



A Blue Tale and Other Stories

©2009 eNotes.com, Inc. or its Licensors. Please see [copyright information](#) at the end of this document.

“A Blue Tale,” the first of the three stories in this collection, is both a literary exercise and a morality study on greed. As its title colloquially implies, the work is suggestive on both the sensual and the literary levels. European merchants converge upon a house of women and convince one of them to guide them to a cave containing a pool of sapphires. The young woman uses her hair to filter the jewels, then generously bestows each merchant with more than he can carry. Not satisfied with this wealth, they attempt to enslave her. Their greed causes each to lose his wealth and, except for two, his life. Blue, in virtually every shade from gray to azure, is the story’s exponential motif, a setting in which the object of the merchants’ sensuality and greed—the sapphires—hold the central place.

“The First Evening” is biographical. Yourcenar developed this story from an incomplete work written by her father, Michel de Crayencour. It describes the wedding night of a man who has just left his mistress to marry a naive and younger woman. Georges, the husband, has mixed emotions about both decisions. He is incapable of selfless love and remains strangely unmoved, even when a telegram arrives to announce the apparent suicide of his mistress. Both Crayencour and his daughter perceived an element of coldness in their own personalities. If the story does not mirror elements of Crayencour’s two relatively loveless marriages, it does at least focus on the perception Yourcenar and her father had of themselves.

The third story, “An Evil Spell,” is historical. Its characters are Italian peasants, emigrants who escaped fascism. The story describes a bizarre ritual held to cure an attractive woman named Amanda of tuberculosis. The ritual unmasks the woman who had placed a curse on Amanda because she had envied her good fortune in love. Algenare, who had wished Amanda ill, comes to realize the strange power she has over those around her, and knows that with this power comes separateness.

Copyright Notice

©2009 eNotes.com, Inc.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

No part of this work covered by the copyright hereon may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, Web distribution or information storage retrieval systems without the written permission of the publisher.

For complete copyright information, please see the online version of this work:
<http://www.enotes.com/blue-tale-other-stories-salem>