

she calls "the Supervisor," a powerful ally of Madame Mao's. But before the movie was finished, Mao died, his wife was denounced and the Supervisor's fortunes collapsed. Min spent the next six years washing the studio's floors. In 1983 she received a letter from a friend in the United States, the actress Joan Chen. Would Min like to leave? "My despair made me fearless," she writes. The book ends with her arrival in Chicago in 1984.

Today the harsh scenes of China that Min conjures so vividly seem distant indeed. Min, 37, lives with her Chinese émigré husband and their 2-year-old daughter in Chicago, where she and her husband paint and Min writes. During her first years in this country she worked at numerous jobs—waitressing, fixing toilets, painting fabrics—while studying English and art. "I didn't even bother to take off my clothes at night," she says. "Red Azalea" (306 pages. Pantheon. \$22) began as an assignment for her English class; the book has 40,000 copies in print, and Min is at work on a sequel. That's happy news for readers who turned the last page of "Red Azalea" slowly—longing to know what happened next.

Laura Shapiro with Karen Springen  
in Chicago

## Invasion of the Body Snatchers

A Harvard professor says aliens are real

**S**CIENTISTS ARE HARD-LINE SKEPTICS. Only after failing to debunk, say, the big bang do they accept the evidence. But in **Abduction: Human Encounters With Aliens** (432 pages. Scribner's. \$22), Harvard psychiatry professor John E. Mack makes only a cursory pass at disbelief before buying the idea that extraterrestrials are filching human sperm and ova in order to create better earthlings. Mack (who won a Pulitzer Prize in 1977 for a biography of T. E. Lawrence) told NEWSWEEK in an interview, "I've racked my brains to discover an alternative explanation" for the accounts he heard of kinky kidnappings by aliens. He came up empty and boarded the interplanetary bandwagon at the first stop.

Over the last three years, Mack has treat-



RICHARD HOWARD

Couched in space: Psychiatrist Mack in Cambridge

ed 76 people—housewives, musicians, businessmen—who claim aliens snatched them. "Abduction" looks at 13 of the cases. All give similar details: a beam of light, a circular ship, big-eyed humanoids and often the services of an outer-space proctologist. "Ed" remembers being coolly seduced by a space succubus; he was a teenager at the time and had been asleep dreaming of girls. Catherine recalls being forcibly stripped and delivered of a half-alien fetus. Her earth job is a "nightclub receptionist." If warning bells haven't already gone off for the reader, "Edward Carlos's" baroque tale of "angels" and miracle cures should be Big Ben. In a footnote, Mack labels it a "literary collaboration" between psychiatrist and subject, but doesn't elaborate.

**Green politics:** There's a lot Mack doesn't do. He failed to run standard psychological tests on more than a few subjects because it was too time-consuming and expensive. He says that little supporting forensic evidence can be found because the aliens' advanced technology is too "subtle." So why couldn't their technology clone humans from the DNA in a toenail, instead of dragging people to the mother ship for bondage and discipline? The aliens' green politics are also remarkably similar to Mack's; their agenda is to make a race that will stop polluting planet Earth. At one point, Mack concedes the aliens might merely hail from "some other reality" instead of outer space. If we ever do accept the existence of alien body snatchers, it will be in spite of Mack's book, not because of it.

Peter Plagens with Martha Brant

### ROME REMEMBERS THE HOLOCAUST

Maybe even the pope has been inspired by "Schindler's List." This week the Holy Father is hosting a concert that—amazingly—is the Vatican's first official commemoration of the 6 million Jews killed by Hitler. Gilbert Levine will conduct the British Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the choir of St. Peter's in a multifaith program of works by Bernstein, Schubert and Beethoven. Levine, who is Jewish, doesn't want to dwell on the 50-year silence. "This is an act of enormous empathy and understanding," he says. "You have to look forward."



ST. PETER'S

### TOO BLUE FOR DISNEY?

When Disney bought Miramax last year both parties swore the company that made "The Crying Game" a hit wouldn't lose its independence. Last week Miramax canceled its deal to distribute "You So Crazy," the ultra-blue concert film by comedian Martin Lawrence, after it got an NC-17 rating. Did Mickey get squeamish? "Disney played no part in this decision," said a spokeswoman; Miramax's Bob Weinstein concurred. But the deal fell apart after Miramax couldn't persuade Lawrence to cut his film for an R.



LAWRENCE

### ART ON THE CUTTING EDGE

Ron Athey is an HIV-positive performance artist who pierces himself with needles. He also carves designs into an assistant's flesh and hangs paper towels blotted with the man's blood above the audience. His performance last month, sponsored by Minneapolis's Walker Art Center, has sparked the first controversy for National Endowment for the Arts chairman Jane Alexander. One audience member fainted. Another complained: "I was surprised they could perform this and put people in danger," said Jim Berenson, who called health officials and is considering legal action. The health department said the Walker, which used about \$100 of NEA funds for the show, took proper precautions. Athey says his piece fuses Hindu and African rituals with the issue of AIDS.



ATHEY

Said Alexander, "I appreciate some people would find this difficult. Not all art is for everybody."