

N-Oxide-Induced Ugi Reaction: A Rapid Access to Quinoline-C2-amino Amides via Deoxygenative C(sp²)–H Functionalization

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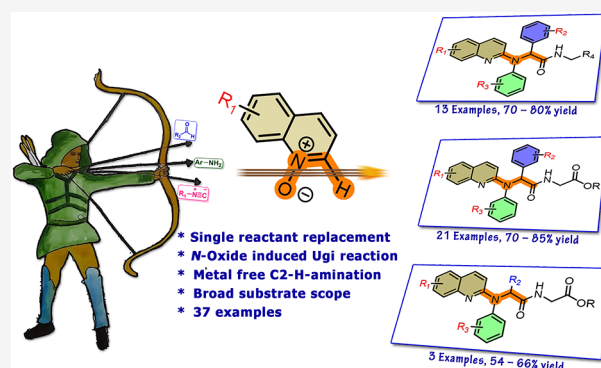
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ABSTRACT: A logic-based replacement of the carboxylic acid component of the Ugi reaction by quinoline *N*-oxides has been developed. In this approach, the carboxylic isostere, quinoline *N*-oxide, plays a vital role by shifting the equilibria toward the product side with irreversible addition onto the C2-position of the *N*-oxide. Thus, aldehydes react with amines, isocyanides, and quinoline *N*-oxides to furnish quinoline four-component Ugi adducts. The unique reactivity of *N*-oxides with Ugi components opens an efficient synthetic route for the preparation of biologically active compounds.

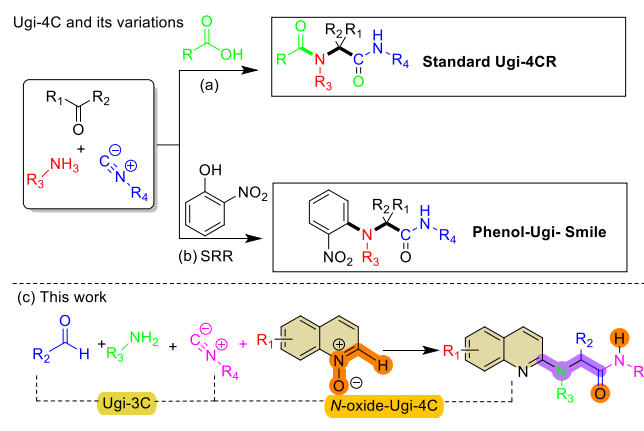


The Ugi four-component reaction (U-4CR) is one of the most extensively studied multicomponent reactions, which readily gives access to peptide-like structures known as bis-amides or peptomers with potent biological activity and structural diversity.^{1,2} This revolutionary approach by Ugi in 1959 has opened a new platform in isocyanide-based multicomponent reactions (IMCRs), and it has also been in the limelight recently for adhering to green chemistry principles such as atom-economy, reduced number of steps, and use of green solvents.³

Due to the emergence of combinatorial chemistry and high-throughput screening for efficient preparation of bioactive molecules, medicinal chemists have focused more on the Ugi reaction in polymer-supported solid-phase synthesis, in combination with postcondensation and modified Ugi conditions.⁴ Modifications to the Ugi reaction have mainly relied on the single reactant replacement (SRR) approach.⁵ The single reactant replacement approach involves the logic-based alteration of one component by another component with a similar mode of reactivity which is required for the known MCR to improve its efficiency and to provide new synthetic routes. For instance, the Ugi reaction is the first SRR approach of the Passerini reaction and has led to new MCRs in which imines were introduced in place of carbonyls to synthesize a library of α -acylamino amides. This novel SSR approach triggered the development of new MCRs in the field of drug discovery (Scheme 1a).

In this approach, replacement of multifaceted carboxylic acids in U-4CR poses challenges because of the key role they play in many equilibrium steps, including formation of the imine, nucleophilic addition of moderately reactive isocya-

Scheme 1. Single Reactant Replacements in the Ugi Reaction



nides, and the final Mumm rearrangement to provide the target compound.⁶ In fact, exchange of the carboxylic acid with other acidic components in the Ugi reaction has shown inferior results.^{7–13}

Later in 2005, El Kaïm et al. reported the first use of Smiles rearrangements in the Ugi reaction to synthesize *N*-arylated

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peptides (Scheme 1b).¹⁴ In this phenol Ugi–Smiles multi-component reaction, electron-deficient phenols are used as acidic surrogates to give *O*-aryl- and *N*-arylamides.¹⁵ This sequence opened rapid access to *O*-aryl- and *N*-arylamides but has its own limitations such as the requirement of strong activation energy, moderate yields, and pK_a dependency. Thus, replacement of the carboxylic acid in U-4CR with (i) weak inorganic acids (H_2O , HN_3 , $HOCN$, $HSCN$, H_2S , H_2Se) or (ii) electron-deficient nitrophenols, pyridines, and pyrimidines has found limited access since the discovery of the reactions.

