



# A neutral state yellow to navy polymer electrochrome with pyrene scaffold

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## ABSTRACT

A new pyrene based soluble polymer, namely poly(3,3-didecyl-6-(1-(3,3-didecyl-3,4-dihydro-2H-thieno[3,4-b][1,4]dioxepin-6-yl)pyren-6-yl)-3,4-dihydro-2H-thieno[3,4-b][1,4]dioxepine), **P5**, which is synthesized by both chemical and electrochemical methods, is highlighted. The polymer shows both electrochromic and fluorescent properties (the emission of yellow (545 nm) and yellowish green light (524 nm) in solid state and in THF solution, respectively). It is noteworthy that **P5** has a specific optical band gap (2.2 eV) to reflect the yellow color in the neutral state. Furthermore, the optical and electrochemical features of the polymer were investigated.

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## 1. Introduction

The design and synthesis of novel organic materials, specifically the conjugated polymers, are of considerable interest since they hold great promise for advanced technological applications in the fields of light emitting diodes (LEDs) [1,2], photovoltaics [3,4], and transistors [5,6]. In particular, they have been envisioned as one of the most useful electrochromes for high performance innovative devices [7,8], displays [9], smart windows [10,11], mirrors [12,13] and camouflage materials [14,15]. Organic polymer electrochromes (PECs) [16,17] can show high optical contrast ratio, high redox stability, long cycle life, multicolors with the same material, low response time and low operation voltage when compared to inorganic variants. For polymeric RGB applications in an industrial platform, it is important to process organic PECs onto large area surfaces: Compatibility, tunable intrinsic properties and also processability of these materials offered by the structural design pave the way of this. Therefore, significant effort has been

devoted to design and synthesize of novel solution-processable PECs [16,17], which exhibit many distinct and saturated colors of the spectrum including blue [18–20], green [20–25] and black [26–28] in the neutral state. In this context, we recently reported a series of solution processable D-A type PECs with tunable colors and performance [20]. Furthermore, it was shown that the neutral state colors of the PECs can easily be controlled through rational design of the backbone structures which mainly control the optical properties and allow spectral engineering [20,25,27,29]. However, it should be noted that the palette of colors that are available with PECs, should be extended, if the full color displays are desired where the PEC is an active colorant. At this stage, it is desired to design and synthesize of new PECs with yellow color on which scant studies have been done [30] one leg of the CMY (Cyan-Magenta-Yellow) color space [16].

On the other hand, pyrene and its derivatives are valuable fluorescent probes due to their unique fluorescence properties, which can be used in a variety of applications including sensors [31–35], LEDs [36,37] and transistors [38]. Also, having both electrochromism and fluorescent properties in a single molecule gets some advantages such

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as multifunctionality and miniaturization [39]. In contrast to these numerous applications of pyrene derivatives, regio-regular polymeric systems with pyrene scaffold in the main chain are uncommon [40], albeit a few random copolymers of pyrene with pyrrole [41], 3,4-ethylenedioxythiophene [42] and bithiophene [43] have been reported.

In this paper, we wish to report the synthesis and properties of a novel processable regio-regular PEC which is based on pyrene (**Py**) and didecylpropylenedioxythiophene (**P**). In this unique combination, **P** units provide solubility and low oxidation potential as well as electrochromic features whereas **Py** scaffold contributes with its fluorescence to this dual electrochromic and luminescent system. It is noteworthy that this novel processable PEC has a specific optical band gap (2.2 eV) to reflect or transmit the yellow color in the neutral state, which can be switched to a navy state upon doping. Furthermore, the optical and electrochemical features of this PEC were investigated.

