Evidence & Premodern Literary Biography

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This informal presentation and discussion will concern several problems Prof. Strohm has encountered while writing a Chaucer biography, together with some proposed ways of dealing with them.

Every literary biographer confronts the chasm between a writer’s daily or empirical life-details and his or her imaginative creations. This issue arises in a particularly stark form for the premodern biographer, who mainly lacks such mediating evidence as letters, memoirs, diaries, interviews, and testimonials. Chaucer, for example, left behind 494 life-records, but not one of them concerns his poetry or describes him as a poet. How, then, to connect his ordinary life with his extraordinary body of poetical work? And what assistance (if any!) is to be gained from the variable and elusive “I” flickering in and out of his poems?

Wednesday, 9 April

5pm, CAHI (1211 E Atwater Ave)
reception to follow

The Medieval Studies Institute
of Indiana University