

A. Discussion Questions

1. In *Silent Anatomies*, I write about the phenomena of cultural silences of the body. How do these silences or erasures manifest in the work?
2. Who is the narrator and how does her voice evolve throughout the work?
3. Describe the family dynamics at play in the book. What details do you notice?
4. *Silent Anatomies* explores the immigrant experience of overseas Chinese living in the Philippines as well as the United States of America. Both are culturally diverse melting pots with colonial histories. What is the influence of colonization on the cultural landscapes in the book?
5. Notice the ghosts that appear in the book. What do they symbolize? Describe other kinds of “ghosting” that occur.
6. What is the role of stigma or shame in creating narratives around the body? How would you describe shame? How might shame be a barrier to health?
7. When I wrote the book, I sought to challenge the notion of a monolithic story of Chinese diaspora, to complicate and broaden understanding about the experiences of overseas Chinese. Does *Silent Anatomies* accomplish this and if so, how?
8. How would you describe the poetic forms in *Silent Anatomies*? What is the role of the visual context of the work and how does it serve the work's overall meaning? How does this book challenge traditional ideas of “reading”?
9. Notice the different landscapes throughout the book: the cultural geographies of this family's immigration experience and the medical landscapes of the body. How are these landscapes constructed? How do they inform one another? What role do the images play? What kinds of languages do you notice in the book?
10. Is there a distinction between belief and bias? What argument does the book make in terms of how this distinction might shape one's interpretation of others' bodies? What are the dangers?
11. In what ways does *Silent Anatomies* contend with memory and failing memory, as well as translation and lack of translation? How does this inform your understanding of the process of constructing histories, and who that work is entrusted to?
12. The demand for cultural competence in health care is critical. What medical beliefs or cultural ideologies are reflected in the book and how do they converge? What does it mean to practice cultural competence?

## B. Writing Exercises

1. Consider something or someone that is stigmatized in your community. What details are uncomfortable or most visceral? What do you notice about your body's response to this?

Observe the social landscape where this takes places. How is it reported? What gets distorted or erased? Identify any misconceptions.

In a short poem or block of prose, write from the point of view of the stigmatized, in conversation with what you have noted from above.

2. Examine the following diagram of the cerebrum on page 3. What word associations do you make when reading the original language in the diagram? What are the sensations or memories that you connect with this part of your body? What places and textures are stored or hidden in this space?

Using this diagram as a poetic structure, go to page 4 and write a poem that replaces the medical language with your own fragments.

## C. Suggested Reading

Books that inform or support the reading of this book:

*Dictée* by Theresa Hak Kyung Cha

*Don't Let Me Be Lonely* by Claudia Rankine

*Nox* by Anne Carson

*The Black Automaton* by Douglas Kearney

*Endocrinology* by Mei-Mei Berssenbrugge

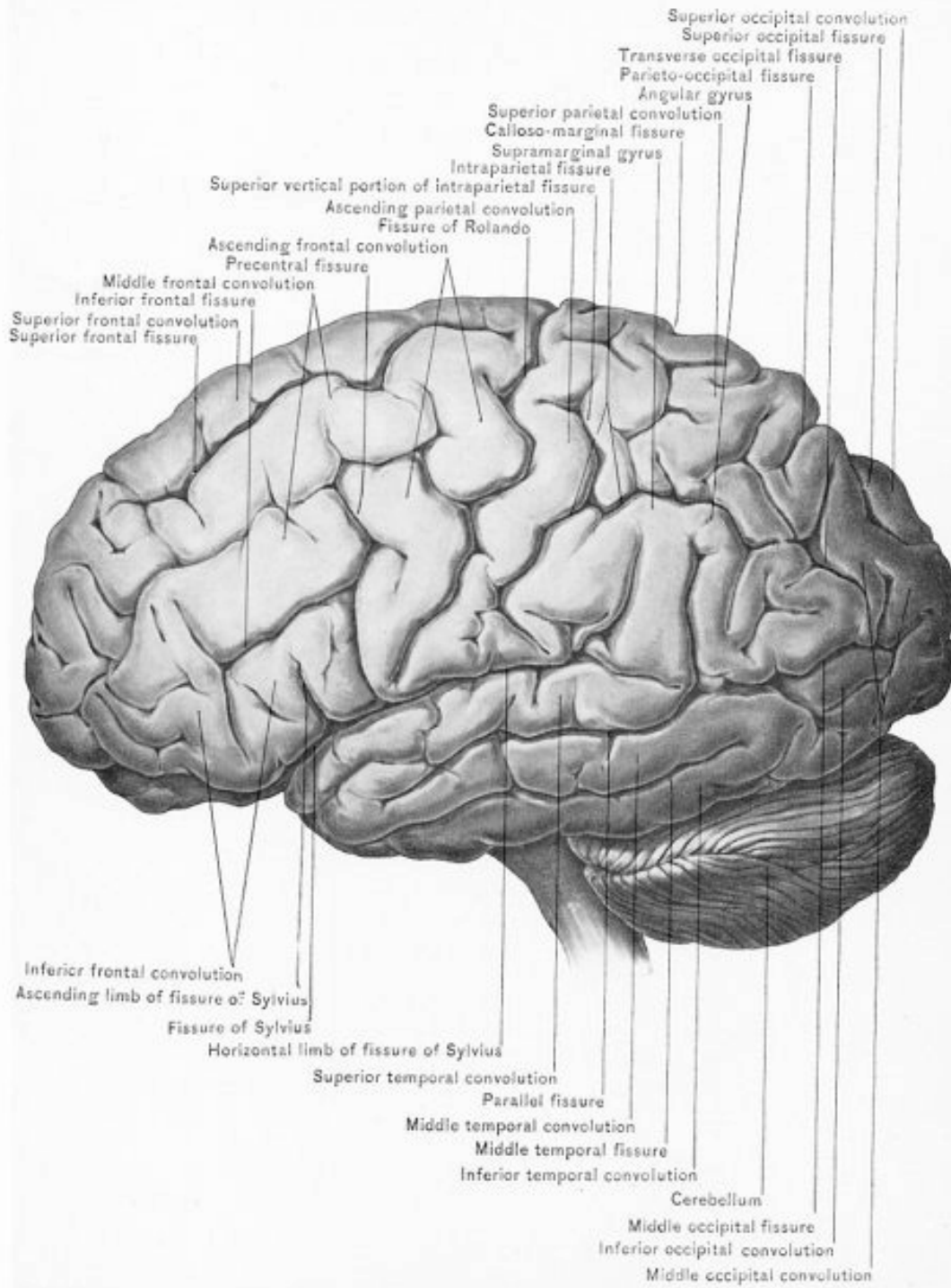
*Split* by Cathy Linh Che

*Gephyromania* by TC Tolbert

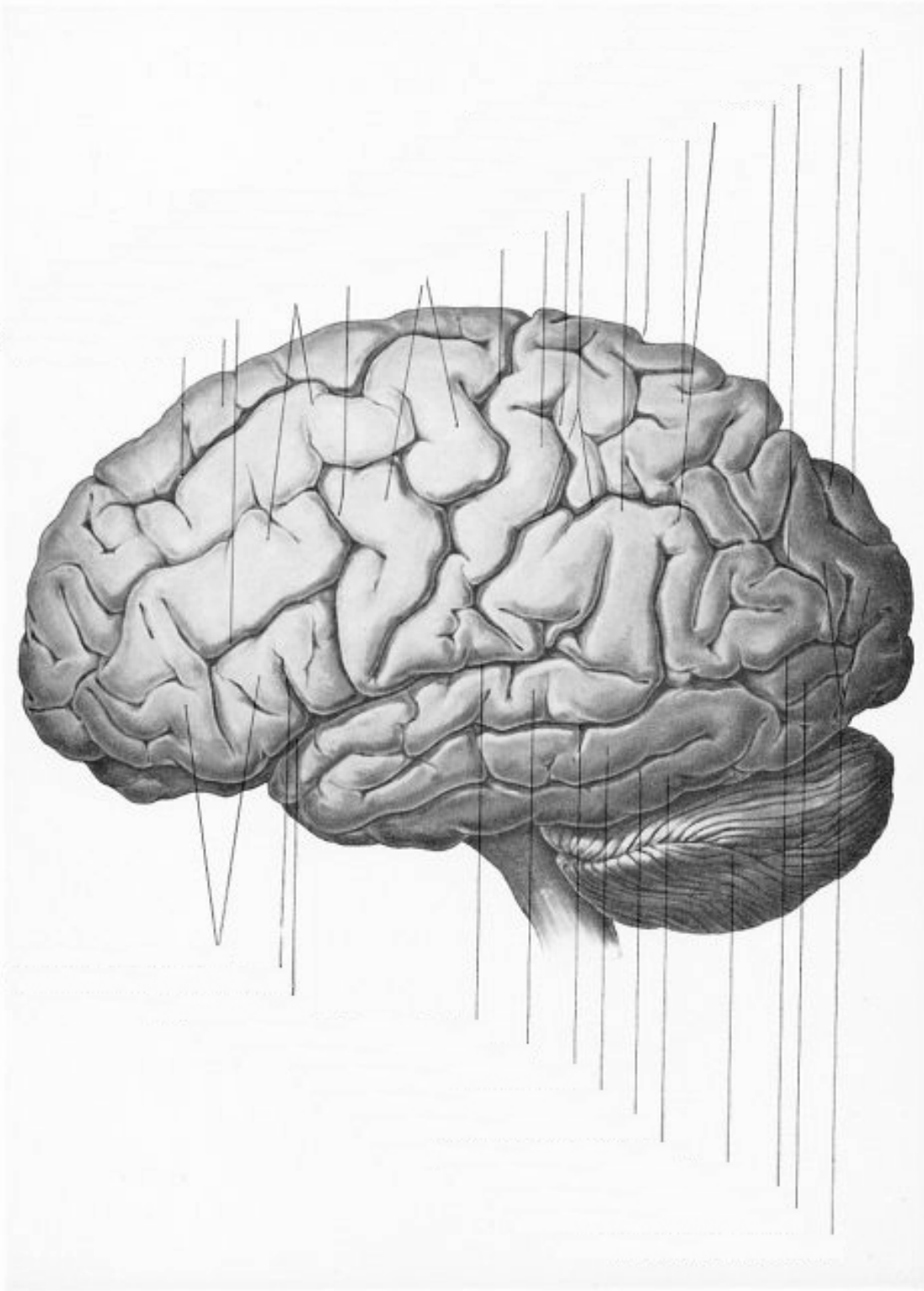
*The Body* by Jenny Boully

*Sister Outsider* by Audre Lorde

*Troy, Michigan* by Wendy S. Walters



EXTERNAL SURFACE OF CEREBRUM.



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