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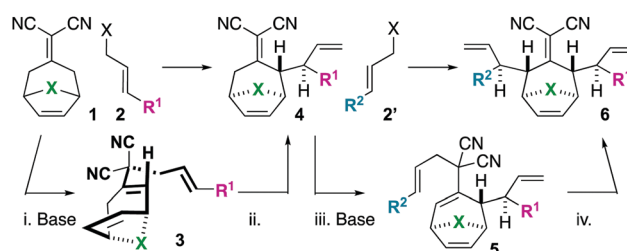
Selective ring-rearrangement or ring-closing metathesis of bicyclo[3.2.1]octenes†

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Explored was the competitive ring-closing metathesis vs. ring-rearrangement metathesis of bicyclo[3.2.1]octenes prepared by a simple and convergent synthesis from bicyclic alkylidenemalononitriles and allylic electrophiles. It was uncovered that ring-closing metathesis occurs exclusively on the tetraene-variant, yielding unique, stereochemically and functionally rich polycyclic bridged frameworks, whereas the reduced version (a triene) undergoes ring-rearrangement metathesis to 5-6-5 fused ring systems resembling the isoryanodane core.

3,3-Dicyano-1,5-dienes are attractive substrates due to their ease of construction from ketones, malononitrile, and allylic electrophiles, and their ability to undergo Cope rearrangement.¹ In fact, 3,3-dicyano-1,5-dienes are the classic Cope rearrangement substrates.² We have been studying this class of 1,5-dienes as substrates for complex polycycloalkane synthesis.^{3–7}

We became interested in iterating the deconjugative alkylation^{8–10} and the diastereoselective[3,3]sigmatropic rearrangement steps of alkylidenemalononitrile functionalization. If performed on alkylidenemalononitriles **1** with allylic electrophiles **2/2'**, unique tetraenes **6** could be rapidly established *via* intermediates **3–5** (Scheme 1). Further piquing our interest was how these substrates would react under olefin metathesis conditions: would they undergo ring-closing metathesis (RCM¹¹) (to **7**) or ring-rearrangement metathesis (RRM¹²) (to **8**) (Scheme 2A)? ring-rearrangement metathesis would occur by the ring-opening of the central, strained cycloheptene olefin followed by double ring-closing metathesis, whereas ring-closing metathesis would result simply from the “allylic arms” reacting with each other directly. Notably, the ring-closing route would require the “allyl arms” to be *cis*-oriented^{13–16} as well as a conformationally biased¹⁷ for the axial isomer. In addition to the growing body of work on the synthesis of bridged bicyclic systems *via* RCM,^{13–16} we have previously



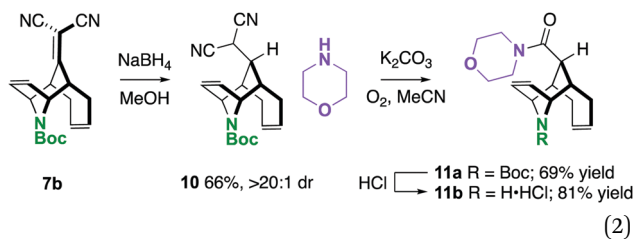
Scheme 1 Iterative deconjugative allylation/Cope rearrangement to synthesize bicyclic tetraenes (**6**).

shown one example of an RCM reaction on a scaffold related to those of interest to this work,⁶ though there are no possibilities for RRM with this particular substrate (Scheme 2B). Conversely, bridged bicyclo[3.2.1]octenes can react by ring-opening cross-metathesis (ROCM) or polymerization (ROMP) (Scheme 2C).^{18–21} For example, ketone (Y = O), alcohol (Y = H/OH), and alkylidenemalononitrile-containing scaffolds react *via* ROCM (Scheme 2C). Thus, we hypothesize that either pathway (RCM or RRM) is plausible and potentially in competition for the proposed scaffolds **6**. As such, we began a campaign to explore the reactivity and selectivity of these types of substrates in RCM *vs.* RRM reactivity. Herein we report that such tetraenes **6** undergo exclusive ring-closing metathesis to **7**. We also provide a hypothesis for the observed chemoselectivity, which ultimately yields a method to achieve exclusive ring-rearrangement metathesis to 5-6-5 tricyclic ring systems.

