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The City of Words (CBC Massey Lecture)

Alberto Manguel

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The end of ethnic nationalism — building societies that promote civic nationalism with universally accepted value systems — seems eminently sensible. But something is going wrong. In these 2007 Massey Lectures, Alberto Manguel takes a fresh look at the problems that come with creating new societies. Race riots in France, political murder in The Netherlands, bombings in Britain — all appear to be symptoms of a multicultural experiment gone awry. Politicians and sociologists are puzzled; why is it so hard for people to live together given the grim alternatives? Is blood still more important than peaceful coexistence? In *The City of Words* Manguel proposes a different approach: look at what writers have to say — maybe books and stories hold secret keys to the human heart, keys that social planners can't find. With his trademark wit and erudition, Manguel suggests looking on the library shelf marked "fiction" for the book titled *How to Build a Better Society*.

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