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Women's resistance against patriarchal tradition in Royyan Julian's *Tiang Garam* and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*

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Abstract: *This study comparatively examines the representation of women's resistance to patriarchal traditions in Royyan Julian's Tiang Garam (2023) and Alice Walker's The Color Purple (1982). Although the novels emerge from different sociocultural contexts—rural Madurese society in Indonesia and an African American community in the southern United States—both portray women whose bodies, voices, and life choices are controlled by family, marriage, and communal expectations. Employing a comparative-literature approach and feminist textual analysis, the research examines characterization, narrative voice, setting, conflict, and the symbolic significance of the female body and spatial mobility. The analysis argues that Kana's stigmatization following infertility and divorce demonstrates how Madurese patriarchal culture associates womanhood with marriage and motherhood. Her decision to leave her community represents a spatial and everyday form of resistance through which she attempts to reconstruct her identity. In contrast, Celie's resistance develops from silence and submission toward narrative, economic, and personal autonomy. Letter writing, female solidarity, work, and her eventual rejection of marital domination enable her to reclaim her voice and subjectivity. The comparison reveals that resistance does not always take the form of direct rebellion. It may emerge through survival, migration, storytelling, economic independence, and supportive relationships among women.*

Keywords: *marriage, patriarchal society, women's resistance, women's identity*

INTRODUCTION

Literary texts do not simply reproduce women lived experiences; they construct meanings about womanhood by selecting whose experiences are narrated, which bodies are valued, and what kinds of conduct are recognized as socially legitimate. Representation is therefore a process of meaning production rather than a transparent reflection of reality (Hall, 1997). Through characterization, narrative voice, conflict, setting, symbolism, and plot resolution, literary works can reproduce normative ideas about women as obedient daughters, wives, mothers, caregivers, or domestic workers. At the same time, literature can expose the contradictions of such norms and imagine how women negotiate, reject, or move beyond the identities imposed upon them. A feminist comparison of literary texts must consequently distinguish between the social worlds constructed in fiction and the broader communities to which the texts refer. This study does not treat *Tiang Garam* as an ethnographic account of all Madurese women or *The Color Purple* as a complete representation of African American women. Instead, it examines how the two novels aesthetically and narratively construct culturally situated forms of patriarchal power.

Royyan Julian's *Tiang Garam* (2023) and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982) provide a productive comparison because they share several structural concerns while

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emerging from markedly different literary, historical, and cultural contexts. Both novels center women living in predominantly rural communities, place marriage at the center of gendered regulation, and portray female bodies as objects of familial and social evaluation. Both Kana and Celie initially possess limited control over marriage, sexuality, domestic roles, and the meanings attached to their bodies. Nevertheless, their experiences are not interchangeable. Kana is represented within a Madurese social world shaped by kinship, reproductive expectations, land relations, religion, class, and communal judgment. Celie is situated in the racially segregated American South, where gender domination intersects with anti-Black racism, poverty, sexual violence, limited education, and the historical legacy of slavery. These correspondences make comparison possible, while the differences prevent it from becoming a simple search for universal female experience.

The central research problem concerns the different mechanisms through which patriarchal systems regulate women's bodies, identities, and choices. In *Tiang Garam*, Kana's body is socially evaluated according to its presumed reproductive capacity. Infertility becomes more than a personal or bodily condition: it is transformed into a sign of marital inadequacy and incomplete womanhood. Her marginalization demonstrates a patriarchal mechanism of reproductive exclusion, through which a woman may lose marital and communal recognition when she is perceived as unable to produce descendants. In *The Color Purple*, Celie's body is subjected to sexual violence, compulsory domestic labor, forced motherhood, and marital domination. Her continued inclusion in the household is not evidence of acceptance; rather, it reflects a mechanism of extractive confinement in which her body and labor are retained because they remain useful to a male-dominated domestic order. The comparison consequently reveals that patriarchy does not regulate all women in the same manner: it may operate by excluding women who are considered reproductively inadequate or by confining and exploiting women whose bodies and labor remain socially useful.

