

The UFO PRESS

by Dennis Stacy

UFO books continue to arrive faster than we can shake a stick (or throw a reviewer) at them. In the future, we hope to have full-length reviews of all of the following titles, but for now, just so you'll know they exist, we offer these thumb-nail sketches. Not all details were complete or available at press time, and the opinions expressed herein are those of the author only.

One of the more controversial titles is sure to be Jim Schnabel's *Dark White*, subtitled "Aliens, Abductions, and the UFO Obsession" (Hamish Hamilton, London, 304 pages, £16.99). It hasn't found an American publisher yet and isn't likely to, so if you want a copy you'll have to order it from Arcturus Books or some other similar source. *Dark White* is written in the same sort of vein as the author's earlier *Round in Circles*, i.e., part Gonzo journalism and part sociological study. *Circles* was roundly criticized by English cereologists because Schnabel himself was a confessed (and unrepentant) circle hoaxer. Rumors that he was a covert government agent hellbent on discrediting the crop circle phenomenon still continue to circulate in some English circles.

Not a few American abduction researchers are almost certain to feel the same way about *Dark White*, although there's no evidence that Schnabel ever tried to stage an abduction. What will probably be lost in the anticipated attacks against the author's journalistic ethics, though, is the fact that *Dark White* is a serious, far-ranging book that raises many questions about abduction "mania" that need addressing before they are summarily dismissed, regardless of Schnabel's previous reputation. And regardless of whether or not one agrees with his final conclusions, many readers will find Schnabel's portraits of Budd Hopkins, David Jacobs, John Mack and others — perhaps even Philip Klass! — full of fascinating details that haven't been previously reported elsewhere.

At the opposite end of the spectrum is the long-awaited opus by John Mack, a professor of psychiatry at Harvard's Cambridge Medical Hospital who was recently profiled in the *Sunday New York Times Magazine* (March 20, 1994). Mack's book is *Abduction: Human Encounters With Aliens* (Scribner's, approximately \$20 and 450 pages), which is both more and less than it should be. Originally introduced to the abduction phenomenon by Budd Hopkins in January of 1990, Mack has since proven to be his own guiding light in such matters, with repercussions that are likely to reverberate throughout the field. In brief, although he concurs that

abductions are initially traumatic in nature, ultimately, he concludes, the experience is essentially an uplifting and transformative one, or at least that it can be.

It's unfair to judge a book by one's prior expectations, but anyone who anticipated that Mack might put the phenomenon in its proper perspective in terms of the known psychological and psychiatric literature is apt to be disappointed. Instead, what we are treated to is a series of breathless abduction anecdotes, thirteen in all, accompanied by Mack's running commentary. If there was an attempt to thoroughly investigate or physically corroborate the testimony of even one of the 76 abductees interviewed for this book, it sailed completely over this reader's head. The majority of Mack's "evidence" — virtually all of it recovered under his own aggressive brand of regressive hypnosis — is, for the most part, simply accepted at face value, even when it includes tales told of past lives lived both as humans and as alien-human hybrids.

Moreover, this is all eventually bound up with a political, cultural and religious naiveté that borders on the brink of New Age cliché. East is good and West is bad, almost as if the rape of Tibet by the Chinese had been orchestrated by a secret cabal of corporate capitalists and Genghis Khan was but a misunderstood do-gooder. Mack writes as if Western culture somehow had a patent on negative human nature, greed, ambition and other excesses included. But not to worry: the aliens are here to save us from ourselves and impending ecological catastrophe, themes first raised almost half a century ago by the so-called contactees of the late 1940's and early 50's. If there's a critical or reflective bone in Mack's body, they're not much in evidence here.

Linda Moulton Howe is back with another gorgeously produced book, *Glimpses of Other Realities* (self-published, 365 pages, \$39.95), subtitled "Volume 1: Facts and Eyewitnesses," which indicates others to come. Unlike her first book, *An Alien Harvest*, this one is a paperback, but no less monumental in its presentation, with a color plate on almost every other glossy page. This kind of production value doesn't come cheap, which explains the relatively high price tag.

There are four extended sections devoted, in order, to crop circles, animal mutilations, abductions and other beings, along with appendices, a bibliography and index. Each section is fully documented and illustrated. What's missing, at first glance, is an over-arching theme or theory that would tie all of these disparate manifestations together in a coherent, convincing hypothesis. Are we to assume, for example, that the same celestial artist who carves out a Picasso-like pictogram in an English summer wheat field is also responsible for, or even remotely connected with, the gruesome mutilation of cattle in rural Arkansas?

To further complicate the problem, astronomer Gerald Hawkins of Stonehenge fame has recently claimed that