

Works by Mary Renault

Historical Novels

- *The Last of the Wine* (1956)
- *The King Must Die* (1958)
- *The Bull from the Sea* (1962)
- *The Mask of Apollo* (1966)
- *Fire from Heaven* (1970)
- *The Persian Boy* (1972)
- *The Praise Singer* (1979)
- *Funeral Games* (1981)

Non-Fiction

The Nature of Alexander (1975)

Medical Novels:

Purposes of Love (1939)

Kind are her Answers (1940)

The Friendly Young Ladies (1944)

Return to Night (1947)

North Face (1948)

The Charioteer (1953)

The Last of the Wine tells the story of Alexias, an Athenian youth who comes of age during the Peloponnesian War, and his older lover, Lysis, a real figure known from Plato. Alexias and his family are fictional, but the novel is filled with real figures: Lysis, Plato, Socrates, Xenophon, the generals of 415, Kritias, Autolykos, Euripides, Aristophanes etc.

The King Must Die and *The Bull from the Sea* tell the story of the legendary Athenian hero, Theseus, the first the adventures of his youth ending with his return from Crete, and the second the rest of his eventful life and his meeting with Hippolyta, the love of his life.

The Mask of Apollo is set in the 4th century and narrated by Nikeratos, an Athenian actor, who gets involved with Plato and his ill-fated attempt to establish an ideal republic in Sicily. Again Nikeratos and his family are fictional, but the rest of the 'cast' include philosophers (Plato and the Academy), actors and dramatists (Thettalos), and political figures at Athens, in Sicily, and in Macedon.

Fire from Heaven traces the early years of Alexander the Great, from his childhood through to his accession to the throne of Macedon in 336 BC. As so little is recorded about his youth, MR was free to create an Alexander of the sort she imagined he would have been.

The Persian Boy continues the story of Alexander, particularly his campaigns in Persia and the East. The narrator is an actual historical figure, Bagoas, a Persian eunuch and 'boy-friend', first of Darius III, King Of Persia, and later of Alexander himself.

The Praise Singer is the first part of a memoir in old age by the lyric poet Simonides, set principally at Athens in the late 6th century, during the tyranny of Peisistratos and Hippias. It ends with the fall of the tyranny in 510 BC.

Funeral Games deals with the aftermath of the death of Alexander in 323 BC, with many characters and narratives interspersed. It ends in 270 BC with only Ptolemy in Egypt the only survivor of these 'games'.

Filming *The King Must Die*:

(1) 1958-1963: Twentieth-Century Fox

letter from MR to Kasia Abbott – in 1959

I have just heard from a man in Hollywood called Samuel Engel. who is making the film of THE KING MUST DIE. One hears about these Hollywood moguls who shout out “Get me this guy Defoe! And tell him to write in a part for Ava Gardner!” But I must say this Engel’s manners could not be more exquisite if he were a prince. He even invites suggestions from me. I am sure in the end he will ignore them all, and Ariadne will be played by some female moron of stupendous vulgarity, with dialogue to match. (Noel Langley is writing it, so it shouldn’t be bad, but of course they mess it about afterwards). But meantime the glove is certainly made of the very best velvet. At least they plan to shoot it in Greece, so there should be some nice visual bits

announcement by Buddy Adler (director 20th-Century Fox), February 1960

With filming completed on “The Story of Ruth”, producer Samuel G. Engel is finalizing plans for production of his second “block-buster” for 1960 release, “The King Must Die”. One of the costlier and bigger of the studio’s projects for this year, this picturization of Mary Renault’s best-selling novel is scheduled to go before the cameras this spring. It is tentatively scheduled for release next Fall.

Like George Stevens, who will produce and direct our next Todd-AO production, “The Greatest Story Ever Told”, Engel is deeply involved in an anything but an ordinary casting chore. As the trade in general and the personnel of the world-wide distribution are aware, Engel is desirous of casting a relatively unknown actor for the focal role of Theseus. Exhibitors have been asked to participate in the global search for candidates to play that part. Here are the exact specifications, as submitted by the studio:

The candidate must be at least six feet tall and weigh between 180 and 200 pounds. Nationality is unimportant, but the candidate must speak English perfectly and fluently. His body must exude dynamic power, agile enough to perform the numerous Herculean feats of skill and daring the part calls for.

Up to press-time, Engel stated, more than 350 candidates had been submitted from 72 countries, 121 from the United States alone. However, there will be no screen-tests made of candidates until the search has been completed, which will be very soon. Preference, of course, for screen-testing will be given candidates with histrionic talent. Engel is elated with the results of the co-operative search.

Producer: Sam Engel

Director: Henry Koster or Jack Cardiff

Cast to include: Stephen Boyd or Tom Tryon (Theseus). Elena Eden (Ariadne)

(2) 1968: Producer Robert Fryer attempts to persuade 20th-Century Fox to film *The King Must Die*

(3) 1972-1974: Steve Fellouris and Duncan Boss acquire the rights from 20th-Century Fox to *The King Must Die*.

Producers: Robert Fryer and Steve Fellouris

Director: Jack Clayton

Cast to include: Maggie Smith, John Gielgud, Calvin Culver

Script: David Giler

Music: Rod McKuen

(4) 1979-1981: The Movie Company signs a deal first with Warner Brothers and then with United Artists for a film version of Mary Renault's *The King Must Die*, to begin filming in mid-1980 on a budget of \$12 million.

Producer: Barry Krost.