

## Scipio, Laelius, and the Parallel World of Cicero's Dialogues

Drawing on Stephen Hinds' insights about intertext and J.G.F. Powell's careful analysis of Cicero's dialogues, this paper argues that the reappearance of Laelius and Scipio in multiple Ciceronian dialogues allows these texts to engage each other in ways that develop Cicero's ideas about individual immortality.

In the world of Cicero's dialogues, the relationship between Scipio Aemilianus and Cato the Elder is established in the *De re publica* (2.1). Scipio and another lead character from the *De re publica*, Laelius, are transported deeper into the past (150 BCE) to form the audience for Cato in the *De senectute*. Cato throws the weight of his authority behind Cicero's experiments with individual immortality when he tells Scipio and Laelius that their fathers are still alive (77). Cicero has Cato use Pythagoreans and Plato to back this contention and his adaptation of *Phaedrus* 245c-d triggers associations with the *De re publica* (6.27). Laelius moves from the audience of the *De senectute* to center stage in the *De amicitia*. The dialogue is set days after the death of Scipio and therefore soon after the dramatic date of the *De re publica*. By selecting a veteran of both the *De re publica* and the *De senectute* to lead this dialogue, Cicero creates a sequel to these prior discussions of immortality that self-consciously responds to them. The enigmatic death of Scipio is the point of departure for Laelius' coda to this intertextual dialogue on immortality unfolding in Cicero's texts. Laelius shows that he has been a keen listener in his prior appearances in Cicero's fictional gatherings when he sets out the theoretical bases for his bold claims about Scipio's posthumous transformation (13). Cicero here pointedly equips Laelius with Cato's teaching on immortality, which in effect has Laelius carry knowledge that he acquired in the *De senectute* over into the *De amicitia*. *De senectute* 78 reverberates when Laelius arrays Pythagoreans alongside Socrates in his phalanx of authorities. Laelius' reference to Socrates (*qui Apollonis oraculo sapientissimus est iudicatus*)(13) is an almost verbatim recollection of the words that he heard from Cato in the *De senectute* (*qui esset omnium sapientissimus oraculo Apollonis iudicatus, Sen. 78*).

After Laelius indirectly reifies the world of the *De senectute* by studiously exhibiting Cato's influence on his thought, he shares his memory of a subsequent conversation about immortality in early 129 (the *De re publica*) in a more direct manner. Scipio too, he recalls, held forth on the immortality of the soul right before his death (14). The way in which Laelius 'stays in character' and learns and develops within the fictional scope of these dialogues cues us to read these recurring deliberations about immortality as a conversation being held at multiple levels. Within the frame of each of these dialogues (*De re publica*, *De senectute*, and *De amicitia*) there are self-contained ruminations on the possibility of immortality for individual Romans. In the larger frame that Cicero creates when characters and ideas resurface, he orchestrates a multi-year exploratory exchange in which the dialogues themselves operate as interlocutors. Laelius does not tap into the readers' literary memory in this instance simply to register Scipio's endorsement. Cicero has him offer consequential follow-up to the *Somnium Scipionis*. His update on the fate of his friend Scipio serves as a retrospective validation of Scipio's dream: since the *De re publica* Scipio himself has achieved immortality.