

Journey to Erewhon

**PASSPORT TO THE COSMOS
HUMAN TRANSFORMATION AND ALIEN ENCOUNTERS**

by John E. Mack
Crown Publishers, 1999

Reviewed by Robert Anton Wilson



John Mack's new book on the UFO "abduction" experience probably will inspire as much furious opposition and denunciation as the collected works of Immanuel Velikovsky, Wilhelm Reich, and Timothy Leary. Certainly, it contains more heresy than those three heresiarchs combined: Sometimes it rivals L. Ron Hubbard and David Koresh. Turning page after page, I almost imagined I could hear the entire staff of CSICOP gnashing their teeth and growling.

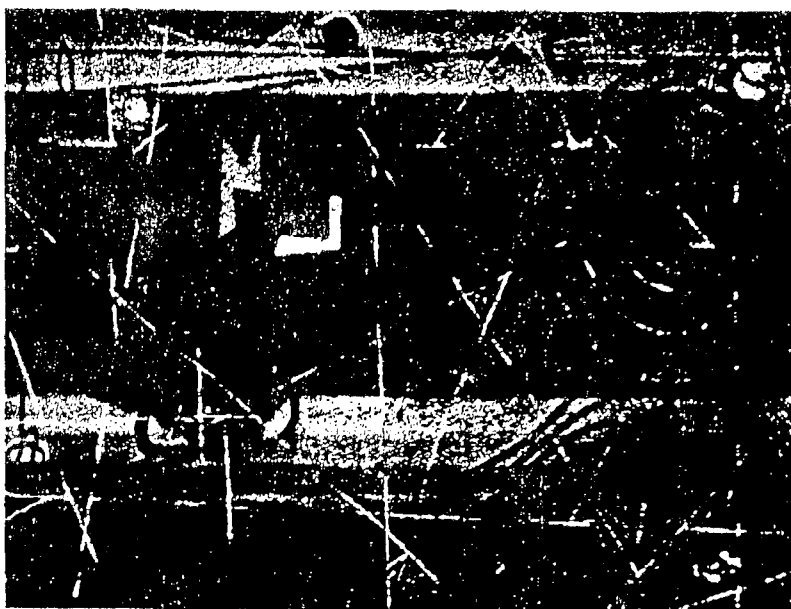
Mack has modified his thesis—or his rhetoric—since his earlier book, *Abductions*. The people who provide the case histories in this book are no longer called "abductees" but "experiencers" (even though most of them still think that what they experienced sure felt a lot like an abduction—or even a rape). Mack also stipulates that the experiences, or abductions, may not have occurred in "objective reality" but in some other kind of "reality," or maybe it was some other "reality" intersecting "objective reality." I admire Mack for his honest confusion about these points as much as for his courage and daring to write about this academically taboo subject in the first place.

Judging by some of Mack's defensive remarks here and there, it seems to me that he thinks the scientific world will find this multiple-reality model worse than any of his other heresies. I have no trouble with it myself. Every scientific instrument—and even more, every scientific theorem—describes a different "reality," and calling them aspects of a single "reality" is only a lazy convention. (How can you get mass, acceleration, gravity, quarks, molecules, cells, hormones, neurotransmitters,

reflex arcs, the unconscious, synchronicity, supply, demand, capital, labor, and the genetic code into one Grand Unified Theory?)

The "reality" of our sense perceptions often contradicts all these scientific models totally, as for instance when you bang your knee against a "solid" object which quantum mechanics describes as mostly *empty space* (haunted by probability waves that whimsically also appear as particles if you measure them a different way). If your banged-up leg hurts enough, you will have to admit that personal perception has a "reality" of its own distinct from any scientific "realities." What seems "real" depends on what level of magnification you use, and on what hurts, among other factors.

I don't know what kind of "reality" Mack's subjects suffered, but I certainly agree that their reports are



important, especially in relation to other nonnormal phenomena going on concurrently. (See below.)

Although Mack calls himself a "recovering Freudian," he might still have something to learn from Papa Sigmund. Each case in this book has idiosyncratic features but they do seem variations on a single theme: the myth of Hades and Persephone. Like Persephone, these people have had intensely disturbing experiences that usually involved sex, "monsters," abduction from ordinary "reality" to Something Weirder, and, like Persephone, they have emerged only partially, living half in this world and half in the other world.

Freud would probably call this the "Persephone Complex"—although a reviewer in *Seattle Weekly* (September 30, 1999) compared it to a bondage-and-discipline fantasy from the porn factories, a kind of *Behind the Green Door* with a New Age ending tacked on in the form of an ecology sermon.

But that suggests another odd parallel: Howard Hughes' once-banned and still-controversial film *The Outlaw*, in which Rio (Jane Russell) is raped by Billy the Kid and then falls in love with him. Feminists consider this a particularly perverted male fantasy, but some of Mack's subjects think they were raped, or sexually molested, and they also seem to love the inhuman critters who did this to them. Go figure.

To fully grasp the depth of this enigma, imagine what would happen if an equal number of US citizens said they had been sexually assaulted by aliens from Mexico or Iraq, instead of aliens from Outer Space or Other Dimensions. Obviously, there would be no scientific taboo against investigating such cases, and Congress might even have declared war on the invaders by now. If the subjects claimed, as most of Mack's subjects do claim, that they now love their kidnappers, and have learned from them important lessons about how wicked and wretched our society is, this would be considered evidence that they had been "brainwashed" as well as raped ("Stockholm Syndrome"). This difference in scientific and political reactions to atrocities by human aliens and nonhuman aliens seems even more confusing than the rest of this mystery.

Consider, in this context, the investigations of Dr Cory Hammond of the University of Utah, former president of the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis. Dr Hammond has had a lot of clients who, under hypnosis, remember hideous incidents of satanic rituals, infant sac-

rifice, sado-masochism, coprophilia, and assorted horrors. Dr Hammond believes that these cases, and the data he has unearthed on the Satanic cult in general, prove that three distinct groups working together—neo-Nazis, the CIA, and NASA—have been secretly and brutally programming American children for more than 50 years to make them part of "a Satanic order that will rule the world."

Can we believe both Mack and Hammond at the same time, and accept that while extraterrestrials or even weirder nonhumans have been raping people and teaching ecology, another conspiracy is simultaneously torturing and abusing children to make them Slaves of Satan? Or might we more economically assume that a lot of people have had a lot of nonordinary experiences, and we all tend to interpret these according to our own hopes and fears?

Or consider the model offered by Jacques Vallee, who has been investigating UFOs for more than 30 years. Vallee has suggested as one possible explanation a vast experiment in mind control and behavior modification by some Intelligence Agency (he doesn't try to guess which one . . .). Could both Mack's and Hammond's cases represent persons who fell victim to this, and retain only shattered and distorted memories of their ordeal? Considering what has already leaked about the CIA's MK-ULTRA research, this hypothesis does not seem altogether extravagant.

Hammond uses hypnosis to find—or create—the details of the Satanic conspiracy. Mack says he uses only "relaxation." The line between the two seems blurry at best, and we still don't have any reason to trust one of these techniques more or less than the other.

None of these points is intended to refute or dismiss Mack's works. He has made an important contribution, and his evolution toward what physicists call "model agnosticism" seems to me a step in the right direction. We don't know what the hell is going on, but somebody or something has done a lot of messing around with human minds in recent decades.

If other scientists will not join Mack in looking at the evidence, the public can hardly be blamed for choosing among the nonscientific and New Age explanations available to them.



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