

**LOTE****Shola von Reinhold**

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A woman's obsession with a forgotten poet leads to life-changing personal and historical discoveries in Shola von Reinhold's novel *LOTE*.

Mathilda finagles her way into the lives of others and lives off of their largess until circumstances force her to move on. After one such escape, she signs up for a bizarre artists' residency that brings her to a forgotten town where Hermia Druitt, a poet whom Mathilda is fixated on, lived nearly a century before. The more Mathilda learns about this elusive figure, the closer she comes to finding what she has been searching for all these years.

Mathilda is a shiftless, restless queer woman who forever has one foot in another world. Her dreaminess, combined with lengthy discussions and speculations about art and philosophy, results in an almost hallucinatory atmosphere. Her life is ruled by her obsessions with various Black and queer historical figures. Obscure yet fabulous Hermia, in particular, proves so inspiring that Mathilda and a revolving coterie of friends take ever-increasing risks to retrieve her life from the shadowy corners of history.

Mathilda dives headlong into her investigation, desperate to unearth the truth. As relayed through flashbacks, Hermia and others like her dealt with the fear of rejection every day, even as they remained determined to live and love and create in their own ways. In the end, Mathilda's quest highlights an unsettling truth: white European and Black European artistic works are more closely linked than some may suspect—and the achievements of the famous and beloved are all too often built on the efforts of those whom they dismiss as worthless.

*LOTE* is a novel about the nature of art and about who gets to participate in its creation.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (May / June 2022)

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