Dido’s Last Day
Melody Wauke, ’17

I took you in, a shipwrecked stranger. I should’ve let you die. Or sent you off, straight away, to go seek your precious fate. How did you not see? Me, wretched, consumed by the fire, while you wandered through my city, ignorant of my wound. All this time, I’ve been sick, infected by your false love. How is it that I burned for you? You! Cold and incapable of care. I had long ago meant to swear off harboring care inside my swollen heart. I’d expected that side of me to die along with Sychaeus, snatched by savage fate. Then you appeared and I thought, perhaps, a fire warmed me once more. Desire? No, just a wound that spread silently inside me and I called “love,” while you devised plans to desert me. You claim that our love was imagined, that I possess a one-sided care. Tell me, when did all your compassion die? Was it when you abandoned your will to blind fate? If only, while beloved Troy burned and bled in furious fire, you too could have suffered some fatal wound and spared me from this pointless pain. Now I’ve wound up betrayed again, this time by the object of my love. Yet you, pitiless, but so proud in your piety, care so carefully about unclear prophecies, just so you can die with a glorious name. And truly now the gods fate me to die neglected, my former fame reduced by your fickle fire. Yes, you, reckless, have brought ruin and set fire to my Phoenician land. You depart, leaving a permanent wound on this city, once shining and cherished by the love of Juno. Our lofty walls now whither from neglected care and Carthage feels the sting of its queen, left to die by a coward, all too enamoured of his Italian fate. So this is it—now I come to learn my own fate: To heap up this pyre and at last, light on fire these vain gifts, eternal reminders of the wound left by an unfeeling man who defiled sacred love. If ever we meet in the realm of Dis, I’ll be the one to care less about you, so careless, who let love and a lover die.
Sail away! Prove you don’t care. Love your fate more than me. I, Dido will die by the fire, curing one wound with another.