



## A Grain of Truth

Zygmunt Miloszewski , Antonia Lloyd-Jones (Translation)

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**A Grain of Truth** Zygmunt Miloszewski , Antonia Lloyd-Jones (Translation)

It is spring 2009, and prosecutor Szacki is no longer working in Warsaw—he has said goodbye to his family and to his career in the capital and moved to Sandomierz, a picturesque town full of churches and museums. Hoping to start a "brave new life," Szacki instead finds himself investigating a strange murder case in surroundings both alien and unfriendly.

The victim is found brutally murdered, her body drained of blood. The killing bears the hallmarks of legendary Jewish ritual slaughter, prompting a wave of anti-Semitic paranoia in the town, where everyone knows everyone. The murdered woman's husband is bereft, but when Szacki discovers that she had a lover, the husband becomes the prime suspect. Before there's time to arrest him, he is found murdered in similar circumstances. In his investigation Szacki must wrestle with the painful tangle of Polish–Jewish relations and something that happened more than sixty years earlier.

**Zygmunt Miloszewski** was born in Warsaw, Poland, in 1975. His first novel *The Intercom* was published in 2005 to high acclaim. In 2006 he published *The Adder Mountains*; in 2010, the crime novel *Entanglement*; and this year its sequel, *A Grain of Truth*.

## A Grain of Truth Details

Date : Published January 8th 2013 by Bitter Lemon Press (first published October 15th 2011)

ISBN : 9781908524027

Author : Zygmunt Miloszewski , Antonia Lloyd-Jones (Translation)

Format : Paperback 380 pages

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## From Reader Review A Grain of Truth for online ebook

### Inna says

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### Bettie? says

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0bf...>

Description: *Taut crime thriller by leading Polish writer, Zygmunt Miloszewski, dramatised for radio by Mark Lawson. War time intrigue and modern politics mesh in a murder mystery.*

*The complexities and frustrations of the modern Polish legal system are the setting for this bestselling crime novel, featuring long suffering State Prosecutor Szacki who finds himself trapped in a limbo land of half-truths and secrets from post-Communist Poland. Will he prove himself to be a redoubtable seeker of the truth or will he compromise?*

#### Episode 1: The Blood Painting

Szacki is finding small town Poland a little dull but a bizarre murder case soon throws him back into action. The crime scene is littered with grotesque clues suggesting that the murder is mirroring an infamous Jewish blood libel, drawing on historical anti-Semitism.

#### Episode 2: The Body is Lying

State Prosecutor Szacki investigates a series of murders, all of which seem to point crudely towards some kind of alleged Jewish ritual killing. But appearance is not always what it seems. His girlfriend Klara and a cliched daytime soap bizarrely unlock the answers at last.

The writer: Zygmunt Milosewski is a leading Polish writer. The Teodor Szacki series is hugely popular in Poland and the book series is currently being filmed.

The translator: Antonia Lloyd Jones is a full time translator of Polish literature. She won the Found in Translation Award 2008 for the English version of The Last Supper by Pawel Huelle and is a committee member of the UK Translators Association.

Teodor Szacki Bryan Dick

Klara Dybus Rachel Austin

Leon Wilzcur David Fleeshman  
Grzegorz Budnik David Crellin  
Barbara Myszynska Claire Benedict  
Olga Ursula Holden Gill  
Nun Ursula Holden Gill  
Radio News Reader Ursula Holden Gill  
Monsignor Stanislaw Dan Carey  
Author Zygmunt Miloszewski  
Translation Antonia Lloyd Jones

4\* Entanglement (Teodor Szacki, #1)  
CR A Grain of Truth (Teodor Szacki, #2)

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### **Ksenia says**

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### **Kathleen says**

I liked the first book in this series, "Entanglement," but I liked this one even more. The main character, Prosecutor Teodor Szacki, is more sympathetic in this one (he seemed a bit misogynistic in the first one), and the mystery had even more layers to it. The many-dimensional issue of Polish-Jewish relations during and right after World War II is dealt with a very interesting way that illuminates for us not only what happened then and why but what Poles (especially members of the Polish intelligentsia) now think about it. I can't wait for the next translation of a Szacki mystery!

