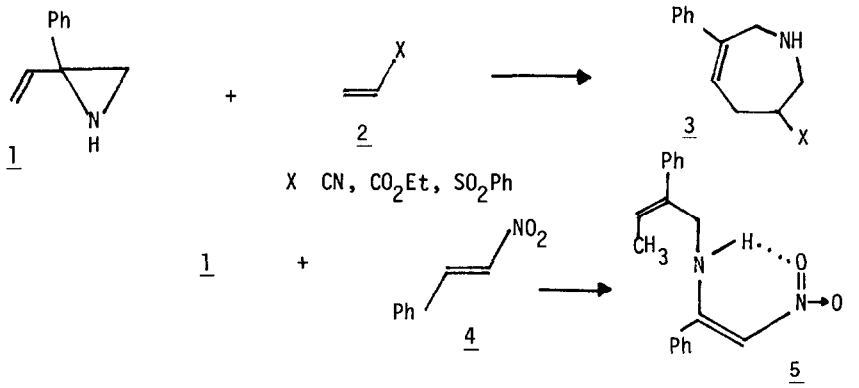
Tetrahedron Letters,Vol.23,No.19,pp 1989-1992,1982 0040-4039/82/191989-04$03.00/0
Printed in Great Britain 

# On the Mechanism and Scope of a Novel Nitroolefin Rearrangement[1]

Alfred Hassner* and William Chau, Department of Chemistry, State University of New York, Binghamton, N Y. 13901

Abstract D-Labelling permits differentiation between three plausible mechanistic pathways in the novel transformation of vinylaziridine 1 with β-nitrostyrene 4 to nitro enamino olefin 5 The results are consistent with a retro-ene reaction proceeding under mild conditions (80°). Choice of proper substituents can guide the reaction toward formation of azepines or substituted enamines

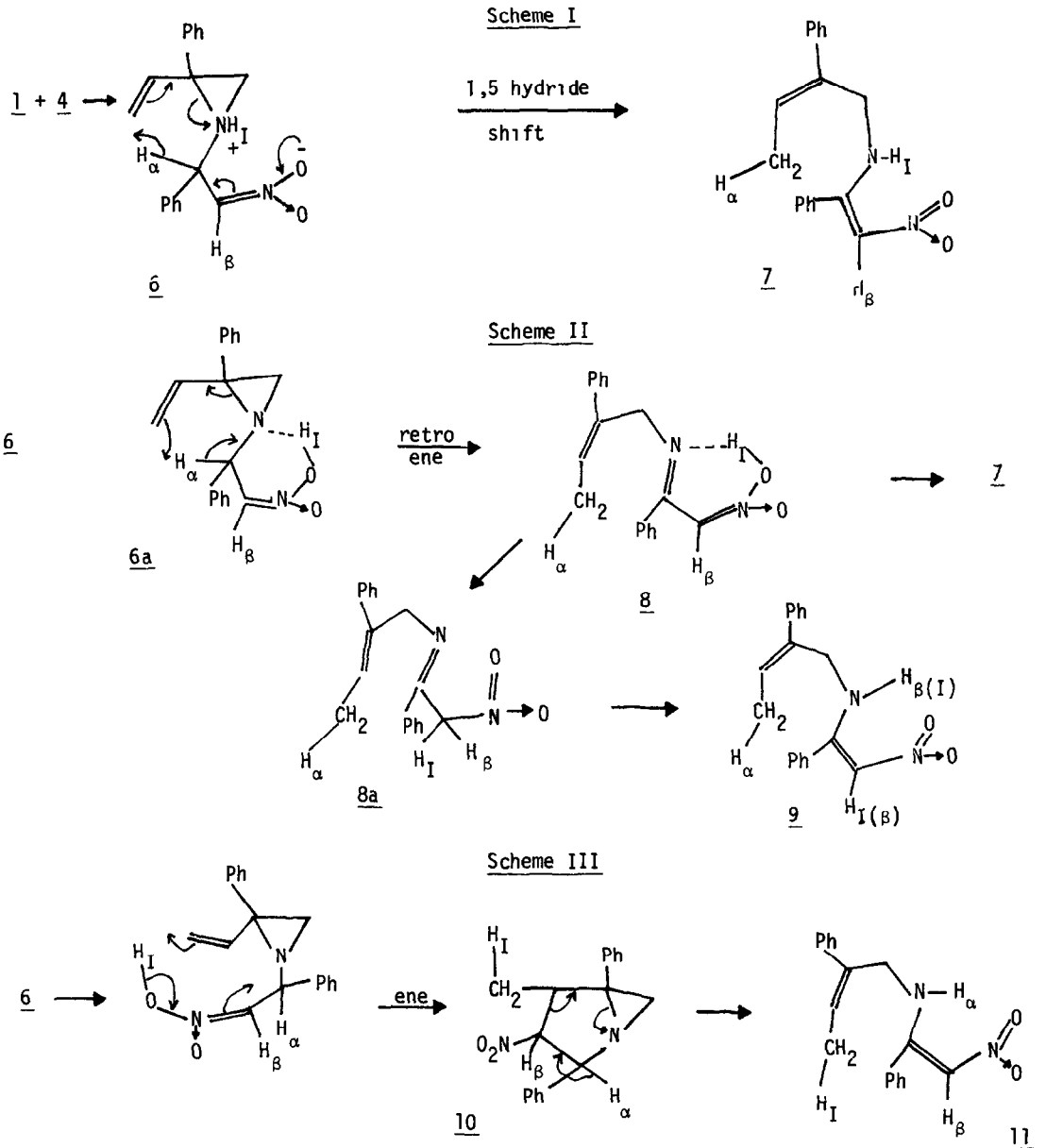
During a recent study[2] of the addition of 2-vinylaziridine 1 to unsaturated substrates 2, which led to formation of tetrahydroazepines 3, we discovered an unusual rearrangement When the nitroolefin 4 was used as a substrate instead of 2, and heated with 1 at 80°, the product isolated in over 90% yield was unexpectedly the unsaturated nitro enamine 5 The structure of the latter was proved by spectra and x-ray diffraction



