



*"Excellence in Graduate Polymer Research" symposium*  
*ACS Polymer Chemistry Division (POLY)*

# *Versatile Dynamic Polymers from Thioctic Acid*

Qi ZHANG

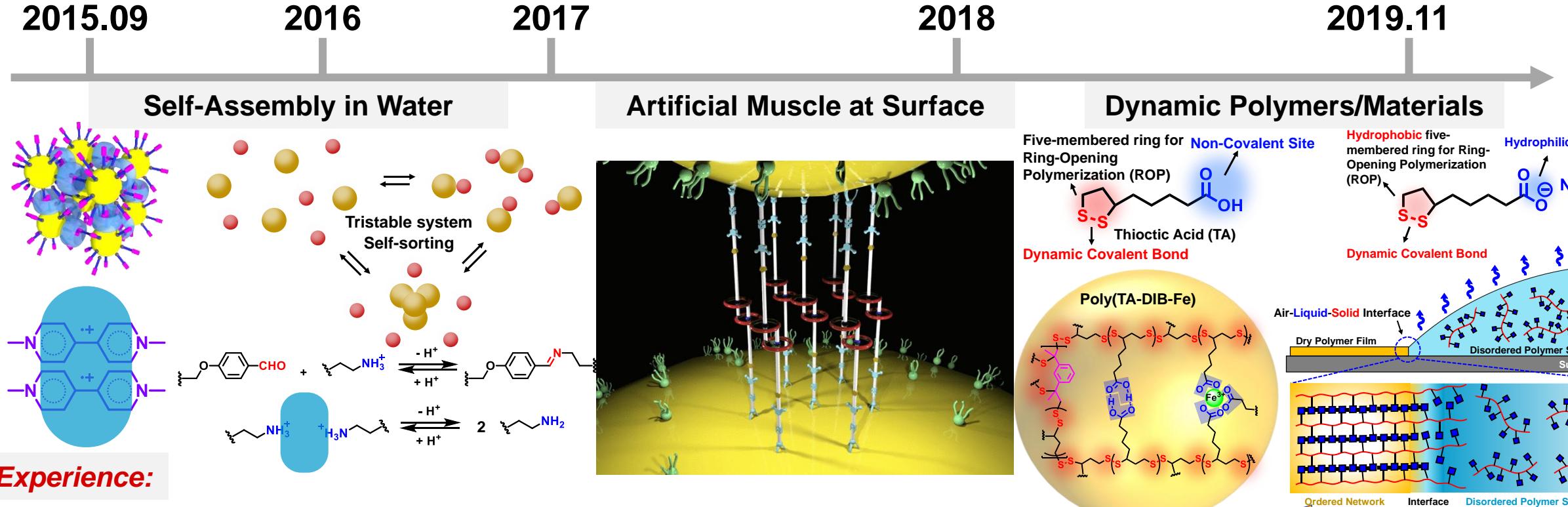
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2020/03/24

# PhD Research in ECUST

Find me at: [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Qi\\_Zhang99](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Qi_Zhang99)  
<https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=ESdH8fsAAAAJ&hl=zh-CN>



## Experience:

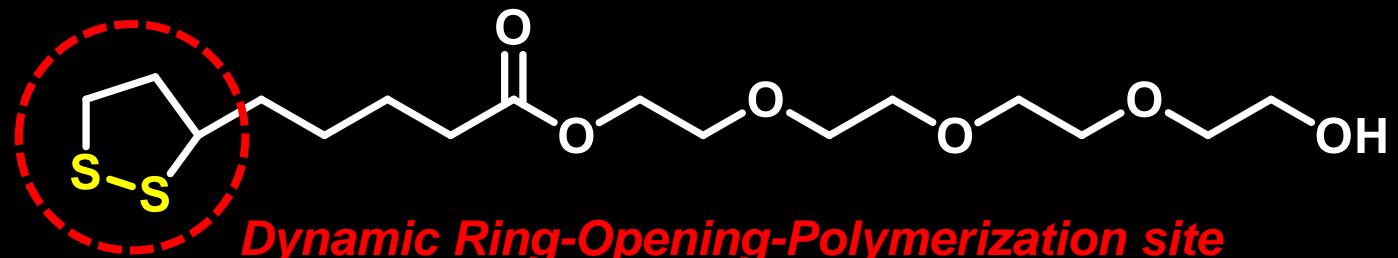
- Host-guest chemistry
- NPs ( $TiO_2$ , Au): Synthesis & Modification
- Photochemistry of semiconductors
- Viologen-based radical chemistry

- Single-particle analysis
- Surface modification
- Rotaxanes (MIMs)
- Plasma resonance

- Self-healing elastomers
- Adhesives
- Material characterization
- Continue to study in RUG...
- Supramolecular polymers

# *The Beginning of The Story*

*A very interesting surprise...*



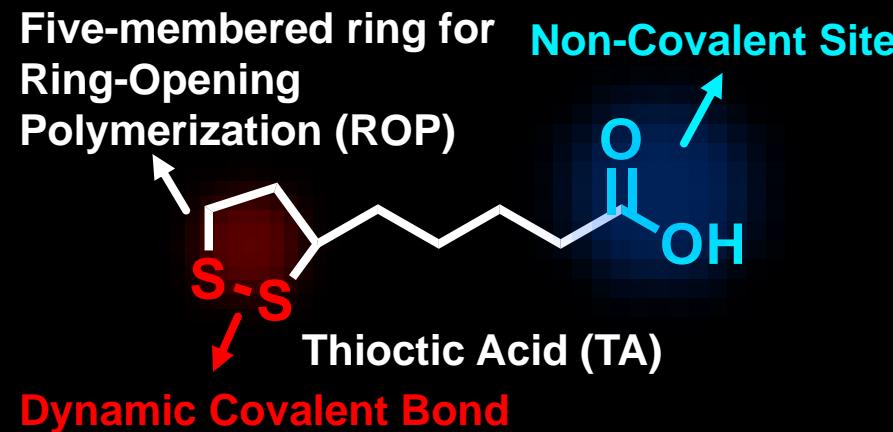
*The compounds with S-S-containing five-membered ring  
are very easy to become a gel/polymer automatically.*



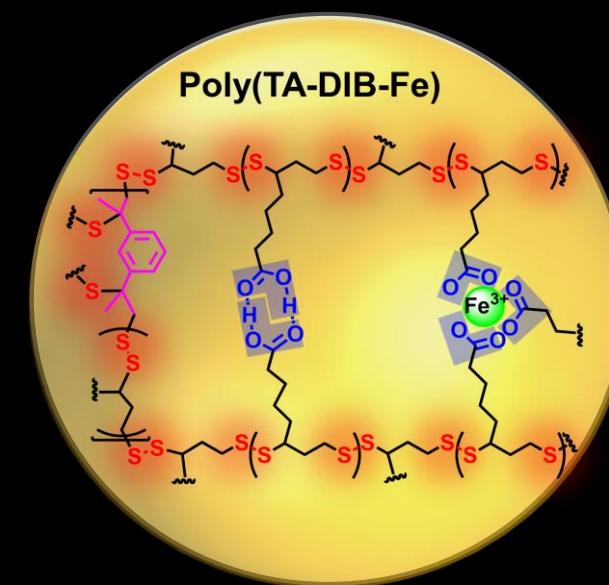
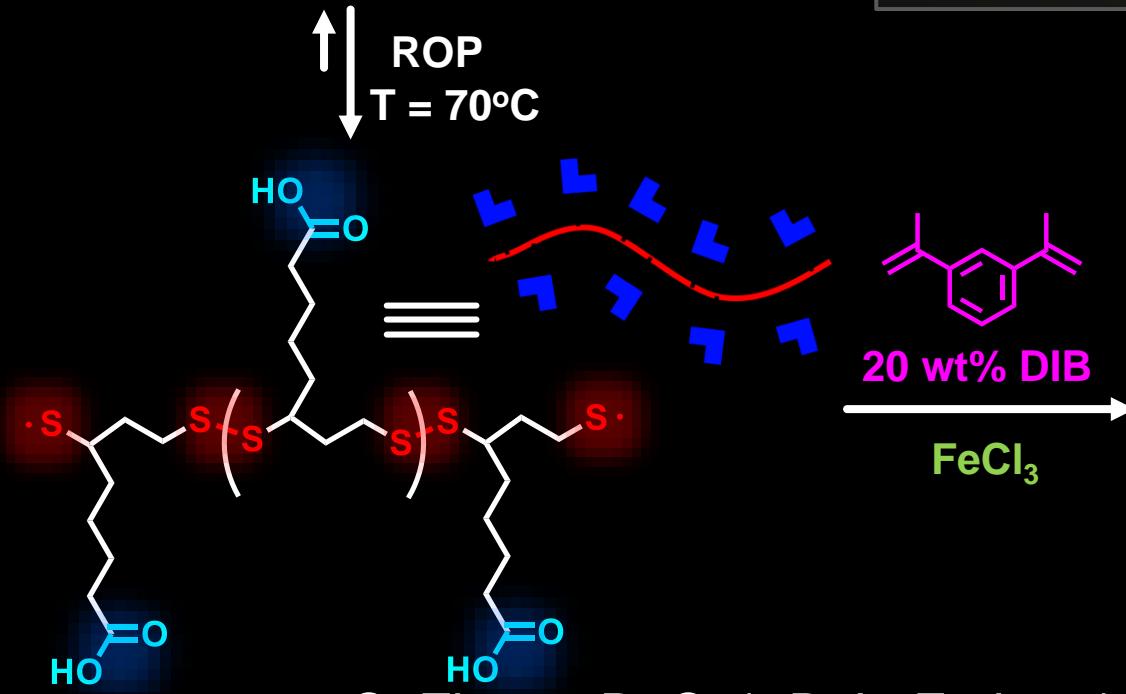
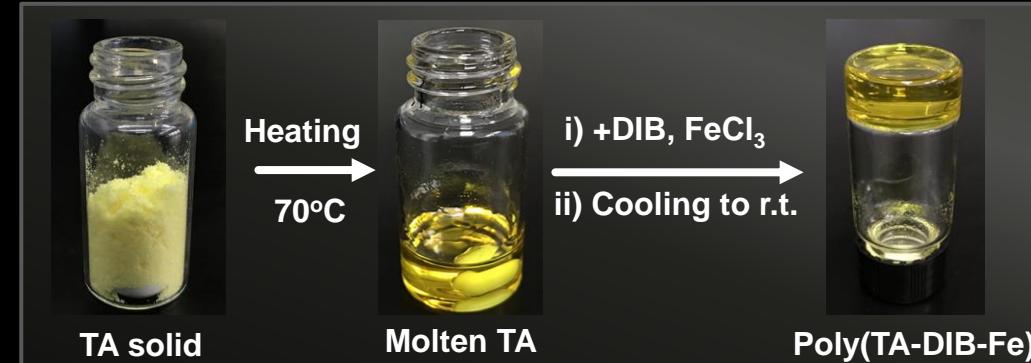
*Why don't we use it as the feedstock for polymers?*



