

Analysis of the Characteristics of Retro - Futuristic Design - A Case Study of Alexander McQueen

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Abstract This study conducts a comprehensive analysis of retro-futuristic design elements present in Alexander McQueen's collections, categorizing them into specific expressions of Retro-Futurism. By identifying and examining these design characteristics, the study aims to provide valuable insights and establish a structured fashion design method for understanding the characteristics and expressions of Retro-Futurism in contemporary fashion design. The collected cases were divided into four main categories: Utopic Retro-Futurism, Fantastic Retro-Futurism, Primitive Retro-Futurism, and Scientific Retro-Futurism. In each category, different expression forms of Retro-Futurism were analyzed. The results are as follows. Utopic Retro-Futurism based on politics, military, and propaganda, contains a significant predominance of black along chromatic colors and a predominance of leather as the main fabric and texture. Fantastic Retro-Futurism based on religion and science fiction, showed figures related to past religious garments and science fiction horror movies, legends or short novels closely related to fantasy. Primitive Retro-Futurism category was divided into three basic sections from a futuristic vision: tribal, ethnic, and archaic. Scientific Retro-Futurism was divided into elements related to technology, space, science, or robotics.

Keywords Retro futuristic design, Alexandre McQueen, Nostalgia, Futurism, Utopia

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Introduction

The future itself acts as a reflection of the present and the past by embracing existing aesthetics to develop new and innovative fashion trends. Between the past, present, and future, Retro-Futurism becomes a way of finding common ground for the development of trends, fashion culture, and new design pathways.

The concept of Retro-Futurism refers to movements from the 1970s that focused on pessimistic views and expectations about the future, which were shaped by their past backgrounds. By examining both the positive and negative aspects of the past, the understanding of Retro-Futurism encompasses various visions of the future, ultimately guiding us to the present (Roselló, 2013). The continuous popularization

of science fiction since the early 20th century has led to the use of these concepts in diverse areas, including fashion. The constant growth of this genre in literature, cinematography, and art has had a significant impact on how fashion has portrayed the future as envisioned in past literature and films.

Retro-Futurism, exemplified by the space fashion of the 1950s and 1960s and futuristic costumes in post-1970s cinema, has become an essential tool for exploring the future through the lens of the past in the last century. According to Kimball (2016, pp. 1-3), the transformation of fashion during this period was heavily influenced by the emergence of the Space Age and the increasing popularity of science fiction, including TV series like Star Trek. This influence led to a

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shift towards a more space-futuristic style in fashion, with notable designers such as Paco Rabanne, Pierre Cardin, and Andre Courrèges leading the way.

Furthermore, the impact of science fiction extended beyond fashion and encompassed cinema as well. Movies like *Metropolis*, *Matrix*, and *Tron* served as notable examples that later inspired a diverse range of fashion brands, including Dior, Louis Vuitton, and Balenciaga (Borrelli-Persson, 2016). In the field of literature, various subgenres of Retro-Futurism, such as Steampunk and Neo-Victorian, gave rise to imaginative fantasies and alternative worlds where reality is reimagined from a retro-futurist perspective (Grabias, 2018).

This study analyzes the different ways in which Retro-Futurism expresses itself. It demonstrates how futuristic styles from the past continue to serve as a tool to inform the conception and futuristic trends in current fashion. This study aims to determine the retro-futuristic fashion design method through the analysis of Alexander McQueen's collections (2010-2020), chosen as a representative of Retro-Futurism. The result of the study can be used as an academic reference in the field of retro-futuristic fashion.

Literature Review

Retro-Futurism

In 1983, the term 'Retro-Futurism' was coined by Lloyd Dunn, an American publisher. The term emerged from the fusion of two words directly associated with the notion of time: 'retro' and 'futuristic.' The word 'retro' encompasses all aspects linked to the past, particularly elements closely related to fashion. As Hernández Romero (2012, p. 116) explains, retro includes ideas related to culture, aesthetics, or styles from the past. The Oxford English Dictionary from Oxford University Press (n.d.-a) explains that the Latin term 'retro' can be translated as 'backwards,' referring not only to materialistic objects but also to all those intangible styles from a certain period in the past. Furthermore, this dictionary, defines the concept of Retro-Futurism as 'the use of a style or aesthetic considered futuristic in an earlier era' (Oxford University Press, n.d.-b).

The idea of 'futurism' originated with Marinetti's

Futurist Manifesto, published in 1909. In dictionaries such as Larousse's (n.d.), Futurism is defined as a literary movement created in opposition to the past, seeking ideas that allow adaptation to modernity.

Futurism brought significant changes to the understanding of art and its expression. The idealized vision of a future world dominated by the splendor of machines, widely depicted in art, literature, and cinema, was overshadowed by the social realities of the late 19th and 20th centuries. As Davidson (2019, p. 7) explains, this dismissal may also stem from the problems caused by technology in modernity (such as the use of non-renewable energy, pollution, and wars), resulting in the dismissal of this inspiration model. Moreover, "this paradoxical union of the future and the past is the core of the retro-futurist impulse or the conscious reprisal of the disappointing visions of yesterday's mornings."

