A Syntactic Profile of (Re)Telling in *The Woman Warrior*

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December 21, 2023

1 Introduction

In the study of storytelling and retelling, Deborah Schiffrin (2006) has shown that survivors' retelling of traumatic experiences provides crucial insight into their narrative motivations and the linguistic negotiations necessitated by the process of narration. Building on Schiffrin's framework, I will continue to explore the linguistic struggles contained in the (re)telling of traumatic histories using texts from Maxine Hong Kingston's 1976 memoir, *The Woman Warrior*. Borrowing from narrative analysis' local inspection of sentences (Schiffrin 2006, Bamberg 1997) and discourse analysis' statistical study of global variables (Kotek et al. 2021), I will develop a global profiling method of sentence-level variables and digestible visualizations. My computer-mediated temporal profiling method will show how Kingston attempts to perform a narrative move to reconstruct an erased history while demonstrating the difficulty of rendering such a history using different narrators.

2 Text and Method

2.1 *The Woman Warrior* and "No Name Woman"

Chinese American author Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*, published in 1976, is a collection of interconnected (auto)biographical stories. In addition to providing an account of Kingston's own life, the stories render the histories of the other women in the author's matrilineage, including her Chinese-born mother and aunts. The book's (auto)biographical content draws on sources that are not strictly verifiable: Kingston blends her family's oral history with Chinese folk religion as well as her imagination.

In *The Woman Warrior*'s first chapter "No Name Woman," Kingston[1] offers three monologic accounts of her aunt's life (and death), once through the voice of Maxine's mother, Brave Orchid, and twice through Maxine's voice. At the beginning of the chapter, Brave Orchid reveals the aunt's history as a family secret: in 1924, the aunt had an extramarital pregnancy in China when her husband was working in the United States. Upon learning about the pregnancy, the villagers raided the aunt's family, which Brave Orchid had to witness. The next day, the aunt and her newborn baby were found dead in the family well. Brave Orchid then uses this story to warn Maxine not to engage in any sexual wrongdoings (1976: 3-5). After living with this family secret for twenty years and feeling haunted by her dead aunt, Maxine decides to offer her speculation about what happened from her aunt's perspective. Maxine first offers a short, definitive account that a man in the village had repeatedly raped her aunt and instigated the raid (1976: 6-7). Later, she develops a more detailed account with less certitude: perhaps her aunt loved her inseminator and chose

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[1] As per tradition, I use "Kingston" to indicate the author of the book and "Maxine" to indicate the protagonist-narrator.

to commit adultery. While developing the backstory about the village's kinship culture, Maxine departs to elaborate on her own relationship with the Chinese kinship culture as an American. She then returns to the account and deduced that the villagers raided the family partially to preserve morality, and partially to discharge their anger caused by poverty. Maxine concludes the account by imagining her aunt's self-helped labor, her encounter with the baby, and her suicide-infanticide (1976: 7-15).

At the end of the chapter, Maxine reframes the secrecy around her aunt as the family's punishment for the aunt's "wrongdoing," the nature of which remains unknown. For this reason, Maxine feels a need to break the silence and "devote pages of paper to her" (1976: 16). Throughout the chapter, the aunt's history is not told by its dead owner, but by the living others whose voices necessarily render the history differently from the owner. For this reason, both Brave Orchid and Maxine can be said to be retelling the aunt's story. The three accounts in "No Name Woman" are then the first turn of retelling, the second turn of retelling, and the third turn of retelling. This linear sequence can be understood under the narrative-analysis framework of retelling.

2.2   Retelling and Positioning

In Deborah Schiffrin's work on retelling (2006), she analyzed Holocaust survivor Susan Beer's recounts of her capture story. Schiffrin observes a "move towards performativity" (2006: 274) in Beer's retelling of the same story over time. Based on the factual event where a group of Jews fell for a capture scheme set up by the Nazis, this move originated from a technical recount of unexpected events and became an emplotted story about deception. The later versions of retellings share an increased use of devices such as the passive positioning of acting victims (2006: 220), evaluative post facto commentaries (2006: 227-228), and the authorial representation of collective mental states (2006: 229-236). Schiffrin explains this "move" as Beer's attempt to convey the "importance" (2006: 274) of her experience.

The turns of retellings in "No Name Woman" can be understood under a similar framework: a sequence of accounts that constitutes a movement towards a narrative goal set forth by the editor-author Kingston. To investigate the sequential variations in the retellings as well as the goal, I will consider the three partially interdependent retellings as separate narrative segments with their own beginnings and endings. I will conduct a detailed comparison of the first retelling (by Maxine's mother Brave Orchid) and the third retelling (by Maxine). A noteworthy difference here is that while Beer's accounts can be said to move towards a performance that contains an evaluative distance from the traumatic experience, Kingston's accounts seem to move "back" towards the traumatic experience from a performance that contains an evaluative distance. Nevertheless, Schiffrin's framework offers a selection of useful analytical tools that can be applied to the narrative segments in "No Name Woman."

One of the tools Schiffrin used is a version of positioning theory developed by Michael Bamberg (1997). In Bamberg's original publication, there are three levels where animate participants can position themselves or be positioned within/around storytelling: Positioning Level 1 is how "characters [are] positioned in relation to one another within the reported events" (1997: 337), Positioning Level 2 is how "the speaker position[s] him- or herself to the audience" (1997: 337), and Positioning Level 3 is how "narrators position themselves to themselves" (1997: 337). In the "Visual Results" section, I will show how Positioning Level 1 can reveal the nature of a narrator's underlying perspective, how Positioning Level 2 can accomplish interpersonal narrative protocols, and, finally, how a participant's movement between Level-1 and Level-2 positions can enable them to tell their history through multiple voices.

2.3   Syntactic Profiling

In the aforementioned literature, both Schiffrin and Bamberg conducted local analyses of phrases and sentences to gain insights into the positions of narrators and characters. Central to their syntactic analyses is the predicate-argument relationship, namely, what roles the narrators/characters play in relation to actions, events, or experiences. I will briefly review the technical definition of this relationship before incorporating it into a more global analytical strategy. Andrew Carnie (2013) offers a helpful definition of predicates and arguments:

> The syntactician's definition of predicate is based on the mathematical notion of a "relation". The predicate defines the relation between the individuals being talked about and the real world – as well as among themselves. The entities (which can be abstract) participating in the relation are called arguments. (2013: 58)

In other words, an action, an event, or an experience constitutes the predicate of a sentence, and the participant that initiates the action, undergoes the event, or perceives the experience constitutes the argument. The relationship between the argument and the predicate—the initiating, undergoing, and perceiving—constitutes what is called the thematic relation.

