



# Chaucer and the Death of the Political Animal (The New Middle Ages)

*Jameson S. Workman*

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*Chaucer and the Death of the Political Animal* is an experimental metapoetics that begins with a simple idea: the most interesting thing about Geoffrey Chaucer is not that he was alive during the 1380s, but that he was alive when he wrote the *Canterbury Tales*. From there it suspends the social and political background, looks horizontally at recurring Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophical structures in the texts, and collects them into a working theory of art. What results is a vision Chaucer's poetry as part of a long literary epistemology in the history of ideas, one that wants to empty Art of historical being and reconvene a shuttered symbolic order that existed prior to the Fall. Finally, Workman brings this internal mythic conflict between Art and History to bear on an external question: To what extent is historicism's method for the "poem-in-the-world" a responsible measure of the "world-in-the-poem?"

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