Due to this, Retro-Futurism is understood as the idea that recovers the loss of the conceptions about the future images generated in the past, containing an immense imagination about all the possible futures that were, could be, or will be. Retro-Futurism finds its foundation in past perspectives of the future to reinvent alternative visions that deviate from those associated with the present.

Similarly, as Kang (2021, p. 28) explains, the influence of Retro-Futurism and its capacity for temporal navigation facilitates the creation of unprecedented visual and expressive elements. This phenomenon arises not solely from replicating past objects, but rather from the process of repositioning and reinterpreting these visual cues through individual cognitive and emotional perspectives. This is supported by Kang and Kwon (2021, p. 9), emphasizing that Retro-Futurism enables the creation of a real-world not based on past models, but rather on the imaginative overlay of a fictional past and future. This results in the recreation of emotional experiences connected to both, the past and the future.

According to Sian and Lucas (2018, p. 1), Retro-Futurism is defined as a design trend closely tied to advancements in science and technology. The authors also emphasize that this concept closely connects with how artists, authors, or film directors portray future images derived from the past.

However, despite the extensive study of Retro-Futurism

in fields such as film, art, and literature, there is a noticeable research gap regarding its relationship with fashion. Existing studies often concentrate on specific subgenres of Retro-Futurism without establishing a clear framework to grasp its core concept. This study aims to fill this gap by providing a clearer understanding of the features of this concept, thereby enhancing our understanding of how Retro-Futurism impacts fashion design.

Nostalgia, Retro-Futurism

The meaning of nostalgia has been changing over time, and its understanding has evolved due to constant research and studies on human consciousness, memory, and experience. Xue and Carvalho Almeida (2011, p. 3) explain that until the 20th century, the idea of nostalgia was considered a disease related to Swiss mercenaries who fought abroad. The term 'nostalgia' originates from the combination of two Greek words: 'nos,' meaning 'return,' and the suffix '-algia' (from 'algos'), signifying 'pain' or 'suffering' (Martin, 2016). However, nostalgia cannot be restricted to terms related to our place of origin; it is also connected to a diverse range of variables such as childhood, family, friends, or any space or time where we hold special memories or emotions (Xue & Carvalho Almeida, 2011).

This term also presents a pessimistic point of view similar to some perceptions of Retro-Futurism, which is sometimes understood as dissatisfaction with the present and an escape to imagined futures created in the past. There is a certain feeling of disappointment about the dreams imagined through Retro-Futurism, as they traced independent lines or breaks in history to create new hopeful environments that ultimately failed (Davidson, 2019).

The Cambridge Dictionary from Cambridge University Press (n.d.) defines nostalgia as "a feeling of pleasure and slight sadness when you think about things that happened in the past." Victoria-Uribe et al. (2018, p. 3) explain that nostalgia is understood as the idealized emotion of attachment or yearning for personal past experiences that generate a certain feeling of pleasure. Hernández Romero (2012, p. 112) claims that nostalgia is an intricate feeling that reflects the melancholy of the past but with shades of joy. Therefore, the

perception of nostalgia can be summarized as a bittersweet feeling or emotion of a melancholic tone derived from the longing for moments or past experiences that we wish to recover in the present. This feeling can be experienced individually or collectively.

In previous studies, two visions of nostalgia closely related to Retro-Futurism were introduced: Future Nostalgia and Utopian Nostalgia.

Future Nostalgia could be understood as a type of nostalgia that focuses on both future perspectives (prospective) and past visions (retrospective). Reflecting on the future encourages us to recognize that nostalgic yearnings are either no longer a part of our existence or may have never truly existed (Miller, 2010). Additionally, as Victoria-Uribe et al. (2018, p. 4) explain, nostalgia cannot only be defined as dwelling on the past but also as a mental instrument to predict hope in the present and, through this, face the future. Hence, we can understand the role of Future Nostalgia as a way to build a present based on past experiences and knowledge, serving as a foundation for future changes (Monge, 2001). As Sedikides and Wildschut (2016, p. 321) explain, nostalgia can be used as a driving force to face the future, motivating us to preserve past experiences that can later be recovered and utilized in future situations.

On the other hand, the vision of Utopian Nostalgia is related to the creation of a space and time that never existed, evoking an unexplainable feeling of nostalgia. The word 'utopia' is derived from a combination of Greek words: 'ou', meaning 'no', and 'topos', referring to 'place'. Originally, it signifies 'the ideal place that is non-existent', implying a deeper meaning than our common understanding of it. According to Monge (2001, p. 5), utopia is a necessary element to recover the past, although it can be a heartbreaking factor for the individual who experiences it. Due to transformations in reality, utopia is reinvented. Miller (2010, p. 21) complements this perception of nostalgia as a manifestation stimulated by utopia and, in turn, accompanied by a melancholic reaction due to disappointment.