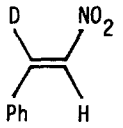

An examination of the scope and mechanism of these transformations has led to consideration of 3 pathways, Schemes I-III, for this novel rearrangement One involves an anion-mediated 1,5-hydride shift (Scheme I) Scheme II involves a prototropic shift followed by a retro-ene reaction (also a 1,5-shift) The third scheme proceeds with ring closure to a 5-membered ring 10 (ene reaction on a nitronic acid)[3] followed by ring opening of 10 to 11 It is clear that labelling of $H_\alpha$ should permit differentiation between Scheme III and the other two, while labelling of $H_I$ or $H_\beta$ may differentiate between Scheme I and II, provided

that these hydrogens do not exchange in the product.

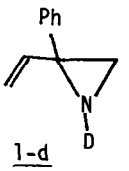
We prepared 4-d and found that its reaction product (96% yield) with vinylaziridine 1 possessed structure 7 ($H_\alpha$=D), as evidenced by its nmr spectrum (vinyl triplet at δ5.83 ppm,




NH at 9 95 disappears on $D_2O$ exchange and $CH_2$ doublet at 4 24 which collapses to a singlet with $D_2O$) This excludes Scheme III as a reaction pathway



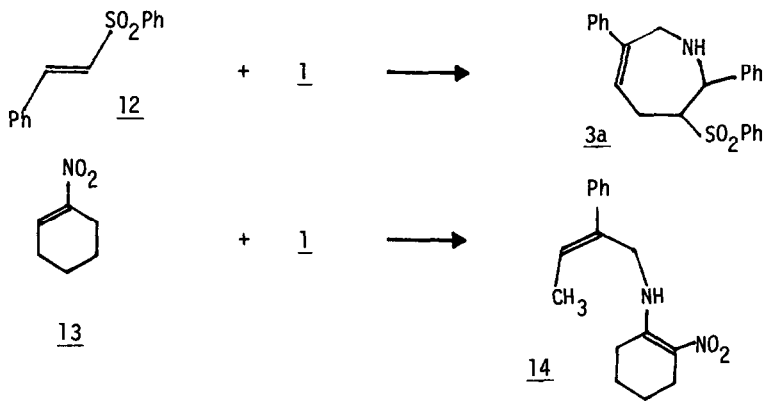

4-d



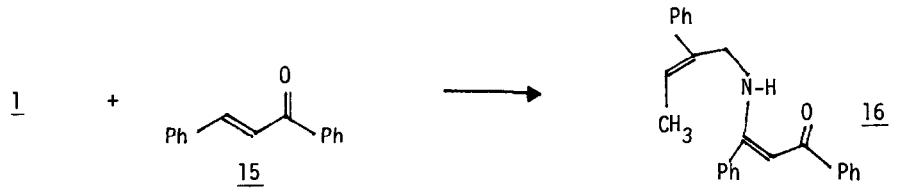

1-d

Treatment of the N-deuterated 1-d with 4 leads to isolation of 9 ($H_I$ or $H_\beta$=D) with deuterium distributed on N and C in a ratio of 2·1, as determined by nmr integration of the NH at δ9,95 ppm and the vinyl $H_\beta$ singlet at δ6.45 ppm. The product 7 exchanges only $H_I$ with $D_2O$ under reaction conditions (80°) Hence, an equilibration 7 ⇄ 8 ⇄ 9, that would scramble the deuterium in the product from nitrogen to carbon, is ruled out. Tautomerism of 8a to 9 ($H_I$ or $H_\beta$=D) should occur with preferential proton over deuteron transfer to nitrogen, by virtue of the primary isotope effect. The observed 2 1 ratio of N-D to C-D in 9 is consistent with Scheme II in which a dual pathway (8 → 7 and 8 → 9) is operating or alternatively, both Scheme I and II may be operating in this rearrangement

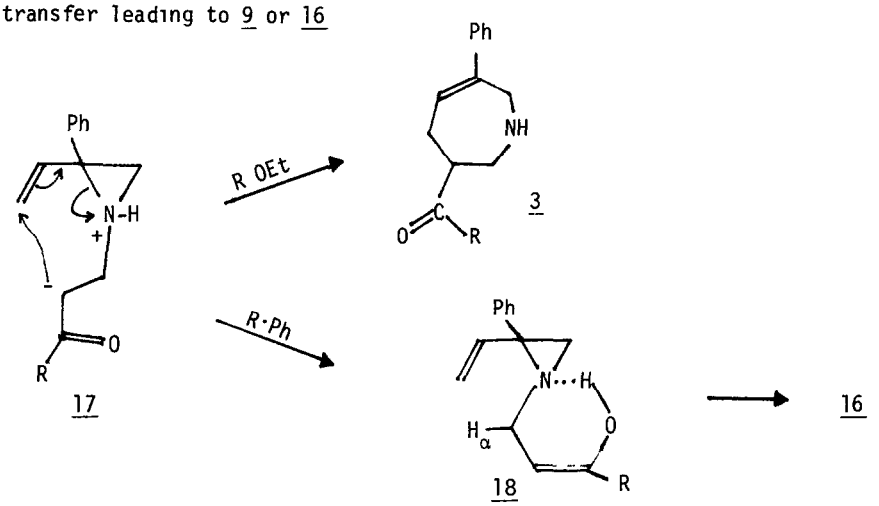
