

The 1984 Phi Beta Kappa Book Awards

The Phi Beta Kappa Award in Science

FROZEN STAR: OF PULSARS, BLACK HOLES AND THE FATE OF STARS. *George Greenstein. Freundlich Books. \$16.95.*

Citation: *Frozen Star* is a book on the marvels of modern astrophysics—mostly pulsars, black holes, and X-ray astronomy. Its real purpose is to get people to see that there is nothing cold and impersonal about the way scientific work is conducted. The book is not only extremely well written, but it possesses a quality that few books about science have: namely, it captures the confused, unplanned, marvelous, and fascinating process by which real scientists make real discoveries. The author is blunt in his appraisal of others and, at the same time, compassionate, for he exposes the doubt and uncertainty that permeate the scientific endeavor. The result is a fascinating book, particularly for one who lacks special knowledge of this field. Dr. Greenstein is to be congratulated for having achieved the very difficult task of making his field of science available to the intelligent layman.

The Christian Gauss Award

SWIFT: THE MAN, HIS WORKS, AND THE AGE. *Volume 3. DEAN SWIFT. Irvin Ehrenpreis. Harvard University Press. \$35.*

Citation: In this biography, Irvin Ehrenpreis firmly situates Swift, an extremely complex man, within complex social, political, and personal circumstances and events, and his presentations of man, works, and times coalesce. By the bold procedure of organizing the biography into narrative sequences concerning such separate topics as the Church, the Deanship, and Gentry and Journeys, masses of material are kept under firm control. Every detail—whether of Swift's friends, his enemies, or the secret maneuvering to publish major works—directly serves the reader's comprehension of Swift's intellect, sensibility, and actions. The committee for the Gauss prize considered officially only the third and final volume, entitled *Dean Swift*, which gives an account first of the disappointed exile, then of the Irish patriot at peak performance, and finally of the declining years. Standing tall on the shoulders of the best critics and scholars from Swift's day to ours and drawing on his own searches through manuscripts and newspaper accounts previously neglected and his own strong and sound intelligence, Irvin Ehrenpreis has succeeded in his announced aim of revealing "unexpected connections and relationships."

The Ralph Waldo Emerson Award

AGAINST THE APOCALYPSE: RESPONSES TO CATASTROPHE IN MODERN JEWISH CULTURE. *David G. Roskies. Harvard University Press. \$20.*

Citation: There are some books that grasp the reader with the first sentence and never let go. Such is the case of *Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture* by David G. Roskies. "There are said to be Moroccan Jews," the book begins, "who have kept the keys to their ancestral homes in fifteenth-century Spain and Portugal." These keys become for the author a metaphor of the memory of catastrophe in Jewish thought from the First Destruction of the Temple through the Holocaust. It is that collective memory, the book argues with a power at once scholarly and poetic, that has enabled the Jewish people to triumph over destruction and despair. The book focuses on the "lost temple" of eastern European Jewry in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During this period the traditional apocalyptic response to catastrophe, which combined terror, lament, and despair, was vigorously challenged by Jewish writers, artists, and intellectuals who resorted to strategies of irony, irreverence, laughter, and revenge to cope with persecution and suffering. *Against the Apocalypse* is a work of deep learning, literary sensibility, and critical judgment. It rises above mere scholarship, however. Written with intense self-consciousness and with "controlled passion," it is a work of moral and intellectual commitment as well.