Researchers have exploited thematic relations as a statistic variable in profiling linguistic representations in various types of literature. In one of the latest iterations of this lineage of research, Hadas Kotek et al. (2021) used example sentences in linguistic journals as data, and analyzed the gendered linguistic properties of person arguments (arguments that represent a person or people) on various registers, including their fulfillment of thematic relations. They found that the arguments representing men are more likely to fulfill agentive thematic relations (i.e., to be the initiators) and the arguments representing women are more likely to fulfill passive thematic relations (i.e., to be the observers and recipients) (2021: 661). Kotek et al. developed a socio-ethical stance by using linguistic agentivity and passivity as proxies for the reinforcement and reproduction of sociological agency and passivity (2021: 671-672).

I will extend this syntactic-statistical methodology and apply it to narrative discourses. Instead of focusing on the sociological implications of syntactic patterns, I will focus on the interpretive possibilities they contain with respect to positioning.

2.3.1   Schema

Following Kotek et al.'s methodology, I will utilize a parsing model that retrieves person arguments as variables from the narrative segments under consideration. The parser records several pre-labeled features: phi-features (person, gender, number), theta roles (made up of thematic relations), and grammatical functions. Additionally, the schema incorporates arguments' interactional roles with respect to Level-2 positioning. See sample data in Figure 1.

The possible categorical values for each feature are specified below.

1. Interactional Role: {mother, father, parents, aunt, Maxine, NA}

   The Level-2 interactional roles represent all the participants, both explicit and implicit ones, in the storytelling environment in "No Name Woman". This set includes "mother" (Brave Orchid), "father," and "parents" who provide facts and opinions about what might have happened, "aunt" who haunts "Maxine" and prompts "Maxine" to retell her story, and "Maxine" herself. When a person argument does not participate in the interaction, it is assigned the "NA" role.

	Interactional Role	Gender	Person	Number	Theta Role	Grammatical Function
38	aunt	feminine	third	singular	theme	subject
0	Maxine	feminine	second	singular	agent/source	subject
3	mother	feminine	first	singular	agent/source	subject
44	NA	masculine	third	singular	theme	subject
111	aunt	feminine	third	singular	agent	subject
114	father	masculine	third	singular	theme	direct object
12	NA	masculine	third	plural	possessee	direct object
60	NA	NA	third	plural	agent	subject
20	NA	masculine	third	singular	agent	subject
126	Maxine	feminine	second	singular	experiencer	subject

Figure 1: Sample Data

2. Gender: {feminine, masculine, NA}

The gender feature here refers to grammatical gender, which, in English, is a binary feature that only holds among animate nominals in the texts under consideration. This binary representation is not a reflection of sociological gender which has more than two possible values. In the context of this paper, the grammatical gender can either be observed from a given lexicon (e.g. mother, father, aunt, she, her, he, and him) or be inferred through the lexicon's antecedent (its coreferential lexicon that appears earlier in the text). Grammatical genders that are unknown and mixed genders are recorded as "NA".

3. Person: {first, second, third}

The person feature is a reflection of the relationship that the argument has with the speaker and the audience.

4. Number: {singular, plural, NA}

The number feature can either be inferred from the lexicon under consideration through its morphology or through its antecedent.

5. Theta Role: one or more element(s) from the set of thematic relations: {agent, causer, experiencer, theme, goal, source, location, instrument, beneficiary, possessor, possessee}

The list of thematic relations here is a combination of the lists provided by Andrew Carnie (2013) and Sportiche et al. (2014). Detailed definitions are listed below.

(a) "The initiator or doer of an action is called the agent." (Carnie 2013: 229) In other words, this is "a person or entity (intentionally) causing or doing something" (Sportiche et al. 2014: 141).

(b) The causer is "a cause (*The rock* broke the window, *This* made him cry)" (Sportiche et al. 2014: 141). A causer is to be differentiated from an agent: a causer often does not have an intention of doing, while an agent has an intention of doing.

(c) "Arguments that feel or perceive events are called experiencers" (Carnie 2013: 230).

(d) "Entities that undergo actions or are moved, experienced, or perceived are called themes" (Carnie 2013: 231). "Often more broadly used as a wastebasket for things that do not fit anywhere else e.g. *John* is tall, Mary thinks *that it is raining*" (Sportiche et al. 2014: 142).

(e) "The entity towards which motion takes place is called a goal. Goals may involve abstract motion" (Carnie 2013: 231).

(f) "The opposite of a goal is the source. This is the entity from which a motion originates" (Carnie 2013: 231).

(g) "The place where the action occurs is called the location" (Carnie 2013: 231).

(h) "The object with which an action is performed is called the instrument" (Carnie 2013: 231).

(i) "[T]he one for whose benefit an event took place is called the beneficiary" (Carnie 2013: 231).

(j) "Possessor: is a possessor (*Susan has a book, Susan owns books, These books belong to Susan*)" (Sportiche et al. 2014: 141).

(k) "Possessee or possessed: what is possessed (*John owns books, John's books*)." (Sportiche et al. 2014: 141)
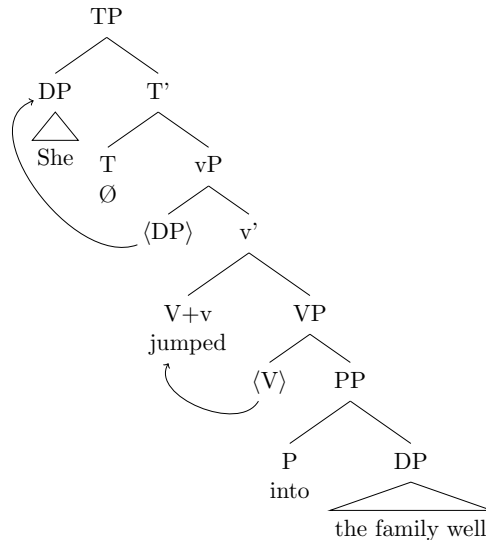
6. Grammatical Function: {subject, direct object, indirect object, object of preposition}

   The subject of a sentence is what shows phi-feature agreement with the predicate (eg. the singular entity that matches the singular form "s" of a verb). A direct object is what follows the predicate and usually fulfills the theme thematic relation. An indirect object is what follows the predicate and usually fulfills the goal thematic relation. An object of preposition is what follows a preposition. There exist other types of grammatical functions that do not constitute the direct mentioning of nominal entities (person arguments) and are not under consideration here.

