

Three for the body

by [Jean Janzen](#) in the [June 28, 2011](#) issue

1

All those sermons about the seductions  
of the flesh. Spiritual life, the elders said.  
But who could hear it without the intricate

cochlea and hammer, or the wondrous  
muscles of lips and face to form the words?  
I sat supported by a spine balancing

my head, heart muscle pulsing—home  
for the mind, according to the Hebrews,  
nest of bowels cradling my emotions.

2

In the Book of Kells the Incarnation  
Initial swells with bodies, elaborate  
swirls around humans and animals—

cats, rats, moths, and angels sharing  
equal space. See the harmony, and how  
the borders are pressed by fecundity,

how nothing is fixed, the top curve  
of the Initial having burst open, fragrance  
of lilies announcing the outpour.

3

Body as temple, the apostle declares.  
All around, the courtyards of clamor,  
our appetites and aches crowding the doors

while inside, the table shimmers.

I saw it first in my parents' faces  
and in the glare of sunlit snow.

Beyond the striving and failures, the quiet  
center waiting, curtains parted for entry,  
our body's hunger to be known.