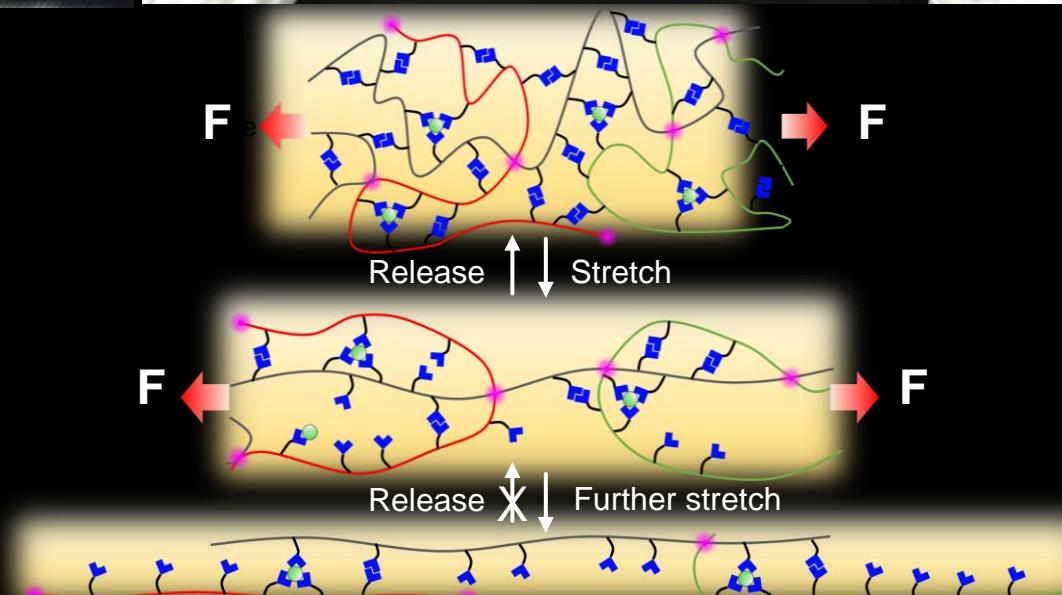
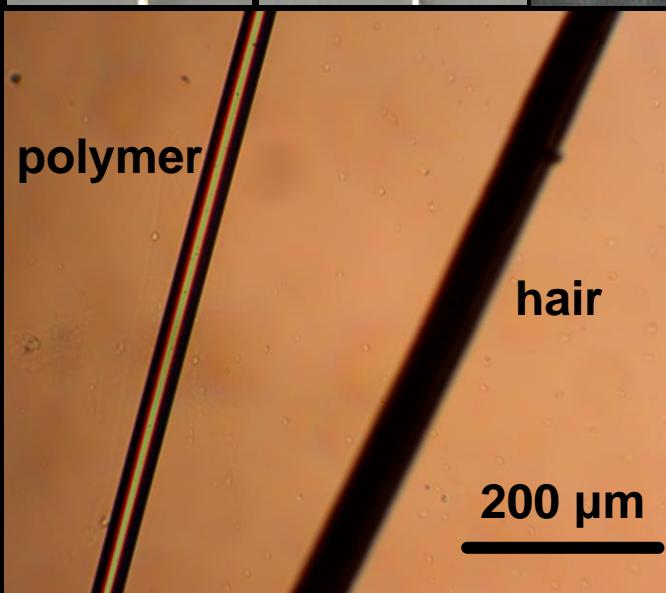
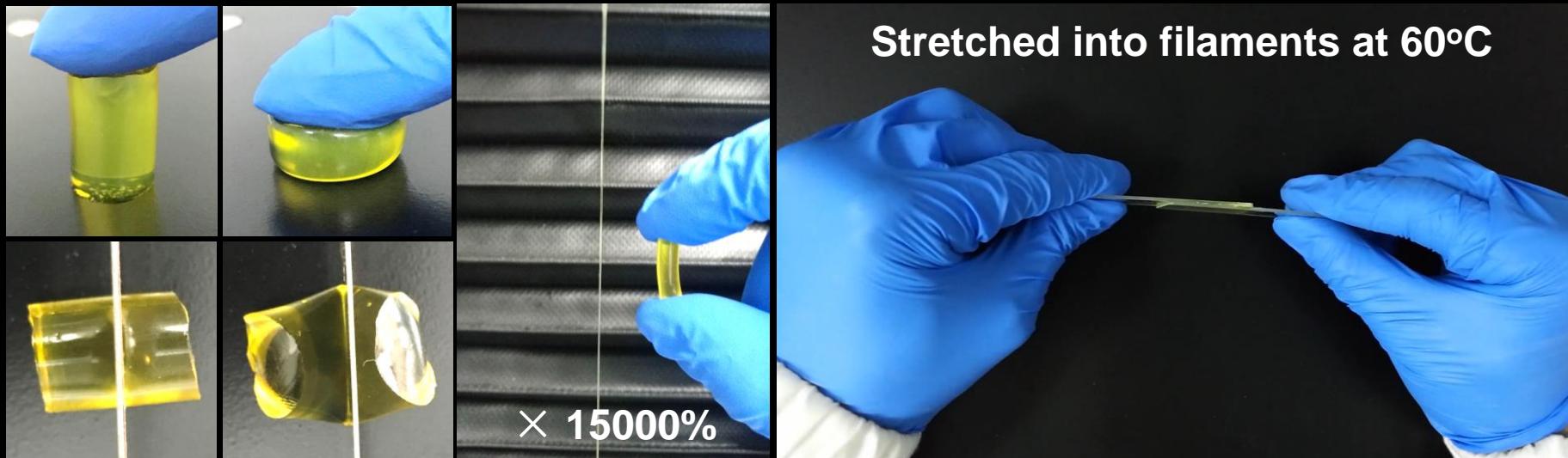
# One-step: from natural small molecules to polymers



