



MACBETH VE KARA KİTAP ESERLERİNİN YAPISÖKÜM TEORİSİ IŞIĞINDA KARŞILAŞTIRMALI İNCELEMESİ

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MACBETH AND KARA KİTAP IN LIGHT OF DECOUNSTRUCTION THEORY

Özet

Shakespeare'in *Macbeth* ve Orhan Pamuk'un *Kara Kitap* adlı eserlerini Yapısöküm Kuramı açısından ele alan bu çalışma, ikili karşıtlıkların kullanımı, hırs ve belirsizlik temaları gibi ortak temalar ve paylaştıkları unsurlar açısından karşılaştırmalı bir analize ışık tutmayı amaçlamaktadır. Söz konusu eserler, özellikle İngiliz Edebiyatı'nın kanonlaştırılan eserlerinin Dünya Edebiyatı eserleriyle karşılaştırılması alanındaki boşluk tespit edilerek seçilmiştir. Shakespeare'in ünlü eserlerini İngiliz Edebiyatı'ndaki diğer eserlerle veya yine kendisinin çeşitli eserleriyle karşılaştıran çalışma sayıca fazla olmakla birlikte, *Macbeth* gibi öncü bir eseri Türk Edebiyatı gibi Dünya Edebiyatından bir eserle birlikte inceleyen eserlerin sayısı görece azdır. Ayrıca, mevcut araştırmalardaki ortak eğilim, eserleri tarihi, feminist veya psikolojik teorilerin bakış açılarıyla ele alma eğilimindedir. Bu anlamda dekonstrüktif bir yaklaşımla *Macbeth*'e odaklanılmasına ve *Macbeth*'in Türk Edebiyatı'ndan bir edebi eser olan Pamuk'un postmodern romanı *Kara Kitap*'la karşılaştırılmasına karar verilmiştir. Analiz sonucunda ikili karşıtlıkların çözülmeye açık olduğu ve kolaylıkla yapıbozuma uğratılabileceği verilerine ulaşılmıştır. Bunun yanı sıra, iki metnin içerdikleri ortak tema olan 'belirsizlik' unsurları sebebiyle, amaçlanan anlamı geciktiren ve hem okuyucuyu hem de hırslı eylemleriyle dürtülenen ana karakterleri kararsız bırakan bir anlam ertelemesine neden olduğu sonuçlarına varılmıştır.

Abstract

The study of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Orhan Pamuk's *Kara Kitap*¹ adopting Deconstruction Theory aims at shedding a light to a comparative analysis in terms of the common themes and elements they share such as the use of binary oppositions and the themes of ambition and ambiguity. The works in question have been selected specifically upon the detection of the gap in the area where the canonised works of English Literature are compared and contrasted to the works of World Literature. Though the study comparing the renowned works of Shakespeare to other works from English Literature or to some other works of his are abundant, the works that examine a pioneer work such as *Macbeth* together with a work from World Literature such as Turkish Literature are scarce. Moreover, the common trend in the current studies tends to handle the works from historical, feminist or psychological theories' point of views. In that sense, it has been decided to focus on *Macbeth* with a deconstructive approach and to compare it to a literary work from Turkish Literature, which is Pamuk's *Kara Kitap* – a postmodern novel. As a result of the analysis, it has been concluded that binaries are open to dismantling and could be deconstructed with ease. Furthermore, the ambiguous elements and the characteristics of the two texts cause *deférrance*, which make the intended meaning delay and leave both the reader and the protagonists *undecidable* who are stimulated by their ambitious actions.

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Geliş Tarihi/Submitted:
20.03.2022

Kabul Tarihi/Accepted:
11.06.2022

Anahtar Kelimeler:

Macbeth, *Kara Kitap*, Yapısöküm,
Belirsizlik Teması, İkili Karşıtlık,
Deférrance

Keywords:

Macbeth, *Kara Kitap*, Deconstruction,
Ambiguity, Binary Oppositions,
Deférrance

Kaynak gösterme/Citation:

Mızrak, Gözde Begüm (2022). "A
Comparative Study of *Macbeth* And
Kara Kitap in Light of Decounstruction
Theory". *World Language Studies*
(WLS), 2 (1): 1-14

