

As a Latin author, Egeria (c.380's) is usually considered somewhat lacking. Grammatically she often wrong, stylistically she is inelegant and overall her writing, if not precisely vulgar or colloquial, seems much more like the spoken Latin of the late fourth century AD than a polished literary work (Sivan; Bechtel; Swanson; Ernout). Hence, it is generally surmised that she lacked the learning or aptitude for serious literary pursuits (Wilkinson; Gringas). However, Egeria's Latin, and the seeming errors it contains, is highly comparable to another set of late antique texts- the unedited sermons of Christian preachers which were recorded by audience members. A comparison of Egeria's Latin and the Latin in the unedited sermons of Jerome is strongly suggestive that Egeria's text, as it survives, is part of this oral Christian tradition. To this end, the overwhelming orality of her text, is indicative *not* that Egeria's own grasp of Latin was somewhat poor, and that her education was middling, but rather, that the surviving text is the aural recording of her oral recitation. Thus, it is the purpose of this paper to present an alternative approach to Egeria's *itinerarium* that identifies Egeria not as the author but as the speaker, a differentiation that significantly impacts textual and biographical interpretations.

Many of the extant late antique sermons come through the recordings of *notarii*. These sermons were then either edited into more elegant versions, usually by the preacher who gave the sermon, or, were left in the form recorded by the *notarium*, a sort of rough draft (Schaeffer; Pease). The sermons of Jerome exemplify this, and can be divided into two very distinct styles: the polished, revised works which he himself edited, and the much less erudite works, which were only even proven to belong to Jerome in the last century (Morin). These rather raw sermons were distributed without Jerome's consultation, a fact that very much bothered him (*ep.* 49.2). Considering the style of Egeria's text, it seems a real possibility that her work represents a similar sort of textual transmission. A comparison of the criticisms launched against Egeria's Latin, and the Latin of Jerome's unedited sermons reveals striking similarities. Stylistically it is possible to identify correlations between the overly simplistic syntax, and constant repetition of facts in both Egeria and Jerome's work (Pease; Swanson). In addition, the grammatical issues of Egeria, the overuse of certain pronouns and the confusion of prepositions, are echoed in Jerome's unedited sermons. With the evidence laid out it seems to be a highly compelling possibility that we have not Egeria's text, but a *notarium* version of it, which, for whatever reason was never edited into a more polished form. In other words, the text that survives is the version recorded by someone who heard Egeria or the letters Egeria wrote, but is not the original composition.

Such an interpretation of the text forces a reinterpretation of aspects of Egeria and her work. While it does not influence her veracity as the author, it does call into question some of the assumptions about her level of education and literary style, in particular her presupposed lack thereof. Fourth century Christian literature was impacted on either side by the oral nature of the culture. In the case of Egeria, it may have resulted in a text that presents a misleading image of the writer and her facility with the Latin language.