

MYSTERY



Naoya Sanuki

David Peace writes about a true story of a murder in post-World War II Japan.

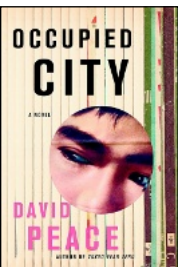
Sayonara to reason after World War II

Novel based on a murder is infused with dizzying prose

By Patrick Beach
AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

“Which do you want to know; what happened, or the truth?” asks a character in David Peace’s “Occupied City.”

Since you asked, I’ll take both, actually. But Peace isn’t letting go of either easily. This novel of murder in postwar Japan is less than 300 pages but it is dense, challenging, maddening and rewarding. A beach read? Not so much. But if you’re in the mood for a genre-busting



Occupied City

David Peace
Knopf; \$25.95

True story: At the beginning of 1948, around closing time, a man claiming to be a medical officer walked into a bank in greater Tokyo saying he’d been sent by occupation authorities to inoculate the staff against dysentery, which had been reported in the area. The cure was poison: Ten people died on the spot, two others later. A sizable sum of money was found missing. After a monthslong investigation, a painter named Sadamichi Hirasawa was arrested, tried and sentenced to death for the crimes. He had confessed, then recanted. He died in prison in 1987, and efforts to clear his name continue to this day. That’s not exactly a spoiler; you could look it up.

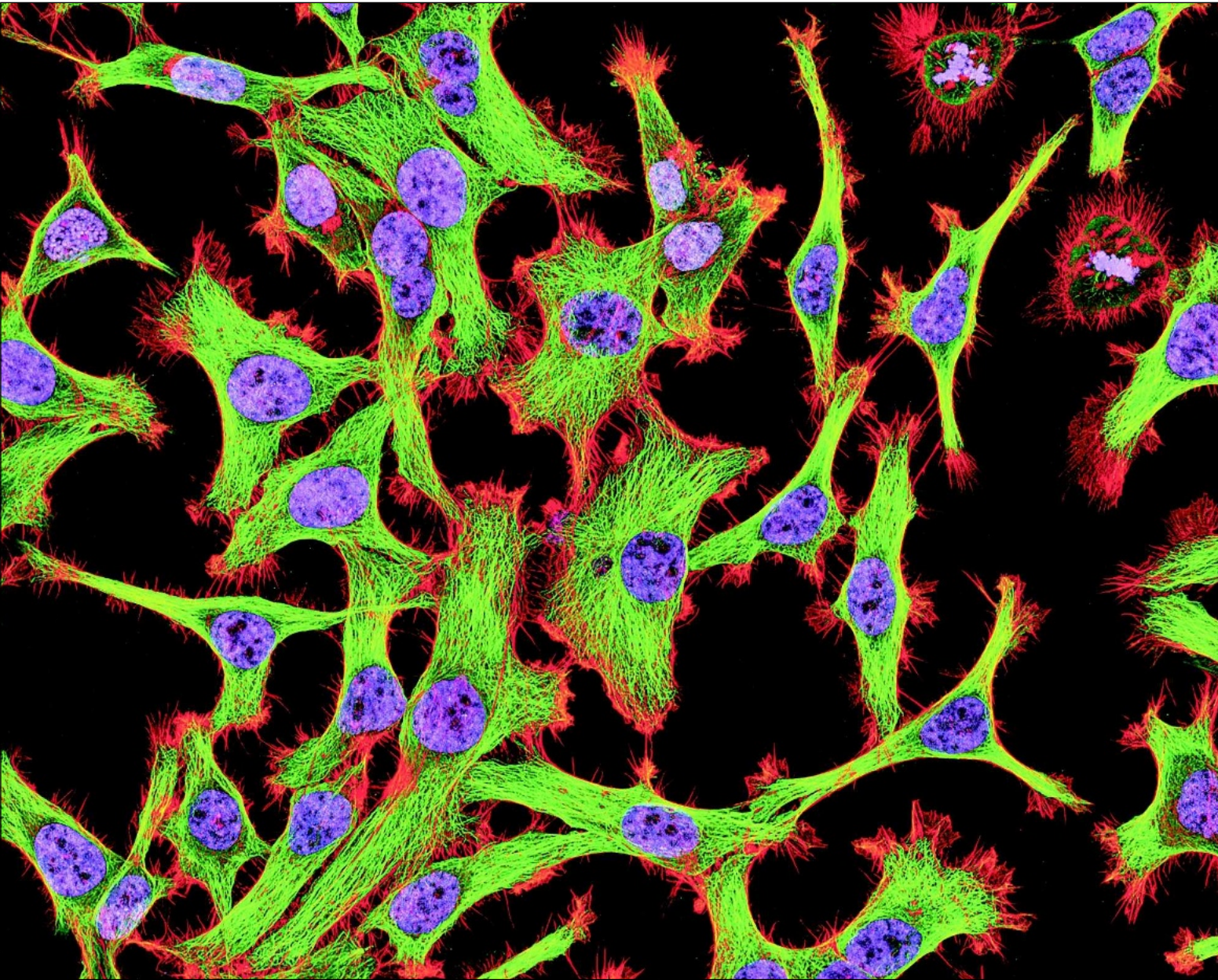
Peace writes with boatloads of style, and here employs a technique that allows him to unpack even more of it: The narrative spools out in the voices of a handful of characters, some of whom are testifying from the grave: There’s a survivor, the suspect himself, a reporter from a Tokyo newspaper, an American Army doctor, a detective. Not content to have one unreliable narrator, Peace gives us a bunch of them.