## 2. Experimental details

All chemicals were purchased from Aldrich Chemical and used as received unless otherwise noted. 0.1 M tetrabutylammonium hexafluorophosphate (TBAH) dissolved in dichloromethane (DCM) and acetonitrile (ACN) was used as electrolyte solution. A platinum disk (0.02 cm<sup>2</sup>) and a platinum wire were used as working and counter electrodes, respectively, as well as a Ag/AgCl reference electrode (calibrated externally using 10 mM solution of ferrocene/ferrocenium couple which is an internal standard calibrated to be 0.44 V in ACN solution vs. Ag/AgCl). Repetitive cycling or constant potential electrolysis was used to obtain the polymer films. Electro-optical properties were investigated by using an indium tin oxide (ITO, Delta Tech. 8–12 Ω, 0.7 × 5 cm) electrode as well as a platinum wire as counter electrode and an Ag wire as a pseudo-reference electrode. For the spectroelectrochemical measurements, **P5** polymer film was coated on ITO electrode via cyclic voltammetry (between 0 and 1.15 V, 10 cycles) from a solution of **5** (5 × 10<sup>-3</sup> M) in 0.1 M TBAH/ACN. In order to break in the polymer film, it was switched between 0.0 and 1.25 V in a monomer-free electrolytic solution during five cycles. Electroanalytical measurements were performed using a Gamry PCI4/300 potentiostat-galvanostat. The electro-optical spectra were monitored on a Hewlett–Packard8453A diode array spectrometer. FTIR spectra were recorded on Nicolet 510 FTIR with an attenuated total reflectance (ATR). High resolution mass spectrometry analysis of **5** was done via Water, Synapt HRMS instrument. GPC analysis of polymer was carried out with Polymer Laboratories PL-GPC 220 instrument. TGA analysis was done via Perkin Elmer Pyris 1 TGA under nitrogen atmosphere with 10 °C/minute heating rate. Bromination of pyrene (**1**) [44] and the synthesis of **4** [20] were carried out according to previously reported procedures.

### 2.1. Synthesis of **5**

To an argon-degassed solution of **2** (150 mg, 0.417 mmol) and **4** (635 mg, 0.875 mmol) in dry toluene

(30 mL) was added Pd(PPh<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> (62 mg, 0.0875 mmol) and the mixture was heated under reflux during 5 days. After being cooled to room temperature, the solvent was removed under reduced pressure. The crude mixture was chromatographed on silica gel by eluting with hexane:methylene chloride (10:1, v/v) to give **5**. 56% yield, yellow viscous liquid.

<sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>, δ, ppm): 8.18–7.93 (m, 8H, Ar H), 6.55 (s, 2H, Ar H), 3.92 (s, 4H), 3.80 (s, 4H), 1.46–1.09 (m, 72H), 0.88–0.76 (m, 12H).

<sup>13</sup>C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>, δ, ppm): 149.64, 146.35, 131.00, 129.89, 129.14, 129.11, 127.20, 126.26, 124.89, 124.56, 120.36, 103.98, 77.02, 49.56, 38.08, 31.92, 30.50, 29.65, 29.63, 29.56, 29.34, 22.96, 22.69, 14.11.

FTIR (ATR, cm<sup>-1</sup>): 2926, 2950, 1609, 1509, 1487, 1467, 1405, 1375, 1270, 1176, 1042, 942, 849, 808, 732, 683.

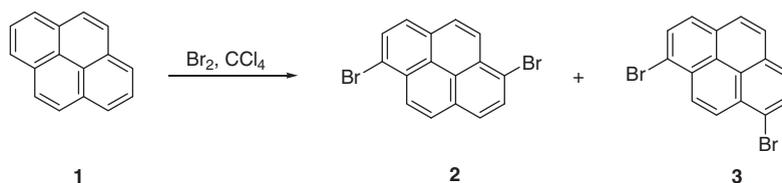
### 2.2. Chemical polymerization of **5**

Compound **5** (145 mg, 0.135 mmol) was dissolved in chloroform (50 mL). A solution of anhydrous FeCl<sub>3</sub> (110 mg, 0.675 mmol, 5 equiv) in nitromethane was added dropwise over a period of 45 min to the stirred monomer at room temperature (the bright yellow monomer solution turned progressively dark blue with addition of oxidizing agent). The mixture was stirred 48 h at room temperature. It was then precipitated into methanol (300 mL). The precipitate was filtered, redissolved in chloroform (300 mL), and stirred for 6 h with hydrazine monohydrate (6 mL) (the color of the solution was turned from dark blue to yellow after addition of the hydrazine monohydrate). After evaporation, the concentrate (dark blue) was precipitated into methanol (300 mL), the precipitate was filtered through a Soxhlet thimble and purified via Soxhlet extraction for 48 h with methanol. The polymer was extracted with chloroform and concentrated by evaporation. Then, the polymer was precipitated in methanol (300 mL) and collected as a black solid (52% yield).

