Aliens in the Academy: A Paradisciplinary Discourse

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IN THE LAST DECADES OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, AUTHORS TOUTING academic credentials made their way into the public discourse on alien abduction. In the process, these academics have manufactured a rhetorical space in which to speak from professional expertise, while at the same time enacting rhetorical conventions of contemporary public discourse in the United States that limit the validity of "expertise." The authors accomplish this by appealing to the contemporary American taste for "democratic" discourse—by "democratic," I mean discourse that privileges knowledge derived from personal experience rather than from objective reasoning, a way of knowing that requires no credentials but the ability to render oneself a speaking subject.

The first book by an author sporting academic credentials on the phenomenon of alien abduction was Edith Fiore's *Encounters*. This book's format closely resembles that of mainstream self-help books. Its author asserts that her goal is to help readers identify and cope with the possibility of this trauma in their lives: "In order to help you assess whether you have had a close encounter with extraterrestrials, I'll describe the signs and symptoms that are indicators. It is not necessary to have experienced all of them; sometimes just one important indicator can give you a very strong clue about the repressed event. Often, that one may be only the tip of the iceberg" (252). Fiore makes the most of her academic connection in having a foreword written by another PhD who vouches for her as his "colleague" and a researcher: "Dr. Fiore is aware of the unorthodox scientific paradigm for evaluating

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UFO reports . . . she knows that she must emphasize her role as a therapist rather than her role as a researcher" (Sprinkle, foreword to *Encounters*, xi). She also informs us early in her book of invitations to speak at professional conferences and of her connections to other PhDs, including a Berkeley professor (xx–xxi).

In 1992, David Jacobs was the first academic to publish a book about alien abduction. Jacobs's *Secret Life* has a foreword in which John Mack hints at the understanding of alien abduction that he would publish in his own popular book two years later. In *Secret Life*, Jacobs's contribution to the discourse is the construction of a working model of the abduction phenomenon. He describes this as the task that his (academic) discipline requires of him: "Most of the [abduction] reports consisted of snippets of stories, beginning in some logical order but then either ending abruptly or swerving off into wild, fantastic flights of fancy. As a historian, I required a chronological narrative" (23). It would seem that the fact that the stories made no coherent sense was only a problem of arrangement for Jacobs, who goes on to conclude, "I knew that if I were to make sense of what was happening, I would have to do abduction research myself. This meant that I would have to learn hypnosis" (23). On the face of it, this is not a logical conclusion. However, nonacademic "researchers" had already established hypnosis as a research tool for recovering more complete memories. Lest the reader assume that he had no contact with specialists in this area, Jacobs adds, "I read books about hypnosis. I attended a hypnosis conference. I learned about the dangers and pitfalls of hypnosis" (23). Jacobs never tells us what books and what conference helped him learn hypnosis, but an author and editor hates to weigh down a popular text with citations. A fellow academic might wonder in what way attendance at a conference would help qualify one to use hypnosis. A fellow historian might wonder in what way hypnosis is a data-collection method in his or her discipline. Although Jacobs had to go outside of his discipline to find a method "to be sure of [his] evidence" (23), he assures the reader that his academic background makes him particularly qualified to deal with the "data" because, "In the discipline of history, one spends years learning how to analyze documents and other forms of evidence, put them together into a coherent, logical whole, write serious historical works, and make knowledgeable contributions to the field" (27). Following previous assumptions, Jacobs attributes to faulty memory the fact that under hypnosis,

