

MLL Bellini Colloquium: The Spirit Moves: Saintry Mobility in Old French Hagiography

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Movement is a defining feature of saints' lives. Saints are often written in transit, journeying from one locus to the next, and this movement ultimately informs their holiness. As transient beings in the secular world, saints are not themselves connected to place but rather are accorded an association with a geographical site after their death: in the stories about their lives, in the churches bearing their names, and in the translation of their relics. This notion of movement reminds the audience of the saints' worldly detachment and their transcendence of fixed geography, making them universally accessible to the community of Christians. By examining saints' lives from different centuries, this paper intervenes in recent phenomenological approaches to hagiography that focus on place as a means to define identity, and considers the absence of fixed places and objects in defining the saint.