

The Grand Jury. It sounds important and frightening. It is always secret. David Davidson has served on many Grand Juries. In his new novel, THE QUEST OF JUROR 19, the Grand Jury room has the physical aspect of a surgical theater and the psychological overtones of a nightmarish circus, with its parade of junkies, junkie cops, rapists, members of the vice squad, murderers and witnesses to the act.

For juror 19, Mark Robling, participation in the proceedings of the Grand Jury becomes an unexpected rite of passage into violence and the Grand Jury room turns into a vast super-market of crime. Mark Robling does not realize until he has spent some days sitting in judgment on the alleged crimes of others that he too wishes to commit a crime. As he watches and listens to the accused and their accusers, he begins to sort and sift the crimes, looking for the one that will work best for him. What makes this seemingly peaceful film-maker shop for a vicious crime of violence is the question on which the story turns.

And turn it does. David Davidson is a first-rate writer whose first novel, *The Steeper Cliff*, was much admired and read. He abandoned the novel for some years to work in television, where he garnered more than a dozen awards. Now he is back writing fiction and we are glad of it.

THE QUEST OF JUROR 19 begins very quietly, but soon develops intense, personal suspense. What adds to the chill factor is that juror 19 is not a freak or a nut. He is a thoughtful, participating citizen. Just like me. Or you.

L.L. Day
Editor-at-Large

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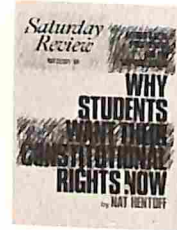
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by Nat Hentoff

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