Many academics have widely discussed utopian nostalgia in fields related to the study of nostalgia. Svetlana Boym's studies show that the disorienting effect of utopia is understood as an element that fosters extreme perspectives of

thought and revives perceptions from the past. In this way, nostalgia is connected to appealing feelings of the past, leading to a reinvention of the future in a more positive manner. Boym centered her study on the idealization of the past and proposed two distinct perspectives on the concept of nostalgia. Firstly, she mentions restorative nostalgia, which promotes the recovery of certain marginalized visions from the past, closely linked to culture or society. Secondly, she also introduces the idea of reflective nostalgia, which is more likely associated with our understanding of nostalgia, focusing on a singular moment in the past (Kenny, 2017).

The complexity of nostalgia, combined with the abstract nature of the utopian concept, presents a significant challenge in comprehending the concept of Utopian Nostalgia as a whole. Nevertheless, it is possible to establish a connection between this term and the concept of Retro-Futurism. As Frangos (2017, p. 3) defined, Retro-Futurism could be re-interpreted as a representative mark of the utopian failures of modernity.

The association of Retro-Futurism and Utopian Nostalgia is correlated with the unsuccessful attempts of political movements like Communism or Nazism during the last century, not only by a few but by many authors. This is supported by Monge (2001, pp. 7-8), who suggests that Nazism and Stalinism exerted mass control over society, but with contrasting bases: Nazism rooted in nostalgia for the past, and Stalinism in nostalgia for the future. This discrepancy raises a fundamental inconsistency, as constructing the future requires present action rather than drawing it from different times and spaces. In conclusion, by studying the idea of nostalgia within the concept of Retro-Futurism, it has been possible to observe how the variability of emotions and perceptions within this concept distorts our assimilation of the future.

Alexander McQueen

The study of Retro-Futurism in fashion leads us directly to the observation of the most retro-futuristic designer in the current fashion industry: Alexander McQueen. The legendary designer, Lee Alexander McQueen, was born in 1969 into a

working-class family from the British middle class. After leaving school at 16, he began his fashion career as a tailor. In 1992, he graduated with a master's degree from Central Saint Martin's art school, and subsequently pursued his career as a fashion designer. From 1997 to 2001, he worked as a designer for the renowned brand Givenchy while also creating collections for his own brand, 'Alexander McQueen'. The strict and complicated historical context present during this designer's youth encouraged McQueen and many other artists to adopt a rebellious and provocative attitude towards the system. Similarly, his interest in ancestors and nature, especially birds, became one of the British designer's obsessions (Vogue, n.d.). This fusion of tradition (past) and rebellion or progressivism (future) within his fascination for new technologies positions McQueen as a prime example of retro-futuristic design.

Following McQueen's tragic death in 2010, Sarah Burton assumed the role of the brand's new creative director. Burton has employed themes such as nature and English tradition as a way of healing after the loss of McQueen. There has also been a more feminine approach to the brand, accompanied by an emphasis on craftsmanship (Bowles, 2017).

On the other hand, Burton has successfully orchestrated an incredible transition after the designer's death, managing to preserve the rebellious, gothic, and punk essence of the brand while infusing it with a stronger and more feminine perspective (Sutherland, 2020). However, there is a significant difference between the two designers. While McQueen utilized history and technology as the foundation for his designs, Burton has maintained similar themes but with a focus on craftsmanship, femininity, and a deep interest in British history and traditional culture (Bowles, 2017).

Alexander McQueen has exerted a strong and visible impact on the fashion industry through the reinterpretation of the design and style of Retro-Futurism. The originality of his designs, as a reflection of his creativity, emanates a dark and captivating allure, exemplified through exceptional runway presentations and craftsmanship. McQueen's iconic creations, such as razor-sharp suits, skull prints, armadillo shoes, and empowering concepts like clothes as a woman's armor, have become symbolic of his artistic vision. Additionally, his

experimentation with technology in fashion has inspired a new generation of designers, including Iris van Herpen. By blurring the boundaries between fashion and fine arts, Alexander McQueen's Victorian-gothic style, and theatrical aesthetic, epitomized in groundbreaking shows like 'Untitled,' 'Highland Rape,' and 'Joan,' have left an enduring mark on the fashion landscape. His influence encourages emerging designers to embrace fearless creativity while maintaining their distinctive identities and integrity (Alexander, 2015; Glaysheer, 2021).

In this research, apart from the Plato's Atlantis collection (SS 2010) created by Alexander McQueen, the rest of the collections have been generated, either in part or in whole, under Burton's creative direction. Therefore, while the philosophy and identity of the brand are preserved across all collections, it is important to note that the retro-futuristic content of this research is primarily associated with the post-McQueen era.

Furthermore, the majority of Alexander McQueen collections align with the keywords derived from the theoretical background. As evidenced in the coverage of different collections in Vogue Magazine, the brand's collections prominently feature themes such as history, military, politics, and religion; fantasy inspired by literature, art, or traditional stories; technology; nature and biology; and tradition and craftsmanship.