"significant parts of the stories were impossible to understand, and some of these were pretty 'wild'" (27). Somehow, Jacobs manages "to learn to distinguish the unreliable material from what appeared to be legitimate memories" (27). Of course, if the "legitimate memories" are the same as the "coherent, logical" parts of the stories, and the "unreliable material" is the same as what was "impossible to understand," a narrative is fairly easy to construct. Yet Jacobs tells us that it was only "after much trial and error" that he "finally became confident in [his] ability to perceive what was happening in various abduction accounts and to make connections" (27). Not surprisingly, Jacobs "noticed that the abduction accounts were forming themselves into distinct patterns of activity" (27). Once his model was constructed, aspects of abductees' reports that did not fit the "distinct patterns of activity" could be excluded as "unreliable material," and Jacobs can marvel, "The more data I gathered, the more I began to realize just how structured this phenomenon was" (28). After his description of method, a reader could be surprised to see Jacobs attributing the structure to the phenomenon rather than to himself. Jacobs's conviction that "the abduction accounts were forming *themselves* into distinct patterns of activity" is significant because the orderly and quasilogical sequence attributed to accounts of alien abduction in this discourse begins here in Jacobs's "ability to perceive what was happening in various abduction accounts and to make connections"—an ability he attributes to his academic credentials as a historian. And Jacobs's understanding of the historian is as a scientist: "I knew I was on shaky ground in terms of both my own analysis and science. I was using primarily anecdotal evidence as the basis of my research. Stories that people tell are a weak form of evidence for most scientists" (27). Yet Jacobs presents himself as having made a discovery rather than an invention. In the "Note to the Reader" at the beginning of *Secret Life*, Jacobs asserts that "All the major accounts of abduction in the book share common characteristics and thus provide a confirmation of one another," denying his own role in constructing the master narrative. Jacobs's understanding of his discipline as a science that does not participate in linguistic construction of the phenomenon it studies allows him to establish the working model for the discourse and to give his book's first chapter the title "A New Discipline."

Jacobs's *Secret Life* established not only the model for a discourse on alien abduction (and thereby reified the "phenomenon") but also

confirmed hypnosis as an appropriate method. Jacobs acknowledges that this methodology makes an obvious connection to the disciplines of psychiatry and psychology, but, of course, as a scientist studying a historical phenomenon, he understands the extent to which mental health professionals are unprepared to deal with alien abduction:

> The vast majority of professional therapists are not trained to help abductees. "Standard" therapy not grounded in the knowledge of what actually happened to the abductee rarely dissipates anxieties, and the problems continue unabated . . . Some less conventional therapists who have attempted to deal with the residual effects of the problems regardless of their cause have had the best success. A few have referred abductees to competent abduction researchers. (255)

Jacobs is clearly the only speaking subject in his text. By his own description, only he has "the knowledge of what actually happened to the abductee." This knowledge belongs only to one who has the "ability to perceive what was happening in various abduction accounts and to make connections." Readers and potential abductees are outside the realm of speaking subjects, as are other professionals with academic credentials. The reader can assume that one of the "less conventional therapists" is John Mack, who wrote the foreword for *Secret Life*. One is led to believe that Mack has sent his patients to Jacobs. Regardless of whether this is true, the suggestion allows the reader to understand Jacobs as a "competent abduction researcher," and Mack and other psychiatrists or psychologists as simply "less conventional [than others in their discipline]," which is distinct from being "a competent researcher." Jacobs's move to map out the phenomenon as the proper domain of the expert is a reversal of the nonacademic discourse on alien abduction. Fiore encourages her readers:

> Now that you know the signs and indicators of repressed close encounters with extraterrestrials and have determined that you've experienced one or more signs yourself, you are ready to discover if you have had a CEIV [close encounter of the fourth kind] and, if so, what happened during it. The next chapter gives you a simple technique you can use in the privacy of your own home to explore this amazing possibility. (257)

This relationship to the reader assumes that the reader is also a potential object—that is, an abductee. Rather than allowing the reader only the option of passive object or uninvolved spectator, Fiore takes a

strategy from the self-help genre that permits her readers to join her in examining the phenomenon. Because the speaking subject position's "technique" is "simple," it can be used by anyone—no need to be a specialist, an expert, or a professional of any kind. As we shall see, this strategy returns to the paradisciplinary discourse after *Secret Life*, in which Jacobs is insistent that research into the phenomenon is no longer the realm of amateurs:

> We are just at the beginning of a systematic study of abductions. Amateur investigators and professional therapists are also beginning to do abduction research. *Extreme caution is necessary.* The researcher must protect the abductee from further harm. Abductees can be emotionally fragile, and incompetent memory recovery techniques can cause them psychological damage. The risk of the further victimizing of the abductees by well-meaning but unqualified individuals is high. Special training is required. (317)

