

# CULTURE SHOCK AND CROSS-CULTURAL ADAPTATION IN MAGGIE GEE'S VIRGINIA WOOLF IN MANHATTAN\*

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## ABSTRACT

*Maggie Gee's Virginia Woolf in Manhattan (2014) depicts the resurrection of Virginia Woolf in contemporary New York. Having been encultured into the norms of Victorian period and the early twentieth century, Virginia is overwhelmed by an initial sense of estrangement in the modern, multicultural world, whose façade has been shaped by advanced scientific and technological developments and the changes in traditional socio-economic and cultural relationships. When Virginia decides to be deculturated from Victorian culture, she starts to adjust herself to the new world, in which she has a chance to develop herself in a more liberated woman. This study refers to theories on culture shock and cross-cultural adaptation to show that Gee's Virginia, who moves from the early twentieth-century society dominated by conservative Victorian norms, achieves cross-cultural adaptation into a foreign community by adjusting herself to the rules and values of the global and multicultural twenty-first century world.*

**Key Words:** Maggie Gee, Virginia Woolf in Manhattan, culture shock, alienation, cross-cultural adaptation

## Maggie Gee'nin Virginia Woolf in Manhattan Adlı Eserinde Kültür Şoku ve Kültürler Arası Adaptasyon

### ÖZET

*Maggie Gee'nin Virginia Woolf in Manhattan (2014) adlı eseri, Virginia Woolf'un günümüz New York'unda hayata yeniden dönüşünü anlatır. Viktorya döneminin ve yirminci yüzyılın başlarının kurallarına göre kültürlenmiş olan Virginia, ileri bilimsel ve teknolojik gelişmelerin ve geleneksel sosyo-ekonomik ve kültürel ilişkilerdeki değişimlerin çehresini şekillendirdiği modern, çok kültürlü dünyada başlangıçta yabancılaşma hissine kapılır. Virginia, Viktorya dönemi kültüründen uzaklaşmaya karar verdiğinde, kendini daha özgür bir kadın olarak geliştirme şansına sahip olduğu yeni dünyaya uyum sağlamaya başlar. Bu çalışma, muhafazakâr Viktorya dönemi normlarının hâkim olduğu yirminci yüzyıl başı toplumundan ayrılan Gee'nin Virginia'sının, küresel ve çok kültürlü yirmi birinci yüzyıl dünyasının kurallarına ve değerlerine uyum sağlayarak yabancı bir topluma kültürler arası adaptasyon sağladığını göstermek için kültür şoku ve kültürler arası adaptasyon teorilerine atıfta bulunmaktadır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Maggie Gee, Virginia Woolf in Manhattan, kültür şoku, yabancılaşma, kültürler arası adaptasyon

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## Introduction

Maggie Gee's *Virginia Woolf in Manhattan* (2014) is a novel in which socio-cultural differences between early twentieth century and twenty-first centuries are discussed through the fictional resurrection of Virginia Woolf in contemporary New York. Angela Lamb, who is an ambitious writer and an admirer of Virginia Woolf, goes to America to read Woolf's manuscripts found in the private Berg Collection in New York Public Library so as to be well-prepared for Virginia Woolf conference, which is going to be held at Istanbul University. She wishes so much to know Woolf in person that her wish comes true and in the library, she sees Virginia Woolf. While Lamb is quite excited to see her idol in her century, Woolf experiences culture shock and finds it difficult at first to achieve cross-cultural adaptation. Since this study examines culture shock and cross-cultural adaptation in *Virginia Woolf in Manhattan*, it is necessary to explain the two terms. Culture shock is basically a progression that occurs when "a person moves to live, either temporarily (as a visitor) or permanently (as an immigrant), in a society that has a radically different cultural background" (Tseng, 2003: 66). However, culture shock may also "relate to life crises in a variety of areas other than the experiences of travel to "another country" (Pedersen, 1995: 11). Moreover, people having culture shock are "not merely experiencing an unfamiliar culture but [are] perhaps more importantly confronting herself or himself," thus the term culture shock may be "described as resulting from the encounter between people or a state of mind external from the individual" (Pedersen, 1995: 12). Cora DuBois, an anthropologist, may have first used the term "culture shock" publicly to describe the experiences of anthropologists, who confronted some problems while encountering different cultures (LaBrack, 2015). Kalvaro Oberg expanded the concept to describe a feeling of "anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse" (as cited in Jackson, 2014: 193). As such, culture shock is regarded as an emotional reaction to the loss of one's learned culture, which results often in "symptoms of disorientation, sadness or anger, grief, [and] nostalgia" (Baldwin et al., 2014: 251).

