

The Lost Steps

a novel

by Alejo Carpentier

LAI Greenleaf Scholar Lecture: Latin American Writers and Books in the U.S.: Translation and Public Reception (1940-1965)

Presenter: Armando Chávez-Rivera

SEPTEMBER 4

Thursday, September 4, 2025 | 3:00 PM (MST) | Zoom

The company Alfred Knopf in New York was one of the most influential and respected publishing houses in the United States in the 1940s and 1950s. At that time, one of its publication lines was dedicated to Latin America, including books and writers from Colombia, Cuba, Argentina, Mexico, and Brazil. The main Knopf editions on Latin America were novels, biographies, and historical essays. Those publications became a first introduction to Latin American literature and culture. Today, those editions look partial and limited; however, they were considered a huge progress for the time, and they often resulted in unsuccessful business deals with financial losses for Knopf. The editor Herbert Weinstock and the translator Harriet de Onís were essential to the promotion of Latin American literature until the mid-1960s. His active correspondence and meetings with Ibero-American intellectuals achieved the distribution of the first English language editions of the best books by legendary writers.

Armando Chávez-Rivera is a Numerary Member of the North American Academy of the Spanish Language (ANLE) and Corresponding Member in the United States of the Royal Spanish Academy (RAE). He is currently Professor and Director of the Spanish Program at the University of Houston-Victoria (University of Houston System). He earned a Ph.D. in Hispanic literature from the University of Arizona and a master's degree in Hispanic Lexicography at the Royal Spanish Academy and University of León, Spain. His academic research is concentrated on culture, literature, and lexicography. He recently published the first edition of the *Diccionario de provincialismos de la Isla de Cuba* (1831). This is a highly specialized book that provides a wealth of information understandable to a wide audience of readers in matters of lexicon, history, and culture. Dr. Chávez-Rivera's articles and books include extensive information about Latin America, where he lived for many years.



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