



Parasites and Tupilaks

ART AND SCIENCE MONSTERS



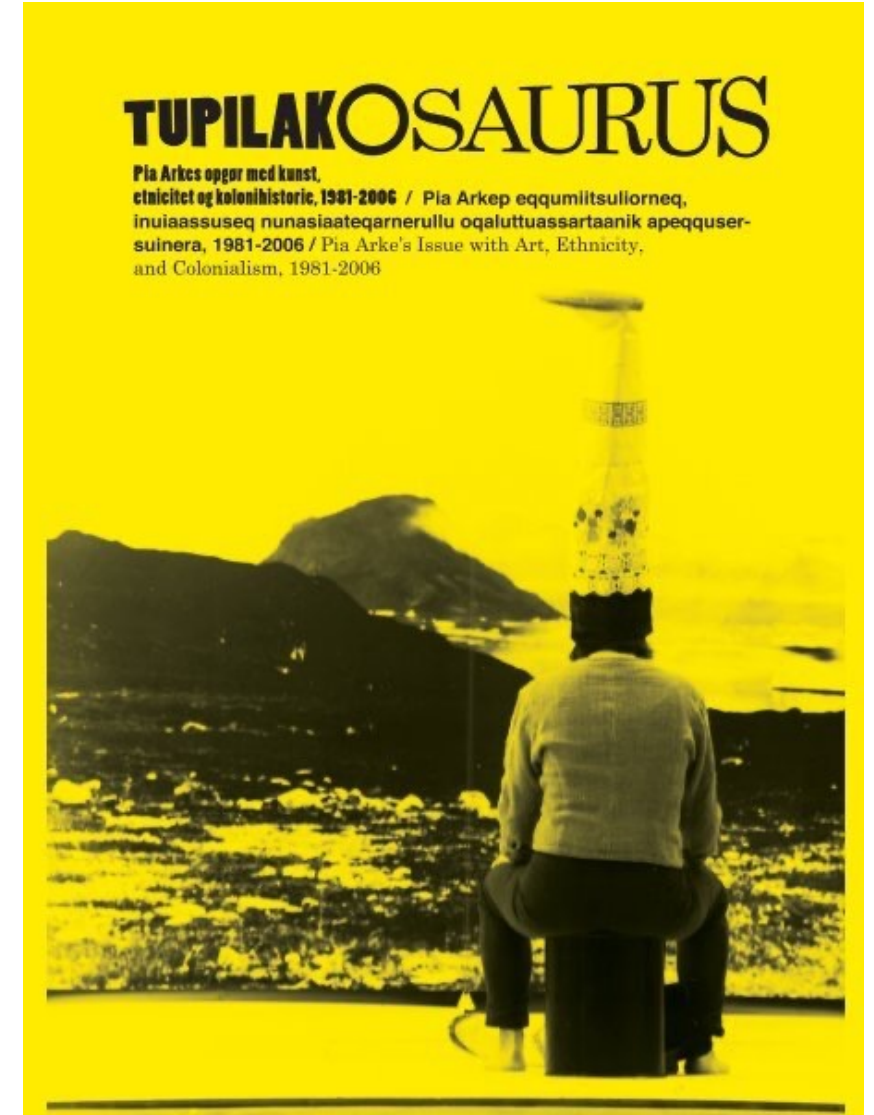
The Parasite – according to Michel Serres

- The term parasite refers to three very different ‘systems’, which however share the common principle of interference:
- **Biological** – a parasite is an organism that lives in a body or under the skin. It harms the host by draining energy (i.e., blood or nutrients) without providing any benefits. In the seventeenth century, “parasite” was likely used to refer to flora exclusively (e.g., mistletoe is a common form of parasitic plant).
- **Social** – a so-called social parasite is a person who drains resources from a society without giving anything in return. Originally, *parasitos* referred to a specific character trope in Greek drama, and the word “parasite” was later co-opted by biologists.
- **Informational** – *le parasite* is “static” or “noise” in a system. For Serres, an organized system exists in opposition to noise.

