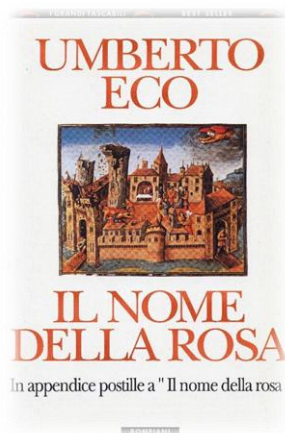


## ECO & LEE: FOREVER MISSED

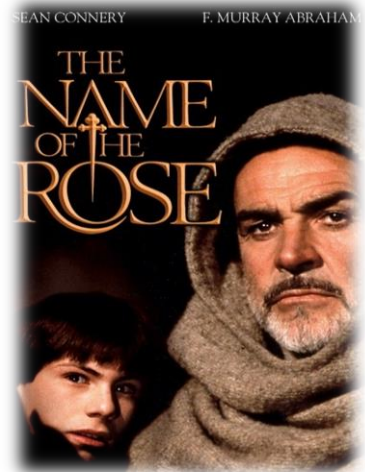
*Zeynep DEMİR*

We have made a tragic start to this year. It has been nearly two months since two of the world's most influencing authors, Umberto Eco -*best-selling academic who navigated two worlds*<sup>1</sup>- and Harper Lee -*the author of the most widely loved American novel of the past half century*<sup>2</sup>- passed away on the same day, February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016, and joined their fellow writers who left this world leaving shoes that are too big to fill.



Umberto Eco -born in Alessandria, Italy, on January 5, 1992- was a writer, academic, linguist and philosopher best known for his novel *Il nome della rosa (The Name of the Rose)*.<sup>3</sup>

The book -translated into more than 30 languages and sold over 10 million copies only six years after publication- was a mystery novel including biblical analysis, study on medieval times and semiotics. The novel was adapted into a Hollywood movie starring famous actor Sean Connery.



<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from: [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/20/arts/international/umberto-eco-italian-semiotician-and-best-selling-author-dies-at-84.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/20/arts/international/umberto-eco-italian-semiotician-and-best-selling-author-dies-at-84.html?_r=1) (April 7, 2016 / 19.13)

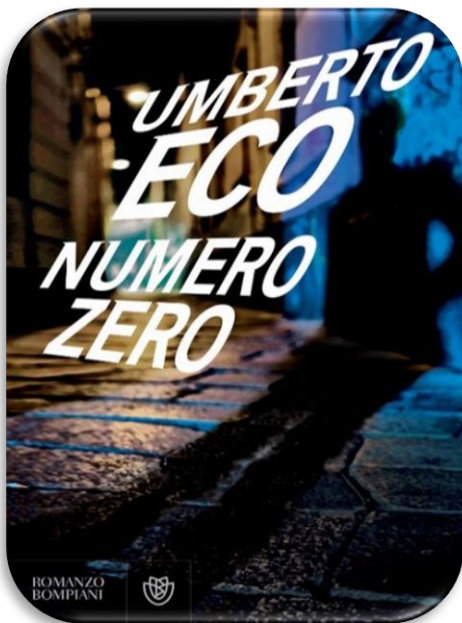
<sup>2</sup> Retrieved from: <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/feb/19/harper-lee> (April 7, 2016 / 19.15)

<sup>3</sup> Retrieved from: [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/20/arts/international/umberto-eco-italian-semiotician-and-best-selling-author-dies-at-84.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/20/arts/international/umberto-eco-italian-semiotician-and-best-selling-author-dies-at-84.html?_r=1) (April 7, 2016 / 19.13)



The relationship of protagonists -*William of Baskerville*-*Guglielmo da Baskerville* in Italian- and *Adso of Melk*- is often compared to the relationship of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's most beloved characters Sherlock Holmes and Doctor John Watson.

The character *William of Baskerville* reminds of Sherlock Holmes and *William of Ockham*, both of whom are fictional characters created by Doyle. While he used *William* as the first name, the origin of the character is derived from an adventure of *Sherlock Holmes*, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*<sup>4</sup> Moreover, Holmes and William also share physical similarities.