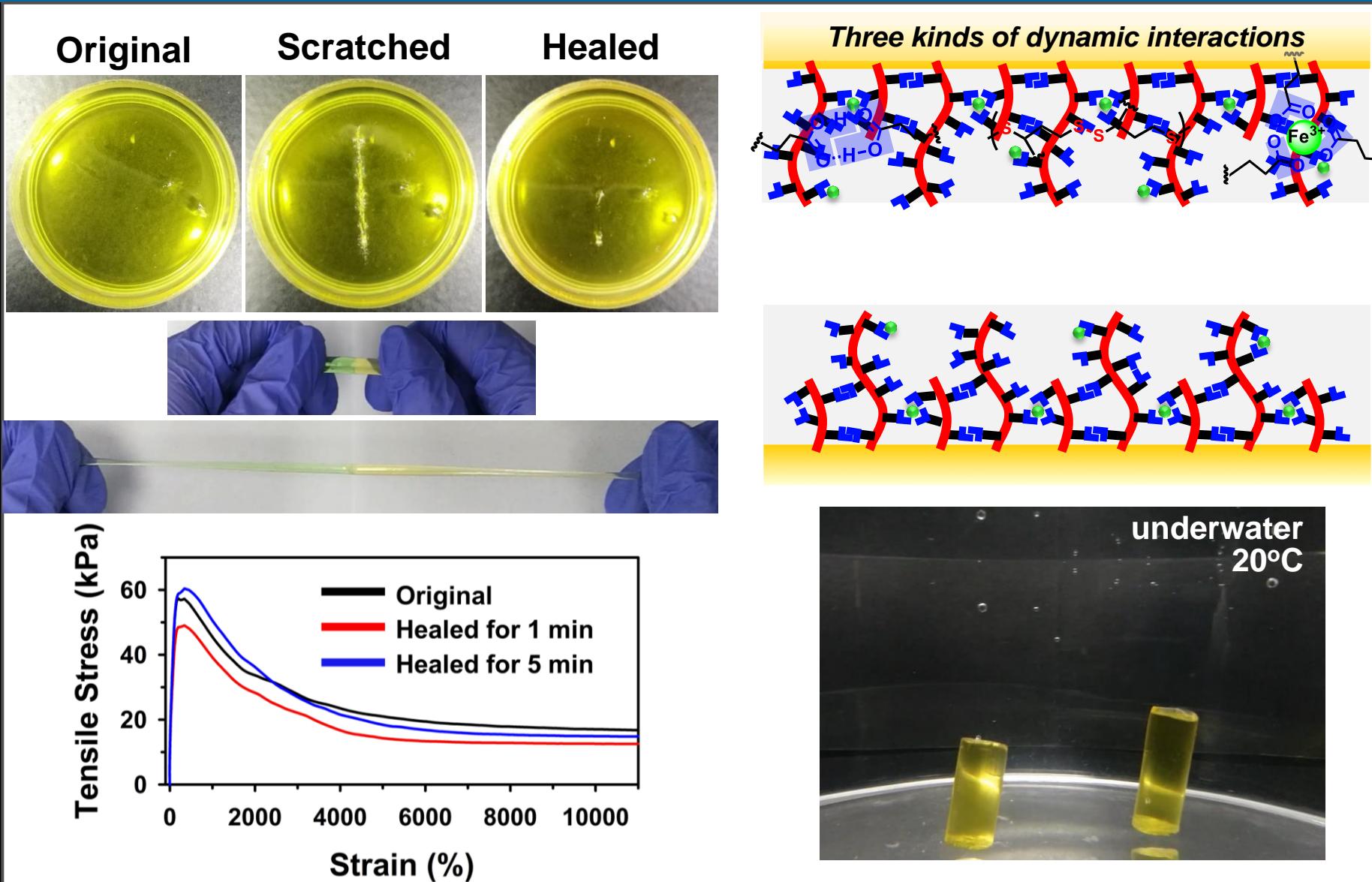
## Simple Preparation Method



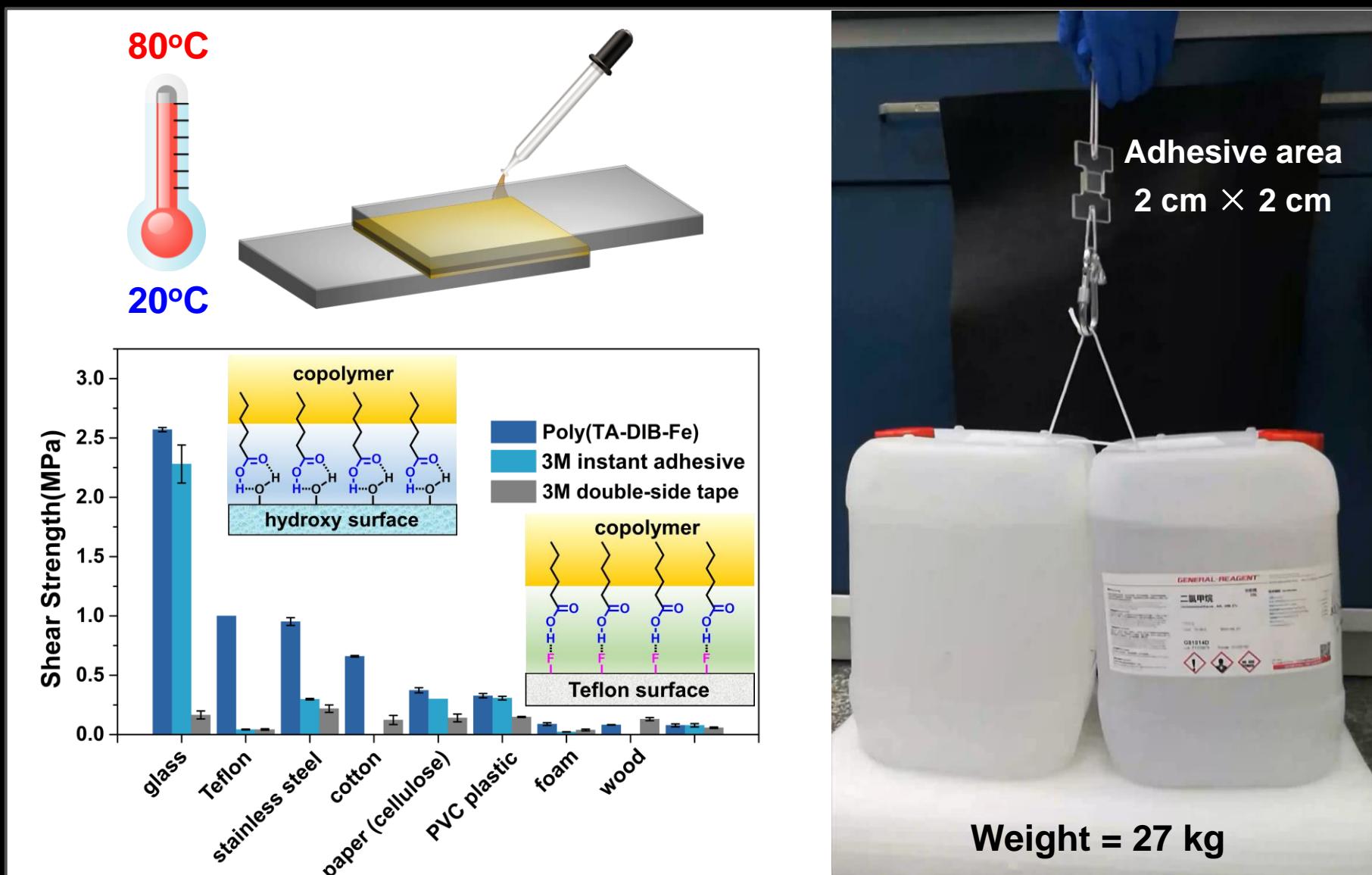
# High Stretchability



# *Self-healing ability*



# High Adhesive Strength



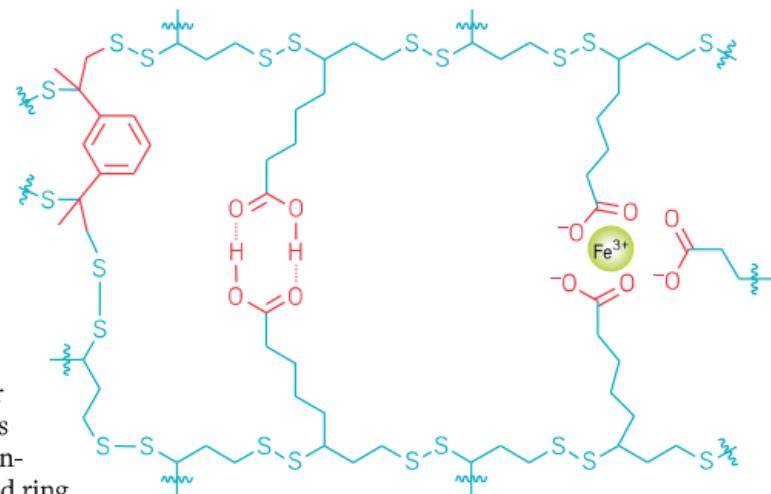
# Summary

## MATERIALS

### Easy-to-make polymer stretches, sticks, self-heals

A few commercially available reagents and a little heat are all that's needed to make a polymeric material that's easily processed, highly stretchable, self-healing, and sticky, according to a study (*Sci. Adv.* 2018, DOI: 10.1126/sciadv.aat8192). The polymer may prove useful in producing adhesives, self-healing materials, and wearable devices. To make the compound, researchers at East

China University of Science & Technology, including Da-Hui Qu, Yi-Tao Long, and chemistry Nobel laureate Ben L. Feringa, heated thioctic acid (TA), a coenzyme involved in animal metabolism, to 70 °C. The mild heat melts the organosulfur compound and triggers polymerization by opening TA's five-membered ring at the site of a S–S bond. Cooling leads to poly(TA), a transparent



solid cross-linked through carboxylic acid hydrogen bonds. But poly(TA) is metastable. So the researchers added diisopropenylbenzene (DIB) and ferric chloride to molten TA. Those reagents stabilize the product, poly(TA-DIB-Fe), by cross-linking it in three different ways (shown)—via hydrogen bonds, covalent bonds with DIB, and iron-carboxylate coordinative bonds. The polymer's knack for repeatedly making and breaking three types of bonds endows it with many of its properties, such as the ability to be stretched to 150 times its original length without breaking.—MITCH JACOBY



ACS  
Chemistry for Life®

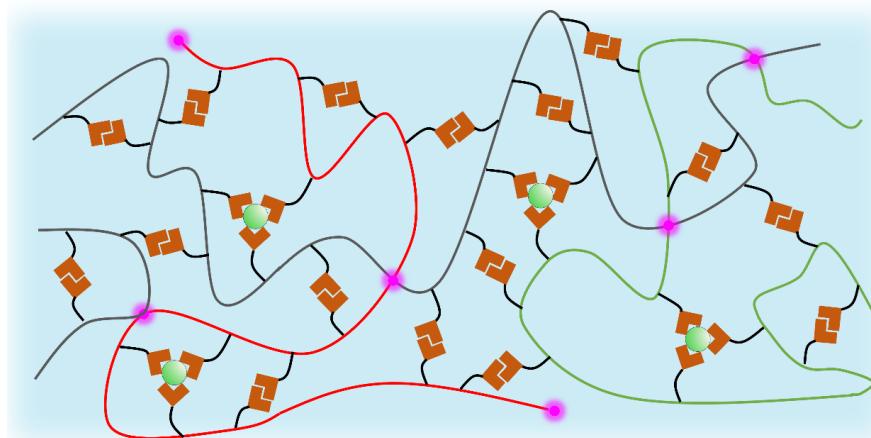
c&en  
CHEMICAL & ENGINEERING NEWS

**A few commercially available reagents and a little heat are all that's needed to make a polymeric material that's easily processed, highly stretchable, self-healing, and sticky, according to a study (*Sci. Adv.* 2018, DOI: 10.1126/sciadv.aat8192). The polymer may prove useful in producing adhesives, self-healing materials, and wearable devices...**

Highlighted in *C&EN*, 2018, 96 (31)

# Extended Research: How to *toughen* the polymer?

Low-density iron-carboxylate complexes

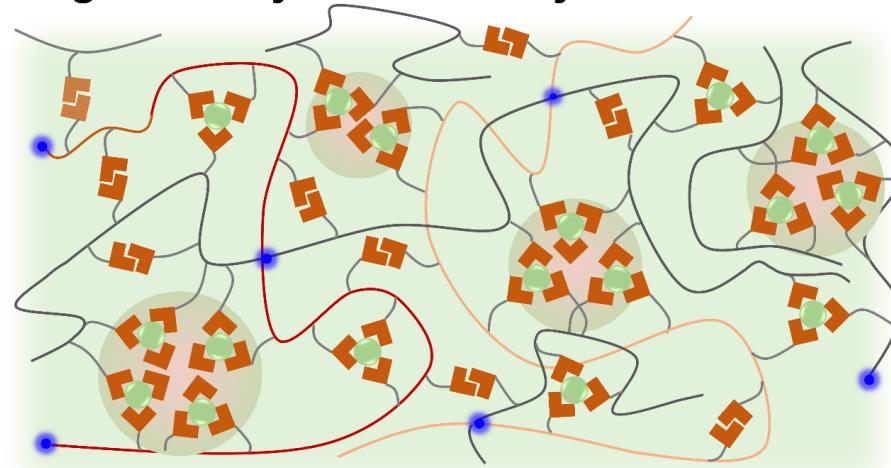


Soft Supramolecular Network  
(81 KPa of Young's moduli in previous work)

× 63 times

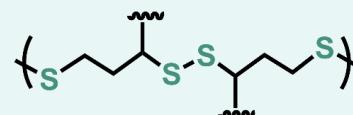
Tough Supramolecular Network  
(5.1 MPa of Young's moduli in this work)

High-density iron-carboxylate clusters



Four kinds of dynamic combinations in single network (this work)