2.3.2 Labeling Procedure

The procedure of labeling person arguments involves deconstructing sentences with syntax trees. The final sentential representation of argument structures can render some arguments pronounced (with lexicons) and others silent (without lexicons). Since both pronounced arguments and silent arguments contribute to the narration of "*who* did what" and "what happened to *who*," my method records both with the help of syntax trees. See sample trees and deconstructions below.

(1)   She jumped into the family well. (Kingston 1976: 3)

The syntax tree suggests that there is 1 person argument in (1): *She*. *She* is third-person, has the feminine gender feature, and is singular in number. *She* gets the theta role of agent from the verb *jumped* at its initial position "⟨DP⟩" before it moves up to become the subject of the sentence. In the narrative segment under consideration, *She* is coreferential with Maxine's aunt, and gets the interactional role of aunt.

(2)   I remember looking at your aunt one day when she and I were dressing; (Kingston 1976: 3)

The syntax tree suggests that there are 4 person arguments in (2): *I, PRO* (a silent element that is coreferential with its antecedent *I*), *your aunt*, and *she and I* as one argument. *PRO* arises from a subject-control structure, where the subject of a higher TP is coreferential with a silent argument that is the subject of a lower TP. The arguments' syntactic features can be inferred similarly to the argument in (1), and are displayed in Figure 2.

Sentential Representation (Not recorded)	Interactional Role	Gender	Person	Number	Theta Role	Grammatical Function
I	mother	feminine	first	singular	experiencer	subject
PRO	mother	feminine	first	singular	agent	subject
your aunt	aunt	feminine	third	singular	theme	object of preposition
she and I	NA	feminine	first	plural	agent	subject

Figure 2: Data Points in (2)

3   Visual Results[2]

Since the stories in "No Name Woman" are stories about gender-based trauma, I will first compare the aggregate profiles of arguments with different genders. With the aggregate profiles as a context, I will focus on demonstrating representations for the temporal linguistic patterns pertaining to Level-1 and Level-2 positioning as mentioned earlier.

3.1   Aggregate Results

In Brave Orchid's retelling, as Figure 3 suggests, the gender markup of arguments follows a ratio of 48:27:60 (feminine:masculine:NA). Arguments with the feminine gender take on more diverse thematic relations, while arguments with the masculine and the unmarked gender tend to populate certain categories (most notably, the agent category) and not others. Using linguistic agentivity as a proxy for personal agency, linguistic passivity as a proxy for personal passivity, and linguistic experientiality as a proxy for personal experientiality, we can observe a few gendered discrepancies. Arguments with the feminine gender feature display less agency, more passivity and more experientiality, and arguments with the masculine gender feature display more agency, less passivity and less experientiality. Figure 4 suggests that this discrepancy persists when the grammatical function is fixed to be subject. In other words, when arguments show up at the subject position, which is often associated with agency, they can still display varied levels of agency across genders.

Maxine's retelling exhibits different patterns, as suggested by Figure 5 and Figure 6. By proportions, there are fewer arguments with the masculine gender and fewer arguments with the unmarked gender as indicated by the ratio 218:66:137 (feminine:masculine:NA). Arguments of different genders occupy similarly diverse thematic relations. Arguments with the feminine gender feature display more agency and less passivity, arguments with the masculine gender feature display less agency and more passivity, and the two groups are similarly experiential. Figure 6 suggests that this discrepancy persists when the grammatical function is fixed to be subject.

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[2]The code for the visualizations can be found at https://github.com/rileyhuo/syntax_view.
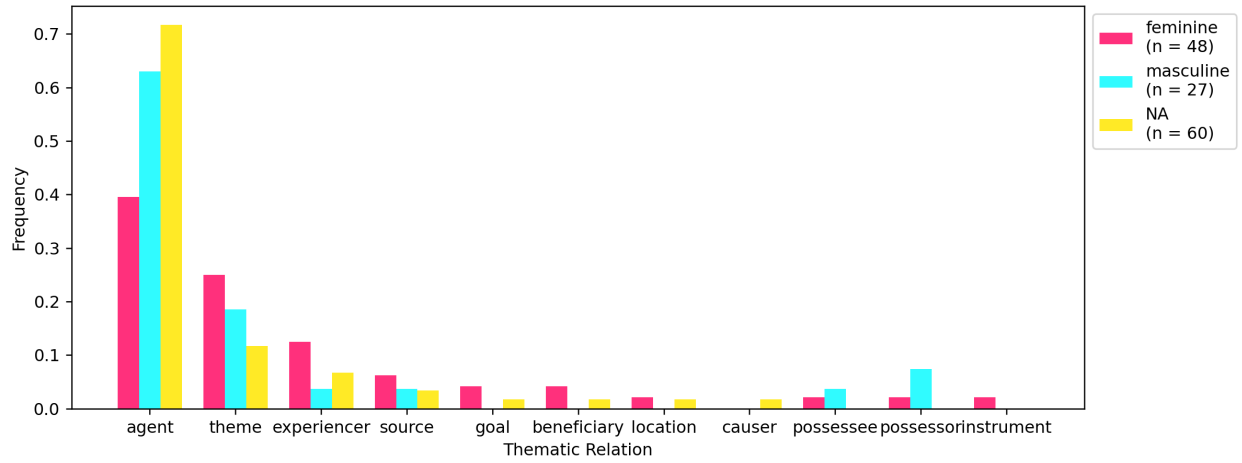
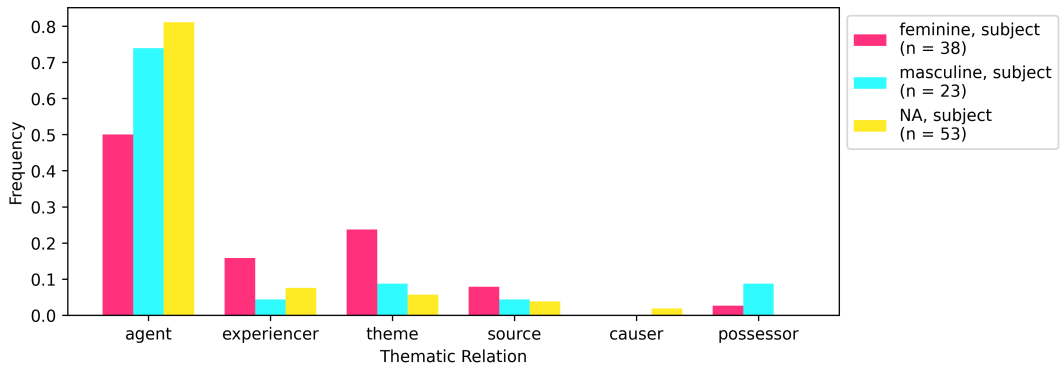Figure 3: Comparison of 3 Conditional Distributions in Mother's Retelling: P(Thematic Relation|Gender)

