

# **THE BISHOP, THE PIRATE, AND THE BLACK SLAVE: CUBA'S RENAISSANCE EPIC**



**Peter Hulme**  
**University of Essex**

**April 6, 2009**  
**5:30pm**

**John Carter Brown Library Reading Room**  
**Brown University**  
*Reception to follow*

The *Espejo de paciencia* [The Paragon of Patience], a poem in the epic tradition written in 1608 in Cuba, is one of the earliest works of American literature. Based on historical events of the kidnap and rescue of the Bishop of Cuba while on a diocesan visit to Oriente, the text of the *Espejo* was only discovered in the 1830s, leading to persistent rumours that it was a nineteenth-century forgery. Featuring the actions of an heroic slave, the poem was easily incorporated into the anti-slavery literature of that period before acquiring a further reputation as an early exemplar of creole poetics. This lecture attends both to the historical context of the *Espejo*'s composition and to its critical reception, particularly within Cuba.

Peter Hulme is Professor in Literature and Head of the Department in Literature, Film, and Theatre Studies at the University of Essex in Colchester, UK. Prof. Hulme read Spanish at Leeds and took his doctorate in Literature at Essex in Literature, where he has taught since 1975. He was closely involved with the various Essex Sociology of Literature projects and their many publications. His research interests centre on the relationships between literature, travel writing, anthropology and colonialism, especially in the Caribbean, and on postcolonial studies in its widest sense.

He is the author of *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492-1797* (1986, paperback 1992) and *Remnants of Conquest: The Island Caribs and Their Visitors, 1877-1998* (2000), and joint editor of *Wild Majesty: Encounters with Caribs from Columbus to the Present Day* (1992), *Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory* (1994), *Cannibalism and the Colonial World* (1998), *'The Tempest' and Its Travels* (2000), and *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (2002). His current research project - supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council - is: *American Tropics: Towards a Literary Geography*.

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