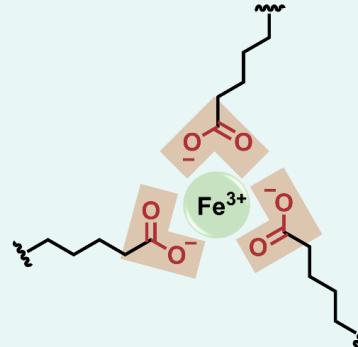
Dynamic covalent mainchain



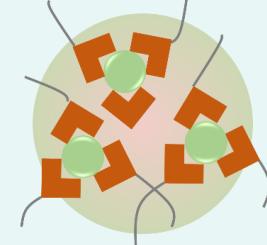
Hydrogen bond



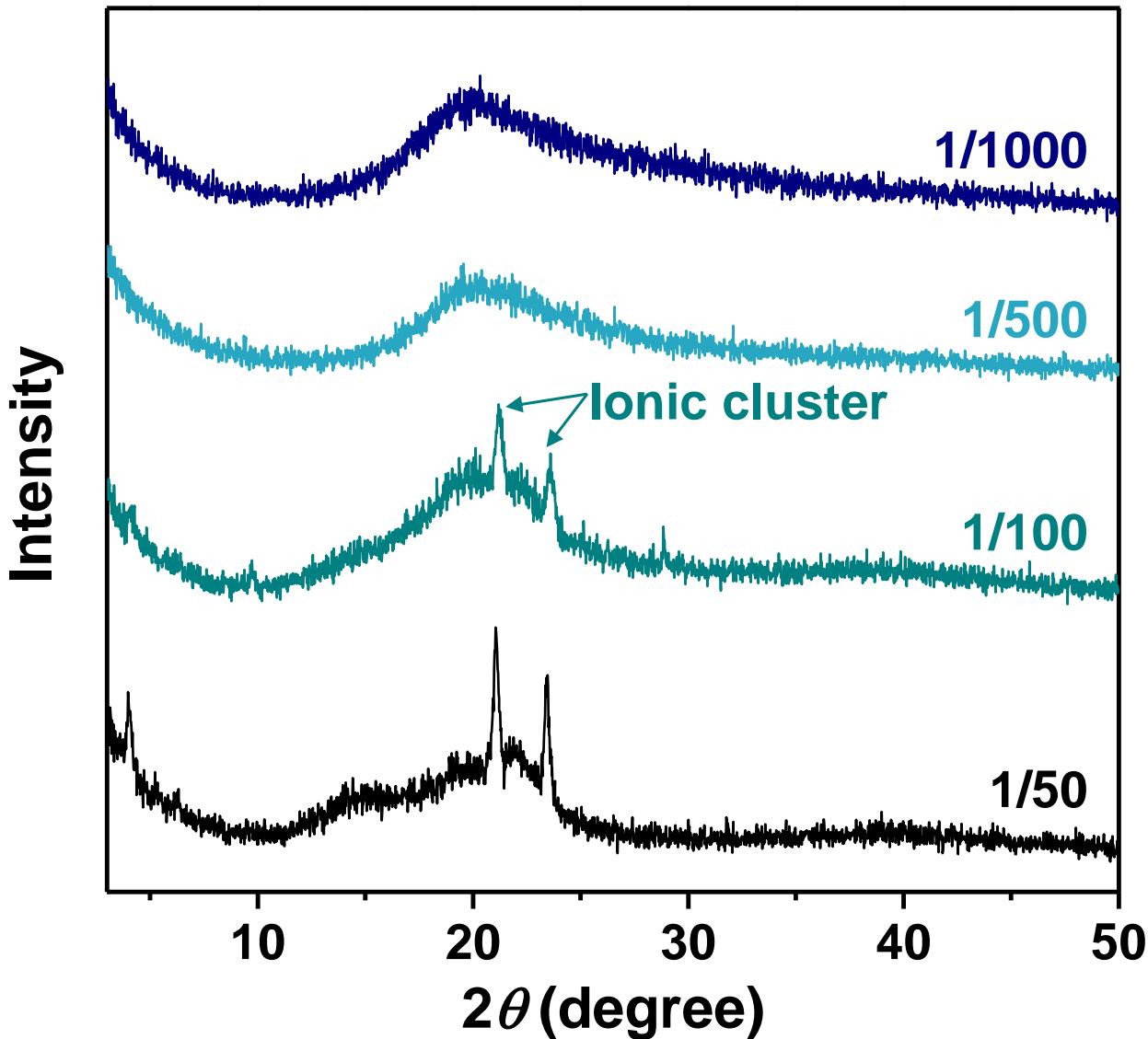
Iron-carboxylate complex



Ionic cluster (secondary)

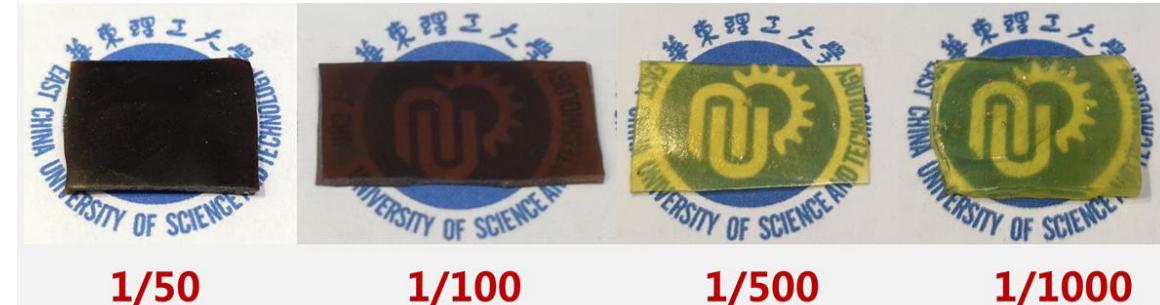


# Extended Research: How to toughen the polymer?

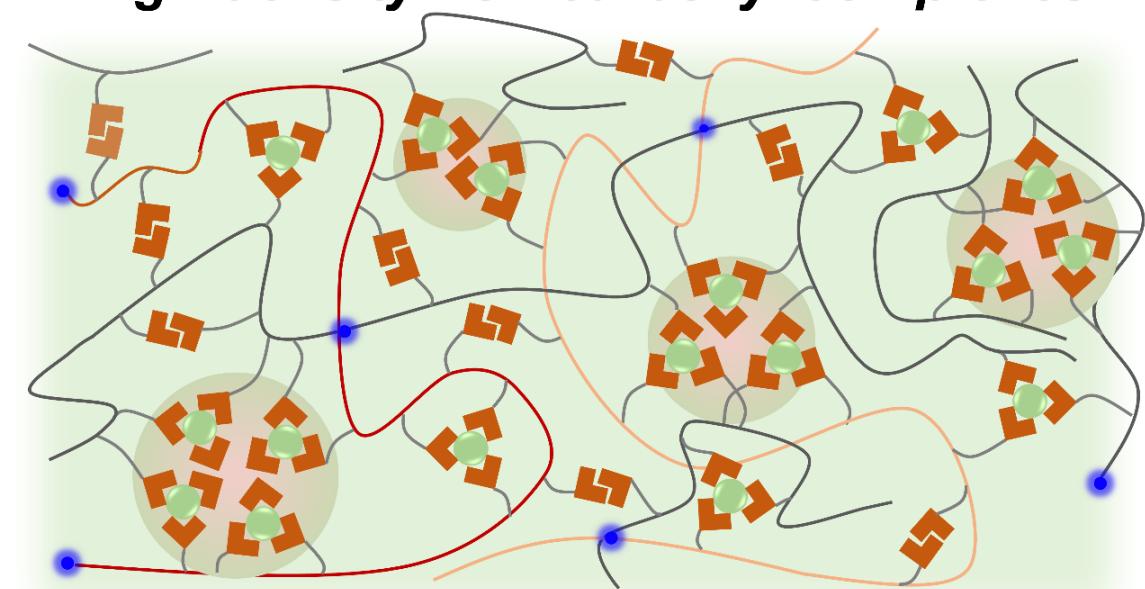


Y.Deng, Q. Zhang, B. L. Feringa\*, D. Qu\*, et al. *Angew. Chem. Int. Ed.* 2020, 59, 5278.

