

7-10-2012

# A Study of the Politics of Color in Lillian Hellman's Drama and Memoir Against Colorism -- Blackness, Redness, and Whiteness

Seung-hye Joo

*Indiana University of Pennsylvania*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://knowledge.library.iup.edu/etd>

---

## Recommended Citation

Joo, Seung-hye, "A Study of the Politics of Color in Lillian Hellman's Drama and Memoir Against Colorism -- Blackness, Redness, and Whiteness" (2012). *Theses and Dissertations (All)*. 780.

<http://knowledge.library.iup.edu/etd/780>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by Knowledge Repository @ IUP. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations (All) by an authorized administrator of Knowledge Repository @ IUP. For more information, please contact [cclouser@iup.edu](mailto:cclouser@iup.edu), [sara.parme@iup.edu](mailto:sara.parme@iup.edu).

STUDENT HAS RESTRICTED ACCESS TO FULL TEXT OF THE DISSERTATION.

ONLY COVER PAGES AND ABSTRACT ARE AVAILABLE AT THIS TIME

A STUDY OF THE POLITICS OF COLOR  
IN LILLIAN HELLMAN'S DRAMA AND MEMOIRS:  
AGAINST COLORISM - BLACKNESS, REDNESS, AND WHITENESS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research  
in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

Seung-hye Joo

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

May 2012

©2012 by Seung-hye Joo

All Rights Reserved

Indiana University of Pennsylvania  
School of Graduate Studies and Research  
Department of English

We hereby approve the dissertation of

Seung-hye Joo

Candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

---

Susan M. Comfort, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of English, Advisor

---

Ronald R. Emerick, Ph.D.  
Professor of English

---

David B. Downing, Ph.D.  
Professor of English

ACCEPTED

---

Timothy P. Mack, Ph.D.  
Dean  
School of Graduate Studies and Research

Title: A Study of the Politics of Color in Lillian  
Hellman's Drama and Memoir Against Colorism -  
Blackness, Redness, and Whiteness

Author: Seung-hye Joo

Dissertation Chair: Susan M. Comfort, Ph.D.

Dissertation Committee Members: Ronald R. Emerick, Ph.D.  
David B. Downing, Ph.D.

My intent for this study is to broaden an understanding of Lillian Hellman's written works and her life by dealing with Hellman's politics against an ideology of Colorism. Colorism constructs a world where people of color are otherized, alienated, theorized, and organized by the color white/whiteness over other colors/nonwhites. This study investigates how Hellman's sociopolitical conscience and responsibility are constructed in her works and how these beliefs are reflected in her written works and her life.

For this study, I analyze blackness, redness, and whiteness as a color-coded ideology hidden in a discourse of Colorism. I divide Lillian Hellman's selected plays and memoirs into three groups based upon the colors black, red, and white as a color-coded ideology of Colorism; first, *The Little Foxes* (1939), *Another Part of the Forest* (1947), and *An Unfinished Woman* (1969); second, *The Children's Hour*

(1934), *The North Star* (1943), and *Scoundrel Time* (1976); third, *Watch on the Rhine* (1941), *The Searching Wind* (1944), and "Julia" in *Pentimento*. I employ the first group to examine the ideology of the color black against the politics of hatred, otherizing different colors and Hellman's obsession with the color black. For the second group I investigate the ideology of the sociopolitical color red against the politics of conspiracy and fear and Hellman's obsession with the color red related to the Red Scare. The third group is arranged to study the people of honor and bravery against the ideology of whiteness.

I relate color and race, color and ideology, and finally race and ideology in a discourse on the oppressive system of Colorism in a more global approach to Colorism. I reconceptualize the meaning of the term Colorism as an ideology that structures patriarchal gender, race, and political affiliation. The ideology also applies negative associations to communists and leftists by "coloring" them red. Analysis of sociopolitical and cultural color ideology as a reoccurring theme in history reveals the power of the white dominant culture and ideology as manifested in Colorism. It discloses economic inequality, social injustice, and "pigmentocracy" hinged on Colorism; whether racialized, symbolized, religious, gendered, or ideological.