In conversation with Mary Oliver's poem, *Bone.* This is for Cath.

If the ear bone is something like the soul

—so hard, so necessary—

so that it lasts longer than any other bone in the body of a human being,
in the body of a pilot whale, lying

alone on the beach,
long after the body is gone;

and, if the music of the spheres and, therefore,
of the universe

is literal, as it must be, despite centuries of explanations as
metaphor

(all the universe moves and so
sings);

then, is the ear bone,
like the soul,
a connecting rod,
a way of knowing, directly, the
rhythms of our origins,

still expanding,
spiraling,
singing?

The ear bone, and the soul,

—so hard, so necessary—

endure and synchronize the
rhythms from the farthest galaxies
with the rhythms of our heartbeats.

Our ear bones and
our souls resonate and,

even when we are silent,

we sing.

—Mary Ann Allison, 2010