



## **From Eden to Ecofeminism: Tracing the Evolution of the Pear as a Symbol of Female Sexuality and Power in Women's Literature**

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### **Abstract**

The scholarship surrounding Eden's forbidden fruit is ripe with multiple speculations about the nature of the fruit since the Bible offers no direct answers to this. While many scholars have assumed it to be an apple, others suggest it may have been a pear. This paper studies how women's literature employs the image of the pear to connote female sexuality and paradisaical bliss, countering the traditional patriarchal narrative of corruption associated with Eve's consumption of the fruit. The pear tree image in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is read parallel to Katherine Mansfield's deployment of the same image in her short story "Bliss" in order to document the liberatory ecofeminist approach within this symbolism. While women's writings divest this image with a transformative function, male authors associate it with degeneration. Following the Biblical tradition, John Steinbeck related the pear image to female perversion in his novel *East of Eden*, where the female protagonist poisons the pear tree she is closely associated with. This paper traces the evolution of the pear symbolism from Biblical and patriarchal connotations implying female sexual transgression to its present understanding of empowering female sexuality.

**Keywords:** Biblical tradition, forbidden fruit, paradisaical, speculations, transformative