REGIOSPECIFIC SYNTHESIS OF DIMETHYLPHENANTHRENES

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**Abstract**

The dimethylated phenanthrenes 2,3-dimethylphenanthrene (**4a**), 2,7-dimethylphenanthrene (**4b**), 2,6-dimethylphenanthrene (**4c**) and 1,7-dimethylphenanthrene (**4d**) have been prepared in gram-quantities by a short sequence of directed ortho metalation of *N*,*N*-diethylbenzamides followed by Suzuki-Miyaura cross-coupling reaction and directed remote metalation to form 9-phenanthrols. The final phenanthrenes were obtained through protection/deprotection as triflates.

**Introduction**

Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) are the primary cause of chronic toxicity of petroleum products to marine fish, and crude oil and discharges from the oil and gas industry contains large quantities and a very large array of PAHs.1 Even with decades of research only a very small portion of these PAHs, and mainly the basic ring-systems, have been described.2 A majority and sometimes up to 80-90% of all petrogenic PAHs are alkylated.3, 4 Alkylated PAHs are more persistent in weathering processes and microbial degradation with increasing number of substituents.5-7 The toxicity of PAHs does not arise from the parent compounds, but from the metabolites.8, 9 To complicate things further different organisms produce different arrays of metabolites with different toxicities from the same parent compound.10, 11 A methyl group can block oxidation even in remote positions and change the metabolic profile.12, 13 These effects are still poorly elucidated, but alkylated phenanthrenes are known to be more toxic than phenanthrene,14 and the position of the alkyl groups on PAHs affect the toxicity towards fish embryos.15 Another example is 5-methylchrysene where the substitution makes the compound 1000 times more carcinogenic than chrysene, although substitution in other positions gives less dramatic effects.16

Recently it was found that the benthic invertebrate *N. diversicolor* mainly metabolized methylated phenanthrenes and chrysenes to the corresponding acids.17 Again, the position of the methyl group had an effect. To further study the effect of the position of methyl groups in exposure studies Malmquist and Christensen18 proposed a set of 5 dimethylated phenanthrenes: 2,3-dimethylphenanthrene (**4a**), 2,7-dimethylphenanthrene (**4b**), 2,6-dimethylphenanthrene (**4c**) and 1,7-dimethylphenanthrene (**4d**) and 1,9-methylphenanhtrene. Although these compounds are commercially available as analytical standards, there are no feasible sources for the multi-mg quantities desired in exposure studies. Thus, we decided to make/remake these compounds and report the synthesis herein.

Although the classical Pschorr synthesis of phenanthrenes19 was developed as early as 1896,20 it has dominated the synthesis of simple phenanthrenes for a long time, but the need for better control of substitutions on the phenanthrene ring has led to development of several different synthetic approaches. Ring-closure of stilbenes by photochemical oxidation in the Mallory-reaction21 is often effective, but affords a mixture of isomers for *meta*-substituted stilbenes. A similar reaction can be achieved with mCPBA,22 but with more restrictions on the substitutions. Another main route to simple substituted phenanthrenes is the combination of directed ortho metalation (DoM),Suzuki-Miyaura cross-coupling and directed remote metalation (DreM) to form phenanthrenes.23 This reaction sequence has been used successfully to make a wide range of substituted phenanthrenes.24, 25 Herein we present a scale-up of the Snieckus route24 to **4b** and **4c**, and utilize its flexibility to make **4a** and **4d**.

Phenanthrenes are found in a range of different molecules from various sources and for a number of applications, and several other methods has been utilized in their synthesis. A more extensive discussion of their applications and synthesis can be found in Wang et al.26 and Jørgensen et al.25

**Results and Discussion**

Only 1,9-dimethylphenanthrene can easily be made as a single isomer by photochemical cyclization, and it’s synthesis will be reported elsewhere with other compounds following photochemical cyclization of biphenyls. For compounds **4a-d** a selectivity problem due to meta-substitution will produce a mix of isomers by following the photochemical cyclization protocol. Thus, the most practical approach will be through DreM reaction from biphenyls as presented in scheme 1.



Scheme 1: Synthesis of dimethylphenanthrenes **4a-d**.