Recently, aromatic amine *N*-oxides have attracted considerable attention due to the ability of the *N*-oxide moiety to act as an ortho-directing group to control the regioselectivity of the C–H activation.¹⁶ In particular, *N*-oxide-directed C2-selective C–N bond formation has become a focus due to the importance of 2-aminoquinolines in medicinal chemistry and pharmaceuticals.¹⁷ In all the approaches, *N*-oxides either react with promoters or coordinate with metals to activate the C2-position of aromatic *N*-oxides. Thus, the activated C2-position and nucleophilicity of oxygen of the *N*-oxide could be a promising route for single reactant replacement in the Ugi reaction to achieve a *N*-oxide-mediated Ugi four-component reaction (Scheme 1c).

In the continuation of our work on C2–H functionalization of aromatic amine *N*-oxides using isocyanides,¹⁸ herein we report a *N*-oxide-induced Ugi reaction to access a library of 2-phenyl-2-(phenyl(quinolin-2-yl)amino)acetamide derivatives in one-pot reactions via $C(sp^2)$ –H functionalization.

To test our hypothesis, initial screening experiments were conducted on quinoline *N*-oxide **1a** with benzaldehyde **2a**, aniline **3a**, and *p*-toluenesulfonylmethyl isocyanide (TosMIC) **4a** in suitable solvents and at temperatures to optimize the reaction conditions, and only the key results are reported in Table 1. The reaction of quinoline *N*-oxide **1a** (0.5 mmol) with benzaldehyde **2a** (0.5 mmol), aniline **3a** (0.5 mmol), and TosMIC **4a** (0.5 mmol) in CH_2Cl_2 at room temperature failed to give **5a** but at elevated temperature afforded the desired

product **5a** in 10% yield (Table 1, entries 1 and 2). Standard spectroscopic analysis identified **5a** as *N*-(4-methylbenzyl)-2-phenyl-2-(phenyl(quinolin-2-yl)amino)acetamide, in line with the original design. This result revealed that the quinoline *N*-oxide **1a** indeed acted as a carboxylic acid isostere in the traditional Ugi reaction.

To our delight, the yield of *N*-(4-methylbenzyl)-2-phenyl-2-(phenyl(quinolin-2-yl)amino)acetamide **5a** was increased to 60% at elevated temperatures (Table 1, entries 3 and 4). These results suggested that heating is required to get a better yield of product. Next, we carried out the reaction in various solvents to assess their effect on the reaction efficiency. Among other solvents tested, such as toluene, CH_3NO_2 , THF, alcohols, DMF, and DMSO, CH_3CN turned out to be superior for this transformation (Table 1, entries 5–12). Further change in the temperature and time has no effect on the yields of the reaction (Table 1, entry 13).

To explore the scope of this new four-component reaction, we examined diversely substituted quinoline *N*-oxides with aromatic aldehydes, anilines, and TosMIC (Table 2a). Quinoline *N*-oxides unsubstituted and substituted at various positions reacted smoothly to give the respective products in excellent yields (Table 2a). Substitutions on the nitrogenous quinoline ring were also well tolerated to deliver corresponding *N*-(4-methylbenzyl)-2-phenyl-2-(phenyl(quinolin-2-yl)amino)acetamides **5e,f** in 74–77% yields (Table 2a). Presence of a donor group on the fourth and sixth position of quinoline gave the target products **5g,h** in 80% yield.

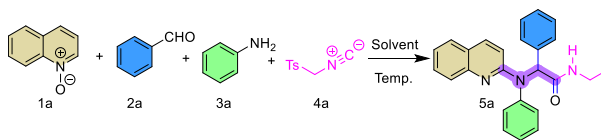
Likewise, 4,7-dichloro- and 4-chloro-6-bromo substitutions on the quinoline *N*-oxides gave target products **5i,j** in 70–75% yields, respectively. Electron-donating and electron-withdrawing groups on the aldehyde allowed smooth reaction under the optimized reaction conditions.

