El Lector's Canon: Social Dynamics of Reading from Havana to Tampa[1]

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Abstract:

Using the collected oral histories and cigar factory documents housed in the University of South Florida's Special Collections and through the University of Florida's Samuel Proctor Oral History Program, this paper explores the role of the lector in the Latin immigrant community of Ybor City (Tampa), Florida, during the period from the mid-1880s to the early 1930s. A complex relationship exists between the reader, the laborers, literature, and concepts of literacy. Some of the questions explored include: how did a largely uneducated workforce come to select the works of Victor Hugo and Leo Tolstoy and other world literature, for it was the workers who selected the novels, not the lectors; and in what ways did the literature and reading influence the culture and heritage of the community as vestiges of the lectors' influence can still be seen in the social and cultural organizations in Tampa today?

No other industry has had the profound impact on the establishment of a city in Florida like cigar manufacturing has had on Tampa, particularly the area called Ybor City. Prior to the introduction of the cigar factories in the 1880s, Tampa was a small town surrounded by swamplands, sand and alligators. The town could only be reached by stagecoach or steamboat, though Henry B. Plant was building his Southern Railway with lines running from Sanford, Florida, southwest to Tampa. With good wages, a good standard of living and improved transportation, the cigar industry burgeoned in Tampa, drawing workers, merchants and intellectuals from Cuba, Spain and Sicily as well as Eastern Europe. Along with their families, these new immigrants and exiles brought their traditions, including mutual aid and labor militancy, and a strong cultural heritage; by the late 1890s Ybor City was more Latin than American.

One of the most romanticized cultural traditions was that of *el lector de tabaqueros*, or the reader. These men and a handful of women were employed to read to the cigar factory workers throughout the workday. Hired by the cigar workers, the lector was both revered by

the factory workers and feared by the factory owners. The cigar workers viewed the readers as educators who enlightened them and improved their understanding of the world, finding common ground for discourse and dialogue among varied groups and factions; the lector was the linchpin holding the community of Latin immigrants together, speaking in a single voice. The lector, by comparison, was seen by factory owners as an organizer of labor and promoter of socialism and radical ideals, reading labor newspapers and socialist novels that supported freedom and equality for the working class. Factory owners believed that the lectores were the source of dissension and agitation between the manufacturers and the cigar workers; yet factory owners failed to understand that the workers themselves selected the reading materials and hired the lectores, and carried their own strong heritage of labor militancy.

A complex set of social dynamics evolved between the reader, the factory workers, literature, and concepts of literacy. Many workers had little formal education, yet *they* made the choices of the literature and news that was to be read. The news, novels and poetry read within the factory walls spread beyond to the broader community through a sharing of the reading experience between workers and their families and neighbors. All of the reading was translated into Spanish, requiring the Italians and non-Spanish speaking workers to learn Spanish in order to assimilate into the working community. Some of the literature, especially the newspapers and political tracts, was used to educate the workers about workers' rights, and served as a conduit to labor organization; but, it also served to remind workers of their familial and cultural ties to Cuba, Spain and Italy.

The readers had a profound effect upon the community, which is still felt in contemporary Tampa and which continues to intrigue researchers and scholars. Using the collected oral histories, photographs, and other cigar factory documents[2] this paper explores the social dynamics of reading within the cigar industry and the role of the reader in serving as a gatekeeper, educator, and social commentator. While the cigar industry in Tampa serves as a microcosm for the greater international labor movement at the turn of the Twentieth Century, it also offers a unique environment in which to explore the role and impact of books and other reading materials in the lives of a working-class people.

Bringing Cigars to Tampa

In the late 1870s Don Vincente Martínez Ybor[3] moved his cigar-making factory from Havana, Cuba, to *Cayo Hueso*[4] (Key West), Florida, and then in 1884 to the small harbor town of Tampa, Florida. When Ybor stepped off the steamboat at Port Tampa, he found a land of primitive beauty, a perfect tropical environment for his fine Havana tobacco leaf (hot and humid), and a place ripe with opportunity. Buying a large tract of undeveloped property just outside of the city limits, Ybor established his company town, calling it Ybor City[5]. Other cigar manufacturers, including Ignacio Haya and his partner Serafin Sanchez, quickly established their own factories in Ybor City and West Tampa, in the hopes of avoiding political pressures and labor unrest that were swelling to support *Cuba Libre* in both Havana and Key West.

