

**UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL BULLETIN
ANNOUNCEMENT**

Florida International University
University Graduate School

Master's Thesis Defense

Abstract

Mermaids and Fish Scales

By

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MERMAIDS AND FISH SCALES is a 200 page collection of inter-linked short stories that explores the ways members of a small Brazilian fishing community adapt to economic and social change brought about by foreign developers. The characters and events are based loosely upon the lives of people I knew in a fishing village in the northeastern state of Bahia, Brazil, some 900 miles north of Rio de Janeiro. I used to visit this village when I worked as an English teacher in Salvador, the state capital, from 1994-1998. The sequence of stories begins with the story of Elisalva, a woman whose husband returns from fishing out at sea and believes that he is a mermaid. Elisalva's struggles to come to terms with her husband's madness through her belief in Iemanja, the Goddess of the Sea. Her reliance on Iemanja establishes her village, Praia da Concha, as a place with its own belief system and mythology. This first story takes place before the village is touched by tourism. The following story is told from the point of view of a German businessman, Horst Schraeger, who on a trip to the northeast of Brazil in 1980, meets the mayor of Mata de Sao Marcos in a swank brothel in Salvador and buys the mayor's land in Praia da Concha. Ten years later, Horst Schraeger has become the owner of a luxury resort and as most villagers readily admit, the virtual ruler of Praia da Concha itself. This collection of overlapping short stories gives voice to the villagers' public and intimate struggles: the class with Horst Schraeger for power over their businesses, their dependence upon the tourism his resort brings, and their battle to survive day to day life.

Date: November 14, 2002

Time: 1:00 p.m.

Place: AC1 306A, Biscayne Bay Campus

Department: Creative Writing

Major Professor: Les Standiford