Stowell-Kaplan

Staging Detection

From Hawkshaw to Holmes

Staging Detection reveals how the new figure of the stage detective emerged in nineteenth-century Britain. The first book to explore the productive intersections between detection and performance across a range of Victorian plays, Staging Detection foregrounds the role of the stage detective in shaping important theatrical modes of the period, from popular melodrama to society comedy. Beginning in 1863 with Tom Taylor's blockbuster play, The Ticket-of-Leave Man, the book criss-crosses London following the earliest performances of stage detectives. Centring the work of playwrights, novelists, critics and actors, from Sarah Lane and Horace Wigan to Wilkie Collins and Oscar Wilde, Staging Detection sheds new light on Victorian acting styles, furthers our understanding of melodrama, and resituates the famous Wildean dandy as a successor to the stage detective. Drawing on histories of masculinity and gender performance as well as developing scientific theory and nineteenth-century visual culture, Staging Detection shows how the earliest stage portrayals of the detective shaped broader Victorian debates concerning fraud, omniscience and earned authority. This book will be of great interest to students and scholars of theatre history, Victorian literature and popular culture – as well as anyone with an interest in the figure of the detective.

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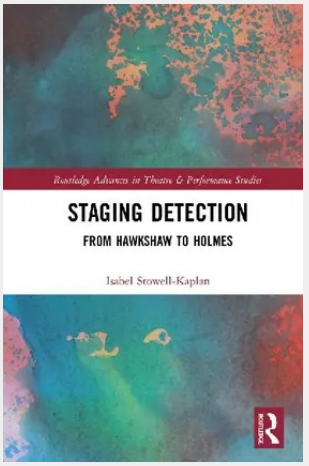

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