

A CLOSER LOOK

Troy: It Casts a Spell

The ancient Greeks and Romans had no doubt that the Trojan War really happened. They believed it took place around 1200 B.C. The Greek historian Thucydides (c. 460–c. 400 B.C.) believed that the real causes of the war were economic and political—he rejected Homer’s story of Helen’s abduction and the vengeance taken on Troy by the Greeks. By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, most historians had dismissed the Trojan War as a legend.

Enter Heinrich Schliemann (1822–1890). Schliemann was a wealthy German merchant who turned archaeologist when he was middle-aged and archaeology was in its infancy. Armed with a well-thumbed copy of Homer’s *Iliad*, Schliemann arrived in northwestern Turkey in 1871. A few miles from the Dardanelles, the narrow and windy sea lane that divides Europe from Asia, Schliemann began excavations at a small hill called Hissarlik, perched about a hundred feet above a wide plain.

After five long years, Schliemann made an electrifying discovery. He unearthed gold cups, bracelets, and a spectacular gold headdress. Homer had called Troy “rich in gold,” and Schliemann now told the world he had found the treasure of Priam, the last king of Troy. (The gold’s eventful history was not over. Schliemann took the treasure to Berlin, where it disappeared at the end of World War II. “Priam’s gold” surfaced again in 1993 in Moscow’s Pushkin Museum.)

Schliemann went on to excavate Mycenae, the home of King Agamemnon in Greece. There he also found treasure.

Despite his successes, he was plagued by doubts about whether he had really found Troy. The level, or stratum, where the gold was discovered seemed too ancient to date from the traditional time of the Trojan War.

We now know that Schliemann’s treasure came from a stratum (called Troy II) that dated back to a thousand years before the Trojan War. Another level (Troy VIIA) showed violent destruction by fire around 1200 B.C. Could this have been Homer’s Troy? During the 1930s, another team of archaeologists (this time from the United States) thought so. Despite the inconsistencies that remain, the hill of Hissarlik is now widely accepted as the most likely location of the Trojan War.

In the 1990s, a fifteen-year archaeological project began in Turkey, directed by Professor Manfred Korfmann from the University of Tübingen in Germany. Whatever Korfmann and his international team of seventy scientists and ninety local workers discover, their presence at Troy in the third millennium is powerful proof that this ancient war still casts a spell.



