

**Athena Athanasiou**

**Whither the *demos* of democracy? The political performativity of "the people"**

The paper asks what it is that mobilizes radical social imagination in times of neoliberal governmentality. This "break" with the logics and logistics of crisis inscribes an openness-to-come, and constantly pushes toward the not-yet-here, beyond the neoliberal order of accumulating capital and poverty and against the recurring fascisms and racisms. My purpose is to unravel the performative qualities of such critical contestation and action at the heart of loss (loss of public education and health, loss of work, loss of housing, loss of rights, loss of dignity, loss of democracy): in other words, the emergent processes by which embodied subjects, simultaneously produced and foreclosed via multiple regulatory schemas, return to the space of their erasure and in varied contexts of unevenly distributed affectability. I seek to attend to the plurality, undecidability, and decentredness of "the people" as an event of political performativity: as a trans-subjective modality of political agonism, which might undo the established power/ knowledge matrices regulating which - and how - bodies are made to appear, endure, matter, and act as "we".