

# “Modernity Has Failed Us”: Cultural Crisis and Political Aesthetics in *Love It If We Made It*

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Media texts, including music videos, are powerful artifacts in media. They play a significant role in reflecting society’s ideologies and influencing viewers’ perspectives. Cultural analysis examines these media texts to discover the underlying messages about power, ideology, and representation. In the text, it is noted that media texts create narratives around class, race, gender, and power, all of which emphasize dominant ideologies (Ott & Mack, 2020). Media often shows the opinion of those with power; however, some artists use their platforms to challenge these ideologies. The 1975’s *Love It If We Made It* exemplifies this dynamic by integrating strong imagery, provocative lyrics, and political symbolism to critique the modern social and political issues of the world. The music video includes one-second clips of real-life footage of systemic issues with an overlay of flashing, vibrant colors. This approach highlights systemic inequalities and ensures viewers are confronted with issues like racial injustice, environmental concerns, and media manipulation. Using cultural analysis, this

paper examines *Love It If We Made It* through the lens of hegemony, ideology, and interpellation, while examining how it critiques the structures of dominant power and immerses viewers into its ideologies.

Hegemony is the process by which dominant ideologies become widely accepted within society. This convinces marginalized groups that their position is fair or unavoidable (Ott & Mack, 2020). Many music videos contain hegemonic ideas, while others, like *Love It If We Made It*, resist them by exposing how power structures reinforce inequality. The video is a fast-paced montage of the band mixed with clips of political conflict, environmental destruction, and racial oppression, which challenges the dominant media narratives that normalize these crises. Music has the power to influence emotions and passions that inspire political action, making it a crucial part of either reinforcing or challenging dominant ideologies (Street, 2003). In cultural analysis, hegemony operates by persuading individuals to consent to power structures rather than forcing them through coercion (Ott & Mack, 2020). The 1975's video embodies this resistance by refusing to show a cleaner version of reality and instead presenting a chaotic view of modern crises.

Many songs have been used as protest, rights advocacy, and to challenge systems. *Love It If We Made It* reflects this by using powerful imagery to create awareness around political and

social issues. The music video also encourages resistance, as the combination of clips and lyrics requires critical thought to understand the underlying message. This aligns with Antonio Gramsci's view of hegemony, where dominant ideologies maintain control not only through force but by shaping common sense and everyday practices (Ott & Mack, 2020). By giving viewers an overwhelming view of real-world injustices, the video resists hegemonic control by pushing for active engagement from viewers rather than passive consumption. By combining modern issues with pop culture aesthetics, the video also demonstrates how media can criticize hegemony while still existing within it, as cultural production is typically influenced by economic and political structures (Ott & Mack, 2020). The music video acts as a cultural critique of the failure of modernity by exposing systemic issues like racial injustice, environmental destruction, and political corruption. *Love It If We Made It* includes real-world footage, combining clips of protests, environmental issues, and political scandals with bright neon outlines of the band flashing throughout. The mix of clips contrasts serious social issues with an upbeat melody and intense visuals. This reinforces the video's contradictions surrounding modern society (Bajgrowicz, 2018). These contradictions show how ideology functions by making certain beliefs appear natural while disrupting the mechanisms of power that shape them (Ott

& Mack, 2020). Even as media critiques inequality, it still remains within the ideological systems that normalize it.

The 1975 has openly rejected the notion that musicians should avoid political topics, arguing that artists have a responsibility to engage with social and political issues. Matty Healy, the lead singer, stated that their music is inherently “socially and politically informed” and that artists with a platform should use it to address important issues rather than staying silent (BBC Newsbeat, 2017). Music has the power to disrupt the status quo by making the familiar become unfamiliar, which in turn can help motivate social change (Goehr, 1994). *Love It If We Made It* highlights this by demonstrating how music can challenge social norms by rejecting tradition and questioning authority. However, as Ott and Mack (2020) explain, the media can also function as a form of negotiation, where messages of resistance are absorbed and reused in ways that fit within the dominant ideological structures. This shows how media resistance is limited by commercialization since opposing messages can be taken in and changed to fit dominant ideologies.

The lyric “modernity has failed us” (The 1975, 2018) is repeated many times throughout. It is a critique that technology and global improvements have not actually solved our social and political issues but have made them worse. The video reflects

this by using a large number of visuals that ensure viewers are aware of global issues. This shows how modern media exaggerates and desensitizes us to real-world problems and suffering. This aligns with the function of ideology as a way of structuring perception (Ott & Mack, 2020). By showing the audience crises while offering an aesthetic visual showcase, the video shows us the contradictions of modernity and how media gets us to witness suffering without acting upon it. Although the video aims to critique media, it also uses the same techniques to deliver its message. The song and music video reference the global refugee crisis. The lyric “a beach of drowning three-year-olds” reminds us of 3-year-old Syrian refugee Alan Kurdi, who drowned in 2015. A clip was included in the video of his deceased body that had been circulating around the internet (Smith, 2018), highlighting him as a symbol of the failure within humanity. The music video reinforces this message by using real images that give the audience the ability to face these realities rather than ignore them, showing the dehumanization and lack of political accountability (The 1975, 2018, [1:39–1:40]).

