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Section S

September 27th, 2021

Humanities

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Consequence of Technology

As humans rely on technology to replace simple needs, humans begin to lose their grasp on their own lives. After World War II, Ray Bradbury, a science fiction author, writes two short stories, "August 2026: There Will Come Soft Rains," and "The Pedestrian," set during future time periods. Both stories envision what Bradbury believes can happen with advancing technology. The 1900s marked a time where technology rapidly advanced. Wars went from fighting with sticks and spears to weaponry capable of annihilating all life forms and structures in entire cities. "August 2026" is about a single surviving house after a nuclear war, capable of maintaining itself and completing the work a human typically does, such as cooking. However, it eventually causes the death of itself. "The Pedestrian" is Bradbury's foresight of a dystopia with energetic days but silent nights. Nothing but a singular robotic police vehicle roams the three-million-populated city during the night because everyone stares lifelessly at a tv screen. While both stories warn that overreliance on technology will eventually dictate human lives, "The Pedestrian" more effectively uses allusions, imagery, and characterization to convey this than does "August 2026."

"The Pedestrian" uses vivid imagery, characterization of humans, and allusions to society in the real world throughout the story to better portray the effect of using technology without restraint. In the short story, "The Pedestrian," the focus centers on Leonard Mead, a man who

differs from his peers in the year 2053. Although Mead seems ordinary to the reader, the perspective through which he narrates the evening indicates Mead is the atypical one. Mead has walked for ten years, and “in ten years of walking by night or day... he [has] never met another person walking” (Pedestrian 1). Mead later goes on to describe the neighborhood and its inhabitants as “Sudden gray phantoms” (Pedestrian 1) and explains “everything went on in the tomblike houses at night... where people sat like the dead.” (Pedestrian 2). He describes the emptiness of the city through comparisons of “highways [being] like streams in a dry season, all stone and bed and moon radiance” (Pedestrian 1). Mead characterizes the city as if it is dead. The people in the “tomblike houses” are equated to “phantoms.” The imagery Bradbury uses indicates how overusing technology leads to lifelessness. The people of Mead’s city are also characterized as lifeless. Bradbury alludes to how if one breathes, it does not mean one is actually alive. The reason behind this is the overuse of technology; everything humans want is in front of them- in the form of a big screen. Mead mocks the people who lifelessly stare at the tv all night, indicating television has become a part of everybody’s life at night. Instead of humans choosing when to watch television, television is dictating the life of the human. The imagery, characterization, and allusions of the human race in “The Pedestrian” more accurately reflect technology uses humans.

The imagery and characterization of the police in “The Pedestrian” also foretell how technology will ultimately be the ruler of humankind. Since everyone no longer feels the need to leave their house, Mead mentions “crime [is] ebbing” (Pedestrian 1). One police car is capable of handling crime in the entire city. However, this does not mean technologically controlled police are perfect. The police car arrests Mead and sends him “to the Psychiatric Center for Research on Regressive Tendencies” (Pedestrian 1). The “metallic voice” (Pedestrian 1) and the “radio throat

faintly humming” (Pedestrian 1) are instances of imagery used by Bradbury to indicate technology. The thing that replaces human police officers is clearly to be described as a piece of technology. However, it is far from perfect. Bradbury characterizes the robot police as simply something that functions off of code. The voice cannot detect tone, nor can it empathize and responds and decides what action it takes based on the answers. The only humane being, the protagonist, is unfairly arrested by a piece of technology incapable of understanding true intention. The robot police is a great example of how technology dictates human life through the display of Mead’s life because humans did not feel the need to have human police officers. Also, the characterization of the police clearly shows that by depending on technology to replace humans, a major consequence is that there are certain human qualities technology cannot replace, and therefore will cause the downfall of humanity. The way Bradbury describes the police and how it acts in “The Pedestrian” more effectively warns the consequences of overutilizing technology.

In contrast, Bradbury writes “August 2026” as a warning to the aftermath when humans depend on technology , not how technology may control human lives , conveyed through allusions, imagery, and characterization. The setting of the story takes place after a nuclear war and humans all perish. The only evidence of civilization is a “house [standing] alone in a city of rubble and ashes” (August 2026). The story also mentions the absence of humans repeatedly, demonstrated through “the rain [tapping] on the empty house, echoing” (August 2026 1). The destruction is alluding to the destruction atom bombs caused in Japan. Although the atomic bomb was an invention, it does not demonstrate how technology will eventually direct human life. “August 2026” not only alludes to the end of World War II, but also uses imagery to strengthen Bradbury’s view on what overusing technology can cause. After a while, the

untouched food is described as “the eggs [being] shriveled and the toast... like stone” (August 2026 1). Bradbury alludes to death once again as a result of the development of new technology. The leftovers change from “perfectly browned” and “sunnyside up” to “shriveled” and stone,” alluding to the loss of life. The leftovers are taken care of by the house, using “an aluminum wedge [to scrape] them into the sink... [flushing] them away to the distant sea” (August 2026 1). The house knows how to dispose of waste, but does not take other factors into consideration. Even though the house is doing its job, cleaning itself, the big picture of pollution is not even glanced at. The built-in self-cleaning piece of technology humans add to the house, simply to make their life easier, has consequences that outweigh the benefits. Finally, Bradbury characterizes the house as a living organism, although it is unable to think for itself. The house is portrayed to be able to do everything on its own, but eventually “cleaning solvent, bottled, [shatters] over the stove” (August 2026 3) and the house catches itself on fire. The house is the cause of its destruction. Despite attempts to save itself, , “the quenching rain ceased” (August 2026 3). When humans depend on technology to do simple tasks, avoidable situations occur. The house essentially lights itself on fire, and after attempts to save itself, it burns to the ground. Bradbury alludes to the fact that certain tasks are far too advanced to entrust a piece of technology to handle it. Perhaps it is best for firefighters to never be replaced. “August 2026” characterizes the house as imperfect, alludes to death and destruction frequently, and uses imagery to strengthen the consequence of overdependence of technology, but not how technology controls human life.

Two short stories published following World War II written by Ray Bradbury , “August 2026: There Will Come Soft Rains,” and “The Pedestrian,” warn that reliance on technology will ultimately determine the future of the human race, though the latter better communicates

this through the use of imagery, allusions, and characterization . The stories, published in the early 1950s, are already an accurate representation of what society has become today . With the development and increasing use of technology, humans are slowly pulled into a state where the meaning of humanity is lost.