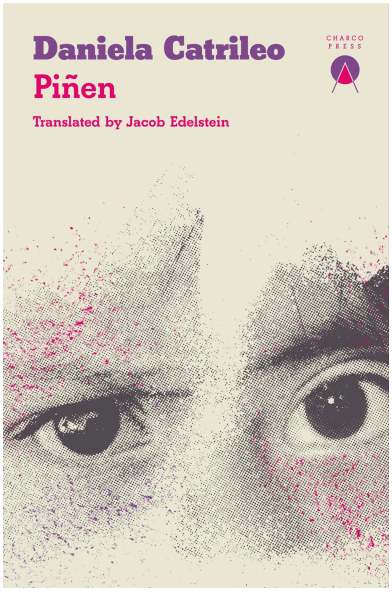
CHARCO PRESS

Reading Guide

PIÑEN

Author: Daniela Catrileo

Translator: Jacob Edelstein



Please be aware that this discussion guide contains spoilers.

Short Context Note for Readers

Piñen is a collection of short stories by Chilean Mapuche writer Daniela Catrileo, one of the most important contemporary Indigenous voices in Latin American literature. The Mapuche are the largest Indigenous people in Chile, with a long history of resistance to colonial dispossession, state violence, and cultural erasure. Despite Chile presenting itself internationally as a modern nation-state, Mapuche communities have been systematically marginalised and continue to face land dispossession, criminalisation, and structural racism.

For readers in the UK and the US, *Piñen* offers a crucial perspective from Indigenous Latin America that is still rarely available in translation. The collection resonates with broader transatlantic conversations about colonial legacies, racialisation, migration, urban poverty, and the ongoing effects of settler colonialism. While the Mapuche context is specific, the questions the book raises about belonging, survival, and whose lives are made visible within national narratives speak powerfully across borders.

21 April 2026 • 9781917260381 • £11.99 • 160 pages • 198mm x 129mm

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Short Summary of the Novel

Rather than following a single narrative arc, *Piñen* presents a constellation of stories that centre Mapuche women, girls, and marginalised subjects navigating urban spaces, memory, desire, violence, and survival. The stories move between the intimate and the political, often focusing on moments of fracture: displacement, grief, poverty, friendship, sexuality, and resistance.

Catrileo's prose is spare, poetic, and unflinching. Across the collection, bodies carry history, language becomes a site of struggle, and everyday life reveals the ongoing effects of colonial and patriarchal violence. *Piñen* refuses consolation, instead insisting on attention, presence, and endurance.

Why Read This Novel Now?

At a moment when readers in the UK and the US are increasingly engaging with questions of decolonisation, racial justice, Indigenous sovereignty, and the limits of liberal multiculturalism, *Piñen* offers a vital perspective from Indigenous Latin America. The collection foregrounds Indigenous urban experience, challenging romanticised, rural-only, or folkloric representations of Indigeneity that still dominate cultural imaginaries in the Global North.

Reading *Piñen* now invites transatlantic audiences to reflect on how colonial violence persists in contemporary forms: policing, housing precarity, labour exploitation, gendered violence, and everyday racism. The book also raises urgent questions about who is heard, who is translated, and whose stories circulate internationally.

In a literary landscape increasingly attentive to questions of voice and power, *Piñen* insists on literature as both testimony and refusal. It asks readers not only to empathise, but to remain with discomfort, opacity, and endurance – making it an essential read for our present moment.

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Discussion Questions

1. **Fragmentation and form**
   How does the short-story form function across the collection? Did you read the stories as discrete pieces, or as a cumulative portrait? How does fragmentation reflect the themes of displacement and precarity?

2. **Indigenous urban life**
   For the most part, the stories are set in the capital, Santiago, rather than rural or ancestral lands. How does Catrileo portray urban Indigenous experience? What tensions emerge between city, memory, and belonging?

3. **Bodies as sites of history**
   How are bodies marked by violence, labour, desire, and memory throughout the collection? In what ways do bodies carry collective as well as personal histories?

4. **Gender and sexuality**
   How does *Piñen* engage with gendered and queer experiences? Where do intimacy, desire, and vulnerability appear as forms of resistance or survival?

5. **Language, silence, and voice**
   Consider Catrileo's use of language – its restraint, rhythm, and moments of silence. What is spoken, what is withheld, and why might silence itself be meaningful?

6. **Violence and its aftermath**
   The collection depicts multiple forms of violence, often without spectacle. How does Catrileo represent the aftermath rather than the act itself? What emotional or ethical effect does this have?

7. **Care, friendship, and solidarity**
   Where do you see moments of care or mutual support in the stories? How do these moments coexist with exhaustion, anger, or despair?

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8. **Colonial continuities**
   How do the stories trace continuities between historical colonial violence and present-day racism, policing, poverty, or exclusion?

9. **Refusal of victimhood**
   Do the characters in *Piñen* resist being framed solely as victims? If so, how? What alternative forms of agency does the collection propose?

10. **Affective atmosphere**
    What emotional tone lingers across the collection – anger, grief, tenderness, numbness, defiance? How did this atmosphere affect your reading experience?

11. **Translation and readership**
    How might reading this work in translation shape its reception in the UK? What responsibilities do readers have when engaging with Indigenous literature from other contexts?

12. **An unfamiliar tongue**
    The stories include several words in Mapudungun, the Mapuche language, whose meanings we can grasp from contextual clues. Is this an effective strategy on the part of the author? Was it the right decision on the part of the translator to leave them intact?

13. **The title: *Piñen***
    Without reducing it to a single meaning, how do you interpret the title in relation to the collection's themes of fear, endurance, and survival?

14. **Literature as testimony**
    In what ways does *Piñen* function as literary testimony? What does it ask of the reader – not just emotionally, but ethically?

15. **After reading**
    What stayed with you most after finishing the collection? Did it change how you think about literature's role in representing marginalised lives?