Next, we turned our attention to test the scope of various isocyanides with different quinoline *N*-oxides. Methyl 2-isocyanoacetate, ethyl 2-isocyanoacetate, benzyl isocyanide, and cyclohexyl isocyanide reacted smoothly with various quinoline *N*-oxides to obtain the Ugi products **6a–x** in 70–85% yield (Table 2b). The substitution on quinoline *N*-oxides with methyl, F, Cl, Br, and alkyl ethers did not alter the product yields (Table 2b).

Surprisingly, aliphatic aldehydes such as paraformaldehyde, propionaldehyde, and valeraldehyde gave the corresponding adducts **6y**, **6z**, and **6aa** in 60%, 54%, and 66% yields, respectively, which are less in comparison with aromatic aldehydes (Table 2c). Simple pyridine *N*-oxides are not reactive under these optimized conditions, which could be on account of their lower reactivity. Finally, we have evaluated the gram-scale synthesis of the developed protocol and obtained **6a** (2.17g) in 74% yield (see SI).

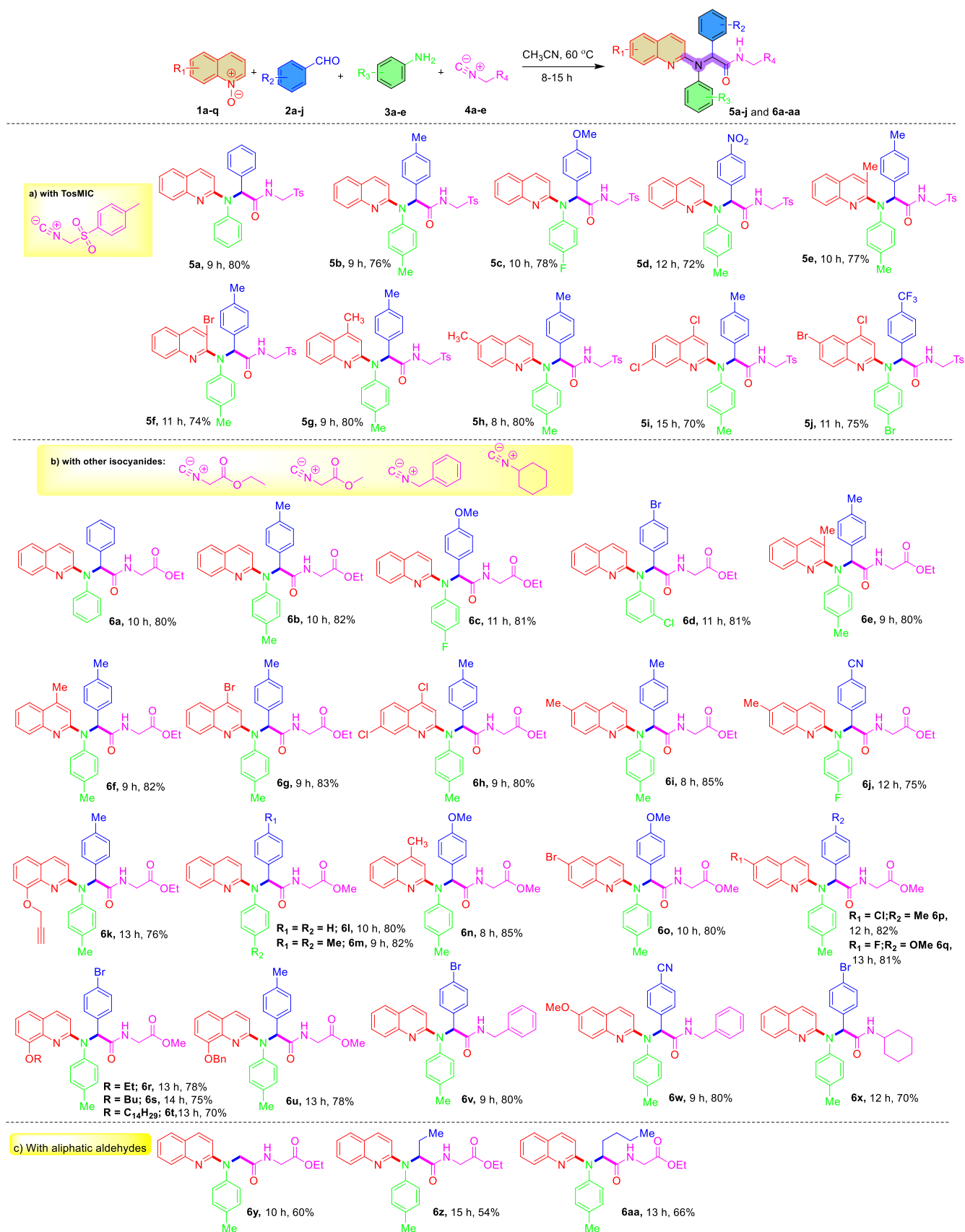
Next, we carried out several control experiments to determine the reaction mechanism (Scheme 2). Initially, quinoline **7** was treated with benzaldehyde **2a**, aniline **3a**, and isocyanide **4a** under the standard conditions, but no reaction was observed, which indicated the important role of *N*-oxide in this transformation (Scheme 2a). Later, 2-substituted quinoline *N*-oxide **8** was used to test the reactive position of quinoline *N*-oxide and found to be nonreactive under the optimized conditions (Scheme 2b). Then we conducted three-component reactions by varying the isocyanide and quinoline *N*-oxide and recorded the HRMS of reaction aliquots during the course of the reaction to determine the formation of intermediates (Scheme 2c,d).

