

Supporting Information

Mechanoredox Catalyzed Cationic RAFT Polymerization via Perfluorinated Anion Assistance for High-Molecular-Weight Polymers

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Materials

Isobutyl vinyl ether (IBVE; 99%, TCI), n-butyl vinyl ether (NBVE; 99%, TCI), n-propyl vinyl ether (NPVE, 97%, TCI), ethyl vinyl ether (EVE, 98%, TCI), cyclohexyl vinyl ether (CyVE, 98%, TCI), 2-chloroethyl vinyl ether (Cl-EVE, 99%, Sigma-Aldrich), dihydrofuran (DHF, 98%, TCI) were filtered through a plug of neutral alumina to remove inhibitors prior to use. *S*-(trifluoromethyl)dibenzothiophenium tetrafluoroborate (CF₃ reagent a, 97%), *S*-(trifluoromethyl)dibenzothiophenium tetrafluoroborate (CF₃ reagent b, 97%), *S*-(trifluoromethyl)thionitronium triflate (CF₃ reagent c, 97%) were purchased from Shanghai Aladdin Biochemical Technology Co., Ltd. Hydrogen chloride ether solution (2.0 M HCl in Et₂O) was purchased from Zhoushan Aike Biological Technology Co., Ltd. Anhydrous dichloromethane (DCM, 99%, TCI), sodium diethyldithiocarbamate (98%, J&K), sodium tetrafluoroborate (NaBF₄, 98%, TCI), sodium hexafluorophosphate (NaPF₆, 98%, J&K), sodium hexafluoroantimonate (NaSbF₆, 98%, J&K), sodium hexafluoroarsenate (NaAsF₆, 98%, MERYER)were used as received. All ball-milling (BM) experiments were carried out in a Retsch Mixer Mill (MM 400) ball mill instrument using 1.5 mL stainless-steel grinding jars equipped with a single 5 mm stainless-steel grinding ball.

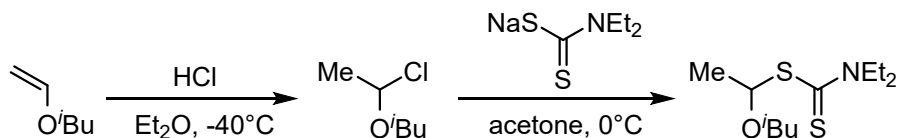
Characterization

¹H NMR and ¹³C NMR were recorded on a BRUKER AVANCE NEO 400MHz nuclear magnetic resonance instrument by using CDCl₃ as solvent and tetramethylsilane as the internal standard. The number-average molecular weight (M_n) and dispersity (\bar{D}) of the obtained polymers were determined by a TOSOH HLC-8320 SEC equipped with a TSK gel Multipore HZ-N (3) 4.6 × 150 mm column at 40 °C. THF served as the eluent with a flow rate of 0.35 mL·min⁻¹. SEC samples were injected using the TOSOH HLC-8320 SEC plus autosampler. The number-average molecular weight (M_n) and dispersity (\bar{D}) were calibrated with PS standards. GC-MS analysis was performed using an Agilent 5977C GC/MSD single quadrupole mass spectrometer coupled to an Agilent 8860 gas chromatograph.

Matrix-assisted laser desorption/ionization time-of-flight mass spectrometry (MALDI-TOF MS) was measured on an UltrafleXtreme III MALDI-TOF mass spectrometer (Bruker Daltonics, Germany) The matrix was trans-2-[3-(4-tert-butylphenyl)-2-methyl-2-propenylidene]-malononitrile (DCTB) for PMMA, the additive salt was CF₃COONa. Samples were tested in linear mode. And the data analysis was conducted with Bruker's Flex Analysis software.