Cross-cultural adaptation, on the other hand, is a term which refers to "the process one goes through in adjusting to another culture" (Baldwin et al., 2014: 251). According to Young Yun Kim (2002), this concept includes such terms as acculturation, adjustment, integration, and adaptation. Acculturation is described as "the process by which individuals acquire some (but not all) aspects of the host culture" (Kim, 2002: 260). During this process, one tries to get "accustomed to the social values and mores of a new culture" (Yook, 2013: 22). Adjustment and coping are used to "refer to psychological responses to cross-cultural challenges," and integration is regarded as "social participation in the host environment" (Kim, 2002: 260). Adaptation, on the other hand, is a term which is employed to "refer to the dynamic process by which individuals, upon relocating to an unfamiliar cultural environment, establish (or reestablish) and maintain a relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationship with the environment" (Kim, 2002: 260). Cross-cultural adaptation is a concept which encompasses these terms, and it is "a phenomenon that occurs subsequent to the process of childhood enculturation (or socialization) of individuals into recognizable members of a given cultural community" (Kim, 2002: 261). When strangers come across a new culture, they face some surprises that "may awaken or shake strangers' previously taken-for-granted self-concepts" and "bring the anxiety of temporary rootlessness" because "they are forced to suspend or even abandon their identification with the cultural patterns that have symbolized who they are and what they are" (Kim, 2001: 50). According to Kim, strangers feel the need to "learn the new cultural system" (2001: 50) to overcome their inner conflicts, thus "all individuals entering a new and unfamiliar culture undergo some degree of new cultural learning," which is "the very essence of *acculturation*" to cope with their inner conflicts (Kim, 2002: 261, 50; emphasis in the original). However, adaptation is "not a process in which new cultural elements are simply

added to prior internal conditions,” for it includes “*deculturation* (or unlearning) of at least some of the old cultural elements” since acquisition of some new things inevitably leads to the loss of some old things (Kim, 2001: 51; emphasis in the original). During this process, the strangers are compelled to “conform to ways of thinking and acting that are consistent or compatible with the prevailing cultural practices of the environment” by learning to make changes in their old habits (Kim, 2001: 51). Strangers may be forced to adapt themselves to the new cultural environment, but they cannot be forced to change their internalized, customary habits and values to “accept and appreciate the underlying values” of the host culture (Kim, 2001: 51). Having made an introduction to culture shock and cross-cultural adaptation, this study provides an overview of previous works dealing with the two terms and Maggie Gee's *Virginia Woolf in Manhattan* in the next section and acknowledges and summarizes the published literature on culture shock and cross-cultural adaptation in literary works to show the need for the current study.

### Literature Review

Literature review demonstrates that there are scholarly works and theories on culture shock and cross-cultural adaptation. Adler (1975) defines culture shock as “a set of emotional reactions to the loss of perceptual reinforcements from one's own culture, to new cultural stimuli which have little or no meaning, and to the misunderstanding of new and diverse experiences” (as cited in Jackson, 2014: 190). Meisel argues that individuals who are introduced to a new culture experience culture shock and they feel challenged, excited, and disoriented (2012: 112). In a similar vein, Furnham (2019) defines culture shock as “the unexpected and often negative reaction of people to new environments” (1832). Various scholars offer different explanations for the causes of culture shock. According to Oberg (1960), culture shock is caused by the anxiety and frustration felt due to encountering “a strange culture” (177). Torbiorn claims that culture shock is related to three factors, namely “a situation or a state, the individual's interpretation of this situation as threatening or dangerous, and an emotional response of fear or anxiety” (1982: 95). However, Goldstein and Keller (2015) maintain that “low travel experience and interest in foreign language learning” might be the causes of culture shock (187). Ward et al. (2001), on the other hand, assert that people, who have unrealistic expectations about the host nationals, might be disillusioned and “many react badly when confront[ing]” the host culture, which is different from their indigenous culture (20).

Literature review also shows that there are several discussions on cross-cultural adaptation. According to Kim (2017), cross-cultural adaptation is “[the] adaptation of individuals born and raised in one culture who move to a new and unfamiliar cultural environment” (1). According to Redfield et al. (1936), acculturation, which is a process related to cross-cultural adaptation, is a phenomenon that “result[s] when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups” (149). Jackson argues that acculturation is a component of cross-cultural adaptation and describes it by comparing it to enculturation. She maintains that while enculturation is “the process by which individuals acquire the knowledge, skills (e.g. language, communication), attitudes and values necessary to become functioning members of their culture acculturation,” acculturation can be defined as “the term used to refer to the changes that take place after contact between individuals or groups with different cultural backgrounds” (Jackson, 2014: 186-187). Berry et al. (2011), on the other hand, define acculturation as “changes in a cultural group or individuals as a result of contact with another cultural group” (464). Berry et al. (2011) describe adaptation in the context of acculturation, and they assert that adaptation is “the process of coping with the experiences and strains of acculturation,” or acculturative stress, which is “a negative psychological reaction to the

experiences of acculturation, often characterized by anxiety, depression, and a variety of psychosomatic problems” (465).

