The Glass Ceiling in Science Fiction

Pronoun Exploration in Frank Herbert's *Dune* vs Octavia E. Butler's *Parable of the Sower*

A little about the authors...

Photo: George Westbeau

FRANK HERBERT

Born in 1920

Grew up in Washington state

Best known for his book Dune

According to Wikipedia, he said the novel originated when he was assigned to write a magazine article about sand dunes in the Oregon Dunes near Florence, Oregon

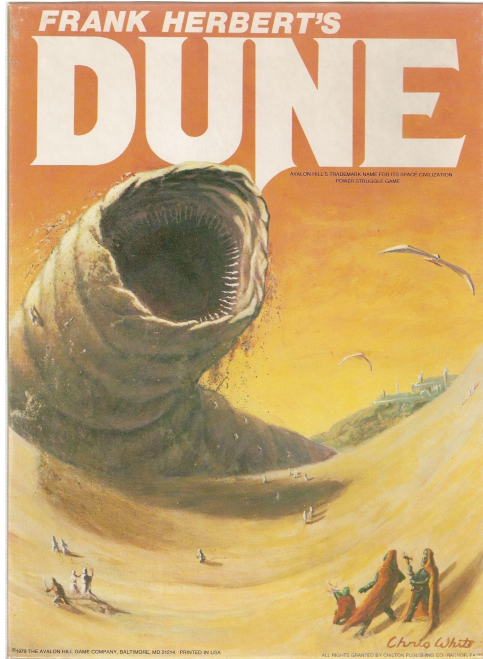# A little about the authors...

Octavia E. Butler

Born in 1947

Grew up in California

Butler always wanted to be a writer. For 10 years after graduating from Pasadena City College, she worked menial odd jobs in order to be able to get up at two or three in the morning to write. By 1978, she was able to support herself on her writing income alone.

She was the first black woman to win both the Hugo and Nebula awards.

A little about the books...
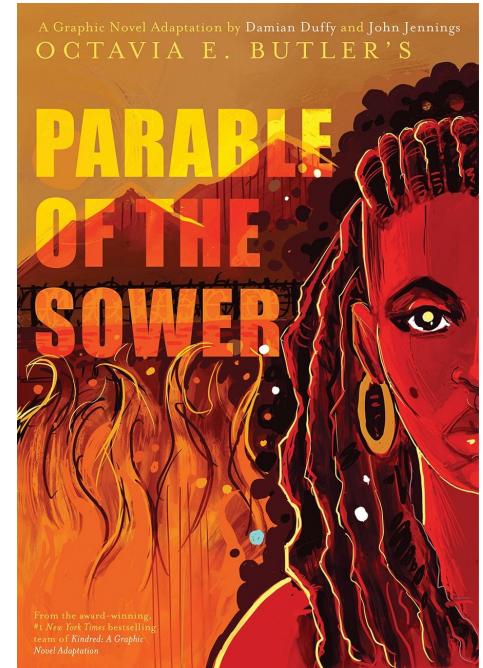

Similarities

Young protagonist that has to navigate a world that has completely fallen apart, leaving their fathers dead.

The protagonists either creates or uses a new religion to help them navigate that new world.
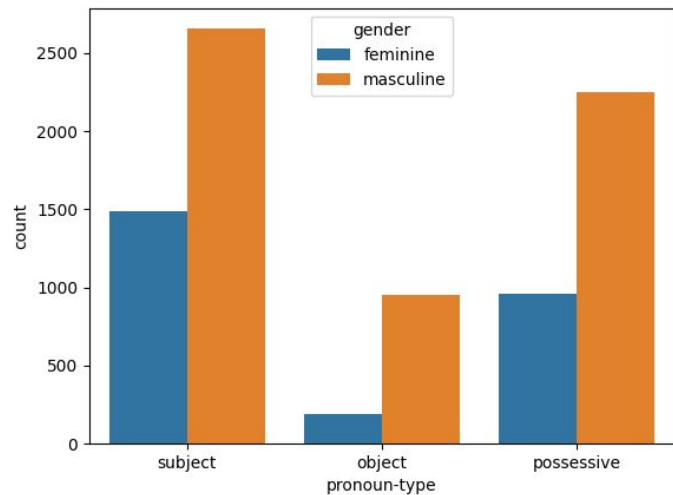
Differences

Male vs. Female protagonists.