INTRODUCTION

Among Shakespeare's great tragedies, *Macbeth* has found a vast place for itself in terms of being subjected to extensive literary criticism. Not only the thematic features of the play have already received various in-depth analyses, but also the play has been examined within the perspectives of Feminist Theory, Freud's Psychoanalysis and New Criticism, which handle the text through gender, psychological and historical viewpoints. Critics of Feminist Theory and Psychoanalytic Theory paved their ways by focusing on the character of Lady Macbeth in general to prove their points and New Historians directed themselves to the historical backgrounds of the play to reach their conclusions. Though the available research provided a prosperous base for the researchers from all around the world and contributed to the branch of English Literature along with the other related studies, the tragedy of *Macbeth* has not undergone a broad research in the light of Deconstruction Theory when compared to the other theories of literary criticism mainly because the idea of 'deconstructing' something -let alone a literary masterpiece- is associated with 'destroying' it for a long time since its first appearance as a theory introduced by Jacques Derrida during a lecture at John Hopkins University in 1966. It was perceived as an attack to the theories available at the time because deconstruction as a theory was criticising many widespread ideas put forward by some long existing and common theories. It wasn't until 1980s that the theory gained major acceptance and popularity owing to the attentive and clear explanation of Barbara Johnson (1980) on deconstruction in her work entitled *The Critical Difference*:

Deconstruction is not synonymous with 'destruction', however. It is in fact much closer to the original meaning of the word 'analysis' itself, which etymologically means 'to undo'—a virtual synonym for 'to de-construct'. The deconstruction of a text does not proceed by random doubt or arbitrary subversion, but by the careful teasing out of warring forces of signification within the text itself. If anything is destroyed in a deconstructive reading, it is not the text, but the claim to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another. A deconstructive reading is a reading which analyses the specificity of a text's critical difference from itself. (Johnson, 1980, p. 5)

Following this period, the theory was applied on different works of several writers in the field of humanities; however, the gap from the introduction of the theory till Johnson's explanation was not filled sufficiently and the later produced works could not catch up with the number of earlier works on which common previous theories were practised. Besides, the

deconstructive criticism applied on Shakespeare's works mainly focused on his comedies rather than tragedies that widened the gap resulting from the lack of production. In the 21st century, the tendency was towards either combining Deconstruction Theory with other theories creating a "hybrid approach" (Witteck, 2008, p. 8) or conducting comparative studies. Following the latter direction, this study aims at comparing Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Orhan Pamuk's *Kara Kitap* in the light of Deconstruction Theory with the prospect of contributing to the area of comparative studies. The works in question have been selected because there have not been abundant comparative studies regarding Turkish and English Literature so far in that the Turkish side of the story is "unknown, unrecognized and under-researched" (Kaya, 2009, p. 295), which mainly derives from the categorisation of the available works of Turkish Literature in the immigrant literature or as autobiographical works. (Walkowitz, 2006, p. 531) The choice of Pamuk is specific since he holds a solid knowledge of English and has been working with the same translator Maureen Freely for a considerable period of time, which prevents the intended meaning from being lost in translation. Moreover, the fact that he was awarded with the Nobel Literature Prize in 2006 grants him priority to be compared to Shakespeare since both of them are true canonised representatives of their cultures in the international agenda. It is also believed to be an asset in attracting attention and reaching a wider audience. The difference in the genres of the selected works are not taken as a first concern because the study is aimed to be examined thematically, which are essentially the themes of ambition and ambiguity.

DEFINITIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The fact that deconstruction is a theory dealing with 'meaning', some crucial terms and concepts are required to be used in the study. According to Derrida, as the signifiers of a word are liable to a constant change, words can easily have double meanings, which may misdirect the receiver or more importantly delay reaching the intended meaning. In that sense, the meaning can be 'different' depending on the interpretation or lack of information and it is 'deferred'. Combining the French equivalents of these concepts, Derrida came up with the term *différance*, which is having a different or deferred meaning in texts. (Tyson, 2006, p. 253) Thus; it can be concluded that words do not mean any particular thing without a definite signifier; however, as those signifiers are also to be signified by other signifiers, reaching an utmost meaning is not possible and it may take a longer time than expected. This partly stems from the idea that words carry the characteristics; in other words, *traces* of their signifiers and of other words. That's why, words do not have *stable* meanings and meanings can be *ambiguous*. For Derrida, just as the words are linked to each other and do not mean anything significant on their

own, texts do not display essential information for the readers, either as every text needs assistance of other texts to provide a better, clearer and the intended understanding for the reader, which takes us to the idea of *intertextuality* meaning that every text has traces of previous studies and includes ideas or allusions from them. Derrida disagrees with the idea of *binary oppositions*, as well because they are concepts to be questioned easily. Binaries that drive the meaning towards the idea of *undecidability* and lead the receiver to ambiguity can be deconstructed simply.