To establish the effect of substituents in the olefin substrate 2 upon the course of the reaction, we examined the phenyl substituted unsaturated sulfone 12 (presence of Ph but $SO_2Ph$ instead of $NO_2$ as compared to 4), and 1-nitrocyclohexene 13 (presence of $NO_2$ but absence of Ph) The former reacted with 1 to produce the phenyl substituted tetrahydroazepine 3a, whereas 13




led to rearranged product 14. This indicates the importance of the nitro substituent on the olefin substrate However, the presence of a nitro group is not essential, since ketone 15 also leads to rearrangement (see 16)




We conclude that, for the rearrangement to occur, a well enolizable group ($NO_2$ or keto C=O) is required. In such cases the intermediate 6 or 17, instead of ring closing to a 7-membered ring 3, will undergo a prototropic shift to 6a or 18 followed by a retro-ene reaction and proton transfer leading to 9 or 16




These results shed light on the mechanism of the novel transformation 1 + 4 ⟶ 5 and allow one, by choice of proper substituents, to guide the reaction to azepine 3 or to rearranged products (of type 5, 14, 16) In these cases the retro-ene reaction proceeds under relatively mild conditions (80° instead of the usual 200-350°) apparently because of relief of strain by breaking of the aziridine ring[4] and may be applicable to other strained ring systems

ACKNOWLEDGMENT This work was supported by USPHS Grant CA19203 awarded by the National Cancer Institute, DHEW A Meyerhoff Fellowship awarded to AH is gratefully acknowledged

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2 A Hassner, R. D'Costa, A T McPhail and W Butler, Tetrahedron Letters, 3691 (1981)

3 Examples of both the ene reaction and the retro-ene reaction have been studied but they usually require higher temperature conditions (200-500°), (a) H M R Hoffman, Angew. Chem Internat Ed , 8, 556 (1969), (b) W Oppolzer and V. Snieckus, ibid , 17, 476 (1978)

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(Received in USA 20 November 1981)