Synthetic and Experimental Procedures

Experimental procedure for synthesis of chain transfer agent S-1-isobutoxyethyl N,N-diethyl dithiocarbamate (DTCB)

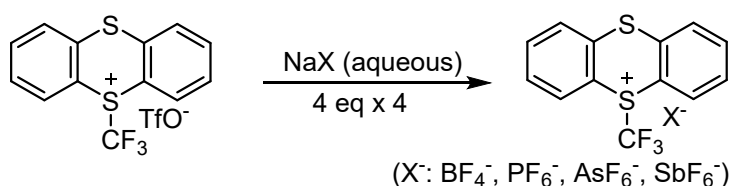


DTCB were synthesized according to the reported method.^{1,2} In a flame dried flask, 2.6 mL isobutyl vinyl ether (IBVE, 20 mmol) was added dropwise to 10 mL hydrogen chloride ether solution (2M, 20 mmol) over 10 min at -40 °C and stirred for 3 h to prepare IBVE-HCl adduct. Then, the addition product was slowly dripped into the solution of sodium diethyldithiocarbamate trihydrate (5.4 g, 24 mmol) in acetone (100mL) at 0 °C. Stirring was continued for 1.5 h at 0 °C, followed by 1.5 hours at room temperature. The solvent was removed by rotary evaporation. The crude product was dissolved in 60 mL EA, and washed with saturated sodium bicarbonate (NaHCO₃) and sodium chloride (NaCl). The solvent was removed under reduced pressure. The residue was further purified by column chromatography eluting with a solvent mixture of hexane: ethyl acetate (gradient from 10:0 to 9.5:0.5) to afford the compound as light oil (4.1 g, 16.4 mmol, 84% yield).

¹H NMR (CDCl₃, 400 MHz, δ , ppm): 5.89 (q, 1 H), 4.03 (m, 2 H), 3.75 (m, 2 H), 3.47 (dd, 1 H), 3.34 (dd, 1 H), 1.85 (m, 1 H), 1.73 (d, 3 H), 1.28 (dt, 6 H).

¹³C NMR (CDCl₃, 100 MHz, δ , ppm): 195.0, 91.6, 76.0, 48.7, 46.8, 28.3, 23.5, 19.4, 12.6, 11.7.

Experimental procedure for synthesis of initiators containing different counterions through ion pair replacement



As an illustrative example, the synthesis of TT-CF₃⁺ BF₄⁻ was conducted under air condition.³ Initially, 1 g S-(trifluoromethyl) thionitronium triflate (TT-CF₃⁺ TfO⁻, 2.3 mmol) was dissolved in 20 mL DCM. Concurrently, 4 g NaBF₄ (36.4 mmol) was dissolved in 80 mL deionized water, and this solution was divided into four equal portions. The dichloromethane solution was washed four times with the NaBF₄ aqueous solution, followed by drying with anhydrous Na₂SO₄. The mixture was then filtered, and the solvent was removed under reduced pressure to yield a white solid product (TT-CF₃⁺ BF₄⁻, 0.75 g, 88 % yield). The product was characterized by ¹⁹F NMR spectroscopy using acetone-d₆. Notably, TT-CF₃⁺ SbF₆⁻ did not exhibit a signal peak corresponding to SbF₆⁻, while the disappearance of the TfO⁻ signal peak confirmed the

successful ion pair replacement.

TT-CF₃⁺ TfO⁻ ¹⁹F NMR (acetone-d₆, 376 MHz, δ, ppm): -51.12, -78.43.

TT-CF₃⁺ BF₄⁻ ¹⁹F NMR (acetone-d₆, 376 MHz, δ, ppm): -50.66, -149.67, -149.66.

TT-CF₃⁺ PF₆⁻ ¹⁹F NMR (acetone-d₆, 376 MHz, δ, ppm): -50.56, -70.45, -72.34.

TT-CF₃⁺ AsF₆⁻ ¹⁹F NMR (acetone-d₆, 376 MHz, δ, ppm): -51.08, -62.20, -64.68, -67.15; -69.62.

TT-CF₃⁺ SbF₆⁻ ¹⁹F NMR (acetone-d₆, 376 MHz, δ, ppm): -51.86.

Experimental procedure for mechano-cRAFT polymerization of IBVE under air or Ar

Under air conditions (relative humidity 40%-50%), the initiator [CF₃]⁺ [X]⁻ (0.003 mmol) and 5 mg MoS₂ (0.03 mmol, 1.6 wt %) were added to a 1.5 mL stainless steel grinding jar containing a 5 mm diameter ball. Subsequently, 50 μL anhydrous DCM (LAG = 0.2 μL/mg), 2.1 mg DTCEB (0.008 mmol) and 250 mg IBVE (2.5 mmol) were added and closed under air. The grinding jar was then placed in the MM400 ball mill and milled at 30 Hz for designated time. Polymerization was quenched with 5% Et₃N in MeOH, and diluted with CHCl₃. The solution was centrifuged to remove the MoS₂, the supernatant was collected and analyzed by ¹H NMR spectroscopy and GPC.