By integrating the abovementioned terms in itself, the study will compare *Macbeth* and *Kara Kitap* in terms of certain common themes and concepts such as the use of binaries, the themes of ambiguity and ambition, which will compose the limitation of the study.

DISCUSSION

First and foremost, the use of binaries takes up an important place in the course of the two works. 'Fair vs foul' that is introduced through the inclusion of the three witches in the play could be regarded as the most apparent and well-known binary opposition in *Macbeth*. It appears at the very beginning of the play and works as a preparation of the reader for the upcoming events and developments as such:

(Three Witches)

ALL

Fair is foul, and foul is fair,

Hover through the fog and filthy air. (1.1.11-2)

When these lines are approached in accordance with the deconstruction theory, as fair represents foul and foul represents fair, it would not be wrong to say there is no stability in meaning. Every fair act is comprised of some foulness and every foul act includes certain fairness in itself. When that is the case, the binaries follow a floating pattern and the meaning can change easily. They can be deconstructed effortlessly because of their unstable and undecidable characteristics. Victoria Stec who is a researcher in the Shakespeare Institute at the University of Birmingham states related to the use of binaries in *Macbeth*:

If either can signify the other, where do we look to for stability, or is there no such thing as stability in the world of *Macbeth*? A world where everything is clearly and correctly labelled is a safe and comforting place. A world where labels can be erased

is threatening to contemplate. The crisis at the heart of Macbeth is in some ways a perfect expression of what some 20th century theorists call ‘deconstruction’. (n.d.)

When the labels that represent the binaries are not stable, the text distracts from the comfort zone both for the reader and the researchers and reaching the intended meaning is delayed. Besides, as more words are required to get the utmost description of each side of the binary for the sake of having a more comprehensible meaning, mere words are left meaningless on their own. Only when they come together, can meaning become more accessible. Similarly, Richard Strier, in his review article entitled “Shakespeare and the Question of Theory” where he reviews *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory* by Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman and *William Shakespeare* by Terry Eagleton argues that “the sexual, material, and linguistic ambiguity of the witches is seen as subversively and precisely deconstructive ...” (Strier, 1988, p. 72) Within that understanding, they break the stable linguistic norms of the society which had long been settled. Their ambiguous speeches as well as the ambiguous binary they present every time they appear gain them a deconstructive idiosyncrasy, which leave Macbeth in limbo and direct him to take impulsive actions.

Concerning Pamuk’s *Kara Kitap*, the use of binaries finds its place as ‘east vs. west’ given with the character of Bedii Usta, who is a master of making mannequins in old İstanbul by observing people and their behaviours on the streets. When the Turks started to become like Europeans both in their clothing and acting styles, he was rejected by the shop owners as he believed the real essence of Turkish culture lies in people’s origin, which is what makes them distinct and authentic. The scene that is translated by Maureen Freely is highlighted as follows:

For his mannequins did not look like the European models to which we were meant to aspire; they looked like us. “Consider the customer,” one shopkeeper advised him. “He’s not going to want a coat he sees worn by someone who looks like the swarthy, bowlegged, moustachioed countrymen he sees ten thousand times a day in our city’s streets. He wants a coat worn by a beautiful creature from a distant unknown land, so he can convince himself that he, too, can change, become someone new, just by putting on this coat.” One window dresser who was well versed in this game was good enough to confess, after admiring Bedii Usta’s mastery, that he thought it a great shame he could not earn his keep by using “these real Turks, these real fellow citizens” in his shop windows; the reason, he said was that Turks no longer wanted to be Turks, they wanted to be something else altogether. ... What brought them into his store was the dream of becoming “the others” who’s worn that dress. (Freely, 2006, p. 61)

