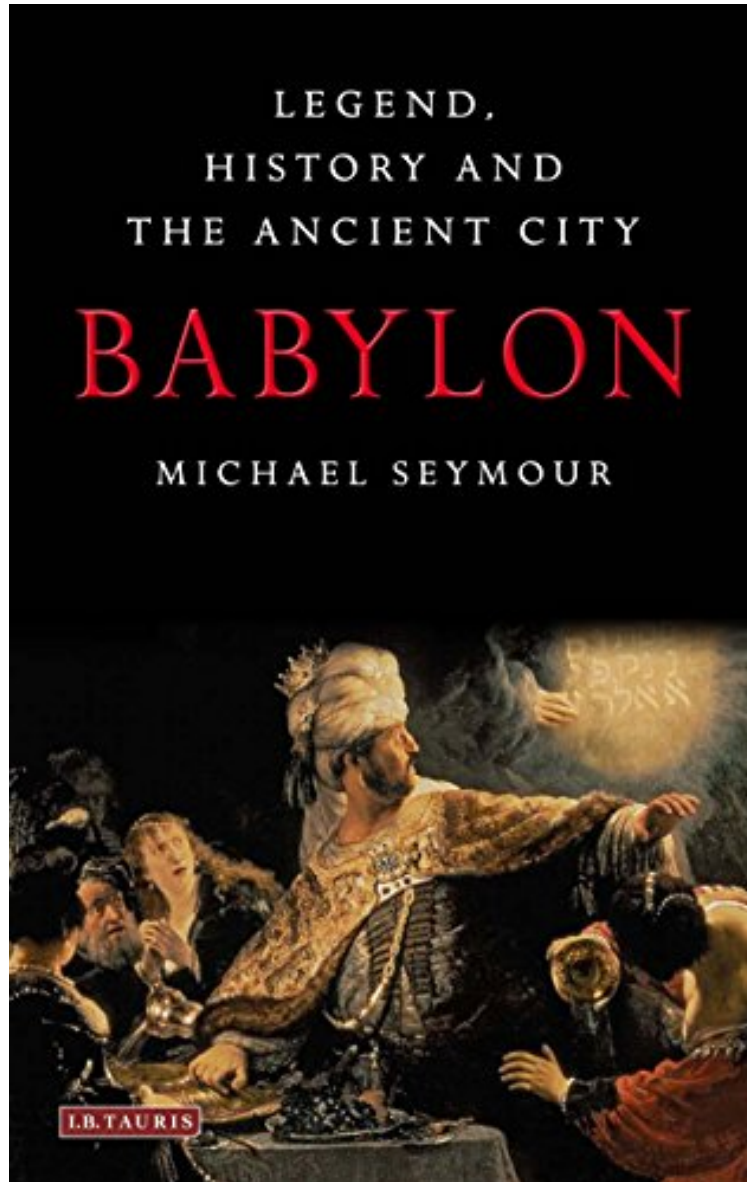


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Babylon: Legend, History and the Ancient City

Michael Seymour

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Michael Seymour : Babylon: Legend, History and the Ancient City before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Babylon: Legend, History and the Ancient City:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. There is NO overview better. A catalogue for a major end-of-career exhibitionBy Nicholas WestbrookThere is NO overview better . A catalogue for a major end-of-career exhibition, the summa sapientia of I.L. Finkel, a major scholar in the field.3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Beautiful

book originally related to a museum exhibit
By Reviewing brother
This was purchased for my wife to use in a class that she took. She said that it was a beautiful book that did a good job of explaining the illustrations. The book was originally tied in with a museum exhibit and was concentrating on artifacts that could be shown and did not cover everything possible about Babylon and its history.
1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Babylon in all its splendor and mystique.
By Victoria Hardiman
There are no superlatives too great for this book--compelling written, wonderfully illustrated, thoroughly researched--a perfect combination of scholarship, depth, popular interest and readability.
This book should have 5 stars; if less than 5 appear in the review, the error is mine.