In an argon-filled glove box, the initiator [CF₃]⁺ [X]⁻ (0.003 mmol) and 2 mg MoS₂ (0.01 mmol, 0.7wt %) were added to a 1.5 mL stainless steel grinding jar containing a 5 mm diameter ball. Subsequently, 10 μL anhydrous DCM (LAG = 0.04 μL/mg), 2.1 mg DTCEB (0.008 mmol) and 250 mg IBVE (2.5 mmol) were added, and the grinding jar was closed. The grinding jar was then removed from the glove box and placed in the MM400 ball mill and milled at 30 Hz for designated time. Polymerization was quenched with 5% Et₃N in MeOH, and diluted with CHCl₃. The solution was centrifuged to remove the MoS₂, the supernatant was collected and analyzed by ¹H NMR spectroscopy and GPC.

Simulation details:

The density functional theory (DFT) calculation was performed as implemented in Gaussian G16 program package to get a clear understanding about the interaction between the anions (TfO⁻, BF₄⁻, AsF₆⁻) and cations. The optimized geometry was calculated by the dispersion-corrected density functional theory (DFT-D3) method on the B3LYP-D3(BJ) theory level with 6-31G (d) in conjunction with the SMD continuum dielectric computations. As for these system with minor solvent (DCM), the solvent environment could be regarded as the same as the monomer (static dielectric constant of the IBVE, ε_s = 3.3). We constructed two anion-cation dimer models for each combination, with the anion positioned either above or below the cation. One configuration is more favorable for ion pair interactions, while the other is more conducive to forming hydrogen bonds. As for the IBVE cation and water, the latter configuration was selected. Then the intermolecular interaction energy of the optimized structures was calculated by DFT (B3LYP/6-311+G**). The

intermolecular interaction energy was calculated followed the equation $E_{\text{int}} = E_{\text{dimer}} - (E_{\text{anion}} + E_{\text{cation}})$.

Supplementary Tables

Table S1. Results of mechano-cRAFT polymerization of IBVE under various conditions

Entry ^a	Condition	Time (h)	Conversion ^b (%)
1	No MoS ₂	2	< 5
2	No ball milling	2	< 5
3	No TT-CF ₃ ⁺ AsF ₆ ⁻	2	< 5
4	30 °C stirring	2	< 5
5	LAG = 0.04 μL/mg	2	71

^aReaction conditions: [IBVE] = 2.5 mmol, TT-CF₃⁺ AsF₆⁻ = 0.003 mmol, 1.6wt% loading MoS₂ (0.03 mmol). Ball mill (1.5 mL stainless-steel jar, 5 mm stainless-steel milling ball, 30 Hz), LAG (η = 0.2 μL/mg) with DCM. Room temperature, under air. ^bDetermined by ¹H NMR in CDCl₃.

Table S2. Results of water tolerance of AsF₆⁻ initiated system under air.

Entry ^a	H ₂ O (eq)	Time (h)	Conv. [%] ^b	<i>M</i> _{n,th} [kDa] ^c	<i>M</i> _{n,GPC} [kDa] ^d	<i>Đ</i> ^d
1	0	1.5	98	10.1	10.5	1.09
2	10	2	60	6.3	6.8	1.19

^aReaction conditions: [IBVE] = 2.5 mmol, TT-CF₃⁺ AsF₆⁻ = 0.003 mmol, 1.6wt% loading MoS₂ (0.03 mmol). Ball mill (1.5 mL stainless-steel jar, 5 mm stainless-steel milling ball, 30 Hz), LAG (η = 0.2 μL/mg) with DCM. Room temperature, under air. ^bDetermined by ¹H NMR in CDCl₃.

^c*M*_{n,th} = [IBVE]₀/[DTCB]₀ × conversion × *M*_{IBVE} + *M*_{DTCB}. ^dDetermined by GPC using polystyrene as calibration standard in THF.

Table S3. Mechano-cRAFT polymerization of other vinyl ethers under Ar.

