

### Iphigenia among the Taurians: *Tristia* 4.4b

*Tr.* 4.4 generally is viewed as a single poem despite the fact it consists of two distinct parts. The first part (1–54) is directed almost certainly to V. Messalla Messalinus, a leading politician of the day and the elder son of Messalla, Ovid’s literary patron (Syme, *History in Ovid* 122). The point of the poem is to request that Messalinus intercede with Augustus to effect a transfer for Ovid from Tomis to a safer location. The second part of *Tr.* 4.4 (55–88) gives an account of the myth of Iphigenia among the Taurians, based on Euripides’ play by the same name. J.B. Hall is the only editor to separate *Tr.* 4.4 into two poems, guided by the division found in several manuscripts. Presumably scholars have not questioned the unity of *Tr.* 4.4 because they see *P.* 3.2 as forming an analogue to *Tr.* 4.4. That poem, directed to Messalinus’ brother Cotta Maximus, also relates the story of Iphigenia among the Taurians. The myth told in *P.* 3.2 differs from that in *Tr.* 4.4, however, in that it forms an integral part of the poem, framed by Ovid’s comments on loyalty and friendship. My paper will support Halls’ division of *Tr.* 4.4 by showing how *Tr.* 4.4a and 4.4b form individual poems that are each integrated by a ring-composition structure. It is interesting that *Tr.* 4.4b centers on the deep loyalty of Orestes and Pylades to each other because the very next poem also concerns the subject of loyalty. *Tr.* 4.5 is directed almost certainly to Cotta Maximus (Syme, *ibid.*, 125). The reason that poems to the sons of Messalla frame the myth of Iphigenia among the Taurians is that *Tr.* 4.4b appears to allude to the brothers. If there we are to see Ovid as Iphigenia (both stranded in the Black Sea area) and the statue of Artemis as representing his poetry, it seems not unreasonable to loosely construe Messalinus and Cotta, who apparently were deeply devoted to each other (cf. *P.* 1.7.31–32), as Orestes and Pylades. Just as Orestes and Pylades rescued Iphigenia, Ovid is hopeful that the brothers will assist him in securing a commuted sentence.