Control over the body in both novels also shapes identity and limits women's capacity to make choices. Kana is reduced to stigmatizing categories associated with infertility, divorce, and unsuccessful womanhood, while Celie internalizes definitions of herself as poor, Black, unattractive, and powerless. In both narratives, marriage functions not merely as a private relationship but as an institution connecting bodily regulation with social identity, labor, mobility, and recognition. However, the sources and operations of that power differ. Kana encounters a dispersed form of regulation exercised through marital expectations, kinship, gossip, social labeling, and communal surveillance. Celie experiences more direct sexual, physical, economic, and verbal domination within the household. Reading these novels together therefore makes visible a spectrum of patriarchal regulation, ranging from symbolic stigmatization and social expulsion to bodily violence and domestic exploitation. It also demonstrates why female resistance cannot be measured only through visible confrontation: the form of power encountered by each protagonist shapes the form of agency available to her.

Existing scholarship supports elements of this interpretation but has not adequately developed their comparative implications. Studies of *The Color Purple* have extensively examined Celie's movement from silence toward voice, female solidarity, bodily self-recognition, womanist consciousness, and economic independence

(Simparinka, 2022; Sharma & Sharma, 2024). Studies of *Tiang Garam* have focused on ecological exploitation and environmental degradation (Rahman & Cindi, 2025), while Habiburrahman et al. (2026) analyze symbolic violence, agrarian class relations, infertility stigma, and Kana's accumulation of cultural and economic capital. The present study builds upon this scholarship by shifting attention from the general claim that both women suffer under patriarchy to a more precise question: how do the novels construct different patriarchal logics, and how do those logics generate different possibilities for negotiation and refusal? Its contribution does not rest solely on the fact that the novels have not previously been compared. Rather, it proposes a relational model in which reproductive exclusion and extractive confinement are examined as distinct but comparable mechanisms for regulating women.

This comparison also advances the analysis of female resistance. Kana's endurance, departure, spatial mobility, and reconstruction of identity can be read as forms of gradual and everyday resistance, while Celie's letter writing, relationships with women, verbal refusal, departure from her husband, and economic activity constitute narrative, relational, confrontational, and material forms of resistance. Neither trajectory should serve as the universal standard for the other. Celie's explicit acquisition of voice should not cause Kana's less confrontational agency to appear deficient, just as Kana's mobility should not be assumed to produce complete liberation. Following Mohanty's (2003) critique of homogenizing representations of women, the comparison preserves the historical and cultural specificity of each protagonist. Intersectionality identifies the different configurations of gender, race, class, reproduction, sexuality, kinship, and community that shape their positions (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). In patriarchal societies, women are frequently represented based on their conformity to normative roles—such as daughter, wife, mother, caregiver, and domestic worker (Rahayu, 2022). However, literature can also dismantle and challenge these constructions by revealing contradictions, injustices, and instances of women resisting the gender norms that constrain their lives (Rahayu, et.al., 2020). The patriarchal bargain explains how they initially survive and negotiate within unequal structures before modifying or rejecting those arrangements (Kandiyoti, 1988). In this situation, the patriarchal power operates through family, marriage, gossip, labeling, and social surveillance, rather than solely through direct violence, as the stories of nyai in Indonesian histories (Rahayu, 2025). In addition, womanism illuminates the specifically Black female, relational, spiritual, and communal dimensions of Celie's transformation (Walker, 1983).

Accordingly, this study argues that *Tiang Garam* and *The Color Purple* represent patriarchy as a flexible system that regulates women through culturally specific combinations of bodily evaluation, marriage, labor, social recognition, and restrictions on mobility and voice. By examining both the comparable structures and the irreducible differences between the novels, the study demonstrates that female agency is not a uniform movement from oppression to freedom. It is a situated process that may emerge through survival, negotiation, mobility, storytelling, solidarity, economic independence, or direct confrontation. This contextualized comparison contributes to feminist comparative literature by explaining not only that women resist patriarchy but also why particular structures of power make certain forms of resistance possible, necessary, or