Figure 4: Comparison of 3 Conditional Distributions in Mother's Retelling: P(Thematic Relation|Gender, Grammatical Function=Subject)
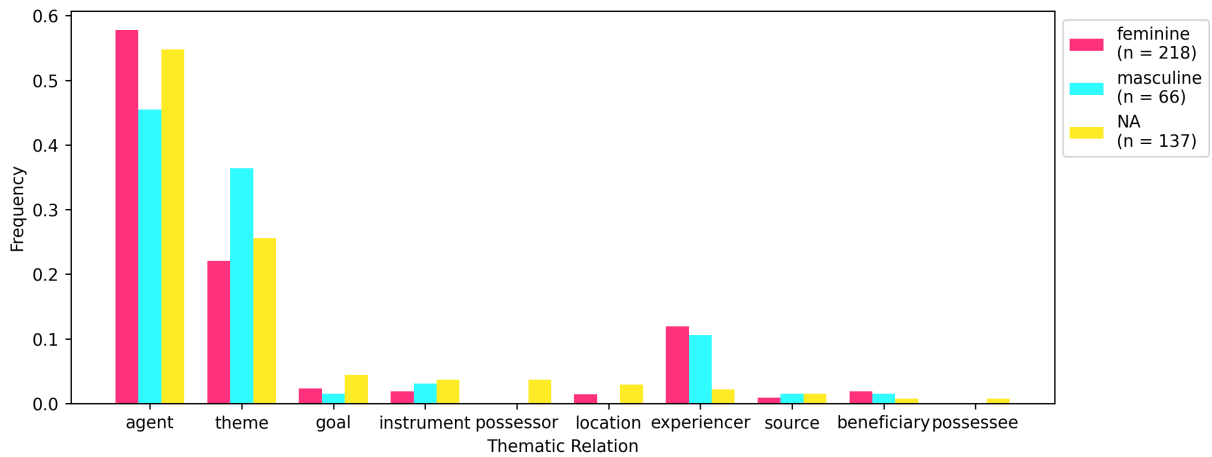

Figure 5: Comparison of 3 Conditional Distributions in Maxine's Retelling: P(Thematic Relation|Gender)

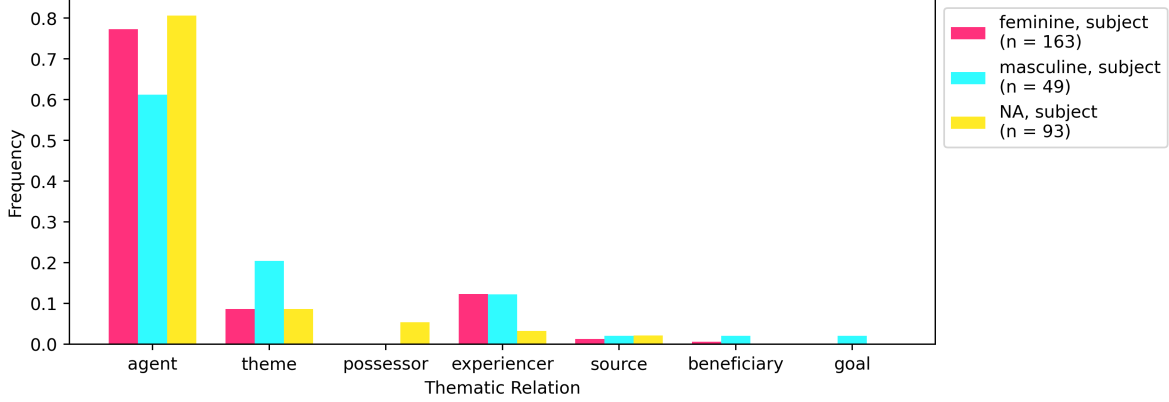Figure 3: Comparison of 3 Conditional Distributions in Maxine's Retelling: P(Thematic Relation|Gender, Grammatical Function=Subject)

3.2 Temporal Results

To have a granular view of the narrative segments' internal structures, I will also visualize the data points on a temporal register according to their appearances. To access sentence-level positioning, I will use three thematic relations in this visualization: agent, theme, and experiencer as proxies for agentic positioning, passive positioning, and experiential positioning. The following graphs (Figure 7 through Figure 12) illustrate the appearances of personal arguments on the first row and each argument's fulfillment of thematic relation on the second, third, and fourth row.

As an example, Figure 7 can be interpreted in the following ways. The legend displays the set of arguments the graph considers out of all arguments, namely arguments with the interactional role in the set {Maxine, aunt, mother, parents, father}. The first color block on the "Appearance" row is yellow, and this means the first person argument in the represented narrative segment has the interactional role of Maxine. In the vertical direction of this yellow block, another yellow block shows up in the "Fulfillment of 'agent'" row; this means the argument under consideration fulfills the thematic relation of agent. In certain cases, an argument under consideration fulfills a thematic relation that is not in the set of agent, theme, experiencer, and will have three empty/white color blocks under its "Appearance" block. The next color block on the "Appearance" row is empty/white as well as every block underneath it; this means the argument is not in the set of arguments under consideration. While the graph reserves space for this argument to reconstruct the pace of argument appearances, the graph does not illustrate the thematic relation of this argument.