Boronate **1a** was readily available by directed ortho metalation of diethylbenzamide followed by addition of triisopropyl borate. Contrarily to quenching by trimethyl borate,24 triisopropyl boronates does not hydrolyze to boronic acid during work-up, but is readily cross-coupled in the following step. In the previously described reaction24 of *N*,*N*-diethyl-3-methylbenzamide with trimethyl borate purification by flash column chromatography of the pinacol ester was necessary. With triisopropyl borate there was no trace of substitution in the 2-position and the crude product could be used in the cross-coupling without any further purification. Standard Suzuki-Miyaura cross-coupling of the boronate in slight excess (1.25 equivalents) with the required bromobenzene catalyzed by 5 mol% PdCl2(dppf) in aqueous solvent provided biphenyl **2a** in 73% yield. The other cross-couplings were performed with 2 equivalents boronate, but this excess should not be necessary. For biphenyl **2c** only 42% yield was obtained in the cross-coupling reaction. However, biphenyl **2c** was the last compound made in this project, and as the other bromobenzenes used in the cross-coupling reactions are both more and less bulky, it is reasonable to assume that a repeat experiment would have produced better results. Our spectral data of biphenyl **2d** deviate from those reported by Cai.24 From a DreM reaction of biphenyl **2a**-**d** using freshly made LDA,23 (diisopropylamide and n-BuLi) 9-phenanthrols was formed. 9-Phenanthrols are easily oxidized to the corresponding brown colored quinones when purified by flash chromatography. In order to avoid this problem the alcohol was protected directly after extraction before further purification. The right protecting group can serve a double purpose as it can easily be cleaved from the phenanthrene to remove the oxygen left after the DreM reaction. Although the less expensive way of doing this is through a carbamate,25 the more commonly used triflate was used since cleavage of carbamate inevitably produce a few percent of the alkylated byproduct that would be inseparable from the product by moderate resolution chromatography. The DreM reaction followed by protection with triflic anhydride using 2,6-lutidine as base gave triflates **3a-d** in 67-75% yield. While the data of triflate **3b** are in accordance with those reported by Cai,24 there is a small difference in the 1H NMR data at 7.9 and 7.7 ppm for triflate **3d**. When converted to **4d** all data are in accordance. Cleavage of the triflates with palladium and formic acid as hydrogen source gave the target compounds **4a-d** in close to quantitative yields after flash column chromatography.

In summary, this short route provided the desired dimethylphenanthrenes as single isomers in gram-scale after only three chromatographic purifications and in resonable over-all yields (29**-**62% calculated from the bromobenzene cross-coupling partners, or 14-31% as calculated from the benzamides).

**Experimental**

**General**

The reactions were followed by TLC on silica plates (60A, F254). Flash column chromatography were performed with silica gel (40-63 µm, 60A). All melting points were measured in capillary tubes on a Bibby SMP3 melting point apparatus. NMR-spectroscopy were performed on a Varian Mercury 300 MHz spectrometer. The FID’s were treated on MestReNova or MestReNova Lite for integration and peak picking. Infrared spectroscopy were performed on a PerkinElmer, Spectrum One FT-IR spectrometer. HRMS were obtained from the University of Bergen or the Arctic University of Norway by electron impact (EI) or electrospray ionization (ESI) on time-of-flight (TOF) mass analyzers.

All reactions were performed under nitrogen atmosphere. In the Suzuki-Miyaura reactions with PdCl2(dppf) all solvents were degassed by freeze-thaw cycles.

*N*,*N*-diethylbenzamide were made as described by Hall’s group,27 and afforded 9.86 g (86%) as a clear oil by vacuum distillation at 116 °C, 3.7 mBar. *N*,*N*-Diethyl-3-methylbenzamide and the differently methylated bromobenzenes were purchased from Sigma-Aldrich. (Abbreviations: DCM: dichloromethane, DME: dimethoxy ethane, DMF: dimethylformamide, EtOAc: ethyl acetate, Et2O: diethyl ether, PE: petroleum ether, THF: tetrahydrofurane, TMEDA: tetramethylethylenediamine)

