

A Note on “El Lector”
Emily Schulten

“El Lector” is poem rooted in the place I live now, Key West, and like much of what I write lately, this poem explores the history of this place and its transience. As the island has become the tourism industry, the stories that are sold along the way become obscure versions of some history, always a bit prettier than the truth, but not nearly as interesting.

Many families who have been established here for generations are also obscured, many people who live here now are transient, and so the island hangs – much as it does physically – in limbo, connected to something bigger, but refusing to promise a lasting foundation.

Because my partner here is part of one of these families who has been here for generations, since his great-grandfather came from Cuba to work in the cigar industry, I notice a microcosm of this brand of storytelling in his own family history, and in this poem I address this and becoming a part of it as he and I are becoming family. There is so much to be said about one’s roots, but this small, special place does not easily let people and their narratives root into its ground.