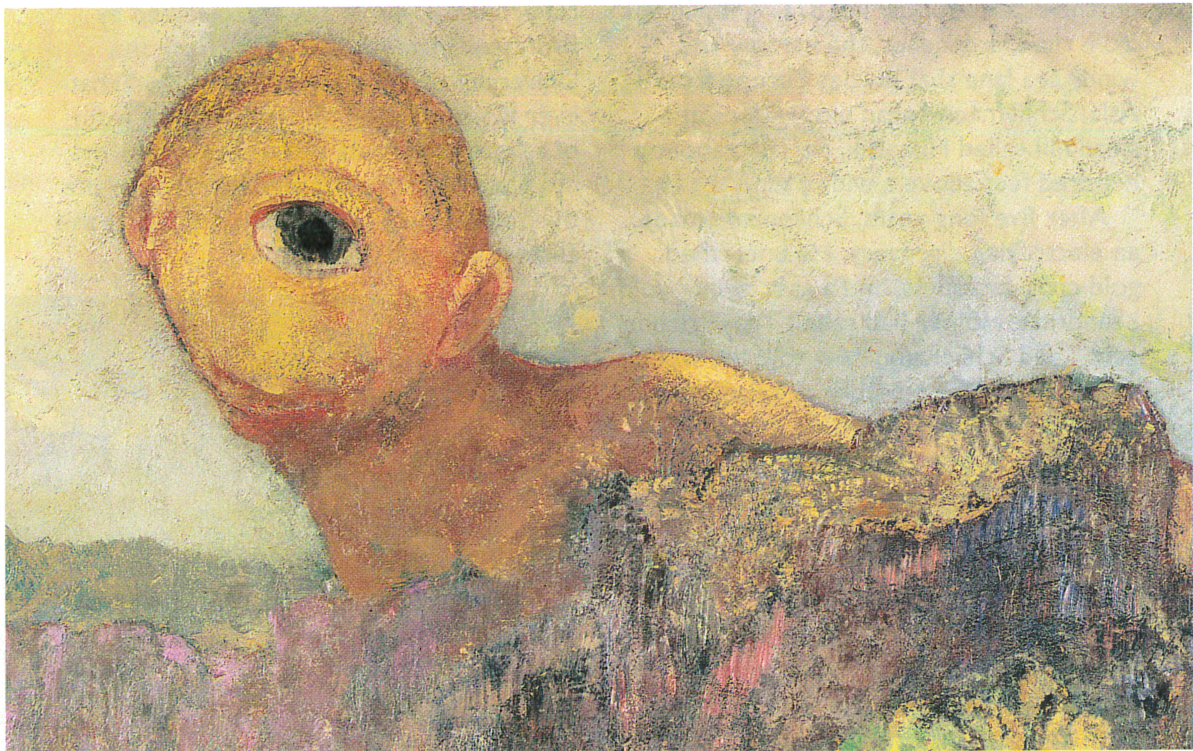
THE CYCLOPS

In his next adventure, Odysseus describes his encounter with the Cyclops named Polyphemus, Poseidon's one-eyed monster son. Polyphemus may represent the brute forces that any hero must overcome before he can reach home. Now Odysseus must rely on the special intelligence associated with his name. Odysseus is the cleverest of the Greek heroes because he is guided by the goddess of wisdom, Athena.

It is Odysseus's famed curiosity that leads him to the Cyclops's cave and that makes him insist on waiting for the barbaric giant.

Odysseus is still speaking to the court of King Alcinous.

220 “We lit a fire, burnt an offering,
and took some cheese to eat; then sat in silence
around the embers, waiting. When he came
he had a load of dry boughs on his shoulder
to stoke his fire at suppertime. He dumped it
with a great crash into that hollow cave,
225 and we all scattered fast to the far wall.
Then over the broad cavern floor he ushered
the ewes he meant to milk. He left his rams



Rijksmuseum Kroller-Müller, Otterlo, the Netherlands.

The Cyclops (detail) (late 19th or early 20th century) by Odilon Redon.

and he-goats in the yard outside, and swung
high overhead a slab of solid rock
230 to close the cave. Two dozen four-wheeled wagons,
with heaving wagon teams, could not have stirred
the tonnage of that rock from where he wedged it
over the doorsill. Next he took his seat
and milked his bleating ewes. A practiced job
235 he made of it, giving each ewe her suckling;
thickened his milk, then, into curds and whey,
sieved out the curds to drip in withy baskets,^o
and poured the whey to stand in bowls
cooling until he drank it for his supper.
240 When all these chores were done, he poked the fire,
heaping on brushwood. In the glare he saw us.
‘Strangers,’ he said, ‘who are you? And where from?
What brings you here by seaways—a fair traffic?
Or are you wandering rogues, who cast your lives
245 like dice, and ravage other folk by sea?’
We felt a pressure on our hearts, in dread
of that deep rumble and that mighty man.
But all the same I spoke up in reply:
‘We are from Troy, Achaeans, blown off course
250 by shifting gales on the Great South Sea;
homeward bound, but taking routes and ways
uncommon; so the will of Zeus would have it.
We served under Agamemnon,^o son of Atreus^o—
the whole world knows what city
255 he laid waste, what armies he destroyed.
It was our luck to come here; here we stand,
beholden for your help, or any gifts
you give—as custom is to honor strangers.
We would entreat you, great Sir, have a care
260 for the gods’ courtesy; Zeus will avenge
the unoffending guest.’
He answered this
from his brute chest, unmoved:
‘You are a ninny,
or else you come from the other end of nowhere,
telling me, mind the gods! We Cyclopes

237. withy baskets: baskets made from willow twigs.

253. Agamemnon
(ag'ə·mem'nän'). **Atreus** (ā'trē·əs).

Vocabulary

ravage (rav'ij) v.: destroy violently; ruin.



Palazzo Poggi, Bologna, Italy.

Ulysses and His Companions on the Island of the Cyclops (16th century) by Pellegrino Tibaldi.

