

**"Dry people scare small children.
Watch them, it's true."**

- The Beer Brothers, describing their least favorite of all types of drinkers - pg. 6

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LETTERS

Joe,

Your article on John E. Mack is part of disturbing trend, as of late, in some of Boston's local papers and magazines. Along with psychic readings at the Tremont Tea Room, ear candling and others, Dr. Mack's work on the subject of "alien abduction" falls firmly into the realm of pseudo-science or outright fallacy.

What is not revealed in your article is the method used to determine "abduction". One of the key problems inherent in Dr. Mack and his associate Bud Hopkin's approach to decide whether they are dealing with a case of abduction is to question their subjects with a battery of inquiries skewed towards the abduction theory.

Dr. Mack also uses the example of Brazilian makuras as evidence of the abduction phenomenon's pan-cultural existence. Alien abduction has had parallels drawn to the old Faerie legends; with their faerie rings, tales of being spirited away and of infants being taken and replaced with changelings. That these similarities exist should not immediately be taken as validation of the phenomena (certainly few today would say that faeries exist and are the culprits for such 'occurrences'). Instead, could we not consider that yes, indeed, [there] might be a collective psychological experience at work and that, based upon the prevailing culture, these experiences are given a name, face and identity? "Makuras," "faeries," "aliens?" Although I cannot at this time provide you with the anecdotal instances, there have been studies which suggest that certain natural phenomena, such as ball-lightning, might "short-circuit" the brain's electro-chemical signals and induce a state which gives rise to hallucinations and emotional states which coincide with those reportedly experienced during alien abduction scenarios.

Dr. Mack's imploring his colleagues to accept a universe that cannot be defined by scientific methods flies in the face of all that is science. What he recommends is not fact, [and is] not a rational, definable quantity. It is closer to the faith of religion than to the inquiry of science. His theories and those of other paranormal researchers are not, as he states, "part of our basic reality." They are the exact opposite. That there are whole cultures that accept these supposed phenomena as fact does not prove they are fact. It is unfortunate that a person of such standing and accomplishment as Dr. Mack did not feel that he was dealing with "a new psychiatric syndrome [for which a] cause had not yet been established". If he had, perhaps we would have a true and rational explanation for these phenomena and claims.

Instead, it seems, he has fallen into the trap of being seduced by the fantastic. I am somewhat disheartened to see that the Weekly Dig has as well.

Still your friend and admirer,
Joe Niedbala
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Often, when criticizing the work of paranormal investigators like Dr. Mack, debunkers themselves resort to anecdotal evidence rather than hard evidence. Dr. Mack has been peer reviewed by none other than the folks at Harvard and none of them found him to be leading his patients or forcing a panacea on them. As he explained in both book and interview, those reviewing his work didn't like his findings but could find no real problems with his methodologies. No doubt that when artist turned hypnotist Bud Hopkins introduced America to the concept of alien abduction and repressed memories in the 70s, people were justifiably skeptical, but Mack's involvement over the last decade has brought new respect—and controversy—to the field. However, as long as debunkers use vague accusations of 'leading' a patient without evidence that Mack has done so, you all do nothing to help your argument.

Whether Faeries or Aliens, a long cross-cultural history of starpeople and mysterious abductions permeates mankind's mythos. Even if, as you say, there may be a "collective psychological experience at work," from where did it originate? Such a suggestion is open to just as much if not more questioning than Mack's observations that these people genuinely experienced something (something unexplainable) by today's limitations of scientific inquiry.

And I think that's the key here: questioning. Remember, we could have picked up the phone and called MUFON (The Mutual UFO Network) and interviewed any number of persons investigating the abduction phenomenon—instead, we profiled a respected and dedicated, brilliant local doctor who has changed the minds of many and challenged most of the rest who have come to know-his work on this topic.

In 1999 Harvard and the Doctor hosted an event where many scientists in many fields debated the phenomenon. Interestingly enough, those involved in some very high-sciences like experimental physics had far less difficulty in accepting the multi-universal terms in which Mack speaks. Recent scientific discoveries challenging the Standard Model, accelerating and decelerating light and quantum research have all begun to unravel and yet improve our basic knowledge of physics and the universe. Those who have witnessed Einstein's and Newton's discoveries miss the mark firsthand often don't find the concept of extra-dimensional existence all that unscientific. That is not the same as saying they believe in the abduction phenomenon, but such new thinking does allow for more time to be spent on asking, "What happened to these people?" as opposed to, "Did anything happen to these people?"

Reaching for the stars,

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