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### **Megu says**

Seria o prokuratorze Szackim robi si? ciekawsza z ka?d? nast?pn? ksi??k?. "Ziarno prawdy" mia?o bardzo

dobrze zbudowan? intryg?, zgrabnie wplataj?c? w?tki z historii Polski. Przeniesienie akcji z Warszawy do Sandomierza równie? by?o korzystnym zabiegiem - o ile w poprzedniej cz??ci historia rozgrywa?a si? na tle wielkiego miasta, tutaj czytelnik ma okazj? zetkn?? si? z typowym mikrokosmosem polskiej prowincji. Musz? przyzna?, ?e trudno lubi? g?wnego bohatera, ale najwyra?niej tak mia?a by? skonstruowana ta posta? - mizogin, wik?a si? w przelotne romanse z ka?d? napotkan? kobiet? i biadoli nad rozpadem ma??e?stwa (kt?ry wynikn?? z jego winy). Z drugiej strony nale?y mu odda? sprawiedliwo?? i powiedzie?, ?e zagadki kryminalne rozwi?zuje sprawnie - cho? w pewnym momencie zaczyna dr?czy? ilo?? "klików", kt?re rozbrzmiewaj? w jego g?owie, gdy pr?buje wpa?? na nowy trop. Motyw "mam przeczucie, ?e pomin??em co? wa?nego" pojawia si? kilkukrotnie w ka?dym jego ?ledztwie i musz? przyzna?, ?e jest on do?? wt?rny i irytuje?cy - zw?aszcz?a, kiedy ma si? ?wiadomo??, ?e bohater w ko?cu musi doj?? do rozwi?zania, bo takie s? wymagania gatunku.

To co musz? pochwali?, to bardzo dobrze zarysowane historyczne t?o ca?ej historii - antysemityzm i pogromy ?ydów. Kiedy w?tek pojawi? si? na scenie by?am pewna, ?e spotkamy po drodze samych prawdziwych z?ych Polaków, którzy antysemityzm (of course) wyssali z mlekiem matki i, którzy (of course) sami nie potrafi? wyja?ni? dlaczego pluj? jadem na wszystko co ?ydowskie. Spotka?a mnie tutaj mi?a niespodzianka - autor sprawiedliwie potraktowa? wszystkie strony w sporze, daj?c mo?liwo?? wypowiedzenia si? (w racjonalny sposób) ka?dej z nich, jednoco?nie nie promuj?c nachalnie jedynej s?usznej opcji i pozwalaj?c czytelnikowi samemu przemy?le? problem. Mamy wi?c do czynienia z rozgarni?tym rabinem, pomocnymi ksi??mi, potomkiem ?ydowskiej rodziny, która zgin??a przez irracjonalne uprzedzenia oraz z dziennikarzami doszukuj?cymi si? wsz?dzie sensacji i polskich antysemitów. Wnikliwy czytelnik odnajdzie te? przytyk w stron? najwi?kszego polskiego dziennika, kt?remu tematyka antysemityzmu jest szczególnie bliska ("Nam nie jest wszystko jedno" w ustach jednego z dziennikarzy, którzy pr?buje wp?ywa? na ?ledztwo).

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## **Nancy Oakes says**

oops...I read this book and forgot to put in a review.

Continuing with the excellent writing, plotting and above all the characters he established in *Entanglement*, Zygmunt Mi?oszewski has returned with the second novel in his series featuring state prosecutor Teodor Szacki. While the novel gets a little windy ("i" as in "eye") and frustratingly wordy sometimes, the devilish murder plot, the characters and Mi?oszewski's infusion of humor all make for an impressive read. There is also a darker side to this novel as the author explores the historical interactions of Catholics and Jews in Poland, moving the subject matter into the Communist era and on into modern times where, according to the author, the old legends, fears, guilt, and prejudices can still resonate.

When the body, throat slashed and drained of blood, of a beloved member of the Sandomierz community is found in a ravine at the medieval walls of the town, in the middle of what used to be a Jewish cemetery, Szacki is called in on the case. He's no longer in Warsaw, having relocated to Sandomierz after an affair caused the breakup of his marriage; up to now he's found provincial life rather boring living in a city "which was in fact dead after six p.m" and wonders why he threw a carefully-built career in Warsaw away for a few dull cases. But the murder investigation sets all of that aside for the moment. Although he's still a relative newbie, it is Szacki who gets the case precisely because he will come into it with no preconceived notions -- the dead woman was a friend of his colleague, and according to anyone in the town, as near to sainthood as any mortal could possibly be. What Szacki terms a "razor-machete" is found nearby, and it turns out to be a knife used in the Jewish ritual slaughter of cattle. This is problematic -- as fellow prosecutor Barbara Sobieraj notes, "Sandomierz is at the centre of the so-called legends of blood," ... "the capital of the universe

for the idea of ritual murder." After two more vile murders are discovered, each with its own link to "ritual murder," the press has a field day, planting the idea of the old legends concerning Jews and the murders of Christian children into the minds of the public. As Szacki notes, "They say that in every legend there's a grain of truth," but is that really the case here?