legible. Based on this problem, the study addresses the following questions: How do *Tiang Garam* and *The Color Purple* represent patriarchal regulation of women's bodies, marriages, and identities? How do Kana and Celie negotiate and reject patriarchal structures within their respective narrative and sociocultural contexts?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Existing studies of Royyan Julian's *Tiang Garam* have primarily approached the novel through ecological and sociological perspectives. Rahman and Cindi (2025), for example, examine its representation of deforestation, environmental pollution, and animal exploitation, emphasizing the novel's relevance to environmental literacy. Their study establishes the importance of ecological degradation within the narrative but gives limited attention to the gendered consequences of social and environmental transformation. More recently, Habiburrahman et al. (2026) analyze symbolic violence, class domination, and Kana's resistance using Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field, and capital. They interpret Kana's infertility stigma and spatial mobility as part of her transformation from an alienated object of symbolic violence into a more empowered subject. This study significantly advances the discussion of gender in *Tiang Garam*, but its primary focus remains the relationship among class formation, agrarian capitalism, symbolic capital, and social mobility. Consequently, the connections among reproductive stigma, marriage, patriarchal definitions of womanhood, and the embodied experience of female resistance remain insufficiently developed from a specifically feminist perspective.

Studies of Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, by contrast, have produced an extensive body of scholarship concerning patriarchal violence, Black female consciousness, epistolary voice, sisterhood, sexuality, spirituality, and economic independence. Simparinka (2022) examines Celie's oppression and gradual emancipation through a feminist framework, while Sharma and Sharma (2024) emphasize her movement from subjugation to independence and the importance of solidarity among women. Other studies have similarly shown that Celie's empowerment emerges through her relationships with Nettie, Shug Avery, and Sofia, her recovery of bodily and spiritual self-knowledge, and her achievement of economic independence (Reddy & Kavitha, 2021). These studies convincingly demonstrate that Celie's resistance is simultaneously personal, relational, narrative, and material. Nevertheless, their dominant emphasis on Celie's successful development from silence to voice may encourage a relatively linear model of empowerment. Such a model does not fully account for less visible forms of resistance—including endurance, strategic compliance, withdrawal, and spatial mobility—that may emerge under different cultural conditions.

The present study therefore advances existing scholarship in more substantial ways than simply providing the first direct comparison between the two novels. First, it identifies two contrasting patriarchal logics governing women's social value. Kana is marginalized because she is perceived as failing to perform reproductive womanhood, whereas Celie is retained within an oppressive marriage because her sexual, domestic, and reproductive labor can be exploited. Patriarchy thus operates through both exclusion and extraction: it can discard women considered reproductively inadequate and confine women whose bodies and labor remain useful. Second, the study expands

the concept of resistance beyond an overt or linear transition from victimhood to emancipation. It places Kana's mobility, survival, and reconstruction of identity alongside Celie's writing, female solidarity, verbal confrontation, and economic independence. This comparison demonstrates that resistance may be spatial, everyday, narrative, relational, economic, or explicitly confrontational. Third, the study develops a contextualized mode of comparison that does not use Celie's visible empowerment as the universal standard against which Kana's agency is measured. Instead, it examines how different patriarchal arrangements produce different constraints, resources, and possibilities for resistance.

Integrated Conceptual Framework

Intersectionality, the patriarchal bargain, and womanism are employed as complementary frameworks, but they perform different analytical functions. Intersectionality provides the structural dimension of the analysis. Crenshaw (1989, 1991) demonstrates that gender cannot be separated from race and other social positions because systems of inequality operate through their interaction. In this study, intersectionality identifies the distinct configurations of power surrounding each protagonist. Kana's experience is shaped by the intersection of gender with infertility, marital status, kinship, religion, class, land relations, and communal surveillance. Celie's experience is structured by gender, race, poverty, age, sexuality, limited education, and the historical consequences of racial segregation. Intersectionality therefore prevents the comparison from treating Kana and Celie as representatives of a single, culturally undifferentiated category of oppressed women.