According to literature review, there are various theories used to explain cross-cultural adaptation. Oberg's theory is based on four stages: honeymoon stage, crisis, recovery, and adjustment. Oberg (1960) claims that strangers feel an initial fascination with the new environment, but after this stage, they feel the crisis of being exposed to a foreign culture and unfamiliar values and signs. However, once the sojourner learns the language and values of the host culture, they recover the initial crisis and adjust themselves to the host culture, although they might have episodic experience of frustration and strain. Jackson claims that the most popular models of cultural adjustments include the U- and W-curve adjustment models. The U curve model (Lysgaard, 1955) demonstrates the four phases of cultural adaptation, namely honeymoon, which is a phase of enchantment, culture shock, or disenchantment, recovery, and adaptation. Gullahorn and Gullahorn's (1963) W curve model, on the other hand, is an extended version of the U curve and it demonstrates that strangers, who return to their native lands, reexperience the four phases of cross-cultural adaptation indicated by the U curve. However, Furnham (1984) argues that there are “theoretical and empirical problems with this stage-wise U- or W - shaped formulation” related to stage order, individual differences, and “the universality of the stages for all cultural groups” (Furnham, 1984: 46, 47). Moreover, Furham (2019) asserts that these theories, including the one developed by Oberg, are “descriptive and tend to overlap” (1845). Therefore, this study benefits mainly from a recent cross-cultural adaptation model developed by Young Yun Kim, which acknowledges individual differences. Kim's model encompasses four phases, namely enculturation, acculturation, deculturation, and assimilation. Enculturation is the phase in which individuals acquire their “taken-for-granted habits of mind ... during their childhood” by interacting with their home culture (Kim, 2017: 3). Acculturation is the process which starts with the movement of strangers into the host society, where they experience an initial crisis as “[t]hey are challenged to suspend or even abandon their identification with the cultural patterns that have symbolized who they are and what they are” (Kim, 2017: 3). Acculturation involves “the acquisition of the host cultural practices in wide-ranging areas, particularly those areas of direct relevance to their everyday functioning,” and it is followed by the phase of deculturation, in which strangers are forced to abandon “some of the original cultural habits, at least temporarily” to acquire the values of the new culture (Kim, 2017: 3). Assimilation, on the other hand, is “a state of the highest degree of acculturation into the host milieu and deculturation of the original cultural habits that is theoretically possible,” although it might be beyond “the reality of many long-term settlers” (Kim, 2017: 3). Kim claims that cross-cultural adaptation is a process experienced by all people moving to “a new and unfamiliar environment,” but the adaptation process might be “varied in scope, intensity, and duration” according to “individual circumstances” (Kim, 2017: 1). She argues that strangers want to achieve cross-cultural adaptation to fit “between their internal conditions and the conditions of the new environment” (Kim, 2017: 2).

The literature review shows that there are some works that study culture shock and cultural adaptation in literary works. In “Cultural Immersion and Culture Shock in Conrad's Fiction,” J. W. Griffith (1995) examines the culture shock and cultural isolation experienced by Conrad's characters, arguing that his characters “are often unable fully to penetrate the other culture” and some characters, like Marlow, search for “familiar signs” in the unfamiliar environment (48, 53). In “‘A Body Without a Head’: Culture Shock in Dickens's *American Notes* (1842),” Juliet John (2010) investigates *American Notes* (1842), Dickens's travel writing which shows the culture shock experienced by the author on his first visit to America. In “Culture Shock: Trauma, Pleasure, and Visual Memory,” Ana Carden-Coyne (2009) studies the literary works, like “Battle Dreams” (1919) and *The New Book of Martyrs* (1918), which

demonstrate the culture shock experienced in the post-war society. María Alonso Alonso (2018), on the other hand, explores the themes of culture shock and alienation in Jamaica Kincaid's *See Now Then* (2013), which reveals "Kincaid's experience of alienation as a Caribbean migrant in the United States" through the case of the female protagonist (281). In "Defying Post Colonialism: the Quest for Cultural Adaptation and Transcultural Identity with References to Some Postcolonial Novels," Enas Subhi Amer focuses on "[the] exploration of transcultural identity and the quest for cultural adaptation" in postcolonial novels, including Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* and Ahdaf Suoeif's *The Map of Love* (2016: 2316). M. A. Thasleema and A. Ajmal Khaan explore the alienation and identity crisis endured by the characters in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* and "the conflict between their home and host cultures, the want of adaptation and the fear of disintegration" (2021: 2055). However, there are no studies analysing the concepts of culture shock and cross-cultural adaptation in Maggie Gee's *Virginia Woolf in Manhattan*. The literature review shows that, while Smith (2017) reads the novel as a contemporary archive novel, Koç (2021) evaluates the novel as a contemporary author fiction. Layne (2021), on the other hand, regards *Virginia Woolf in Manhattan* as a metaphor for biofiction, and Varalda (2020) discusses the relationship between Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and Gee's *Virginia Woolf in Manhattan*, which she, like Layne, reads as a biofiction. Differing from the previous works on Gee's *Virginia Woolf in Manhattan* and acknowledging various works and theories on culture shock and cross-cultural adaptation, the next section of this study focuses on the analysis of the symptoms and causes of the culture shock experienced by Maggie Gee's Virginia Woolf, who time travels from early twentieth-century England into the modern world, where the traditional norms about culture, gender, class, and race have been challenged. Referring to theories on culture shock and cross-cultural adaptation, the present study aims to show that Gee's Virginia Woolf, who manages to adapt herself to the new norms and values of twenty-first century world, achieves cross-cultural adaptation into an unfamiliar society, which offers new and better opportunities for dominated groups, including women.

