



# The Blood Oranges: A Novel (New Directions Paperbook)

*John Hawkes*

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No synopsis or comparison can convey the novel's lyric comedy or, indeed, its sinister power—sinister because of the strength of will Cyril exerts over his wife, his mistress, his wife's reluctant lover; lyric, since he is also a “sex-singer” in the land where music is the food of love.

"Need I insist that the only enemy of the mature marriage is monogamy? That anything less than sexual multiplicity . . . is naive? That our sexual selves are merely idylers in a vast wood?" Thus the central theme of John Hawkes's widely acclaimed novel *The Blood Oranges* is boldly asserted by its narrator, Cyril, the archetypal multisexualist. Likening himself to a white bull on Love's tapestry, he pursues his romantic vision in a primitive Mediterranean landscape. There two couples—Cyril and Fiona, Hugh and Catherine—mingle their loves in an "Illyria" that brings to mind the equally timeless countryside of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*.

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