**Bis(propan-2-yl)[2-(diethylcarbamoyl)phenyl]boronate (1a)**

A solution of *N*,*N*-diethylbenzamide (5.48 g, 30.9 mmol) in anhydrous THF (100 mL) was added dropwise to a solution of s-BuLi (41.2 mL (0.9 M), 37.1 mmol), and TMEDA (5.56 mL, 37.1 mmol) in anhydrous THF (100 mL) at -78 °C. After 1 h stirring at -78 °C the mixture was treated with triisopropyl borate (17.8 mL, 77.3 mmol). The mixture was allowed to reach room temperature overnight, quenched with sat. aq. NH4Cl solution (150 mL) and extracted with Et2O (3 x 150 mL). The combined organic phase was dried over MgSO4, filtered and concentrated under reduced pressure to give 7.75 g (82%) of **1a** as a brown oil. *The compound were partly hydrolyzed and had a complex 1H NMR spectrum including different rotamers and were not assigned in detail. The crude compound was used in the next step without further purification.*

**Bis(propan-2-yl)[2-(diethylcarbamoyl)-4-methylphenyl]boronate (1b)**

A solution of *N*,*N*-diethyl-3-methylbenzamide (5.25 g, 27.5 mmol) in anhydrous THF (80 mL) was added dropwise to a solution of s-BuLi (62.2 mL (0.53 M), 32.9 mmol), and TMEDA (4.94 mL, 32.9 mmol) in anhydrous THF (80 mL) at -78 °C. After 1h stirring at -78 °C the mixture was treated with 3-isopropylborate (15.7 g, 68.6 mmol). The mixture was allowed to reach room temperature overnight, quenched with sat. aq. NH4Cl solution (150 mL) and extracted with Et2O (3 x 150 mL). The combined organic phase was dried over MgSO4, filtered and concentrated under reduced pressure to give 8.82 g (quant.) of **1b** as a brown oil. *The compound were partly hydrolyzed and had a complex 1H NMR spectrum including different rotamers and were not assigned in detail. The crude compound was used in the next step without further purification.*

***N*,*N*-diethyl-2-(2,4,5-trimethylphenyl)benzamide (2a)**

A mixture of PdCl2(dppf) (0.86 g, 1.05 mmol) and 5-bromo-1,2,4-trimethylbenzene (4.17 g, 20.9 mmol) in DME (60 mL) was stirred at room temperature for 15 min before **1a** (7.75 g, 25.4 mmol) in DME (40 mL) was added, followed by the addition of 2M aq. Na2CO3 (60 mL). The mixture was boiled at reflux for 18 h, cooled and extracted with Et2O (3 x 150 mL). The combined organic phase was dried over MgSO4, filtered and concentrated under reduced pressure. The crude product was purified by flash column chromatography (PE : EtOAc 5:1) to afford 4.53 g (73%) of **2a** as a brown oil. 1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl3) : 0.65-1.00 (m, 6H), 2.09-2.25 (m, 9H), 2.84 (br s, 2H), 3.75 (br s, 2H), 7.00(br s, 1H), 7.23(br s, 1H), 7.34-7.41 (m, 4H); 13C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl3) : 11.6, 13.7, 19.1, 19.3, 19.6, 37.8, 42.4, 127.0, 128.1, 130.4, 131.4, 135.7, 137.1, 170.3; IR (KBr, cm-1): 1634, 1456, 1427; HRMS (ESI-TOF) m/z [M+H]+ for C20H25NO calcd 296.20144, found 296.20166.

**2-(2,4-dimethylphenyl)-*N*,*N*-diethyl-5-methylbenzamide (2b)**

A mixture of PdCl2(dppf) (0.58 g, 0.71 mmol) and 1-bromo-2,4-dimethylbenzene (2.62 g, 14.2 mmol) in DME (60 mL) was stirred at room temperature for 15 min before **1b** (8.82 g, 27.6 mmol) in DME (40 mL) was added, followed by the addition of 2M aq. Na2CO3 (60 mL). Reaction and workup as described for **2a** afforded 2.64 g (63%) of **2b** as a brown oil. 1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl3) : 0.70-0.95 (m, 6H), 2.18 (s, 3H), 2.31 (s, 3H), 2.39 (s, 3H), 2.89-3.70 (br m, 4H), 6.94 (d, J= 7.2 Hz, 1H) 7.03 (s, 1H), 7.11-7.27 (m, 4H); 13C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl3): 11.8, 13.6, 20.1, 21.1, 37.7, 42.2, 128.9, 130.2, 130.7, 136.9, 137.0, 170.4; HRMS (ESI-TOF) m/z [M+Na]+ for C20H25NO calcd 318.1828, found 318.1830. *The data are in accordance with those previously reported.24*