Monomers:

NBVE

NPVE

EVE

CyVE

DHF

Cl-EVE

Entry ^a	Monomer	DP_T	Time (h)	Conv. [%] ^b	$M_{n,th}$ [kDa] ^c	$M_{n,GPC}$ [kDa] ^d	\bar{D} ^d
1	NBVE	500	1.5	97	48.8	51.3	1.28
2		1000	1.5	96	96.4	98.6	1.43
3	NPVE	500	1.5	99	42.9	44.1	1.25
4		1000	1.5	99	85.5	88.9	1.40
5	EVE	500	1	99	35.9	37.6	1.24
6		1000	1	99	71.6	63.9	1.44
7	CyVE	500	1	93	58.9	37.9	2.20
8		1000	1	92	116.4	53.1	2.49
9 ^e		1000	1	90	113.8	97.6	1.84
10		500	1	94	33.2	23.8	1.43
11	DHF	1000	1	94	66.1	35.3	1.60
12 ^e		1500	1	83	87.5	78.8	1.64
13	Cl-EVE	500	1.5	98	52.5	32.6	1.63
14		1000	1.5	98	104.7	43.0	1.96

^aReaction conditions: [M] = 2.5 mmol, TT-CF₃⁺ AsF₆⁻ = 0.003 mmol, 0.7wt% loading MoS₂ (0.03 mmol). Ball mill (1.5 mL stainless-steel jar, 5 mm stainless-steel milling ball, 30 Hz), LAG (η = 0.04 μ L/mg) with DCM. Room temperature, under air. ^bDetermined by ¹H NMR in CDCl₃. ^c $M_{n,th}$ = [M]₀/[DTCB]₀ \times conversion \times M_M + M_{DTCB} . ^dDetermined by GPC using polystyrene as calibration standard in THF. [e] LAG = 0.2 μ L/mg.

Table S4. The simulation results of interaction energy between different counterions and IBVE dimer cation.

Dimer	TfO-IBVE	BF ₄ -IBVE	AsF ₆ -IBVE	H ₂ O-IBVE
Dimer 1 (hatree)	-1585.19	-1048.15	-3458.80	-699.23
Dimer 2 (hatree)	-1585.19	-1048.14	-3458.79	/
cation (hatree)	-623.62	-623.62	-623.62	-622.76
anion (hatree)	-961.54	-424.41	-2835.04	-76.47
interaction 1 (hatree)	-0.034105	-0.117229	-0.141549	-0.00461
interaction 2 (hatree)	-0.034131	-0.109053	-0.134443	/
interaction 1 (kcal/mol)	-21.40	-73.56	-88.82	-2.90
interaction 2 (kcal/mol)	-21.42	-68.43	-84.36	/

Table S5. Summary of molecular weight of IBVE cationic polymerization in recent years.

Entry	M_n (kDa)	$M_{n,th}$ (kDa)	\bar{D}	IBVE	Reference
1 ^a	14.5	29.7	1.25	undried	this work
2 ^a	27.3	29.3	1.23	undried	this work
3 ^a	77.9	93.4	1.46	undried	this work
4 ^b	101	98.2	1.43	undried	this work
5 ^b	171.1	378.9	1.58	undried	this work
6 ^a	9.8	9.8	1.06	dried	our previous work ¹
7 ^a	26.4	59.4	1.26	dried	our previous work ¹
8	18.1	23	1.15	undried	ref ⁴
9	65.7	57	1.14	undried	ref ⁵
10	47.8	68.6	1.38	undried	ref ⁶
11	40.6	39.9	1.19	undried	ref ⁷
12	70.8	99.4	1.34	undried	ref ⁷
13	25.7	40	1.21	undried	ref ⁸
14	34	34	1.24	undried	ref ⁹
15	80.1	100.1	1.37	dried	ref ¹⁰
16	14.5	15.2	1.46	dried	ref ¹¹
17	160.4	200	1.68	dried	ref ¹¹
18	153	186.3	1.91	dried	ref ¹²
19	35	40	1.3	dried	ref ¹³
20	34.8	40	1.49	dried	ref ¹⁴
21	22.5	28.8	1.33	dried	ref ¹⁵
22	32.6	34.6	1.45	dried	ref ¹⁶
23	65.3	80.5	1.24	dried	ref ¹⁷
24	104	104	1.23	dried	ref ¹⁸
25	22.5	20.2	1.19	dried	ref ¹⁹
26	25.4	30.3	1.48	dried	ref ²⁰
27	19.2	20.3	1.54	dried	ref ²¹
28	37.1	40.2	1.18	dried	ref ²²
29	55	50	1.14	dried	ref ²³

^aReaction in air. ^bReaction in Ar.