While *A Grain of Truth* is an entertaining mystery that will keep you turning pages, the author also explores the ins and outs of the Polish legal system, and different aspects of Poland's history: Catholicism, anti-Semitism, Polish resistance both to the Nazis and the Communists, the return of the Jews after the camps, and the effects of Poland's often-troubled past on its present. Even if you're not a history-oriented person, here it makes for interesting reading and, in my case, spurred me to want to know more.

Szacki's opinions on topics that range from religion to the media reflect Mi?oszewski's honed skills as an observer of reality, as do the author's chapter beginnings which look at individual days in 2009 (the year in which the novel is set), setting forth little tidbits of info that happened on that particular day from different parts of the world. These little blurbs range from the funny to the serious, are related in a kind of sardonic wit and generally have some sort of sideways bearing on the action occurring in the chapter. Once in a while, though, the author does trend toward the wordy, but this is such a minor niggle about a novel that is so well written that it's easy to set aside, one I heartily recommend. Do NOT start this series here; you will get more out of Szacki's character and out of Mi?oszewski's writing by beginning with *Entanglement*. Readers of cozy-type mysteries probably will want to pass; on the flip side, while it deals with dark subject matter, it's not as edgy as noir, either. If you're a fan of intelligently-written translated crime fiction, though, this one will definitely appeal to you.

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### **Beata says**

One of the first Miloszewski's novels that made him famous. The intrigue worth the effort!

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### **Laura says**

*From BBC radio 4:*

*Taut crime thriller by leading Polish writer, Zygmunt Miloszewski, dramatised for radio by Mark Lawson. War time intrigue and modern politics mesh in a murder mystery.*

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#### *Episode 1: The Blood Painting*

*Szacki is finding small town Poland a little dull but a bizarre murder case soon throws him back into action. The crime scene is littered with grotesque clues suggesting that the murder is mirroring an infamous Jewish blood libel, drawing on historical anti-Semitism.*

*The writer:*

*Zygmunt Milosewski is a leading Polish writer. The Teodor Szacki series is hugely popular in Poland and*

*the book series is currently being filmed.*

*The translator:*

*Antonia Lloyd Jones is a full time translator of Polish literature. She won the Found in Translation Award 2008 for the English version of The Last Supper by Paweł Huelle and is a committee member of the UK Translators Association.*

*The dramatist:*

*Mark Lawson is a well-known writer, critic and journalist.*

*Warsaw backgrounds - Zofia Morus*

*Polish language advisor - Antonia Lloyd Jones*

*Producer/director.....Polly Thomas*

*Sound design..... Eloise Whitmore*

*Production coordinator.....Sarah Kenny*

*Executive producer.....John Dryden*

*A Naked production for BBC Radio 4.*

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0bf...>

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**Lolanta says**

<https://lolantaczyta.wordpress.com/20...>

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**Moni says**

Nueva entrega de este Fiscal tan sarcástico y especial y me ha vuelto a gustar mucho, no solamente por la trama policial, sino tambien por la imagen que se nos da de la sociedad polaca y sus sentimientos respecto de la población judía, que era totalmente desconocida para mí. Por supuesto la vida personal de Sacksi nos da momentos de tregua y nos saca alguna sonrisa también.

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**Úrsula León says**

Fluctúa entre 3.5 y 4, bastante entretenida y me gusta cómo va uniendo la trama con todo el background histórico. Definitivamente, leeré la trilogía sobre Teodor Szacki ;)

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**natura says**

Muy, muy bueno: el caso, los personajes, el desarrollo de la trama, el protagonista. Muy bien el equilibrio entre la trama policiaca y la vida cotidiana del fiscal investigador. El enlace con la Historia Contemporánea

al comienzo de cada capítulo te sitúa en el mundo y en la sociedad de la pequeña provincia polaca con toda naturalidad y te acota el espacio geográfico-temporal de manera eficaz.

Me gusta mucho este autor y el protagonista cada vez más humanizado que ha elegido. Espero que traduzcan lo antes posible el último título.

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## **Antonomasia says**

Four years after the events of *Entanglement*, Prosecutor Szacki is more misanthropic than ever, transferred at his own request to the cute historic tourist town of Sandomierz, South East Poland, and unsurprisingly divorced from Weronika. Funnily enough, a bourgeois town of 25 000, not in the hinterland of a major city, doesn't have much interesting work for a big-shot from the capital. Though - in a typical dash of metafiction - it is the setting for a cosy mystery TV series, Father Mateusz. Szacki now misses the colleagues in Warsaw he complained about in book 1, but is still typically unflattering when he remembers them. He doesn't like anyone he knows in Sandomierz. And he's bored.

