

excerpt, 13 Songs
from the Stygian Sleep

IX

the black girls are
jumping rope
tell me not to touch
that stray cat
it will bite and
has rabies

California.

We saw everything —
right down to the pink plastic flamingos;
the condemned buildings whose sullen eyes
stared down into the so-called wealth
and saw that there wasn't any to spare.
We strolled the litter-strewn Walk of Fame
at Hollywood and vine and watched vagrants
buy their meals from a trash can.
We sent pretty postcards home and wondered
why our best pictures came from Arizona.

Shannon Murphy