

Evan Rail

Some Advice on Dying

First of all, forget what everyone else said
about going gracefully or raging or entering into
a light: the real point is to leave an impression.
Take, for example, a blow-up doll blown up
with helium, in an outfit identical to your own,
and walk with it down the right side of the bridge
toward Marin from Land's End. When ready,
cut across all lanes to the western side
and throw yourself over with more commitment
than you've ever given anything, at the same time
releasing your Doppelgänger or -gängerin
from a grip which should have felt Siamese.
Immediately make an effort to turn yourself over.
Take this moment to admire the bridge and its crowd
of onlookers facing down, watching your fall,
and note the rest, chins-up, shielding their eyes
as they see you shooting upward into the sky.

How To Be an American

Come from somewhere else. Save
little pieces of string, photographs
of people you no longer know,
but throw away acres of paper
and cook enough food for an army.
Oppose change of any order. Revel
in newness. Dream of millions:
About what you could do with that,
what you could not do with it as well.

How To Be German

It will help to shave your head.
Afterward, buy black turtlenecks; get
some steel-rimmed spectacles
to make you intellectually respectable.

Avoid all questions of race,
but look strangely out of place
when conversation turns to
(or with) lesser peoples.

If anything is amusing,
it is not laughter, not joking.
Remember that words are different
than what they mean. Words mean.