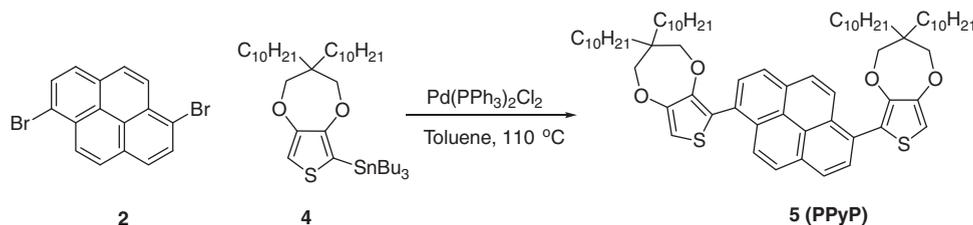
## 3. Results and discussion

The synthesis of the target compound **5** (**PPyP**) started with the bromination of pyrene (**1**), as outlined in Scheme 1. This reaction yielded a mixture of 1,6- (**2**) and 1,4-dibromopyrene (**3**), from which 1,6-regioisomer (**2**) was isolated by repeated recrystallization from toluene [44,45]. Stille coupling reaction of **2** with tributyl(3,3-didecyl-3,4-dihydro-2H-thieno[3,4-b][1,4]dioxepin-8-yl)stannane (**4**) [20] in the next step provided **5** in a yield of 56% (Scheme 2). Compound **5** was initially characterized by spectral (<sup>1</sup>H, <sup>13</sup>C NMR, FTIR, see supporting information Fig. S1–S3) data, which was in well agreement with the structure.

UV–vis absorption and emission spectra of **5** were depicted in Fig. 1. It was found that **5** emits blue light (431 nm) in THF solution as it is the case for many pyrene derivatives. It should be noted that organic compounds with emissions in the solid state are quite rare, since even bright organic fluorophores pack very tightly in the crystalline state or amorphous solid phase (as thin films), leading to very significant quenching [46–48]. As π–π stacking is



Scheme 1.



Scheme 2.

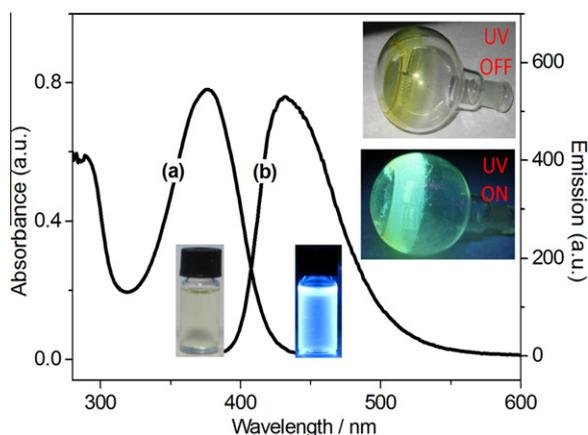


Fig. 1. (a) UV–vis absorption and (b) emission spectra ( $\lambda_{\text{exc}} = 377 \text{ nm}$ ) of **5** in THF. Inset: photographs of **5** under day (up) and UV (down) light.

mainly responsible for the quenching of the emission in the solid state for most of the aromatic fluorophores, it is assumed that **P** units on the core structure of **5** are effective in keeping the  $\pi$ -systems apart, where  $\pi$ - $\pi$  stacking is hindered.

