

# ***Setting the Scene<sup>1</sup>***

Malin Arnell

Before all reciprocity in the face of the other, I am responsible.

Subjectivity is not a matter of individuality but a relation of responsibility to the other or other materializations.

“We” are not the only active beings that cut things together and apart.

All real living is meeting. And each meeting matter.  
Intentionality cannot be taken for granted.

What does “material” mean?  
How does matter make itself felt?  
Not only that it matters, but also how it matters and for whom.

Matter is neither fixed or given nor mere end result of different processes.  
Matter is produced and productive, generated and generative.  
Matter is not immutable or passive.  
Matter is always already an ongoing historicity.  
Matter is not a linguistic construction.  
Matter is a dynamic intra-active becoming.  
Matter is regularly created and destroyed.

Matter(ing) is a dynamic articulation or configuration of the world.  
Mattering and its possibilities and impossibilities for justice are integral parts of universe in its becoming.

Mattering is an invitation to live justly written in the very matter of being.

The yearning for justice, a yearning larger than any individuals or set of individuals, is about our connections and responsibilities to one another.

We have to be attentive to the difference that matter.

In an important sense, it matters to the world how the world come to matter.  
How reality is understood matters.

Language has been granted too much power.

The proof is in the hearing.

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<sup>1</sup> This text is composed by Malin Arnell from the writing of Karen Barad in the book *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (2007) for the 2 hour performance “Setting the Scene” at Danspace in New York, December 5th 2014. Presented as part of Movement Research Festival Fall 2014: M A T T E R I N G. The reading of the text in the action was improvised. Some parts was read repeatedly, and other parts was not read at all. The sound was recorded live during the action by KOFF / Johanna Rosenqvist and looped back in to the soundscape.

Ethics is about mattering, about taking account of the entangled materializations of which we are part, including new configurations, new subjectivities, new possibilities.

Even the smallest cut matter.

Accountability and responsibility must be thought of in terms of what matters and what is excluded from mattering.

Accountability requires much more attentiveness to existing power asymmetries. This have to do with responsibility and accountability for the entanglements "we" help enact and what kind of commitments to "ourselves" and who "we" may become.

Neither the past nor the future is ever closed.

Knowing requires differential accountability to what matters and is excluded from mattering.

Knowing is a distributed practice that includes the larger material arrangements.

Knowing is a specific engagement in the world where part of the world becomes differentially intelligible to another part of the world.

Knowing is a direct material engagement, it's ongoing articulations.

Bodies are not situated in the world: they are part of the world.  
Bodies are not objects with inherent boundaries and properties.

Boundaries and properties.  
Boundaries and properties.

Boundaries and properties

Some are always excluded.

It is not about any difference but about which difference matters.  
Some bodies are perceived as "space invaders"

Can we trust our eyes?

Realness does not necessarily imply "thingness": what's real may not be an essence, an entity, or an independently existing object with inherent attributes.

"Seeing" takes a good deal of practice.

"Position" is neither an absolute nor an a priori determinate feature of space.  
There is no absolute inside or absolute outside. There is only exteriority within.

The issue is not simply a matter of inclusion.

Our responsibilities not only for what we know but for what may come to be.

Objectivity is a matter of accountability for what materializes, for what comes to be.

It matters which cuts are enacted: different cuts enact different materialized becomings.

Do “not simply intervene, enact the between.”

We are switching back and forth between imaging and manipulation mode.

Knowing is a capacity that is the exclusive birthright of the human.

Knowing is part of being.

Knowing is a physical practice of engagement.

“Humans” are part of the world-body space in its dynamic structurations.

Objectivity is a matter of accountability to mark on bodies.

Objectivity, then, is about being accountable and responsible to what is real.

Discursive practices are not placeholders for human concepts but specific material articulations of the world.

Discursive practices are not speech acts. Discourse is not synonym for language.

Discursive practices are the material condition for making meaning.

Intelligibility is not an inherent characteristic of humans but a feature of the world in its differential becomings.

The world articulates itself differently.

Discursive practices are boundary-making practices that have no finality in the ongoing dynamics of agential intra-activity.

We are part of nature that we seek to understand.

We are intimately connected.

Perhaps what we need is a politics of possibilities.

Frictions of distance.

Spatiality is always an exclusionary process.

What are the artist obligations to history?

Ethics of responsibility and accountability not only for what we know, how we know, and what we do but, in part, for what exists.

Material condition matters. (Engaging in everyday acts of resistance.)

Bodies do not simply take their place in the world.

Why should our bodies end at the skin?  
There are no intrinsic boundaries.  
Boundaries do not sit still.

What is cause and what is effect?

Agency never ends; it can never “run out”  
Agency is not aligned with human intentionality or subjectivity.  
Agency is not foreclosed.  
Agency is an enactment, not something that someone or something has.  
Agency and causality are not on-off affairs.  
Agency is about the possibilities for changing the configurations of spacetime-matter relations.  
Agency is not about a choice.  
Agency is not an attribute but the ongoing reconfigurations of the world.

Space is an agent of change.  
Dynamics are about change.

The world unfolds without a hitch.

Power is not restricted to the domain of the social but is rethought in terms of its materializing potential.

We know this story well, it’s written in our bones, in many ways we inhabit it and it inhabits us.

I am accountable.

“The world kicks back”  
A fact that we cannot afford to ignore.

Small details can make profound differences.

- We cannot have it both ways at once.
- Things are disturbed when we measure them.
- The concept of position cannot be taken for granted

Memory does not reside in the folds of individual brains;  
There is no such line.

An active radius of touch.  
Opening up for the possibilities for change.