Whereas intersectionality maps the structures that shape the protagonists' positions, Kandiyoti's (1988) concept of the patriarchal bargain explains their strategies within those structures. A patriarchal bargain refers to the context-dependent practices through which women seek security, recognition, or limited autonomy under male-dominated arrangements. It does not imply that women freely accept their subordination. Rather, it helps explain why apparent compliance may function as a survival strategy when alternative choices are severely restricted. The concept is used to examine Kana's initial accommodation of marital and reproductive expectations and Celie's early silence and domestic submission. It also clarifies how these strategies change when the existing bargain no longer offers security: Kana creates distance from the community that stigmatizes her, while Celie gradually replaces submission with writing, solidarity, departure, and economic independence. The patriarchal bargain thus connects social constraint with situated agency and reveals resistance as a process rather than a single emancipatory event.

Womanism provides a more culturally specific framework for interpreting Celie's transformation. Walker (1983) formulated womanism to foreground Black women's experiences, creativity, spirituality, relationships, cultural survival, and commitment to the well-being of a wider community. In *The Color Purple*, Celie does not achieve autonomy through individual separation alone. Her transformation is enabled by relationships with other women, the recovery of bodily and spiritual self-knowledge, creative labor, and the reorganization of community. Womanism consequently explains dimensions of Celie's experience that cannot be fully captured by a generalized feminist

model of individual liberation. However, this study does not impose womanism on Kana's experience because it emerged from the specific intellectual and historical traditions of African American women. Kana's agency is instead interpreted through her own narrative and cultural context, particularly reproductive stigma, kinship, communal judgment, spatial mobility, and access to cultural and economic resources.

Taken together, the three frameworks establish a structure–strategy–cultural horizon of analysis. Intersectionality explains how multiple relations of power structure each woman's vulnerability and opportunities; the patriarchal bargain explains how each protagonist negotiates and eventually challenges those relations; and womanism illuminates the specifically Black female, relational, spiritual, and communal dimensions of Celie's self-reconstruction. This integrated framework allows the study to compare the protagonists without erasing cultural differences or assuming that resistance must follow the same path. Its contribution therefore lies in theorizing female resistance as culturally situated, intersectionality conditioned, and expressed through multiple practices—from endurance and migration to storytelling, solidarity, economic independence, and direct refusal.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach utilizing a comparative literature research design integrated with feminist literary criticism. The comparative approach is used to read both literary works*: Tiang Garam* by Royyan Julian (2023) and *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker (1982) based on comparable issues: the patriarchal construction of women's bodies, marriage, voices, identities, and mobility. The comparison aims not merely to compile a list of similarities and differences, but to elucidate how similar gender issues are constructed within distinct social, historical, and cultural contexts (Bassnett, 1993; Tötösy de Zepetnek, 1998). Feminist literary criticism is used to identify the positioning of female characters within the narrative structure, the locus of speaking authority, the evaluation of women's bodies and actions, and the ways in which the texts either reproduce or challenge patriarchal norms (Showalter, 1981). The primary data sources are the novels *Tiang Garam* and *The Color Purple*. The units of analysis encompass words, phrases, dialogue, monologues, narrator descriptions, character actions, sequences of events, spatial depictions, symbols, conflicts, and narrative resolutions related to the experiences of Kana (in *Tiang Garam*) and Celie (in *The Color Purple*).

Data collection was done through close readings of both novels. At the initial reading, she identified the general narrative structure, character development, interpersonal relationships, social settings, and central conflicts. Next, the reading focused on identifying excerpts that illustrate patriarchal mechanisms, such as unequal marriage, bodily control, reproductive demands, sexual and domestic violence, the division of labor, economic dependence, silencing, labeling, gossip, and restrictions on women's mobility. The readings were also used to identify the characters' responses to the events, ranging from strategic compliance, negotiation, survival, withdrawal, and spatial relocation to women's solidarity. The data were then grouped into six analytical categories: (1) control over the body and reproduction; (2) marriage and domestic labor; (3) voice, silence, and narrative authority; (4) space and mobility; (5) solidarity

and relationships among female characters; and (6) economic, symbolic, and identity-based resistance.