### **Virginia Woolf's Cross-Cultural Movement into the New World**

In *Virginia Woolf in Manhattan*, Woolf's fictional spatial and temporal movement from early twentieth-century English society, which was under the influence of Victorian mores, to twenty-first century New York, "a global financial and cultural center," which welcomes people from various socio-economic, cultural, and racial groups, makes the famous author experience culture shock (Day & Hall, 2016: 284; Varra, 2020: 106). Woolf gets shocked in the new world where nothing resembles the things in her own world. Moreover, Woolf's confrontations with the modern society are important indices of life crisis, which is related to culture shock, because her previous presumptions about culture and society are rebutted, and she cannot find anything familiar in the new world, which has been shaped by advanced technological innovations. Therefore, she initially finds it difficult to adapt herself to twenty-first century world, having such novelties as mobile phones and laptops. In the modern world, people communicate through mobiles, but the word is foreign to Virginia, who knows just telephones. When she sees a mobile, she calls it "a small box" and feels confused to see that these new types of telephones "did not need wires ... [and] slept like dogs on bedside tables" (Gee, 2014: 36). Computers are also alien to her, so she tries to open the laptop of Angela Lamb with a knife to understand what this machine is. As Virginia is enculturated into late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century societies, in which authors used typewriters, she confuses the laptop with a typewriter and becomes shocked to see that this machine works without paper. Her shock is doubled when Angela says that "[w]riters don't write on paper" (Gee, 2014: 81). Confronting an unfamiliar culture, Virginia finds herself estranged from the modern society, where people are less dependent on paper, and "physical books" have been replaced by e-books (Gee, 2014: 286).

Furthermore, she protests the fact that she cannot find pen and ink in New York to write: “And could we find pen and ink? We could not. It was as if our world no longer needed to be written” (Gee, 2014: 107). Woolf feels alienated “in a society that has a radically different cultural background” (Tseng, 2003: 66), and seems to be “out of date” and “vintage” in the twenty-first century (Gee, 2014: 107). Therefore, she displays emotional reactions to the loss of all the familiar things reminding her of her own society, into which she is encultured. She becomes “irritable” and “dazed” and feels like “a trapped animal” in the modern technological world, which have witnessed changes in communication, readership, and authorship (Gee, 2014: 29, 30). Since people show “emotional reactions to the loss of perceptual reinforcements from one’s own culture” (as cited in Jackson, 2014: 190), Virginia’s sense of estrangement, confusion, and irritation can be viewed as the natural responses developed while being introduced to a new community.

Virginia also feels disoriented by meeting modern people whose styles and clothing refute her understanding of fashion, which is shaped by Victorian and early twentieth-century norms. Her sense of alienation can be regarded as evidence of culture shock, which results often in “symptoms of disorientation, sadness or anger, grief, [and] nostalgia” (Baldwin et al., 2014: 251). Virginia is bewildered by people “smell[ing] of chemicals” and “painted women,” whom she does not consider “respectable” (Gee, 2014: 25). She also criticises women who wear skin-tight dresses and conceals her anger and grief she feels when she sees modern women having attractive, feminine styles under a sarcastic tone: “‘They go out without skirts,’ she [Virginia] hooted, happily. ‘What fun to see New York prostitutes!’” (Gee, 2014: 86). Having been encultured into conservative Victorian doctrines, condemning women who wore tight garments, which had “moral risks,” like exciting lascivious desires, and “made women vain and trivial” (Kortsch, 2016: 56), Virginia rejects wearing appealing, modern dresses and continues to preserve her modest and conservative style, which can be read as symptoms of anger and nostalgia triggered by losing her conventional social and cultural signs. Her early twentieth-century dressing style, finished with her “grey hair pulled back in a knot” and “a long woollen suit” (Gee, 2014: 32), covering her feminine body features, makes her at an odd with “half-dressed people” on New York streets, who are different from the modest and conservative people of her age (Gee, 2014: 32). Angela notices that Virginia, who carries an umbrella and wears gloves and “the metal-tipped shoes that must have been standard in her day” (Gee, 2014: 176), is “[a] water-streaked monument ... in the wrong century” (Gee, 2014: 46). Therefore, Woolf, like people who experience “life crises” and alienation when they encounter the host culture (Pedersen, 1995: 11), feels lost, rootless, disoriented, and alienated in the modern world having different things and faces: “Where was this place & who were these people?” (Gee, 2014: 30). Having lost all her “familiar signs and symbols” of her own cultural circle, Virginia cannot be integrated into the foreign culture that has “new cultural stimuli which have little or no meaning” for her (Oberg as cited in Jackson, 2014: 193; Adler as cited in Jackson, 2014: 190).

Lack of communication between modern people is another factor that prompts the culture shock experienced by Virginia Woolf. Woolf had an active social life for she was a member of Bloomsbury that was comprised of such intellectuals as Leonard Woolf, E. M. Forster, Roger Fry, and Vanessa and Clive Bell (Agsous, 2010; Rosenbaum, 1995). Woolf is confused and perplexed over the fact that modern people are lost in the unreal world created by technological machines: “Back in the 1920s, 1930s, people were rooted in reality. ... True, sometimes Leonard and I read through meals. Were we addicted in our own way? But- ordinary people weren’t, one thought. Meals got cooked, dishes got washed. In this new century, it wasn’t so. The whole populace was lost in fancy” (Gee, 2014: 229-30). She admits that reading was a kind of addiction for her and her husband, but still people of her time were not completely

