

## Technology References by Frequency in *The Sonnets*

The visual below is a word tower that is representative of the frequency of technological references by word. Words with more frequent occurrences in *The Sonnets* appear larger while words with fewer occurrences are smaller. Words that are blue represent technologies that commonly connect two entities. For example, a tack connects papers to a bulletin and radio waves connect one signal to another. Forms of media are included in this category as they connect ideas and thoughts. Words that are yellow represent technologies that commonly divide or disperse an entity. For example, pills break apart, and they disperse particles across the body.



## The Significance of Technology as a Component of Collage

As vast forms of technology began to develop in the 1960's, it was clear that an infatuation with digital media was developing in America. From radio to television, American life was beginning to centralize around digital technology for recreation, entertainment, and information. With this being the case, technology has an inherent correspondence to pop culture and modern artistic endeavours. It is this connection to pop culture as a medium for art that attracts artists of the New York school to utilize technology as a parallel to mundane activities. How this use of technology is executed, however, differs between *The Sonnets* and *I Remember*.

The reasoning behind the difference in categories between the two books comes from the purpose of using a collage to fulfill an aesthetic. Joe Brainard utilizes the structures and aspects of collage to create a memoir while Ted Berrigan utilizes the sensations around experiencing poetry to create a collage. It is this distinction that illustrates why *I Remember* has many technological categories, and *The Sonnets* uses technology as an overarching allusion to the process of composing collages.

Although utilized for differing purposes, technology referenced in *The Sonnets* and *I Remember* ultimately serves the purpose of enhancing the structures and themes of the collages created in the two books.

## Technology References by Frequency in *I Remember*

The visual below is a word tower that is representative of the frequency of technological references by word. Words with more frequent occurrences in *I Remember* appear larger toward the top of the tower while words with fewer occurrences are smaller and toward the bottom. Words are colored based on their category, the key for which can be seen in the pie chart below the word tower. As an example, the red word at the very top, “shoes,” is part of the fashion category and appeared the most frequently. Note that not all categories are included within the word tower because the words of those categories did not reach the frequencies of the lowest visualized in the tower.



## The Use of Technology in *The Sonnets* as a Tool for Collage

*The Sonnets* is a collection of poems spawned through the method of collage creation. All of the poems in the book connect to one another through repetition and theme. Among the vast array of words are references to technology, including tools, media, weapons, and transportation. According to *The Wedge* by William Carlos Williams, poems are small machines made of words. His point is that machines have no redundant or impractical components and neither do poems. *The Sonnets* is in direct conversation with William's opinion, and the technologies referenced are practical parts to the machine in that they serve the purpose of creating the literal effect of composing collages. Just as a bridge connects Brooklyn to Manhattan, pieces of a collage are arranged to create connections and correspondences between fragments and pieces that don't inherently go together. Inversely, as pills serve to dissolve and spread medicine through the body, pieces of a collage are broken, ripped, and divided to be configured back again.

Technologies such as pictures, cameras, movies, and radio waves are present in *The Sonnets* to accentuate the importance of this new media-dense cultural environment to the New York School aesthetic (Voyce). It is because of this inclusion of electronic media that a vast majority of the referenced technologies come in the form of “connecting words” when viewed in the word tower visual. It is also important to note the inclusion of electronic media as a method to experience the auditory experience of poetry. With radio (referenced by as radio waves in *The Sonnets*) and video as a medium, the performance aspect of poetry could finally be expressed outside the scope of poetry readings (Casselman).

## The Use of Technology in *I Remember* as a Tool for Collage

*I Remember* by Joe Brainard is a collage of specific and personal memories that evoke vivid images through details of the physical world. References to technologies appear within these details and indicate its importance to the time period (Hester). Technology covers a large range of things; for example, media is a tool—and thus technology—for communication, and toys are a tool used for entertainment, particularly within childhood. The categories of technology listed within the *I Remember* pie chart are separated as such because they are each significant within all or a particular stage of Brainard's life.

