



Yazar/Author
Eren BOLAT*

Makale Adı/Article Name

Ngugi'nin Tutsak: Bir Yazarın Hapishane Günlüğü ve Orhan Kemal'in 72. Koşuş Adlı Eserlerinde Hapishane ve Mahkûmların Temsili

The Representation of Prison and Prisoners in Ngugi's Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary and Orhan Kemal's 72nd Ward

ÖZ

Bu çalışmada iki farklı yazarın, Ngugi wa Thiong'o ve Orhan Kemal, düşünceleri yüzünden kendi devletleri tarafından hapse atılmaları sonucu deneyimledikleri hapishane hayatını ve mahkûmların durumlarını nasıl betimlediklerinin incelenmesi amaçlanmaktadır. Seçilen bu eserler farklı edebi türlerde yazılmış olmasına rağmen her iki yazarın bahsetmiş olduğu olaylar tamamen yaşanmış ve kendilerinin de tanıklık etmiş olduğu olaylardır. Ngugi çalışmasında özellikle politik mahkûmların durumuna vurgu yaparak hapishane yönetiminin hükümet telkini ile mahkûmlara kabul edilemeyecek bir şekilde nasıl davrandığını, mahkûmların bu şartlara nasıl göğüs gerdiğini ve hayatta kalabilmek için göstermiş oldukları çabayı anlatmaktadır. Bu makaleye konu olan diğer çalışmada ise, Orhan Kemal politik nedenlerden dolayı hapse atıldığında deneyimlemiş olduğu hapishane hayatını özellikle yoksul, gariban ve kimsesiz bireylerin hayatlarına odaklanarak anlatmaktadır. Eserlerinde genellikle sosyalist gerçekçi bir tavır sergileyen Orhan Kemal, bu anlatımında sadece mahkûmların hayatlarını değil aynı zamanda hapishane ortamını ve gardiyanların mahkûmlara karşı olan aşağılayıcı tavrını da canlı bir şekilde betimlemiştir. Tüm bunlar göz önünde bulundurularak, bu çalışmada Kenyalı yazar ve düşünür Ngugi wa Thiong'o'nun bir günlük türünde kaleme aldığı eseri ile Orhan Kemal'in bizzat şahitlik etmiş olduğu olayları aktardığı 72. *Koşuş* adlı eseri karşılaştırmalı bir şekilde incelenmiş ve her iki yazarın benzer ve farklı yönlerinin ortaya konması amaçlanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ngugi, Orhan Kemal, Hapishane, Mahkûm, Temsil

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine how two distinct authors, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Orhan Kemal, express their experiences in prison as a result of being imprisoned by their own states due to their opinions, as well as how they portray the conditions of the prison and prisoners. Ignoring the fact that both works are written in different literary forms, the events recounted by both authors are completely encountered and witnessed by themselves. Ngugi's work focuses on the plight of political prisoners, detailing how the prison administration treated them horribly through government indoctrination, as well as how the inmates coped with these circumstances. On the other hand, Orhan Kemal portrays the prison life he witnessed while imprisoned for political reasons, focusing particularly on the lives of the impoverished, poor, and outcast prisoners. In his story, he discusses not only the life of the prisoners, but also the prison atmosphere and the warders' degrading attitude toward them. In light of these considerations, Kenyan writer and scholar Ngugi wa Thiong'o's work, which he composed in the form of a diary, and Orhan Kemal's story *72nd Ward*, in which he tells the events he witnessed, were compared and contrasted, accordingly, the parallels and differences between the two writers were explored.

Keywords: Ngugi, Orhan Kemal, Prison, Prisoners, Representation

Introduction

*Stone Walls do not a Prison make,
Nor Iron bars a Cage;
Minds innocent and quiet take
That for an Hermitage*

Richard Lovelace, *To Althea, from Prison*

The problems, events and phenomenon that negatively affect individuals in a society are generally expressed by writers, poets, artists and scholars giving voice to their people. These people, criticizing the current adverse conditions with their pen and thoughts, have often been subjected to certain sanctions and even arrested for their opinions. To control such intellectuals and individuals whom the state deems problematic, the prison is utilized as a trenchant apparatus. The arrest or imprisonment of people is perhaps not a new phenomenon, but it has been one of the main weapons that the state has used for the last three hundred years to keep criminals under control (Sykes, 1971: xi). Over time, numerous concepts and theories have been put forth about prison and its use as a control mechanism, such as the panopticon prison put forward by Jeremy Bentham. With the changing dynamics of the world, the prisons finally turn out to be a mechanism having polycentric power (Stastny & Tyrnauer, 1982: 19). Correspondingly, it has been simpler for those in positions of authority to apply pressure to individuals who deviate from the norms. And, the people that deviate from the norms set by the state or the dominant authority is generally led by the intellectuals of that society. As a result, many thinkers and intellectuals have experienced prison experience. The authors of the works that will be studied in this paper are also peculiar authors who have encountered the prison life and have included this subject in their works, which can be studied within the frame of prison literature.

Prison literature, gaining popularity with the flow of time, covers the genres of literature in which an author tells about fiction or real events that they indited while in prison, after prison, or about prison. Prison literature or prison writings generally refers to “writing produced by authors with experience of incarceration – largely, but not only, prisoners and former prisoners – and writing, including fiction from beyond the prison, that seeks to engage the experience of imprisonment directly” (Westall, 2020: 4). Prison literature has been considered as a new literary genre; however, first pieces of it can be traced back several centuries ago. Boethius, Roman politician and philosopher, can be labelled as one of the first authors of prison literature. His book, *The Consolation of Philosophy (523 AD)* written while he was imprisoned, upholds several of Boethius’ prior philosophical and literary ideals (Boethius & Slavitt, 2008: viv). Several examples can be given for the prison works written centuries ago. For example, while he was detained for one year in Genoa, Marco Polo was able to narrate *The Travels of Marco Polo*, a comprehensive chronicle of his journey to China. Thomas Malory composed *Le Morte d’Arthur* in a 15th-century prison. The number of such notable works boosted in the following periods and “The quantity of prison writing, as well as the number of its forms, also increased dramatically in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries” (Freeman, 2009: 134). For example, the seventeenth-century English poet Richard Lovelace penned his poem *To Althea from Prison* while incarcerated in Gatehouse prison for advocating the repeal of the Clergy Law. Upon spending several months in prison, Lovelace glorified a stoicism that is purposefully at conflict with the prevalent, religiously driven changes

to prison's severity in his works (Anselment, 1993:21). American short story writer William Sydney Porter, alias O. Henry, composed his renowned stories while in prison in Ohio, when arrested for embezzlement. Likewise, one of the prominent representatives of Russian literature, Fyodor Dostoyevsky authored his work *The House of the Dead* (1860), in which he narrates the horrendous events he witnessed during his time in exile camps and prison. The poem *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* by Oscar Wilde is one of the first pieces that comes to mind when prison literature is discussed. The poem, which was published in 1897 and describes the execution of a prisoner by the name of Wooldridge, illustrates the ferocious methods of punishment generally applied to inmates. Wilde's poem can be called as "an eloquent plea for reform of prison conditions" (Britannica, 2017). With the increase of writers interested in this field and the change in the way people perceive life, "During the twentieth century, prison writing, in particular! has periodically experienced waves of popularity" (Davis, 2003: 54). The modern American poet and writer E. E. Cummings wrote his autobiographical novel *The Enormous Room* after months of detention in France. Prolific figures in Turkish literature including Kemal Tahir, Nâzım Hikmet, and Sevgi Soysal all had penitentiary experiences and wrote some of their best-known works while incarcerated. For example, Soysal's *Yıldırım Bölge Kadınlar Koğuşu* is a work born out of prison. Besides these aforementioned writers from America, Russia, Turkey and several parts of Europe, the writers contributing to the genre of prison writing, which acquired popularity in African literature as well, must be mentioned. South African writer and academician Breyten Breytenbach can be included among the firsts of these authors. Breytenbach, known for his deprecation to racial discrimination in his country, was detained for treason. He "served seven years of a nine-year sentence" (Roberts, 1986: 305). His work *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist*, in which he describes his experiences during the period of imprisonment and detention, is also a work that can be evaluated within the scope of prison literature. Nigerian Wole Soyinka, one of the iconic postcolonial writers, was also arrested for having anti-war discourses in the local press, for an effort to unite the intellectuals in the country against the war (Soyinka, 1972: 18), and indited his work *The Man Died: Prison Notes of Wole Soyinka*, a recounting of his detention and 22-months incarceration (Britannica, 2009). Egyptian feminist writer Nawal El Saadawi was also convicted for criticizing the tyrannical regime in her country and portrayed the events she witnessed in prison in her novel *The Fall of The Imam*. As clearly seen, various writers from the distinct part of the world have employed themselves with the prison writing, which resulted in a popularity in prison literature. The main reason why prison writing is becoming more popular is because authors, academics, and philosophers who were unable to turn a blind eye to injustice in many parts of the world are amplifying their voices. The authors of the works selected in this study, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Orhan Kemal, were also convicted because of enouncing their dissenter opinions and had to experience prison life. In this study, I will examine Ngugi's *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary*, which tells his experiences in prison and the events related to prison life, and Orhan Kemal's *72nd Ward*, which he wrote inspired by the events during his prison days.

In the literary sense, prison is generally accepted as a place where the author can be inspired and produce new ideas, however, "it is extremely hard to find either the opportunity or the means to write" (Ahnert, 2013: 2). Ngugi is one of the authors experiencing these difficulties. He describes the conditions under which he penned: "I wrote my first novel *Caitani Mũtharaba-Inĩ, The Devil on the Cross*, in this language in prison, on toilet paper. The prison to me was like a school. And

writing became a way to cope with my detention” (Gomez, 2019). Even though Ngugi went through a difficult phase during his time in prison and tried to survive in inhumane conditions, he was able to harness the prison’s transformative power in a constructive way and kept aloof from its current conditions. The prison somehow turned into a bee cocoon for him and he resisted all the injustices and miseries via writing. “True freedom of expression is a luxury everywhere, but in some places it is an unattainable dream” (Cooke, 2001: 237), however, Ngugi pursued his desire to write. With this mindset, which he formed by means of writing, Ngugi harshly criticized Kenyan government, which imprisoned him because of his opposition and dissenter opinions against the neo-colonial government, and disclosed the regime’s attitude toward the people. Likewise, upon his imprisonment because of reading the books that the government did not approve, Orhan Kemal has felt and discovered the dreadful and icy face of prison life, as well as the conditions in which individuals strive to survive. It is quite significant that both authors were detained for their defiant attitudes and expressing their opinions in ways that their governments do not ratify. They endured such a manner now that their governments wanted to pacify and prevent them from public awareness. The fact that both writers were imprisoned by different governments in separate continents and used their time in prison to their advantage also demonstrates that the governments’ attempt to subjugate them failed. This is because “Jail literature reverses the panopticon, fragmenting the state’s attempts to appear unassailably unified” (Whalen, 2007: 6). Ngugi and Orhan Kemal, combining prison life with literary personalities, utilized potential of prison writing to make their opinions heard and deconstructed the position of the state.

Ngugi’s work is a diary-like record of the events that he witnessed and experienced in prison, therefore, his work is the personal account of his prison days. On the other hand, while Orhan Kemal’s story is a piece of fiction, the events he recounts are true occurrences that he observed during his time in prison. As an example of historical fiction, his work preserves the nuances of his time, together with societal conventions, attitudes, and practices with a sense of veracity. That means, their works belong to distinct literary genres. However, on the other hand, it should be noted that “Literature is fiction. If literature is realistic, then reality is fictionalized to make it suitable for literature” (Zimmermann, 2015). Accordingly, “Diary writing is creating “real” fictions of one’s self” (Hooks, 2020: xx). I mean whether it is reality or fiction, literature is a melting pot embracing different genres. Therefore, although they are created in different genres, I selected these two works to compare the conditions of prison and the prisoners conveyed through the lenses of two divergent authors from different nationalities and political atmospheres.

In other respects, the countries where both authors are born are poles apart in terms of historical, political and socio-cultural aspects. For example, while Kenya was subjected to the domination of the colonial mentality until it gained its independence, Turkey has never been under the yoke of any country throughout its history. Turkey adopted the republican administration about half a century before Kenya, which gained its independence only in 1963 and opted for the republican administration in 1964. Notwithstanding these drastic discrepancies, it is evidence that people from various continents, worldviews, and cultural backgrounds may come together and share interests. Both Ngugi and Orhan Kemal were unable to remain apathetic to the injustice, dominance, and oppression they observed in their own countries.

Even at the risk of facing imprisonment, Ngugi and Orhan Kemal's criticism of the official apparatus in accordance with their personal principles and values is a crucial reaction. American journalist and writer Maureen Freely, who has been in Turkey for many years and has a comprehensive knowledge of Turkish culture, appreciates Orhan Kemal's attitude and expresses the difference between him and today's writers as follows: "Today's novelists are less likely to see themselves as writing for the people, let alone the struggle, and more likely to resist the idea that their work only has worth to the extent that it serves the national project" (2009: 49). At this point, Freely's opinion sounds reasonable because both writers wrote for their own people and their sufferings, in other words they dared to write at the cost of losing their lives. What unites their works is their stories based on their personal prison experiences.

1. The Representation of Prison and Prisoners in Ngugi's *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary*

Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o, one of the prominent names of postcolonial canon, diverges from other postcolonial authors because his "subaltern background, his upbringing in an extended family of landless, illiterate peasants, and his lived experience of colonial violence, anticolonial resistance, and neocolonial imprisonment, make him an unusual postcolonial intellectual" (Lovesey, 2015: 3). The life of Ngugi, as an African witnessing the colonial and post-colonial period intensely, can be divided into two parts as before and after his intellectual rebirth. He released his works in English under the name James Ngugi before his awakening phase. After his journey to his own roots, he first changed his baptized name and later started to write his works in his native language, Gikuyu. These decisions had a radical impact on Ngugi's life, because ironically enough Ngugi did not face any problems while writing in English, he was regarded as a threat by the state government and even imprisoned because he wrote in his native language. He "was arrested on 31 December 1977 and spent the whole of 1978 in a maximum security prison, detained without even the doubtful benefit-of a trial. They were attempting to stop the emergence of an authentic language of Kenyan theatre" (Thiong'o, 1987: 58). The fact that Ngugi was imprisoned without inquiry for writing in his native language indicates that his struggle for his country and people was ignored by his own government. Ngugi has faced such a situation because "A writer who tries to communicate the message of revolutionary unity and hope in the languages of the people becomes a subversive character" (1987: 30). Ngugi is also aware of the situation and the drastic outcomes of being such a person because "It is then that writing in African languages becomes a subversive or treasonable offence with such a writer facing possibilities of prison, exile or-even death" (1987: 30). Ngugi was exposed to all of these scenarios, with the exception of death, and he has never hesitated to voice his opinion.

The work titled *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary* is a series of actual events in which Ngugi articulated the frustrations and cruel attitudes he had in the prison where he stayed with political prisoners. Approaching Ngugi's work in general, it is crystal clear that "there is a clear opposition between state power and writing, or rather, aesthetic reflection" (Gikandi, 2009: 197). To prevent Ngugi from writing and influencing the public with his thought provoking works and discourses, the Kenyan government sent him to "Kamiti Maximum Security Prison for helping to write a play in the Gikuyu language" (Thiong'o, 1981: 139). According to Ngugi, the Kenyan government suppressed him and other political prisoners because "Torture, imprisonment, and isolation are all attempts at breaking the connection with memory" (Thiong'o, 2009: 112). However, Ngugi, being subjected to all these tortures, exile and silence, pursued his struggle to free his country

from the clutches of colonization and injustices during the neocolonial era. It can be definitely said that Ngugi's firm attitude and "his role in canon reform and educational decolonization helped to establish the discipline of postcolonial studies" (Lovesey, 2015: 3). In addition, Ngugi also expects a similar struggle from postcolonial writers and thinkers in his country. He believes that Kenyan intellectuals of this age must enhance their languages, literature, and culture in the same way that others have done (Thiong'o, 1981: 196). In its actual sense, "Ngugi is suggesting something much more fundamental: the decolonization of the African intellectual" (Lovesey, 2015: 38). At this point, he believes that it is African writers who have to take responsibility and they must return to their roots in order to cleanse themselves of the colonial mentality.

In the first pages of his work in which he deals with his experiences in prison, Ngugi mentions that he stayed with 16 political prisoners and he was identified with a "number", that is, he was not called by his name. His statement indicates that everyone placed in the prison is just a "prisoner" and their names or identities have no importance there. This kind of approach suggests that the inmates are under control by the system and can show their existence only with their numbers. Aware of this situation, Ngugi satirically declares that he was pleased to see the increasing number of the intellectual prisoners. He asserts: "I am glad they brought you here. It would be a good thing for Kenya if more intellectuals were imprisoned. First, it would wake most of them from their illusions" (Thiong'o, 1981: 8). This argument implies that his country's intellectuals are blind to the oppression that the government inflicts on its own citizens. To uncover the blinkers, he presumes they will only discover the truth once they have spent time in prison, which renders prison as a kind of school resulting in "potential transformation not only for those 'inside' but also those going prisons as facilitators, be they creative practitioners, academics, university students" (Schwan, 2011: 1). As Michel Foucault argues: "The prison is like a rather disciplined barracks, a strict school, a dark workshop, but not qualitatively different" (1977: 233)

Ngugi believes that intellectuals must endure certain challenges in order to be aware of the facts in their country, on the other hand, he also draws attention to the government's approach toward prisoners. Ngugi is stunned at how other prisoners are able to survive in such severe circumstances. His portrayal of a day in prison reveals the horrendous plight in which the inmates are forced to live. Ngugi describes a single prison day routine as follows:

During the first month of my prison life, I was daily locked in cell 16 for twenty-two hours. The remaining two hours were distributed to cover the daily chores of emptying the chamberpot topful with shit and urine; of gulping down the breakfast, lunch and supper of porridge, ugali, worm-infested beans and rotten vegetables; and of sunshine and exercise. The other detainees had lived under these conditions for the previous two years; precisely, from September 1975. Everyday I would ask myself: how have they managed to stay afloat? (1981: 20).

In addition to malnutrition and physical impossibilities, the conditions that prisoners suffer most are the problems they have experienced in health conditions. Under the prevailing conditions, it was almost impossible for these prisoners to stay healthy, however- therein lies the rub- the problem of not being able to access health services after their illnesses doubled their sufferings. Ngugi states that one of the patients has been battling with an incurable disease for seven years, and his hospitalization process was carried out in a painful manner that no human being should endure:

One detainee used to suffer from swollen veins. His laments would be met with indifference or with the ready explanation that he was malingering. Then suddenly he would be whisked off to Kenyatta National Hospital, in chains, under heavy guard, for surgery. Two days later he would be back in the block, still in chains, but with bleeding cuts. The laments would start all over again. This game of treatment-without-a-cure had gone on for seven years. He was still hospitalized at Kenyatta National Hospital when news of his freedom reached him (1981: 101-102).

The insufficient health care services to which the patients are exposed is the most startling reality in the prison that Ngugi eloquently depicts. Ngugi especially emphasizes the struggle of the prisoners to survive in the prison milieu, where even access to health services, which is a basic human right, is unattainable. Aside from the above-mentioned patients, another prisoner had an anus ailment that made it impossible for him to eat because he was not treated. The most crucial point that Ngugi includes in his observations about prison life is the inhuman attitude that sick prisoners face during the transfer procedure to the hospital. As recorded by Ngugi, this persecution of the prisoners could only doom in two ways: "The plight can only end in either death or freedom, which he supposes are two different forms of release. So release of one sort or other is eventually assured" (1981: 146). Ngugi experiences the second of these alternatives and regains his freedom, although this emancipation is accompanied with exile.

For Ngugi, "Life in prison is not all endless confrontations and 'profound' meditations on history. It is basically a cliché: dull, mundane, monotonous, repetitious, torturous in its intended animal rhythm of eating, defecating, sleeping, eating, defecating, sleeping" (1981: 116). Ngugi likens their exposure and lethal routine to the situation of animals awaiting the slaughter day and trying to escape it. With his analogy, Ngugi argues that people are losing their human features transforming into animal-like creatures. On the other hand, he somehow found a way to break free from this mundane and routine life: "Free thoughts on toilet-paper!" (1981: 8). Ngugi wrote his novel *Devil on the Cross*, which he published after his release from prison, while in prison. It was a "novel written with blood, sweat and toil on toilet-paper" (1981: 164). In his novel and prison diary, "one of the primary themes is the power of art to unmask the state by exposing its moral bankruptcy; writing is here presented as one of the most potent instruments against 'the culture of silence'" (Gikandi, 2009: 197-198). Accordingly, Ngugi wielded this instrument efficaciously and became the voice of all the prisoners there, rendering himself an "intellectual in political exile" (Lovesey, 2015: 41).

2. The Representation of Prison and Prisoners in Orhan Kemal's *72nd Ward*¹

Known for his socialist and critical realist narrative style, prolific Turkish novelist and playwright Orhan Kemal was born in Adana, Turkey, in 1914. His real name is Mehmet Raşit Ögütçü, but he took a pseudonym². Growing up in a family with a patriarchal structure, Orhan Kemal constantly felt the pressure of his father until his father moved to another country for political reasons³. Despite being born and raised in such an atmosphere, Orhan Kemal made great efforts

¹ The quotations about *72nd Ward* have been translated by the author of the article.

² In a magazine published in Istanbul in 1942, his name was "Orhan Raşit", but with the intervention of the editors, his name was changed to "Orhan Kemal". From that date until his death, he always wrote under the name Orhan Kemal (Ögütçü & Kangül, 2010). At that time, the source of the articles in the magazine was the authors in prison, but the editor of the magazine was publishing it by changing the names of the authors so that it would not be understood (Mendil, 2016).

³ The government of the day detained Orhan Kemal's father multiple times for various offenses. His ties to the Union and Progress Party (İttihat ve Terakki Partisi), his criticism of the present government, and his publications opposing

to improve himself and build a perspective on life by reading the works of prominent writers and poets of the period. Because of the political turbulence in his country, he was sentenced to five years in prison for allegedly spreading communist propaganda and reading the works of the renowned poet Nâzım Hikmet. His five-year incarceration began in Kayseri and redounded in Bursa Prison, where he met Nâzım Hikmet, who would have an intellectual and literary impact on him. Orhan Kemal, being largely engaged in poetry during his time in Bursa Prison, verged to creating stories and novels with the help of Nâzım Hikmet, who served as a mentor to him. He leveraged his observations and experiences during his time in prison to write his work, *72nd Ward*, which is the focus of this paper. In his work, written as a short story and then staged as a theatrical play, Orhan Kemal powerfully depicts prison life, social divisions, economic distress, and the climate in which the prisoners lived. The length of time Orhan Kemal spent in prison is the most essential aspect in his ability to portray prison life with such an in-depth and detailed way.

Ahmet Kaptan is the main character in *72nd Ward*, whose plot is entirely based on prison life. He is brave, generous, and gets along well with his pals. In his work, Orhan Kemal sheds light on the lives of the prisoners, whom he calls as “âdembabas”, and reveals their current pitiful condition. In *72nd Ward*, Orhan Kemal basically tells the story of waifs and penniless prisoners who cannot meet even their most basic needs in the worst ward of the prison. What is clearly felt throughout the story is the extreme poverty of the prisoners. Orhan Kemal succinctly describes the prisoners as follows: “The men who came in and out with their tattered apparel, they were dark, scrawny and unpleasant people” (Kemal, 2021: 8). The prisoners staying in the *72nd Ward* were poorer than the prisoners in the other wards, deprived of many opportunities, and could barely sustain themselves. The *72nd Ward* depicted by Orhan Kemal was “the poorest ward of the prison, and because it was the poorest, it was the dirtiest ward. The people of this place are like a standing worm. The benevolent state gave them a black ration on the day. Sometimes it’s dry, sometimes it’s fresh, but it’s always muddy” (2021: 22). Âdembabas were striving to survive under these conditions.

The state that compensates for the weaknesses of the inmates, thread and thrum, is described by Orhan Kemal as a “benevolent father/state”, yet it is a kind of irony because no protective and caring father would allow his children to live like this. Prisoners in *72nd Ward*, on the other hand, are barely surviving. The fact that the detrimental impacts of WWII were felt all around the world is the underlying cause for the state’s poor aid to the inmates. In his story, Orhan Kemal also recounts this phenomenon:

There was a world war. Motorized German troops were turning Europe upside down with lightning speed. The roads and borders were closed, not much came in from outside, the country was feeding itself. The bread was rationed. In prison, lumps of sugar were sold for five cents (2021: 23).

While the lives of even free people were badly affected by this horrific war that affected the entire world, the sufferings of the inmates were doubled. These people are both deprived of their freedom and face destitution. Their lives have been rendered even more miserable by their incarceration. They “have no income from anywhere, nor do they have hope. They live in hunger” (2021: 23). Orhan Kemal narrates the conditions of the prisoners and the effect of starvation as

the then-regime were the main causes of his detention. He is required to travel to Syria and Lebanon (Beirut) due to the pressure exerted on him.

follows: "Their strength was weakened by hunger, they were emaciated, their faces were completely dry, their breath was trembling" (2021: 40).

The most critical issue that the prisoners faced together with hunger was the lack of adequate accommodation. Despite being guarded by four walls in prison, they did not have access to a bed, which they regarded a luxury. "The bed was what the ward forgot over the years" (2021: 28). Most prisoners slept on cement bags (2021: 63). Before looking for a place to sleep, the inmates' first concern was to satisfy their ravenous stomachs. The prisoners, whose bellies had been groaning with hunger for some time, began to fill their tummies when the money sent by Ahmet Kaptan's mother is received. In fact, as a result of their satiation, they began to fantasize about things that would be considered luxurious to them. Beton Ahmet expresses his delight at the prospect of having a toothbrush: "When I tasted hot meal and bread, I thought of brushing my teeth. What the hell are we guys. If we are not embarrassed, we will ask the captain to purchase us a toothbrush" (2021: 57). The ambient and physical conditions of the prisoners, who lacked even a bed and dreaming of a toothbrush -some of the most basic needs- were really appalling. "With broken windows, crushed bedbug blood on the walls, and a dusty tiny light bulb, this ward was really dirty" (2021: 63). In addition to hunger, physical deprivation and lack of facilities, other unpalatable situations are gambling, usury, and violence that make the life doubly unbearable for the prisoners. The inmates, struggling to survive economically, tried to make money by gambling and borrowed with interest when they lost, incurring them in debt that they could not repay. And what is worse, the warders were oblivious to all of these issues and the inmates' systematization of illegal practices among themselves. In his story, Orhan Kemal implicitly criticizes the state officials for not performing their duties properly, by referring to this attitude of the warders because their callousness results in the crushing of the destitute and poor prisoners by the stronger ones.

The warders' perspectives and attitudes towards the impoverished and destitute inmates, as well as the way they tolerate corruption in the prison and the inmates' setting up their own systems, are humiliating and unacceptable. When a prisoner from the 72nd Ward approaches to the chief guard to buy a light-bulb, the chief guard responds him as follows: "How can you afford the light-bulb! You don't deserve it" (2021: 66). When Kaya Ali reproaches him, the chief guard says in a contemptuous manner: "Are you a human being? A human being cannot live in 72nd Ward? Does the man who has a money collect grass? Does he fill his stomach from the trash can?" (2021: 66). The chief guard's statements reveal that he does not regard the prisoners in the 72nd Ward as human beings and has no respect for them. The prisoners, already suffering from hunger and destitution, are also subjected to the warders' degrading treatment. Orhan Kemal unambivalently depicts the dramatic position of the individuals in the 72nd ward, who are marginalized and ignored by both the powerful wealthy prisoners and the warders: "They will live as long as they can, like a dog, a worm, a cockroach, protist, like a moss, without thinking about whether their life is of any use to the homeland or the nation, without remembering the homeland or the nation" (2021: 23). As a foregone conclusion, most of the prisoners in this ward survived only until the winter. "The winter that year was much more severe than every year. Beton, Fitol, Tavukçu, İzmirli, exactly ten âdembabas and Ahmet Kaptan froze to death" (2021: 102-103). What Orhan Kemal tells throughout his story are these ostracized, abused and marginalized prisoners whose existence and absence make no difference for the others.

Conclusion

*Jails and prisons are designed to break human beings,
to convert the population into specimens in a zoo —
obedient to our keepers, but dangerous to each other.*

Angela Davis, 1989

Writers and philosophers who were imprisoned, exiled and paid various prices for their beliefs and thoughts can be observed in divergent societies and nations in peculiar time zones. Such writers do not hesitate to proclaim what they believe to be true, even if it means risking their lives. Even though they were from different nations with separate beliefs, the authors of the selected works, Ngugi and Orhan Kemal, underwent the same fate: they were imprisoned. Both writers' prison experiences are distinctive, however, they share the experience of being violated by their own government and living as a prisoner. While Ngugi's prison life lasted for about one year and resulted in exile, Orhan Kemal sojourned in prison for about five years, during which he met Nâzım Hikmet, who paved the way to his literary career. Notwithstanding the fact that the two writers spent different lengths of time in prison, they both had a profound experience during their imprisonment and reflected it in their works.

Both authors deal with the events in the prison, howbeit, some kind of discreteness in their subjects can be seen. While Ngugi's work focuses specifically on the center of political people condemned by the government, Orhan Kemal tells the stories of ordinary, poor and desperate people. The state's/officials' merciless and inhumane attitude toward prisoners is a recurrent theme shared by both authors, though Orhan Kemal defines the state as "benevolent father" in an ironic manner. In both studies, it is seen that prisoners are deprived of the most basic human needs, humiliated and dragged into a miserable life. At this point, it is undeniable that both Ngugi and Orhan Kemal have voiced severe concerns about the state and prison conditions.

Considering the periods in which both works were penned- keeping in mind that both prisons were terrible- the prison conditions portrayed in *72nd Ward* are stiffer than Ngugi's because it was the Second World War period that ravaged the whole world depriving lots of people. For example, Ngugi preserved his work *Devil on The Cross* by writing it on toilet paper, however, in the *72nd Ward*, there is not even a bed for the prisoners to sleep on, which means toilet paper is an ultra-luxury item for them. Furthermore, the physical conditions in the *72nd Ward* are also more severe, by the end of the story, the main character and ten other inmates die from exposure to freezing cold. Of course, the prison conditions mentioned in both studies are not at the level that any person can endure, but the *72nd Ward* can be regarded as bottom of the barrel.

With their keen observations and narrative styles, both Ngugi and Orhan Kemal enduring prison life, being suppressed by their own states, and paying a price for their opinions manifest their prison experiences with all their nakedness, shed light on the inhumane plight that prisoners were exposed , and in a way rebel against their current regimes with their stunning works.

References

- Ahnert, R. (2013). *The rise of prison literature in the Sixteenth Century*. Cambridge University Press.
- Anselment, R. A. (1993). "Stone Walls" and "Iron Bars": Richard Lovelace and the Conventions of Seventeenth-Century Prison Literature. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 17(1), 15–34. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43444945>
- Boethius, A. M. S. (2008). *The consolation of philosophy*. (D. R. Slavitt, Trans.). Harvard University Press.
- Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopedia (2009). *Wole Soyinka*. Retrieved June 29, 2022, from <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Wole-Soyinka#ref162245>
- Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopedia (2017, August 4). *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Ballad-of-Reading-Gaol>
- Cooke, M. (2001). *Ghassan al-Jaba'i: Prison Literature in Syria after 1980*. *World Literature Today*, 75(2), 237–245.
- Davis, A. Y. (1989). *Angela Davis: An autobiography*. New York: International Publ.
- Davis, A. Y. (2003). *Are prisons obsolete?* Seven Stories Press.
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. (A. Sheridan, Trans.). Vintage Books.
- Freely, M. (2009). The Prison Imaginary in Turkish Literature. *World Literature Today*, 83(6), 46–50.
- Freeman, T. S. (2009). The Rise of Prison Literature. *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 72(2), 133–146.
- Gikandi, S. (2009). *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gomez, G. (2019, September 1). Ngugi wa Thiongo: "prison was a school to me". - news & views from emerging countries. News - News WordPress Theme. Retrieved January 31, 2022, from <https://www.southworld.net/ngugi-wa-thiongo-prison-was-a-school-to-me/>
- Hooks, A. R. (2020). *Diary as literature: Through the lens of multiculturalism in America*. Vernon Press.
- Kelly, M., & Westall, C. (2020). *Prison writing and the literary world: Imprisonment, institutionality and questions of literary practice*, Routledge.
- Kemal, O. (2021). *72. Koğuş*. Everest Yayınları.
- Lovelace, R. (n.d.). *To Althea, from prison by Richard Lovelace*. Poetry Foundation. Retrieved June 28, 2022, from <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44657/to-althea-from-prison>
- Lovesey, O. (2015). *The postcolonial intellectual: Ngugi wa Thiong'o in context*. Routledge.
- Mendil, İ. (2016, February 29). *Mehmet Raşit Nasıl Orhan Kemal Oldu?* İPEKLİ MENDİL. Retrieved June 30, 2022, from <https://ipeklimendil.wordpress.com/2015/09/15/mehmet-rasit-nasil-orhan-kemal-oldu/>
- Thiong'o, wa. N. (1981). *Detained: A writer's prison diary*. Oxford: Heinemann.
- Thiong'o, wa. N. (1987). *Decolonising the mind: The politics of language in African literature*. Harare, Zimbabwe: Zimbabwe Pub. House.
- Thiong'o, wa. N. (2009). *Something torn and new: An African renaissance*. New York: Basic Civitas Books.
- Öğütçü, I., & Kangül, Ö. (2010). Yazar Orhan Kemal web sitesi. Retrieved June 30, 2022, <http://www.orhankemal.org/links1/816.html>

- Roberts, S. (1986). Breyten Breytenbach's Prison Literature. *The Centennial Review*, 30(2), 304–313. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23738721>
- Schwan, A. (2011). Introduction: Reading and Writing in Prison. *Critical Survey*, 23(3), 1–5. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41556427>
- Soyinka, W. (1972). *The Man Died: Prison Notes of Wole Soyinka*. Harper & Row.
- Stastny, C., & Tyrnauer, G. (1982). *Who rules the joint: The Changing Political Culture of Maximum Security Prisons in America*. Lexington Books.
- Sykes, G. M. (1971). *The Society of Captives*. Princeton University Press.
- Whalen, L. (2007). *Contemporary Irish Republican prison writing: Writing and resistance*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Zimmermann, P. (2015, September 25). *On the diary as a literary genre by Peter Zimmermann*. European Literature Network. Retrieved June 29, 2022, from <https://www.eurolitnetwork.com/on-the-diary-as-a-literary-genre-by-peter-zimmermann/>

Çatışma beyanı: Makalenin yazarı, bu çalışma ile ilgili taraf olabilecek herhangi bir kişi ya da finansal ilişkisi bulunmadığını dolayısıyla herhangi bir çıkar çatışmasının olmadığını beyan eder.

Destek ve teşekkür: Çalışmada herhangi bir kurum ya da kuruluştan destek alınmamıştır.