detached from reality. Therefore, she is confused by the fact that all modern people live in a dream world created by technology, and they cannot form a face-to-face relationship. Angela, who belongs to the contemporary world, is also aware of the fact that modern people lead isolated lives. She explains that her husband is so absorbed with making ecological documentaries that he does not spend enough time with her and their daughter, and she adds that he leads such an isolated life that he does not even notice their neighbours. Although Angela complains about her husband, she herself does not like being active socially. She is always too “*busy*” with her books or studies to spend time for her daughter or husband (Gee, 2014: 37; emphasis in original). Instead of visiting her daughter in the boarding school, she either calls her or sends e-mails, which makes her daughter feel like “the baby, swinging, hopeless” (Gee, 2014: 37). After she meets Virginia, the communication between the mother and daughter gets even worse as Angela stops answering her daughter’s mails and says she has to “take care of Virginia Woolf” (Gee, 2014: 50). Therefore, Woolf thinks that modern people, who are obsessed with technological things, are lonelier and they are isolated from one another: “They were addicted to cinema, these modern people! At home, at table, or on tiny machines on the streets of New York ... They were so much lonelier than we had been” (Gee, 2014: 229). Having been encultured into a social circle where she had a chance to enjoy sociability, culture, and intellectual gatherings, Virginia regards busy modern life based on the advent of technology as shocking, and she feels anxious and depressed, which are regarded as the symptoms of acculturative stress (Berry et al., 2011).

In Maggie Gee’s *Virginia Woolf in Manhattan*, the conflict between the new and the old cultural systems can also be noticed in the use of language. Since acquiring the values and language of one’s own culture is a part of the process of enculturation into the home culture (Jackson, 2014), Virginia is offended and shocked by the fact that Angela, a stranger, violates the formality rules of her era on their first meeting and calls her by her first name, which is a sign of intimacy and informality, rather than using her formal family name, namely Mrs Woolf: “She said my name, that first time, as if I belonged to her. ... She said ‘Virginia?’” (Gee, 2014: 22). Moreover, Woolf is confused by the modern language, having different terms and elements. Twenty-first century language is heavily influenced by technological developments, so such words as “googl[ing]” and “iPad” (Gee, 2014: 27, 90) enter the modern language and people express their feelings through such emoticons as “>: -)” (Gee, 2014: 146). While Woolf finds it hard to adopt the new language, her early twentieth-century language, having “fluting vowels,” sounds funny and archaic to modern people (Gee, 2014: 25). Furthermore, Woolf uses French words like “adore,” or Latin words like “Caveat lector [Reader beware]” (Gee, 2014: 31, 159), which indicate culture and sophistication, and she is surprised to learn that Angela, a writer having received a college degree, does not know Latin: “But you went to the university? ... I never went to the university, but all of us knew Latin. ... I don’t understand why you don’t know Latin. And you write books- you’re an author? ... You must know some Latin” (Gee, 2014: 159). However, Angela defends herself by explaining that they live in “a different world” where reading literary works in Greek or Latin is not compulsory any longer (Gee, 2014: 159). Woolf has also difficulty in understanding why modern people use euphemistic words. She uses the words “Jews” or “Semites” (Gee, 2014: 224, 227) to address the Jewish on the plane to Istanbul, but as “Jews” is considered to be a racist expression in the modern time, Angela does not want her to use it: “We don’t use language like that anymore, it’s considered anti-Semitic” (Gee, 2014: 227). Trying to adapt Virginia to the new cultural milieu, she says that modern people “prefer ‘Jewish people’” instead of “Jews” and this is related to “respecting difference” (Gee, 2014: 228). Angela also corrects Virginia, who calls the cabin staff “servants” (Gee, 2014: 268) because in the modern age the words “servants” and “master” are considered to be insulting (Gee, 2014: 269). Virginia also learns that anti-sexists use the word “flight attendant,”

which is gender-neutral, instead of “air hostess” in the modern era (Gee, 2014: 270). Since Virginia is not familiar with modern euphemisms and their function to promote racial, gender, and social equality, Angela's obsession with words makes her bewildered, and she misunderstands “new and diverse experiences” on socio-cultural issues (Adler as cited in Jackson, 2014: 190), thus she thinks that modern people are “obsessed with the names of things” and cannot see Angela's initiations to adapt her to the new world by deculturing her of her learned cultural norms and habits (Gee, 2014: 270).

