

Olsen, S. (2022) “Thisbe’s Novel: Writing Romance in Heliodorus’ *Aethiopica*,” *Ramus: Critical Studies in Greek and Roman Literature* 51, 1-26.

While scholars have long recognized the value of Heliodorus’ heroine, Charicleia, as a figure for the literary aesthetics of the *Aethiopica* itself, less attention has been paid to the divergent model of erotic and aesthetic experience offered by her foil, the deceitful sex worker Thisbe. This article explores how Thisbe, in a letter to her erstwhile lover Cnemon, composes a narrative in which she figures herself as the vulnerable heroine of a novelistic plot (*Aeth.* 2.6-11). By thus recalling and subverting the generic expectations of the Greek novel, Thisbe’s letter gestures to alternative modes of romance and expands the forms of imaginative pleasure available to the readers of the *Aethiopica*. Although Thisbe’s early and violent death forestalls the development of her plot, comparative and theoretical approaches can enable us to better appreciate her provocative role in the literary economy of Heliodorus’ novel.