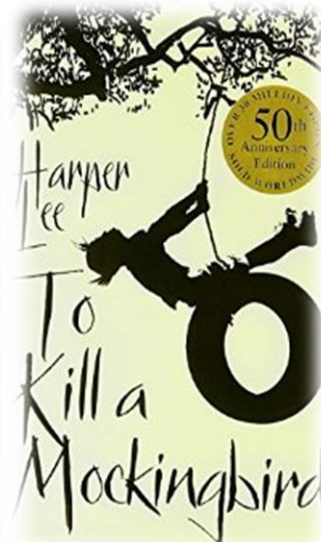
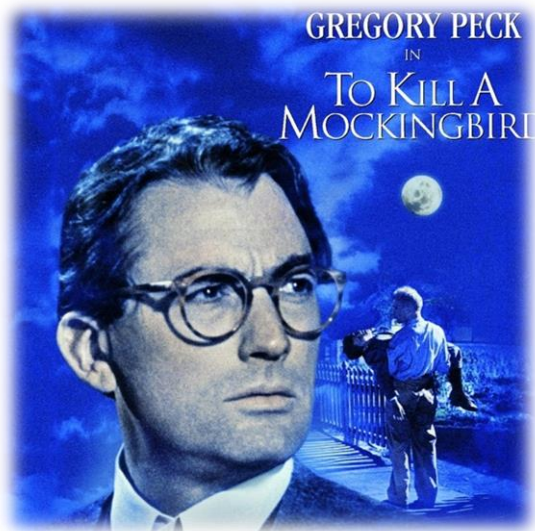
He was a creative scholar who reflected his expertise on his both fictional and non-fictional works. In his last published work, a novel titled *Numero Zero (The Number Zero)*, he fictionalized the conspiracies about Italian dictator Benito Mussolini, *el Duce*. As a little boy, Mussolini was in charge of his homeland. Therefore, we can see that his own experiences influenced his writings. In *The Number Zero*, Eco combines mystery with politics and conspiracies to create a good old thrilling mystery novel, an epic fiction.

<sup>4</sup> Retrieved from: <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/20/arts/international/umberto-eco-italian-semiotician-and-best-selling-author-dies-at-84.html? r=1> (April 7, 2016 / 19.13)

During his eighty-six years of life full of success, Eco was granted many awards and exclusive merits such as *Légion d'honneur* of France and *Pour le Mérite* of Germany<sup>5</sup>.



Nelle Harper Lee -born on April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1926, in Monroeville, Alabama- was an author best known for her Pulitzer-winning novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*. She was not a hotshot academic expert on many different fields like Eco, and unlike him, she only wrote two novels. Nonetheless, her novels on a contradictive and sensitive matter -namely racism- made a huge success.



The novel was adapted into a film -an Oscar-winning one- in 1962 and reached the success of selling forty million copies worldwide. Lee was the daughter of a lawyer father, so she knew the importance of human rights. She had a mother who is believed to have a bipolar disorder. One of her best friends was Truman Capote who is also a well-known writer. He

<sup>5</sup> Retrieved from: [https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umberto\\_Eco](https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umberto_Eco) (April 7, 2016 / 19.35)

wrote the famous *Breakfast at Tiffany's* -a novel adapted into a Hollywood movie, starring Audrey Hepburn, and *In Cold Blood*, a book on a real life event; a quadruple murder, with the help of Lee<sup>6</sup>.



## LEE & CAPOTE

Lee became interested in English literature when she was a young woman. She was not just a regular teenage girl of Alabama whose interests were make-up, dresses, shoes or dating. She was known for being a loner.<sup>7</sup> At first, she became editor to the school's magazine but couldn't continue after being accepted into the school of law. Eventually, she came to the conclusion that she couldn't be a lawyer; she dropped out and moved to New York City.