Jacobs puts both "amateur investigators" and "professional therapists" together in the category of potentially "well-meaning but unqualified individuals." The "systematic study" and "special training," which it seems Jacobs has but many others do not, must be the use of hypnosis, the understanding of the model of the abduction experience, and the historian's "ability to perceive what was happening in various abduction accounts and to make connections." Jacobs therefore attempts to drive the discourse into a more specialized professional domain. As the only social scientist taking up this object of study, Jacobs laments the loneliness of being a first member of this "new discipline":

> I wanted to discuss the research I was doing with my fellow UFO researchers. Although sympathetic to my work, most of them were still involved with investigating the sightings of UFOs and knew very little about abductions. . . . When I broached the subject with my colleagues at the university, I was met, with few exceptions, with instant ridicule. Jokes about my sanity followed as they tried to humor me. And who could blame them? The material seemed so outrageous and ridiculous that expressing interest in it was obviously a waste of time. Some criticized me for veering from my normal history research. A few pointed out that my academic career could be effectively halted by this research. (27)

It seems that Jacobs believes his unorthodoxy resides primarily in his choice of object for study. Yet Jacobs has breached more than the ordinary canon of historical objects of study; he has approached his

object with methodology unorthodox in his discipline. In itself, Jacobs's casual adoption of hypnotherapy as a way to collect "data" places him outside history's normal bounds. Jacobs routinely eschews the vagaries of hypnosis. Later authors will follow him in defending their research topics rather than their research methods. This becomes an important rhetorical strategy in the discourse's apologetics. Resistance to the discourse's legitimacy is presented as elitist disapproval of the topic's popular and public interest, rather than as a response to incongruous research practices. The significant difference between Jacobs's "fellow researchers" outside academe and his "colleagues" inside is that the amateurs are "sympathetic" but "knew very little." By contrast, the professionals offer only "ridicule," "jokes," and criticism. Such a characterization of himself as an outsider to elite circles provides Jacobs with a useful appeal to his readers (whom Jacobs justifiably assumes to be nonacademics). The reader can identify with this position of the outsider whose interests would draw ridicule from professors and scientists. Earlier books on UFOs and alien abduction used a variation of this strategy, asserting that the reality of phenomenon was beyond doubt but that it was scorned by the elites of science and government for their own reasons. But Jacobs's use of the device allows him to avoid tying himself to a conspiracy theory in addition to mediating his ethos as a member of an elite group commonly understood to dismiss ufology: academics. Jacobs permits his reader to identify with him as someone outside the elite view on this issue. It is a move that flatters the reader who, through identification with Jacobs, can now attach the prestige of a "scientist" to himself or herself. In this way, Jacobs can reserve the subject position for himself without the reader sensing that he or she is objectified or excluded.

Two years after the publication of Jacobs's *Secret Life*, John Mack's own book, *Abduction*, appeared. Mack published what he claims is four years of alien abduction research conducted when he was a tenured professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School. Where Jacobs understood his task as a historian to be finding a coherent narrative to represent "the phenomenon," Mack sees his own discipline as the obvious site for the analysis of it:

> Our knowledge of the abduction phenomenon depends, fundamentally, upon human experience—i.e., the reports of the abductees themselves and the recording, sifting, and evaluating of these reports by the investigator. That is, of necessity, a participatory

> process in which the person exploring the experiences—in this case, myself—must enter fully and empathically into the experiencer's world in order to create the context of trust that will bring forth the relevant information. (xi)

Jacobs's disciplinary "ability to perceive what was happening in various abduction accounts and to make connections" is no longer adequate to the task. Where Jacobs asserts the usefulness of a historian's capacity "to distinguish the unreliable material from what appeared to be legitimate memories," Mack believes his psychiatric credentials enable him to perform a more appropriate task: to "enter fully and empathically into the experiencer's world." Not only does empathy "create the context . . . that will bring forth the relevant information," it is also Mack's central methodological tool:

> The feelings and spirit of the facilitator in alternative therapeutic situations, as well as his or her rational mind and observational skills, are a vital aspect of the therapeutic or investigative method. This expanded use of the self relies on empathy and is, in essence, intersubjective. Within this framework hypnosis, shamanic journeys, meditation, Grof breathwork, vision quests, and other modalities, which are called in the West "nonordinary" states of consciousness, become natural investigative allies. . . In the end, of course, the rational intellect is essential for understanding and integrating the data obtained through the fuller use of consciousness as an investigative tool. (387)

