

**UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL BULLETIN
ANNOUNCEMENT**

Florida International University
University Graduate School

Master's Thesis Defense

Abstract

Dr. Harper's Dig

By

George V. Tucker

Dr. Harper's Dig is a comic novel set against the contemporary debates about fact and faith in science, history, and religion. In rural Arkansas, Dr. David Harper, a young archeologist, discovers a strange human skeleton which might be real (and if so would overturn existing theories in this field) or might be fraudulent. As his find becomes public it incites the interest and opposition of an array of characters. This novel borrows from detective fiction a reliance on material clues to reveal elements of plot and past. Multiple third-person points of view are employed to add to the panoramic effect, showing the various forms of orthodoxy, irrationality, science and doubt which clash over the skeleton's authenticity and significance. The overall structure of the novel is comedic, with the rise of the protagonist and two new couples formed at the end, in the tradition of academic comedies like Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* and A.S. Byatt's *Possession*. Thematically, David learns blind adherence to orthodoxy is as bad as complete irrationality. He must learn to discern not just facts but the true motives and nature of others in order to forge a new role in the scientific world and in his relationships.

Date: November 14, 2004

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Place: Biscayne Bay Campus, AC1 306

Department: Creative Writing

Major Professor: Lynne Barrett