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### The Detrimental Effects of Technology on Society

Most people would agree that technology comes with numerous benefits; Ray Bradbury, however, disagreed with this view. Bradbury wrote numerous dystopian books and short stories during the 1950s warning people about the potential dangers of an overdependence on technology. He portrays this message in his short stories “August 2026: There Will Come Soft Rains” and “The Pedestrian.” “August 2026” depicts a city in California destroyed by nuclear war, where only one house remains standing. “The Pedestrian” describes a society in which people are addicted to their televisions and rarely spend time outside their homes. In the story, the police arrest the protagonist, Mr. Mead, for simply taking a walk outside his home and being the sole pedestrian. In both of his short stories, Bradbury displays the potential detrimental impacts of technology on human society; however, he presents this idea more effectively in “August 2026”.

While both short stories create unsettling moods, “August 2026” more effectively harnesses this mood to develop the idea that technology may destroy human society. The story describes the last standing house in the city of Allendale, California, shortly after the detonation of a nuclear bomb, which has destroyed the city and killed all of its inhabitants. The nuclear blast left behind a “silhouette in paint of a man mowing a lawn” and of “a girl, hands raised to catch a ball which never came down” (1). This image unsettles because it captures an innocent moment through death and leaves behind a permanent mark of the children’s deaths. Bradbury chooses to focus on the families and children killed by the bomb in order to elicit human sympathy for

them, which allows him to more effectively present the destructive capabilities of technology. Contrarily, “The Pedestrian” lacks the mood development present in “August 2026,” which inhibits its ability to portray the destructive capabilities of technology. The story develops an unsettling mood early on; however, most of the story does not. In the story, Mr. Mead describes his walking home past “the cottages and homes with their dark windows” as “not unequal to walking through a graveyard.” (1). The juxtaposition between people in their homes distracted by technology and dead bodies buried in a cemetery creates an unsettling mood for the story. Although the beginning of the story develops an ominous and disturbing mood<sup>[OB]</sup>, the majority of the story focuses on dialogue between Mr. Mead and a computer in a self-driving car. The purpose of this is to demonstrate how technology can cause society to radically change to the point where something as simple as going for a walk would be considered irregular. However, the conversation mimics normal human conversation, and does not help to develop the story’s mood. Because of this, the story lacks the deeper mood development present in “August 2026,” causing it to present the destructive abilities of technology less effectively than “August 2026”

Bradbury’s use of imagery in “August 2026” makes it more effective than “The Pedestrian” in demonstrating this.<sup>[OB]</sup> Bradbury effectively employs imagery when he describes “the house [standing] alone in a city of rubble and ashes” and how “the ruined city gave off a radioactive glow that could be seen for miles” (1). Through his description of the town after the nuclear blast, Bradbury demonstrates how easily advancements in technology can destroy all of humanity. The nuclear bomb had already existed at the time that the book was created, and it had the ability to completely obliterate large cities and towns. Bradbury uses the destruction of a city by a nuclear bomb to demonstrate that technology can completely obliterate all of humanity. Through the detonation of a nuclear bomb, Bradbury demonstrates Unlike “August 2026,” which

is filled with imagery throughout, “The Pedestrian” only utilizes imagery in the first few paragraphs. Early on in the text, Bradbury uses imagery in describing how “lights might click on and faces appear and an entire street might be startled by the passing of a lone figure” while he is walking (1). However, the majority of the text focuses on a conversation between Mr. Mead and an autonomous car. This section of the story focuses on dialogue and thus contains very little imagery. Because of this, it is less effective at demonstrating the destructive capabilities of technology than “August 2026.”

The exclusion of human characters in “August 2026” allows it to more effectively portray the negative impacts of technology than “The Pedestrian.” “August 2026” describes a city which has been annihilated by the detonation of a nuclear bomb, and thus the story contains no human characters. At the time when people would normally go to work, “no doors [slam]” and “no carpets [take] the soft tread of rubber heels,” due to the fact that the people who used to live in the house were killed by the bomb (1). By not including any humans in his story, Bradbury shows that technology’s negative impacts are not just that they isolate people and distract them from the world around them, but rather that it also has the ability to destroy all of humanity. The inclusion of human characters makes “The Pedestrian” less effective at portraying the potential detrimental effects of technology than “August 2026”. Rather than focusing on the physical destruction of humanity, the story focuses on technology causing people to become more isolated and preventing human interaction. Bradbury describes how, with the exception of Mr. Mead, “the street was silent and long and empty” (1). He also uses Mr. Mead’s arrest and transfer to a psychiatric center for “regressive tendencies” to show how technology will cause society to change to the point where something as basic as going for a walk is considered abnormal behavior (1). However, the negative impacts of technology presented in the story are limited to

human interaction and behavior, and do not extend to the physical destruction of humanity in the way that they do in “August 2026.” Because of this, “August 2026” is more effective at presenting the potential dangers of technology than “The Pedestrian.”

Although both of Bradbury’s short stories serve to warn people of the potential destruction of human society due to an overdependence on technology, “August 2026” is more effective at serving this purpose than “The Pedestrian.” “August 2026” utilizes an unsettling mood and descriptive imagery more effectively than “The Pedestrian.” Its lack of human characters also demonstrates technology’s ability to completely destroy all of humanity, an idea which does not appear in “The Pedestrian.” Both stories and their messages are increasingly relevant in people’s daily lives today, as many of the technologies present in the stories, such as the nuclear bomb, are continuing to improve and become more powerful. It is very important for people to be careful while developing or using these technologies, because, as demonstrated in Bradbury’s short stories, many of these technologies come with unintended consequences and can have destructive effects on society.