The electrochemical behavior of **5** was investigated by cyclic voltammetry in an electrolyte solution consisting of 0.1 M TBAH dissolved in DCM and ACN by 1:1 volume ratio. Upon anodic scan, two oxidation peaks were observed at 1.06 and 1.28 V, which were attributed to **P** and **Py** units, respectively (Fig. 2, inset). The second oxidation peak looks quite irreversible during the polymerization process (taking place at 1.06 V), which probably precludes the reversibility of the redox behavior of the pyrene units.

In order to get an electroactive polymer film, repetitive anodic scans were performed between 0.0 and 1.15 V. During this process, a new reversible redox couple was observed at 0.95 V. The increase in the current intensities of this redox couple clearly indicated the formation of the polymer film **P5** on the electrode surface (Fig. 2, Scheme 3).

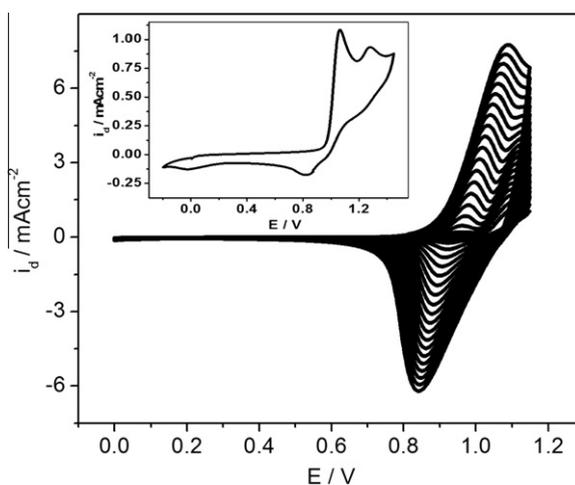
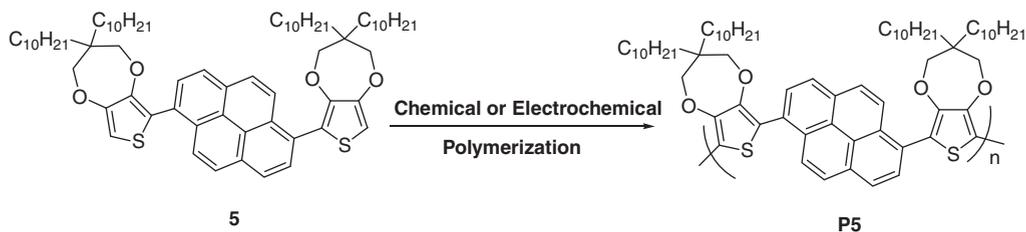


Fig. 2. Repetitive cyclic voltammogram of **5** ( $5 \times 10^{-3} \text{ M}$ ) in order to obtain **P5** in 0.1 M TBAH/ 1:1 (v/v) DCM-ACN with a scan rate of 100 mV/s vs. Ag/AgCl. Inset: First anodic scan of **5** ( $5 \times 10^{-3} \text{ M}$ ) under the same conditions.

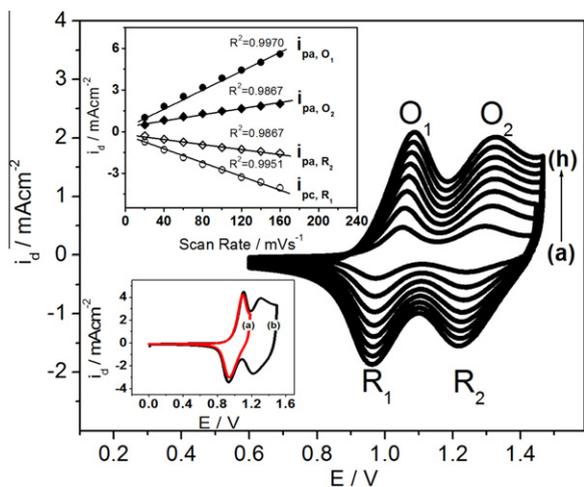
When the as-prepared **P5** film (Scheme 3) was anodically scanned in a monomer free electrolyte solution of 0.1 M TBAH/ACN (Fig. 3), two reversible redox couples were observed at 1.02 and 1.28 V, which were ascribed to the **P** and **Py** units, respectively. Unlike monomer behavior, pyrene units have reversible redox couple since the polymerization was completed and the charges formed on polymer backbone do not prevent the reversibility. The onset potentials of this novel system, 0.91 and 1.07 V, were lower when compared to dodecylthiophene or fluorene based systems [40].