Parasite: A
productive
force... being
excluded in
order for the
system to
function

“In each case, the parasite interferes in, and ultimately upsets, some existing set of relations and pattern of movement. It compels us either to expel it, or to readjust our internal workings so that we can accommodate the needs of the parasite. Noise, in other words, is to communication what a virus is to an organism, or a scapegoat is to a community. **It is not simply an obstacle, but rather a productive force around the exclusion of which the system is organized.**” Serres

Tupilakosaurus: An Interesting Study about the Triassic Myth of Kap Stosch (1999)



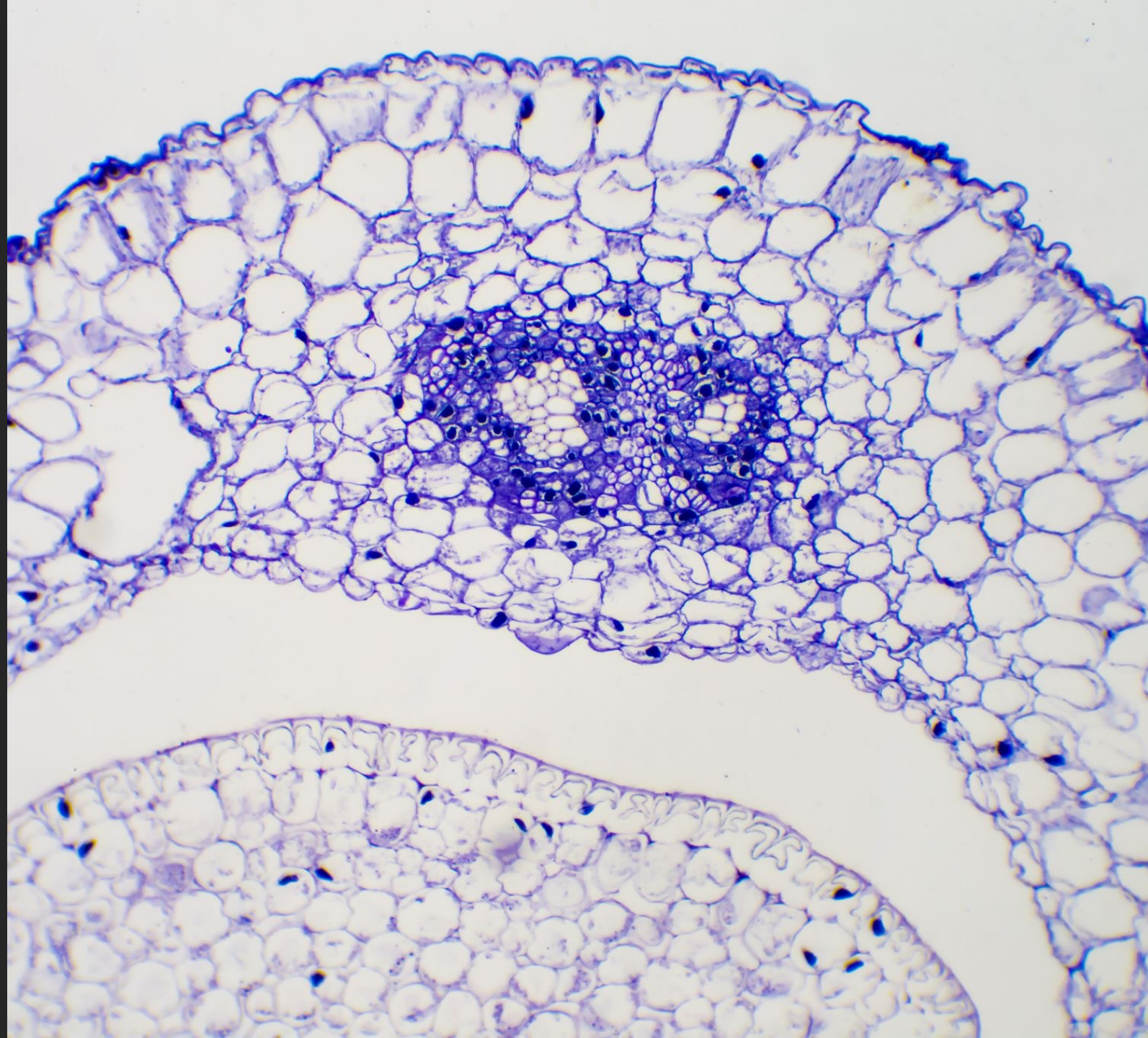
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INTERFERING
WITH

SYSTEMS OF
EXCLUSION

Bateson – Organism plus environment

Bateson argues that 'the unit of survival is organism plus environment. We are learning by bitter experience that the organism which destroys its environment destroys itself'



Guattari – Rooted Parasites : An Ecology of Bad Ideas

There is an ecology of bad ideas, iust as there is an ecology of weeds, and it is characteristic of the system that basic error propagates itself. It branches out like a rooted parasite through the tissues of life, and everything gets into a rather peculiar mess. When you narrow down your epistemology and act on the premise 'What interests me is me, or my organization, or my species,' you chop off consideration of other loops of the loop structure.