Regarding the theory of deconstruction, such binaries are bound to be eliminated conveniently as they are a reflection of traditional mainstream definitions and no two things truly have something in common resulting from the fact that words reserve ambiguity within themselves and are consist of other words to exist fully. The theory also holds the opinion that one side of the binary is not superior to the other one since perceptions change depending on from which direction or viewpoint they are handled. Respecting the quotation above, one could clearly suggest that Pamuk aims at drawing attention to the gradual loss of the Eastern culture and customs in society, which is in close connection with the rising eagerness towards the West and its culture. According to Oğuz Demiralp, who is a renowned literary critic in Turkey; however, though Pamuk mentions the suffering of roots and culture in most of his works, which is a natural and inevitable result of the cultural imperialism promoted by the West, he stressed during his statement to the press in Stockholm that he does not believe in the clash of civilisations, which is a contradictory expression. (Demiralp, 2018, p. 72) In that view, as deconstruction suggests even Pamuk can refute such an argument put forward by none other than himself. Just as meanings can defer, one's opinion could also defer causing differences and inconsistencies within himself/herself that takes the reader to instability and ambiguity, so reaching the real understanding is postponed constantly.

Another common theme in both works is the idea of ambition that is observed in the protagonists – Macbeth in *the Tragedy of Macbeth* and Galip in *Kara Kitap*. In his talk with the witches as a reaction to their prophecies claiming that he would be the king, Macbeth asserts:

<p>MACBETH (to the Witches):</p> <p>Speak if you can: what are you?</p> <p>FIRST WITCH:</p> <p>All hail Macbeth, hail to thee Thane of Glamis.</p> <p>SECOND WITCH:</p> <p>All hail Macbeth, hail to thee Thane of Cawdor.</p> <p>THIRD WITCH:</p>	<p>All hail Macbeth, that shalt be King hereafter.</p> <p>...</p> <p>MACBETH:</p> <p>Stay, you imperfect speakers, tell me more:</p> <p>By Sinell's death I know I am Thane of Glamis,</p> <p>But how, of Cawdor? The Thane of Cawdor lives</p> <p>A prosperous gentleman; and to be King</p>
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Stands not within the
prospect of belief,

No more than to be Cawdor.
Say from whence

You owe this strange
intelligence, or why

Upon this blasted heath you
stop our way

With such prophetic
greeting? Speak, I charge
you.

Witches vanish (1.3.48-78)

In these lines, the problem with the prophecy appears as the witches hold themselves back from telling Macbeth how to do the things, which leaves him in questions, ambiguity and undecidability and he ends up being even more ambitious and frustrated. No matter how hard he pushes the witches to direct him to the ways of being in line to the throne, he cannot reach certain conclusions. Likewise, in the following acts, the witches inform Macbeth about “a deed without a name” (4.1.64) and through several successive lines, Macbeth asks them consecutive questions to find out more about the deed; however, they provide him obscure and misleading answers guiding him to false conclusions. This shows ‘naming’ the deed with definite words results in *différance* and he comes to the understanding that there are not any readily available answers since anything that can be put into words is not the answer.

Aligning with the situation above, Galip, who is a lawyer in search of his missing wife through the streets of İstanbul and meets various people during that process, experiences a similar enlightenment in *Kara Kitap* owing to his great ambition to replace himself with his cousin Celal, who is a newly popular columnist in a newspaper. Galip’s desire to take Celal’s place and actually his identity is described in the novel in this way:

On the other hand, to become someone else you had to use all your strength. By the time he reached Taksim Square, Galip knew that he had– at last– the strength and determination to make his dream come true. I’m someone else! He told himself. How good it felt! ... Though he could not bring himself to name this someone else; he could feel his memories, his sadness, rising up in him like a dirge. (Freely, 2006, p. 222)

‘Naming’ is subjected to questioning one more time with Galip’s example as seen in *Macbeth* earlier. His ambition rises powerfully and overwhelmingly restraining him from realising the truth, which causes a delay in reaching the desired meaning. With that in mind, later in the novel, Galip starts to live Celal’s life and takes his identity; moves to his house, wears his pyjamas, answers his phones and even writes columns for the paper in the name of

Celal. Such a strong ambition leads him to ambiguous places that he is not destined to be. Although he starts his journey with the aim of finding his missing wife Rüya, he ends up chasing Celal believing the two are together. This false assumption works to fulfil his ambition to become a writer. However, at the end of the novel, when he finally finds his wife and cousin, both are dead and he realises finding his wife or taking Celal's identity was not what he wished for; he was in search of his own identity. The real journey was to himself. His ambition guides him to ambiguity and his journey which does not have an origin is directed towards himself.