As shown in Fig. 3, inset, a linear increase in the peak currents as a function of the scan rates confirmed that the polymer film was tightly bounded to the electrode surface and the redox process is non-diffusional.

The oxidative polymerization of **5** was also carried out with  $\text{FeCl}_3$  in order to get **P5** by chemical methods

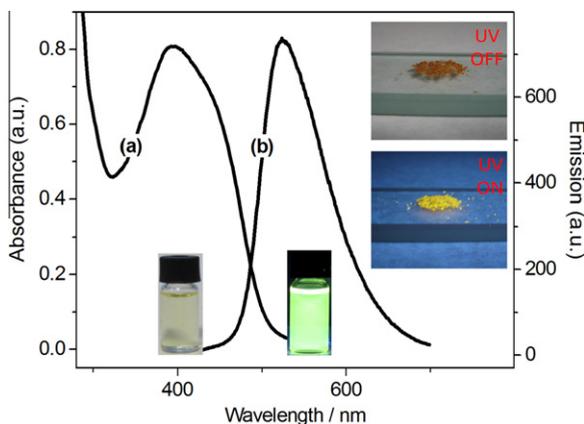


Scheme 3.

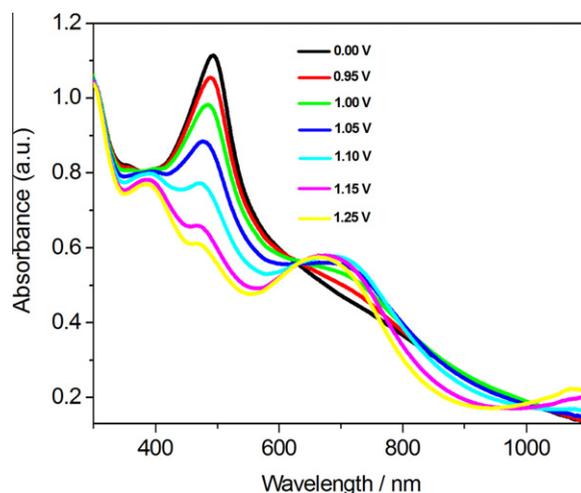


**Fig. 3.** Cyclic voltammogram of **P5** in 0.1 M TBAH/ACN with different scan rates: (a) 20, (b) 40, (c) 60, (d) 80, (e) 100, (f) 120, (g) 140, (h) 160  $\text{mVs}^{-1}$ . Top inset: Peak current vs. scan rate in 0.1 M TBAH/ACN ( $i_{pa}$ : anodic peak current value,  $i_{pc}$ : cathodic peak current value). Bottom inset: Cyclic voltammogram of **P5** showing (a) first redox couple, (b) second redox couple (waveclipping).

(Scheme 3). It was found that both electrochemically and chemically obtained polymer, **P5**, was quite soluble in THF and partially soluble in common organic solvents: dichloromethane (DCM),  $\text{CHCl}_3$ , DMF (*N,N*-dimethylformamide). More importantly, **P5** reflects or transmits the yellow color in the neutral state. Note that soluble neutral



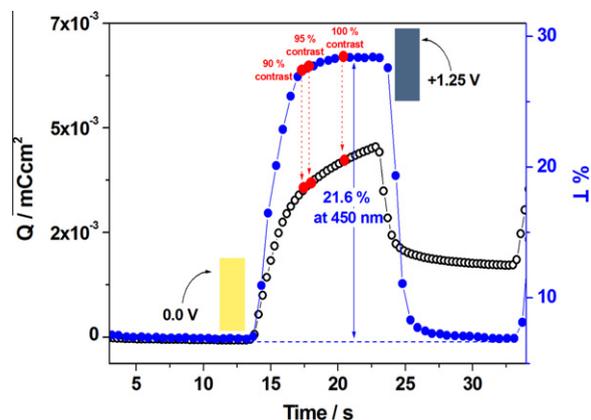
**Fig. 4.** (a) UV-vis absorption and (b) emission spectra ( $\lambda_{exc} = 391 \text{ nm}$ ) of **P5** in THF. Inset: photographs of **P5** under day (up) and UV (down) light.



