

NEW BOOKS & MEDIA

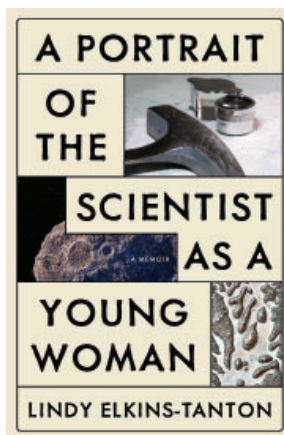
A Portrait of the Scientist as a Young Woman

Lindy Elkins-Tanton

William Morrow, 2022. \$29.99

In this deeply personal memoir, Lindy Elkins-Tanton recounts her tortuous path to becoming a scientist and principal investigator of a NASA deep-space mission. As a female student at MIT in the 1980s, she endured rampant sexism and battled depression and impostor syndrome. After attaining a master's in geochemistry, she put her academic career on hold for a decade as she married, had a son, and got divorced. Nevertheless, Elkins-Tanton would go on to not only attain a PhD and a professorship but also become one of the few women to lead a NASA mission. With *Psyche* poised to launch in August 2022, Elkins-Tanton's well-timed memoir alternates between the trials and tribulations of getting a NASA mission off the ground and her own storied experience as a woman in a traditionally male field.

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Supernova

Or Graur

MIT Press, 2022. \$16.95 (paper)

Supernovae—the explosions of stars—are some of the most luminous astronomical phenomena in the universe: According to contemporary Chinese, Islamic, and European records, the supernova of 1006 CE could be seen in broad daylight for several weeks. Supernovae also create and disperse many of the heavier elements that we use in our daily lives. In *Supernova*, a book in the MIT Press Essential Knowledge series, the astrophysicist Or Graur provides

readers with a concise description of the current state of supernova science along with the field's history. As he puts it, "We owe our existence to supernovae."

—RD

Fragments of Time

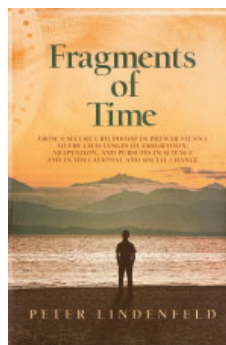
From a Secure Childhood in Prewar Vienna to the Challenges of Emigration, Adaptation, and Pursuits in Science and in Educational and Social Change

Peter Lindenfeld

Random Walk Books, 2021. \$32.00

It's well known that Albert Einstein found refuge from Nazism in the US at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey, but Einstein's story was unique: Most Jews trying to flee Europe in the 1930s were not afforded the same luxurious welcome he received. Peter Lindenfeld's new memoir *Fragments of Time* is a powerful reminder of that fact. An eventual physicist, Lindenfeld was the child of a middle-class Viennese Jewish family that fled Austria after the Nazi Anschluss in March 1938. He and his mother eventually settled in Canada, but only after stops in Italy, Switzerland, and England. His father was not as lucky. Interned in the Buchenwald concentration camp for several months, he eventually escaped to England, but he was interned there as an "enemy alien" and sent to Australia. He only rejoined Peter in Canada in 1942. More a personal memoir than a scientific autobiography, *Fragments of Time* eloquently documents a period of 20th-century history that is rapidly receding from living memory.

—RD



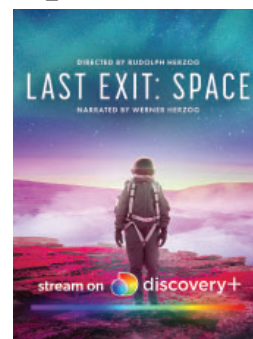
Last Exit: Space

Rudolph Herzog

Discovery+, 2022

In this new documentary, the director Rudolph Herzog confronts the techno-utopian fantasies of billionaires like Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos, who assert that humanity has an existential need to settle Mars, outer space, and exoplanets. Narrated by Rudolph's father, Werner, *Last Exit: Space* points out that space is an airless vacuum and that even Mars is a bleak, uninhabitable wasteland. The film isn't all critical: The Herzogs also profile the father-daughter team of Carsten Olsen and Anna Olsen, who are part of the Copenhagen Suborbitals, a hobbyist spaceflight program, and who idealistically hope to be the first amateur astronauts. But it's refreshing to see a healthy bucket of cold water thrown on the delusions of Musk, Bezos, and their ilk. As the space anthropologist Taylor Genovese remarks, life on a Martian colony would be akin to living in an "Amazon fulfillment center."

—RD



Physics Girl

Dianna Cowern, host

YouTube, 2011–

It's no coincidence that Dianna Cowern's Physics Girl is one of the most-followed YouTube channels devoted to the field: Her enthusiasm for physics is infectious. One series of videos from summer 2021 follows Cowern as she road-trips across California in a car powered by a hydrogen fuel cell and explores the future of renewable energy. (The vehicle was provided by Toyota as part of a sponsorship.) During the trip, she looks at such topics as energy storage, solar-panel technology, and the changes that need to be made to the power grid to adapt it for the green-energy future. Another series reviews introductory physics and helps students prepare for AP Physics exams. Accessible and informative, the channel provides a highly engaging introduction to the discipline.

—RD PT