Although Mack's credentials more easily lend themselves to the prestige of "science," he insists that his "feelings and spirit" are as much a part of his expertise as his analytical skills or professional training. Far from embracing the ethos of the objective scientist, Mack wants to establish the "expanded use of the self" as investigative method. Mack's position that hypnosis is roughly equivalent to shamanic journeys, meditation, and vision quests presents it as a mystical rather than a scientific procedure. Mack makes a routine of identifying mystical terminology with the markers of scientific discourse: "expanded use of the psyche" is "the exploratory process"; "the feelings and spirit" are united with the "rational mind and observational skills"; "the therapeutic or investigative method" is the "expanded use of the self"; and "the fuller use of consciousness" is a part of "the data." This understanding of his investigation as a mystical process leads Mack to privilege the individuality and personal identity

of those involved, including himself: "In my work with abductees I am fully involved, experiencing and reliving with them the world that they are calling forth from their unconscious. My whole psyche or being is engaged; naturally the rational or observing self is always present, shaping, limiting, protecting the process" (388). By establishing personal experience as the criterion for knowledge, Mack democratizes the discourse. While reading Mack's text, the reader is as equally "fully involved, experiencing and reliving with [the abductees] the world that they are calling forth" as any professional. More significantly, because the abductees have had an experience and Mack re-experiences it alongside them, an abductee becomes a cosubject. Because readers are invited to understand themselves as potential abductees, they can position themselves as Mack's cosubjects. Where Jacobs appealed to readers by allowing them to identify with him, Mack returns to Fiore's strategy of sharing the subject position. But Mack's version of this democratic rhetoric is more subtle and complex. Fiore only invited the reader to participate in academic ways of knowing; Mack replaces academic epistemology by making the object of analysis a speaking subject in the discourse.

Mack's assertion that he is "shaping, limiting, protecting the process" is not unlike Jacobs's claim to know "how to analyze documents and other forms of evidence, put them together into a coherent, logical whole, write serious historical works, and make knowledgeable contributions to the field." Both assume that using language to "shape," "limit," "protect," "analyze," "put together," and to render "logical" is something other than the construction of the phenomenon they presume to be observing. For both Jacobs and Mack, their unselfconscious use of language permits them to perceive the phenomenon. Where they differ is in their attitudes toward objectivity. Jacobs understands himself as a scientist, willing and able to maintain an objective analysis of his (constructed) object. Mack, on the other hand, believes in a bit of objectivity ("the feelings and spirit of the facilitator in alternative therapeutic situations, as well as his or her rational mind and observational skills"; "the rational intellect is essential for understanding and integrating the data obtained through the fuller use of consciousness as an investigative tool") to balance what he sees as a particularly subjective phenomenon—a phenomenon that is an experience rather than a fact. Mack's insistence upon self-consciously breaking with the epistemological assumptions of scientific discourse

allows him to use a variety of the identification appeal Jacobs used: to pose as an outsider. Mack's outsider ethos hinges on his research methodology that privileges the personal experience of the individual abductees and allows him to valorize the abductees as heroes. Again, this is a useful position from which to appeal to his readers: presenting himself as one who is willing to stand beside rather than before the common man in "a *participatory* process" rather than a directive one. Mack's valorization of the "heroic" abductees offsets his position as the scientist with enough privilege to do the valorizing, thus democratizing the discourse.

Mack's strategy of empathetic credulity changes the depiction of the abductee. Fiore had depicted abductees (directly conceived as her readers) to be people who need to get in touch with repressed memories so that they can move on with their lives. She avoided a paternalistic tone by literally identifying herself and other researchers with abductees:

> It is commonly found that UFO buffs or others with an intense interest in ufology and CEIVs are contactees. Leo Sprinkle, PhD, known throughout the world for his research into the contactee phenomenon, discovered only recently through hypnotic regression that he himself was a contactee. I believe that most researchers and therapists specializing in this area have been contacted or abducted. (257)

So, in the end, the abductees and the researchers are identical, and the readers can consider themselves members of the group to which the author belongs. To have been abducted, for Fiore, means to have an awareness of something very important and very positive:

> One of the most interesting findings that has emerged from this work was the many healings and attempts to heal on the part of the visitors. Even when lasers were not yet being used by Earth people, the extraterrestrials were using them on their spacecraft. I wonder if some of the modern developments in medicine, technology and space exploration can be credited directly or indirectly to the intervention of our space friends. Remember telepathy! Wouldn't it be interesting if our top scientists were being helped with their research and development? (267)

But it is not the abductee himself or herself that is important; the abductee simply has an association with important people: the "top scientists" of "medicine, technology and space exploration."