To conclude this section, the key findings of the literature study show that Retro-Futurism serves as a catalyst for nurturing imaginative and creative processes, facilitating the formation of alternative realms, spaces, and temporal dimensions. These imaginative pursuits find their foundation in a spectrum of emotions, encompassing nostalgia, utopic ideas, and emotions associated with the future. These emotional foundations, in turn, pave the way for the emergence of inventive ideas and concepts that interconnect with the multifaceted aesthetics and facets embedded within Retro-Futurism.

Based on the key findings of the literature study, a couple of research questions were developed as follows:

1. What are the design elements and features of Retro-Futurism in Alexander McQueen's designs and collections?

2. How do these characteristics and design elements contribute to the retro-futuristic aesthetics in Alexander McQueen's designs?

Research Method

Analysis cases were conducted on Alexander McQueen looks featured on Vogue Runway between 2010 and 2020, focusing on Retro-Futurism characteristics identified through a comprehensive literature review. Case selection, categorization, and determination of relevant keywords were carried out collaboratively by a panel of three experts. In total, 510 cases were gathered and subsequently classified into four distinct categories. The creation of each category is based on the previous research of Núñez Barranco et al. (2022), and it serves as a way to group the different characteristics found during this research. The cases analyzed in this study were selected by the panel of experts under a 'retro-futuristic perspective,' specifically by identifying images that contained retro-futuristic content related to the keywords and information derived from the literature review. This methodological approach ensures a focused examination of designs that align with the thematic of Retro-Futurism, maintaining coherence and relevance in exploring their influence on the fashion industry.

The idea of Utopic Retro-Futuristic Fashion encompasses all those ideas related to the vision of alternative realities created under utopic perceptions. Keywords such as Political Movements (Nazism/Communism/Imperialism), Propaganda, or Military were added to this category. The Fantastic Retro-Futuristic Fashion category comprises ideas related to Religion, Futuristic Fiction, and the mystical fantasies of Retro-Futurism. The Primitive Retro-Futuristic Fashion category directly connects with ideas related to cultural elements from ancient civilizations or ethnic groups. Keywords such as Tribal, Ethnic, or Archaic were added to this section. The Scientific Retro-Futuristic Fashion category encompasses ideas related to technological and scientific advances and their utilization within retro-futuristic aesthetics in fashion. Keywords such as Technological, Space, Scientific, or Robotic were included in this category.

Table 1. Retro-Futuristic Categories and Keywords

Categories	Related Keywords
Utopic Retro-Futuristic Fashion	Political Movements
	Propaganda
	Military
Fantastic Retro-Futuristic Fashion	Mysticism
	Religious
	Futuristic Fiction
Primitive Retro-Futuristic Fashion	Tribal
	Ethnic
	Archaic
Scientific Retro-Futuristic Fashion	Technological
	Space
	Scientific
	Robotic

Furthermore, this study builds upon the previous research of Luque (2015) and her work on semiotics and visual analysis of fashion and art. It incorporates valuable elements that contribute to the understanding of retro-futuristic aesthetics in fashion. By examining color, shape, and fabric choices, this research aims to assess the differences within each category and identify shared attributes. This process helps in creating a coherent categorization of the key features of Retro-Futurism.

Case Analysis

Utopic Retro-Futuristic Fashion



Utopic Retro-Futurism, as defined in this research, represents a category that encompasses the creation of alternative spaces and times rooted in human ideologies and utopian beliefs, which have evolved from historical political processes. As previously explained, utopia emerges as a vision of an idealized future, drawing inspiration from past events and experiences. Throughout history, the formation of idealized societies and futures has been a recurring theme, particularly in recent centuries when the proliferation of various

ideologies and beliefs has led to the fragmentation of the world in numerous ways. Consequently, this category is focused and organized based on the evolving political values and aesthetics that have emerged during these historical changes, while also incorporating military values stemming from various historical movements.

Retro-Futurism, primarily rooted in political ideologies, has been shaped by influential powers and movements that have governed society throughout history, including those originated from monarchy or nobility. Moreover, more recent political movements such as Nazism or Communism, as previously discussed, have also significantly contributed to the development of alternative universes within Retro-Futurism. Consequently, the concepts of propaganda and militarism have become integral to this category. This results from the fact that many of these political movements encompass extensive propagandistic and militaristic components, originating from historical wartime conflicts, which have been extensively utilized in crafting alternative spaces and times, particularly within the realm of science fiction.

