

## BOOKS

# 'Abduction' steals the humor from pop myth of aliens and UFOs

### ABDUCTION: Human Encounters With Aliens

By John E. Mack. Scribner's. 432 pp. \$22

By RUDY RUCKER

AS A science-fiction writer, I am predisposed to enjoy such things as psychotronic space-invader films, crazed saucer cults and the modern pop myth of UFOs.

But with John Mack's *Abduc-*

*tion*, ufology has reached a vile new low.

Mack, professor of psychiatry at the Cambridge Hospital, Harvard Medical School, is the author of a psycho-biography of T.E. Lawrence, *Prince of Our Disorder*. He was on the board of directors of Werner Erhard's est in the early 1980s and brings a hard-eyed huckster's zeal to his trade: His business is hypnotizing and regressing subjects — he calls them "experiencers" — in order to help them bring forth memories of UFO abductions, often decades after these supposed-

ly took place.

Business is booming for Mack and his ilk, and, with the support of Las Vegas businessman Robert Bigelow, more and more "mental health professionals" are being trained to hypnotize troubled individuals who come to believe that they have been abducted by flying saucers.

What are the abduction fantasies like? Much of a dreary muchness.

You're in bed or in a car. You see a light. You float up into the air and into a flying saucer. In-

side the saucer a tall alien who reminds you of a doctor probes at your genitals and sticks things up your anus. If you are a man, the "doctor" masturbates you to orgasm, and if you are a woman, the "doctor" extracts eggs from your ovaries.

Then the aliens give you a millenarian spiel about how it's high time the human race got its act together, and you wake up back in your car or in your bed. This pathetically infantile scenario was first popularized by Whitley Strieber's bestseller *Communion*.

But come on! Is this really what superhuman aliens would do?

This is irresponsible, dangerous claptrap. Some thrill-seekers will of course enjoy their abduction-regression sessions with Mack. They pay him for weird new memories and he delivers.

As he delicately puts it, "I cannot avoid the fact that a co-creative intuitive process such as this may yield information that is in some sense the product of the intermingling or flowing together of the consciousness of the two (or more) people in the

room." But what about those who get in deeper than they expected with Mack's "therapy"? And what about their families?

Why is it, finally, that *Abduction* is so annoying? I guess it's because I love the idea of UFOs, and *Abduction* drags this idea into the mud. UFOs should be a witty and inspiring notion, but in the hands of John Mack, UFOs become boring and, above all, humorless.

Rucker's science-fiction novels include two that were recently reissued under the title *Live Robots*.