Mack's abductees use their status as speaking subjects to assert their claims to a special subjectivity, to become *super subjects*. The knowledge that qualifies a super subject to speak derives from an inscrutable source, and its truths are mystical. The super subject position existed before the idea of contact with extraterrestrials; the oracle, the prophet, and the saint all have spoken from such a position. Mack sums up each case study in his book with a "discussion" section. Almost all of these sections include validation of the abductee's self-aggrandizement and establish him or her as a super subject:

> Jerry, like many abductees, has opened her mind and heart to important philosophical and spiritual concerns. These are expressed most fully in her writings . . . Jerry's writings include consideration of a vast range of existential matters, including the nature of time, space, and the universe itself; the great cycles of birth, death, and creation; the mysteries of truth, spirit, and soul; and the limitations of material science. (128)

A number of Mack's patients "discover" that they have a "dual identity," that they are part human and part alien. Such a claim not only places the abductee in both the object and subject positions in this phenomenon, it also confers upon him or her super subject status. Mack muses, "If, for example, the alien beings are closer to the divine source or *anima mundi* than human beings generally seem to be, then it is possible that their presence among us, however cruel and traumatic in some instances, may be part of a larger process that is bringing us back to God, or whatever we choose to call the creative principle" (190–91). To remember being part alien is to reconnect with one's profoundly significant role in reconciling humanity to God. This is a far more powerful position than that of objects of study, and it even exceeds that of cosubjects. One of Mack's patients, he reports, has joined him on lecture circuits to talk about his experience as an abductee. But "Joe" not only speaks as one who has experienced abduction, but as one who now remembers that he is part alien himself and is a "spiritual healer" (190). "Eva" also turns the power positions around in her role as Mack's patient. Usurping his role as the one who observes, diagnoses, and advises, Mack writes that

> Eva spoke of my own extremes of intellect and unconditional love, a "cosmic tension," and advised me to "go to a retreat" in an isolated place without other people in order to balance these polarities and

> "connect your being to the cosmos." Picking up emotions of sadness and loneliness in me she said, "You need to know that you are never alone. Just ask for the connection and you'll feel us," i.e., "all of the nonphysical beings that have been guiding you all along." (253)

Here it seems that "Eva" returns the favor of being granted super subject status and confers the same upon Mack, who need only ask *her* (and her kind) for "the connection" in order to "connect . . . to the cosmos." In addition to understanding themselves as spiritual leaders and healers positioned to turn the tables of power on the PhD, Mack's abductees also aspire to influencing discourses that are not readily available to them as nonprofessionals: "It appears as if from childhood Sara's encounters were a kind of preparation of consciousness for a life's work she strives to accomplish. This work appears connected to using an expanded notion of ecology or 'environment' to bring about a paradigm shift from a consciousness of division and separation to one of openness, creativity, and unconditional love" (207). Mack legitimates and valorizes this super subject status that the abductees attach to themselves:

> Each abductee appears to me like a pioneer on a hero's journey. For as they undergo their own ego-destroying terror, and allow us to know about their experiences, their consciousness opens to the existence of unknown dimensions of the cosmos and the human psyche, which themselves appear increasingly to be profoundly interwoven. The inner work of the abductees, by enabling them to acknowledge their experiences, has allowed some of them to appreciate the importance of the gifts they have to offer. (419)

Not only is each abductee a "pioneer" and a "hero," each suffers "terror" and strains to perform the necessary "inner work" to enlighten the rest of humanity. This image of the abductee as martyr and chosen one expands in the discourse after Mack's *Abduction*. In fact, the glow of martyr and prophet increasingly extends to the authors themselves.

