

The Red Man's Revenge

by [David Solway](#) (May 2021)



Autostrasse im Taunus, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, 1916

A tractor guts her teeming yard, backhoes
grade terraced slopes in level tiers of earth
and combed-flat gravel beds. A dumpster squats
beside the flower brakes and glowers blue
murder at the hecatombs of asters,
the slumped hydrangea by the railed porch,
a clump of roses giving up the ghost.
Neil Gabriel, branch of a sundered
tree, has come to chop and scalp her maples,
stack logs in the back of his Dakota,
cords of lumber to be burned in season.
He clears her acre for the wood alone.
“Now how,” he grins, “does an Indian act
knowing a record winter’s coming on?
He grabs the white man’s woodpile for the cold.”
A shack will rise where maple trees once stood,
shelves nailed into pine slats for her tracts
and walls burnished to a coppery hue
to warm a newborn theologic urge.
According to the Gabriel account
our neighbour needs a place to contemplate
the *dies irae* of her tranced despairs
and builds her bunker up on barren ground:
“Marie Labelle’s a squaw that Jesus loves,
the bible’s driven her to brooding now,
to hack her garden and her woodlot down—

or book a Mohawk brave to do the job.
It needs an Injun to take up the slack.”
Again he grins, and guns his truck for home.

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David Solway's latest book is [Notes from a Derelict Culture](#), Black House Publishing, 2019, London. A CD of his original songs, [Partial to Cain](#), appeared in 2019.

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