Supplementary Figures

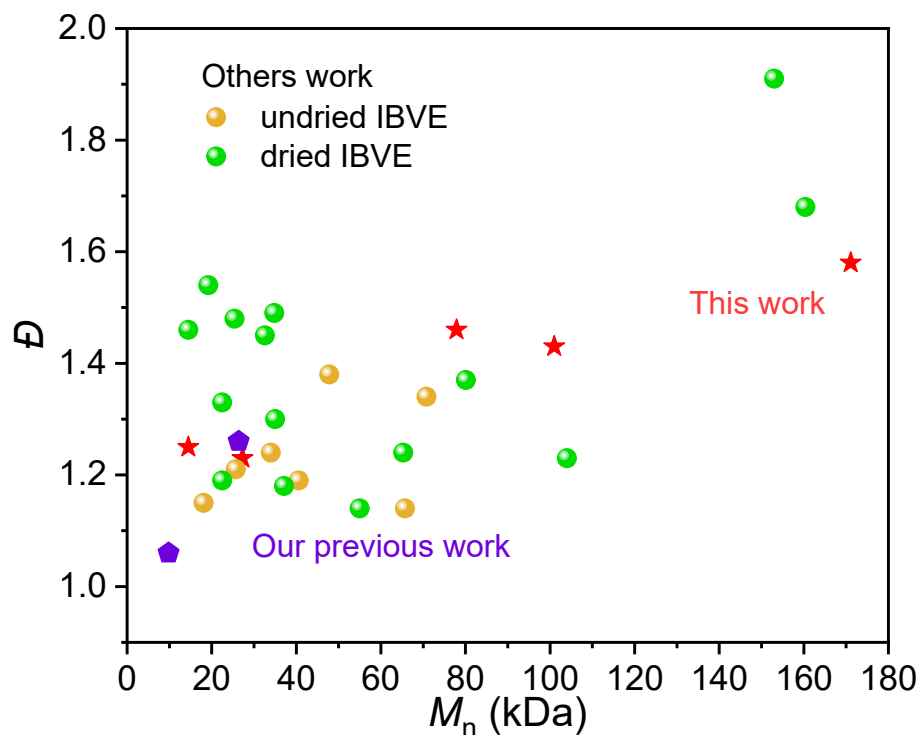


Figure S1. Scatter plot for comparing the molecular weight of IBVE cationic polymerization in recent years (date from Table S5).

