Winner: Richard Halpern, New York University,

TITLE: *"Eclipse of Action: Tragedy and Political Economy"* (University of Chicago Press, 2017).

CITATION:

"Richard Halpern's Eclipse of Action puts forward a bold new theory of tragedy, with portentous and even prophetic implications for our present. Centered in the early modern period but equally comfortable dealing with the origins of tragedy in ancient Greece, its absence or marginalization in the period of Hegel and Marx, and its strange return, after centuries of submission, in Strindberg, Ibsen, and above all Beckett, this book is a model of how to make a tight and rigorous argument on a geographically and temporally enlarged scale, well beyond that of our usual period-based studies. Written with exhilarating clarity, and unstinting in its attentiveness to both historical and formal detail, the book sustains a powerful theoretical arc through a dense thicket of texts that suddenly appear in a completely new light. In revisiting the question of tragedy through the prism of political economy, Halpern makes a powerful intervention into contemporary philosophical debates (Marxist, Arendtian, left- and right-Schmittian most notably) surrounding the autonomy of the political (vs the social), the state (vs civil society), action (vs production), and a host of related issues. It is also (and for related reasons) a brilliant model of how to deal with the suddenly controversial matter of "context." A marvel of scholarship, wit, and theoretical sophistication, this book redefines the importance of literary representation at a cultural, social, and political level."