The first cigar factories, V.M. Ybor and the Sanchez y Haya, opened in 1885.[6] At the peak of the cigar manufacturing more than two hundred factories were located in Ybor City and West Tampa, employing 10,000 workers from Cuba, Spain and Italy along with a small portion of freedmen and whites. Factories ranged in size from very small facilities, which were often family-run operations, to factories employing hundreds of cigar workers. In 1929,

the pinnacle of production, Tampa produced 505 million hand-rolled cigars and millions of dollars in export receipts.

Ybor, Haya, and others enticed workers from Havana, Key West, New Orleans, and New York, by offering better wages and a higher standard of living than was available in many other larger cities. Factory owners built small *casitas* near the factories to house the workers and their families; they built boardinghouses for the single men; and, they provided stores and bakeries. By 1887 Ybor City boasted streets paved with wooden blocks and street lights along with coffeehouses and theatres, having "outpaced [the City of Tampa] in every respect: population, mercantile development, cultural activity, and economic productivity…."[7] The factory owners created a paternalistic community with the intent to stem the rise of labor militancy; by keeping the workers satisfied with work and living conditions, they were less likely to cause labor trouble.

Cuba had ended the Ten Years' War in 1878—the first in a series of wars declaring Cuban independence from colonial Spain—and many Cubans and Spanish ex-patriots fled or were exiled, landing first in *Cayo Hueso*, then moving northwest to Tampa. Cesar Marcos Medina explained the reason that his parents immigrated to Tampa was because of:

> the opportunity that Tampa offered, and the fact that Tampa at the time was already becoming a big cigar center and that there were more opportunities here, better living conditions.[8]

Mary Fontanills, a daughter of one of Ybor City's most renowned readers – Manuel Aparicio –corroborates Medina's assessment, indicating that her family moved to Tampa, first because they could make a better living, and then because it was a community of Latin people who spoke the same language and shared the same culture.[9] Sicilians also learned of plentiful jobs and a better life from their families who had emigrated earlier, abandoning their native Sicily for the promise of opportunities in America. When asked why his and other Italian families moved to Tampa, Domenico Giunta explained it was due to "the steady sure flow of a weekly income [which] was the realization of the pot of gold at rainbows end."[10]

Ybor City quickly grew up around the needs of the cigar workers. Eastern Europeans flocked to the area, opening dry goods stores and clothiers. The Italians, while working in the factories as unskilled labor, also established bodegas (groceries), fish and fruit stands. They also found employment in construction, which was booming in and around Ybor City and West Tampa. Each ethnic group formed its own social clubs and mutual aid societies where they would gather for education and entertainment and to receive medical care. The social clubs and societies became hotbeds of political activities and unionization as well as cultural centers.

The Latin community established numerous cafés and restaurants to serve their traditional food and drink. The cafés were especially important for the workers. By custom, the cigar rollers enjoyed *café con leche* three times during the day. Since the factories had no cafeterias, the factory awarded a concession to "el Cafatero," a local café owner, to deliver the coffee to the workers at their work benches; and he collected payment from the cigarmakers once a week on payday. Even more critically, the cafés became a gathering place for discussion and dialogue, serving as a place for the Latins to congregate and exchange news and information. The Federal Writer's Project in 1941 noted:

> Latins are politically-minded ….They are as intensely interested in politics in their native lands as in affairs at home. Even the poorest has a favorite coffee house, restaurant, or private club in which to spend evenings in search of discussion and recreation.[11]

Not only did the workers—the men—gather at the cafés, but the lectores congregated at them early in the morning and again in the evening to plan and discuss the day's readings from the newspapers.

Reading to the Workers -- *El Lector*

Cigar factories throughout Havana, Key West, and Tampa maintained the tradition of a reader, or *el lector*, to educate and entertain the cigar rollers as they completed the monotonous task of rolling cigars by hand. In its early practices in the prisons of Cuba, the role of the reader--most often a prison guard--was conceived as morally uplifting and as more beneficial to the prisoners than a flogging. In the cigar factories, however, the readers played quite a different role of enlightenment, radicalism, and organization.

