

★ **Heart Radical: A Search for Language, Love, and Belonging****Anne Liu Kellor**

She Writes Press (Sep 7, 2021)

Softcover \$16.95 (253pp)

978-1-64742-173-1

Anne Liu Kellor's intimate and revealing memoir *Heart Radical* concerns a struggle to know oneself—and to get into the heart of the Chinese people through language.

In Chinese, it takes four brush strokes to form the shape of a heart. This shape has long been a radical—the part of a Chinese character that hints at its root meaning. A communist committee's decision to remove the heart radical from the character for "love" left Kellor, who had been in love with language since she was a child, feeling a sense of loss for something full, rich, and beautiful. And lacking the vocabulary of the heart, she found herself reminded of her otherness.

Kellor was born in Seattle to a Chinese mother and a white father. Here, she writes about longing to go to China for an immersive experience in Chinese language and culture. Traveling from the cool, misty forests of the Pacific Northwest, she plunged into the noise, crowding, pollution, and dense, sticky heat of Chengdu, a city of nine million people near the Tibetan border, hoping to find a place where she could belong. A contract to teach English allowed her to stay, study Chinese, and travel to Tibet, yet belonging evaded her. Her senses were assaulted by sky burials and rough conditions. Despite her ancestral roots, wherever she went, she was seen as Other.

Kellor is attentive to the legacies of war, famine, secrecy, and betrayal that are held in the silent, cellular memories of her ancestors. As the book progresses, she learns to accept that the only place she can truly belong is in her own essential nature. A story about love and loss, *Heart Radical* is a memoir that also expresses willingness to be broken open and vulnerable.

KRISTINE MORRIS (September / October 2021)

*Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.*