This discovery is related to Derrida's idea of intertextuality, as well. The story of Galip is indeed a reference to Şeyh Galip's masterpiece *Hüsn-ü Aşk* proving that no text exists by itself and any text adds to its meaning by the allusions and references of other texts which work as complementary resources. As the aforementioned examples suggest, ambition can easily influence people with false assumptions leaving them in ambiguity and causing *différance* in the scope of deconstruction theory.

Many of the examples displayed above inherently orient one to read the idea of ambiguity in between the lines; however, it actually appears as an essential theme in both works. In *Macbeth*, it is mostly given through the character of Lady Macbeth in her persuasive speeches to her husband. So as to convince Macbeth to kill Duncan, she uses a coded language that is widely implicit with the hope of keeping herself away from uttering the words that are indicative and directly evoking the act of crime. For instance; she prefers the noun "that" for murder, the verb "do" for committing it. (1.5.20-25) After the act is completed, while she is consoling her husband and encouraging him to be confident, she puts "What's done, is done." (3.2.9-13) and "What's done, cannot be undone." (5.1.66-68) The ambiguity of her language is what takes Macbeth so long to recognise the disastrous act he has committed and the fact that he has become a victim of his greed and ambitions. Silvia Bigliuzzi, in her recent article entitled "Linguistic Taboos and the "Unscene" of Fear in *Macbeth*" affirms:

The use of "doing," "undoing," and "deed" in the course of the play signals precisely this internal conflict. Whether in the presence of each other or in solitude, Macbeth and his wife never call the crime by its name but by the generic, although pragmatically and symbolically highly connoted, master concept "doing." (Bigliuzzi, 2018, p. 60)

Not only "deed" or "that", but also the expression of "hurly burly" (1.1.3) is used in the play to point the murder of Duncan. When they all come together, such references form an ambiguous atmosphere as these words do not recall sufficient meanings to take one to the

utmost truth. They can be deconstructed by taking the meaning to any other desired direction because of their flexible nature.

Another ambiguity of the play is maintained through Lady Macbeth's remarks one more time. She demands the spirits to alter her nature:

... Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe, top-full
Of direst cruelty. Make thick my blood
Stop up th'access and passage to remorse,
That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
Th'effect and it. Come to my woman's breasts
And take my milk for gall, you murd'ring ministers,
Wherever, in your sightless substances,
You wait on natures mischief. ... (1.5.39-49)

Lady Macbeth seems to be afraid of her nature as she wants to change what is inside her. For this reason, this is an ambiguous passage implying that she does not have what she is in need of and that is why she needs to be transformed. Her calling on nature refers to her personality that is required to be emptied out and filled out with something else. She longs for not a form of human body, but a body filled with death which is not living and belonging to a different kind of world. She would like to free herself from the 'fair' sex by passing to the 'evil', in other words, to the 'foul' side and wants to be "unsexed" that is a reminder of the binary of 'fair vs foul' spread throughout the play. This is a never-ending cycle as Bryan Reynolds suggests in his article entitled "Transversal Poetics and Fugitive Explorations: Subject Performance, Early Modern English Theatre, and "Macbeth"":

... we remain aware that there is no inherent, absolute, or unmediated meaning or subject position; that truth and perception are processual and contingent; and that any text or social identity ... can be made to deconstruct itself endlessly ... by replacing one supplemental, always already indeterminate meaning after another,

each standing in for the never-to-be-found conclusion or transcendental signified.