Reading to groups of workers is not unique in an historical perspective, and it served similar purposes of education and entertainment in other times and places. Throughout history evidence exists that many industries featured one person reading to groups of workers who toiled in a quiet room. The earliest evidence of reading aloud to others appears in Chapter 38 of "The Rule of St. Benedict of Nursia" from the First Century where it prescribes the reading aloud during meals for the "edification of the rest."[12] The monastic readers served as the "humble mouthpiece for the word of God to enter the collective soul…."[13] Reading aloud may have occurred in Flemish shoemaker shops, Scottish weavers' crofts and Mexican hat shops prior to industrialization and automation. The common threads among these practices were the nature of quietness that pervaded these work environments and the need to enlighten and educate the collective workers. However, none of these instances bore the same strength of purpose or cultural heritage as that found in the Cuban cigar factories.

There is no doubt that by January of 1866 the *lectores* had become established in Havana cigar-making factories. United States Secretary of State William Seward visited Havana at that time, stopping in the Partagás Cigar Factory. There he observed the cigar rollers listening to a reader while preparing the cigars. Seward noted the "profound silence" in the factory as the workers took in the words of the reader and the array of necessities and comfort which the factory owner provided for the reader.[14] This practice quickly spread to other Spanish-speaking factories, travelling across the Florida Straits to *Cayo Hueso* and north to Tampa.

In Havana, Saturnino Martinez, a cigar maker and poet, is credited with the early introduction of the reader into cigar factories, following the tradition found in Cuban prisons. He began by publishing a newspaper, *La Aurora*, for the cigar industry workers. This newspaper contained political articles, science, literature, poems, and short stories. Martinez also knew that the Cuban cigar workers were largely uneducated and illiterate, thus *La Aurora* could not achieve any level of popularity among its intended audience. With that he conceived of the idea of having public readings within the cigar factory and sought the assistance of the director of a local high school and the permission of the factory owner. Given the nature of the selected readings and the political views included in *La Aurora* combined with the militant and volatile culture of cigar factories, the public readings were

quickly determined to be subversive and ultimately forbidden by the Political Governor of Cuba in May of 1866.[15]

Not unlike the strikes that would take place in Ybor City and West Tampa in later years, the Cuban *tabaqueros* demanded the return of the very popular practice of readers. James H. Collins, upon visiting Havana's cigar factories, related "[It] was decided that no reader would be permitted to practise [sic] his calling in the *galeras*. Within a few months all the cigarmakers in this readerless factory became mutinous and went upon a strike, and as soon as the difficulty was settled the readers were admitted."[16] In Havana, the practice of cigar factory readers continues into the 21st century in the Patargás Cigar Factory, H. Upmman's and others, following the same canon which was established in 1865.[17]

The practice of reading in the factories migrated to Florida along with the fleeing creoles and political exiles. In Tampa, the role of the reader grew to significant importance within the community. The reader became a political and cultural leader within the Latin enclave, frequently holding positions of authority and influence, including political positions as mayor and serving on the city council. The reader was a man of some education and with a flair for the dramatic. In his reminiscences of reading in the factories, Abelardo Gutierrez Diás says,

> Since one of the requirements necessary to become a lector involved literary skills, almost all lectors had received some form of formal education. But perhaps as important, one had to read with feeling (leer con sentido). More than anything else, one had to act out his material. Take the novel, for example. One had to interpret. The lector had to be something of an actor. He had to breathe life into his protagonists. The old lady-the old man: when they argued, when they yelled. All that. You know, it was not all that easy.[18]

The reader could be a self-taught, self-made man or one who had benefited from a university education, but above all he had to have a fine voice combined with the ability to give life to the stories.

Through his social standing within the Latin community, *el lector* held the role of gatekeeper for the Latin community, serving as the primary link between the Latin enclave and the growing urban white population of Tampa. He provided the workers and their families with information concerning local, national and international news, ensuring that the workers were aware of the important issues and events of the day. The reader also aided newcomers in adjusting to life in Ybor City, providing information about services within the community.

The daily reading followed a specific pattern, and did not vary between factories. The readers mounted their *tribunas*[19] (platforms) on the factory floor at ten o'clock each workday morning. They read for approximately two hours, breaking for a light luncheon, and resuming in the early afternoon. They completed their reading at three o'clock as the workers finished rolling for the day. *El lector* began with the world news, using papers from Cuba, Spain, New York, and Chicago and later with *La Traducción,* a newssheet of world and labor news translated from the original language into Spanish. Readers also included the labor press and radical newspapers in the reading. In the afternoon, the lector read from the local newspapers, translating the *Tampa Tribune* and *Tampa Morning Tribune* from English into Spanish. They ended the day with readings of short stories, poetry, novellas, and novels read as serials

(reading just a chapter or two each day and stopping at a crucial spot in the story). All readings were conducted in Spanish, requiring most *lectores* to be at least bilingual and in many cases having the ability to read and write in Spanish, English and Italian.

