

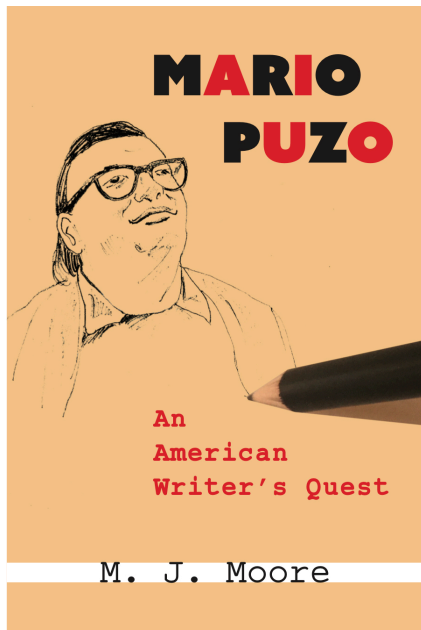
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE / NEW BOOK NEWS

CONTACT: Sue Havlish, 812-327-5494, sue.havlish@bigsisterproductions.com

A BIOGRAPHY YOU CAN'T REFUSE

M. J. Moore's new biography of novelist Mario Puzo, author of *The Godfather*, will be published to honor the 50th anniversary of the Mafia classic's 1969 debut

*Heliotrope Books will publish **MARIO PUZO—AN AMERICAN WRITER'S QUEST** on March 8, 2019*



NEW YORK CITY —The tale of writer Mario Puzo is more than a story about a novelist who grappled with fate and finally enjoyed great success with *The Godfather*. M. J. Moore's first-ever biography of the author, *Mario Puzo — An American Writer's Quest*, does much more than describe what's already familiar about the arc of Puzo's life. Yes, his is one of America's most vivid rags-to-riches stories, but it is also a heroic odyssey. Against all odds, the poor, socially awkward son of illiterate southern Italian immigrants made himself into an author whose collected works fill a whole shelf — and whose most famous book (30 million copies sold), has seeped into America's psyche in a way that remains unique.

Mario Puzo — An American Writer's Quest by M. J. Moore will be published by Heliotrope Books on March 8, 2019, 50 years after Putnam's original publication of *The Godfather*.

One of the major themes to emerge in Moore's biography is that Mario Puzo's life is best understood as an immigrant's inheritance and an American's triumph. Although he is identified more closely with Italian-American culture than almost any other writer of his generation, Puzo chose on most occasions to sidestep the "Italian-American" label. He said simply: "I'm an American."

Nonetheless, as the son of southern Italian immigrants, Puzo always retained and effortlessly evoked an enormously important Old World sense of self. Invariably, those closest to him enjoyed his steadfast gentleman's manners and romantic generosity. No matter how much he identified as "an American," there emerged in Puzo's body of work a spellbinding recapitulation of the past — an immigrant's past.

But in spite of the Old World echoes enhancing the persona and the writings of Mario Puzo, he was very much a product of his times. He deserves to be recognized as one of the most talented of his generation's World War II-era novelists. His debut novel, *The Dark Arena*, is no less important than Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* or James Jones's *The Thin Red Line*. Indeed, like Mailer and Jones (and sixteen million other Americans between 1939 and 1945), there were significant years of Puzo's young adult life spent in uniform. The woman he married and the narrative he wrote for his first novel demonstrate how the Second World War was transformative for him.

But unlike his peers Norman Mailer and James Jones (and others), Mario Puzo did not enjoy youthful success. In fact, unlike a great many members of his ambitious ex-G.I. generation, Puzo did not ride

high during the postwar economic boom. Nor did the rising American economy of the 1960s benefit him. For well over 20 years after WWII, Puzo struggled to make ends meet and support his family. He did not live in a house until age 42. And it wasn't until 1968, when the paperback rights to *The Godfather* sold for a record-breaking sum, that his writer's quest was rewarded financially.

In Mario Puzo's life, all roads led to *The Godfather*. Although he received major critical praise for his first two novels (1955's *The Dark Arena* and 1965's *The Fortunate Pilgrim*), their sales were all but flat. Then . . . badly indebted, with five children, pushing 50 and burdened by stress, he vowed to write a bestseller. His third novel was *The Godfather*. Other major novels followed in subsequent decades.

Long before the first *Godfather* film premiered in 1972, Puzo's novel *The Godfather* had already sold millions of copies worldwide. Subsequently, his co-screenwriting work with Francis Ford Coppola on the three *Godfather* movies ensured that Mario Puzo was central to what is commonly considered America's ultimate mythology. *The Godfather* has superseded Colonial narratives, Westerns, and Civil War stories as a latter-day blueprint for understanding America's mythic dreams and varied disasters.

Unlike most other authors of his era, Mario Puzo still enjoys a worldwide fan base — not necessarily limited to *The Godfather* mystique. However, there's no denying the power of that mystique: the Facebook page devoted to the first "Godfather" film has tallied 9 million "Likes." And, again, unlike most of his peers, all of Puzo's novels remain in print at this time.

In fact, Puzo lived a first-generation American version of The Hero's Adventure, a redemption story, and a writer's quest to boot. **He was "Rocky" with a typewriter.**

And yet, there has never been a biography of Mario Puzo . . . until now.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: **M. J. MOORE** has worked as a big band drummer, a dishwasher and salesman, a college English teacher and freelance journalist, and a long-term Caregiver for a beloved friend suffering from a chronic illness. His articles, features, book reviews, and RETRO columns have appeared in *The Paris Review ~ Daily*, *Newworld Review*, the *International New York Times*, *HoneySuckle Magazine*, *Literary Hub*, and various major urban newspapers. Moore is the author of the novel *For Paris — With Love & Squalor* (Heliotrope Books, 2017). He holds a B.A. and M.A. in English. When asked why he wrote this new biography, he said: "Because I'm a firm believer in Toni Morrison's mandate: 'If there's a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it.'"



#

BOOK INFORMATION:

MARIO PUZO — AN AMERICAN WRITER'S QUEST

by **M. J. Moore**

6 x 9 inches, 250 pages

978-1-942762-63-8 trade paperback \$17.50

978-1-942762-64-5 e-book \$9.99

To be published March 8, 2019 by Heliotrope Books, LLC