3.2.1 Frames

Brave Orchid's retelling and Maxine's retelling are taken out of the global environment of the family's discussion about the aunt's "wrongdoing." When my profiling method isolates the narrative segments from the rest of the interaction, it does so by cropping out paragraphs using markers such as "You must not tell anyone" (Kingston 1976: 3) and "My aunt must have lived in the same house" (1976: 7). Nevertheless, both segments end up retaining their interactional edges either in the beginning or at the end. These edges bridge the gaps between the interaction world and the story world and operate as frames for the story worlds under construction.

To illustrate, Brave Orchid's narration begins and concludes with the following frame:

> "You must not tell anyone," my mother said, "what I am about to tell you. In China
> your father had a sister who killed herself. She jumped into the family well. We say
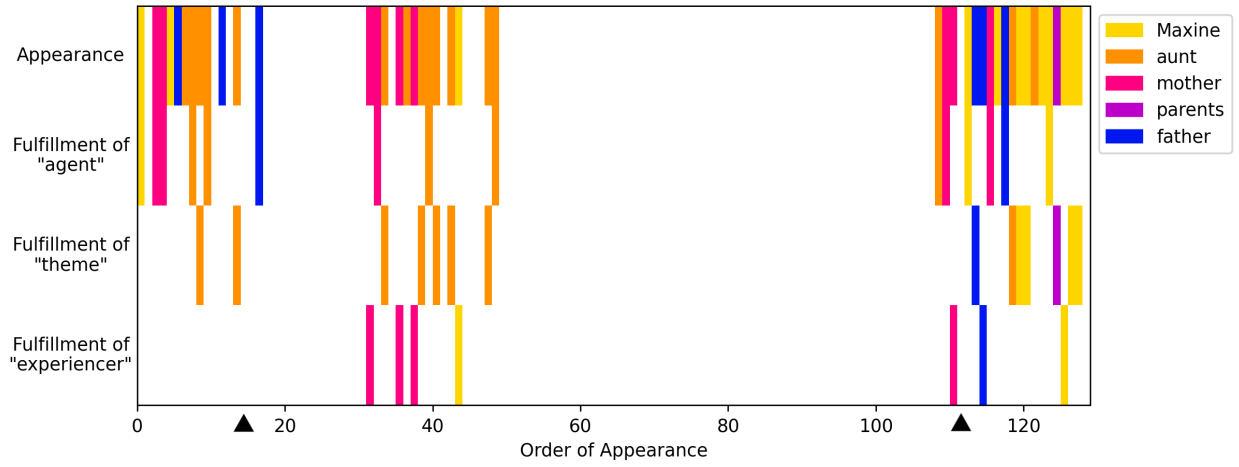
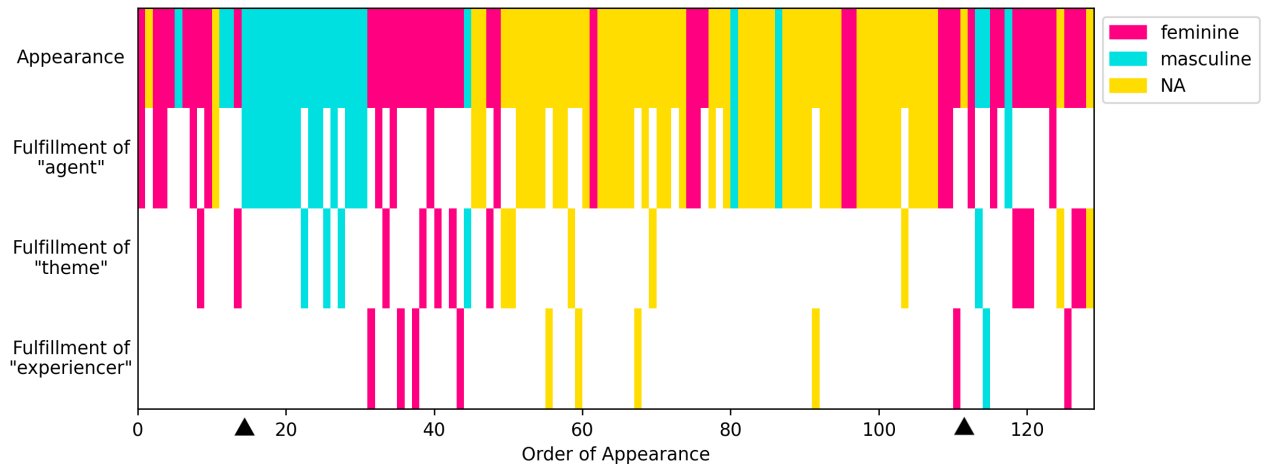Figure 7: Temporal Appearances in Mother's Retelling by Interactional Role

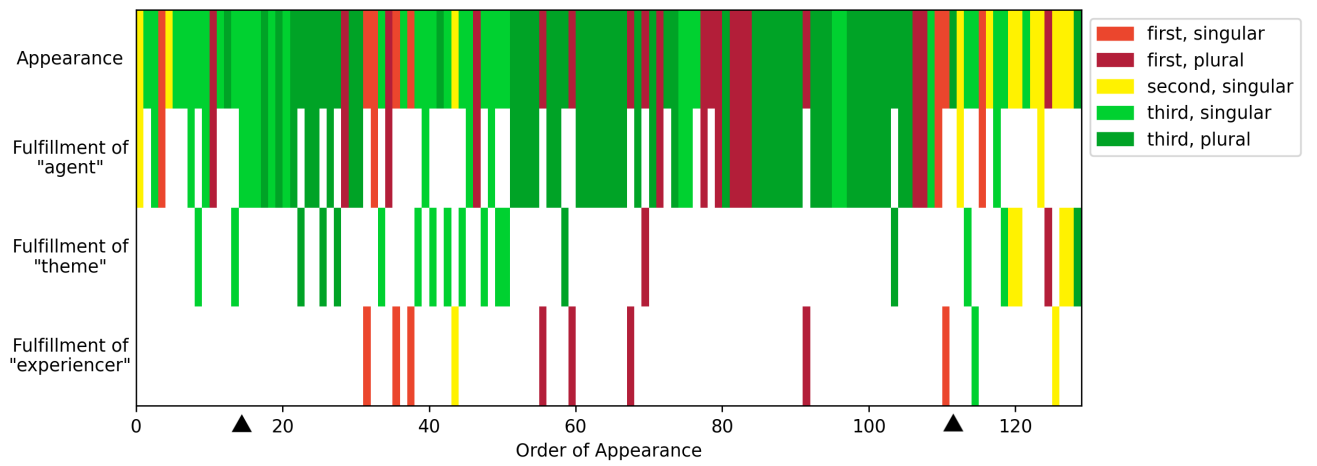Figure 8: Temporal Appearances in Mother's Retelling by Gender