Interpellation is the process by which individuals recognize themselves within ideological systems, often unconsciously accepting dominant ideologies (Ott & Mack, 2020). *Love It If We Made It* plays with this idea by forcing viewers to look at their role in media consumption. The flashing

images and visuals make the audience involved in the act of consuming crises as entertainment. This connects to the concept of doxa, where certain ideological beliefs become so rooted in culture that they are no longer questioned (Ott & Mack, 2020). By making these crises extremely visible, the video challenges accepted beliefs, showing viewers that media narratives are created, not natural. The lyrics and video also reference police brutality and systemic racism, as they critique the justice system and its targeting of Black individuals. The lyric “Selling melanin and then suffocate the Black men” critiques how Black culture is seen as a product for profit, while many Black individuals are continuously treated as less, highlighting the violence they face in society. The video reinforces this message by including an image of Eric Garner, who was choked to death by NYPD officer Daniel Pantaleo (The 1975, 2018, [0:37–0:38]). The lack of indictment for Pantaleo sparked protests across America, showcasing the systemic injustice Black individuals face (Taysom, 2021). By using this tragedy in the video, The 1975 forces viewers to notice these issues rather than ignore the racial violence that is still ongoing. The music video also critiques how media distorts our perceptions of reality. It critiques the gendered power dynamics and normalized misogynistic behaviors in politics by referencing Donald Trump’s remarks about women. The lyric “I moved on her like a bitch” is a quote

from Trump, where he bragged about his ability to take advantage of women — a statement one can assume is due to his status and lack of repercussions (Smith, 2018). The music video reinforces this by including visual imagery that ties Trump to broader discussions of political issues and the power of media influence (The 1975, 2018, [2:56–2:57]). This also demonstrates how cultural discourse can lead to harmful ideologies.

The video for *Love It If We Made It* is visually enjoyable yet disorienting. It has neon colors matched with unsettling real-world images and videos. This contrast of imagery with an upbeat melody is a reflection of the media landscape, where global issues and catastrophes are often turned into entertainment. As Ott and Mack (2020) explain, media texts serve as ideological battlegrounds where dominant and resistant ideologies interact. The video does not offer a solution to the issues, but it highlights the ones that need to be fixed. This can encourage viewers to reflect on their involvement in media culture. Taylor (2007) argues that music videos go beyond the ideological reach of lyrics by transforming them into visual narratives, allowing the audience to engage more deeply. The 1975's video demonstrates this by creating an overwhelming visual experience that matches their lyrics. This forces the audience to address the conflicts we encounter in our daily lives, whether that be online or in our direct lives. Goehr (1994) further

argues that music has the ability to challenge political structures by exposing inconsistencies within dominant ideologies. It is explained that politically fueled music can act as a form of cultural argumentation, and they both reject oppressive ideas and support unconventional views. *Love It If We Made It* does this by using clips of protests, war, racism, and environmental issues alongside stressful visuals and bright colors. This reflects how modern media amplifies and desensitizes individuals to real-world problems and suffering. Again, this style of music video urges viewers to question whether they are actively trying to make cultural change or are simply consumers of others' tragedies. The ending of the video reinforces this, as Matty Healy appears on screen but is powered off by the iPhone power-off slider (The 1975, 2018, [4:15–4:16]). This symbolizes how our society — even artists or people we may idolize — are consumed by temporary content on digital media platforms. Visually, it seems like we are turning off a person by turning off a phone. The video critiques our detached relationships to crises in the world, highlighting how media conditions us to observe but not take action. This also demonstrates how in today's society, we can easily shut off our phones and ignore reality simply because it does not directly affect us.

Through powerful imagery, political references, and a beautiful but somewhat concerning aesthetic, *Love It If We Made*



*It* appears to be a critique of society and a reflection on media chaos. A cultural analysis of the music video reveals that The 1975 challenges hegemonic power structures, media desensitization, and inequality through lyrics and visuals. Music videos are ideological texts, encouraging viewers to understand the meanings and recognize the power structures they support or resist (Taylor, 2007). The 1975 noticed and captured the contradictions within modern society: how our world is full of suffering yet also filled with hope for improvement. By resisting hegemony, questioning authority, and exposing systemic inequalities, *Love It If We Made It* serves as evidence that the power of music is a strong force in moving toward cultural resistance.

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