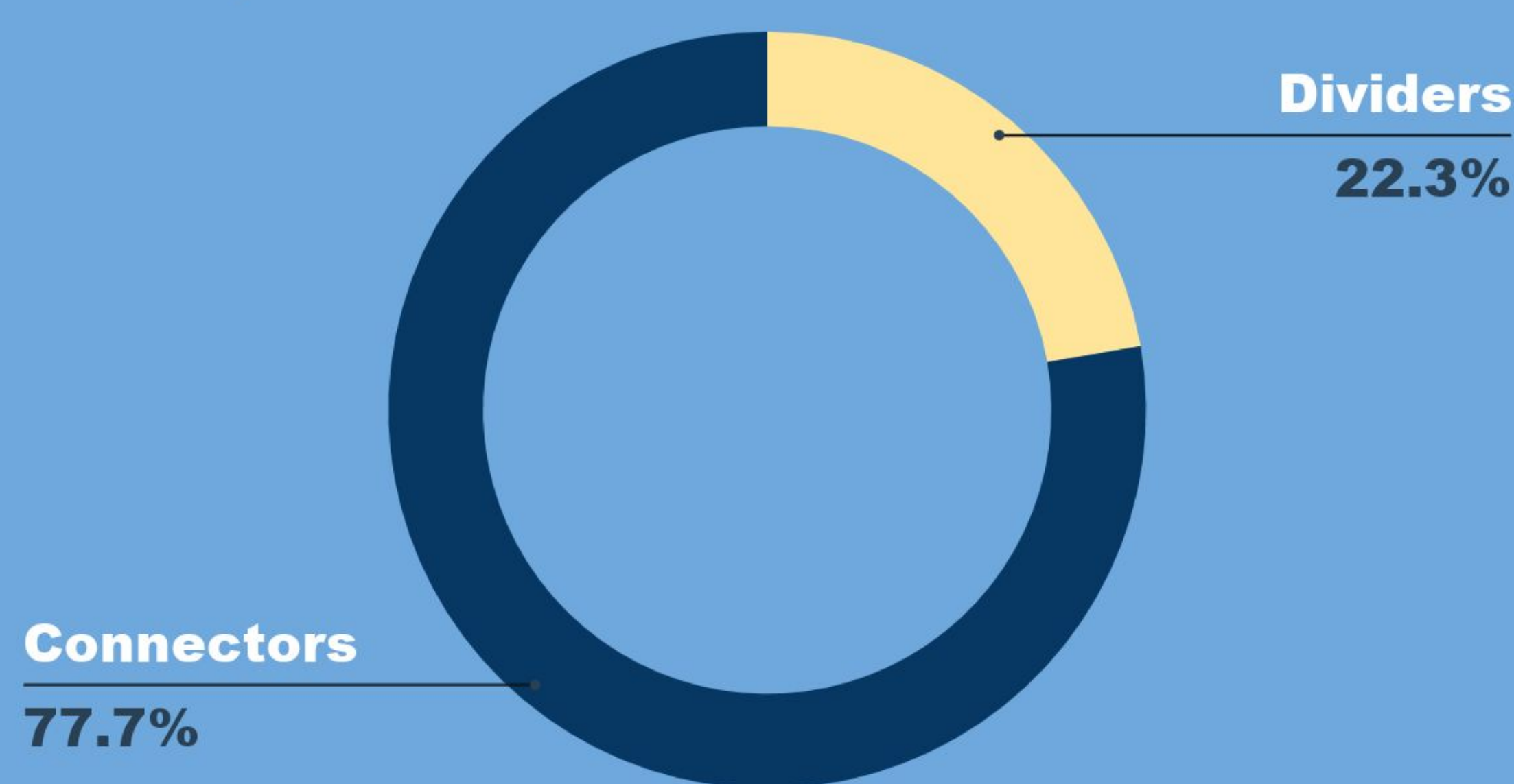
These different types of technology form a collage of their own that depict the various media, technologies, and tools that were a part of Brainard's experiences. The percentages of those categories' presences seen in the pie chart indicate importance to the collage structure of the book. For example, fashion—at 20.8% occurrence—is one of the most prevalent categories. Its significance in the book acts on the fact that it is an aesthetic, design-based technology, which resonates with Brainard's emerging sense of self as a visual artist during the countercultural period of the 1960s and 1970s (O'Connor) as fashion became more of an art form.

With “picture” as one of the most frequently written words, as shown by the *I Remember* word tower, there is an interesting connection to the fact that collages are commonly made from a collection of pictures. This suggests that Brainard's attraction to the collage aesthetic was brought about by his upbringing in an increasingly media-dense culture.

## Comparing the Impact of Technology in *The Sonnets* and *I Remember*

*The Sonnets* references technology and media as the glue that connects seemingly discrete lines and phrases, and that connects poems across the sequence. 77.7% of technology references in *The Sonnets* are what we've defined as “connectors.” The remainder of technology references in *The Sonnets* are dividers, or technologies that suggest a break or fragmentation through their use, which serve to make the connections between poems less apparent. This creates the effect that reading one poem subtly reminds the reader of a previous poem: déjà vu. If there were no dividers and all the poems had clear connections, then the déjà vu effect would be missing. It's interesting that the word “poems” is the most prevalent form of connecting technology mentioned in *The Sonnets*. Although identifying “poem” as a kind of technology might seem to be a unique interpretation, this idea speaks to Williams' aesthetic claim that poems are machines composed of words in his essay *Introduction to The Wedge*. According to Williams, all sonnets “say the same thing of no importance.” This line of thinking explains why poems were chosen as the medium to create a collage. By having a medium that on its own says nothing of importance, the sequence of the medium is now especially important. *I Remember*, however, uses various categories of technologies to describe the many aspects of Brainard's life. The most frequent word in *I Remember* we observed is “shoes.” Shoes fall under the category of “fashion” which serves to express oneself. Thus, “fashion” is essentially a technology to communicate personal identity. The ability to communicate personal identity is a common theme among the words in the word tower: “picture,” “magazine,” “hat,” and “painting,” for example, all relate to expression. As a young artist, fashion was an important medium for expression. As fashion choices correspond to the aesthetic interests that Brainard developed, it is clear why fashion mentions was especially prevalent in this coming-of-age memoir of an aspiring artist.

### Proportion of Connectors and Dividers



### Proportions of Technology and Media Reference Categories