Another of Mack's innovations in the discourse is his assertion that other professionals (specifically avoiding belittling nonbelievers outside of the intellectual elite) who criticize his and others' work as pseudoscientific are themselves practicing bad science in dismissing alien abduction "research":

> I believe these critiques reflect a misunderstanding of the nature of rationality and reason, and even of science itself. For what the worldview implicit in these statements requires is the a priori

> exclusion of vast amounts of data simply because that information is in conflict with that point of view. This, I believe, is a far more irrational, and even dangerous, approach to knowledge than to allow information from every possible legitimate source to come into our minds before applying rationality and reason in assessing this information once we have "let it in." To exclude data simply because it does not fit a particular view of reality can only, in the end, arrest the progress of science and keep us ignorant. (xi)

In a sense, this again reenacts a defensive strategy offered by Jacobs in *Secret Life*: implying that dismissal of his research methods is in fact a dismissal of his topic of research. But Mack makes a more sophisticated epistemological argument, connecting his methods and his topic as an "approach to knowledge." But Mack is not willing to give up the claim to being "rational," and a man of "reason." Rather, he proposes that "rationality and reason" are not properly understood by the critics who wield the terms. Knowing the true definition of "rationality and reason," Mack can assert that his critics are "far more irrational" (though irrationality is not commonly understood to be quantifiable). But his critics are more than unscientific, they are "dangerous." Although Mack may assume that his rhetoric expresses only his understanding of science and paradigm shifts, his words do suggest a further interpretation available to his reader: the critics are "dangerous" because they are undemocratic. That is, he proposes that science should "allow information from every possible legitimate source." His critics wish to limit the possible sources of information, presumably to sources available only to the intellectual elite. The abductees themselves are, after all, the "source" of Mack's "data." Science should "'let it in'" and not exclude these abductees who are, in Mack's book at least, subjects as much as (if not more than) objects. Elizabeth Ervin has suggested that rhetorical moves of this kind are characteristic of public debates in which academics and nonacademics mix. In her analysis of a community's debate about the teaching of "creationism" in public schools, Ervin observes that "the academic scientists wished to restrict the debate to 'experts' like themselves and thus foreclose further public discussion. In the process, however, they reinforced popular perceptions that academic 'outsiders' are insensitive to the local residents' cultural and religious heritage and reluctant to acknowledge morality as a legitimate public issue" (460). In the case of Mack's book, however, the academic is reversing this foreclosure of public discourse. Mack, an

insider, takes the side of the outsider. By setting up a dichotomy in which "science" is opposed to "ignorance," Mack allows the reader to identify himself or herself as a bulwark against ignorance and the tyranny of an elite's "particular view of reality." This is a satisfying position for the reader and is therefore quite persuasive.

In addition, Mack escorts the reader into the circle of professional discourse with the admonition "to allow information from every possible legitimate source to come into *our* minds." Mack's contention that the established intellectual elite must not "arrest the progress of science and keep *us* ignorant" calls forth the fear of a science that is not responsive to public values and beliefs and opposes it in favor of another kind of science. Mack is therefore able to sustain the prestige of his status as a scientist while simultaneously opposing the elitism of that identity. In fact, Mack prescribes the involvement of experts in what had been until recently a popular area of inquiry by urging scientists to learn the public research rather than the reverse:

> But evaluations of possible abduction cases should be pursued by physicians and other clinicians who are at least familiar with and open to the reality of the phenomenon, even when they do not "believe" in it. There is sufficient information available now in books, popular periodicals, and other media, if not in professional journals, to suggest strongly that something that defies conventional explanation is happening to many people. (399)

So, while experts should get involved, they should do so on the terms of the public (rather than their own) discourses. The very definition of who the "expert" is becomes unclear in this articulation of the situation. Such rhetorical sophistication is at least as much responsible for the popular success of Mack's book as his credentials and its publicity.