El lector's canon was comprised of several distinct forms. First, he read world and local news, culled from newspapers received from Cuba, Spain and Italy and the local newspapers. By request of the cigar workers, he also read political and labor news published in socialist and anarchist newspapers as well as newsletters and journals from the Cigar Makers International Union. Novels, short stories, poetry, and drama rounded out his repertoire, with stories of class consciousness and freedom from oppression intermingled with those of adventure and romance.

The selection of the reading materials followed complex balloting system to select the materials. Domenico Giunta explained the selection process which *el presidente de tabaquero* (not *el lector*) would facilitate:

> They [the cigarmakers] were given about a dozen books or novels and they were told to select which one would they want the reader to read for them next and so they made first choice, second choice, third choice, so that the period of three, six, and nine months those three books that had the highest percentage of all were read…[20]

The workers would campaign during the coffee breaks and in the cafés for their favorite titles, hoping to sway the others in the vote. They also had opportunities to review the books themselves in the social clubs' libraries, at the local bookstore, and their own personal copies. For those who were illiterate, the evening discussions in the cafés included detailed descriptions of the novels. However, the selection of newspapers was slightly different. *El lector* could select one or two newspapers he preferred to read, but he was also charged with reading the newspapers that the workers preferred. The reader was required to purchase or acquire all of his own reading materials; it was not provided for him by the workers and certainly not by the cigar factory owners.[21]

The real obstacle for the lectores was the lack of Spanish language materials. It required two or three days for newspapers from Cuba and Spain to arrive at Port Tampa by boat. The Tampa newspapers were English-language papers, requiring the lector to translate them before reading to the cigar workers. This paucity of Spanish materials resulted in a burst of publishing in Tampa with at least twenty-two Spanish-language newspapers appearing between 1886 and 1898. The majority of the editors and publishers for these Spanish-language newspapers were the lectores themselves, many of whom were journalists before becoming readers. Along with international, national, and local news, the newspapers included a broad selection of literary works, including the works of Cuban writers and translations of short stories, poetry, and novels from other languages into Spanish.

Factory workers enjoyed world class literature, including Spanish/Latin, French, and British authors, particularly those novels that explored the development of class consciousness. The first choices among the cigar workers were the work of Spanish and Cuban writers. In almost every cigar factory *Don Quixote* by Cervantes would be heard regularly, by far the most popular choice of novels. The works of Benito Pérez Galdós and Armando Palacio Valdés were popular among the workers as were Pedro Mata and Eduardo Zamacois. Prior to the late 1920s, Louis Pérez indicates that "almost all the novels involved serious themes, usually labor-related subjects-that was at a time when the factories were

made up almost entirely of men."[22] Numerous French authors were translated into Spanish and read, including Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* and *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame,* the work of Guy de Maupassant, and Émile Zola. Alexandre Dumas was a perennial favorite, especially *The Count of Monte Cristo*. Works by U.S. authors were less popular; however, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe and the works of Mark Twain were regularly included in the readings. *Das Kapital* also fell among the standard works read by the lector. Armando Mendez described it "as an eclectic mix of old and new, news and drama, political thought and current best sellers."[23]

The choices of materials were not without controversy, especially between the worker and the factory owners. The cigar workers also selected materials written by anarchists and communists. Eugenio Rodriguez, a cigar factory worker, recalls hearing about Mikhail Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin and Karl Marx from *los lectores*.[24] The lectores read and disseminated the labor press and helped firmly establish a radical press in Tampa. "Newspaper readings regularly included: *Tierra y Libertad* (anarchist, Barcelona), *El Despertar* (anarchist, Key West), *The Daily Worker* (Socialist, New York), *The Socialist Call* (New York) and *El Internacional* (Trade unionist, Tampa)."[25] However, at the heart of the issue, the cigar factory workers, while without formal education, were among some of the most politically and socially astute and "well read" of men.

Social Dynamics and Reading in Ybor City

Los lectores and reading had a profound impact upon Tampa. They wrought changes in the community by bringing a form of education to the workers; aiding the Cuban, Spanish and Italian immigrants to assimilate into the local community; and organizing a social and political structure throughout Ybor City and West Tampa. In the early days of Ybor City cigar-making and the fight for Cuban independence, the readers disseminated information and developed a conscious and aware workforce. In the last days of cigar making the readers were figureheads and reminders of Cuban traditions and culture, leaving the community with a strong literary heritage.

