

## “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.