And it’s sometimes not clear. One character is some combination of soldier; gangster; businessman and politician. There is the “martyr-log” of a Soviet who is either dreaming or nuts, and parts of his chapter are lined through, as in a censored report to superiors. One voice is plainly insane, writing in plain text, caps and italics. One, “the man in the shrine,” keeps repeating “IN THE oCCULT CITY” — typed just like that for reasons I’m not smart enough to suss out. Several are frustrated at the authorities’ apparent attempts to keep the extent of the Japanese biological warfare program during the war, which is the looming back-story here, under wraps — specifically what went on in a “death factory” in Manchuria. Pretty much everybody is justifiably fearful, or paranoid, or both.

Peace’s plain and acknowledged template here is “Rashômon,” but his aim is not unlike Don DeLillo’s in “Libra” — that is, in a case where there may be no cold, objective reality, the best a reader can do is grope for his own truth through fiction.

See CITY, H7

SCIENCE



Tom Deerinck

Tissue samples taken from Henrietta Lacks’ tumor in 1951 came to be known as HeLa, an abbreviation of her name. Shown here stained with fluorescent

dye, the tissue has been reproduced in labs around the world and was used by scientist Harald zur Hausen, who won a Nobel Prize in 2008.



FAMILY PHOTO

Henrietta and David Lacks married and had five children. The family learned about HeLa cells from a 1976 article in Rolling Stone.

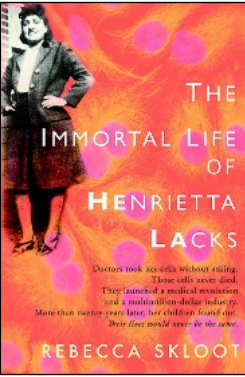
Cellular memories

A dying woman’s tissue samples helped solve medical mysteries, but her family was kept unaware for decades

By Colette Bancroft
ST. PETERSBURG TIMES

You might well owe your health — maybe even your life — to Henrietta Lacks. You probably never heard of her. Yet she contributed immeasurably to vaccines, drugs and other treatments for polio, influenza, hemophilia, Parkinson’s disease, HIV and many kinds of cancer. She helped scientists develop in vitro fertilization and cloning, map the human genome and study the effects of radiation from atomic bombs and in outer space.

And she never knew about any of it. Science journalist Rebecca Skloot’s riveting debut book, “The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks,” is the story of how a cell sample taken from a poor, black mother of five as she lay dying of cervical cancer in 1951 turned into one of the most versatile and widely used tools in modern medicine. It’s also the story of Lacks herself and how the family she left behind has been affected by her strange journey. And it raises important questions about medical ethics, particularly who owns — and potentially profits from — the tissues and fluids that doc-



The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks

Rebecca Skloot
Crown; \$26



Rebecca Skloot

See IMMORTAL, H7

Colette Bancroft is the book editor of the St. Petersburg Times.



Pablo Martinez Monsivais

Former Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson exhausted himself working to stave off financial collapse and ended up taking actions that contradicted his own free-market beliefs.

MEMOIR

Inside Paulson’s head, inside the financial crisis

Ex-Treasury secretary tells of rescue efforts and errors

By James Pressley
BLOOMBERG NEWS

Henry M. Paulson Jr. recalls dining with some of Wall Street’s most powerful bankers on June 26, 2007, not long before the credit bubble imploded.

“All were concerned with excessive risk taking in the markets and appalled by the erosion of underwriting standards,” he writes in his penetrating memoir, “On the Brink.” Yet they felt forced by competitive pressure to make loans they didn’t like, the former U.S. treasury secretary says.

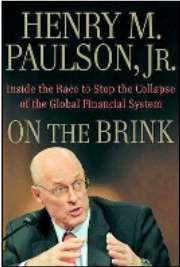
“Isn’t there something you can do to order us not to take all of these risks?” was the gist of a question posed by Charles Prince, the chief executive who was still dancing at Citigroup as

the bank bumbled toward disaster.

That comment encapsulates the bizarre tango that enveloped Paulson as he struggled along with Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke and New York Fed chief Timothy Geithner to save the free-market system from itself. Banks, hedge funds and other financial institutions were playing a game of chicken, the economic equivalent of the Cuban missile crisis. Paulson’s mission was to prevent mutually assured economic destruction.

No one can argue that Paulson, a former chief executive of Goldman Sachs, didn’t work hard enough. “On the Brink,” his day-by-day narrative, written with the help of former Institutional Investor editor Michael Carroll, reminds us of his punishing schedule. We see Paulson’s shiny-headed blur of nonstop phone calls, his late-night meetings, his tossing and turning at night (in boxers and T-shirt). In the

See BRINK, H6



On the Brink: Inside the Race to Stop the Collapse of the Global Financial System

Henry Paulson
Business Plus; \$28.99