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Red Hen Press

**MEDIA CONTACT:** Monica Fernandez, Media Director, [media@redhen.org](mailto:media@redhen.org)

P.O. Box 40820, Pasadena, CA 91114 / (626) 356-4760 / fax: (626) 356-9974 / [redhen.org](http://redhen.org)

# *Desire Lines*

A MEMOIR BY

Kristen Millares Young

*Desire Lines* is a forensic investigation into the emotional topography of womanhood.

In her debut memoir, award-winning novelist and journalist Kristen Millares Young seeks possibilities for women's liberation amid the ongoing erosion of our human rights. *Desire Lines* excavates submerged truths about motherhood, the body and the sacred.

*Desire Lines* takes its title from footpaths—of necessity, defiance and longing—that emerge next to the routes that were planned for us. Challenging herself to be a mother unlike what she has known, Millares Young centers her own body as a site of resistance and making.

Tracing her matrilineage from Cuba to Spain, Millares Young uncovers the remnants of a pagan cult whose mother goddess, Cybele, was erased to make way for the Virgin Mary. But Cybele was no virgin.

On the edge of an impasse, written as both invitation and veil, *Desire Lines* reclaims the power siphoned from women's stories, wielding the lyric essay for awakening consciousness.

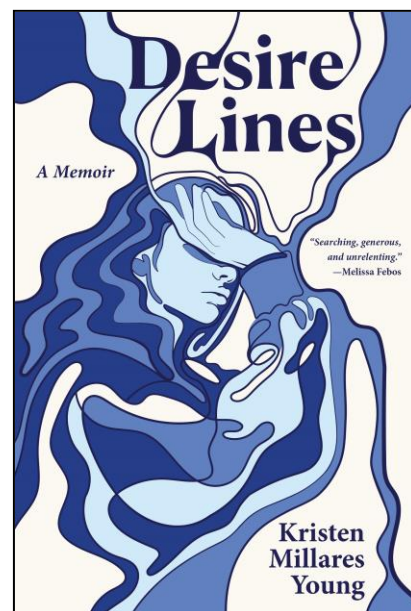
## **ADVANCE PRAISE**

"In this tremendous memoir-in-essays, Kristen Millares Young grips the reader's hand and leads us into the terrifying place where all life comes from. She is intrepid, incisive. Generous and unsparing is her consideration of mothering, the ordinary and glorious act that keeps the world renewing itself. I loved this book."

—**Elissa Washuta**, PEN Open Book Award finalist, author of *White Magic* and *My Body is a Book of Rules*.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Kristen Millares Young is the author of the novel *Subduction*, named a staff pick by *The Paris Review*. Winner of Nautilus and IPPY awards, *Subduction* was a finalist for two International Latino Book Awards and Foreword Indies Book of the Year. Her essays and reviews appear in the *Washington Post*, the *Guardian*, the *New York Times*, and the anthologies *Advanced Creative Nonfiction*, *Alone Together*, and *Broken Free*. A former Hugo House Prose Writer-in-Residence, she is the editor of *Seismic*, a Washington State Book Award finalist. Kristen was the researcher for the *New York Times* team that produced "Snow Fall," which won a Pulitzer Prize. She lives in Seattle.



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**AUDIOBOOK FORTHCOMING**

## **MEDIA CONTACT**

Cassie Murray

Pine State Publicity

[Cassie@pinestatepublicity.com](mailto:Cassie@pinestatepublicity.com)

## **IN-HOUSE MEDIA CONTACT**

Monica Fernandez

Media Director

626-406-1206

[media@redhen.org](mailto:media@redhen.org)

## **MARKETING CONTACT**

Tobi Harper Petrie

Marketing Director

626-406-1209

[marketing@redhen.org](mailto:marketing@redhen.org)

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### **MORE PRAISE FOR *DESIRE LINES***

"Kristen Millares Young is a fearless woman who will go places other writers might fear to tread. I have admired her fierce honesty and craft for a long time and am thrilled to have this explosive and daring memoir-in-essays in my hands. More, please."

— **Luis Alberto Urrea**, Pulitzer Prize finalist, author of *The Devil's Highway*

"Kristen Millares Young's memoir-in-essays *Desire Lines* is a sage instruction manual for how to choose love over harm, joy over despair, art over ruin. Strength and affection shine from every page. In a patriarchal world that seeks to break us, this is a defiant and triumphant howl of wholeness, both electrifying and healing."

— **Sharma Shields**, Washington State Book Award winner, author of *The Cassandra*

"In *Desire Lines*, Kristen Millares Young explores womanhood, human rights, and identity with a moral imperative and artistry that few writers achieve. She is an immense literary talent, and this remarkable book should be read by all."

— **Brandon Hobson**, National Book Award finalist, author of *The Removed*

"These emotionally gripping essays delve into the complexities of familial love and obligation. Kristen Millares Young seamlessly weaves together personal experience, historical research, mythology, and cultural critique in a collection that feels both timely and timeless. Her prose is alive with style and poetic lyricism."

— **Weike Wang**, winner of PEN/Hemingway and Whiting awards, author of *Chemistry* and *Joan is Okay*

"Kristen Millares Young brings a searching, generous, and unrelenting gaze to every subject she writes on, most of all herself."

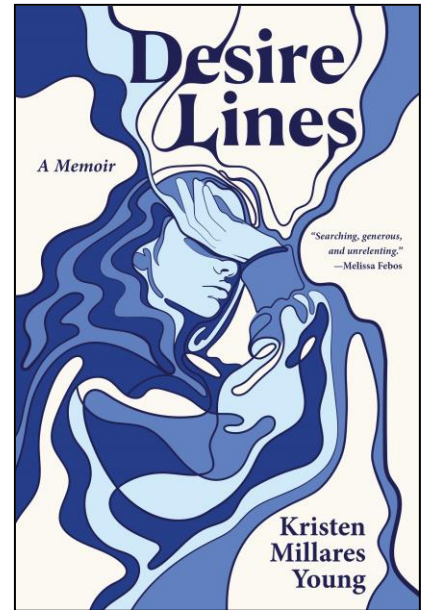
— **Melissa Febos**, National Book Critics Circle Award winner, author of *Girlhood* and *The Dry Season*

### **FROM *DESIRE LINES***

In diaspora, stories are what we can carry across oceans and generations. In lieu of land passed down through bloodlines, our collective idea of ourselves is our trajectory. Stories are our map to a place we call home.

Silence is the organizing principle of my family. Like a black hole that holds together a galaxy, our tacit knowledge keeps us in a distanced constellation. We are unwilling to agree on the fundamental importance of what happened between us, never mind what the stories signified. Bodies that move off the orbits planned for them can be quite difficult. In this way, gravity creates desire lines. Were it not for the tug of the earth, we would have no goddess to worship.

What must be remembered bears repeating: Forgiveness does not imply reconciliation. Because of the daylight between our origin stories, I have questions to answer: Can I let go of shared narratives without severing ties? In short, do I consider us to be a family or not?



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