265 care not a whistle for your thundering Zeus
or all the gods in bliss; we have more force by far.
I would not let you go for fear of Zeus—
you or your friends—unless I had a whim to.
Tell me, where was it, now, you left your ship—
270 around the point, or down the shore, I wonder?’
He thought he’d find out, but I saw through this,
and answered with a ready lie:
‘My ship?
Poseidon Lord, who sets the earth atremble,
broke it up on the rocks at your land’s end.
275 A wind from seaward served him, drove us there.
We are survivors, these good men and I.’
Neither reply nor pity came from him,
but in one stride he clutched at my companions
and caught two in his hands like squirming puppies
280 to beat their brains out, spattering the floor.
Then he dismembered them and made his meal,
gaping and crunching like a mountain lion—
everything: innards, flesh, and marrow bones.
We cried aloud, lifting our hands to Zeus,
285 powerless, looking on at this, appalled;
but Cyclops went on filling up his belly
with manflesh and great gulps of whey,
then lay down like a mast among his sheep.
My heart beat high now at the chance of action,
290 and drawing the sharp sword from my hip I went
along his flank to stab him where the midriff
holds the liver. I had touched the spot
when sudden fear stayed me: if I killed him
we perished there as well, for we could never
295 move his ponderous doorway slab aside.
So we were left to groan and wait for morning.
When the young Dawn with fingertips of rose
lit up the world, the Cyclops built a fire
and milked his handsome ewes, all in due order,
300 putting the sucklings to the mothers. Then,
his chores being all dispatched, he caught
another brace^o of men to make his breakfast,
and whisked away his great door slab
to let his sheep go through—but he, behind,
305 reset the stone as one would cap a quiver.^o



Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

The Cyclops Polyphemus. Detail from a marble statue (2nd century B.C.).



289–295. Why doesn’t Odysseus kill the Cyclops at this moment? What factors must Odysseus consider in devising a successful plan of escape?

302. brace (brās) *n.*: pair.

305. quiver (kwiv’ər) *n.*: case for arrows.

There was a din of whistling as the Cyclops
rounded his flock to higher ground, then stillness.
And now I pondered how to hurt him worst,
if but Athena granted what I prayed for.

310 Here are the means I thought would serve my turn:
a club, or staff, lay there along the fold—
an olive tree, felled green and left to season
for Cyclops' hand. And it was like a mast
a lugger^o of twenty oars, broad in the beam—

315 a deep-seagoing craft—might carry:
so long, so big around, it seemed. Now I
chopped out a six-foot section of this pole
and set it down before my men, who scraped it;
and when they had it smooth, I hewed again

320 to make a stake with pointed end. I held this
in the fire's heart and turned it, toughening it,
then hid it, well back in the cavern, under
one of the dung piles in profusion there.
Now came the time to toss for it: who ventured
325 along with me? Whose hand could bear to thrust
and grind that spike in Cyclops' eye, when mild
sleep had mastered him? As luck would have it,
the men I would have chosen won the toss—
four strong men, and I made five as captain.

330 At evening came the shepherd with his flock,
his woolly flock. The rams as well, this time,
entered the cave: by some shepherding whim—
or a god's bidding—none were left outside.
He hefted his great boulder into place

335 and sat him down to milk the bleating ewes
in proper order, put the lambs to suck,
and swiftly ran through all his evening chores.
Then he caught two more men and feasted on them.
My moment was at hand, and I went forward

340 holding an ivy bowl of my dark drink,
looking up, saying:

'Cyclops, try some wine.
Here's liquor to wash down your scraps of men.
Taste it, and see the kind of drink we carried

Vocabulary

profusion (prō·fyōō'zhən) *n.*: large supply; abundance.

314. lugger (lug'ər) *n.*: type of sailboat.

Odysseus handing the drink to Polyphemus. Relief on a Grecian marble sarcophagus (1st century A.D.).
Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples, Italy.



under our planks. I meant it for an offering
345 if you would help us home. But you are mad,
unbearable, a bloody monster! After this,
will any other traveler come to see you?

He seized and drained the bowl, and it went down
so fiery and smooth he called for more:

350 'Give me another, thank you kindly. Tell me,
how are you called? I'll make a gift will please you.
Even Cyclopes know the wine grapes grow
out of grassland and loam in heaven's rain,
but here's a bit of nectar and ambrosia!'

355 Three bowls I brought him, and he poured them down.
I saw the fuddle and flush come over him,
then I sang out in cordial tones:

'Cyclops,

you ask my honorable name? Remember
the gift you promised me, and I shall tell you.
360 My name is Nohbdy: mother, father, and friends,
everyone calls me Nohbdy.'

And he said:

'Nohbdy's my meat, then, after I eat his friends.
Others come first. There's a noble gift, now.'