Lee worked on *To Kill a Mockingbird* for over seven years. The work that came out was more than just a coming-of-age story. She reflected racism and injustice. Lee told the adventures of *Scout*, her brother *Jem* and their friend *Dill* within the frames of their sociocultural environment.

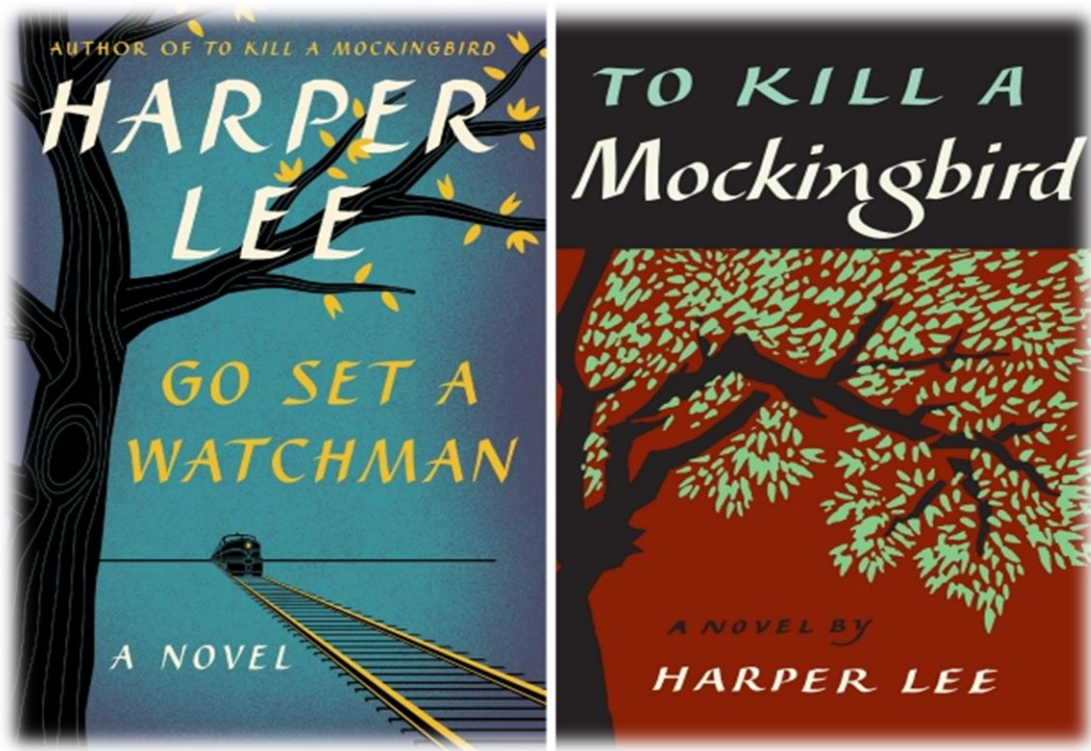
She worked on a non-fiction book about a serial killer in Alabama, but did not publish any of her works until 2015. Lee lived a humble life, and suffered a stroke in 2007 which caused problems in her short-term memory. This did not stop her from reading.

<sup>6</sup> Retrieved from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truman\\_Capote](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truman_Capote) (April 7, 2016 / 19.40)

<sup>7</sup> Retrieved from: <http://www.biography.com/people/harper-lee-9377021#synopsis> (April 7, 2016 / 20.10)



The sequel that came out in 2015 was actually the first book Lee wrote. On the publisher's request, she altered Scout's age and adapted the story accordingly. And they published *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The first manuscript of the novel remained lost until 2014.



Lee's health worsened and after her lawyer found the lost manuscript, she decided that it should be published. *Go Set a Watchman* became one of the fast-selling literary works in history.<sup>8</sup>

Eco and Lee left indelible marks on literary world that always stay among classics and will be read till the end of time. It has been a great experience to read their works and I'd consider myself very lucky if I'd understood what they mean to tell.

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<sup>8</sup> Retrieved from: <http://www.biography.com/people/harper-lee-9377021#synopsis> (April 7, 2016 / 20.15)