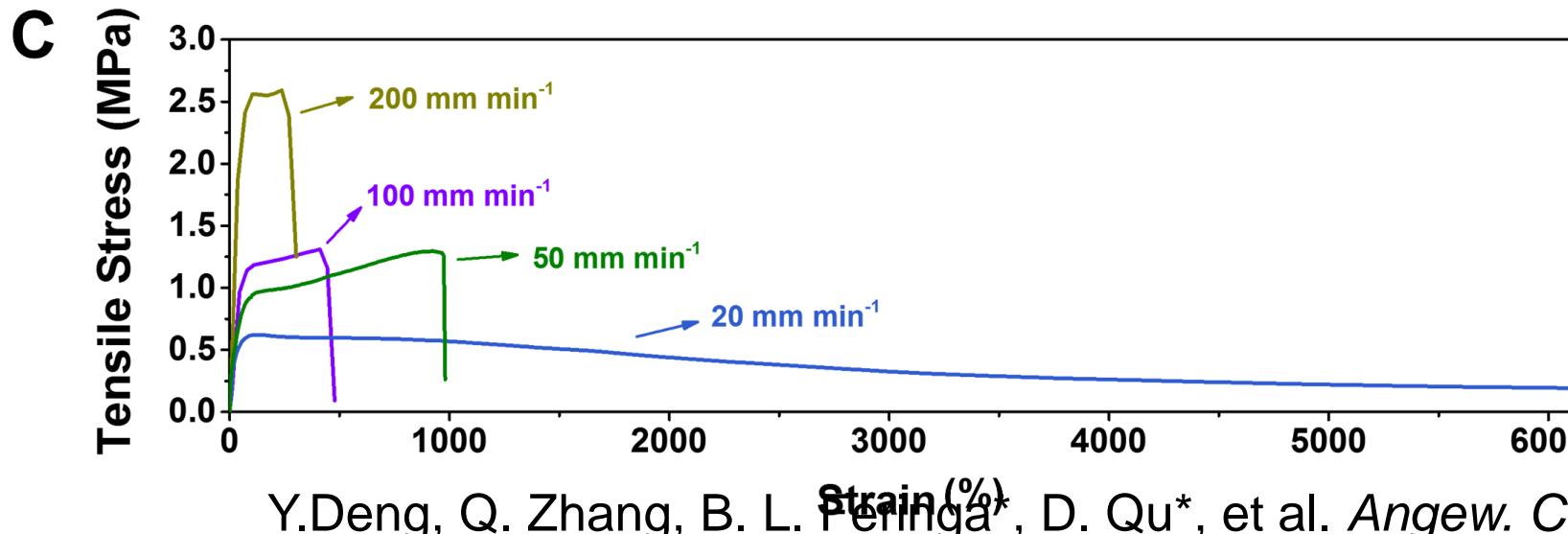
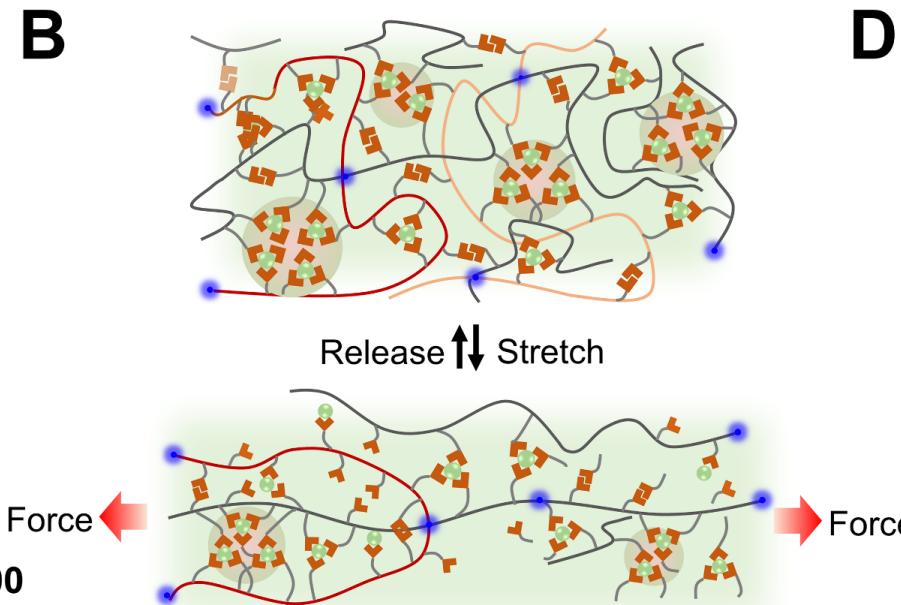
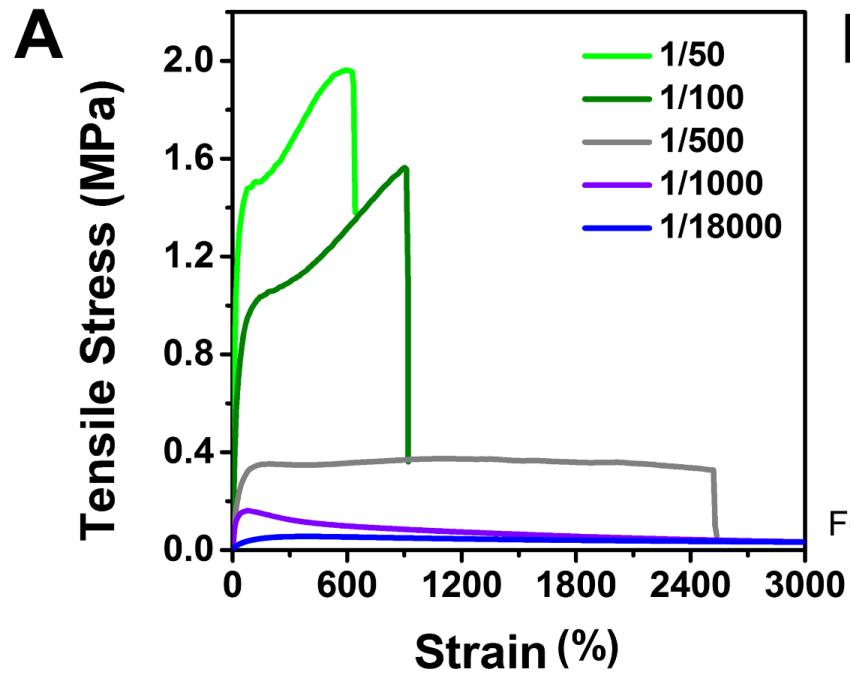
Molar ratio of  $Fe^{3+}/TA$ :