The change in gender relationships in the modern era is another cause of Virginia's culture shock, which is caused by the interaction with an unfamiliar society having different values (Meisel, 2012). Woolf was grown up in the Victorian age, where women were oppressed and restricted by patriarchal society. Nineteenth-century patriarchal ideology subordinated women to men to ensure the sustenance of male authority. While women were supposed to remain in the domestic sphere as agents of morality, men were viewed as beings that belonged to public life (Nassar, 2004; Carlisle, 2004). Moreover, women's duty was to take care of their husbands and children and manage household affairs (Blair, 2007). The traditional image of women, who were considered to be unable to participate in public life and earn their own money, was used to justify the superiority of “income-earning fathers and husbands” over women (Szreter & Fisher, 2010: 34). Furthermore, women were regarded biologically and mentally inferior to men (Becker, 2002). Therefore, jobs that required mental and physical vigour were presumed to be suitable for men (Boyle, 1873). Women were also oppressed by the marriage institution, which gave men the privilege to be the head of their families and control their wives and their properties (McDowall, 1989; Wroath, 1998). As Virginia is encultured into the members of Victorian society, where it was men who dealt with financial and economic issues, she does not understand anything about “[t]he profit motive” or “mak[ing] money” and it was her “practical” and “clever” husband Leonard that managed money for her (Gee, 2014: 182, 183). Angela, on the other hand, is a modern woman of the twenty-first century, who can “[flee] home and its social duties” (Gee, 2014: 33). She leaves her daughter at boarding school and goes to America to make research on Virginia Woolf. Unlike Woolf, she “did not inherit money,” or she does not spend her husband's money (Gee, 2014: 33). It is in fact she who supports her husband financially: she gives him money for his ecological research. Moreover, she can pay for her spending in New York and Istanbul because she is a writer who earns enough money to support herself. Encountering socio-economically emancipated women of the new era, like Angela, Woolf, who has moved from the restrictive, patriarchal world of Victorian society, experiences culture shock, which results in confronting herself. The socio-economic freedom enjoyed by Angela in her personal and public lives makes Virginia understand the disparity between her own private, domestic marriage life, controlled by her husband, and her public writings, which showed women are “cleverer than the men” and they have the intellectual power to compete with men (Gee, 2014: 51). In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf argued that the patriarchal society could not tolerate intelligent women, thus an intelligent woman used to be marginalised as “a witch being ducked,” or “a woman possessed by devils,” and she was likely to become “a lost novelist,” or “a suppressed poet” because patriarchal discourse belittled women's intellectual capacity by arguing that “nothing could be expected of women intellectually” (2000: 63, 70). She asserted that women writers also had to cope with the angelic, domestic image of women produced by the patriarchal society to hinder their writing career, thus women writers, including herself, had to kill “The Angel in the House” who denied her physical and intellectual powers to exist in the male-dominated world, which expected women to be “sympathetic,” “unselfish,” “tender,” “pure,” and “excelled in the difficult arts of family life” (Woolf, 1966: 285). As such, although Virginia wrote to condemn women's oppression, she understands that she was not as free as Angela Lamb, who has both



creative freedom and equal socio-economic and political rights with men. While writing her radical treatises on women's condition, Virginia felt the oppression of the patriarchal society, which believed that women should not have "a mind of [their] own" (Woolf, 1966: 285), thus in the modern period, she recognises that she was one of the angelic figures she tried to slay because she wrote like "[a] pinioned angel" who was socio-economically and politically restricted by the patriarchal society and its conventional norms (Gee, 2014: 51).

Virginia Woolf is also shocked by the changes in class relationships in the twenty-first century. She is encultured into the socio-economic structure of Victorian society, which was "rigidly stratified by class" (Griffin, 2012: 74). Although the living conditions of the lower classes improved during the Victorian period, poor people suffered from "poverty, destitution, poor housing, overcrowding, and poor personal hygiene" (Rosen, 1973: 633). Moreover, children of working-classes could attend schools when they were three or four years old, but they had to leave school by the age of ten when their parents needed their income and labour (Frost, 2008). Poor children also could not receive "quality teaching" since they did not mostly have well-educated teachers, and many schools available for the destitute children were "little more than babysitting services" (Frost, 2008: 36). However, in the twenty-first century, social and educational opportunities for the lower classes have been improved. The progress of the Third Way vision for the British welfare state, which began in the early 1990s, has resulted in the advancement of some regulations to fight against social inequalities and problems in the UK, like "structural unemployment; poor education; poor housing" (Blair as cited in Waldfoegel, 2010: 37). Therefore, in the modern age Angela, who has a working-class background and whose parents were poor, can receive a university degree and thanks to "[her] profession and education," she can earn enough to have a house in Hampstead, a living space in London for intellectuals and rich people, and she can send her daughter to the Abbey, a distinguished school in the UK (Gee, 2014: 97). Virginia, on the other hand, does not have a working-class background, but she comes from the privileged upper class: "[S]he was the daughter of Leslie Stephen, the most famous Victorian man of letters, ... she was friends with E. M. Forster and Maynard Keynes and Lytton Strachey ... [and] she had a small private income" (Gee, 2014: 51). Therefore, although Angela does not lead a working-class life anymore, Virginia feels "contempt" for her (Gee, 2014: 48) since Angela cannot change her working-class accent, which is contrasted to Woolf's "elongated vowels of her 'really'" and "[her] accent of someone who had never had to work" (Gee, 2014: 70). Angela also uses swear words like "shit" (Gee, 2014: 30), and that's why Virginia, who is encultured into the value system of the "social elites" (Griffin, 2012: 74), says Angela is "[n]ot respectable," and she is "vulgar-looking" and "common" (Gee, 2014: 25, 57). Virginia also thinks that although Angela has moved from the lower to the upper classes, she has a "a bad grace," which she does not regard as appropriate for an elite woman, thus Angela has "many things to learn about being a lady" (Gee, 2014: 342). Her criticism about Angela's manners is a reaction to the loss of her "previously taken-for-granted self-concepts" about class relations, which makes her experience the feeling of rootlessness as she is forced to question and abandon her learned socio-cultural norms that "have symbolized who [she is] and what [she is]" (Kim, 2001: 50).

