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### **Performative Democracy Revisited**

Performative Democracy, a particular dimension of political life that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s in non-democratic contexts, notably in East & Central Europe, led to the dismantling of the Iron Curtain and instigated democratic transformations in the region. In one of my earlier books, *Performative Democracy* (2009, Paradigm), I explored a potential in political life that easily escapes theorists: the indigenously inspired enacting of democracy by citizens. At the core of performative democracy is the constitution, however embryonic, of a free public space, and its gradual cultivation and expansion, where one can speak with and listen to others. I discussed the practices that preceded the events of 1989, seeking to identify the conditions for performative politics in public life. The examples of performativity are drawn from Polish experimental student theatre, "Solidarity" gatherings, Round Table negotiations, and the post-1989 efforts of feminist groups and women artists to defend the recently won right to influence public discourse. Now, as we approach the 30th anniversary of the 1989 revolutions -- and with a disturbing sense that something went wrong with our precious square of freedom that once facilitated the dismantling of authoritarian regimes -- it is important to revisit the phenomenon of performative democracy. How is it that democracy is making such a U-turn, and that we are now stunned as we watch its massive reversal? What are the social factors that have facilitated the recent and striking emergence of a retreat, or transition, FROM democracy?