In the case of Utopic Retro-Futuristic Fashion, it is possible to observe how past ideologies and political movements are reinterpreted through fashion. This reinterpretation results in a wardrobe that reflects the evolution of these ideologies and the revival of aesthetics associated with historical political movements that are no longer present, such as Nazism, Imperialism, or declining movements like Communism. In Figure 1, it is possible to observe a garment reminiscent of the iconic black uniform worn by the Nazi Schutzstaffel but reimagined from a retro-futuristic perspective. This collection conveys concepts of heroism and power within a military aesthetic, incorporating elements from Welsh national and traditional heritage (Bowles, 2020). In Figure 2, this garment could be understood as a retro-futuristic reinterpretation of the Communist uniform worn by Russian workers, commonly used as a symbol of the power of the working classes. In this case, the collection portrays the North of England, emphasizing regional differences through traditional, cultural, and national elements, all presented in a wartime fashion style (Leitch, 2019). In Figure 3, aesthetics resembling attire from the Napoleonic

Table 2. Retro-Futuristic Fashion based on Utopia

Political Movements (Nazism, Communism, Imperialism)	Propaganda			
				
<p>Figure 1. Alexander McQueen (Bowles, 2020)</p>	<p>Figure 2. Alexander McQueen (Leitch, 2019)</p>	<p>Figure 3. Alexander McQueen (Blanks, 2011a)</p>	<p>Figure 4. Alexander McQueen (Blanks, 2015)</p>	<p>Figure 5. Alexander McQueen (Leitch, 2018)</p>
<p>Key aspects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevalence of uniform-inspired garments. • Predominance of black and chromatic colors. • Transmission of rebellious and critical messages toward politics through retro-futuristic, romantic, and decadent expressions. • Extensive utilization of leather and wool textiles. • Predominance of belts and boots as details. 				

era or marine army uniforms are presented within a style that recalls the fashion of the Imperialist era. This collection draws inspiration from military attire, particularly naval uniforms, and offers a more extravagant and luxurious interpretation of the typically austere military clothing (Blanks, 2011a).

In this category, black serves as the predominant achromatic color, complemented by chromatic colors like pink, as well as metallic textures in gold and silver. When it comes to garment styles, military uniforms take center stage, particularly those associated with nationalistic, communist, Nazi and imperialist movements. Textiles prominently feature the use of leather and wool. Additionally, the prevalence of belts and boots is a distinguishing characteristic within this category. Furthermore, political propaganda, which has exerted significant influence on history, society, fashion, and art, plays a vital role in this category. Propaganda is considered an essential element for illustrating the core characteristics of Utopic Retro-Futurism. Through propaganda, politically idealized future images are crafted, providing insight into the style and aesthetics associated with each political movement.

As seen in Figure 4, this design features a contemporary

all-black ensemble reminiscent of typical uniforms from Communist or even Nazi regimes. The prominent use of large lettering displaying the word 'Honour' reflects the characteristic aesthetic style of wartime propaganda and significant political upheavals. This interpretation aligns with the collection's inspiration from the Second World War era, capturing a military aesthetic and integrating words like 'truth', 'valour', and 'honour' to emphasize the historical context (Blanks, 2015). Figure 5 showcases a uniform adorned with a multicolored style that is frequently linked to political propaganda. This technique is often utilized to capture the attention of citizens or to depict a vision of unity among nations and cultures. Through this collection, Burton communicates the solemn duty and national expectations tied to men and their role in warfare, all within a military-inspired style (Leitch, 2018). Regarding color, this category exhibits a predominance of the color black within a diverse palette of chromatic colors. Moreover, textiles and details predominantly incorporate hard textures, especially leather.

To conclude this section, it is essential to highlight how the utopian facets of Retro-Futurism, particularly those associated with political and military movements, align with the diverse aesthetics found in McQueen's collections.

Table 3. Retro-Futuristic Fashion based on Fantasy

	Mysterious		Religious	Futuristic Fiction	
					
	Figure 6. Alexander McQueen (Blanks, 2014a)	Figure 7. Alexander McQueen (Blank, 2011b)	Figure 8. Alexander McQueen (Mower, 2010)	Figure 9. Alexander McQueen (Blanks, 2014b)	Figure 10. Alexander McQueen (Blanks, 2010)
Key aspects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dominant color palette consisting of black, white, and metallic tones. • Strong incorporation of elements inspired by the dark and mystical aspects of religion and science fiction. • Extensive use of fabrics such as jacquard, glossy materials, and lightweight textiles. • Headpieces, accessories, embroidery, and the deliberate use of contrasting fabric materials play a significant role in the aesthetic. 				

Within these collections, the presence of rebellion or political criticism is conveyed through a retro-futuristic, romantic, and decadent expression.

Fantastic Retro-Futuristic Fashion

Fantastic Retro-Futurism is understood as a type of Retro-Futurism that encompasses all imaginaries associated with religion, mystery, and futuristic fiction. This category is characterized by elements originated from both religion and science fiction. In Figure 6, Fantastic Retro-Futurism, linked to mystery, is exemplified through the presentation of futuristic imagery associated to alchemy and mysterious religions from the past. Esotericism and mysticism play significant roles in this context. The collection was generated under a fairytale vision, incorporating dark, ethereal, and magical elements (Blanks, 2014a).