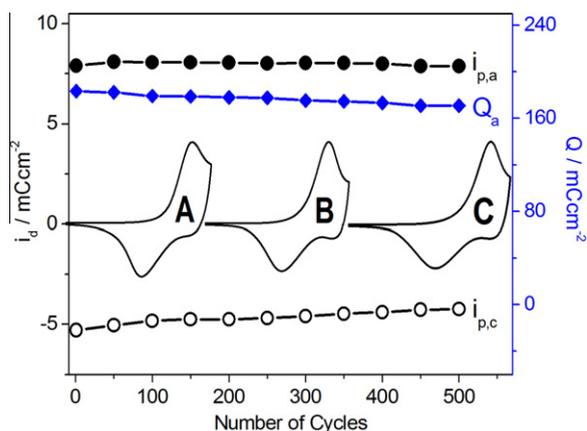
**Fig. 5.** Spectroelectrochemistry of **P5** film on an ITO coated glass slide in 0.1 M TBAH/CAN between 0.0 and +1.25 V vs. Ag wire.

state yellow PECs, which require a specific optical band gap (*vide infra*), are not enough. Additionally, the polymer has a maximum wavelength of emission resulting in yellowish green (524 nm) and yellow (545 nm) emission in the solution and in the solid phases, respectively (Fig. 4).

The molecular weight determination of the polymer was carried out by gel permeation chromatography (GPC) by using polystyrene as the standard and THF as the eluent.



**Fig. 6.** Chronoabsorptometry and chronocoulometry tandem experiment of **P5** between 0.0 and +1.25 V at 495 nm.



**Fig. 7.** Stability test for **P5** ( $5 \text{ mC/cm}^2$ ) film in  $0.1 \text{ M TBAH/ACN}$  via square wave potential switching between  $0.0$  and  $1.3 \text{ V}$  and cyclic voltammetry at  $75 \text{ mVs}^{-1}$  as a function of number of at: A: 1st; B: 100th; C: 500th.  $Q_a$ : Anodic charge stored;  $i_{p,a}$ : Anodic peak current;  $i_{p,c}$ : Cathodic peak current.

The measurements indicated that **P5** had a weight-averaged molecular weight ( $M_w$ ) of  $9052$  ( $M_n = 4316$ ), with a polydispersity index (PDI) of  $2.09$ , respectively. Although the  $M_w$  of **P5** was moderately low when compared to precedent analogs [40], it was evident that the polymer chain of **P5** consisted of approximately 25 repeating units.

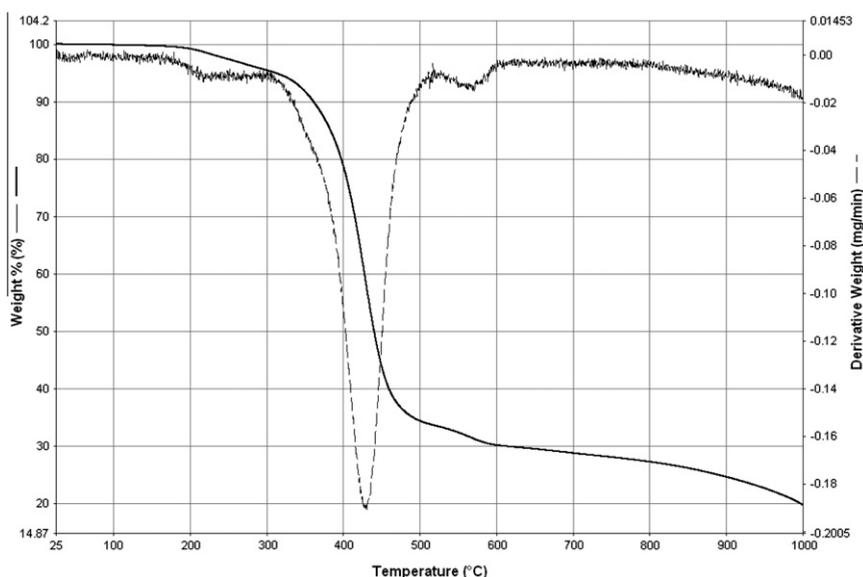
In order to elucidate the electrochromic features of **P5**, a simple electrochromic device was constructed and the spectroelectrochemical behavior of the polymer film coated on ITO electrode was examined under a variety of voltage pulses between  $0.95$  and  $1.25 \text{ V}$  (p-doping). During p-doping, the higher energy absorbances at wavelengths shorter than  $500 \text{ nm}$  ( $\pi-\pi^*$  transition) started to decrease with an apparent new absorption band at around  $680 \text{ nm}$ , which was attributed to the formation of polaron

