

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.