The modern, multicultural world is another source of Woolf's culture shock. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the image of a homogenous society, comprised of white, Anglo-Saxons, was fostered and as slavery had been outlawed in the British Isles since the late eighteenth century, "slavery and the question of race [were] kept at a distance" (Favret, 2000: 179). The years between the 1970s and the mid-1990s, on the other hand, were characterised by "a rejection of earlier ideas of unitary and homogenous nationhood" and by "the increased recognition and accommodation of diversity through a range of multiculturalism

policies and minority rights” (Kymlicka, 2010: 32). Therefore, a multicultural society having racial and ethnic minority groups is foreign to Virginia Woolf, who lived in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in English society, inculcating homogenous nationhood. When Woolf wanders on the streets of New York, she faces a multicultural society where she encounters “many Africans and Chinamen” (Gee, 2014: 25), “three Japanese girls,” “a Chinese teacher” and “Northern Europeans” (Gee, 2014: 206). She pities the fact that this multicultural crowd, who are not well-educated, has replaced intellectual and cultured people, like her husband Leonard, “with their subtle cargo of Latin and Greek, their skilful phrases, their philosophy, their discriminations, their subtleties in art and life” (Gee, 2014: 210). In this way, she associates the decay of high culture, which is “opposed to ... ignorance, crudity and bad taste” (Grant, 1996: 210), with the establishment of a multicultural society, having citizens who represent low culture composed of non-academic and non-intellectual people. Her feeling of sadness and nostalgia caused by the decay of the English elitist society, which is represented by her husband and friends, can be regarded as “an emotional response to the loss of one’s own culture” (Baldwin et al., 2014: 251).

Since Virginia Woolf belongs to the old English society, which was under the influence of Victorian values, when she moves to the new, multicultural society, she develops “psychological responses to cross-cultural challenges,” a process called adjustment or coping (Kim, 2002: 260). During this process, Woolf tries to cope with the cultural clash between the old and new worlds and to adjust herself to new socio-cultural norms of the twenty-first century. For instance, she feels perplexed when she sees on the boat to the Statue of Liberty that socio-economic hierarchies have been removed and traditional discourses on gender, race and class have been deconstructed to bring different people together. The boat carries passengers belonging to various socio-cultural and economic groups, like women wearing “trousers and shorts” and “shouting at their husbands,” the Africans who are “no longer in chains but out for the day,” the servants and the masters between whom “there was no distinction,” “women carolling about the opera and the big-thighed, ignorant working class,” and homosexuals “holding hands quite openly” (Gee, 2014: 209). The image of the multicultural society makes Woolf “tired” because she cannot bear to see this heterogeneous mass, including coarse, vulgar, and ignorant people (Gee, 2014: 209). However, once she gets familiar with the mores and values of the new culture, she is acculturated into the cultural system of twenty-first century society, and she starts to “acquire some (but not all) aspects of the host culture” (Kim, 2002: 260). The first step of her acculturation is taken when she accepts that she is no longer “the dead Virginia [people] knew from the writing,” but a new woman reborn in the twenty-first century society, where she is no longer Mrs Woolf, who let her husband deal with money affairs and publishers (Gee, 2014: 134). Although Virginia is initially shocked by the unconventional clothing and manners of the women of the new era, she appreciates the fact that twenty-first century women no longer depend on men to survive or gain public recognition. Modern women, who have achieved emancipation both in private and in public spheres, hearten Woolf to desire to “write all this newness” as a new, emancipated person, who has realised her ambition to become a strong, powerful figure that “somehow holds within it a female form” (Gee, 2014: 134, 122). She regards her rebirth in the twenty-first century as a chance to fulfil her ambition for gender equality because she was othered as an unconventional woman in the earlier periods. Virginia explains that her intelligence prevented her from being an ideal woman in her age: “Because I was clever, [men] had to gloat that I was not a proper woman” (Gee, 2014: 193). Nevertheless, she argues that she always expressed her admire for free, intelligent, and independent women: “The gesture of a powerful mother, not the angel in the house but someone stronger, tall and courageous, a light-bringer, a light-giver- Grace Darling, perhaps? Florence Nightingale? Yes, a brave, strong, luminous angel. All my life I had looked for such a figure”

(Gee, 2014: 122). As she likes strong women, she adds that all her life she avoided the fate of her mother, who was a typical Victorian woman engaged with domestic chores, like “reading the Bible, mending the sock ..., visiting the sick and caring for the little ones” (Gee, 2014: 205). Therefore, as an “unruly” woman (Gee, 2014: 435) Virginia does not like the rules set by her husband, restricting her freedom: “Leonard always watched my intake of wine. Like everything else, talking, walking, seeing our friends, going to parties ... It was because he loved me, and yet there were rules, and I was unruly” (Gee, 2014: 435). In the twenty-first century, which offers better socio-economic rights for women, Woolf confronts herself and realises that she does not need to be a domesticated ‘angel,’ monitored by her husband, to secure her public reputation and public career as a writer, and she can prefer to be an unconventional, non-domestic woman, or “a wicked woman of the world,” as there is no longer Leonard to “monitor” her (Gee, 2014: 201).

Deciding to adapt herself to the new era, where women are more liberated, Virginia wants to be “someone else ... with different rules” (Gee, 2014: 429) and to “maintain a relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationship” with twenty-first century society (Kim, 2002: 260). Accordingly, she is deculturated from the conventional Victorian norms on gender, which attribute domestic roles to women. Woolf feels glad that Angela can manage economic affairs, and she has two university degrees because women could not receive a university education in her time. Inspired by the liberated women, like Angela, she is deculturated from the separate spheres ideology of Victorian era, and moves to the public sphere of money and commerce. Virginia talks to book dealers on her own in order to sell her manuscripts, and gets 80.000 dollars, an amount which is enough for her to travel with Angela to Istanbul, where the latter presents a paper on Woolf, without depending on dominating, protective patriarchal figures. By doing so, Virginia rejects the conventional image of womanhood, associated with ignorance, helplessness, and vulnerability. She also gives up her attributed identity as a pure and obedient wife by having an extramarital affair in Istanbul. Virginia was a wife to Leonard, who called her Virginia or “Mandrill [sic],” which is “a large, fierce, strong baboon of western Africa” (Gee, 2014: 84; Panken, 1987: 279). Since she relates the names imposed by her husband to male oppression, Virginia wants her Turkish lover Ahmet to call her Ginia, which was her “childhood nickname,” to show that she is a new woman who can choose her own name and her own personal self-identity (Gee, 2014: 429). Furthermore, women were not supposed to express their wishes or have their own self-will in Woolf’s time, and she goes against this rule by wanting something from her Turkish lover: “‘There is something I want to do,’ I said. I was surprised to hear myself speak. It had always been hard for me to say what I wanted. Men’s wishes were so strong, so immediate-but I refused to slip back into the past” (Gee, 2014: 431). She also challenges the image of a conventional woman who is “too chaste” (Gee, 2014: 388) by expressing her physical attraction to Ahmet and making love to him without “feel[ing] shy or worried [about] [her] nakedness” (Gee, 2014: 439). In this way, although Woolf experiences culture shock when she encounters a new society, which is drastically different from the conservative Victorian society, she manages to adapt herself to the foreign cultural environment by having a new name and a new identity as “a free woman who ... was with a man [she] had chosen [herself]” (Gee, 2014: 432). Accordingly, Gee’s Virginia, who moves across the society where she was enculturated, achieves cross-cultural adaptation to twenty-first century world and achieves self-fulfilment by killing “The Angel in the House,” who “used to come between [her] and [her] paper” and dictate her that she should not express her ideas on such taboo subjects as morality and sex, because they “cannot be dealt with freely and openly by women” (Woolf, 1966: 285, 286).

## Conclusion

Differing from the previous studies on Maggie Gee's *Virginia Woolf in Manhattan* (Smith, 2017; Koç, 2021; Varalda, 2020), this study concludes that in *Virginia Woolf in Manhattan*, Virginia Woolf experiences culture shock as a result of her movement from early twentieth-century English society to modern, twenty-first century New York, known as a centre welcoming people from diverse cultures. This work, like the works discussing the issues of culture shock and cultural isolation in literary works (Griffith, 1995; John, 2010; Carden-Coyne, 2009; Alonso Alonso, 2018), has explored the culture shock and alienation experienced by the protagonist. Having been brought up in the conservative Victorian society, representing the old world, Virginia feels alienated in New York, a microcosm of the new multicultural, global world, where she meets people whose clothing, language, and manners are different. Furthermore, in the twenty-first century, the strict socio-economic hierarchies of Victorian era have been loosened and the boundaries between classes, races and genders have become more flexible. Therefore, the dominated socio-economic groups in Victorian and early twentieth-century English society, like lower classes and women, and African people, are more liberated in the twenty-first century, a scenery which makes Woolf, who is from the old world, feel estranged. The conflict between the new and the old can also be noticed in the use of language and the communication between people. As a person standing for the intellectual community of the early twentieth century, which was comprised of elite, sociable people using a sophisticated language, Woolf is astonished by modern people who have isolated lives, indulging in the virtual world operated by such machines as mobile phones and laptops. The socio-cultural and economic developments in the new world, in turn, make Woolf develop aggressive and nostalgic responses towards these cross-cultural challenges.

In parallel with the previous studies dealing with the struggles of characters to adapt themselves to the host culture in literary works (Amer 2016; Thasleema & Khaan 2021), this study has shown the attempts of Gee's *Virginia Woolf* to adapt herself to a new, unfamiliar society. However, differing from the earlier studies, which adopt a postcolonial perspective, this study has mainly benefitted from Kim's theory (2001, 2002, 2017) on cross-cultural adaptation to explain the cross-cultural adaptation achieved by the protagonist. Although Virginia is initially perplexed by the norms and values of the twenty-first century, when she is deculturated from the rules and norms of her time, she starts to adapt herself to the new world, having different values and socio-cultural and economic structure. Deciding to adjust herself to the new world, where oppressed socio-cultural groups, including women, are more liberated, Virginia rejects to be known as Mrs Woolf, who needs her husband to deal with 'manly' jobs, like economic affairs. She adapts herself to the socio-cultural codes of the new era by getting her economic freedom and challenging Victorian gender discourse which relates women to chastity, purity, and obedience. Accordingly, Gee's *Virginia*, who moves across her learned socio-cultural values and behaviours to which she was enculturated, achieves cross-cultural adaptation by adjusting herself into twenty-first century world, which has better socio-economic opportunities for women and other dominated and marginalised groups.

## Information Note

The article has been prepared in accordance with research and publication ethics. This study does not require ethics committee approval.

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