charge (Fig. 5). Upon further oxidation, the polaron charge carriers turned into the bipolaron charge carriers above  $1000 \text{ nm}$ . In this process, it was assumed that charge carriers (polarons and bipolarons) were delocalized as the conformation of the polymer was planarized to an extent. As a result of these variations in the conformation and the absorption spectrum of **P5**, the color of the polymer changes from yellow in the neutral state to a navy state upon doping.

On that basis, the band gap ( $E_g$ ) of polymer **P5** was calculated from the onset of  $\pi-\pi^*$  transition at  $450 \text{ nm}$ , and it was found to be  $2.2 \text{ eV}$ . The percentage transmittance change ( $\Delta\%T$ ) and coloration efficiency (CE at 95% of the full optical switch, after which point the naked eyes couldn't sense the changes in the color) of the polymer film were also calculated to be  $21.6\%$  and  $287 \text{ cm}^2/\text{C}$  at  $450 \text{ nm}$  during p-doping, respectively. Also, the CE values were found as  $252$  and  $298 \text{ cm}^2/\text{C}$  for  $100\%$  and  $90\%$  of full optical switch (Fig. 6). The response time of the polymer film was found to be  $3.4 \text{ s}$  for  $95\%$  of full optical switch.

Stability of the material is a key parameter for any potential application of the polymers. For that reason, the electrochemical and thermal stability of the polymer were examined. First of all, the electrochemical stability of **P5** was tested by switching between neutral ( $0.0 \text{ V}$ ) and oxidized ( $1.25 \text{ V}$ ) states. It was found that **P5** retained  $93\%$  of its electroactivity even after  $500$  of cycles (Fig. 7).

Finally, the thermal stability of **P5** was determined by thermogravimetric analysis (TGA) as depicted in Fig. 8. Though light weight losses were observed during the analysis, the polymer shows the onset temperature of weight loss at  $350^\circ\text{C}$  under nitrogen atmosphere. Note that polypyrrene shows the onset temperature of weight loss at around  $290^\circ\text{C}$  [42]. The data for **P5** suggested that the polymer would be thermally robust during metal deposition for optical device applications such as LED and solar cells, where thermal stability is very important. On the



**Fig. 8.** Thermogravimetry curve of chemically prepared **P5**.

other hand, when the temperature was risen above 350 °C, the total weight loss was increased due to the decomposition of the material.

#### 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the design and synthesis of novel materials (**5** and **P5**) with pyrene scaffold were described. Interestingly, both of these systems were emissive in both solution and the solid states. It is assumed that **P** units on the core structure hinder  $\pi$ - $\pi$  stacking thus rendering the emission in the solid state. Furthermore, a novel soluble PEC, **P5**, which has a specific optical band gap (2.2 eV) to reflect (or transmit) the yellow color in the neutral state was introduced herein to extend the repertoire of available colors of processable PECs (blue, green and black etc.), which are essential for full color displays [49]. The electrochemical and thermal stability of the polymer indicated that **P5** is a promising candidate for electrochromic applications. Work in this line is currently underway in our laboratories.

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#### Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found, in the online version, at [doi:10.1016/j.orgel.2011.05.016](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orgel.2011.05.016).

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