

POP CULTURE REFERENCES IN *I REMEMBER* AND *THE SONNETS*

Tracking pop culture in *I Remember* and *The Sonnets* by categorizing references by type paints a picture of mid-twentieth century America that shapes these New York School texts. It is irrefutable that both Brainard and Berrigan were influenced by their surroundings when writing their respective books. The unique structure of these books, however, allows for an equally unique analysis of those pop culture influences: by tracking and categorizing the pop culture references in each book - structured by memory and collage as opposed to chronology - a hypothesis can be made regarding which elements of pop culture were most impactful to each author's works. Overlaps in category could indicate which elements of pop culture the New York School artists were most interested in, and how childhood memories and cultures are shaped by people's interactions with media, literature, consumerism, and their physical surroundings. These implications can then be discussed in the context of the twenty-first century and applied to our own lives.

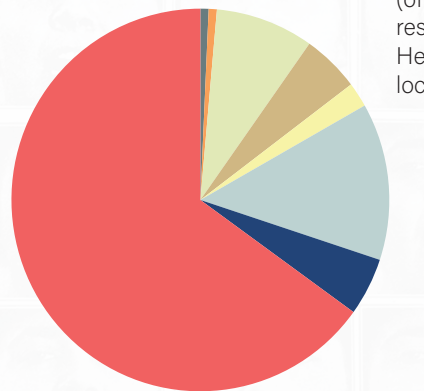


Ted Berrigan (R) and Ron Padgett (L) - Ron Padgett was the most frequent reference, mentioned 11 times between the two books.

THE SONNETS - TED BERRIGAN

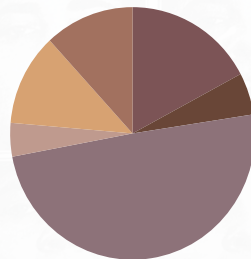
Ted Berrigan's book of collaged lines (both appropriated and original), uses a smaller variety of pop culture references than Brainard's *I Remember*, but has nearly twice the concentration of celebrity references - almost 50% of which are to poets. This makes sense, for as New York School Painters & Poets states, *The Sonnets* cataloged a "twitching bricolage of days,—who Berrigan was thinking about, and who he hoped was thinking about him." (Quilter 156). Considering that most of Berrigan's friends were fellow poets, this explains the quantity of poetic references (of which the historical ones were likely the result of Berrigan's professional knowledge). He was also noticeably influenced by famous locations, Old-West literature, and pulp fiction.

THE SONNETS REFERENCES



- Song
- Business/Organization
- Literature
- Fictional Character
- Food/Drink
- Location
- Other
- Famous People

FAMOUS PEOPLE BREAKDOWN



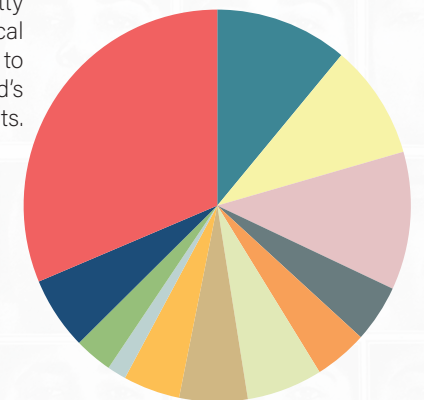
- Actor
- Artist
- Politician
- Poet
- Other
- Musician

I Remember, composed entirely of memories, has more categories of pop culture references than Berrigan's *The Sonnets*. Furthermore, Brainard appeared to be less focused on poets and writers than on celebrities, movies, and consumerism. This variety can likely be attributed to the fact that *I Remember* spans Brainard's entire childhood and adolescence, whereas *The Sonnets* is not connected to any specific time period. A young man is more likely to focus on fads and media, such as pig-latin and Betty Grable, than esteemed literature and historical figures. However, a large chunk still belongs to the "poetry" category, as many of Brainard's memories involve New York School poets.

I REMEMBER - JOE BRAINARD

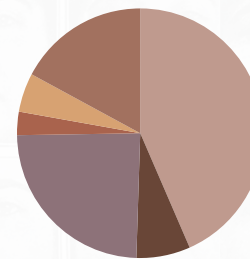
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I REMEMBER REFERENCES



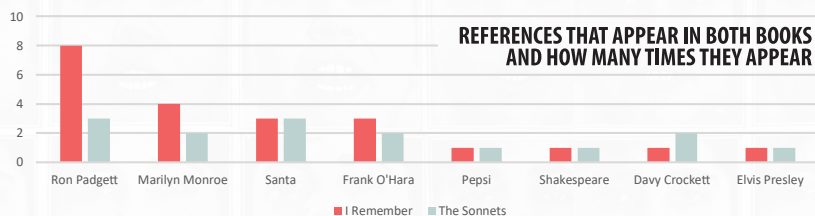
- Consumer Brand
- Food/Drink
- Movies/TV
- Song
- Business/Organization
- Literature
- Fictional Character
- Fashion
- Location
- Household Item
- Other
- Famous People

FAMOUS PEOPLE BREAKDOWN



- Actor
- Author
- Other
- Musician
- Politician
- Poet

REFERENCES THAT APPEAR IN BOTH BOOKS AND HOW MANY TIMES THEY APPEAR



Despite their differences in quantity and style, both *The Sonnets'* and *I Remember's* references to pop culture shape their authors' connections to the world around them. They form the environment of the authors' adolescence, the sights and sounds that shaped their growth, such as Marilyn Monroe, mentioned in both texts as a stylistic icon (see figure to the left). In the same way, pop culture greatly affects how we see the world today: William Corbet best summarizes this experience in *Joe Brainard's Art* by describing *I Remember* as "everybody's biography," (Corbet 192). Many references - like Cherry Coke and 7-Up - are still relevant in 2019. However, whether or not the pop culture references in both books were intentionally added to create this experience is irrelevant. What matters is that they are there, and they do have an impact on the reader, be it remembering their own experiences with these references or through drawing parallels with the pop culture around them today.