**2-(2,5-dimethylphenyl)-*N*,*N*-diethyl-5-methylbenzamide (2c)**

A mixture of PdCl2(dppf) (0.48 mg, 0.59 mmol) and 2-bromo-1,4-dimethylbenzene (2.18 g, 11.8 mmol) in DME (60 mL) was stirred at room temperature for 15 min before **1b** (7.57 g, 23.6 mmol) in DME (40 mL) was added, followed by the addition of 2M aq. Na2CO3 (60 mL). Reaction and workup as described for **2a** afforded 1.48 g (42%) of **4c** as a brown oil. 1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl3) : 0.67-0.92 (m, 6H), 2.17 (s, 3H), 2.28 (s, 3H), 2.40 (s, 3H), 2.82-3.75 (br m, 4H), 7.00-7.26 (m, 6H); 13C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl3) : 11.6, 13.6, 19.7, 20.8, 21.1, 37.8, 42.3, 128.1, 128.8, 130.0, 137.0, 170.3; IR (KBr, cm-1): 1631, 1473, 1458, 1435, 826; HRMS (ESI-TOF) m/z [M+H]+ for C20H25NO calcd 296.20144, found 296.20173.

**2-(2,3-dimethylphenyl)-*N*,*N*-diethyl-5-methylbenzamide (2d)**

A mixture of Pd(dppf) (0.386 g, 0.528 mmol) and 1-bromo-2,3-dimethylbenzene (1.96 g, 10.6 mmol) in DME (60 mL) was stirred at room temperature for 15 min before **1b** (6.79 g, 21.1 mmol) in DME (40 mL) was added, followed by the addition of 2M aq. Na2CO3 (60 mL). Reaction and workup as described for **2a** afforded 2.59 g (82%) of **2d** as a brown oil. 1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl3) : 0.67-0.95 (m, 6H), 2.07 (br s, 3H), 2.29(d, 6H), 2.81-3.72 (br, 4H), 6.91-7.22 (m, 6H). 13C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl3) : 11.6, 13.5, 17.0, 20.4, 20.9, 37.6, 42.3, 128.8, 136.6, 136.8, 170.4, 120-140:*several broad ‘hills’*; IR (KBr, cm-1): 1631, 1460, 826, 787, 726; HRMS (ESI-TOF) m/z [M+H]+ for C20H25NO calcd 296.20144, found 296.20168. *Data deviate from those previously reported*.24

**2,3-dimethylphenanthryl-6-trifluoromethanesulfonate (3a)**

A stirred mixture of diisopropylamine (5.08 mL, 36.3 mmol) and n-BuLi (25.0 mL (1.45 M), 36.3 mmol) in anhydrous THF (85 mL) at 0 °C was added **2a** (4.28 g, 14.5 mmol). The mixture was stirred at room temperature for 30 min before being quenched with sat. aq. NH4Cl (150 mL) and extracted with Et2O (3 x 200 mL). The combined organic phase was dried over MgSO4, filtered and concentrated under reduced pressure. The crude 2,3-dimethyl-6-phenanthrol (14.5 mmol) and 2,6-lutidine (2.14 mL, 18.4 mmol) dissolved in DCM (50 mL) was stirred at 0 °C for 5 min before addition of triflic anhydride (3.87 mL, 23.0 mmol). After 1 h stirring at room temperature the mixture was added water (50 mL) and extracted with DCM (3 x 100 mL). The combined organic phase was dried over MgSO4, filtrated and concentrated under reduced pressure. The crude product was purified by flash column chromatography (PE : EtOAc 6:1) to give 3.46 g (67%) of **3a** as a white powder. Mp = 98-99 °C (Ethanol); 1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl3) : 2.46 (s, 3H), 2.53 (s, 3H), 7.61-7.75 (m, 4H), 8.10 (d, J = 7.5 Hz, 1H), 8.39 (s, 1H), 8.65 (d, J = 7.5 Hz, 1H); 13C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl3) : 19.9, 20.6, 116.6, 120.9, 121.5, 122.8, 123.0, 125.0, 127.2, 127.8, 127.9, 128.8, 129.0, 131.5, 137.3, 137.5, 143.7; IR (KBr, cm-1): 1415, 1218, 1143; HRMS (EI-TOF) m/z [M]+ for C17H13F3O3S calcd 354.05375, found 354.05227.