Even as he spoke, he reeled and tumbled backward,
365 his great head lolling to one side; and sleep
took him like any creature. Drunk, hiccuping,
he dribbled streams of liquor and bits of men.

Now, by the gods, I drove my big hand spike
deep in the embers, charring it again,
370 and cheered my men along with battle talk
to keep their courage up: no quitting now.
The pike of olive, green though it had been,
reddened and glowed as if about to catch.
I drew it from the coals and my four fellows
375 gave me a hand, lugging it near the Cyclops
as more than natural force nerved them; straight
forward they sprinted, lifted it, and rammed it
deep in his crater eye, and I leaned on it
turning it as a shipwright turns a drill
380 in planking, having men below to swing
the two-handled strap that spins it in the groove.
So with our brand we bored that great eye socket



Odysseus and three companions
blinding Polyphemus. Detail from a
Cyrenean cup (6th century B.C.).
Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

while blood ran out around the red-hot bar.
Eyelid and lash were seared; the pierced ball
hissed broiling, and the roots popped.

385

In a smithy°

one sees a white-hot axhead or an adze°
plunged and wrung in a cold tub, screeching steam—
the way they make soft iron hale and hard—
just so that eyeball hissed around the spike.

390

The Cyclops bellowed and the rock roared round him,
and we fell back in fear. Clawing his face
he tugged the bloody spike out of his eye,
threw it away, and his wild hands went groping;
then he set up a howl for Cyclopes

395

who lived in caves on windy peaks nearby.
Some heard him; and they came by divers° ways
to clump around outside and call:

‘What ails you,

Polyphemus? Why do you cry so sore
in the starry night? You will not let us sleep.
400 Sure no man’s driving off your flock? No man
has tricked you, ruined you?’

Out of the cave

the mammoth Polyphemus roared in answer:

‘Nohbdy, Nohbdy’s tricked me. Nohbdy’s ruined me!’

To this rough shout they made a sage° reply:

405

‘Ah well, if nobody has played you foul
there in your lonely bed, we are no use in pain
given by great Zeus. Let it be your father,
Poseidon Lord, to whom you pray.’

So saying

410

they trailed away. And I was filled with laughter
to see how like a charm the name deceived them.
Now Cyclops, wheezing as the pain came on him,
fumbled to wrench away the great doorstone
and squatted in the breach with arms thrown wide
for any silly beast or man who bolted—

415

hoping somehow I might be such a fool.
But I kept thinking how to win the game:
death sat there huge; how could we slip away?
I drew on all my wits, and ran through tactics,
reasoning as a man will for dear life,

385. smithy (smith'ē) *n.*: black-smith's shop, where iron tools are made.

386. adze (adz) *n.*: axlike tool with a long, curved blade.

396. divers (dī'vərz) *adj.*: diverse; various.

404. sage (sāj) *adj.*: wise.



Odysseus and his men blinding the Cyclops. Hydria, or water jar (530–510 B.C.).

Collection Villa Giulia, Rome.



Odysseus escaping the cave of Polyphemos under the belly of the ram. Detail from a krater, a vessel for holding wine (c. 510 B.C.).

Badisches Landesmuseum, Karlsruhe, Germany.

420 until a trick came—and it pleased me well.
 The Cyclops' rams were handsome, fat, with heavy
 fleeces, a dark violet.

Three abreast

 I tied them silently together, twining
 cords of willow from the ogre's bed;
 425 then slung a man under each middle one
 to ride there safely, shielded left and right.
 So three sheep could convey each man. I took
 the woolliest ram, the choicest of the flock,
 and hung myself under his kinky belly,
 430 pulled up tight, with fingers twisted deep
 in sheepskin ringlets for an iron grip.
 So, breathing hard, we waited until morning.

