



Tom Waits

Various

*Rain Dogs*

09/1985

Island

# Rain Dogs in November

Ethan Milner

Age nineteen, driving  
back to Ann arbor.  
We listened to Rain Dogs,  
all my enthusiasm spent  
trying to convince my father  
to appreciate Tom Waits.

*Aba, it's not an aria,  
(wasted effort)  
but listen to the breadth  
of the arrangements,  
his byzantine lyricism,  
his vision!*

Track by track he  
listened, loudly sneering  
but hearing the Polka,  
Bossa Nova, the Blues.  
The doctor diagnosed  
each song without feeling.

*It's not music, it is many  
good imitations of music  
he condescended  
in the way one does  
knowing they've hit  
a small vein of truth.*

I still hold onto this  
small effort, the sincerity  
and the depth of his  
perception. Little else  
we could talk about,  
but the road ahead.

When we arrived,  
he held me for the last  
time in ten years, returned  
to the home I used to know  
but that he would forever  
rend. He drove back

in a car I'd eventually crash,  
saying something like goodbye,  
something I can't actually recall.  
Everything changes anyway,  
like rain's blunt erasure—  
the dogs left out to chase

faint traces, vapors  
fading in the clear  
atmosphere—memory sheer,  
battered by years until  
worn, until we can't even  
remember what was said.