The Life of Antony is the first and one of the most famous saints’ lives that has ever been written. Shortly after the death of the desertfather Antony in 356 A.D., Athanasius –bishop of Antioch- wrote a ‘biography’ of this famous saint in Greek. The text has been translated into several languages. In Latin two translations were made: the first – anonymous- translation appeared shortly after Athanasius had finished his Greek text. Only one copy of this first translation has survived. A second translation, made by Evagrius of Antioch in 373, became enormously successful in the medieval Latin West and has come to us in more than 400 manuscripts, from the late eight until the sixteenth century.

The impact of both the Greek and the second Latin translation of the Vita Antonii was beyond imagination. Not only was it one of the first and most influential encounters of medieval western society with christianity, it also started a new type of texts: hagiography (saint’s lives). Many hagiographical texts that have been written from Late Antiquity onwards have been influenced by this Greek and Latin Life of Antony. Although Evagrius’ translation has left his mark on the development of Latin and Greek hagiography, its influence on Latin written sources (hagiographical and non-hagiographical texts) and its manuscript tradition have never been analysed systematically.

This thesis provides an analysis of the reception history of the text, its spread and its manuscript tradition from the fourth until the eleventh century. From this timespan 42 manuscripts have survived. Next to this all references to Antony and the Vita Antonii from the fourth until the eleventh century, next to entries in medieval library catalogues, have been taken into consideration. The analysis is followed by a new critical edition of Evagrius’ Latin translation.