



Adam Kirsch

Columbia University

Wednesday
Nov. 4, 2015

6 pm Reception
6:30 pm Lecture

The Magnes Collection of
Jewish Art and Life

2121 Allston Way
Berkeley, CA

Is There Such a Thing as Jewish Literature?

Writing, literacy and text have always stood at the heart of Jewish identity. But in the modern period, as many Jews lost contact with the texts that defined their tradition, Jewish writing emerged as a paradox: a practice that seems characteristically Jewish while not necessarily dealing with Jewish subject matter or speaking a Jewish language. Is there something that unites Jewish writing across the boundaries of language and genre? Is textuality alone a sufficient basis for Jewish identity? And if so, why is “Jewish literature” a different kind of definition than other, historically negative terms like “Jewish music” or “Jewish science”?

Adam Kirsch is a poet and critic. He is the author of three collections of poetry, most recently “Emblems of the Passing World: Poems after Photographs by August Sander,” and several books of criticism, including “Why Trilling Matters” and “Rocket and Lightship: Essays on Literature and Ideas.” He is a contributing editor at Tablet Magazine and a former senior editor of The New Republic; his essays and reviews appear in The New Yorker, the New York Review of Books, and other publications. He is director of Columbia University’s M.A. Program in Jewish Studies and teaches on the seminar faculty of the Center for American Studies.

Co-sponsored by:

