



## Exploring Simmel's Social Types in Kemal Tahir's Novels: A New Perspective on Turkish People

Özge Seda Uğraş\*

Mehmet Uğraş\*\*

\* Dr. Arş. Gör. / Ph.D. - Res.

Asst.

Hatay Mustafa Kemal  
University, Faculty of Arts  
and Sciences, Department of  
Sociology / Hatay Mustafa  
Kemal Üniversitesi, Fen-  
Edebiyat Fakültesi, Sosyoloji  
Bölümü

osedatuyulu@gmail.com

Hatay / TÜRKİYE

\*\* Dr. Öğr. Üyesi / Asst. Prof.

Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey  
University, Faculty of  
Letters, Department of  
Sociology / Karamanoğlu  
Mehmetbey Üniversitesi,  
Edebiyat Fakültesi, Sosyoloji  
Bölümü

ugras\_0@hotmail.com

Karaman / TÜRKİYE

**Received / Gönderim :**

21 Eylül 2024

**Accepted / Kabul:**

14 Mart 2025

**Field Editor / Alan**

**Editörü:**

Haktan Kaplan

### Abstract

Kemal Tahir is a significant novelist who witnessed a critical era, from the late Ottoman Empire to the early years of the Turkish Republic, a time when social and political realities were being transformed. The period he experienced continuous to have sociological, political, and socio-economic impacts that persist to this day. Consequently, his observations on Turkish society remain relevant in many respects. He continues to be an influential intellectual, offering an alternative interpretation of official historiography by blending literature, history, and sociology. His handling of events, versatility, and original perspectives provide readers with unique insights. This study examines seven books by Kemal Tahir between 1955-1980. These books, recently republished in chronological order by Ketebe Publications in 2022 under the series called "1890-1945 Turkey," include; A Castle of Property (Bir Mülkiyet Kalesi), Tired Warrior (Yorgun Savaşçı), People of the Captive City (Esir Şehrin İnsanları), Prisoner of the Captive City (Esir Şehrin Mahpusu), Wolf Law (Kurt Kanunu), Crossroad (Yol Ayrımı), and The Seed in the Steppe (Bozkırdaki Çekirdek). The study focuses on Kemal Tahir's seven novels, totaling over three thousand pages, and the author's characteristics which can be viewed as 'social types' representing Turkish people and society. Drawing on Georg Simmel's conceptual framework of *social types*, the study aims to explore how Kemal Tahir's depiction of characters reflects broader societal norms and values. Additionally, it seeks to analyze the political and cultural influences that motivated Tahir to write these novels and their impact on the construction of social life.

**Keywords:** Kemal Tahir, literature, sociology of literature, social type, Georg Simmel.

## Kemal Tahir Romanlarında Simmel'in Toplumsal Tiplerini Aramak: Türk İnsanı Üzerine Yeni Bir Yorum

### Öz

Kemal Tahir, Osmanlı'nın son dönemlerinden Cumhuriyet'in ilk yıllarını içeren, toplumsal ve siyasal gerçekliğinin yeniden şekillen(di)diği kritik bir döneme tanık olmuş önemli bir romancıdır. Tanıklık ettiği yıllar sosyolojik, siyasal ve sosyo-ekonomik açıdan etkisini günümüzde de sürdüren bir zaman dilimini göstermektedir. Dolayısıyla Türk toplumuna dair yaptığı tespitler de birçok açıdan

güncelliğini korumaktadır. Yazar olayları ele alma biçimi, çok yönlülüğü ve okuyucuya sunduğu orijinal perspektiflerle edebiyat, tarih ve sosyolojiyi birlikte ele alarak resmi tarih yazımına alternatif bir okuma önerisi geliştiren önemli bir entelektüel olarak halen karşımızdadır. Bu çalışmada Kemal Tahir'in ilk basım tarihleri 1955-1980 arasındaki yedi eseri incelenmiştir. Ketebe Yayınları tarafından 2022 yılında kronolojik sırayla yeniden yayınlanan bu eserler, "1890-1945 Türkiye" dizisiyle okuyucuya sunulmuştur. Bu dizide sırasıyla *Bir Mülkiyet Kalesi*, *Yorgun Savaşçı*, *Esir Şehrin İnsanları*, *Esir Şehrin Mahpusu*, *Kurt Kanunu*, *Yol Ayrımı* ve *Bozkırdaki Çekirdek* yer almaktadır. Çalışma Kemal Tahir'in üç bin sayfanın üzerindeki yedi eserine ve yazarın Türk insanı ve toplumuyla ilişkilendirdiği bir 'toplumsal tip' olarak görebileceğimiz karakteristik özelliklerine odaklanmaktadır. Bahsi geçen karakterleri analiz etmek için sosyolojinin önemli isimlerinden Georg Simmel'in *toplumsal tipleri* kavramsallaştırma biçimi esas alınmıştır. Amaçlanansa Kemal Tahir'i bu eserleri yazmaya iten şevkin arkasındaki siyasal ve kültürel kodların, toplumsal hayatın inşasındaki etkisini tartışmak ve Simmel'in perspektifiyle Kemal Tahir'in tiplerini değerlendirmektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kemal Tahir, edebiyat, edebiyat sosyolojisi, toplumsal tip, Georg Simmel.

## INTRODUCTION

It has been one hundred and fourteen years since Turkish novelist Kemal Tahir's birth and over fifty years since his death. During this time, hundreds of books and articles have been written about him and special issues of magazines have been published in his name. After so many interviews, symposiums, and discussions have been held in his honor, one might ask: what more can be written about him, or what remains to be said in 2025? Has Kemal Tahir not been consumed enough, or has he not been thoroughly explored? If his work has been extensively examined and if he has seemingly faded from the contemporary debates, what, then, explains why his works remain bestsellers, why his ideas are still referenced in fundamental discussions, and why many contemporary works still revolve around the issues he addressed? What are the key factors that lead readers to perceive Kemal Tahir's writings as relevant to contemporary times, rather than merely reflecting the late 1800s or the 1940s? Does this not indicate that Kemal Tahir's work will remain a significant part of contemporary discourse in 2025 and beyond? These questions, among others, are the initial steps and form the foundation of this study's inquiry.

When considering what 'new' perspectives can be offered on Kemal Tahir, it becomes evident that there has been a significant lack in addressing his novels, social types, or characters, often centered in literary analysis, through the lens of sociological and political debates. It is a notable oversight to confine the analysis of Kemal Tahir to his novels, literary criticism, or, as if doing him a favor, to literary sociology. These novels, crafted outside of the Western pattern, featuring local and socially representative characters deeply embedded in their social context, require a re-evaluation of Kemal Tahir in 2025. This re-evaluation is crucial because Kemal Tahir is not only a novelist but also a poet and thinker whose works engage deeply with political and social issues. While he may not fit neatly into the conventional categories of a sociologist or political scientist, his eclectic, profound, and unconventional perspectives warrant a broader intellectual consideration beyond his identity as a novelist.

During my research into the relationship between society and politics in Turkey, the tradition of politics, and the social forms of politicization, I decided to explore novels beyond Kemal Tahir's well-known works such as *Devlet Ana* (Mother State). Existing studies in the literature have been limited to either individual novels by the author or the The Captive city trilogies *Esir Şehrin İnsanları*, *Esir Şehrin Mahpusu ve Yol Ayrımı* (People of Captive City, Prisoner of Captive City, and Parting of the Ways). Upon discovering that these novels had been reprinted with new typesetting, my interest in reading them in this updated format became a significant impetus for this study. The absence of any existing research that addresses these seven novels collectively has been a major motivating factor for this study. In reading these seven novels, the author's observations on the characteristics and social types of Turkish people and society became prominent throughout the narratives. This focal point on 'social types' naturally directs the study toward Simmel, who introduced and developed the concept of 'social types'. The emphasis on character within the novels, the diversity of types, and the lack of existing research in this area have collectively accelerated the development of this study. Indeed, much has been written, depicted, and discussed about Kemal Tahir, but analyzing his social types in these seven novels through the lens of Simmel's social types represents a significant gap in literature. This study transcends traditional research genres such as monographs or merely novel analyses, aiming to address this gap by offering a fresh interpretation and understanding of Kemal Tahir's work.

### Kemal Tahir and Studies

In his books, Kemal Tahir addresses themes such as state and state tradition, the East-West conflict, Westernization, the era of the National Struggle, the Committee of Union and Progress, the Kuva-yi Milliye (National Forces), the Independence Courts, the Armistice period, the Asiatic mode of

production (AMP), the Republic, the political and social construction of the Republic, property rights, and the socio-economic and socio-cultural fabric of rural areas, the landlord system, village realities, and problems. He also focuses on the challenges faced by bureaucrats and intellectuals, the impacts of war, Ottomanism, and the Village Institutes. Tahir's novels point out the ramifications of a lack of centralized control, gaps in central authority, the fragmentation and internal divisions within the army, and the diverse societal reactions to occupation along with the consequences of all these reactions. Influenced by social realism and realism movements, HIS scope of influence covers a substantial segment of Turkish society. He interprets the transformations and the effects of modernization in both Istanbul and the countryside, focusing on continuities and ruptures. He discusses these continuities and ruptures covering the period between 1890 and 1945, encompassing the late Ottoman era, the National Struggle, the proclamation of the Republic, and the establishment and dissemination of the Village Institutes. Tahir's unique fictionalization is frequently inspired by real figures, grounding his work in a distinctive blend of reality and imagination.

Through his texts and novels, Kemal Tahir made significant contributions to the analysis and understanding of Turkish social reality, offering an alternative perspective to the official historical discourse. This reinterpretation of the official narrative has led him to be misunderstood by intellectual and political circles in Turkey. It can also be said that these arguments leading Kemal Tahir to loneliness and excommunication in the past are the arguments that cause him to be remembered again today (Alkın, 2017, p. 209). However, this study will distance itself from any prevailing tension of political debates and instead will focus on the sociological depth of Kemal Tahir's portrayals of Turkish people and their characteristics. Therefore, the characteristics of Turkish people identified in these seven novels will be analyzed through a Simmel reading.

Kemal Tahir contends that a comprehensive understanding and explanation of Turkish society requires examining the Ottoman, which he views as the childhood period of Turkish society. He argues that ignoring the impact of Ottoman heritage in the Republic of Turkey obstructs efforts to address existing problems (Daşlı, 2014, p. 75). The Westernization process of the Ottoman Empire, extending from the Tanzimat Edict to the Republic, along with changes in administration and culture, and the dilemmas faced by Turkish society due to its estrangement from its own values, form the basis of the author's novels, which are marked by sharp criticism and become his starting points in his novels (Fedai, 2010, p. 377). "Kemal Tahir suggests that in societies like Turkey, where historical narratives have been manipulated and imposed, dual realities emerge: one reflecting Western realities, often misinterpreted due to external pressures and misconceptions, and the other representing an effort to erase our own historical and cultural realities for similar reasons" (Eğribel, 2010, p. 350).

Kemal Tahir opposes the notion of a singular evolutionary path that can be universally applied to all societies. Therefore, his critique of Westernization efforts should be understood within this context. He argues that each society must be assessed within its own developmental trajectory. Otherwise, the failure to implement Turkification as a modern and unifying institution—allowing it instead to drift toward the fascist-chauvinist extremes seen in the West—will once again lead to the disintegration of Anatolia, much like the Misak-ı Milli, which itself lacked any rational foundation. To avoid such an outcome, it is essential to deeply reconsider the concepts of Turkishness, Turkism, and the Republic of Turkey, and to redefine them accordingly" (Tahir, 1992, p. 175). Additionally, he opposes the idealized notion of development and progress that pursues a single, idealized goal and expects a uniform result. In his view, such an approach disregards the historical process, cultural and social codes, and the unique social structures of each society.

In this study, first of all, Simmel's concept of social types will be analyzed. Following this, it will explore the characteristic features of Turkish people and social types depicted in the aforementioned

novels, analyzing these types through a Simmel-centered framework. What sets this study apart from existing research on Kemal Tahir is the final chapter, where social types are examined in a comparative manner.

### Georg Simmel and Social Types

Although Simmel is regarded as one of the pioneers of sociology, he did not gain as much popularity as his contemporaries, partly because his writings were not systematically organized and were somewhat fragmented. The significance of Simmel's sociology focuses on his efforts to challenge the anti-humanist, scientific approaches of positivism and vulgar Marxism, and to reassert the understanding of society as a product of human action mediated within the social sphere (Swingewood, 1991, p. 140). According to Simmel, society consists of individuals connected through interaction, while institutions such as family, religion, economic organizations, and bureaucracy represent the forms in which the social content of these interactions is shaped. Thus, the object of sociology becomes *societization* (Swingewood, 1991, p. 133-134). This perspective demonstrates the process of understanding how humans adapt to their world. Consequently, social interaction is the central issue in Simmel's work.

Simmel avoided the rigid boundaries of structural context, instead focusing on the logical coherence of social ties and highlighting the details and patterns within these interactions. His original approach offered a perspective that could clarify a part of the confusion in contemporary sociology. The myth of the individual as an unsolvable enigma, coupled with the fear that scientific rigor might be compromised by examining this enigma, had left certain areas of the discipline stagnant. Georg Simmel, however, tapped into this potential by developing a significant sociological vision. He began by identifying forms of interaction and encapsulating them within the framework of his own design, then sought to define the individuals within this structure in a formalized manner. The myth of the individual as an insoluble enigma, with the belief of fear that engaging with this concept might compromise scientific rigor, has sometimes left the contemporary sociology discipline barren. However, Georg Simmel was able to build a significant sociological vision by drawing from this treasure. Initially, Simmel identified various forms of interaction and conceptualized them within a framework of his design, and then attempted to formally categorize the individuals who embody these interactions. In this context, he brings up five forms of interaction: exchange, conflict, domination, subordination, and sociability.

In Simmel's view, the central and "magical" concept is life itself. It is evident that his efforts to unravel the enigma of life in his works. In attempting to reveal the forms of interaction and social types, he aims to convey that these types are fundamental matters of life. He often avoids speaking from the core of social realities such as structure, organism, or system. For him, there is no fixed center in life; life is simply what it is and individuals perceive their dimension of living as the center of life. Therefore, Simmel refrains from appointing a singular center on life. Instead, he seeks to classify the outsiders, those whom the established sociological corpus, shaped through a particular process, often views as sole structures or organisms existing outside the usual norms, guided by a motivation based on the emotional acceptances of individuals. Feeling wild, being born privileged, misfortune, having a desire that leads to adventure, and the impulse to possess and spend in ways that exceed the boundaries of social norms... Simmel takes an intriguing approach to studying social realities by focusing on those deemed abnormal and excluded from mainstream society. He employs micro-analyses to better understand social reality. (Simmel, 1971, p. 38).

Consequently, it can be understood that Simmel developed a critical approach toward the macro-design of the structural perspective. In this context, Simmel locates the boundaries of reality not within

the dense structurality of the center, but among the relative outsiders, defined by the ambiguous relationality of the frontiers such as the stranger, the poor, the miser and spendthrift, the adventurer, and the noble.

*The stranger will not be considered here in the usual sense of the term, as the wanderer who comes today and goes tomorrow, but rather as the man who comes today and stays tomorrow—the potential wanderer, so to speak, who, although he has gone no further, has not quite got over the free-dom of coming and going. He is fixed within a certain spatial circle —or within a group whose boundaries are analogous to spatial boundaries—but his position within it is fundamentally affected by the fact that he does not belong in it initially and that he brings qualities into it that are not, and cannot be, indigenous to it (Simmel, 1971, p. 143).*

Thus, it can be objective due to the fact that it exists in both proximity and distance. Each era has its own stranger, and this can change over time. The most straightforward way for a stranger to be involved in a society is via economic activities, such as trade. This is because the least risky method of adapting to a society is by trading something new.

The objectivity gained from being a stranger can also facilitate building intimate relationships. The stranger may be exposed to surprising revelations and confessions about subjects that are carefully concealed even from those from close relationships (Simmel, 1971, p. 151). However, this sense of intimacy and closeness can change abruptly if the group or society makes the stranger feel alienated. This situation is similar to passing through all doors only to find the final one locked, with the message that the path ends here and cannot be gone further. Hence, strangers may be viewed not merely as individuals but as representatives of a certain type of strangers, with their distance being as significant as their proximity. Simmel asserts that the unique form of the interaction with the stranger is defined by the special measure between the distance and proximity, and the tension between them (Simmel, 1971, p. 153).

*Poverty is a unique sociological phe-nomenon: a number of individuals who, out of a purely individual fate, occupy a specific organic position within the whole; but this position is not determined by this fate and condition, but rather by the fact that others—individuals, associations, communities—at-tempt to correct this condition. Thus, what makes one poor is not the lack of means. The poor person, sociologically speaking, is the individual who receives assistance because of this lack of means (Simmel, 1971, p. 178).*

According to Simmel's definition, poverty begins when an individual accepts aid from another person. The act of receiving aid is crucial, as it carries sociological significance. If an individual refuses aid, they would be included in a different category. From a sociological perspective, the poor are those who receive or are expected to receive aid according to social norms, rather than merely those who suffer from deprivation or lack in certain subjects (Simmel, 1971, p. 176). Poverty persists despite the efforts of the poor who accept aid and the rich who are obligated to provide help for the poor. Additionally, poverty is perpetuated by individuals or groups who seek to assist aid from the outside. This occurs because;

*The goal of assistance is precisely to mitigate certain extreme manifestations of social differentiation, so that the social structure may continue to be based on this differentiation. If assistance were to be based on the interests of the poor person, there would, in principle, be no limit whatsoever on the transmission of property in favor of the poor, a transmission that would lead to the equality of all. But since the focus is the social whole—the political, family, or other sociologically determined circles—there is no reason to aid the person more than is required by the maintenance of the social status quo (Simmel, 1971, p. 155).*

Besides, poverty eradication is also not pursued because the emphasis is centered on the concerns of the majority of society rather than on the poor. The interests of the rich and broader society are

fundamental. Simmel, who asserts that the poor are also citizens, argues that the interaction between the poor and their helpers is characterized by interaction. The poor, in a state of being passive in accepting aid, also influences the helper. As the helper provides assistance, they may begin to perceive themselves as superior as a result, become reluctant to abandon this status. Although this may grant the helper a sense of nobility, it ultimately takes shape through their ongoing interactions.

Although the miser and the spendthrift seem like distinct types, they share significant similarities. They both are highly concerned with money in different ways. A miser finds happiness in the mere possession of money and shows no interest in spending it to possess or enjoy objects. Instead, the miser basically feels satisfied with the sense of power and control that money brings (Simmel, 1971, p. 179). The miser's main goal is only to possess money, not something that money can buy. He/she takes pleasure in saving money, not spending it. The characteristic of the miser lies in being satisfied with the feeling of possession of a possibility and not developing thinking to make an opportunity real (Simmel, 1971, p. 180). The spendthrift, on the other hand, does not care about having money, saving money, but spending it. What makes the spendthrift wasteful is not merely the act of spending, but spending on irrational things.

*The life of the spendthrift is marked by the same demonic formula as that of the miser: every pleasure attained arouses the desire for further pleasure, which can never be satisfied. Satisfaction can never be gained because it is being sought in a form that from the beginning foregoes its ends and is confined to means and to the moment before fulfillment. The miser is the more abstract of the two; his goal is reached even earlier than the usual goal. The spendthrift gets somewhat closer to real objects. He abandons the movement toward a rational goal at a later point [than the miser], at which he stops as though it were the real goal. (Simmel, 1971, p. 185).*

*"The adventurer is the extreme example of the ahistorical individual, the man who lives in the present. On the one hand, he is not determined by any past, and on the other hand, there is no future for him"* (Simmel, 1971, p. 188). The adventurer is mainly influenced by the present rather than by the past or the future. Although the adventurer engages in unexpected actions beyond the configuration of daily routines, they never entirely abandon these routines. The adventurer takes pleasure in operating outside of rationality and established boundaries. Simmel compares the adventurer to the artist and the gambler, noting the similarity between the adventurer and the gambler. Just as the gambler surrenders to the randomness of chance, the adventurer is willing to take risks by relying on luck and fate.

Simmel's final social type is the noble. The typical characteristic of the noble class is that it refuses to expand, being closed at both extremes, so that the noble class historically appears even in front of the ruler as a completely self-sufficient closed stratum rooted in its own interests (Simmel, 1971, p. 196). This insularity inevitably brings an isolation from other social strata. The privileges associated with this isolation only serve to widen the gap between the nobility and other classes. Simmel articulates the distinction between the noble and the non-noble by noting that the nobility is permitted to engage in activities that are prohibited to the general public, while actions permissible for the common majority are often forbidden to the nobles (Simmel, 1971, p. 99). The nobility is particularly proficient at maintaining the characteristics that contribute to sustaining their social class, ensuring that their privileges and achievements remain within their own circles, rather than being passed on to the general public.

### **Kemal Tahir and Turkish People**

One of the defining characteristics of Kemal Tahir's work is his focus on the Turkish human types, highlighting the distinctive characteristic features he envisions in his novels. These types are familiar to us, resembling individuals from our own families, close environments, or neighborhoods. This

familiarity strengthens the bond between the reader and his novels, enhancing their impact and bringing them closer to reality. Kemal Tahir was among the first writers to use the term "Turkish people," which he used much more after the 1990s. He also used the phrase the "Anatolian Turkish people" or the "Turkish Ottoman people" (Bora, 2021, p. 338). For him, during the Ottoman period, the Anatolian Turkish people found their identity in Ottomanism through the role the Ottoman Empire played. Thus, Ottomanism was a central subject in his work (Yazoğlu, 2004, pp. 55-56). The emphasis Kemal Tahir placed on the Turkish or Anatolian Turkish people is observed in his works. In his negative critiques and pessimistic evaluations of the Turkish people, he argues that these consequences arise as a result of the influence of Westernization. Thus, he states "We are Ottomans and never run out of exceptional people" (Eğribel, 2010, p. 351).

The characteristic features of Turkish people and society, their worldview, limitations, and perspectives on events are central themes that Kemal Tahir has extensively contemplated and evaluated. The author believed that starting from these individual characteristics is essential for generalizing that influence society as a whole and impact each social and political institution. While these characteristics are generalized and socialized, each character and social type holds particular significance for the author.

In an interview with him on Turkish people and the course of society, the following statement is particularly significant:

*What do you think about the Turkish people? I would ask this question and give the following answer: I love them to death with all their bravery, cowardice, truthfulness, swindling, stinginess, generosity, arrogance, modesty, rudeness, politeness, understanding, and foolishness. Neither an original question nor an original answer! Every writer throughout history has expressed about the nation in which they raised. Even if it is the bravest, most honest, most humble, kind, most understanding nation in the world (Tahir, 1989, pp. 52-53).*

Kemal Tahir accepted, embraced, and adopted the Turkish people in their entirety, with all their good and bad aspects, virtues and flaws. For this reason, "Kemal Tahir's works are the tools to discover the Anatolian people" (Akdağ Sarı, 2015, p. 675). In his writing, it is nearly impossible to find idealized, perfect characters with superior qualities that are rarely encountered in real life. This is because the author is aware of human reality and nature. Human is not such an ideal, perfect, flawless being. His novel characters are crafted based on this reality. In Kemal Tahir's work, "Anatolian people are not demeaned by their ignorance, poverty, or squalor; instead, they are portrayed with their inherent drama. In his stories, the city dweller and the villager, the people and the intellectual are united, highlighting the intellectual's responsibility" (Tepe, 2019, p. 113). Despite all this, Kemal Tahir presents his characters to the reader by depicting their ignorance and the effects of poverty on them.

*The characters Kemal Tahir's novels, equipped with political ideas and attitudes, are not portrayed as utopian figures. Instead, they represent a dynamic community facing existential fears, with worries about challenging conditions, and striving to shape their direction with future projections. Kemal Tahir's political vision in his novels is shaped by this depiction of a living, evolving populace, where all things originate and return. For Tahir, the public is neither an object of pity and compassion nor an insulting scorn (Arslanbenzer, 2010, p. 238).*

Kemal Tahir's characters and social types come from everyday life, they are the social types that each of us encounters on the street and reflect the cultural characteristics of this land. They are not those who lead a sterile life and remain outside both material and moral concerns, but rather those who gain dynamism by feeding on all these concerns. All of the characters, rich and poor, intellectuals and lay people, are deeply influenced by local elements. None of his characters are disconnected from the notion of locality and local influences which the author frequently underscores. Thus, his protagonists are



portrayed as representatives of social movements with their unique psychological depths and a shared collective consciousness (Hüküm, 2017, p. 171). The author is not merely a tourist guide presenting the Turkish people to foreigners as an authorized individual; rather, he illuminates the historical depth of the Turkish people and their role in contemporary societal interactions<sup>1</sup> (Sezer, 2010, p. 168).

*The protagonists in his novels are trapped in drama not only due to their slippery position within the narrative, but also because of their efforts to unfold the events. On the one hand, they are unable to defend the place and role they defended in the past, the values they adhere to, and they struggle; on the other hand, they advance the novel and social drama through their efforts to comprehend the new reality. The character of Kâmil Bey in the novel Esir Şehir İnsanları (The People of Captive City) is an excellent example of this definition (Gündüz, 2011, p. 65).*

The people in Kemal Tahir's novels are not created to represent a cast of individuals, but to reflect the social reality of Turkey amidst evolving social conditions, to exhibit personal drama and to make people think about the underlying social issues (Fedai, 2010, p. 385). In his novels, Kemal Tahir depicts the social drama not through a single person but through that person; he reveals that this drama, which seems personal, is in fact a social existence, a social struggle for identity (Dinler Köksal, 2017, p. 29). Kemal Tahir tried to express the reality of the Turkish people, but this is not a struggle to defend them. He seeks to understand the reality of the Turkish people (Coşkun, 2004, p. 169).

### Seeking Simmel's Social Types Through Kemal Tahir's Novels

Although Kemal Tahir frequently highlights the role of society by prioritizing social order in his interviews, notes, and novels, he particularly emphasizes each character and individual in all his novels. The author is aware that the drama of the individual and the drama of society interact. The drama of society will affect an individual and the drama of the individual will affect society. Although he argues that it is the state that holds society together, he knows that it is human beings who create and sustain the state. However, he believes that human beings should also be nourished with local cultural elements. For this reason, he contends that attempting to build Anatolian people through top-down, non-people-based, Western norms and forms is misguided and ultimately unachievable.

Our claim is not that Kemal Tahir holds this view, but that his human types can still be analyzed through Simmel's framework. The characters Kemal Tahir employs in his novels and his evaluations of these characters are reminders of Simmel's social types. Just as each of Simmel's social types provides detailed insights into society, Kemal Tahir's characters similarly offer valuable information about the social context. Therefore, we can propose a counter-argument to Tahir's excessive emphasis on the unique historical context of Turkish society. Simmel's types—the foreigner, the poor, the miser-extravagant, the adventurer, and the noble—are also present in Kemal Tahir's novels. This study aims to compare Simmel's social types with those depicted by Kemal Tahir.

### The Stranger

This type aligns with Simmel's idea that trade is essential for the stranger to ensure social legitimacy. In this context, the stranger is someone who exists both today and tomorrow yet remains vulnerable to sudden exclusion by the group. Its connection to society is not organic but remains directly tied to that society.

Kemal Tahir has defined the condition of legitimacy of the groups he sees as outsiders within Turkish society as their closeness to the military and political power by reflecting the military tendencies, which are also the characteristic features of Turkish society. However, the nation can also

<sup>1</sup> This study is Baykan Sezer's speech at the memorial meeting of Kemal Tahir organized by IBB Department of Cultural Affairs on 26.04.1997. For more information (Kemal Tahir Yüz Yaşında, pp.167-170, 2010).

alienate those in power when the effect of its own course disappears. Examples of the stranger social type in his novels, *Kurt Kanunu* (Wolf Law), *Yol Ayrımı* (Crossroad), are as follows:

*In our country, for now, the only condition if you desire public support is to be close to the government. Not with bragging, but for real. And the only credibility this has, I think, is that the army stands with you* (Tahir, 2022e, p. 118).

In the statement above, the condition of the relationship a stranger establishes or seeks to establish with society is described. In Kemal Tahir's view, this relationship with power parallels Simmel's notion of the meaningful connection the stranger establishes through trade.

*Our people favor the newcomer against the old filth until they come to power. Yet as soon as they assume power, with the sense of intuition through historical experiences, they immediately recognize who they truly are. If they do not find what they hope from the newcomer, they immediately retreats back into their shells. Leaving the arena to the crooks, abandoning the newcomer isolated with his sad fate, that is, with his disgraces. Unlike intellectuals, who often deceive themselves by holding onto false hopes and repeatedly facing disappointment* (Tahir, 2022f, p. 134).

As realized the position of the outsider within a group is precarious. Whenever an outsider is made to feel that he/she is a stranger by the group members, this may lead to sudden alienation. The stranger, to whom the most intimate relations and private details are shared, can abruptly be pushed away by the group. Kemal Tahir points to the Turkish intellectuals as the concrete example of this position. The role of the intellectual is worth noting, as it highlights the paradox that, in the reality of Turkey, they are both connected to the land with a sense of belonging and, at the same time, remain strangers to it.

### The Poor

According to Simmel, poverty extends beyond mere material insufficiency. An individual is not poor if he/she struggles with material conditions but does not accept aid. Poverty begins the moment you accept aid. Similarly, Kemal Tahir does not confine the boundaries the poor need aid and seek for aid to material elements. The following statement from the novels *Bir Mülkiyet Kalesi* (A Castle of Property), *Yorgun Savaşçı* (Tired Warrior) can be given as examples of the poor type:

*There is profound quality within the impoverished segment of the nation that purifies people, that makes them improve. If those elevated people withdraw from the masses, it burdens their hearts with shame. It gangrenes their hearts. Then, I think they blame their mistakes on the innocent crowd and get angry with them for no reason and hate them. Later when people see disinterest from those once trusted and surrendered to, they feel a terrible hatred. It can be a devastating force that ultimately destroys sultans and kings* (Tahir, 2022a, p. 408). *In order to defend the existence of society, the state must also be despotic. If the state says that it has abandon centralism, bureaucratism, and even despotism, you will rise against it when you are overwhelmed, ask it to bring them back, and even compel it to do so* (Tahir, 2022b, pp. 158-159).

Based on the aforementioned statements, the demand for assistance under state despotism can be considered an alternative interpretation of the poor. According to Simmel, in the relationship established between the poor and the rich, the poor are often treated as objects rather than as individuals. This is reflected in the behavior of the poor. The expressions in the novel *Esir Şehrin Mahpusu* [The Prisoner of the Captive City] "Yes, there is a breathless haste in the way our people ate, as if something shameful is being done and they wanted to cut it as short as possible and keep it hidden" (Tahir, 2022d, p. 62) depicts the impact of this objectification.

*The village is a unit that is economically and socially nothing like the city. We take the child from here and prepare them for here. Their livelihood follows different laws. First, the living and livelihood*

*characteristics of villages were analyzed. For now, the majority of villagers see livelihood as a house, a field for work, necessary tools, and primarily livestock. We will provide these to the village teacher. With the twenty lira salary we will give him, he will certainly not be able to find the same livelihood in the town, especially in the big city. Therefore, he cannot leave the village. Moreover, there is compulsory service for twenty years. We proposed 'thirty years' in the draft law. The council reduced it to twenty years, which my deputy found it sufficient (Tahir, 2022g, p. 32).*

The above quotation in the novel *Bozkırdaki Çekirdek* (*The Seed in the Steppe*) highlights the poverty of both the teacher who educates and the student who receives education in the Village Institutes<sup>2</sup>. Both accept help because of their difficult circumstances. The teacher's role as an educator cannot cover his poverty up. This poverty has reached such a state that compels them to accept this obligatory relationship for twenty years.

### **The Miser and Spendthrift**

Simmel's miser and spendthrift types are frequently depicted in Kemal Tahir's novels. However, these types do not emerge as a result of a material relationship involving money. For example, Simmel suggests that both misers and spendthrifts can be identified by their reluctance to share or by their wastefulness of time, skill, or property. These aspects are often mentioned by the Tahir. The novel *Esir Şehrin İnsanları* [*The People of the Captive City*] includes examples of these social types.

*Their words were inconsistent, with even the most trusted friends forgetting what they had said the day before. Everyone from age seven to seventy, from children to the elderly, were eager to claim the largest share of the spoils after the war. All of them were enraged, as if the politeness of the pre-war period had died with those lost in the war (Tahir, 2022c, p. 19). Turkish nation, which never valued time and would push each other in a rush to act before anyone else, ended up being late because they didn't wait for their turn and acted hastily once more (Tahir, 2022c, p. 136).*

In other words, giving reference above statements, the effects of miser and spendthrift contribute to social change. While people are lavish in breaking promises and not appreciating time, they exhibit stinginess when it comes to putting themselves forward and sharing their gains. They waste time yet are stingy with their own. Kemal Tahir also portrays characters who become increasingly miser as they take pleasure in having money and possessions. The following statements in the novel *Yol Ayrımı* (*Crossroad*) can be given as examples of the stingy social type:

*In the view of our bosses, who will endure as long as the world lasts, perhaps property is not a part of life, but rather life has become a part of property (Tahir, 2022f, p. 15). What happened to our nation? Did we become brave and stop fearing death, or did we start valuing money more than our lives, turning life into a part of property when it used to be the other way around? (Tahir, 2022f, p. 212).*

### **The Adventurer**

Kemal Tahir's perspective on the characteristics of the society he lived in as a novelist can be attributed to his sense of belonging, but he also draws accurate conclusions based on the formal logic derived from Simmel's objective and rational analysis. In this regard, the examples he selects to create an image of the average Turkish person include strangers, nobles, misers and spendthrifts, the poor, or the adventurers. The focus on the adventurous nature of the Turkish people, which he considers fundamental to the traits that shape the general character of the society and is mentioned when addressing various problems:

<sup>2</sup> The Village Institutes (Köy Enstitüleri) were educational institutions in Turkey, established in the 1940s to improve rural education, provide agricultural training, and promote self-sufficiency. They aimed to modernize rural areas but were closed in 1954 due to political opposition.

*I lived among Anatolian people for several years. Eventually, you will bridge the gaps between the different classes. Turkish people relocate frequently and easily. This is how it is in history. They are settling comfortably in their new location. They are getting ready to defend it. I am saying this specifically for your Rumeli immigrants. Another characteristic of you is that you do not seek the identity of those in charge who emerge from the darkness; you don't find them strange at all. This is a very significant national characteristic, a great strength. Being able to replace old chiefs with new chiefs is a great strength. It is a strong trait to take orders from new chiefs and to follow them without hesitation. This wisdom comes from focusing on what is the order, not who gives the order. I believe this is the strength of a nation to survive. Only societies with such characteristics rise when they are believed to be dead. Only these societies display the most unexpected resistance. From such societies, one should anticipate the sharpest reactions in their most static periods (Tahir, 2022c, p. 51).*

Interestingly, this focus appears to be at odds with Simmel's adventurer type. This is because Simmel's types define the range of what can be considered the extra-communal, hovering on the edges of social reality. However, Kemal Tahir views this quality as an inherent aspect of society. Here again, the differences between the romanticism of a literary figure and the rationality of a scientist must be considered. The process of "replacing the old chiefs with new ones" is not an epic event, as the story suggests, but rather a genuine tragedy and a challenging process of change or revolution, marked by society's resistance to adventure. Here, the novelist provides a mixed evaluation by combining dreams and visions regarding the resolution of social issues. However, the point where he addresses the social significance of adventure aligns with Simmel's sociological conception. According to Kemal Tahir, who assesses adventure based on its relationship to political routine, attempting to avoid politics can result in a certain type of adventurer. Although Tahir attempts to forge a new path by avoiding the routine shaped by current conditions, he remains influenced by that routine and cannot fully escape it.

### The Noble

Simmel's concept of the noble as a social type is a fundamental characteristic of the protagonists in the novels. The most prominent example of this type is undoubtedly Kâmil Bey from the novel *Esir Şehrin İnsanları* [The People of the Captive City]. Kâmil Bey is the protagonist who fits Simmel's noble class from head to toe. The transformation, confrontations, and contradictions that Kâmil Bey experiences are precisely the challenges that the noble class encounters when it steps out of its isolation. This confrontation extends beyond Kâmil Bey to include the intellectuals, officers, Unionists, Istanbulites of the period, and true Ottomans, all of whom are part of this noble class.

*In his heart, he felt all the pride of being an 'Istanbulite.' He never questioned what he had done to deserve the good woman, the fine furniture, and the nice house, or what he had earned in return for these things. The less he questioned it, the more he boasted, believing he deserved everything he had (Tahir, 2022a, p. 107). He had no idea about Anatolia. Like many other Istanbulites, especially those in the palaces, he would say 'Rude Turk' (Tahir, 2022a, p. 173). Why don't we consider the filth of those of our own worth or those superior to us as filth? We are only disgusted by the filth of those we consider inferior to ourselves. Our perception of filth is somewhat biased and more judgmental towards those we see as lesser (Tahir, 2022d, p. 135).*

With reference to the above, it can be inferred that the author includes both intellectuals and military officers within the noble social typology. A connection can be established between officers and Simmel's noble type, as both exhibit a sharp isolation from other social classes and possess privileges that are not afforded to others.

## CONCLUSION

Kemal Tahir focuses on the importance of conveying and understanding social reality as it is, free from the influence of Western or other ideological perspectives. Kemal Tahir transcends conventional molds, time, and place. He is a deep source from which those in search of answers will find them in any period. The wellspring that Kemal Tahir provides to his readers is one of mutual construction and nourishment built upon interaction.

He also draws attention to the mistake of viewing society only through archives and specific events like a historian, from the romantic perspective of a poet, or by confining it to rigid ideologies based on pre-made patterns like a politician. What defines Kemal Tahir is not just his critique of these perspectives but his effort to develop a new, interdisciplinary, non-formalist, debatable, and adaptable approach grounded in social reality and historicity. While the importance of history is evident throughout his works, he is also aware that historical elements alone are insufficient to fully understand or address the complexities of society.

Kemal Tahir's body of novels can be examined from various perspectives and serves as a lens through which one can better understand Turkey's social structure and the historical development of Turkey. There are numerous approaches to exploring this lens. It is evident in the substantial volume of academic studies focused on Kemal Tahir.

This study is the result of an attempt to analyze a portion of Kemal Tahir's complete works and evaluate the characters within a sociological-theoretical context. In order to do so, it is necessary to reveal the types and characteristics of Turkish people as portrayed in these seven novels of Kemal Tahir. This will be possible by adapting Simmel's social types, which will help to draw the boundaries of social reality, to the context of these seven novels.

In this respect, paralleling Simmel's types, we can construct an average model based on the characteristics of the five prototypes. Therefore, we can arrive at the following conclusion:

1. In the context of Kemal Tahir, the Turkish intellectual serves as the equivalent of Simmel's concept of the stranger.
2. The adventurer, on the other hand, represents a combination of nomadic and warrior traits, and can actually embody a rare typological scope that mostly resides in the mountains, but has a highly influential position in the unconscious of the nation.
3. The noble position represents a form of elevated isolation that the Turkish people, feeling a sense of estrangement, do not seek to closely align with.
4. The miser and the spendthrift are positioned on the fringes of social reality, often treated as mocked outsiders. The Turkish people use these figures as benchmarks for self-refinement or self-justification.
5. The poor, especially for the periods written by Kemal Tahir, can be considered as a type in which Turkish people see themselves represented. However, this perspective may also indicate that we are influenced by the value judgments of our own time or the intellectual position to which Kemal Tahir belongs. Consequently, one of the claims of this study is that, according to Simmel's conceptualization, the poor are seen as an outsider who needs to be helped.

### Article Information

**Ethics Committee Approval:** Exempt from the Ethics Committee Decision.

**Informed Consent:** No participant.

**Financial Support:** The study received no financial support from any institutions or project.

**Conflict of Interest:** The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- Akdağ Sarı, K. (2015). Kemal Tahir’de Sosyalizm ve Batılılaşma eleştirisi. *İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 4 (3), 674-685.
- Alkın, R. C. (2017). Kurtuluş Kayalı (Ed.), Bir Kemal Tahir kitabı: Türkiye’nin ruhunu aramak, İthaki Yayıncılık, 2010, *Tezkire Dergisi*, 60, 205-209.
- Arslanbenzer, H. (2010). Siyasi romanın mihveri: Kemal Tahir. E. Eğribel & M. F. Andı (Ed.), *Kemal Tahir 100 Yaşında* içinde (s. 237-240). Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Press.
- Bora, T. (2021). Kemal Tahir’de "insan ödevimiz" ve verimli tutarsızlıklar. A. Öz (Haz.), *Kemal Tahir Kitabı: Bir Aydın Üç Dönem* içinde (s. 335-357). İstanbul: Zeytinburnu Belediyesi Kültür Press.
- Coşkun, S. (2004). Bir mülkiyet kalesini okuma denemesi. A. Yaraman (Ed.), *Biyografiya 4: Kemal Tahir* içinde (s. 163-173). İstanbul: Bağlam Press.
- Daşlı, Y. (2014). Tarihe duyulan ilgi: Kemal Tahir. *Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 38(1), 59-83.
- Dinler Köksal, S. (2017). Kemal Tahir’in notları’na yansıyan roman poetikası. *Fırat Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 27(1), 25-42.
- Eğribel, E. (2010). Kemal Tahir’de Roman ve toplum gerçeği açısından yöntem. E. Eğribel & M. F. Andı (Ed.), *Kemal Tahir 100 Yaşında* içinde (s. 347-352). Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Press.
- Fedai, Ö. (2010). Kemal Tahir ve Türk romanı. E. Eğribel & M. F. Andı (Ed.), *Kemal Tahir 100 Yaşında* içinde (s. 374-385). Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Press.
- Gündüz, O. (2011). *Türk romanında toplumsal gerçeklik: Kemal Tahir örneği*. (Unpublished Ph.D dissertation). Istanbul University Social Sciences Institute, Istanbul.
- Hüküm, M. (2017). *Şair-sosyolog: Kemal Tahir/sosyolojik bir bakışla Kemal Tahir romanları*. İstanbul: İthaki Press.
- Sezer, B. (2010). Kemal Tahir üzerine. E. Eğribel & M. F. Andı (Ed.), *Kemal Tahir 100 Yaşında* içinde (s. 167-170). Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Press.
- Simmel, G. (1971). *On Individuality and Social Forms*. Donald N. Levine (Ed.), Chicago and London: The University Of Chicago Press.
- Swingewood, A. (1991). *A Short History of Sociological Thought*. New York: St. Martin’s Press.
- Tahir, K. (1989). *Notlar/sanat edebiyat 1*. C. Yazoğlu (Haz.), İstanbul: Bağlam Press.
- Tahir, K. (1992). *Notlar/Batılılaşma*. C. Yazoğlu (Haz.), İstanbul: Bağlam Press.
- Tahir, K. (2022a). *Bir mülkiyet kalesi*. İstanbul: Ketebe Press.
- Tahir, K. (2022b). *Yorgun savaşçı*. İstanbul: Ketebe Press.
- Tahir, K. (2022c). *Esir şehrin insanları*. İstanbul: Ketebe Press.
- Tahir, K. (2022d). *Esir şehrin mahpusu*. İstanbul: Ketebe Press.
- Tahir, K. (2022e). *Kurt kanunu*. İstanbul: Ketebe Press.
- Tahir, K. (2022f). *Yol ayrımı*. İstanbul: Ketebe Press.
- Tahir, K. (2022g). *Bozkırdaki çekirdek*. İstanbul: Ketebe Press.
- Tepe, E. (2019). *Kemal Tahir- toprakla boğuşmak yumuşatır adamı*. İstanbul: Siyah Beyaz Press.
- Yazoğlu, C. (2004). Kemal Tahir’in tarihe bakışı. A. Yaraman (Ed.), *Biyografiya 4: Kemal Tahir* içinde (s. 51-57). İstanbul: Bağlam Press.