Until a murderer raises the spectre of the Jewish blood libel, planting a corpse, and a knife used in kosher abattoirs, in the grounds of a pre-war synagogue. And this in a town not far from the site of shocking pogroms against Holocaust survivors attempting to resettle, and notorious for a church painting about the destructive myth which the authorities had, until 2014, repeatedly refused to accompany with an explanatory, apologetic plaque.

Mi?oszewski has made the smart move here of having his close third person narratives focus on a number of other characters, as well as on Teodor Szacki, giving the reader respite from the prosecutor's constant evaluations of other people's, and sometimes his own, appearance (which even to someone who will admit to having an inner Trinny and Susannah are excessive and boring, as well as creating a subtle aggression) - and from his 'grass is greener' dissatisfaction with everything. His personality may be connected with negative traits of Polish national character as mentioned by others in the book, such as 'spleen', and a tendency for people to sound like they're complaining when they aren't really. He's not the most loveable of misanthropes - and doesn't have the troubled background that may have made him more forgiveable - but there are signs of mellowing as the book progresses, and he gets a couple of kicks up the arse, from a date, and then from seeing himself on TV, where he looks considerably more pathetic than his hardboiled self-image.

But more than the protagonist, the selling points for this trilogy are the standard of writing and translation (at the better end of modern genre procedurals, comparable, among what I've read, with Arnaldur Indriðason) and the historical and local content, a boon to those who like to use fiction as a way to learn about other countries.

As before, the political comment is more overt than in typical Nordic plots. It's mentioned several times that educated Poles are paranoid about being and sounding anti-Semitic, and the prejudice is far more common than here, shown bubbling under the surface of mainstream society, almost reminiscent of black-white tension in the US, or British liberals' concern and confusion about sounding Islamophobic - although the contemporary Jewish population is small, due not only to the Holocaust, but emigration after an outburst of government anti-Semitism in 1968. Mi?oszewski used recent academic research into Polish anti-Semitism as a source; it would still be interesting to know the opinions of readers in modern Poland. (Google Translate again.) Szacki and his colleagues worry about things being anti-semitic when they aren't (Jewish comedian style jokes, a rabbi's story about an honest old man who doubted he'd have been as brave as his rescuers during the war). Then, annoyed by reporters and cranks in a press conference who treat the blood libel

question with unbelievable seriousness, the prosecutor, who has already explained his anti-racism in serious terms (and who is nostalgic for a more cosmopolitan pre-war Poland), loses his temper and makes bad-taste sarcastic remarks. Local right-wingers take him seriously and approve; whilst there isn't an outcry, his boss takes him off press duties.

The plot is relatively gory, but as it has an obvious political and historical point it wasn't gratuitous in the manner of random serial killer stories. It's also a little smoother in its workings than its predecessor. The hints of the uncanny on the periphery of the story - from a writer whose first book was a horror novel - are present as in book 1. There is a sense of sly references being used which I don't know enough to spot, though I wondered if placing the eccentric rabbi in Lublin evoked Isaac Bashevis Singer.

I'd heard of this book long before I expected to read it; it was the subject of a few articles because the authorities in Sandomierz were angry about it. As a more religious and conservative society, they aren't happy to capitalise on darker crime fiction as a potential asset in the way of some Scandinavian towns; besides the issues highlighted re. the blood libel painting in the church were not resolved.

However, as this series has so much detail about the past and everyday life it would be a good one for potential tourists to read if they like crime fiction. And if you like some history and politics in with a well-constructed contemporary procedural and can stand a detective who's not the nicest, these are good. The Szacki books have also made me laugh more than other recent procedurals I've read. It's a bit of a shame there's only one more - not yet translated - but leaving it as a trilogy seems an admirable decision by a good writer who doesn't want to limit himself.

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### **Izabela Witorze?? says**

With this book Mi?oszowski has proved to be the best criminal writer in Poland and one of the best in the world. He is in the same league as Jo Nesbo or Stieg Larsson.

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### **Jeff says**

I heard about this mystery novel set in Sandomierz, Poland on NPR and first ordered a sample on my Kindle. It was good enough to convince me to buy. The setting is exotic for an American like me, while also showing that certain elements of small-town life are universal. The plot moves at a good pace and the characters are real and believable. Prosecutor Szacki is an interesting protagonist - good but flawed. The theme of Poland's history of anti-semitism makes for a compelling backdrop to a series of murders. Once I made it to the last fourth of the book I couldn't put it down until finished.

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