ON THE DATE OF AVIANUS

SOBRE LA FECHA DE AVIANO

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Abstract: In the dedicatory letter of his Fables, Avianus addresses the emperor Theodosius II. Keywords: Avianus, Fables, Theodosius II, Theodosian Code.

Resumen: Aviano se dirige al emperador Teodosio II en la dedicatoria de sus Fábulas. Palabras clave: Aviano, Fábulas, Teodosio II, Código teodosiano.

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Scholars have been puzzled by the identity of the person to whom Avianus dedicated his Fables. In his dedicatory letter, Avianus mentions the Athenians and the Romans:

Dubitanti mihi, Theodosi optime, quoinam litterarum titulo nostri nominis memoriam mandaremus, fabularum textus occurrit, quod in his urbane concepta falsitas deceat et non incumbat necessitas veritatis. nam si quis tecum de oratione, quis de poemate loqueretur, cum in utroque litterarum genere et Atticos Graeca eruditione superes et Latinitate Romanos?

According to ancient evidence, Avianus refers in line 1 of his letter to the emperor Theodosius1. I would like to suggest that there is a reference in lines 5 ff. to the revival of the study of Greek and Latin under Theodosius II2, and to the Theodosian Code. We should translate as follows:


«For who could speak with you about imperial messages (de oratione\textsuperscript{3}) or about poetry? In both these divisions of literature you surpass the Athenians in Greek learning and the Romans in Latin Law (Latinitate\textsuperscript{4})».

The Theodosian Code was issued by Theodosius II in A. D. 438. The Code contained all still valid imperial ordinances, beginning with the reign of the first Christian emperor.

Conclusion. Avianus addresses the emperor Theodosius II in his dedicatory letter, and refers to the imperial edicts which were contained in the Theodosian Code.

\textsuperscript{3} Cf. Lewis-Short, s.v. \textit{oratio} III, D: “An imperial message… \textit{oratio principis}”.

\textsuperscript{4} Cf. Lewis-Short, s.v. \textit{latinitas} II: “The Latin Law”.