Table 1. Optimization of Reaction Conditions^a



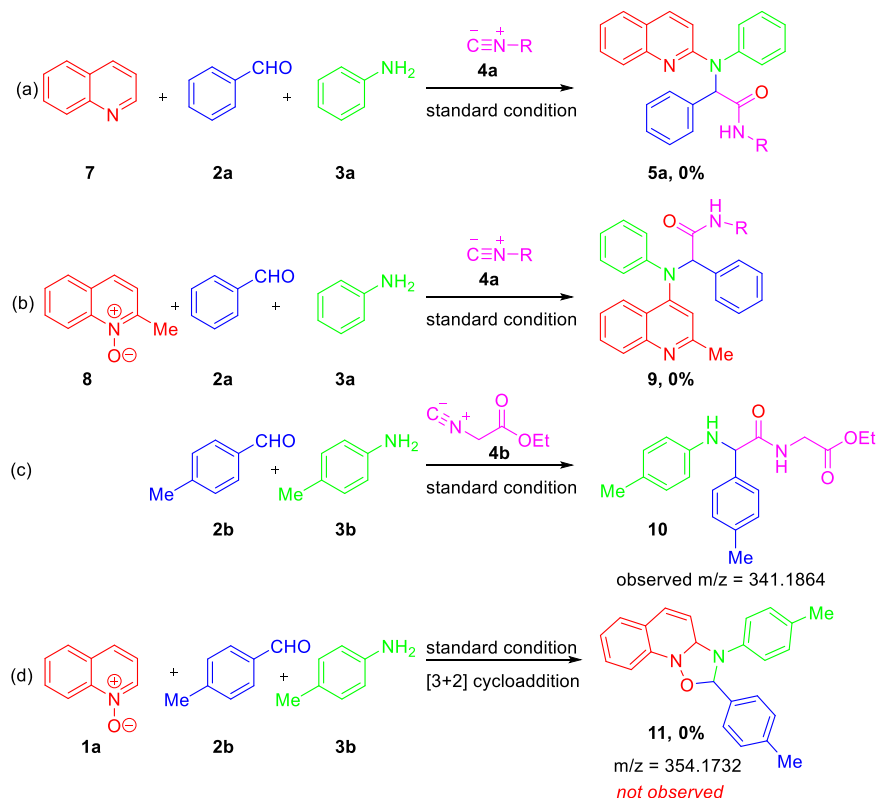
entry	solvent	temp (°C)	time (h)	yield ^b
1	CH_2Cl_2	rt	24	0
2	CH_2Cl_2	40	12	10
3	$CHCl_3$	60	12	40
4	DCE	60	12	60
5	toluene	60	12	10
6	CH_3CN	60	9	80
7	CH_3NO_2	60	12	40
8	THF	60	12	70
9	CH_3OH	60	8	50
10	EtOH	60	8	45
11	DMF	60	12	trace
12	DMSO	60	2	20
13	CH_3CN	80	24	79

^aReaction conditions: quinoline *N*-oxide **1a** (0.5 mmol), benzaldehyde **2a** (0.5 mmol), aniline **3a** (0.5 mmol), isocyanide **4a** (0.5 mmol), and solvent (2.0 mL). ^bIsolated yield.