The analysis runs in three stages: intratextual analysis, comparative juxtaposition, and relational interpretation. Each novel is first analyzed within its own context to ensure that Kana's experiences are not immediately equated with Celie's. Kandiyoti's (1988) concept of the "patriarchal bargain" is employed to explain how compliance, negotiation, and resistance unfold within structural constraints, while Crenshaw's (1989) concept of intersectionality is used to examine the interplay of gender with infertility, marital status, kinship, religion, class, race, age, and sexuality. Walker's (1983) concept of "womanism" is specifically applied to understand Celie's experiences—particularly regarding Black female self-definition, solidarity, spirituality, and healing through female relationships. Subsequently, the findings from both novels are juxtaposed to identify similarities, differences, and connections between forms of patriarchal control and the characters' strategies of resistance. Interpretation is conducted iteratively, moving between textual excerpts, narrative contexts, theoretical concepts, and prior research. Interpretive validity is maintained through sufficient textual evidence, consistent application of categories, examination of data that contradicts initial arguments, and theoretical triangulation. The study also makes a clear distinction between the narrator's perspective, the characters' speech, the ideology of the represented community, and the author's position, ensuring that cultural values within the novels are not generalized as characteristics of the entire Madurese or African-American society.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

To answer the research questions, the result of analysis is presented in following Table 1 and Table 2. Table 1 presents the comparative findings analysis between *Tiang Garam* and *The Color Purple,* by focusing on the analytical dimensions of the main character: Kana in *Tiang Garam* and Celie in *The Color Purple*. The analytical dimensions in Table 1 are aimed to answer the first question, how do *Tiang Garam* and *The Color Purple* represent patriarchal regulation of women's bodies, marriages, and identities?

Table 1. Forms of Patriarchal Control in *Tiang Garam* and *The Color Purple*

Analytical Dimension	Kana in *Tiang Garam*	Celie in *The Color Purple*	Comparative findings
Regulation of the body	Kana's body is evaluated primarily through reproductive capacity. Her infertility is treated as an individual female deficiency.	Celie's body is subjected to sexual abuse, physical violence, forced reproduction, and domestic labor.	Patriarchal control operates through reproductive judgment in Kana's case and bodily appropriation and exploitation in Celie's case.
Principal mechanism	Attribution of infertility to the woman, followed by stigma and social judgment.	Coercion, violence, economic dependency, restricted communication, and control of mobility.	Kana experiences **reproductive exclusion**, whereas Celie experiences **extractive confinement**.
Marriage	Marriage becomes conditional upon Kana's ability to fulfil the expected role of motherhood.	Marriage is imposed upon Celie and turns her into an object of domestic, sexual, and economic exploitation.	Marriage excludes Kana when she is considered reproductively inadequate but retains Celie because her body and labor remain useful.
Construction of womanhood	"Complete" womanhood is associated with fertility, wifehood, and motherhood.	Womanhood is associated with obedience, silence, sexual availability, caregiving, and unpaid labor.	Both novels show that patriarchal womanhood is defined through social functions rather than women's autonomous identities.
Social sanction	Infertility and divorce produce shame, reduced recognition, and communal judgment.	Disobedience may produce physical punishment, intimidation, isolation, and economic insecurity.	Sanctions differ according to the structure of power represented in each narrative: social exclusion for Kana and coercive punishment for Celie.
Control of identity	Kana risks being reduced to the identity of an infertile or unsuccessful wife.	Celie is initially treated as a body and laboring subject rather than an autonomous person.	Patriarchy narrows both protagonists' identities, although it uses different cultural and material mechanisms.
Available choices	Kana's choices are constrained by kinship expectations, marital status, economic resources, and communal recognition.	Celie's choices are constrained by violence, poverty, racial hierarchy, limited education, and restricted access to supportive relationships.	Choice is not absent, but it is structured unequally by the resources and risks surrounding each protagonist.

To answer the second questions, how do Kana and Celie negotiate and reject patriarchal structures within their respective narrative and sociocultural contexts, the data and interpretation are presented in the Table 2. It deals with the survival, negotiation and resistance of the main characters (Kana and Celie) in respective literature.

