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Reviews

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THE PALE OF WORDS: REFLECTIONS ON THE HUMANITIES AND PERFORMANCE (HARDBACK)

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Yale University Press, United States, 1998. Hardback. Book Condition: New. 215 x 147 mm. Language: English . Brand New Book. In this provocative book, James Anderson Winn enters the debate about the perilous state of humanities education today. Winn, founding director of a leading humanities institute, contends that the disciplines we call the humanities have identified themselves excessively with the written word. He exposes the hostility and fear with which writers and philosophers throughout Western history have regarded forms of expression not couched in words, despite the fact that much of what humanists study originates in performance. Winn's brilliant and engaging readings of such figures as Plato, Augustine, Spenser, Milton, Dryden, Rousseau, and Kant underscore the long-standing Western prejudice against music and the similarly stubborn prejudices against theatrical display and the visual arts. The author then asks how the turn toward theory might help us reconsider the troubled relations between the humanities and performance; he discovers a bias toward the linguistic model deeply embedded even in the works of theorists who claim to be undermining the authority of language. Finding hope for a more inclusive view of performance in the thought of Roland Barthes and others, Winn concludes with pragmatic advice for the modern university and a proposal for humanities scholars and performers to form a new alliance.



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