Babylon: for eons its very name has been a byword for luxury and wickedness. "By the rivers of Babylon we sat down and wept," wrote the psalmist, "as we remembered Zion." One of the greatest cities of the ancient world, Babylon has been eclipsed by its own sinful reputation. For two thousand years the real, physical metropolis lay buried while another, ghostly city lived on, engorged on accounts of its own destruction. More recently the site of Babylon has been the centre of major excavation, yet the spectacular results of this work have done little to displace the many other fascinating ways in which the city has endured and reinvented itself in culture. Saddam Hussein, for one, notoriously exploited the Babylonian myth to associate himself and his regime with its glorious past. Why has Babylon so creatively fired the human imagination, with results both good and ill? Why has it been so enthralling to so many, and for so long? In exploring answers, Michael Seymour's book ranges extensively over space and time and embraces art, archaeology, history, and literature. From Hammurabi and Nebuchadnezzar, via Strabo and Diodorus, to the Book of Revelation, Brueghel, Rembrandt, Voltaire, William Blake, and modern interpreters like Umberto Eco, Italo Calvino, and Gore Vidal, the author brings to light a carnival of disparate sources dominated by powerful and intoxicating ideas, such as the Tower of Babel and the city of sin.

'In this ambitious and all encompassing account of how the ancient city of Babylon has been studied, interpreted and received throughout history, Michael Seymour offers an exemplary study in the reception of the ancient world. Multiple manifestations of the notion of Babylon are explored, revealing the extent to which ancient civilisations have been appropriated according to different cultural contexts and priorities. The book presents an intoxicating mix of mythology, interpretation and fact from a wide variety of sources: both textual and visual. Through each of the chapters we see the exciting and complex journey that antiquities undertake once retrieved from the earth in which they were buried. One of the most important findings of the work is the extent to which ancient Mesopotamian culture is shown to have "lived on" in a range of conflicting and successive contexts. In this thoughtful and probing analysis, Seymour unravels the very idea of Babylon, revealing it to be a complex bundle of meanings and significances. He does a great service to archaeology, ancient history and cultural studies in telling this story of entanglement.'

- Stephanie Moser, Professor of Archaeology, University of Southampton, 'The city of Babylon and the idea of Babylon have co-existed as intertwined threads of intellectual and historical engagement for centuries. In the recent past Babylon was an emblem for Saddam Hussein's control over Iraq's past (ancient Babylon), present (reconstructed Babylon), and future (eternal Babylon). Since at least the sixth century BC, and up to modern times, Babylon has been entangled in discourses that transgress the boundaries between history, myth, fantasy and bias, while over the past century scientific archaeology has contributed to the mix. Michael Seymour teases apart the golden threads of Babylon's discourses, tracing each one in meticulous detail before reweaving them into a new and brilliant tapestry, presenting us in this adroit and learned book with a Babylon fit for the scrutiny of our age.'

- Roger Matthews, Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology, University of Reading, 'This is a brilliant first book by a rising star in Ancient Near Eastern studies. It comes at a critical moment when the ancient city of Babylon is under the spotlight as never before. After the coalition invasion of 2003 Babylon was turned into a military camp to universal international condemnation. Now the World Monuments Fund is helping with the conservation of the site and application has been made for Babylon to become a World Heritage Site. There have also been three major exhibitions about Babylon in the last few years, in Paris, Berlin and London, all with sumptuous catalogues, and the famous Cyrus Cylinder, found at Babylon in 1879, is currently the subject of a touring exhibition. Yet until now there existed no book that traced the exploration and excavation of Babylon against the wider backdrop of developments in European intellectual thinking and understanding. Michael Seymour does this with great skill and clarity, and has produced a book that not only examines the importance and significance of Babylon in the western and eastern traditions, but also provides a readable account of the history and excavation of the city. This will be an indispensable book both for scholars in a number of different fields and for laymen interested in the Ancient Near East.'

- John Curtis, OBE, Keeper of Special Middle Eastern Projects, The British Museum, 'The range of sources covered is impressive and there are some fascinating interpretations and details here.'

- History Today
About the Author
Michael Seymour is a Research Associate in the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. He is co-author (with I.L. Finkel) of *Babylon: Myth and Reality* (2008). (2016-05-06)