

23 JUL 1994

Dr, about this alien...

An anti-rational boom is sweeping America and, suddenly, I do not feel I missed out on the 1960s. Recently, four of the 10 best-selling books were on themes of near-death experiences, spirituality, and the immortality of love and consciousness.

Psychics and palmists' salons are proliferating and weighty magazine articles are questioning memory, some denying the Holocaust. Men and women are seeking happiness through wonder drugs such as Prozac and are forming electronic communities on Internet with people they have never seen.

It was just a matter of time before someone added unidentified flying objects to this potent mix. Recently, book store displays were joined by a weighty tome about little grey aliens with blank eyes abducting large numbers of Americans and forcing them to have sex inside spaceships, followed by lectures on ecology.

It would be easy to dismiss *Abduction* (published in the UK and US by Scribners) as crazy except for one detail. Dr John Mack, its 64-year-old author, is a prominent Harvard professor of psychiatry and winner of the Pulitzer prize for his previous book, a biography of T.E. Lawrence. He used clinical methods to interview 90 people who claim to have been abducted (13 appear in the book). And he believes them.

Or so he says. On a sunny spring morning in Cambridge, Massachusetts, I met Mack inside a wooden box of a house with a yard full of tangled weeds. Tired from appearances on such talk shows as Oprah Winfrey and Larry King, he asked about the FT's circulation before settling on a pink velvet chaise longue to tell how he moved from scepticism to believing in large-scale cosmic rape.

According to the publisher's hype, one in 50 Americans has experienced an alien encounter. Mack was introduced to the phenomenon by Budd Hopkins, a New York-based artist

and father of the UFO abduction movement, whom he met in January 1990. Hopkins told him of more than 200 people across the US who had, apparently, been kidnapped by aliens.

Mack recalls: "My first reaction was that there must be something wrong with him and that he was dealing with some contemporary form of mental illness. But I met the people and they were of sound mind, telling their stories reluctantly, scared of being ridiculed.

"Their stories were so similar, and told with such intensity and detail, that they could not be explained psychiatrically. It could only be real experience. That shook me up. If it's real, what is it?" He began seeing abductees in spring 1990 and says that only a handful of the 90 he has

years earlier; Dave, who as a child had his pants removed behind a bush by aliens; Jenny, who gave birth to a human alien hybrid; and Peter, who had an alien wife in a "parallel universe".

These are aliens with a purpose - to save us from ourselves. After being raped or examined, abductees are lectured on how mankind is destroying the earth. Images, given either telepathically or through giant screens, show vast areas of polluted water or parts of the planet disintegrating.

If the true motive of the little grey men is to turn us green, why are they not appearing to world leaders or those who could do something to ward off this impending ecological catastrophe?

Mack claims they are. "Pres-

almost entirely a US phenomenon. Mack says this is simply because the country has a large number of trained psychotherapists to help people "remember". But there is much controversy at present over aggressive, memory-enhancing techniques used by therapists to "recall" events so traumatic that, 'apparently they had been repressed.

A California court recently awarded \$500,000 (£329,000) to a father who accused therapists of conning his bulimia-afflicted adult daughter into "remembering" childhood incidents of incest that he said had never occurred. As a result of her charges, the man lost his job and his wife.

Mack gives little detail on his methodology except to say that it involves hypnosis and breathing techniques. He writes that "memory of an abduction may be outside of consciousness until triggered" and sweeps away suggestions that his subjects were people already familiar with UFO literature.

"These are real powerful emotions from the core of their being," he says. "We can't invent memories like that. Furthermore, there are physical findings - cuts, scoop marks, lacerated and triangular lesions, implants and inexplicable nose-bleeds. Accounts of abductions often coincide with other reports of UFOs in the vicinity." He adds: "Maybe the phenomenon is mysterious and has no place in our world view. But it's not false.

"The problem is with western culture, which is just not ready to accept the idea of life on other planets. Other cultures, like native American and Buddhist, don't have problems with this. But we have become so arrogant that we don't want to think we are not in control. No other people in the history of mankind has been so denying of the existence of other intelligence."

That said, he rubs his blue eyes and says: "I think you've got enough there," before moving wearily on to the next interview. Even aliens, it seems, need publicity.

Christina Lamb meets an eminent Harvard professor who believes that large-scale cosmic rape has been taking place on earth

interviewed have some form of mental illness or effects of a trauma.

In his book, he details a handy do-it-yourself guide on how to recognise when you are experiencing an alien abduction and not simply the effects of overwork or excess alcohol. Abductions usually begin at home in bed or while driving at night. The first sign is a flood of blue or white light, an odd hum or sighting of a being or craft. A beam of light then floats you through the wall into a spaceship.

In a large room, lined with flashing computer consoles, small grey beings with large heads and long arms undress the abductee and remove hair, skin and sperm samples. Female abductees are often impregnated and the foetus later removed.

Mack's book quotes Ed, who remembers a silver-blond alien woman taking a sperm sample from him inside a "pod" while at high school 30

years earlier; Dave, who as a child had his pants removed behind a bush by aliens; Jenny, who gave birth to a human alien hybrid; and Peter, who had an alien wife in a "parallel universe".

He adds: "I have patients from all walks of society. A prison guard and female gas station attendant, at one end of the spectrum, to a prominent business executive, high-level diplomat and someone running for Congress at the other."

The first known abduction case was in 1957 in Brazil, a country with a fine line between reality and fiction. In the US, the first documented case occurred in 1966. Betty and Barney Hill, a retired couple who had got lost one night in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, underwent hypnosis and "remembered" being kidnapped by aliens. Their experience led to books, films and TV dramas.

Abduction appears to be