Table 2. Survival, Negotiation and Resistance

Analytical Category	Definition Used In This Study	Kana	Celie	Interpretation
Survival	Actions intended primarily to reduce immediate harm without directly challenging the structure producing it.	Enduring stigma or adjusting temporarily to reduced social recognition.	Remaining silent during abuse and complying when direct refusal would increase danger.	Endurance should not automatically be classified as resistance. It may reflect severely restricted choices.
Negotiation	Strategic accommodation that creates limited room for safety, dignity, or future action while some patriarchal expectations remain intact.	Managing relations with family and community while gradually reconstructing identity after divorce.	Using relationships with Shug, Sofia, and Nettie to develop confidence, knowledge, and alternative understandings of womanhood.	Negotiation operates within constraints but can accumulate resources for later resistance.
Resistance	Actions that explicitly reject, disrupt, or withdraw from patriarchal authority and its imposed identity.	Refusing to allow infertility and divorce to define her entire identity and pursuing life beyond reproductive wifehood.	Confronting Albert, leaving the abusive household, recovering her voice, and building an independent livelihood.	Resistance becomes possible when protagonists obtain material, relational, emotional, or spatial resources.
Reconstruction	The development of an alternative identity after patriarchal definitions have been challenged.	Reconstituting womanhood beyond marriage and biological motherhood.	Becoming an economically independent woman who speaks, creates, loves, and defines herself.	Resistance involves not only rejecting oppression but also constructing new forms of subjectivity.

Discussion

Patriarchal Power over Women's Bodies, Marriage, and Identity

As shown in table 1, the comparison reveals that *Tiang Garam* and *The Color Purple* construct patriarchal control through two related but distinct mechanisms: reproductive exclusion and extractive confinement. In *Tiang Garam*, Kana's position within marriage is made conditional upon her presumed reproductive capacity. Infertility is not represented merely as a bodily condition; it is socially interpreted as evidence that Kana has failed to fulfil the expected identity of wife and mother. This interpretation shifts responsibility away from the couple and places it almost entirely upon the female body. Patriarchal power therefore operates through attribution: an uncertain reproductive condition is assigned to Kana, transformed into a personal deficiency, and used to legitimize her declining marital and social status. Her biological condition is thus transformed into a moral judgment: Kana is deemed to have failed in

her duties as a wife and to have fallen short of the standards for a "perfect" woman. In this context, patriarchy operates not merely through the husband's decisions but also through the family, public discourse, labeling, and communal surveillance. "She is barren, no child no offspring." The narrative illustrates how bodily difference becomes socially consequential only after it is interpreted through normative assumptions about marriage, motherhood, and women's value (Julian, 2023).

This mechanism is reinforced through social labeling and communal surveillance. Kana is not controlled only by an individual husband; her identity is produced through the judgments of relatives and members of the fictional community. Repeated references to her childlessness narrow the range of identities available to her until "infertile woman" and "failed wife" appear to override other aspects of her personhood. Divorce then functions as both a marital decision and a social sanction. Kana's exclusion communicates that a woman's membership in the marital and familial order can be withdrawn when she is perceived as unable to reproduce it. When the marriage failed to produce offspring, Kana lost not only her connection to her husband but also the social legitimacy conferred by her marital status. Kana said,"I feel of no importance. All the people only talked about her sister's new baby, while saying negative things about me." (Julian, 2023). This process may be described as reproductive exclusion: Kana is marginalized not because her labor is unnecessary, but because the fictional social order makes recognition as a legitimate wife dependent upon motherhood.

