



LAURENCE CHOLLET BOOK REPORTS

Outsiders looking in

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Among the spate of best-selling books dealing with life-after-death experiences, angels, and other-worldly consciousness, none is more controversial than Dr. John Mack's "Abduction: Human Encounters with Aliens" (Scribners, \$20).

The book relates the experiences of 13 people who say they've been abducted by extraterrestrials. Their stories — the stuff of supermarket tabloids — are richly detailed and analyzed by Mack. The eminent Harvard Medical School psychiatry professor and Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer (of T.E. Lawrence with "A Prince of Our Disorder") says he is virtually convinced that the experiences as recounted took place.

"When I first got interested in these [UFO] experiences three years ago, I thought there must be something wrong with these people, that this was some kind of madness," Mack said this past week from a hotel in Seattle, where he was promoting his book. "But as I began to work with these people, and got to know them ... I realized that they were describing real experiences."

Mack, 64, became interested in abductions after meeting Budd Hopkins, a noted author and the so-called father of the UFO abduction movement.

That meeting, in 1990, convinced Mack that there was something real going on. He began working with abductees, setting up counseling sessions, putting them under hypnosis to retrieve buried memories, and helping them form self-help groups.

Mack collected material from 100 patients across the country. Seventy percent of them struck Mack as authentic. Their stories shared the same intricate details — even though the abductees had never met one another.

"In case after case, some kind of intelligence communicated to very simple people profound images about the earth, the planet, and our place in the universe," Mack said. "Why do we need aliens to tell us this? Well, I don't know. But the thing to keep in mind is that there is an element of spiritual growth ... in these people as a result of their encounters."

"I think there is a process going on of opening up, and this is one of the openings," Mack said. "It maybe be [the approaching] millennium, it may be the sorry state of the earth. ... We may be just reaching a place where our consciousness is being forced to reexamine itself."