

Culture

Few Canadians know that one of the greatest poems in Latin American literature was written by a Cuban in honour of Canada's most famous landmark. In contrast, every Cuban school child knows that the *Oda al Niagara* was written in 1824 by Cuba's first great poet, José María Heredia. His ode, and the cataracts which inspired it, have provided a natural magnet for Cubans visiting Canada. In 1915, the great Cuban society photographer Joaquín Blez photographed Niagara's Horseshoe Falls from the

Plaque to Heredia at Niagara Falls, installed 1989

Canadian side - perhaps the first known photograph taken in Canada by a Cuban. In 1955 the Cuban Boy Scouts Association installed a bronze plaque at the falls to commemorate Heredia. In 1989, the Cuban government commissioned a fine bronze bas relief to replace the earlier plaque with Heredia's profile and a fragment of his ode. It was installed at the crest of the falls - in exactly the spot where Blez had taken his photograph over 70 years before.

Cuba has also provided an important entry point for Canadian literature into the Spanish-speaking world. The renowned Canadian novelists Margaret Atwood and Graeme Gibson have been regular visitors to Cuba for almost twenty years. In 1997, with the assistance of Cuba's Union of Artists and Writers, they edited *Desde el invierno*, the first ever anthology of English Canadian short stories translated into Spanish. More recently Dr. Keith Ellis, a distinguished professor of Latin American literature at the University of Toronto worked with the staff of Havana's Casa de las Américas to produce a special Canadian edition of the literary magazine *Casa* in late 2000. This issue, which has been widely distributed in Latin