 When Dawn spread out her fingertips of rose
 the rams began to stir, moving for pasture,
 435 and peals of bleating echoed round the pens
 where dams with udders full called for a milking.
 Blinded, and sick with pain from his head wound,
 the master stroked each ram, then let it pass,
 but my men riding on the pectoral fleece^o
 440 the giant's blind hands blundering never found.
 Last of them all my ram, the leader, came,

439. **pectoral fleece:** wool on an animal's chest.

weighted by wool and me with my meditations.
The Cyclops patted him, and then he said:

- 445 'Sweet cousin ram, why lag behind the rest
in the night cave? You never linger so,
but graze before them all, and go afar
to crop sweet grass, and take your stately way
leading along the streams, until at evening
you run to be the first one in the fold.
450 Why, now, so far behind? Can you be grieving
over your Master's eye? That carrion rogue^o
and his accurst companions burnt it out
when he had conquered all my wits with wine.
Nohbdy will not get out alive, I swear.
455 Oh, had you brain and voice to tell
where he may be now, dodging all my fury!
Bashed by this hand and bashed on this rock wall
his brains would strew the floor, and I should have
rest from the outrage Nohbdy worked upon me.'
- 460 He sent us into the open, then. Close by,
I dropped and rolled clear of the ram's belly,
going this way and that to untie the men.
With many glances back, we rounded up
his fat, stiff-legged sheep to take aboard,
465 and drove them down to where the good ship lay.
We saw, as we came near, our fellows' faces
shining; then we saw them turn to grief
tallying those who had not fled from death.
I hushed them, jerking head and eyebrows up,
470 and in a low voice told them: 'Load this herd;
move fast, and put the ship's head toward the breakers.'
They all pitched in at loading, then embarked
and struck their oars into the sea. Far out,
as far offshore as shouted words would carry,
475 I sent a few back to the adversary:
'O Cyclops! Would you feast on my companions?
Puny, am I, in a Caveman's hands?
How do you like the beating that we gave you,
you damned cannibal? Eater of guests
480 under your roof! Zeus and the gods have paid you!'

Vocabulary

adversary (ad'vər·ser'ē) *n.*: enemy; opponent.

 421–442. Explain
Odysseus's trick. What do you
visualize happening in this scene?

451. **carrion rogue**: rotten
scoundrel. *Carrion* is decaying flesh.



Odysseus escaping under the ram.
Detail from a black-figured convex
lecythus (c. 590 B.C.), by the
Ambush Vase Painter.

Staatliche Antikensammlung, Munich,
Germany.

The blind thing in his doubled fury broke
 a hilltop in his hands and heaved it after us.
 Ahead of our black prow it struck and sank
 whelmed in a spuming geyser, a giant wave
 485 that washed the ship stern foremost back to shore.
 I got the longest boathook out and stood
 fending us off, with furious nods to all
 to put their backs into a racing stroke—
 row, row or perish. So the long oars bent
 490 kicking the foam sternward, making head
 until we drew away, and twice as far.
 Now when I cupped my hands I heard the crew
 in low voices protesting:

 ‘Godsake, Captain!
 Why bait the beast again? Let him alone!’
 495 ‘That tidal wave he made on the first throw
 all but beached us.’

 ‘All but stove us in!’

 ‘Give him our bearing with your trumpeting,
 he’ll get the range and lob^o a boulder.’

 ‘Aye
 He’ll smash our timbers and our heads together!’
 500 I would not heed them in my glorying spirit,
 but let my anger flare and yelled:

 ‘Cyclops,
 if ever mortal man inquire
 how you were put to shame and blinded, tell him
 Odysseus, raider of cities, took your eye:
 505 Laertes’ son, whose home’s on Ithaca!’
 At this he gave a mighty sob and rumbled:
 ‘Now comes the weird^o upon me, spoken of old.
 A wizard, grand and wondrous, lived here—Telemus,^o
 a son of Eurymus;^o great length of days
 510 he had in wizardry among the Cyclopes,
 and these things he foretold for time to come:
 my great eye lost, and at Odysseus’ hands.
 Always I had in mind some giant, armed
 in giant force, would come against me here.
 515 But this, but you—small, pitiful, and twiggy—

498. **lob** (lăb) *v.*: toss.

507. **weird** (wird) *n.*: fate.

508. **Telemus** (tel’ə•məs).

509. **Eurymus** (yōō’rē•məs).

you put me down with wine, you blinded me.
Come back, Odysseus, and I'll treat you well,
praying the god of earthquake to befriend you—
his son I am, for he by his avowal
520 fathered me, and, if he will, he may
heal me of this black wound—he and no other
of all the happy gods or mortal men.'

Few words I shouted in reply to him:

'If I could take your life I would and take
525 your time away, and hurl you down to hell!
The god of earthquake could not heal you there!'