Three years after Mack's *Abduction*, another popular "study" of the alien abduction phenomenon appeared: *Cosmic Voyage*. The author, Courtney Brown, was a professor of political science at Emory University. Like Jacobs, Brown came to study aliens through nonprofessional UFO organizations. Brown merged his remote viewing training and his training in meditation techniques to create what he calls "scientific remote viewing":

> One of my first characterizations of [remote viewers'] early efforts with regard to UFOs was that they were concentrating too much of

> their energy on the beings flying the ships. It was my view that they should shift their efforts entirely to understanding the societies from which the ships emanated. I offered my services as a social scientist to them, hoping that I would be able to make a significant contribution in answering a broader set of questions relating to the structure of sentient life in our galaxy. (17)

So, Brown made his niche in this discourse by attaching his discipline's orthodox parameters (i.e., understanding the structure of societies) to the UFO research topic. He approaches the nonprofessional ufologists as a specialist ("I offered my services as a social scientist to them") who can critique their methodology ("they were concentrating too much of their energy on the beings flying the ships") and lead them to profound information ("I would be able to make a significant contribution in answering a broader set of questions relating to the structure of sentient life in our galaxy"). Brown distances himself from nonprofessionals who might use essentially the same techniques:

> Readers should understand at the outset that remote viewing (as the term is used here) bears no similarity to the techniques of television or tabloid psychics. Remote viewing is an exacting and demanding discipline that involves a precisely structured set of protocols, and only an individual who has been fully trained by a competent teacher can utilize it accurately for data-gathering purposes. (31)

Where Jacobs's treatment of the material closed off an area for professionals only and Mack's treated the object of study as a subject, Brown reasserts the domain of the expert. As Jacobs and Mack casually picked up the necessary skills in hypnosis, Brown absorbed the military strategies for remote viewing and added them to his own disciplinary training, as well as his training in meditation. Brown is, of course, in the same situation as Jacobs in that the social sciences and humanities (in this case, political science and history) do not traditionally employ remote viewing and hypnosis as data-gathering methods. But, unlike Jacobs, Brown takes on the debate of his methods rather than eschewing it in favor of defending the research topic: "Indeed, as will become clear by the time you finish this book, the vast majority of scientists who do not consider things such as telepathy and remote viewing 'real' are simply misinformed at best or, more likely, too biased to look at the subject objectively" (14). In framing his defense this way, Brown comes close to replicating Mack's rhetorical strategy of

flattering the reader's self-perception as intelligent and proscience, while simultaneously rejecting orthodox science's conventions. Although scientists are "misinformed" and "too biased," Brown assures the reader that he or she will, in effect, know more than the scientists because what the scientists fail to understand "will become clear by the time you finish this book." Not being "too biased" and being able to "look at the subject objectively" are, again, virtues of the good scientist. In fact, Brown is simply ahead of the scientists who would reject his methods: "The methods are new, but they are valid and extremely reliable research instruments, regardless of whether many other scientists yet accept them or are familiar with them" (12).

Brown explains why he, as a political science professor, is uniquely qualified to occupy a specific niche in the discourse:

> For example, I would not be very useful remote-viewing details of an advanced alien technology. I simply would not know what I was looking at. . . . But a trained engineer might be able to grasp all sorts of important information, including technical details. The engineer's education helps with the understanding of what is perceived. On the other hand, since I am a social scientist, I can do a very good job remote-viewing ET societies, and I can understand how they organize and govern themselves. (51)

Brown compares an engineer's ability to understand "technology" to a social scientist's ability to understand "societies." Of course, the underlying assumption is Brown's contention that "technology" can be understood by an expert, even if it is alien technology, because "the engineer's education" speaks to some natural laws that underpin *all* technology regardless of the history, values, and internal tensions of its designers. In the same way, then, Brown suggests that societies, even alien ones, can be understood by "a social scientist," presumably because a social scientist's education speaks to some natural laws that underpin *all* societies regardless of the history, values, and internal tensions of its members.

Brown goes so far as to remote-view several alien civilizations (some are visiting Earth regularly, and some are already living here among us) and the past, present, and future of those civilizations, and to make contact with a sort of interplanetary United Nations that would be familiar to any viewer of Star Trek (even calling itself "the Federation"). In fact, Brown claims to have served as the Earth's first representative

to the Federation. Here again we see a bit of the self-aggrandizement that characterizes much of Mack's text. However, no abductees nor even aliens are the super subjects; only the author himself is elevated:

> There is always a study that is the first of its kind, and this is such a study. Widespread acceptance of the methods will come in time; there is no doubt in my mind about this. Meanwhile, we need not be ashamed of using these newly discovered methods while we wait for a new generation of scientists to become acquainted with them, as long as the uses of the techniques are held to rigorous scientific standards. This book sets a baseline for these standards. (13)