Dune takes place far in the future. Parable of the Sower takes place in an eerily prophetic 2024.
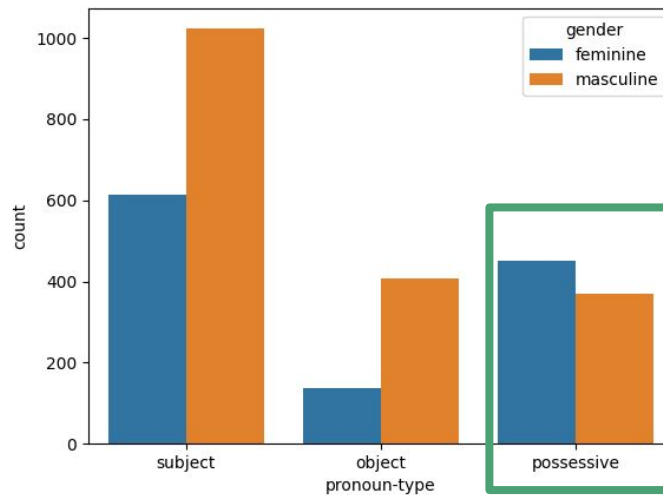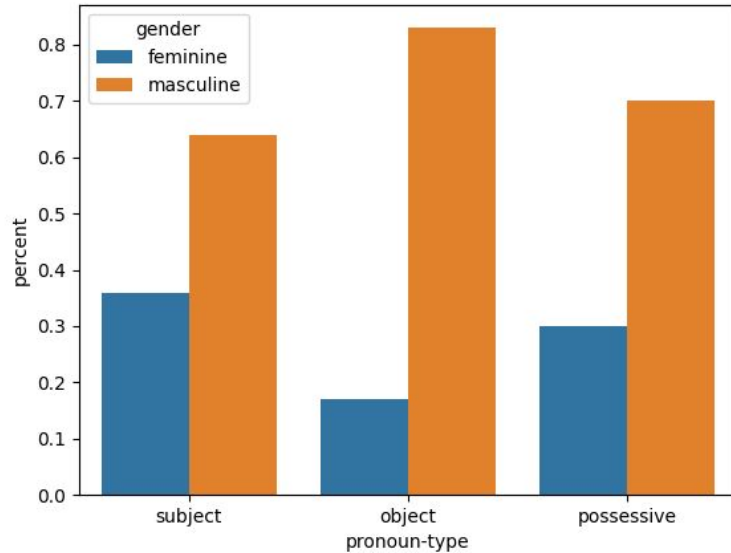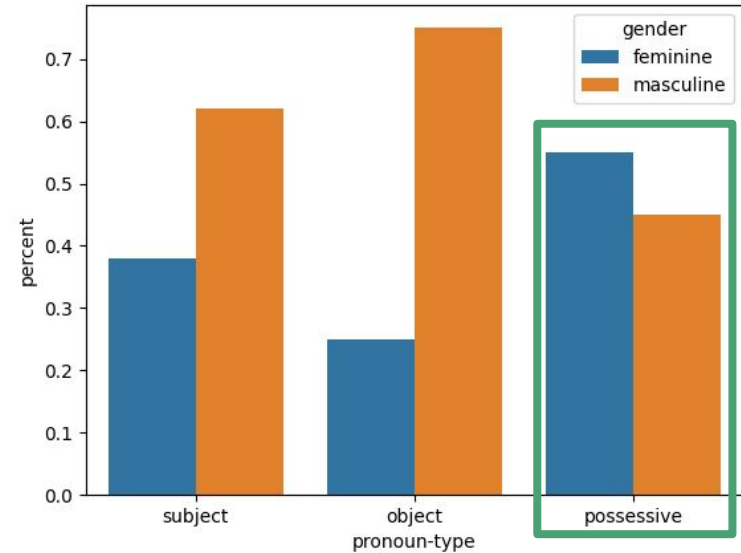
The pronouns…

Dune

Parable of the Sower

All counts reached statistical significance with a p-value of 0.05.

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Dune

Parable of the Sower

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One last thing…

This input:

```
"She ran",
"He ran",
"I saw her",
"I saw him",
"I know her name",
"I know his name",
"That is hers",
"That is his"
```

Produces this output:

Wrong!

```
['ShePRP ranVBD',
 'HePRP ranVBD',
 'IPRP sawVBD herPRP$',
 'IPRP sawVBD himPRP',
 'IPRP knowVBP herPRP nameNN',
 'IPRP knowVBP hisPRP$ nameNN',
 'ThatDT isVBZ hersNNS',
 'ThatDT isVBZ hisPRP$']
```

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Produces this output:

Correct!

```
['ShePRP ranVBD ..',
 'HePRP ranVBD ..',
 'IPRP sawVBD herPRP ..',
 'IPRP sawVBD himPRP ..',
 'IPRP knowVBP herPRP$ nameNN ..',
 'IPRP knowVBP hisPRP$ nameNN ..',
 'ThatDT isVBZ hersNNS ..',
 'ThatDT isVBZ hisPRP$ ..']
```