High-density iron-carboxyl complexes

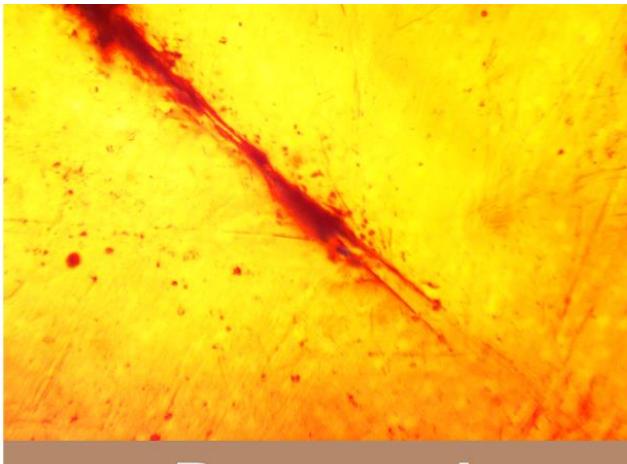


# *Strong and Stretchable Polymer*



# *Strong, Stretchable, and Self-healable Polymer*

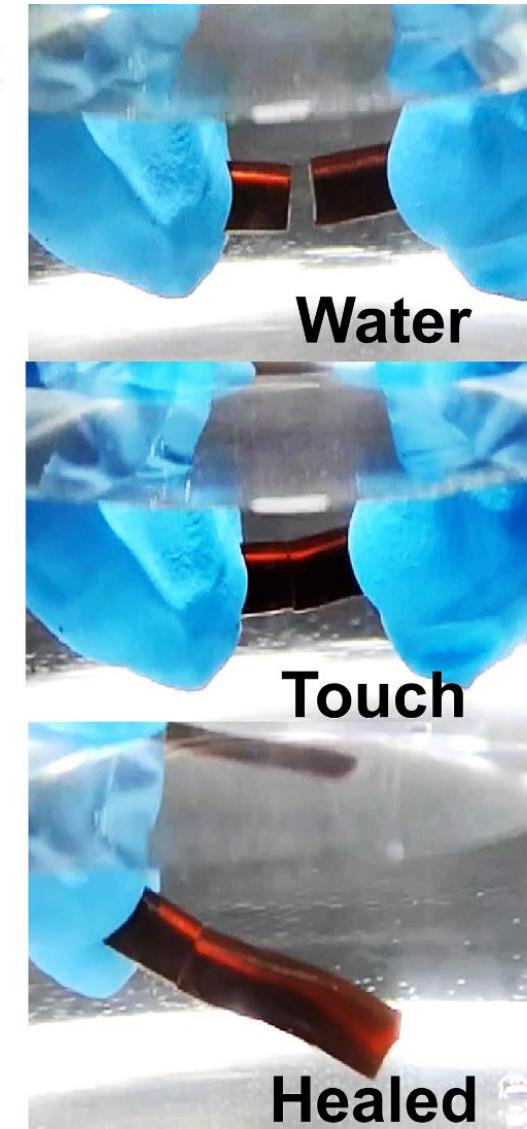
A



B

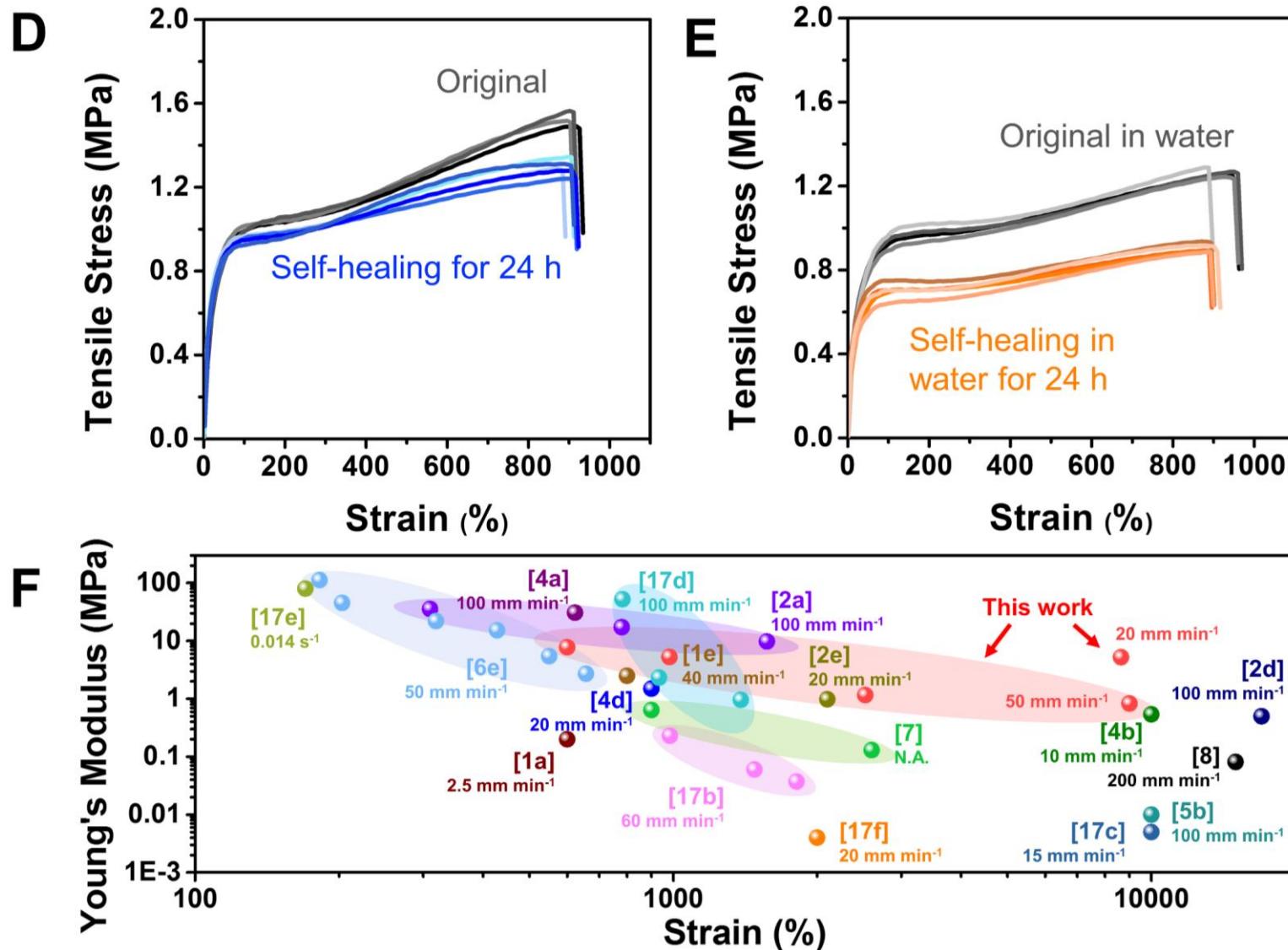


C



Healed at rt

# *Strong, Stretchable, and Self-healable Polymer*

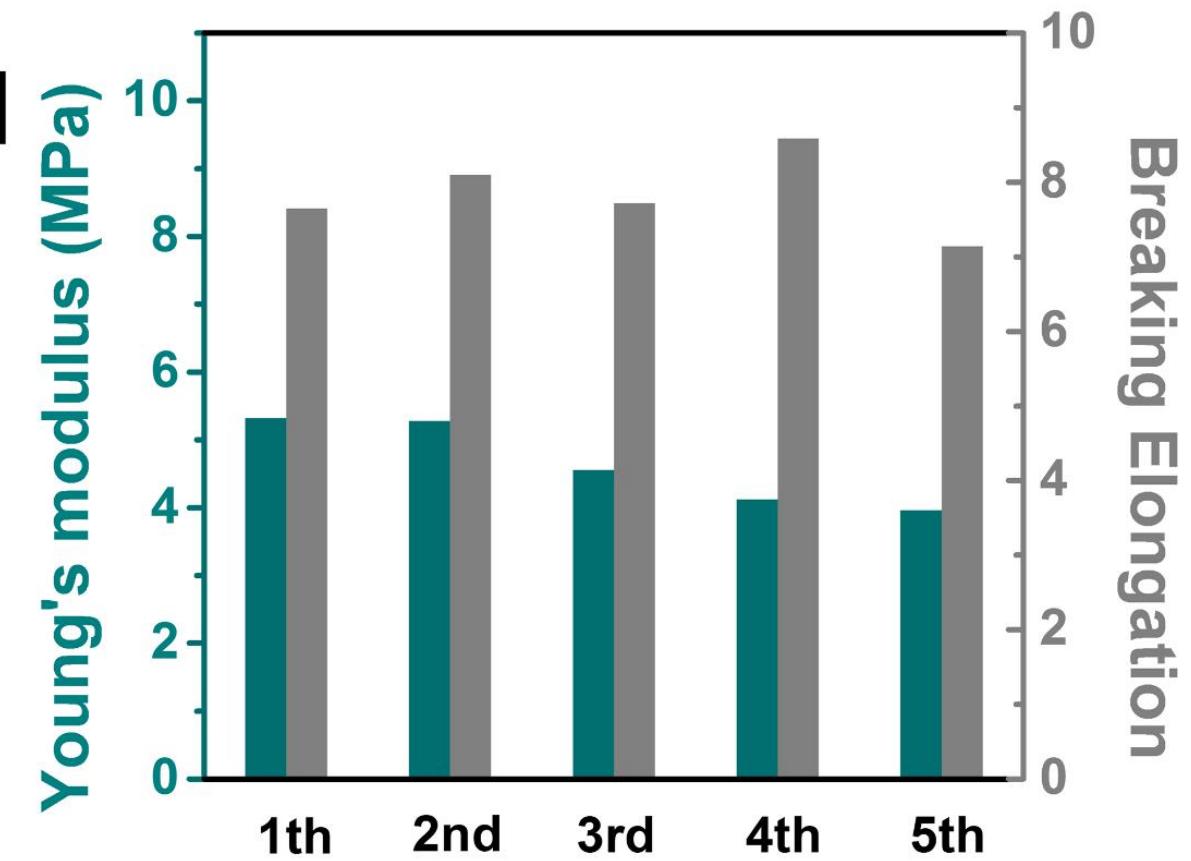


# *Strong, Stretchable, Self-healable, and Reusable Polymer*

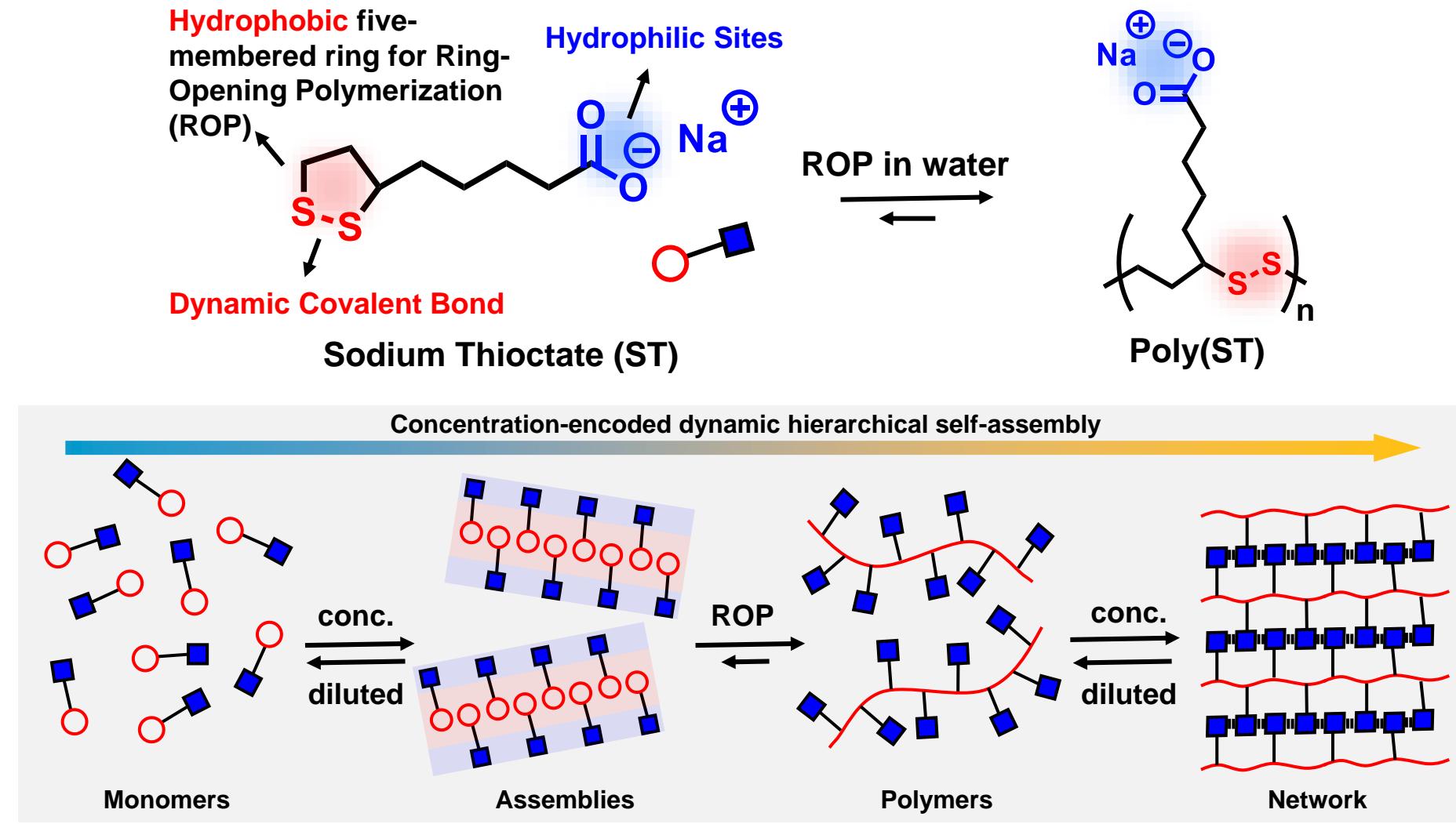
G



H

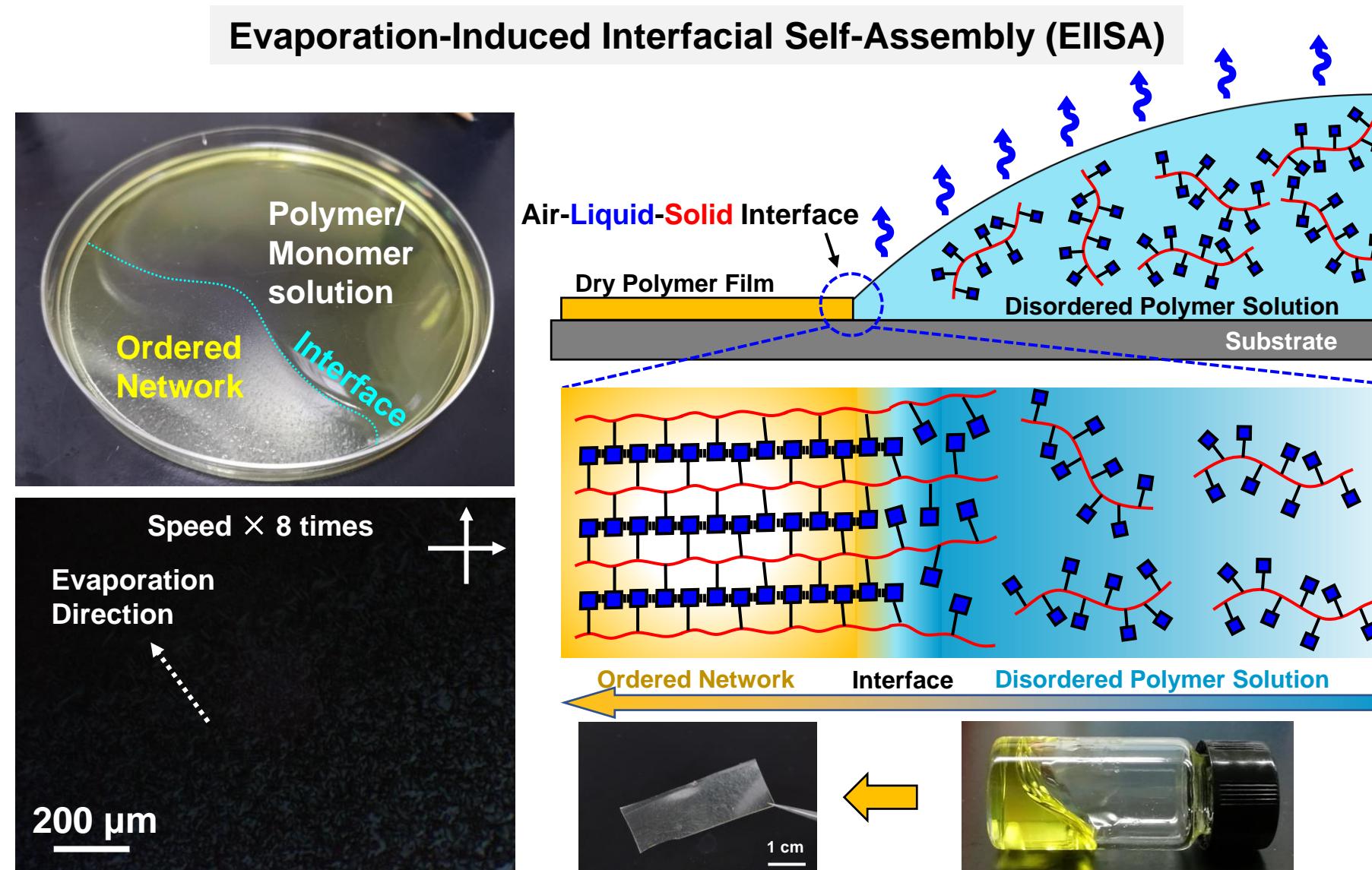


