

## György Spiró: Fogság (Captivity)



**GYÖRGY SPIRÓ** was born in 1946 in Budapest. He is one of Hungary's leading contemporary authors, a writer, a dramatist, a translator and a scholar of Polish literature. He is one of the most frequently played contemporary playwrights of Hungary.

### CAPTIVITY (FOGSÁG)

Novel, 2005, 770 pages

(FULL AND AUTHORISED ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN TRANSLATION AVAILABLE)



**AN INCREDIBLY ENTERTAINING AND EXCITING, PLOT- AND ACTION-PACKED BESTSELLER**

**while**

**AT THE SAME TIME, A DEEP AND PHILOSOPHICAL MASTERPIECE!**

*In his book CAPTIVITY, a story playing out in 1<sup>st</sup>-century Roman Empire, Jerusalem, Alexandria – the Middle East – and presenting the life, adventures and intellectual and physical travels of Jewish Roman citizen Uri,...*

*...“György Spiró aspired at nothing less than (...) present a theory in novelistic form about the interweavedness of religion and politics, lay bare the inner workings of power and give an insight into the art of survival.*

*This book is an incredible page turner, it reads easily and avidly like the greatest bestsellers while also going as deep as the greatest thinkers of European philosophy”.*

**(Aegon Literary Award 2006: From the recommendation of the Jury)**

**The Aegon Literary Award is given yearly for the past year's outstanding literary achievement.**

**With 50,000 copies in print and 13 editions, Captivity belongs with the most successful books ever published in Hungary.**

*The story takes place in the 1<sup>st</sup> century in ancient Rome, Jerusalem and Alexandria, it contains an enormous amount of historical knowledge, but history, politics, philosophy and numerous other facets of the culture of humankind are all included in the coming of age story and the personal destiny of its main hero, Uri, a Roman Jew.*

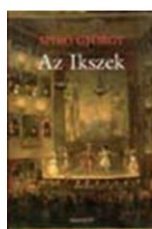
***It is both an extremely entertaining, superbly written, exciting tale and a very deep, thoughtful, philosophical masterpiece – a historical page turner and a marvellous piece of absolutely contemporary literature.***

Spiró's fourth major novel became the literary sensation of 2005 in Hungary. Set in the first century after the birth of Jesus Christ, the novel is set in the Roman Empire when Christianity is first emerging as a religion. The hero, Uri (Gaius Theodorus), is a Jew who was born and grows up in Rome's Jewish community. He is a puny, unprepossessing, short-sighted young man, whom his father, in return for risking his entire tiny fortune as a loan to a high imperial official, gets instated as a member of the delegation that takes the ritual tax for the Jewish community of Rome to Jerusalem every year. Travelling through the eastern half of the Roman Empire, the first great global economy in history, Uri spends time in Judea and Alexandria before finally making his way back to Italy. Along the way, he is imprisoned by Herod's officials for a week in Jerusalem (being joined by two thieves and, it would seem, Jesus himself shortly before their crucifixion) before dining with Pontius Pilate. He is then forced to work among peasants in the Judean countryside before making his way to Alexandria in Egypt. There, he wins a place for three years at the city's elite grammar school, indulges in the pleasures provided by the local prostitutes, and lives through a pogrom with the erection of the first ghetto in history. Uri returns to Rome to find that his father has died during his absence and that he is now obliged to take on repayment of the money which his father borrowed to 'bribe' the high official into instating his son in the delegation. He works first as a secretary to some of the richest Jewish dignitaries and later as a labourer on a palace for the Emperor Nero, before he is unjustly labelled as being a Nazarene and exiled from his birthplace as a penniless outlaw. Although he eventually finds a family, he dies a lonely, neglected figure in wretched circumstances. The very last sentence of the book runs: "I still want to live, he thought to himself, and was lost in wonder." He therefore leads an exciting, varied, and truly adventure-packed life, which offers him the opportunity to become versed in a dozen or more very different occupations. During the course of events, he transforms himself into a true intellectual of his time, reading widely, learning a clutch of languages, acquiring first-hand knowledge of a thousand and one things, and honing a first-class intellect.

At the close of the book, it remains up to the reader to answer various important questions. What is the point of all the battles and religions? What is the point of struggling? Is there any sense? Why, in the final analysis, is history a litany of mass slaughters? Why does mankind continue to place his faith in ever newer things when they disillusion is often lurking round the corner?

As criticism has put it, 'this book is an incredible page turner, it reads avidly like the greatest bestsellers while also going as deep as the greatest thinkers of European philosophy'.

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Russia, Inostranka



Also in the Backlist:

*The X-es* (*Az Ikszek*, novel, 2007, 542 pages) Set in a fractured Poland at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, this novel tells the story of struggling theatre director Osiński and the return of a legendary actor long past his prime, whose pursuit of popularity is disturbed by mysterious critical articles signed simply with „x-es”.



*Messiahs* (*Messiasok*, novel, 2007, 646 pages) In the Polish émigré community of Paris in 1840, a mysterious figure appeared and established a religious sect, claiming to be the Lord himself, and seducing such literary greats as Mickiewicz and Slowacki. This gripping novel tells the story of their social and political machinations. *Rights sold to: Poland, W.A.B.*



*Brideride* (*Feleségverseny*, novel, 2009, 337 pages) An utopian vision of what Hungary may become in the near future, this satirical novel recounts the events of a country where the communist king elects his wife through a TV show, the country loses part of its territory, and everything becomes even more absurd than it is today.