



# The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian Late Antiquity (Transformation of the Classical Heritage)

*Georgia Frank*

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Pilgrims in the deserts of Egypt and the holy land during the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. often reported visiting holy people as part of their tours of holy places. This is the first comprehensive study of pilgrimage to these famous ascetics of late antique Christianity. Through an original analysis of pilgrim writings of this period, Georgia Frank discovers a literary imagination at work, one that both recorded and shaped the experience of pilgrimage to living saints. Taking an important new approach to these texts, Frank finds in them a record of the writers' and readers' spiritual expectations and uses these fresh insights to add substantially to our understanding of the purposes and practices of pilgrimage.

Frank focuses in particular on two important and well-known early texts—*The History of the Monks in Egypt* (ca. 400) and Palladius's *The Lausiac History* (ca. 420), situating these narratives in their literary, historical, and spiritual contexts. She compares these narratives to exotic travel writing and to tales of otherworldly journeys. Bringing in contemporary theory, she demonstrates the importance of sight as a means of spiritual progress and explores the relation between the function of sight in these narratives and in other expressions of visual piety in late antiquity Christianity, such as the veneration of relics and, eventually, icons.

With its unique focus on the sensory dimensions of pilgrimage—especially visuality—this absorbing book widens our understanding of early Christian pilgrims and those who read their accounts. At the same time, it also sheds new light on the relation between religious experience and the senses, on literary representations of visual experience, and on the literature of pious travel.

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