At this he stretched his hands out in his darkness
toward the sky of stars, and prayed Poseidon:

'O hear me, lord, blue girdler of the islands,
530 if I am thine indeed, and thou art father:
grant that Odysseus, raider of cities, never
see his home: Laertes' son, I mean,
who kept his hall on Ithaca. Should destiny
intend that he shall see his roof again
535 among his family in his fatherland,
far be that day, and dark the years between.
Let him lose all companions, and return
under strange sail to bitter days at home.' . . ."

(from Book 9)

Here we will imagine that Homer stops reciting for the night. The blind poet might take a glass of wine before turning in. The listeners would go off to various corners of the local nobleman's house. They might discuss highlights of the poet's tale among themselves and look forward to the next evening's installment.



Louvre, Paris, France.

Polyphemus. Terra-cotta head
(4th century B.C.).

 **538.** Take a few minutes to list what you think are the highlights of Odysseus's journey so far. What questions do you have? What do you think will happen next?

 Read "Welcome: A Religious Duty" on page 671. Then, as you continue reading the story, trace the ways Homer repeatedly dramatizes the importance of mutual respect among people. Think about your own ideas of hospitality today—what are the customs in your family and neighborhood? What are the customs in American society as a whole?

A CLOSER LOOK

Welcome: A Religious Duty

Today's visitors to Greece are often struck by the generous hospitality of its people. An ancient tradition lies behind the traveler's welcome in Greece—and it is a tradition that was fundamentally religious before it became a part of social custom.

Zeus, the king of the gods, demanded that strangers be treated graciously. Hosts had a religious duty to welcome strangers, and guests had a responsibility to respect hosts. The close interconnections and mutual respect in this host-guest relationship are reflected in the fact that the word *xenos* (zen'ōs) in ancient Greek can mean both "host" and "guest." The relationship is often symbolized in the *Odyssey* by the presentation of gifts. Alcinous, the king of the Phaeacians, for example, gives Odysseus a magically swift ship in which to sail home.

What happens when the host-guest relationship is abused or otherwise breaks down? In Homer's epic songs about the Trojan War, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the customs of hospitality are violated at least three times. The first occasion caused the war itself: Paris, prince of Troy, ran off with the beautiful Helen from Sparta while he was the guest of Helen's husband, Menelaus. For the Greeks this insult to *xenia* (hospitality) was at least as serious as Helen's unfaithfulness, and it meant that Zeus would, in the end, allow the Greeks to triumph in the long war.

The second example of violated hospitality has its humorous and ironic side.

In the *Odyssey* the Cyclops is monstrous not only because of his huge size and brutish appearance. He is set apart from civilized beings precisely because of his barbaric outlook on *xenia*. When Odysseus begs the Cyclops for hospitality and warns that Zeus will avenge an injured guest, the Cyclops replies that he and his kind "care not a whistle for . . . Zeus" (line 265). With dark humor the Cyclops uses the word *xeineion* (Greek for "guest-gift" or "noble gift") when he tells Odysseus that he will have the privilege of being eaten last (lines 362–363). The poetic justice of the Cyclops's blinding would not be lost on Homer's Greek audience.

The final example of a breach in the law of hospitality underlies the entire plot structure of the *Odyssey*: Back in Ithaca, year after year the suitors abuse the hospitality of Odysseus—an absent "host"—and threaten to take away his wife. The bloody vengeance that Odysseus wreaks on these suitors should be understood in the context of their outrageous violation of religious law. The suitors have turned hospitality into a crude mockery. Perhaps it is not accidental that Odysseus invokes the host-guest relationship just before the battle, when he quietly gives his son, Telemachus, the signal to fight (lines 1208–1209):

"Telemachus, the stranger [*xeinos*]
you welcomed in your hall has not disgraced you."

The Cyclops in the Ocean

Nikki Giovanni

Moving slowly . . . against time . . . patiently majestic . . .
the cyclops . . . in the ocean . . . meets no Ulysses . . .

Through the night . . . he sighs . . . throbbing against the
shore . . . declaring . . . for the adventure . . .

5 A wall of gray . . . gathered by a slow touch . . . slash and
slither . . . through the waiting screens . . . separating into
nodules . . . making my panes . . . accept the touch . . .

Not content . . . to watch my frightened gaze . . . he clamors
beneath the sash . . . dancing on my sill . . .

10 Certain to die . . . when the sun . . . returns . . .

Tropical Storm Dennis
August 15–18, 1981, Florida