Figure 9: Temporal Appearances in Mother's Retelling by Person and Number

Figure 10: Temporal Appearances in Maxine's Retelling by Interactional Role

Figure 11: Temporal Appearances in Maxine's Retelling by Gender
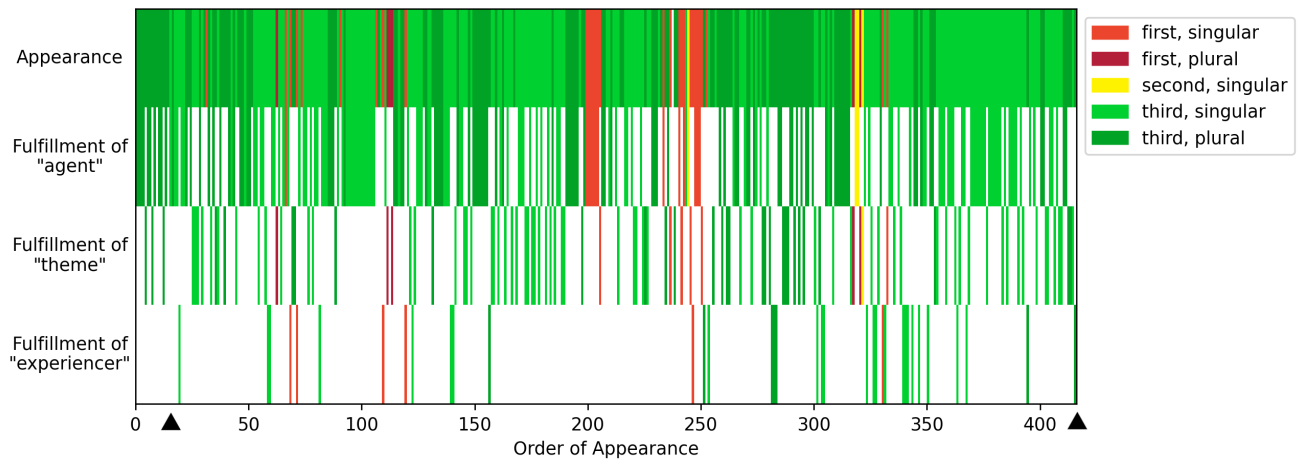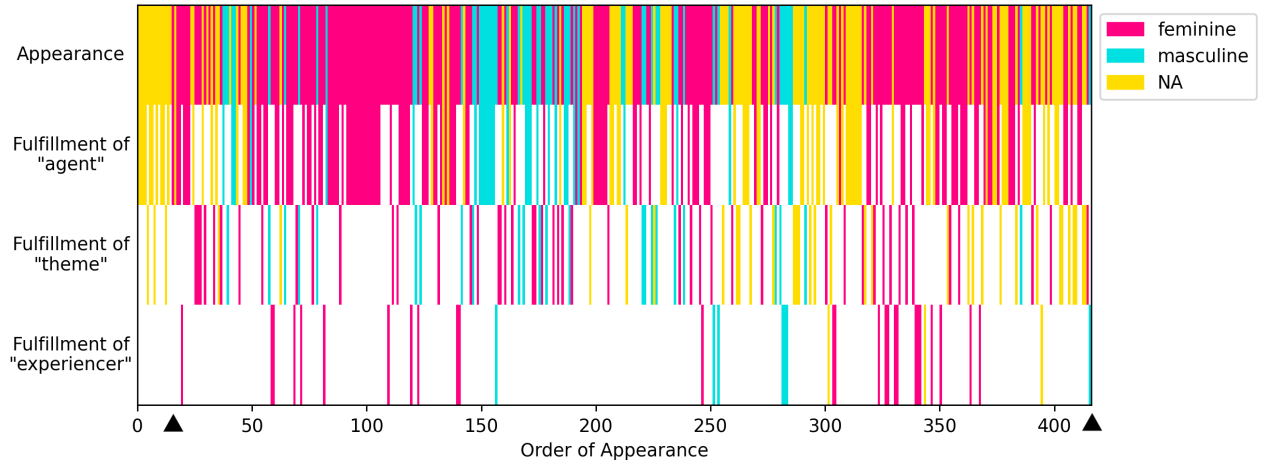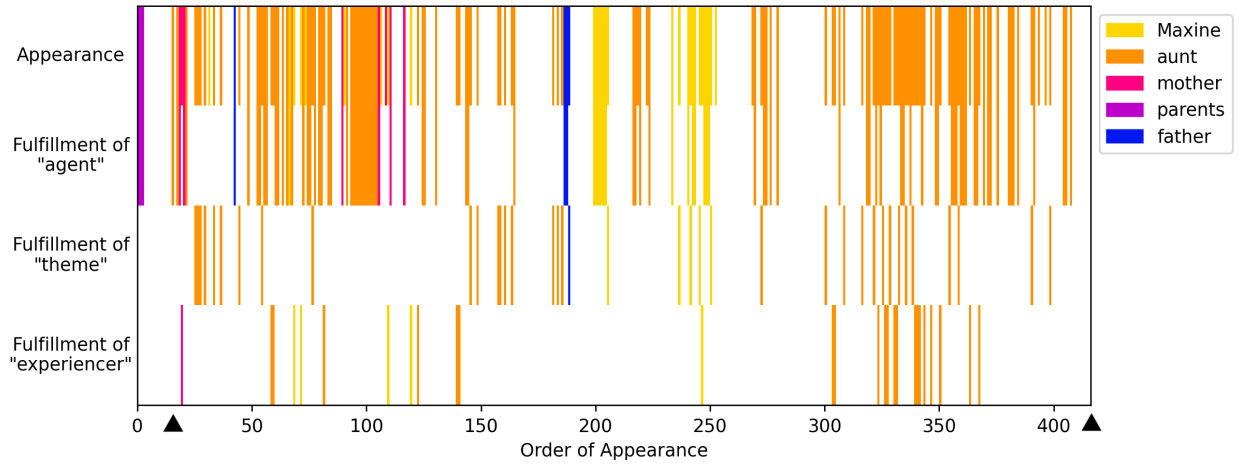