# *Small Change in One Proton: Big Difference in Self-Assembly*



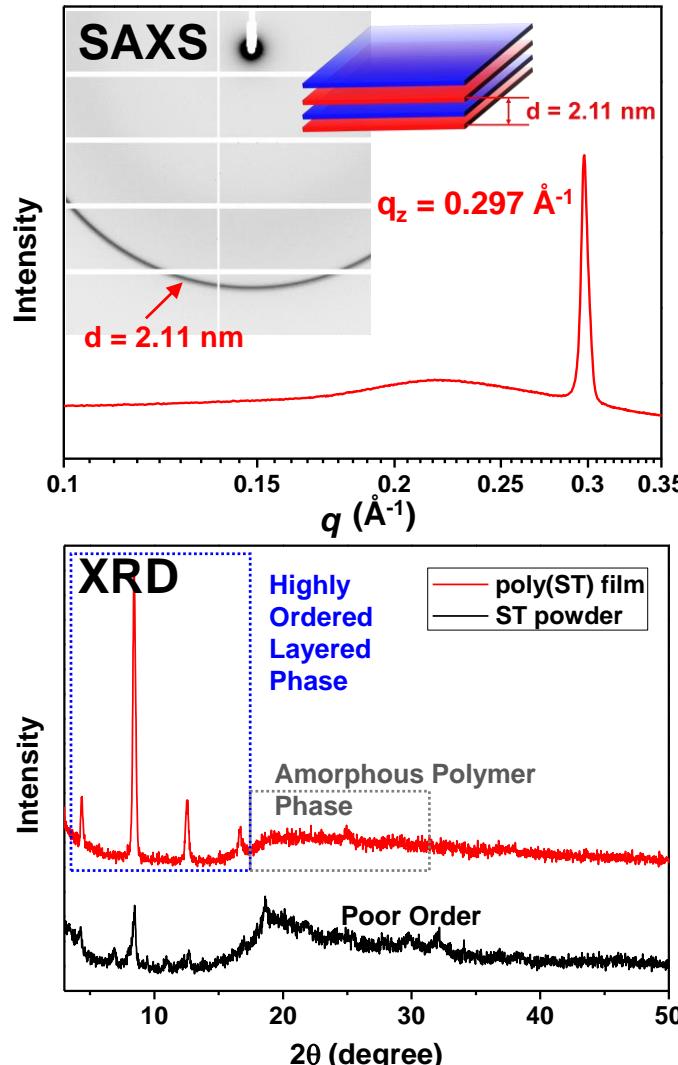
**How to control this dynamic multi-step organization in a high order?**

# Evaporation-Induced Organization

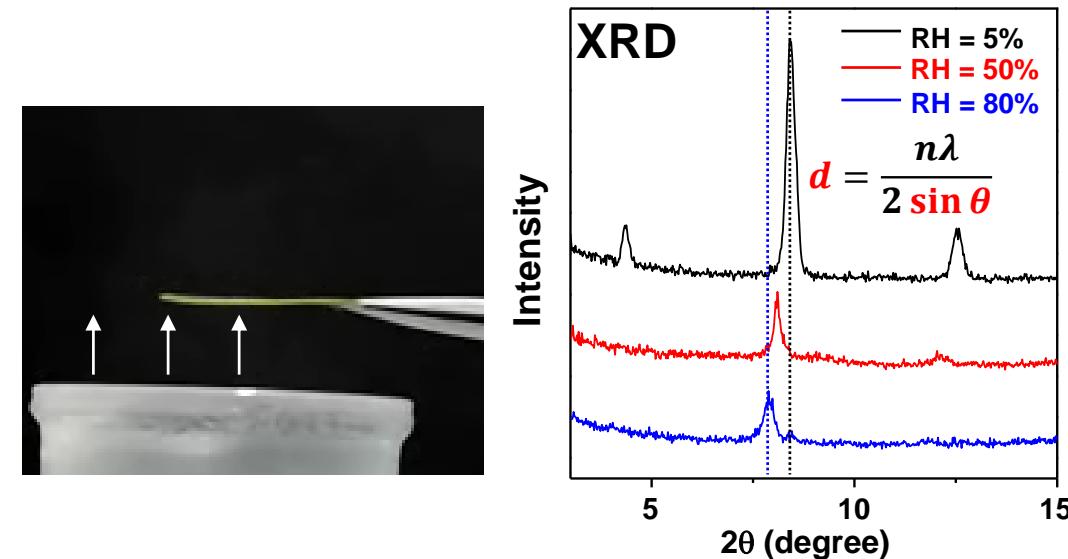
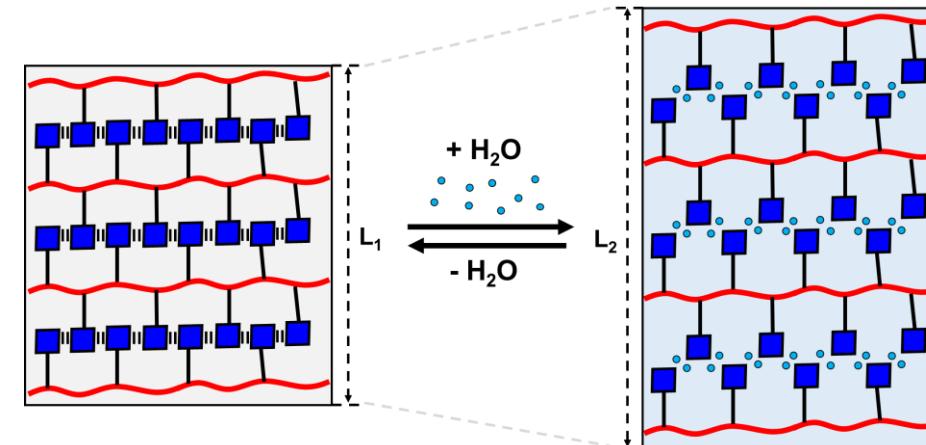


# Highly Ordered Layered Structure

## Highly Ordered Layered Structure

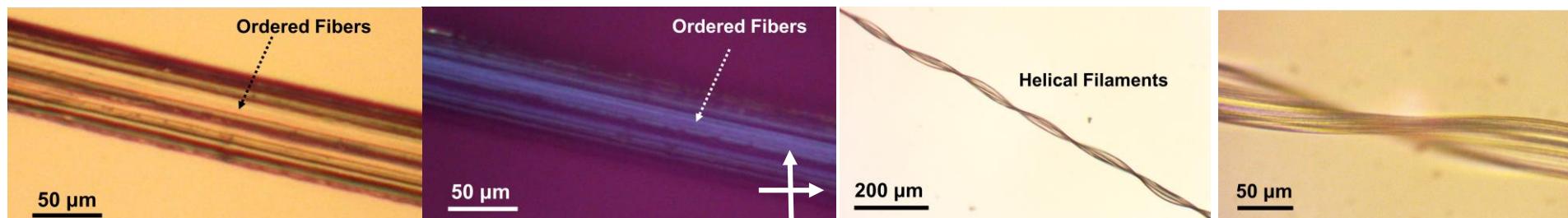
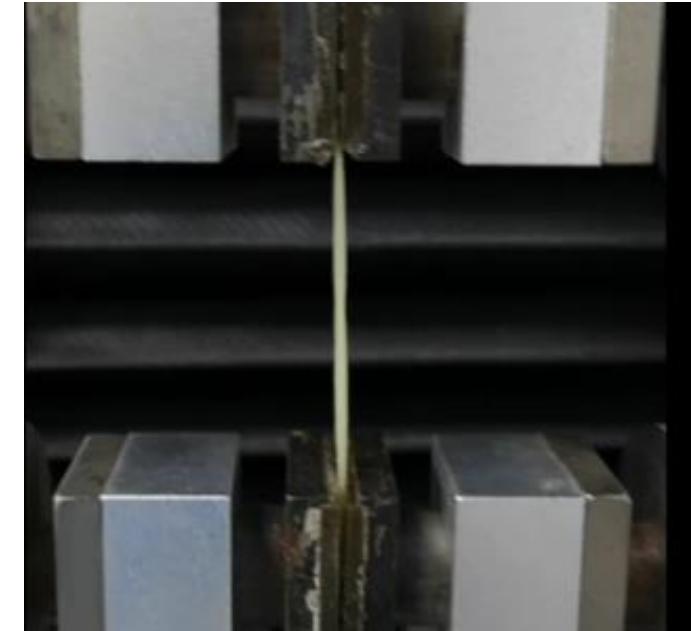
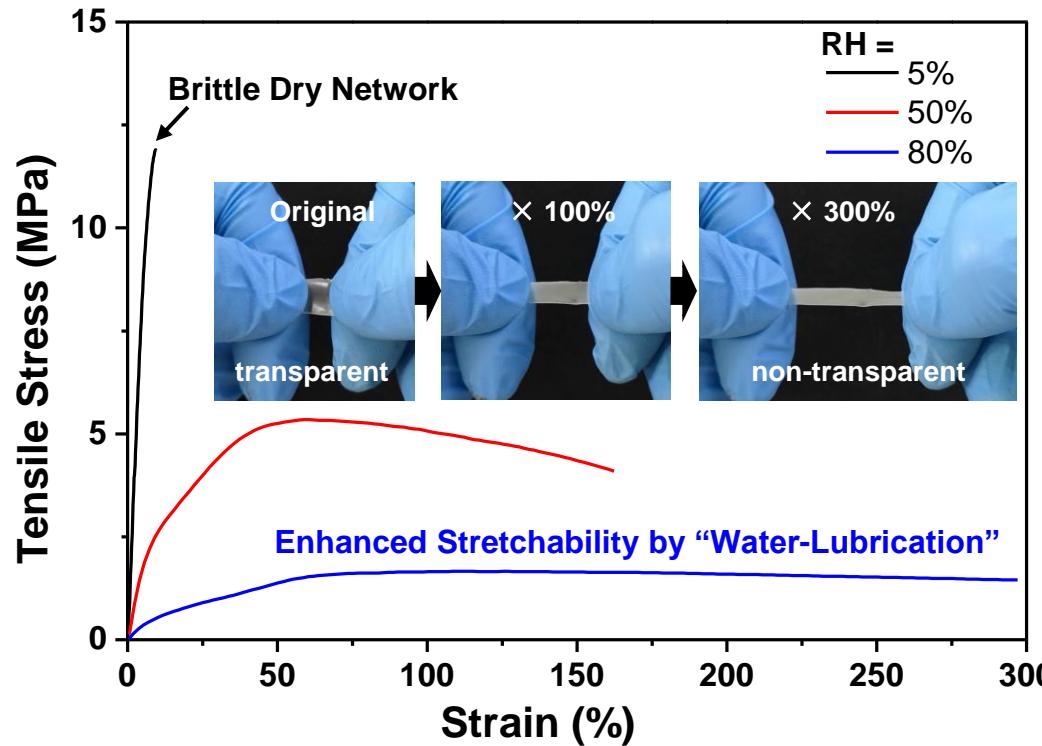