To begin our studies, we prepared tetraenes **6a–6l** by iterative deconjugative allylic alkylation/Cope rearrangement (Scheme 3). Depending on the substitution pattern, products **6** are available in 1–3 steps as single diastereomers *via* diastereoselective Cope rearrangements (see the ESI[†]). We next turned to the examination of the ring-closing metathesis (RCM) *vs.* ring-rearrangement metathesis (RRM) question posed for these substrates (Scheme 4). In these studies, standard Ru-based metathesis catalysts (Grubbs-II²² (G-II) or Hoveyda–Grubbs-II²² (HG-II)) were utilized. Substrates **6a–6l** underwent clean ring closing metathesis to **7a–7l** exclusively under conventional conditions (*e.g.* nonpolar solvent,

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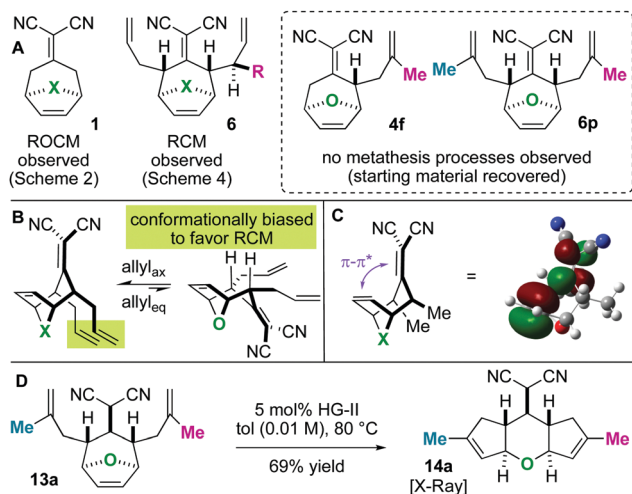
For the substrates in Scheme 4 only one of the “allylic arms” is decorated with an additional substituent. That is because it is generally challenging to perform ring-closing metathesis on densely substituted alkenes. For example, substrates **6n** and **6o** underwent sluggish and low yielding ring-closing metathesis, even with the Stewart–Grubbs (SG-II; CAS#: [927429-61-6]²³) catalyst, which is commonly more accepting to steric challenges (eqn (1)).

One way in which we envisaged finding potential application of these molecules is described in Scheme 5. In two steps, a unique piperidine carboxamide **11a** was prepared by NaBH₄ conjugate reduction and oxidative amidation.²⁴ The *N*-Boc-piperidine can be deprotected to the amine-HCl **11b** under standard conditions resulting in an interesting scaffold for drug discovery, considering that they are rigid piperidine carboxylate scaffolds.²⁵

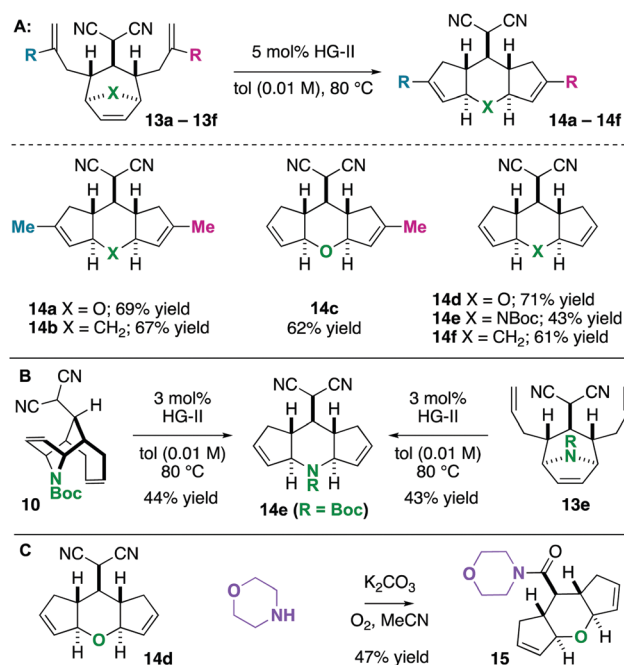
Next, we wished to understand and overturn the observed chemoselectivity for ring-closing metathesis over ring-rearrangement metathesis (Scheme 5). To compare and summarize, non-allylated (**1**) and bis-allylated (**6**) scaffolds have unique reactivity to metathesis catalysts: scaffolds **1** undergo ring-opening cross metathesis (ROCM) whereas the bis-allylated variants undergo ring-closing metathesis (RCM). A thought-provoking observation was that **6p** was wholly unreactive to metathesis catalysts. Regarding **6p**, we presumed that ring-closing metathesis to yield a tetrasubstituted olefin would be unfavourable and therefore ring-rearrangement metathesis would be the dominant

