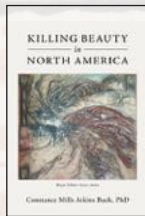


# Killing Beauty in North America

An essential read for those who truly understand the meaning of social change

Book Review by Yoly Zentella, PhD Independent Scholar



*Killing Beauty in North America*  
Conneaut Lake, PA: Page Publishing, 2022  
276 pages  
By Constance Mills Atkins Buck

Based on the author's doctoral dissertation, *Killing Beauty in North America* describes the deep connection between family, legacy, and events representative of the tragic historical beginnings of the United States (U.S.); the genocide of Indigenous peoples by Euro-Americans as they cleared the land for the settling of the American West. Based on this period of time, Buck uses the telling of horrific destruction of peoples and their culture as a way of opening a necessary conversation on personal introspection.

*Killing Beauty in North America* takes a difficult, personal exploration through the realm of Carl Jung, archetypes, shadow work, and psychoanalysis. This process is described through the author's phenomenology, taking the reader into her relationship with war trophies from the period of genocide, inherited by the author's family and directly connected to Buck's maternal great grandfather Anson Mills' military career. On her childhood relationship to trophies displayed on a wall of the family home, Buck states, "... I was the only member of my family who had adverse physical reactions around these beaded articles of clothing [war booty] and a strong feeling that they were linked to unfortunate events". (p.21).

Sensitivity to the world around her as a child, and an impressive knowledge of specific areas within the psychology discipline, form the foundation of such a complex volume as *Killing Beauty in North America*. Added to this knowledge base is the author's clinical psychology doctoral degree from Pacifica Graduate Institute, decades of extensive travel outside of the U.S., and teaching and healing experience. A synthesis of Buck's knowledge is evident in chapter discussions on archetypes, Jungian analysis, shadow work, phenomenology and personal introspection, and the role of transference in perception, all within the context of exploring a legacy of Euro-American colonization and genocide.

*Killing Beauty in North America* has appeal to an academic and advanced degree student audience in the discipline of psychology, more specifically in the areas of humanism and existentialism. The book also appeals to those interested in the psychodynamic, psychoanalytic process, and to psychoanalysts exploring the impact of colonial trauma on both descendants of

victims, and descendants of perpetrators. The chapters focusing on history, would be of interest to academics, students, and lay individuals. Yet, most important, the book attracts readers exploring the psychological impact of a universal colonial scheme regardless of geographical location, those willing to examine their souls as legacy holders and bystanders during any shameful period in history.

The book's content is arranged around two main ideas, Indigenous artifacts, war booty, possessed by the author's maternal great-grandfather Anson Mills, military commander during the latter 1800s, and, the psychology embedded in acts of colonization, genocide, victimization, and aggression intersecting with the personal process of coming to terms with a family legacy of complicity.

Arranged in 7 chapters, the volume interlaces various related themes. Chapters 1 to 5, present the 1876 extermination of an Indigenous village in the battle of Slim Buttes, South Dakota, by starving soldiers led by General Anson Mills. Food and booty were the objective; stolen artifacts were to be later displayed on a wall of the author's family home. There is a historical background of the period and a discussion of the psychological and social implications of colonization and related images influencing the human psyche. Discussed is the European discovery and perspectives of the New World, the idea of savage versus civilized, the European constructs of reality, and military government agendas facilitating the ethnic cleansing of Indigenous populations in the U.S. Also presented, is the shadow as cultural trauma and the concept of post traumatic stress, intertwined with a discussion on the historical relationship between beauty, creativity, perversion, and narcissism. Archetypes and Indigenous myth, such as the archetypal coyote are integrated into the material. Chapters 6 and 7, address areas such as the collective as a factor in the survival and destruction of culture, the role of memory in this relationship, the colonial implications of privilege, and counter-transference as a form of suffering



Photo credit: S.J. Morrow, 1876. 7th Cavalry Guidon found at Slim Buttes Source: [bit.ly/slim-buttles](https://bit.ly/slim-buttles)

The strength of the books lies in Buck's palpable passion for the topic, her skill in the integration of historical and psychological material, and her fearlessness in presenting areas that not many individuals are willing to engage, preferring to continually live in denial of personal or cultural complicity past or present. The photos of artifacts, central pieces of the book, add to the power of the author's intelligent and daring narrative. Perhaps the strongest strength is in the book's push to consider one's personal hidden fears in facing past and present implications in genocide.

This is a strongly recommended book to be read slowly and thoughtfully.

*BIO:* Yoly Zentella of Las Vegas, NM, a Chicana PhD researcher & writer focuses on El Norte's culture and it's attachment to and loss of land and place. She is also editor of *La Plática del Norte*.