## Humidity-Responsive Actuator

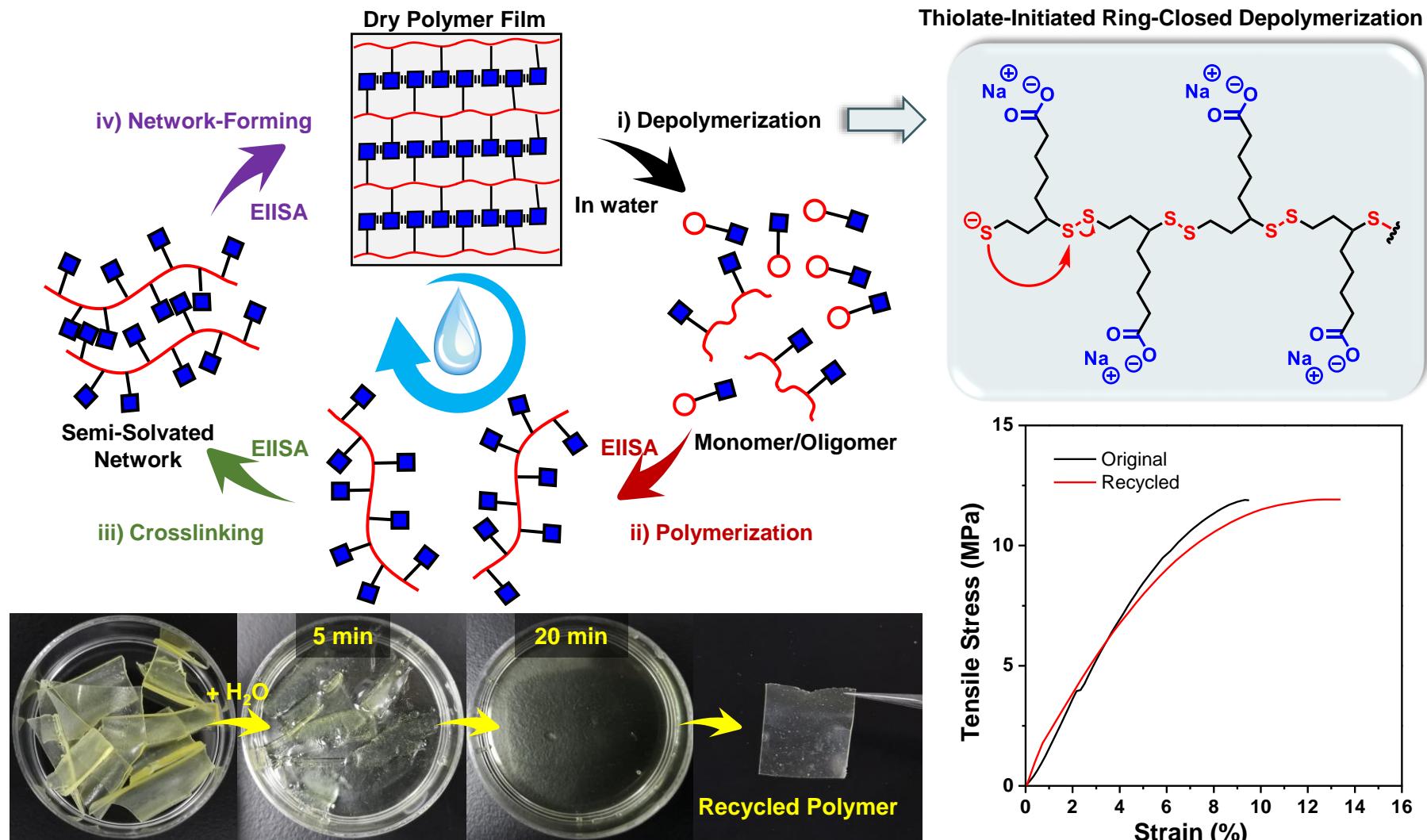


# Structural Water as Lubricator

## Lubrication Effect of Interlayer Structural Water



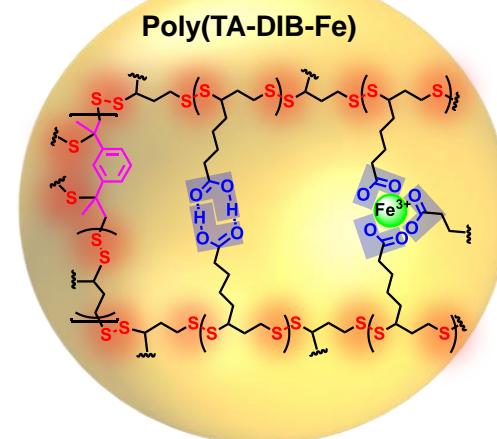
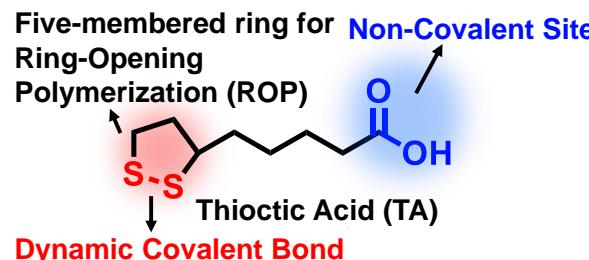
# Water-Mediated Recyclable Polymer



# Summary

2018.09

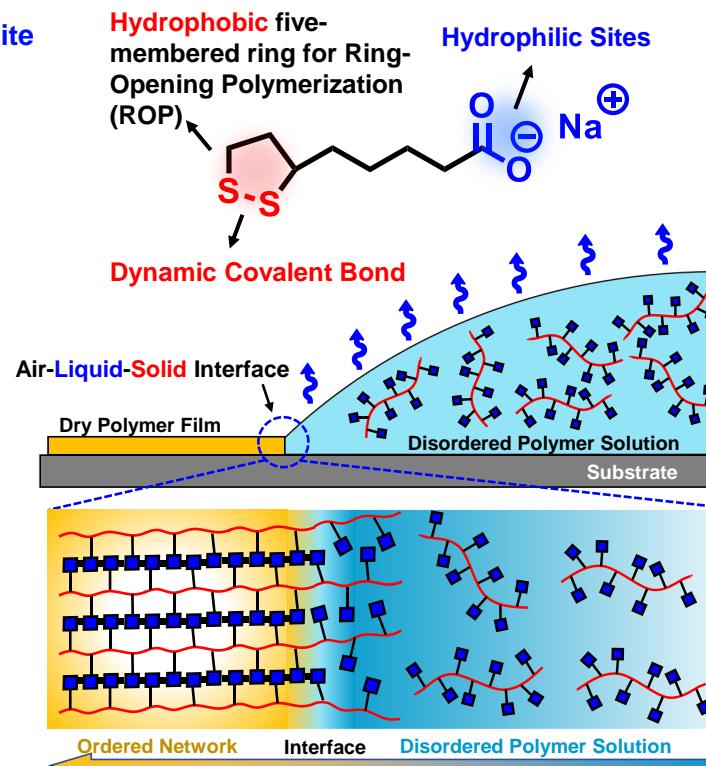
## Easy-to-make Self-Healable Network



Science Advances,  
2018, 4, eaat8192

2019.09

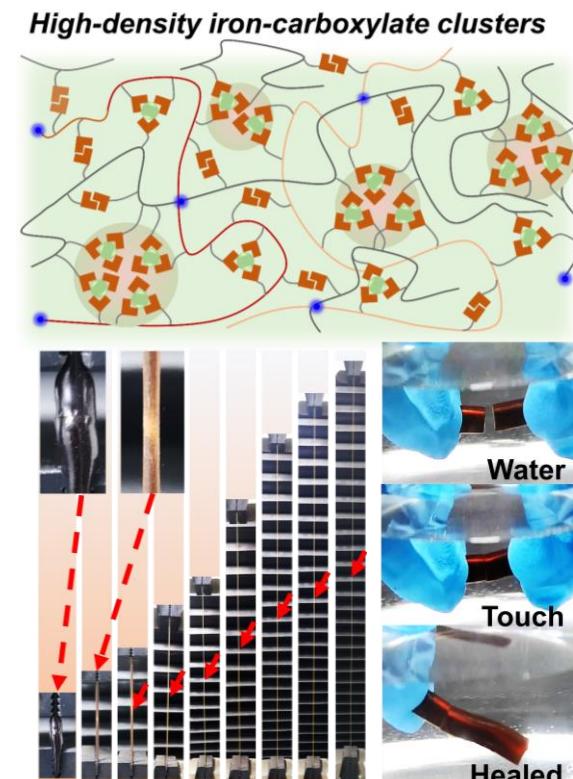
## Highly Ordered Layered Ionic Network



J. Am. Chem. Soc.  
2019, 141, 12804

2019.12

## Ionic Cluster-Toughened Self-Healable Network



Angew. Chem. Int. Ed.  
2020, 59, 5278.

# Acknowledgement



**Prof. He Tian**



**Prof. Da-Hui Qu**



**Prof. Ben L. Feringa**

## Colleagues and Friends in ECUST



# Thank you and welcome to Shanghai!