In Figure 7, a retro-futuristic interpretation of ancient divinities is presented, serving as symbols to comprehend nature and its application in alchemy. This aligns with the central concept of the collection, which draws inspiration from underwater magic, oceanic goddesses, ocean creatures, and pirate narratives (Blanks, 2011b). The use of white as the predominant achromatic color, in combination with metallic

tones like silver and gold, is a recurring characteristic within this category. Moreover, it is essential to highlight the importance of headpieces, hairstyles, and the incorporation of contrasting textures achieved through techniques such as embroidery and jacquard, in conjunction with other textiles like silk, organza, and chiffon.

Religious aesthetics within retro-futuristic designs are presented through the recreation of styles and garments typically associated with the religious field. Figure 8 features Orthodox and Anglican-Christian aesthetics, which exerted a significant influence on the creations of the British designer. This influence has resulted in a retro-futuristic interpretation of religious styles. This collection draws inspiration from the Dark Ages and its strong religious presence. In these designs, the essence of past aesthetics and styles has been reinterpreted and transformed into new visions of future religious fashion (Mower, 2010). A significant aspect of these designs is the prevalent use of achromatic colors, particularly white. Additionally, colors such as gold or silver are incorporated into jacquard textile, details, and accessories, adding depth and richness to the overall aesthetic.

In the case of Fantastic Retro-Futurism inspired by

Table 4. Retro-Futuristic Fashion based on Primitive






	Tribal	Ethnic	Archaic		
					

Figure 11. Alexander McQueen (Mower, 2018)

Figure 12. Alexander McQueen (Blanks, 2013)

Figure 13. Alexander McQueen (Blanks, 2012a)

Figure 14. Alexander McQueen (Mower, 2010)

Figure 15. Alexander McQueen (Mower, 2017)

- Key aspects
- Prevalence of traditional elements and craftsmanship.
 - Aesthetics closely linked to shamanism, rituals, ancient cultures, and ethnic groups.
 - Mixture of chromatic, achromatic, and metallic colors.
 - Combination of materials such as fur and feathers, adding texture and depth to the designs.

Futuristic Fiction, this particular type of Retro-Futurism encapsulates a wide range of alternative future scenarios influenced by science fiction, including elements from films, literature, cartoons, and more. Figure 9 illustrates a design inspired by Japanese style, reinterpreted through a futuristic lens, featuring an android with traditional Japanese prints. In this case, this collection takes inspiration from the imagery of samurais and geishas, but it interprets them with a savage beauty characteristic of McQueen's brand (Blanks, 2014b).

Figure 10 provides an example of a futuristic portrayal of murder within the context of science fiction. Regarding the use of color, this category embraces black color with a noticeable preference chromatic (pink) and metallic tones (silver). In terms of textiles and details, it is essential to highlight the utilization of glossy materials like lacquer or vinyl, headpieces, and hairstyles. Within this category, it is possible to observe how the fantastic elements of Retro-Futurism seamlessly blend with various designs by McQueen, particularly those that prominently feature the enchantment of fairy tales and the dark aesthetics inspired by religion and science fiction.

Primitive Retro-Futuristic Fashion

Primitive Retro-Futurism is a type of Retro-Futurism that draws its inspiration from various elements associated with tribalism, primitivism, shamanism, ethnicity, and the cultural and social values embedded in tradition. It also incorporates the influence of aesthetics and movements like Orientalism, through which retro-futuristic visions of future spaces and eras are created, rooted in components that have endured over time as integral aspects of tradition and culture. This category can be further divided into Primitive Retro-Futurism based on tribalism, ethnicity, and archaic times.

In the context of tribal-based Retro-Futurism, the aesthetic drawn from the clothing and culture of primitive eras or indigenous tribes and groups are employed to create innovative retro-futuristic styles. The following examples illustrate how tribal aesthetics have been utilized to craft fresh alternative retro-futuristic designs. Figure 11 showcases a distinctive version of Tribal Retro-Futurism, featuring a dress-cape adorned with fringes and feathers, evoking the imagery associated with shamans and magic from primitive times. This collection finds inspiration in symbolic imaginaries related to the power of nature, metamorphosis, and paradise

Table 5. Retro-Futuristic Fashion based on Science

	Technological	Space	Scientific	Robotic
				
	Figure 16. Alexander McQueen (Mower, 2009)	Figure 17. Alexander McQueen (Blanks, 2012b)	Figure 18. Alexander McQueen (Blanks, 2011b)	Figure 19. Alexander McQueen (Blanks, 2014b)
Key aspects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevalence of artificial and organic elements in shaping humanoid figures. • Significance of silver color, often accompanied by achromatic and chromatic colors. • Predominance of jacquard and lightweight fabrics such as silk, satin, or chiffon. • Importance of shoes, hairstyles, headpieces, and fabric texture through prints or embroidery. 			