Figure 12: Temporal Appearances in Maxine's Retelling by Person and Number

that your father has all brothers because it is as if she had never been born. (Kingston 1976: 3)

"Don't let your father know that I told you. He denies her. Now that you have started to menstruate, what happened to her could happen to you. Don't humiliate us. You wouldn't like to be forgotten as if you had never been born. The villagers are watchful." (Kingston 1976: 5)

Within Brave Orchid's narration, the aunt's story begins and ends with the following sentences, which are different from the framing sentences:

"In 1924 just a few days after our village celebrated seventeen hurry-up weddings—to make sure that every young man who went 'out on the road' would responsibly come home—your father and his brothers and your grandfather and his brothers and your aunt's new husband sailed for America, the Gold Mountain. (Kingston 1976: 3)

The next morning when I went for the water, I found her and the baby plugging up the family well. (Kingston 1976: 5)

To delimit the interval of the 1924 story within the two narrative segments, see the black triangles under the horizontal axis which mark the story's beginning and end.

As Figure 7 suggests, in Brave Orchid's retelling, 4 interactional roles—"Maxine," "mother," "father," and "aunt"—emerge simultaneously in an alternating manner before the 1924 story unfolds (see horizontal axis: 1-16), and 5 interactional roles—the previous 4 and "parents"—emerge in the same way immediately after the story concludes (see horizontal axis: 113-128). While the father is not physically present in the mother-daughter address, Brave Orchid positions him within the address as a parental figure in parallel to herself to articulate what comes across as the parental consensus. This setup helps the addresser, Brave Orchid, to underpin her parental authority to prompt the addressee, Maxine, to understand the 1924 story as a cautionary tale.

Figure 10 contains a different frame structure: only half of the parental-lecture frame is present, as indicated by the occurrence of the interactional parents (see horizontal axis: 1-3). This half frame is reflected in the original text: "[o]n nights when my mother and father talked about their life back home, sometimes they mentioned an 'outcast table' whose business they still seemed to be settling, their voices tight" (Kingston 1976: 7). As Maxine develops her version of the story (after the first triangle mark), the interactional participants' corresponding Level-1 characters continue meagerly permeating the story, but never constitute sizable appearances. Maxine concludes her narrative segment by imagining the aunt character's suicide-infanticide without elaborate commentary (Kingston 1976: 15). On Level 2, Maxine seems to be able to position herself as a storyteller somewhat distantly from her mother and her father and the sexual shame they try to instill in her. In the paragraph that follows this narrative segment, Maxine does bring her account back into the context of family consensus, but she separates this contextualization from her account by visible sectional spacing. In doing so, Maxine allows herself to develop her own point of view on the controversy, away from parental scrutiny.

3.2.2 Foregrounding

Within the triangle-marked intervals of storytelling, Brave Orchid and Maxine foreground the 1924 story differently. As Figure 8 and Figure 9 suggest, Brave Orchid's retelling is foregrounded in male agency through both singular male characters and plural male characters. In the original text, this episode of "men doing things" is about the men in the village leaving for the United States for jobs. This foregrounding introduces the masculine characters as both individuals and a collective.

Implicitly, the same setup positions Brave Orchid's own character and the aunt's character among another collective as deindividuated, passive observers. This (de)individuation pattern wavers after the foregrounding, but returns at the end.

On the other hand, Maxine's retelling, as shown in Figure 11, is grounded in a gradual move towards female agency (see horizontal axis: 20-120). Specifically, as shown in Figure 10, it is a gradual move towards the aunt's character's agency. Combining Figure 10 and Figure 12 shows that third-person plural characters are subtly and continuously positioned against the aunt character to highlight the individuality of the aunt character. This foregrounding introduces a highly personal tone via the repetition of "my aunt doing things." In the original text, this interval contains a description of the aunt's marriage and family background as well as an elaboration of her being in a relationship with her lover. In Figure 11, the appearances of agentic feminine characters (see horizontal axis: 70-120), almost formed to the exclusion of the appearances of masculine characters, reflect the narration about how the aunt character tends to her appearance to please her lover. While still highly relational to a man, this episode exhibits a pattern of individuation that cannot be found in Brave Orchid's narration. This foregrounding is put to an end as Maxine diverges to probe the male gaze and the Chinese kinship culture, before completely departing to tell a story about herself.

The different Level-1 foregroundings, along with the endings (discussed next), reveal Brave Orchid's storytelling perspective to be one that is deindividuated. Her perspective originates as her observation of one collective (men leaving the village) when she is a member of another collective (people staying in the village) and in the end manifests as her commentary about one collective (the watchful villagers) when she speaks as the member of another collective (her family whose moral image is ought to be protected).

3.2.3   Ending

In Brave Orchid's retelling, as represented by Figure 7, the 1924 story ends at a blank color block (see horizontal axis: 112). This argument is *her and the baby* in the sentence "The next morning when I went for the water, I found her and the baby plugging up the family well." (Kingston 1976: 5) Also in Figure 7, Brave Orchid's retelling as a whole ends at another blank color block at the final point of the horizontal axis. This argument is *The villagers* in the sentence "The villagers are watchful." (Kingston 1976: 5). In Maxine's retelling, as represented by Figure 11, the ending of the story and the ending of the narrative segment co-occur at the final blue color block. This argument is *boys* in the sentence "It was probably a girl; there is some hope of forgiveness for boys." (Kingston 1976: 15).

Between the two segments, there is a shift in their ending foci from ungendered, plural arguments to gendered, singular arguments. Through zooming in on a moral doctrine through gendered individuals, this shift spotlights patriarchal oppression, which has been the unstated premise of the aunt's story throughout. By filling "the villagers"'s position with "boys," Maxine removes the readers from their previous position concerning morality itself, and confronts them with morality's interaction with gender.

3.2.4   Permeability

The vertical axis of the temporal graphs shows how groups of arguments can occupy different categories of thematic relations. Some groups of arguments occupy more rows of thematic relations with low horizontal density on their rows of occupation, and other groups of arguments occupy fewer rows of thematic relations with higher horizontal density on their rows of occupation. I will

refer to this discrepancy as the difference in arguments' permeability with respect to the thematic relations under consideration: the first kind of arguments are considered more permeable than the second kind.

