

Harvard in orbit over book

UFO abductions don't fit into its ivy tower image

By DEAN CHANG

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Harvard's hallowed halls of ivy have been trembling with embarrassment since one of its distinguished professors wrote a provocative best seller about UFOs and aliens.

Now the Ivy League school is striking back.

Dr. John Mack, a Pulitzer Prize-winning author, is being investigated by a Harvard Medical School committee because his book, "Abduction: Human Encounters with Aliens," may not measure up to Harvard's standards of scholarly investigation.

"It's way, way overdue," said Dr. Paul R. McHugh, director of the department of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Johns Hopkins Medical School.

"I've known John since the 1950s. He's a brilliant fellow who occasionally loses it, and this time he's lost it big time," McHugh said.

The book, which is about to be released in paperback, chronicles the experiences of people who believe they were abducted by aliens, or dreamed they were being captured by extraterrestrials.

Mack found that their experiences were too eerily similar to be dismissed: many involved huge-eyed, gray creatures who hijack the "experiencers" aboard spacecrafts, then extract sperm or an egg through clinical or sexual means.

The committee has interviewed Mack on several occasions in the last year, and is believed to be close to issuing its findings to the dean of the Harvard Medical School, Daniel Tosteson.

Mack, a tenured professor of psychiatry, has said he cannot discuss the probe because of a

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pledge of confidentiality made by all involved.

His lawyer, Roderick MacLeish Jr., said Mack has done nothing wrong.

"One of the reasons there is such a thing as tenure is to protect people from any fear of doing what is right, saying what is right, or having ideas that may be offensive to some people," said MacLeish.

"For there to be even the hint of reprisal is absurd," he said.

Mack, founding director of the Center for Psychology and Social Change, won the Pulitzer Prize in 1977 for "A Prince of Our Disorder," a biography of T. E. Lawrence, better known as Lawrence of Arabia.

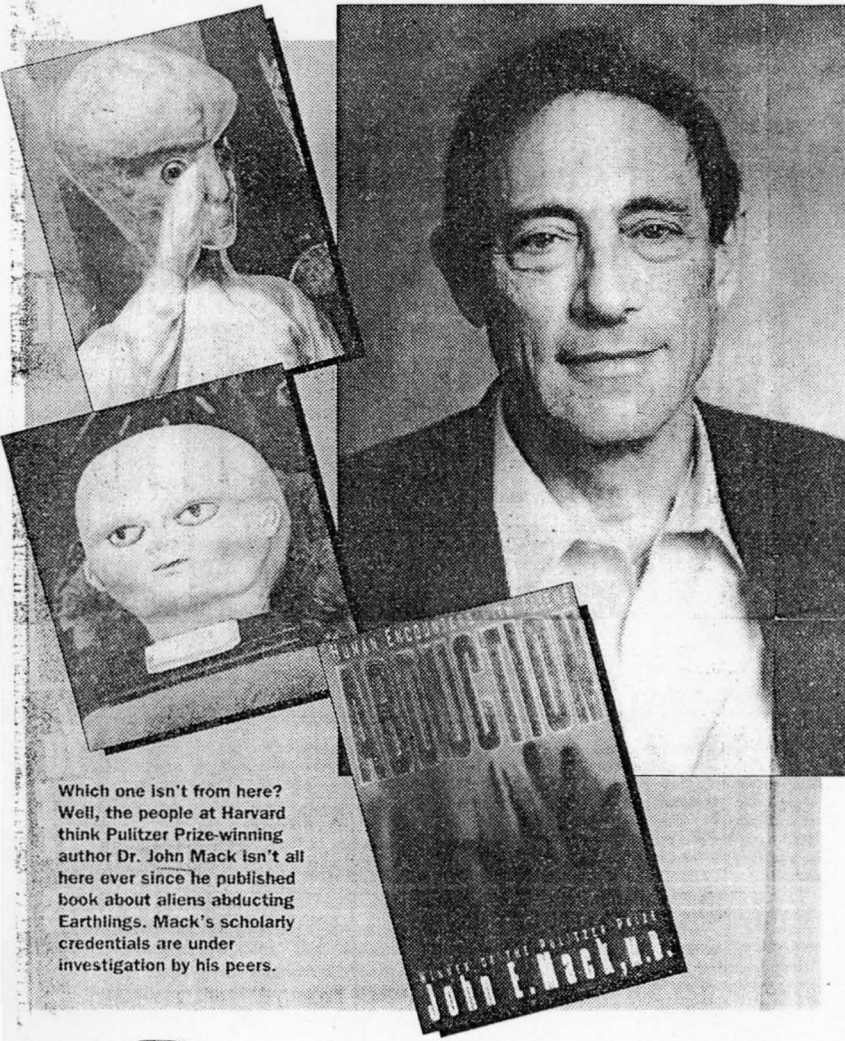
But his latest book has earned him attention from a different circle, one that revolves around supermarket weeklies and talk shows. Mack has appeared on numerous television and radio shows since the book's release, including "The Oprah Winfrey Show" and "Larry King Live."

"Are we so arrogant that we can't accept some of the rules of our universe being challenged?" said MacLeish. "There was no psychiatric phenomenon that could explain what these people were saying."

But the probe of Mack may be Harvard's attempt to dissociate itself from his work.

"Everyone in the academic world was just appalled when this book came out," said McHugh.

"The patients he spoke to are obviously people with real illnesses, people with real troubles," he said. "To masquerade these patients as people who were abducted by aliens is wrong and a disservice to the people who need help."



Which one isn't from here? Well, the people at Harvard think Pulitzer Prize-winning author Dr. John Mack isn't all here ever since he published book about aliens abducting Earthlings. Mack's scholarly credentials are under investigation by his peers.