As in Jacobs's work, the reader is brought into the professional circle where "*we* need not be ashamed" and "*we* wait." More than just setting a baseline for "rigorous scientific standards," Brown understands his remote viewing to be of global significance: "As research into this project progressed, it became obvious to me that the implications of these findings for virtually all of humanity would be enormous" (180). This is not Brown's opinion alone; the chairman of "the Federation" told Brown in a telepathic conversation that he and his remote viewing monitor "will be the initial representatives of humans [to "the Federation"] as determined by consciousness. He is telling me that consciousness determined our arrival at this point." But Brown is warned by the same that he must remain humble in spite of this super subject status:

> We are not saviors, just initial representatives. . . . This is not to go to our heads. This is just our job now, and we all have jobs. He is also telling me that I am doing a fairly good job of writing all of this down. . . . We must focus on the book. The book is important, and they will use it. (142–43)

Not only will the Intergalactic Federation use Brown's book, Mack's book also has had an effect on alien activity. Brown uses the ufologist term "Greys" in reference to the species of aliens abducting humans. When telepathically discussing with a Federation official the Greys' activities on Earth, Brown discovers that the Greys have had a change of policy and now allow humans like himself to remote-view them. This, he speculates, may be in response to Mack's *Abduction*:

> Mack's treatment of the phenomenon is perhaps the most sensitive—and most positive with respect to the Greys—in the

> extant literature. It could be the Greys decided to change their tactics regarding our remote-viewing attempts because they concluded that we are now capable of understanding the phenomenon. . . . Yet the additional possibility exists that the Greys will now allow us to see their activities because of the positive nature of Mack's book, perhaps thinking that they might now get a fair shake in the inevitable trial that will emerge in the court of public opinion. (177)

Brown's speculations about the possible effect of Mack's book on alien decisionmaking all assume that the aliens monitor American popular culture and not only are interested in its influence on humans but also have an active stake in its effects. Brown's understanding of the workings of popular culture are reminiscent of Jacobs's concept of narrative. Where Jacobs was certain that his model narrative simply assisted him in his "ability to perceive what was happening" rather than participating in the construction of "what was happening," Brown views at least some of popular culture to be a reflection of the aliens rather than the aliens being reflections of popular culture. Brown even observes an unnamed person associated with the television series *Star Trek: The Next Generation* receiving a dream from real "Federation" operatives via an implanted device:

> I then cued on the content of the [alien] transmission itself [by means of remote-viewing], and I determined that the message contained a tremendous amount of detail. The transmission included plot ideas, characters, pictures of specific scenes, images of planets, ships, and beings. The content was data that would later find its way into a human-written script of a specific *Star Trek: The Next Generation* episode. (217–18)

Like Jacobs's linguistic construction of "the abduction experience," Brown's reversed understanding of the flow of content from popular culture to his visions allows the reader to comprehend the received tableaus of popular culture as factual "data" corroborated by "scientists." The vagaries of hypnosis and remote viewing may be difficult to grapple with, but the "information" gleaned is appealingly familiar. Brown's understanding of popular culture as encoded by alien societies also lends the public an immediate expertise in the discourse: if you're a Trekkie, you are already on the path to super subject status as one participating in "the ET project" that will "help humans

gradually stop thinking that we are alone at the center of the universe, and to understand instead that we are but one group in a complex galactic society" (219). In this way, Brown participates in the democratic discourse tradition of the paradiscipline. No expertise beyond familiarity with popular culture is required in order to be intimately involved in intergalactic politics. Like Mack, Brown identifies the alien's message as spiritual; it is not technical or scientific. Human emotion rather than intellect is at the center of the knowledge that the discourse constructs. As such, one need not be a scientist or any kind of professional to participate in the project. In fact, being a nonprofessional may have the distinct advantage of allowing a more "open" mind.

If we are curious about what allure alien abduction discourse has had for those who participate in it—and, as we have seen, the reader is always invited to be a participant—we need look no further than the ways that the discourse has constructed complex subject positions and made them available. The possibility of occupying the position of a super subject lends the discourse an enormous payoff for those willing to engage it. In this discourse, outsider status is a credential to speak rather than a justification for silence. Consequently, readers and researchers can jointly construct a knowledge that is both cosmically significant and democratically available to all.

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