Table 2. Substrate Scope^{a,b}

^aReaction conditions: quinoline *N*-oxides 1a–q (0.5 mmol), aldehydes 2a–j (0.5 mmol), anilines 3a–e (0.5 mmol), isocyanides 4a–e (0.5 mmol), CH₃CN (2 mL), 60 °C. ^bIsolated yields.

Scheme 2. Control Experiments



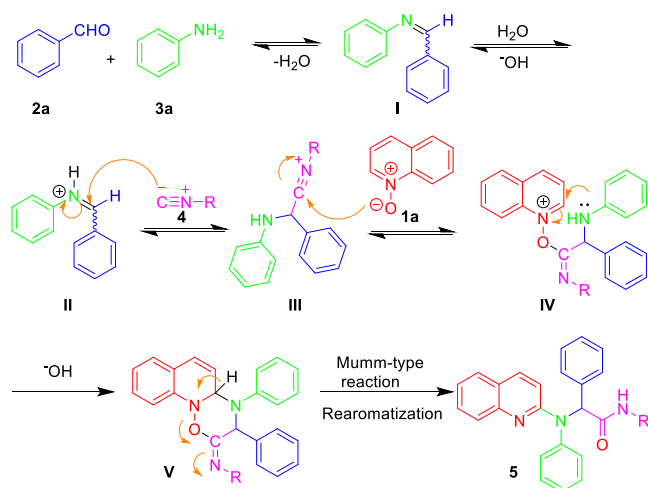
The HRMS data reveal the following points: (i) 4-methylbenzaldehyde **2b** initially reacts with *p*-toluidine **3b** to form an imine intermediate (observed $m/z = 210.1280$) which further undergoes addition by the ethyl 2-isocyanoacetate **4b** followed by hydrolysis to obtain product **10** (observed $m/z = 341.1864$) in the absence of quinoline *N*-oxide (Scheme 2c); (ii) quinoline *N*-oxides do not undergo [3 + 2] cycloaddition with the imine intermediate under standard conditions (Scheme 2d). On the basis of our control experiments and previous literature,^{19,20} a plausible mechanism is illustrated in Scheme 3.

Initially, reaction between benzaldehyde **2a** and aniline **3a** forms imine intermediate **I**. Next, intermediate **I** undergoes

protonation followed by nucleophilic addition of isocyanide **4** to form intermediate **III**. Later, the nucleophilic oxygen of *N*-oxide subsequently adds the carbon of the nitrilium ion to generate intermediate **IV**. Further, an irreversible nucleophilic addition of nitrogen (aniline) onto the activated C2-carbon of quinoline furnishes bicyclic intermediate **V**. Finally, intermediate **V** undergoes a Mumm-type reaction and rearomatization to obtain the desired product **5**.

In summary, an aromatic *N*-oxide-based single reactant replacement approach of the Ugi reaction has been successfully developed. This approach opens a new era for quinoline *N*-oxides to be potent acid surrogates in multicomponent reactions. This method provides a one-pot synthesis of α -quinolinamino amides while ensuring a wide substrate scope with functional group tolerance. Further, exploring the use of Lewis acids and expanding the substrate scope of other aromatic *N*-oxides are currently in progress.

Scheme 3. Proposed Mechanism



■ ASSOCIATED CONTENT

Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge at <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.joc.2c00904>.

Experimental details and procedures and spectral data for all new compounds (PDF)

Accession Codes

CCDC 2159541 contains the supplementary crystallographic data for this paper. These data can be obtained free of charge via www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/data_request/cif, or by e-mailing data_request@ccdc.cam.ac.uk, or by contacting The Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre, 12 Union Road, Cambridge CB2 1EZ, UK; fax: +44 1223 336033.

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Author Contributions

The manuscript was written through contributions of all authors.

Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to Professor Mahesh K. Lakshman on the occasion of his 60th birthday.

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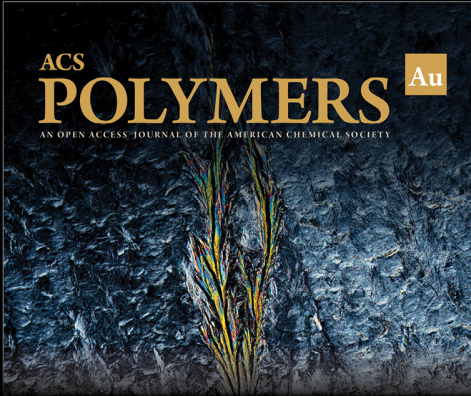
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