Education was the first key role that the lectores provided in helping the Latin immigrants establish themselves in a new country. There was little in the way of public education in Tampa, and the Latins were distrustful of the urban white educational systems. Additionally, parents were required to pay annual tuition for public education beyond the eighth grade, thus reserving the opportunity for only the eldest son. Most boys were taken out of school at a young age to be apprenticed in the cigar factories; girls received little or no schooling at all. While many of the Cuban and Spanish workers were able to read and write in their own language, the Italians, by comparison, were illiterate when they arrived in Tampa.[26] Domenico Giunta, an Italian cigar factory worker, described the reading as "the only doggone education they had."[27] In a more poignant recollection, José Vega Diaz likened *el lector* to a candle of enlightenment, remembering the words of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables:*

> You know what Victor Hugo say? In all the towns, in every place they have a school teacher…. In every town, the school teacher is the light. He lights the candle. But in every town the preachers, the priests, they try to blow away the light. That's why they, the church, the owner don't want the reader. The reader lights the candle. It was a good thing![28]

For many workers, especially the Italians, this was the only form of education they would obtain. Some would never learn to read, but they would be able to recite the novels and they would have a keen understanding of world politics and the role of the working-class. Henry Aparicio, both lector and son of a lector, sums up the impact, saying "The cigarmakers may have been uneducated, but the lectores made sure they were not ignorant. Thanks to the readings, the cigarmakers knew current events, politics, the arts, even fashion."[29]

For the women in the community, the readers were pivotal in the women's efforts to obtain an education and make their mark on the city. Latin and Italian working-class women had few opportunities for formal education in the early years of Ybor City, and most started in the cigar factories as leaf strippers at a very early age, thus not attending school even if it was available. The Italian women in particular had low levels of reading and writing.[30] With access to *el lector* the women acquired language skills (many becoming bilingual) and an appreciation for literature along with an introduction to world politics. Domenico Giunta's sister was one who benefited from the reading:

> You know, especially my sister, for example, never having gone to school, but man, what an education it was to her and she was able to give you the names of a dozen authors and their books just like that, and yet never went to school, never read a book. She only heard. She only heard by listening.[31]

In one notable move in 1888, women cigar workers hired their own lector in a manner similar to the men, engaging in a broad and cosmopolitan education and gaining direct access to local and international news and information.[32] With the improved literacy, the women rose to positions of leadership within the community, in the unions and in the mutual aid societies.[33] The Latin women also gained a level of prominence among the white women's activist movements in Tampa, such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union and other voluntary and reform organizations.

Most significantly, the daily readings spilled over into the broader community. The factories were wooden structures with no central air conditioning; they were positioned to catch the best light and take full advantage of cross breezes. With the windows thrown open and *el lector* with a fine voice that carried, the readings were heard outside of the factory. Henry Aparicio recalls "visiting the factory to listen to his father read through the open windows. So did many people in the neighborhood."[34] Residents, who might not otherwise be exposed to literature, culture and politics, gathered around the open windows to listen to the novels and news, opening opportunities for discussion and dialogue later in the coffeehouses and at home.

In addition to gathering outside of the factories, the day's reading was brought into the homes and to the families of the cigarmakers. After the evening meal, the worker would recite and tell of the day's novels or short stories. Domenico Giunta shares how his sister, who was a stripping girl in the cigar factories, would re-tell the serialized story at home:

> What happened in my family happened in every other family and that was the members of the family had heard these novels, went home and made known what the day's reading consisted of and they were always items of great social value that we appreciated back in those days….And each evening my sister used to come home and give us, verbally, the episode that took place.[35]

The men also did this with the day's news, though they engaged in most of the political and labor discussions at the cafés and social clubs in the evening. Additionally, the lector's materials, including the daily newssheets and translated novels and stories, were sold to the factory workers for half price; and, this reading material made its way into the homes and lives of the workers. This form of both written and aural literacy dispersed throughout the community to draw in all members to the discussion, raising the consciousness of the individual and of the greater community.