(Mower, 2018). In Figure 12, elements reminiscent of costumes found in tribal attire dedicated to dance or practices like shamanism or mystical connections with nature are presented. For this collection, inspiration was drawn from a diverse range of ethnic groups and tribal influences (Blanks, 2013). Figure 13 demonstrates the use of fur to present a futuristic interpretation of primitive and tribal aesthetics. The significance of this collection aligns with aspects of Retro-Futurism as well. The collection conveys a sense of progress, presenting an optimistic and beautiful vision of the future, in contrast to the typical dark and cold visions often associated with it (Blanks, 2012a). In all these examples, a mix of achromatic colors (such as grey, white, and black) and chromatic colors (including red, pink, and purple) is prevalent, often complemented by metallic headpieces and jewelry. In the case of textiles, there is a predominant use of feathers and fur.

In the case of Primitive Retro-Futurism based on ethnicity, it encloses elements derived from groups sharing similar characteristics, as well as common sociocultural values and structures. Figure 14 presents a design by McQueen, characterized by a retro-futuristic interpretation of costumes reminiscent of nomadic cultures from Central-Northern Asia and European traditions, featuring tigers or

lions stamped on the garment. In this collection, the designer presented a medieval aesthetic inspired by the Dark Ages, albeit portrayed from a more beautiful and brilliant perspective (Mower, 2010). Similarly, in this design, colors such as gold, black, or red are prominently employed to represent the East. The boots and headpiece featured in this design play a significant role in presenting a futuristic vision of traditional oriental attire.

Primitive Retro-Futurism linked to the archaic is associated to those ancient cultures that serve as the foundation for many traditional and cultural values, including those of Egypt, Greece or the Nordic regions. It is essential to examine how these cultures and belief systems have been employed to generate alternative futuristic aesthetics and styles.

In the case of Figure 15, the design is clearly inspired by the aesthetics of old Nordic or Saxon cultures, featuring straight dresses adorned with embroidery and feathers. This dress is part of a collection that draws inspiration from various elements, including the forces of nature, mystical stone circles, witchcraft, and the paganism associated with these ancient cultures (Mower, 2017). Additionally, in this figure, a retro-futuristic interpretation of ancient Middle Eastern clothing is presented, featuring long and lightweight

tunics crafted with sheer fabric and elaborated embroidery. The color palette in this representation predominantly includes black as an achromatic color, with a noticeable incorporation of silver as a metallic color.

This category presents a diverse range of retro-futuristic aspects that are consistently reflected in McQueen's collections. These collections prominently feature elements from the past, such as tradition and craftsmanship, but reinterpret them through a more organic and aesthetically futuristic lens.

Scientific Retro-Futuristic Fashion

Scientific Retro-Futuristic Fashion encompasses the utilization of elements to create retro-futuristic environments and eras rooted in components derived from historical technological and scientific advancements. Consequently, this category is divided into technological, space, scientific, and robotic Retro-Futurism. This division results from the constant interplay between machine development, architecture, engineering, and the creation of designs inspired by retro-futuristic concepts.

In the case of Technological Retro-Futurism, it relates to designs grounded in technological advancements, particularly those that reshape our way of living and our environment. This category explores how technology inspires the creation of alternative or future realities in which human existence is intricately connected with technological progress. Figure 16 serves as a prime example of this category, showcasing structures, shapes, and details reminiscent of electrical circuits or power generation. The collection draws inspiration from an ecological apocalypse and presents humanoid creatures achieved through the integration of technology, robotics, and the biological hybridization of human appearances (Mower, 2009; Uppal, 2020). In terms of color, there is a predominance of achromatic colors (white and black) alongside dynamic chromatic colors (blue, purple, or orange). The collection also features futuristic-style shoes and hairstyles that align with the overall futuristic aesthetic. Textiles display a diverse mix of both lightweight and hard materials, characterized by intricate forms, shapes, and prints.

Space Retro-Futurism is centered on futuristic technology associated with space aesthetics. It draws inspiration from

space exploration, the concept of extraterrestrial life, and the existence of worlds vastly different from our own, all closely tied to science fiction. Figure 17 exemplifies this category, presenting an evolved and futuristic representation of human beings as often portrayed in science fiction films and series. The design prominently features a circular and reflective motif, reminiscent of satellites or space technology. This collection finds its inspiration in various sources, including the past androgynous aesthetics of David Bowie, the Art Deco movement, and the Glam Rock of the Gilded Age (Blanks, 2012b). It incorporates futuristic aesthetics by embracing the geometric lines characteristic of Art Deco and the sci-fi imagery associated with David Bowie. Notably, in this design, silver prominently stands out as the primary color, while curved metallic shapes and textured prints are employed as decorative elements on the garments. Textiles continue to achieve a harmonious balance between various materials, incorporating contrasting textures through the inclusion of metallic pieces and jacquard.

Scientific Retro-Futurism focuses on elements from biology, natural sciences, and medicine, which serve as the foundation for the creation of alternative realities. It explores how scientific advancements can result in physical transformations or future scenarios in which human beings achieve complete development. Figure 18 exemplifies this concept, featuring a biomorphic structure perfectly integrated with the human body's shape. This fusion transforms the human figure into silhouettes reminiscent of sea organisms. In this case, this collection highlights the substantial influence of ocean life as a primary source of inspiration (Blanks, 2011b).

