Milton Seminar
Saturday, October 8, 2016, 12:00 noon
The Newberry Library

Milton and Readmission

Kathy Lavezzo
University of Iowa

Scholars have long identified Milton as a “Hebraic” writer fascinated with Judaism as a source of Christianity. But what were the great poet’s sentiments on contemporary Jews and the question of their coexistence with the English? That issue gained national attention during the second half of the seventeenth century, when Oliver Cromwell convened officials to debate formally readmitting Jews, who had officially been absent from England since the 1290 expulsion. Professor Lavezzo explores how, while Milton never explicitly weighed in on national debates over readmission, he offers a charged and elusive commentary on the question in Samson Agonistes. Central to Lavezzo’s exploration of Samson Agonistes are the geographical and architectural aspects of the play, such as Samson’s abiding homelessness, his destruction of the Dagon temple, and his interment in his father Manoa’s home. By reading the spaces of Milton’s closet drama alongside its companion piece Paradise Regain’d and political tracts like Areopagitica, Lavezzo demonstrates how the great Hebraist also gave new life to an offensive English tradition of rejecting “the Jew,” one that extends back nearly a millennium before Milton, to the venerable Bede.

Coffee and refreshments will be served before the seminar.

This program is free and open to the public, but space is limited and registration in advance is required.

Register online by 10 am, October 7
www.newberry.org/renaissance

Organized by Timothy Campbell, University of Chicago; Stephen Fallon, University of Notre Dame; Christopher Kendrick, Loyola University Chicago; and Regina Schwartz, Northwestern University.