

from The Whole Island (1968)

VIRGILLIO PIÑERA

translated by MARK WEISS

*Skin at this hour stretches out like a reef
and bites its own borders,
skin takes to screaming like a madwoman, like a fat sow,
skin tries to cover its light with palm leaves,
with fonds carried carelessly by the wind,
in a fury skin covers itself with parrots and pitahayas,
absurdly it covers itself with comber tobacco leaves
and the remains of shadowy legends,
and when skin has become but a dark ball,
the horrific hen brings forth a white egg.*

*Cover it! Cover it!
But the light advances, invades
perversely, obliquely, perpendicularly,
the light is an enormous vent that sucks the shadow,
and you slowly raise your hands to shield your eyes.*

*The least confessable secrets are spoken:
light moves tongues,
light moves arms,
light throws itself to the guava vendor,
light throws itself on black and whites,
light strikes itself,
rushes convulsively from side to side,
begins to explode, to burst, to split apart,
light begins the most horrific illumination,
light begins to give birth to light.*