**2,7-dimethylphenanthryl-9-trifluoromethanesulfonate (3b)**

A stirred mixture of diisopropylamine (2.97 mL, 21.2 mmol) and n-BuLi (18.6 mL (1.14 M), 21.2 mmol) in anhydrous THF (60 mL) at 0 °C was added **2b** (2.50 g, 8.48 mmol). The mixture was stirred at room temperature for 30 min before being quenched with sat. aq. NH4Cl (120 mL) and extracted with Et2O (3 x 150 mL). The combined organic phase was dried over MgSO4, filtered and concentrated under reduced pressure. The crude 2,7-dimethyl-9-phenanthrol (8.48 mmol) and 2,6-lutidine (1.20 mL, 10.2 mmol) dissolved in DCM (130 mL) was stirred at 0 °C for 5 min before addition of triflic anhydride (2.14 mL, 12.7 mmol). Reaction and workup as described for **3a** afforded 2.15 g (71%) of **3b** as a white powder. Melting point 138-139 °C (Hexane, lit. 138-139 °C[Hexane]24). 1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl3) : 2.56 (s, 3H), 2.60 (s, 3H), 7.52 (d, J= 8.5 Hz, 1H), 7.57 (d, J= 8.5 Hz, 1H), 7.64 (s, 1H), 7.67 (s, 1H), 7.89 (s, 1H), 8.51 (d, J= 8.5 Hz, 1H), 8.56 (d, J= 8.5 Hz, 1H); 13C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl3): 21.4, 21.8, 117.6, 121.0, 122.5, 122.8, 125.1, 127.5, 128.5, 129.6, 129.8, 129.9, 130.2, 137.2, 137.4, 144.5; IR (KBr, cm-1): 1430, 1223, 1139, 816, 614; HRMS (EI-TOF) [M]+ for C17H13F3O3S calcd 354.05375, found 354.05223. *The data are in accordance with those previously reported*.24

**2,6-dimethylphenanthryl-9-trifluoromethanesulfonate (3c)**

A stirred mixture of diisopropylamine (1.55 mL, 11.1 mmol) and n-BuLi (10.8 mL, 11.1 mmol) in anhydrous THF (35 mL) at 0 °C was added **2c** (1.31 g, 4.44 mmol). The mixture was stirred at room temperature for 30 min before being quenched with sat. aq. NH4Cl (40 mL) and extracted with Et2O (3 x 40 mL) The combined organic phase was dried over MgSO4, filtered and concentrated under reduced pressure. The crude 2,6-dimethyl-9-phenanthrol (4.44 mmol) and 2,6-lutidine (0.63 mL, 5.33 mmol) dissolved in DCM (70 mL) was stirred at 0 °C for 5 min before addition of triflic anhydride (1.12 mL, 6.67 mmol). Reaction and workup (water (10 mL), DCM (3 x 30 mL)) as described for **3a** afforded 1.10 g (70%) of **3c** as yellow solid. Melting point 83.5-84 °C (Ethanol); 1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl3) : 2.59 (s, 3H), 2.60 (s, 3H), 7.45 (dd, J = 8.1, 1.6 Hz, 1H), 7.56 (dd, J = 8.5, 1.8 Hz, 1H), 7.65 (s, 1H), 7.75 (d, J = 8.1 Hz, 1H), 7.88 (s, 1H), 8.38 (s, 1H), 8.56 (d, J = 8.5 Hz, 1H); 13C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl3) : 21.8, 22.1, 116.6, 117.7, 121.0, 122.3, 122.9, 125.6(C), 127.9(C), 128.7, 128.9, 129.4(C), 129.7, 137.7(C), 137.8(C), 143.6(C); IR (KBr, cm-1): 1416, 1204, 1142, 914, 797, 608; HRMS (EI-TOF) [M]+ C17H13F3O3S calcd 354.05375, found 354.05236.