While they did not offer formal education to the workers, the lectores disseminated the information that the workers needed to understand their new home, bridging the divide between the old world of Cuba and Europe and the new world of the United States and assimilating into the community. Assimilation began with developing a common language, especially for the Italians and for the women who had little schooling. All of the news and literature read by *los lectores* was in Spanish. "The *lectura* provided a crash course in Spanish and offered and inspired incentive to learn the language, since it was the vehicle to participate in a shared experience."[36] This common language afforded all workers greater access to the immigrant world of discourse and dialogue.

In the role of a gatekeeper, the lectors were considered members of the intelligentsia and were frequently called upon to express their opinions on world events. On the factory floors during the workday and in the evenings at the cafés, *el lector* explained and expounded upon world events for the benefit of the Latin immigrants. They kept the Cuban exiles informed of developments in the Cuban war for independence while also collecting funds to support the war. They encouraged local residents to become involved in local politics. *El lector* also served as the mouthpiece for labor unionization and organization through the introduction of union and labor politics in the radical press.

Part of the cultural assimilation came in the form of the mutual aid societies. Each ethnic group, spurred on by the *lectores*, funded and built their own social club. These mutual aid societies were intended "to minister to the social and economic needs of the immigrants."[37] Manuel Tamargo describes:

> When we got to this country, we had to take care of ourselves. No one else would do it for us. These clubs provided a kind of hospitalization insurance that was unheard of in the old days. And they were more than that—they were social clubs with all kinds of activities.[38]

Not only did the mutual aid societies provide a social and cultural outlet for the immigrants who were unwelcome by the small population of "Americans" (the white population), they also offered a form of medical insurance and health care – a precursor to modern-day Medicare – in a city where white doctors would not render treatment to Latins and blacks. Members of these social clubs paid varying levels of monthly dues for the various services. The men would gather at the clubs in the evening to play cards and dominoes and to discuss the day's current events. On Saturdays the clubs would sponsor theatre and opera, including world-renowned performers such as Enrico Caruso, and dances where young women and men could meet under the watchful eyes of their chaperones. Of the five original mutual aid societies in Ybor City and West Tampa, the Centro Asturiano and L'Unione Italiana still exist, retaining the rich history and culture of the Cuban, Spanish and Italian immigrants.

Along with the social outlet, the each of the mutual aid societies housed a form of social library. Access to the library and its resources were available to all dues-paying members. Initial collections were donated by the readers to support their need for a ready supply of Spanish-language reading materials. A portion of society membership dues were used to further develop the collection for the member community. The social libraries were the precursors to the development of the free library system in Tampa. These social libraries were established in the late 1880s to serve the needs of the lectors and the Latin immigrants who could read or who wanted to learn to read. It was not until 1914 that the City of Tampa opened its first public circulating library in West Tampa, the seat of the cigar industry, housing a Spanish-language collection donated and used by the area's *lectores*.

Conclusion

When examining the words and photos left behind from the heydays of cigar manufacturing, *el lector* and the Latin immigrant community as a whole left indelible marks on the city of Tampa. The Cubans in particular had a strong capacity for learning and acceptance of ideas. This allowed the tradition of *el lector* to flourish for a brief time. The social dynamics of education, assimilation, and organization, sparked the creation of the mutual aid societies and social clubs that still exist in modern day Tampa. The dynamics were the impetus for the development of free public education and free libraries in a city that was born without either. And, they established a lasting cultural legacy.

The romantic influence of *el lector* is evident in contemporary literature. Nilo Cruz's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, *Anna in the Tropics*, uses the life stories of the lectors and of Ybor City to explore the role of class consciousness, familial relationships, and the imitation of life in literature through the reading of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*. The play is replete with images of cock fighting and gambling, the contention and violence played out in the selection of reading materials, and the status of men and women in a Latin community. Other works, including *The Cigarmaker* by Mark Carlos McGinty (7th Avenue Productions, 2010) and *El Lector* by William Durbin (Yearling, 2007), draw on similar topics and explore immigrant life in Ybor City during the pinnacle of the cigar making industry.

More than anything, *el lector* provided the entrée into a world of ideas and ideologies, empowering the cigar factory workers to question and explore their place in the greater community. The literature had a powerful impact on the workers to engage in discussions and to understand their rights as workers and even as American residents. In the words of Henry Aparicio and other *lectores*, "[Being] illiterate didn't mean that the workers had to be ignorant. Not if somebody was reading to them."[39]

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[2] Sadly, much of the original documentation, books, and newspapers from the cigar industry era have been neglected and discarded or lost in fires and floods. Tampa's physical environment, while perfect for rolling tobacco, is detrimental to the preservation of print and paper, causing rapid deterioration from moisture and mold.

