

Peanut Boys in Salvador, Bahia

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That morning the rooster--
always roosters in Brasil--
ended crow with an upswing,
the question of an apprentice
a hesitant start of the day.

Later along the beach with Silvana
at sundown--why no crow then?--
two boys selling bags of peanuts
dawdled behind us, then approached.

First, the spokesman
flashing grin and birth
certificate alternately,
his legitimacy of
selling on the street.
"Meu nome é Fábio,"
Peanuts incidental,
attention the goal,
chattering until he
stopped at my eyes:
"Nunca vi olhos
tão azuis-que beleza!
Salvador, African hub
of Brasil, still in 2000
I was a minority here.
But where in the hub
was his place, juggling
with seeming ease
his bags of peanuts?

Second, the follower,
morose eyes reddened,
permanent tear tracks
ending at downturned,
sealed mute mouth,
shuffling *chinelo*s,
huddling behind his
older friend-protector,
grimy bags of peanuts
trailing the ground,
his life in the red dirt.
History through words
of his friend: "He's eight
and I take care of him."
Would he grow into words?
If he did what would he
say of his gutter footsteps
seeking peanut eaters
with a *Real* to spare?

We left with peanuts we would never eat,
a *vassoura* sweeping trash down the street,
wishing that the buttery moon rising
would be gentler than the glaring sun setting.