**1,7-dimethylphenanthryl-9-trifluoromethanesulfonate (3d)**

A stirred mixture of diisopropylamine (2.63 mL, 18.8 mmol) and n-BuLi (16.3 mL, 18.8 mmol) in anhydrous THF (60 mL) at 0 °C was added **2d** (2.23 g, 7.54 mmol). The mixture was stirred at room temperature for 30 min before being quenched with satd. aq. NH4Cl (60 mL) and extracted with Et2O (3 x 60 mL). The combined organic phase was dried over MgSO4, filtered and concentrated under reduced pressure. The crude 1,7-dimethyl-9-phenanthrol (7.537 mmol) and 2,6-lutidine (1.07 mL, 9.04 mmol) dissolved in DCM (120 mL) was stirred at 0 °C for 5 min before addition of triflic anhydride (1.90 mL, 11.3 mmol). Reaction and workup (water (20 mL), DCM (3 x 60 mL)) as described for **3a** afforded 1.99 g (75%) of **3d** as a white powder. Mp = 87-88 °C (Ethanol, lit. 74-75 °C [EtOAc]24); 1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl3) : 2.62 (s, 3H), 2.73 (s, 3H), 7.47 (d, J = 7.1 Hz, 1H), 7.56-7.62 (m, 2H), 7.90 (s, 1H), 7.91 (s, 1H), 8.51 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 1H), 8.62 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 1H); 13C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl3) : 19.7, 21.8, 114.3, 120.7, 121.0, 123.3, 127.4, 128.3, 130.0, 135.4, 137.8; IR (KBr, cm-1): 1420, 1221, 1137, 784, 607; HRMS (EI-TOF) [M]+ C17H13F3O3S calcd 354.05376 found 354.05243. 1*H NMR data deviate in the two signals at 7.9 ppm from those previously reported.*24 *Most quaternary C were not detected.*

**2,3-dimethylphenanthrene (4a)**

A reaction flask charged with **3a** (3.43 g, 9.68 mmol), Pd(OAc)2 (40 mg, 0.19 mmol), PPh3 (0.101 g, 0.388 mmol), Et3N (4.06 mL, 29.088 mmol), and HCO2H (0.73 mL, 19.4 mmol) in DMF (190 mL) was stirred at 70 °C for 30 min, before being cooled to room temperature, added water (190 mL) and extracted with Et2O (3 x 200 mL). The combined organic phase was dried over MgSO4 and concentrated under reduced pressure. The crude product was purified with flash column chromatography (5% EtOAc in PE) to afford 1.46 g (73%) of **4a** as colorless crystals. Mp = 78.5-80 °C (Ethanol, lit. 79-80 °C[Ethanol]28); 1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl3) : 2.46 (s, 3H), 2.52 (s, 3H), 7.51-7.65 (m, 5H), 7.84 (dm, J = 7.8 Hz, 1H), 8.43 (s, 1H), 8.62 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 1H); 13C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl3) : 20.0, 20.6, 122.4, 122.9, 125.9(2CH), 126.2, 126.4, 128.5, 128.6, 130.0(C), 130.6(C), 131.8(C), 135.8(C), 135.9(C), *one quaternary C was not detected*; FTIR (KBr, cm-1) 1445, 873, 808, 739, 710; HRMS (EI-TOF) m/z [M]+ for C16H14: calcd, 206.10955, found 206.10456.