pathway. However, no metathesis processes were observed; the starting material was recovered in high yield. Furthermore, even the mono 2-methylallylated scaffold **4f** was completely unreactive (starting material recovered). These observations allow us to draw conclusions on the ring-closing vs. ring-rearrangement metathesis chemoselectivity (Scheme 5B and C). First, ring-closing metathesis is favoured when either di- or tri-substituted cyclic olefins are expected. The structures are also conformationally biased, where the “allylic arms” are in an axial-position and thus in close proximity to one another (Scheme 5B). This was confirmed by NMR studies (see the ESI[†]). And second, as shown in Scheme 5C, we have found an anchimeric effect between the cyclic alkene and the alkylidene-malononitrile (a π - π^* interaction). This was achieved computationally where structures were optimized using the DFT level of theory M062x/cc-pvdz.²⁶ Notably, the qualitative trends do not change when using a different functional or basis set combination. We found the localized bond orbitals for the π and π^* orbitals of interest, and used the second order energy between them as computed in NBO 3.1 to quantify the extent of the interaction. Specifically, a 1.9 kcal mol⁻¹ interaction energy was found. To remove this through space interaction (anchimeric effect), the alkylidene-malononitrile was reduced yielding **13a**, which exclusively underwent ring-rearrangement metathesis to **14a** (Scheme 5D).

Having found that ring-rearrangement metathesis can be favoured by alkylidene-malononitrile reduction, we next examined the scope of the RRM transformation (Scheme 6). It was found that a variety of scaffolds with 2-alkylation on the “allylic arms” were competent substrates for ring-rearrangement (**14a-c**). We expected these substrates to be successful because ring-closing



Scheme 5 (A) Summary of RCM vs. RRM selectivity. (B and C) Rationale for RCM regioselectivity: conformational bias (B) and an anchimeric effect (C). (D) Alkydienes reduction results in a scaffold that undergoes ring-rearrangement metathesis.



Scheme 6 (A and B) Ring rearrangement metathesis to 5-6-5 scaffolds. (C) Oxidative amidation.

metathesis is prohibited by the substitution patterns on the alkenes. We were pleased to also find that substrates with unsubstituted “allylic arms” also yielded the desired ring-rearrangement metathesis products **14d–14f** over the ring-closing metathesis products. It was also observed that **14e** could be prepared either from a linear precursor **13e** or a cyclic one **10**, prepared independently *via* the chemistry described in Scheme 6. Thus, there are two potential entry routes into the ring-rearranged 5-6-5 scaffolds. As a final result, the malononitrile functional group can be inter-converted to amides by Hayashi’s oxidative amidation protocol as shown in the conversion of **14d** to **15**.

We have developed a protocol to assemble bicyclic[3.2.1]-tetraenes and explored their reactivity as metathesis substrates. It was uncovered that the tetraenes are kinetically predisposed to undergo ring closing metathesis yielding doubly bridged cyclodeca-1,6-dienes. It was also hypothesized that a π - π^* interaction between the strained endocyclic olefin and the alkylidenemalononitrile precluded ring-opening metathesis. In support of this hypothesis, alkylidenemalononitrile reduction can result in chemoselectivity favouring ring-rearrangement metathesis. For both of the scaffolds, the malononitrile functional group can be converted to amides by oxidative amidation. Future studies will involve the exploration of transformations favouring ring-rearrangement metathesis, as this yields frameworks common to natural products such as pepluanone,^{27,28} retigeranic acid,²⁹ perseanol,³⁰ and leucosceptroids,^{31–33} among others.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts to declare.

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