“Off the Record”

In the attic I find the notes he kept in college over forty years ago: Hooray for Thanksgiving vacation! he wrote in the margin of Psych 102. And for a moment I can see him there, feel the exuberance surge through that odd cell of his body where I am still a secret code uncompleted, a piece of DNA, some ancient star-stuff. And then I find a recording of me from 1948, when he was twenty-two and I was three, and I can see, from my perch up on his shoulders, from stopping at the gaudy arcade, plugging his lucky quarter into the future where we'd always be.

Maybe imagination is just a form of memory after all, locked deep in the double helix of eternity. Or maybe the past is but one more phantasmagoric invention we use to fool ourselves into someone else's shoes.

It's not my voice I want to hear on memory's fading page, on imagination's disk. It is my father's in the background prompting me, doing his best to stay off the record, his hushed instructions vanishing in static.