In *The Color Purple*, patriarchal power over Celie's body is manifested more directly through sexual violence, coercion, and silencing. Early in the novel, Celie is threatened with the command, "You better not never tell nobody but God" (Walker, 1982), demonstrating that control over women's bodies is maintained by forbidding them to speak. This violence extends beyond the physical realm to control language and knowledge; Celie is forced to suppress her traumatic experiences, able to articulate them only through letters addressed to God. Furthermore, her marriage to Albert does not liberate her from patriarchal power but merely transfers her from the control of one man to that of another. Within the household, Celie's body and labor are exploited for domestic chores, sexual service, child-rearing, and the satisfaction of her husband's needs, all without granting her any commensurate authority. The way Celie describes herself—"I'm poor, I'm black, I may be ugly" (Walker, 1982)—reveals how this domination has permeated her self-perception. This negative identity does not arise solely from personal consciousness but stems from the intersection of patriarchy, racism, poverty, and beauty standards that demean Black women (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2000).

The comparison therefore identifies two contrasting patriarchal logics. Kana is expelled from full social recognition because she is constructed as reproductively inadequate, whereas Celie is retained within an oppressive household because her labor and body are exploitable. Patriarchy works through both disposability and utility: it can marginalize women considered unable to perform an expected function and confine women whose work continues to serve the dominant order. This argument moves beyond the general observation that both protagonists are oppressed. It explains how different evaluations of female usefulness produce different sanctions and, consequently, different possibilities for action.

Marriage as a Mechanism of Gendered Regulation

In both novels, marriage connects control over the body with control over identity and choice. In *Tiang Garam*, marriage gives social meaning to Kana's reproductive status. Her childlessness becomes consequential because the narrative's marital order defines reproduction as a central obligation of wifehood. Infertility is consequently interpreted not only as the absence of children but as a disruption of family continuity and marital legitimacy. The choices available to Kana are narrowed by this interpretation: remaining within the marriage requires her to inhabit an identity marked by perceived failure, while divorce exposes her to stigma and diminished recognition within the fictional community.

In *The Color Purple*, marriage transfers Celie between male-controlled households and institutionalizes her obligation to provide labor. Her lack of economic resources, education, and social authority restricts the practical possibility of refusal. The narrative therefore presents choice as materially conditioned. Celie cannot simply decide to leave because leaving requires information, supportive relationships, physical safety, and access to livelihood. Her eventual departure becomes possible only after these conditions begin to change. The contrast is analytically important: Kana confronts the withdrawal of marital recognition, while Celie confronts enforced marital incorporation. In one case, marriage excludes a woman judged unable to reproduce; in the other, it confines a woman whose labor can still be extracted.

Survival, Negotiation and Resistance by Kana and Celie

The protagonists' responses should not all be classified automatically as resistance. Survival refers to actions that preserve physical or psychological existence without necessarily challenging the rules of the dominant structure. Negotiation refers to efforts to obtain limited security or room for action while remaining largely within that structure. Resistance involves a more identifiable refusal, disruption, or redirection of patriarchal authority. These categories are analytically distinct, although a single action may change its meaning over time. This comparison underscores that women's resistance does not always manifest as open rebellion (Rahayu, 2026).

As shown in table 2, Kana's endurance during marriage is most accurately understood as survival rather than resistance. Her initial accommodation of marital and reproductive expectations does not directly question the standards through which she is judged. It reflects the limited alternatives available within the narrative situation. Kandiyoti's (1988) concept of the patriarchal bargain helps explain this position: apparent compliance can be a strategy for retaining security and social recognition under unequal conditions. Negotiation emerges when Kana begins to seek possibilities beyond the identity assigned to her, but such actions become resistance only when they weaken the authority of reproductive stigma over her self-definition.

Kana's relocation is therefore ambiguous rather than inherently emancipatory. Physical movement alone does not necessarily challenge patriarchy; women may relocate because of expulsion, economic necessity, or the absence of viable alternatives. Kana's departure becomes resistant to the extent that it creates distance from communal surveillance, enables access to new cultural or economic resources, and allows her to refuse an identity defined exclusively by infertility and divorce. Habiburrahman et al.

(2026) interpret her mobility as part of an accumulation of cultural and economic capital that strengthens her agency. Even so, the narrative should not be read as presenting migration as complete liberation. Mobility gives Kana a greater capacity to act, but it does not automatically remove the social memory of stigma or the wider structures that produced it.