(Reynolds, 2004, p. 111-112)

Pamuk's *Kara Kitap* is also rich in terms of applying the theme of ambiguity in diverse scenes of the novel. Throughout the novel, in different chapters, the narrator is deliberately left ambiguous in that it is sometimes quite challenging to differentiate between Galip and Celal to understand who is conveying the story. From the very beginning when Galip's wife Rya leaves him with a nineteen-word letter, it is not clear to where, why and with whom she departs and the reader is not introduced with the content of the letter, either. (Pamuk, 1990/2016, p. 54) At the end, the murderers of Rya and Celal remain ambiguous and even the confessor gives contradictory statements to the police and the reader is left in questions in mind whether to believe him or not. In that sense, the novel is resembled to "a Turkish labyrinth" (McGrath, 1995/2000, p. 190) in terms of the reader's having difficulty in finding the way out of the puzzling incidents. Years after the novel was written, a book entitled *Kara Kitap'ın Sırları* (Hadzibegovic, 2013) came out to present a better understanding for the reader and to enable him/her to discover the secrets and hidden meanings of the book where Pamuk explains the success of a novel lies in its instability and ambiguity of its centre. (p. 58) Even the name of Galip's wife (Rya) supports this idea as it means 'dream' in Turkish suggesting Galip's dream to explore his own identity and also the world of dreams where he resides making up scenarios as to Rya's whereabouts.

CONCLUSION

Despite the fact that they were written in different centuries, Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Pamuk's *Kara Kitap* share similar deconstructive characteristics in terms of the common themes and concepts they have. They both render the concept of binary oppositions as 'fair vs. foul' in the former and as 'east vs west' in the latter. However, such concepts are liable to deconstruction as Clare Gorman advocates in her book entitled *The Undecidable: Jacques Derrida and Paul Howard* that binaries are a result of one's desire to find a "centre" for almost everything in the world. (Gorman, 2015, p. 11) The centre is not something accessible by the use of words and as Derrida puts:

... it was necessary to begin thinking that there was no centre, that the centre could not be thought in the form of a present-being, that the centre had no natural site, that it was not a fixed locus but a function, a sort of non-locus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play. This was the moment when language invaded the universal problematic, the moment when, in the absence of a centre or origin,

everything became discourse ... that is to say, a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. (Derrida, 1978, p. 280 as cited in Gorman, 2015, p. 10-11)

It is that wish of the humankind that creates binary oppositions (p. 12) which need to be dismantled to avoid from *différance* pushing one to a deferred and delayed meaning according to the deconstruction theory.

The themes of ambition and ambiguity which are presented through the selected extracts above appear in the protagonists' actions in both works and extreme ambition is the key factor that direct them into obscenity. It is a significant element of Derrida's theory as it leaves the characters *undecidable* with the revelation of multiple meanings bringing about contradiction and confusion. This leads one to the conclusion that words do not carry meanings on their own and they exist with the help and signifying of other words as it is the case of literary texts which possess their entire meanings when combined with other texts preceding them. In the boundaries of Derrida's Deconstruction Theory, this study aimed at carrying out a comparative analysis of the two well-known works of William Shakespeare and Orhan Pamuk with the prospect of contributing to the related area of further research.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The study of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Orhan Pamuk's *Kara Kitap* adopting Deconstruction Theory aims at shedding a light to a comparative analysis in terms of the common themes and elements they share such as the use of binary oppositions and the themes of ambition and ambiguity. The works in question have been selected specifically upon the detection of the gap in the area where the canonised works of English Literature are compared and contrasted to the works of World Literature. Though the study comparing the renowned works of Shakespeare to other works from English Literature or to some other works of his are abundant, the works that examine a pioneer work such as *Macbeth* together with a work from World Literature such as Turkish Literature are scarce. Moreover, the common trend in the current studies tends to handle the works from historical, feminist or psychological theories' point of views. Also, even if it is not the case, the studies generally preferred a hybrid approach combining the widely used theories with one another. The deliberate avoidance of the deconstruction theory was mainly because of the connotations it carries within its nature, which is the association of the word deconstruction with destruction. In order to illustrate this misunderstanding, it has been decided to focus on *Macbeth* with a deconstructive approach and to compare it to a literary work from Turkish Literature, which is Pamuk's *Kara Kitap* – a postmodern novel. As a result of the analysis, it has been concluded that binaries are open to dismantling and could be deconstructed with ease. Furthermore, the ambiguous elements and the characteristics of the two texts cause *deférrance*, which make the intended meaning delay and leave both the reader and the protagonists *undecidable* who are stimulated by their ambitious actions. It has been hoped that the study at hand contributes to conduct further research in interdisciplinary areas.