

'Abduction' will stimulate readers with feast of mysterious encounters

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By Kathy Engle
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"Abduction: Human Encounters With Aliens" sounds like the title for the next Phil Donahue Show or a cover story in the *National Enquirer*.

After all, how many rational, educated people really believe in UFOs, alien beings and life beyond the planet Earth?

The skepticism and the sensationalism the whole subject engenders makes it easy to dismiss these accounts—of encounters with tiny, gray humanoids with pointy heads and slit-like, penetrating black eyes—that pop up with disturbing regularity.

John E. Mack, M.D., a Pulitzer Prize-winning Harvard psychiatrist, has not only taken these accounts seriously and devoted three years to research with more than 100 abductees, he has also written a remarkable book chronicling 13 in-depth, first-person accounts.

Beyond the often startling and disturbing revelations of the abductees, the book attempts to ascend to another dimension, that of

expanding our framework for knowledge, both intellectual and spiritual.

"This book is not simply about UFOs or even alien abductions," Mack writes. "It is about how this phenomenon, both traumatic and transforming, can expand our sense of ourselves and our understanding of reality and awaken our

to characterize abductees as a group have been successful. They seem to emerge at random from all levels of society and are believed to number in the millions.

His research subjects included students, young children, housewives, secretaries, writers, business people, computer industry professionals, musicians, a prison guard

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mutated potential as explorers of a universe rich in mystery, meaning and intelligence."

The book is selling well because its author demonstrates one of the rarest combinations—great courage, an open mind and one eager for new insights to broaden and deepen the meaning of our existence on Earth.

That orientation, coupled with Mack's knowledge of world history, literature and mythology and his meticulously scientific approach to research adds up to a rare feast for both the mind and the imagination.

His clients' descriptions of alien beings conjure up some unforgettable and terrifying images.

"The beings described by my cases are of several sorts. They appear as tall or short luminous entities that may be translucent. Reptilian creatures have been seen that seem to be carrying out mechanical functions....

"By far the most common entity observed are the small grays—humanoid beings 3 to 4 feet in height. The small grays have large pear-shaped heads that protrude in the back, long arms with three to four fingers, a thin torso and spindly legs.

"The beings are hairless with no ears, have rudimentary nostril holes and a thin slit for a mouth, which rarely opens or is expressive of emotion.

"By far, the most prominent feature are huge black eyes which curve upward.... the eyes have a compelling power and the abductees will often wish to avoid looking directly into them because of the overwhelming dread of their own sense of self or loss of will."

While many may regard the whole idea of encounters with aliens as delusions of the emotionally disturbed and their hyperactive imaginations, Mack points out that none of the research efforts to date

and a gas station attendant.

The author notes early on that he was struck by the high degree of consistency apparent in the detailed abduction accounts and by the absence of psychiatric illness or other psychological or emotional factors that explain what is being reported.

Mack's professional interest in the abductees—who frequently describe very frightening and invasive experiences, including sexual violation, is also tinged with compassion, as the psychiatrist endeavors to offer support and assistance to many who have been too ashamed or fearful of ridicule to discuss their experiences openly.

"The experience of working with the abductees has affected me profoundly," Mack writes. "The intensity of the energies and emotions involved as abductees relive their experiences is unlike anything I have encountered.... Above all, more than any other research I have undertaken, this work has led me to challenge the prevailing worldview of consensus reality which I had grown up believing and had always applied in my clinical/scientific endeavors."

This view holds that reality is grounded in the material world or in what can be perceived by the physical senses.

Yet connections between humans and superhuman beings from other dimensions have been a recurring theme in legends, myths and stories from a myriad of cultures for thousands of years.

Many mythical symbols connected with spiritual life and the power of intelligence are expressed with images of flight and wind and all express a break with the universe of everyday reality, Mack notes.

"What the abduction phenomenon had led me ...to see is (please turn to page 19) C

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that we participate in a universe or universes that are filled with intelligences from which we have cut ourselves off, having lost the sense by which we may know them," the author concludes.

One reviewer offers this perspective on Mack's work—"a story of one man's determination to bear witness to cosmic mysteries with extraordinary implications for the human future."

Richard Tarnas, author of "The

Passion of the Western Mind" offers this assessment: "Only once in a great while does a scientist encounter evidence that challenges our fundamental understanding of the cosmos and humankind's place in it. Dr. John E. Mack's extraordinary research with alien abductions represents just such a phenomenon...." }

"Abductions" by John E. Mack, M.D., 432 pages, published by Charles Scribner's Sons, Macmillan Publishing Co., New York, New York, © 1994, is available at local bookstores.

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