**2,7-dimethylphenanthrene (4b)**

A reaction flask charged with **3b** (2.12 g, 5.98 mmol), Pd(OAc)2 (20 mg, 0.12 mmol), PPh3 (60 mg, 0.24 mmol), Et3N (2.50 mL, 18.0 mmol), and HCO2H (0.45 mL, 12.0 mmol) in DMF (120 mL) was stirred at 70 °C for 30 min before being cooled to room temperature, added water (120 mL) and extracted with Et2O (3 x 200 mL). Workup as described for **4a** afforded 1.17 g (94%) of **7b** as colorless crystals. Mp 101-102 °C (Ethanol, lit. 101-102 °C [Ethanol]24); 1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl3) : 2.55 (s, 6H), 7.44 (dd, J = 8.4, 1.8 Hz, 2H), 7.64 (br s, 4H), 8.52 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 2H); 13C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl3): 21.4, 122.3, 126.6, 128.0, 128.16(C), 128.22, 131.8(C), 135.8(C); IR (KBr, cm-1): 1619, 1471, 1250, 890, 875, 815, 796, 708; HRMS (ESI-TOF) m/z [M+H]+ for C16H14: calcd 207.1168, found 207.1165. *NMR-data were in accordance with those previously reported*.24

**2,6-dimethylphenanthrene (4c)**

A reaction flask charged with **3c** (1.01 g, 2.85 mmol), Pd(OAc)2 (13 mg, 0.057 mmol), PPh3 (30 mg, 0.11 mmol), Et3N (1.20 mL, 8.56 mmol), and HCO2H (0.23 mL, 5.7 mmol) in DMF (30 mL) was stirred at 70 °C for 2 h, before being cooled to room temperature, added water (30 mL) and extracted with Et2O (3 x 30 mL). Workup as described for **4a** afforded 574 mg (97%) of **4c** as a brown liquid (lit mp 33-34 °C[Methanol]29); 1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl3) : 2.58 (s, 3H), 2.65 (s, 3H), 7.41 (dd, J = 8.1, 1.8 Hz, 1H), 7.47 (dd, J = 8.4, 1.8 Hz, 1H), 7.61-7.69 (m, 3H), 7.78 (d, J = 8.1 Hz, 1H), 8.46 (s, 1H), 8.58 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 1H); 13C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl3) : 21.6, 22.3, 122.3, 122.6, 125.8, 126.8, 127.9, 128.0(C), 128.2(2CH), 128.5, 129.8(C), 130.5(C), 132.5(C), 136.2(C), 136.3(C); IR (KBr, cm-1): 1621, 1458, 825, 478; HRMS (EI-TOF) m/z [M]+ for C16H14: calcd 206.10955, found 206.10613.

**1,7-dimethylphenanthrene (4d)**

A reaction flask charged with **3d** (2.01 g, 5.67 mmol), Pd(OAc)2 (26 mg, 0.11 mmol), PPh3 (60 mg, 0.23 mmol), Et3N (2.37 mL, 17.0 mmol), and HCO2H (0.46 mL, 11.3 mmol) in DMF (60 mL) was stirred at 70 °C for 2 h, before being cooled to room temperature, added water (60 mL) and extracted with Et2O (3 x 60 mL). Workup as described for **4a** afforded 1.33 g (quant.) of **4d** as a yellow solid. Mp = 78-80 °C (Ethanol, lit 83-84 °C [hexane]24); 1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl3) : 2.56 (s, 3H), 2.75 (s, 3H), 7.41 (d, J= 7.1 Hz, 1H), 7.47 (dd, J=8.5, 1.8 Hz, 1H), 7.52 (dd, J=8.3, 7.2 Hz, 1H), 7.68 (s, 1H), 7.72 (d, J= 9.1 Hz, 1H), 7.93 (d, J = 9.1 Hz, 1H), 8.55 (d, J= 8.5 Hz, 1H), 8.59 (d, J= 8.5 Hz, 1H); 13C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl3) : 19.9, 21.4, 120.6, 122.8(2CH), 126.0, 126.4, 127.3, 128.0, 128.3, 128.5(C), 130.3(C), 130.4(C), 131.8(C), 134.8(C), 136.1(C); IR (KBr, cm-1): 1466, 1438, 1377, 1302, 1250, 881, 829, 792, 757; HRMS (EI-TOF) m/z [M]+ for C16H14: calcd 206.10955, found 206.10621. *NMR-data were in accordance with those previously reported*.24

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**Supplemental Material**

1H NMR spectra and GC-FID of the final compounds **4a-d** after recrystallization are provided, and can be accessed at http://

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