Robotic Retro-Futurism delves into fantasies in which humans and machines merge into a single entity. Figure 19 serves as an example of a robotic aesthetic achieved by distorting the human body's figure and imbuing it with new attributes or appearances. This collection is described as an extreme interpretation of samurais and geishas, featuring a unique and savage aesthetic (Blanks, 2014 b). This category predominantly employs metallic colors (silver) and achromatic colors (black). Design details include headpieces and harness lines that reshape the human body's silhouette. Textiles show a predominance of elaborated jacquard fabric. In summary,

Robotic Retro-Futurism is a recurring theme in many of McQueen's collections, utilizing fashion design to create humanoid creatures that reshape the human form. It explores the hybridization of organic and artificial elements within the apocalyptic and sci-fi environments inherent to the main concept of this study.

Conclusion

The study aimed to identify design methods used to comprehend the characteristics and expressions of Retro-Futurism in contemporary fashion design. The research questions were constructed to examine the design elements and features of Retro-Futurism in Alexander McQueen's designs and collection. Additionally, these questions sought to comprehend how these characteristics contribute to the retro-futuristic aesthetics in Alexander McQueen's designs. The key findings of the analysis were categorized in four types.

Firstly, Utopic Retro-Futurism was further divided into 'political movement', 'propaganda', and 'military'. In the cases of 'political movements' and 'propaganda', there is a pronounced influence from Nazism, Communism, and Imperialist aesthetics. Within the 'military' subcategory, uniforms are prominently featured. Leather is also the most used material in this category.

Secondly, Fantastic Retro-Futurism was further categorized into 'mysticism', 'religious', and 'futuristic fiction'. In the 'mysticism' subcategory, there is a significant influence of alchemy and its various esoteric and mystic aspects. In the 'religious' subcategory, there is a certain predominance of Christian and angelic aesthetics but approached from a futuristic perspective. In the case of 'futuristic fiction', the utilization of biomorphic and technological shapes demonstrates a strong influence from science fiction found in films, literature, or animation. This category presents the most diverse and varied styles among all the selected categories, encompassing a wide range of elements from different genres and aesthetics. The use of white and black with metallic tones, exaggerated volumes and 3D structures is highly prominent in this category.

Thirdly, Primitive Retro-Futurism was further divided into 'tribal', 'ethnic', and 'archaic'. In the 'tribal' subcategory, a futuristic vision of garments detached from their original function of dressing is observed, presenting a more ornamental aesthetic and highlighting a strong relationship with nature, tribal ceremonies, or dances. In the 'ethnic' subcategory, elements belonging to groups that share common attributes and distinguish them from other groups are expressed. In the 'archaic' subcategory, there is a strong connection to ancient cultures such as Egyptian, Greek-Roman, Nordic, or Middle Eastern. This category features a significant use of colors, with black and grey as the main achromatic colors, alongside other chromatic, and metallic tones.

Fourthly, Scientific Retro-Futurism has been categorized into 'technology', 'space', 'science', and 'robotics'. In the 'technology' subcategory, styles or aesthetics closely related to elements or structures linked to speed, electricity, architecture, or engineering are found, but reinterpreted from a more futuristic and organic perspective. In the case of 'space', there is a predominance of organic and extraterrestrial shapes typical of aliens and creatures from science fiction. In the 'science' subcategory, themes related to biology and organic or biomorphic shapes are prevalent. Finally, in the 'robotics' subcategory, styles or aesthetics that connect technology and the human being are mainly observed, creating hybrid creatures rather than fully robotic figures.

The key results of the literature study imply a couple of essential ideas in the context of Retro-futurism and its influence on fashion. Firstly, it highlights how this concept can connect the past and the future, leading to new and unique ideas that transcend time and space. Secondly, studying McQueen's collections can inspire future designers. This relates not only to the understanding of retro-futuristic aesthetics and elements but also to the apprehension of Retro-Futurism as a tool for exploring and crafting styles and images that lie beyond conventional notions of aesthetics and identity.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the theoretical understanding of the characteristics of Retro-Futurism in fashion through McQueen's designs. It enhances our comprehension of the aesthetic and conceptual aspects and

the multiple alternative realities derived from the analyzed categories, relevant to the concept of our study.

The analysis of McQueen's collections as a case study allows for an exploration of the relationship between Retro-Futurism and fashion. Through this analysis, the research provides insights into the unique contributions of McQueen in bridging the past and the future through its designs, thus enriching the understanding of Retro-Futurism in fashion.

The study is limited to a singular designer and selected examples from the Vogue collections from 2010 to 2020. Therefore, the future study can be considered to study other designers like Paco Rabanne or Iris Van Herpen to develop the research idea. Through this, the theoretical framework of Retro-Futurism can be developed, encompassing a broader range of characteristics and the evolution of Retro-Futurism in fashion. These approaches can offer new perspectives and further advance our knowledge of the interplay between Retro-Futurism and fashion.

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