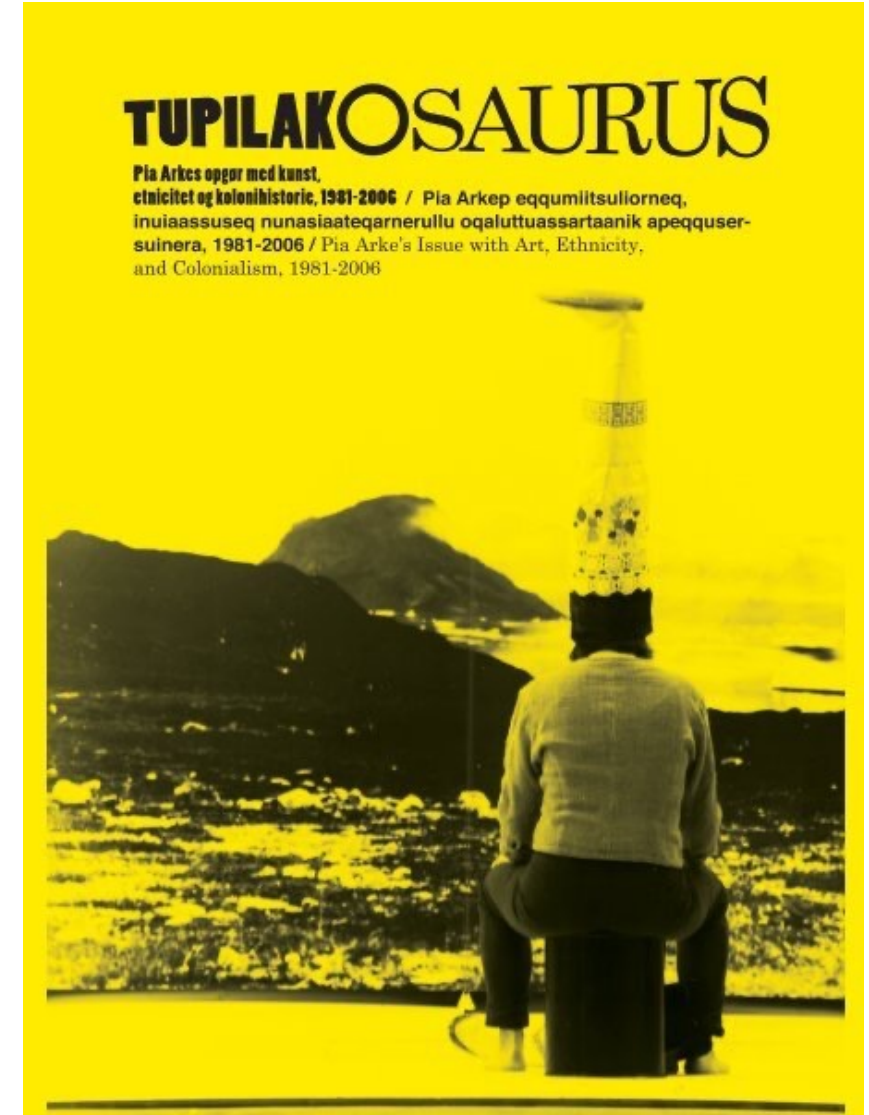




Microparasites and Macroparasites – between lab and society (science and art)

... displacement of microparasites allows the macroparasites - here the farmers - to grow fatter by feeding off healthier cattle. By the same token all the macroparasitic chain of tax collectors, veterinarians, administrators and landlords prosper by feeding off the richer farmers (Serres, 1980). One last element is pushed out - the anthrax bacillus. Wherever the veterinarian comes the small parasite has to go. In this succession of displacements, one can say here the laboratory is and where the society is.

Tupilakosaurus: An Interesting Study about the Triassic Myth of Kap Stosch (1999)



Everything un- aesthetic about aesthetics

The ethnic condition is ironic, indeed: on the one hand, by our own example, we are a necessary, external contribution to the European self-perception; on the other hand, due exactly to this self-perception, we are not quite matching the European superiority, and must generally remain a sadly outdistanced supplement, an unbearable reminder of the ethnic, the political, the economic – in short, of everything un-aesthetic about aesthetics.

- Pia Arke : Ethno-Aesthetics (1996)

“We, the ethnic, of course can contribute with a critique coming from without; it even seems the right place from which to criticize the claim to self-sufficiency. Yet, it is conditioned by the existence of such a place outside, and we have to presuppose that such a place exists. We exist, we can exist, there necessarily has to be something beyond Europe.”

PIA ARKE (1995)