

Editor's Note

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Unlike new journals, many of which are electronic only or open access, *EASTS* reads in the old-fashioned way. While committed to selecting and publishing the very best papers in the field, we pay equal attention to thematic issues, honoring a collective scholarship that individual papers by themselves are too short to achieve. We believe that this is why *EASTS* was the winner of this year's 4S Infrastructure Award, when it was recognized that "academic publishing activities had been tuning with compromised efforts to maintain STS communities in connection and in communication with demands and trends of civil society" (more in News and Events in this issue). Interestingly, even when we're working on issues comprised only of individual papers, we usually find that there's a relatedness to be perceived among them, as if they were written around a common theme.

History is one such theme. For sure, STS has inherited much from the history of science and technology and continues to do so, as Francesca Bray so beautifully set out in her speech for the annual meeting of the Society for the History of Technology in 2016. But here we would like to point to the search for the dynamic interfaces between science and society, which, though from the past, are not necessarily historical. As the literary critic Umberto Eco put it in *Turning Back the Clock: Hot Wars and Media* (2007), the past is not something that should be put behind us in order to move forward. It is instead a hermeneutic tool to enable us to know better our current situation. Meanwhile, STS is not just a set of theories or perspectives for better interpretations of the past. With a recognition of how the past might affect the present, STS appreciates the past and tries to identify therein meaningful topics that could deepen our understanding of how science and society interact.

The articles in this issue capture such themes in science and society. With cases from different times and spaces in East Asia, three research articles address the ambiguous attitude toward science and its ungoverned power, the tensions between hope and fear for the promised land, and the sociotechnical imaginaries of the past that project into the future. Marc Andre Matten's article, "Coping with Invisible Threats: Nuclear Radiation and Science Dissemination in Maoist China," looks at how the Chinese government has dealt with nuclear power, as seen in popular science periodicals. Built on discussions of science communication in the STS literature, this article nicely introduces the visual/ideological aspects that directed how atomic energy and nuclear radiation should be attended to in the Mao era. As Matten points out, when the atomic

threat became visible via the mass media, it was Mao's peculiar perception of the material, the epistemology of infinity, that eased fears in coping with nuclear physics and its destructive power. It did so by providing a conceptual/ideological framework of two kinds of experiences—iconic metaphors and cosmological-philosophical arguments—through which to comprehend the invisible danger.

Moving further back to the turn of the twentieth century, Takashi Nishiyama's article titled "Doctors for Frontier Expansion: Japanese Physicians in Hawaii, 1868–1924," addresses the movement of Japanese physicians to Hawaii, a frontier for Asian emigrants. Beyond a simple explanation, using such modern terms as *brain drain*, describing physicians as intellectual elites who left the homeland for their own personal advantage, Nishiyama successfully traces an increasing labor demand in Hawaii that led to a need for physicians so that decent health care could be provided. The power of these individuals, he further argues, enabled the formation of a critical mass in the Japanese medical community that contributed to the betterment of public health in this borderland where East and West met.

Returning to the contemporary in Taiwan, Chih-Yuan Yang, Bronislaw Szerszynski, and Brian Wynne analyze power shortage narratives in their article "The Making of Power Shortage: The Sociotechnical Imaginary of Nationalist High Modernism and Its Pragmatic Rationality in Electricity Planning in Taiwan." Unlike the conventional approach focusing on the validity of policy rhetoric, the authors take a more cultural and hermeneutic approach that respects the past and its narrative influence on policy making. It is in this way that "nationalist high modernism" should be considered more than just a historical background or legacy. These rationales are not gone, as the authors show; instead, they present themselves as "a set of taken-for-granted habitual practices, identities, relationships, assumptions, and beliefs" that serve as a backbone for the current debate over power supply and Taiwan's economic future.

Joining the discussion on science and social imaginaries in China, Japan, and Taiwan, Dong-Won Kim contributes a valuable research note on science fiction in South and North Korea. After a general introduction to the genre in this divided country postwar, Kim nicely offers his critical assessment, peculiar in some ways, by considering the divergent attitudes toward science and its social function through the lens of how science is fantasized and perceived. One of our authors in this issue, Marc Andre Matten, is invited to comment on this "STS-historical experiment" using the case of China in the 1950s. An engaging article, Matten's response can be read as an extension of his research paper, while Kim's research note nicely echoes how political ideology can affect the public image of science, as Matten notes in his article. We are delighted to present them all in this issue.

Finally, for those who access our articles via our website, I would like to call attention to our cover. Since *EASTS*'s inception, its cover images have been a colorful, intellectual, and artistic feature, and this issue is no exception. This issue's cover is taken from *The Man with the Compound Eyes* by Ming-Yi Wu (new Chinese edition, 2016). A fantasy at first glance, this novel powerfully shows how science is embedded into a complicated narrative landscape in which everything is unsettled and keeps changing. The stage is contemporary Taiwan, but it could equally be any place, any time, if we continue to treat our environment so mercilessly. This cover (and the novel

into which it invites us) not only presents as a critical component in summarizing how East Asia fantasizes itself from the past—it also provides *EASTS* with good reason for retaining its good, old-fashioned, printed edition!

—Wen-Hua Kuo

Reference

Eco, Umberto (2007). *Turning Back the Clock: Hot Wars and Media Populism*. Translated by Alastair McEwen. Orlando, FL: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.