A similar distinction is necessary in interpreting Celie. Her early silence and letters to God initially function as survival. Writing enables her to record violence, preserve memory, and maintain a minimal sense of self, but the letters do not yet confront the perpetrators or alter her material conditions. Writing becomes a form of resistance when its function changes: Celie begins to reinterpret her experiences, question the authority imposed upon her, and address human rather than exclusively divine listeners. The recovery of Nettie's letters is especially significant because it reconnects Celie with an alternative history of herself. Knowledge interrupts the isolation upon which Albert's authority depends.

Celie's relationships with Shug, Nettie, and Sofia similarly move from emotional support toward a relational basis for resistance. These women do not simply inspire her psychologically; they provide knowledge, models of alternative womanhood, emotional recognition, and practical assistance. Celie's confrontation with Albert represents explicit resistance because it publicly rejects his authority to determine her value. Her departure constitutes resistance because it is supported by a new interpretive understanding of herself and by social relationships that make departure materially possible. Her clothing business strengthens this refusal by reducing economic dependence. Economic autonomy is therefore not merely a symbol of empowerment; it changes the conditions under which Celie can sustain her rejection of marital domination.

The comparison reveals that resistance depends on the form of control encountered. Because Kana is regulated predominantly through stigma, exclusion, and communal judgment, her agency develops through distancing, mobility, and reconstruction of identity. Because Celie is controlled through bodily violence, domestic exploitation, isolation, and economic dependency, her resistance requires speech, supportive relationships, physical departure, and material independence. Neither path should be treated as the universal model of emancipation. Kana's less confrontational actions are not necessarily politically weaker, but they should be called resistance only when textual evidence shows that they alter, refuse, or displace patriarchal definitions. Likewise, Celie's endurance should not be romanticized as resistance before it develops into a capacity to challenge the relations that subordinate her.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that *Tiang Garam* and *The Color Purple* represent patriarchal power through distinct mechanisms of control over women's bodies, marriages, and identities. In *Tiang Garam*, Kana experiences reproductive exclusion: infertility is transformed into evidence of marital inadequacy and incomplete womanhood, exposing her to divorce, stigma, and communal surveillance. In *The Color Purple*, Celie experiences extractive confinement: sexual violence, forced marriage, domestic labor, and economic dependence keep her within a household that exploits her

body and labor. These differences reveal that patriarchy may regulate women either by excluding those considered unable to fulfil reproductive expectations or by retaining those whose labor and bodies remain useful to the patriarchal order.

Kana and Celie consequently develop context-dependent forms of resistance. Kana negotiates patriarchal power primarily through endurance, spatial mobility, and the reconstruction of an identity no longer defined solely by marriage and fertility. Celie's resistance develops through letter writing, female solidarity, bodily and spiritual self-recognition, verbal confrontation, and economic independence. Their trajectories demonstrate that women's resistance cannot be measured through a single model of emancipation. Its form depends upon the specific mechanisms of domination, the resources available to women, and their positions within intersecting structures of gender, race, class, reproduction, kinship, and community.

The study's principal contribution is its relational account of two contrasting patriarchal logics—reproductive exclusion and extractive confinement—and the different forms of agency they generate. By combining intersectionality, the patriarchal bargain, and womanism, the study moves beyond identifying a shared theme of female oppression. It shows how literary comparison can reveal both structural similarities and culturally specific differences without treating either protagonist's experience as universal. Resistance therefore emerges not as a uniform progression from victimhood to liberation but as a situated process expressed through negotiation, migration, storytelling, solidarity, economic activity, and direct refusal.

The study is limited by its focus on only two novels and by its reliance on textual interpretation. Its conclusions cannot be generalized to Madurese or African American women beyond the fictional worlds constructed by the texts. Future research could expand the corpus to include works by women and men from other Indonesian, American, or Global South traditions; investigate relationships among gender, ecology, land, and economic power; or examine how readers from different cultural backgrounds interpret Kana's and Celie's agency. Comparative studies of translations, adaptations, narrative forms, and reader reception could further illuminate how representations of patriarchal control and women's resistance change across languages, media, and interpretive communities.

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