[3] Of interesting note, Ybor fled Havana to Key West because of his involvement with Cuban revolutionaries in the fight for independence from Spanish colonial rule.

[4] *Cayo Hueso* and Key West are used interchangeably throughout this paper.

[5] Throughout this paper, Ybor City and Tampa are used interchangeably. In 1887 Ybor City was annexed as the city of Tampa's Fourth Ward. However, Ybor City relates most specifically to the Latin community where the cigar industry dominated.

[6] Ybor's factory opening was delayed slightly due to a workers' strike just before production was schedule to begin. Sanchez y Haya has the distinction of producing the first clear-Havana cigars in Ybor City in March, 1885.

[7] Maureen J. Patrick. "Immigration and Ybor City, 1886-1921." *Cigar City Magazine* (March 1, 2011) http://www.cigarcitymagazine.com/history/item/immigration-and-ybor-city-1886-1921

[8] Cesar Marcos Medina. Ybor City Oral History Program, interviewed May 22, 1984. Transcript is available through the Florida Study Center, University of South Florida Library, Tampa, FL.

[9] Mary Fontanills, Ybor City Oral History Program, interviewed July 29, 1983. Transcript is available through the Florida Study Center, University of South Florida Library, Tampa, FL.

[10] Domenico Giunta, Ybor City Oral History Program, interviewed May 18, 1984. Transcript is available through the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program at the University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

[11]Quoted in Ingalls and Pérez, 52.

[12] George Cyprian Alston. "Rule of St. Benedict." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 2. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907. 5 Aug. 2010 http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02436a.htm; Alberto Manguel. *A History of Reading*. Penguin, 1996: 114-115.

[13] Denise Marie Sariego. *La Lectura de Tabaqueria: Literacy in the Cigar Makers' World 1860s to the 1930s.* Unpublished dissertation. UMI, 2003: 14.

[14] Mormino and Pozzetta, 7.

[15] Manguel, 111.

[16] James. H. Collins. "Literature and the Cigar Makers." *The Bookman* 21 (July 1905): 467.

[17] In late 2009 Cuba sought World Heritage Designation from UNESCO for the cigar-factory readers as part of the world's Intangible Cultural Heritage.

[18] Louis A. Pérez, Jr. "Reminiscences of a Lector: Cuban Cigar Workers in Tampa." *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 53 (April 1975): 448.

[19] A *tribuna* took many forms. In some factories it was simply a chair set upon a small platform in the middle of the workfloor. In other factories it was a very elaborate lectern, resembling a minister's pulpit or professor's podium.

[20] Giunta, 1984.

[21] Néstor Leonelo Carbonell, a school teacher and journalist, owned a small bookstore in Ybor City—The Literary Gallery—from where the lectores purchased or rented their books and newspapers.

[22] Pérez, 447.

[23]Armando Mendez. *Cuidad de Cigars: West Tampa*, Florida Historical Society, 1994: 53.

[24] Rodriguez, 1984.

[25] Darien Cavanaugh and Ybor City Historical Society, 6.

[26] United States Immigration Commission. *Immigrants in Industries: Cigar and Tobacco Manufacturing; Furniture Manufacturing; Sugar Refining.* Table 172. Washington, DC, 1911:242.

[27] Giunta, 1984.

[28] Diaz, 1980.

[29] Jeff Klinkenberg, "His Father's Voice," *St. Petersburg Times,* Floridiana (April 21, 1996): 1F.

[30] United States Immigration Commission, Table 172, 1911, 242.

[31] Giunta, 1984.

[32] Nancy A. Hewitt. *Southern Discomfort: Women's Activism in Tampa, Florida, 1880s-1920s.* University of Illinois Press, 2001: 36.

[33] Mormino and Pozzetta, 1993, 15.

[34] Jeff Klinkenberg, 1996.

[35] Giunta, 1984.

[36] Mormino and Pozzetta, 1993: 15.

[37] Gary Mormino. "We Worked Hard and Took Care of Our Own: Oral History and Italians in Tampa." *Labor History* 23(3): 403.

[38] Manuel Tamargo, interview, *Tampa Tribune*, 1977. Original transcript available *Tampa Tribune* News Archive, Tampa, FL.

[39] Jeff Klinkenberg. "Listen Up! El Lector Is about to Speak," *St. Petersburg Times*, Floridian (October 13, 1997): 4D.