

One Straight Line Addresses Another Traveling in the Same Direction on an Infinite Plane

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One Straight Line Addresses Another Traveling in the Same Direction on an Infinite Plane¹

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We'll never meet, my love! We're parallel!—
and cursed to range across our fated file
parted by an inch or by an ell
as totally as by a statute mile.
If this flat plane were spheric, we might bend
and cross our paths. (You'd make a prime meridian.)
But space cannot protract, my breathless friend,
the laws that bind us—moral or Euclidian.
I'd wish that we ourselves could bend, could curve,
but fear: What if we curved, but not by much,
and then—So close! With one Lucretian swerve
we'd near, and near, and near—and never touch.
A hopeless quest, eternal and quixotic—
your form just out of reach, love asymptotic.

¹This sonnet is part of a series, *Imaginary Sonnets*, inspired by the book of the same name by Eugene Lee-Hamilton. Each sonnet in the series is a persona poem in the voice of a historical figure, literary character, or inanimate object. This poem is one of a pair of sonnets written while reading Apollonius of Perga's treatise on conic sections, the other being "Eudemus to Apollonius," published in *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* (27.2: Fall 2019).