

Playing the Race Card

MELODRAMAS OF BLACK AND WHITE FROM
UNCLE TOM TO O.J. SIMPSON

Linda Williams

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS

PRINCETON AND OXFORD

Contents

Illustrations	ix
Preface	xiii
Acknowledgments	xvii
Introduction	Playing the Race Card 3
Chapter One	The American Melodramatic Mode 10
Chapter Two	"A Wonderful, 'Leaping' Fish": Varieties of <i>Uncle Tom</i> 45
Chapter Three	Anti-Tom and <i>The Birth of a Nation</i> 96
Chapter Four	Posing as Black, Passing as White: The Melos of Black and White Melodrama in the Jazz Age 136
Chapter Five	Rewriting the Plantation Legend: Scarlett "Totes a Weary Load" 187
Chapter Six	Home Sweet Africa: Alex Haley's and TV's <i>Roots</i> 220
Chapter Seven	Trials of Black and White: <i>California v. Powell</i> and <i>The People v. Orenthal James Simpson</i> 252
Conclusion	Our Melodramatic Racial Fix 296
Notes	311
Bibliography	369
Index	385