An overview of the 6 temporal graphs shows that some person arguments are more permeable than others, and the same person argument can show different degrees of permeability at different times. Some of the gendered differences in permeability reflect the same patterns discussed in the section "Aggregate Results." Notably, in Brave Orchid's narrative segment, the aunt appears less permeable than the rest of the participants and characters, as shown in Figure 7: the aunt never fulfills the experiencer thematic relation while other arguments fulfill all 3 thematic relations. This difference can be explained by the frame within which the retelling happens: the parents continue punishing the aunt by suppressing her experience. As shown in figure 10, Maxine's retelling renders the aunt character with more permeability. Particularly, the character is generously assigned the agent, theme and experiencer relations during the narration of her self-helped labor (see horizontal axis: 300-400).

3.2.5 Entanglement

Figure 10 and Figure 12 show a significant amount of authorial intrusion (the author being the narrator Maxine) in the middle part of Maxine's narration about her aunt (see horizontal axis: 200-250). This intrusion can be seen as an autobiographical takeover. Since the book is largely autobiographical, the incorporation of Maxine's personal experience is not surprising. However, the sudden change in perspective and the time/position of its occurrence demand an inquiry.

In the original text, a more subtle incorporation of autobiographical content takes place first as Maxine imagines her aunt combing her hair and remembers how her mother used to take care of her hair (see horizontal axis: 20-125). The incorporation continues as Maxine imagines the village's kinship culture and remembers how she navigates her Chinese American identity. What triggers the takeover might be found in Figure 10 (see horizontal axis: 125-190): dense appearances of masculine characters. In the original text, the appearances are made up by Maxine imagining the men in her aunt's family successfully or unsuccessfully repressing their urges in a sexually conservative society. Per Maxine's explanation, the kinship culture in the village prioritizes and idolizes siblinghood among people who are not blood-related to the exclusion of romance, eliciting an opposite effect. The autobiographical takeover happens during Maxine's reflection on her own compulsory practice of the kinship culture, and, as a result, her being eager for romance but not receiving romantic attention (Kingston 1976: 12) for a long time during her adolescence.

The narrator Maxine, a Level 2 participant, develops an account of her own history by positioning herself in the story about her aunt, a Level 1 character. This cross-level positioning produces an adjacency that allows Maxine to use her aunt's experience as a conduit to develop her own Level 1 character. As Deborah Schiffrin argues, "multi-vocalic oral histories and continuously constructed life stories arise not just from personal actions and interactions that make up 'first-hand' experience, but also from various kinds of vicarious experience" (2006: 211). Under this framework, Maxine's entanglement with her aunt's history can be read as her own "multi-vocalic history," that arises from the "vicarious experience" provided by (an imagination of) her aunt's story.

4 Conclusion

If Susan Beer's retellings show a "move towards performativity" (2006: 274), what do Kingston's retellings say about her narrative move? Brave Orchid fulfills multiple interactional roles in her retelling: she is a wife who is going her husband's wish by spilling the family secret, she is a relative

who is telling the story of her dead sister-in-law, she is a woman who is telling a story about herself (see "Future Work"), and she is a mother who is teaching her daughter survival strategies in the patriarchy. The multiplicity in her position produces a series of protocols that may be in conflict with one another: her self-positioning as an observer and the evaluative distance she holds are both necessary given the protocols she is in negotiation with. As a response to her mother's account, Maxine probes a personal history that had been overwhelmed by a collective history and a crime whose nature remains unknown. She does so by revealing the issue of gender oppression and subversively positioning the aunt as an agent and an experiencer in her version of retelling.

Yet, a crucial difference is that Brave Orchid's retelling happens in person during a conversation, and Maxine's retelling happens through her rumination and imagination. Maxine's imagination is not only a departure from conventional storytelling, but also a detour that avoids the same narrative protocols that hindered her mother. Thus, both Brave Orchid's negotiation with narrative protocols and Maxine's avoidance of them demonstrate the difficulty in (re)rendering a history of female shame. In developing an account of this suppressed history, Kingston is not only diligently recovering her aunt's truth, but also revealing the difficulty in performing such a recovery when narrators are explicitly or implicitly bounded by their multiple interactional roles.

In observing the different interactions and plots, the temporal syntactic profiles called our attention to specific paragraphs and sentences where we performed comparative close readings to understand the underlying trajectory of the retellings. The profiles highlighted the interactional frames the narrators adopt, their different foregrounding and ending strategies, the varied depths they give to their characters (permeability), and their own entanglements with the story characters. The temporal profiles have proved helpful in our observation of Kingston's narrative move towards the erased history of a no-name woman, towards shame, and towards a new verdict.

5   Future Work

On the register of narrative analysis, I am leaving an important pattern unexplored, providing an opportunity for future work. A significant "blank" takes place in Brave Orchid's narration, as represented by Figures 7, 8, and 10 (see horizontal axis: 50-110). The blank is a disconnect between Level-1 and Level-2 positioning, during which the story characters stop being coreferential with the interactional participants. It is also an opaque expression of "we saw that they did things," where *they* repetitively reconstruct a doing in a largely deindividuated manner. In the original text, the dense appearances of *they*s can be traced back to Brave Orchid's witness of the raid that happened at her home—Brave Orchid was implicated in the violence not only as an observer, but also as a victim. As Deborah Schiffrin points out: "[s]urvivors' oral histories reveal continuous struggles with 'what happened,' with how to convey what happened, and with how to integrate the self of past experience with the self of current existence" (2006: 214). The blank, the disconnect between her storytelling self and her experiential self, as well as the evaluative distance she keeps from the aunt's experience, might require an analytical framework of trauma to further elucidate.

On the technical register, future iterations of the profiling method can consider keeping track of variables to further explain the argument-predicate relationship. Suitable variables here include the predicate types among verbs (unergative, unaccusative, 2-place, 3-place, and passive) and the predicate types among specificational copular sentences (verbal, adverbial, nominal, and prepositional). Both categories can provide further insight into the behavior of arguments beyond thematic relations. Additionally, future work can allocate attention to thematic relations other than agent, theme, and experiencer for a fuller observation of the mapping between arguments and predicates.

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