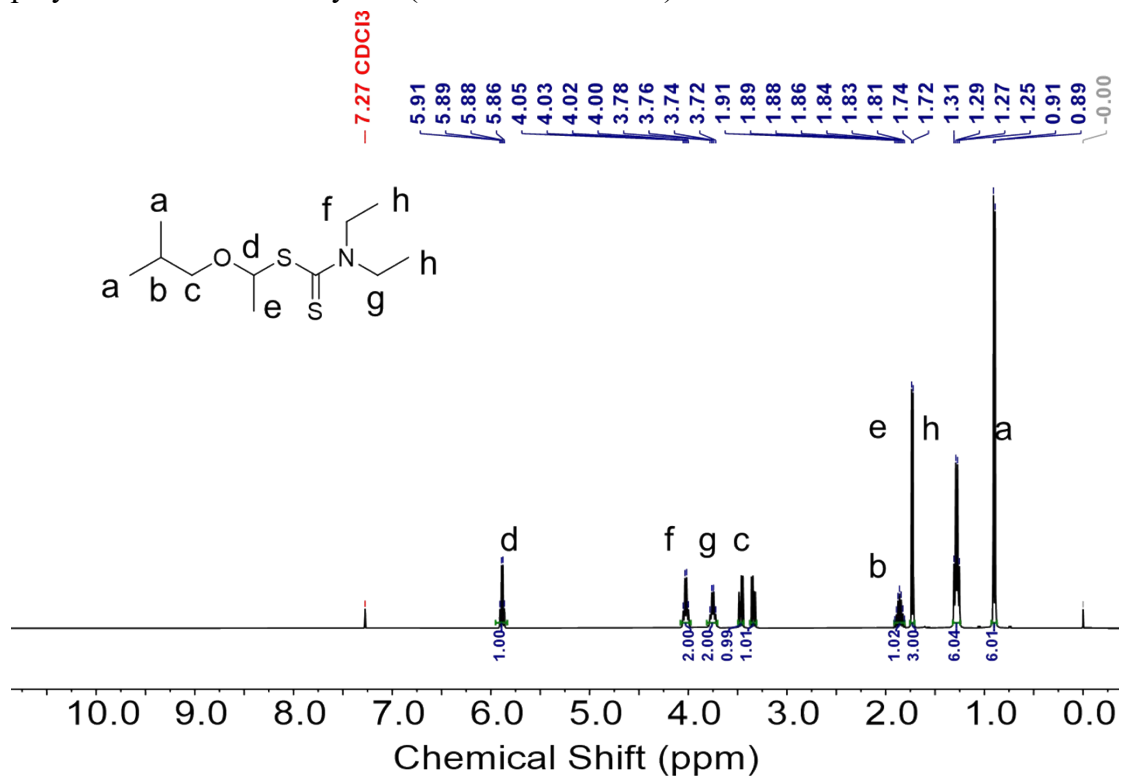


Figure S2. ^1H NMR spectrum of *S*-1-isobutoxyethyl *N,N*-diethyl dithiocarbamate (DTCB) in CDCl_3 .

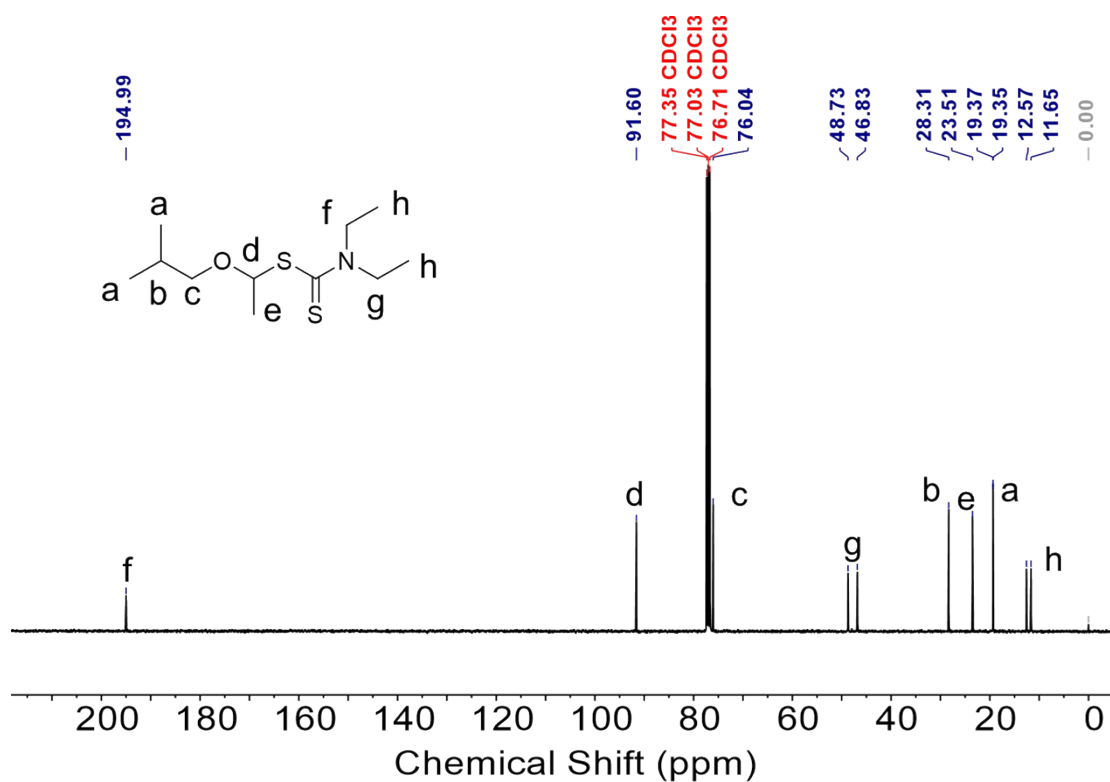


Figure S3. ¹³C NMR spectrum of *S*-1-isobutoxyethyl *N,N*-diethyl dithiocarbamate (DTCB) in CDCl₃.

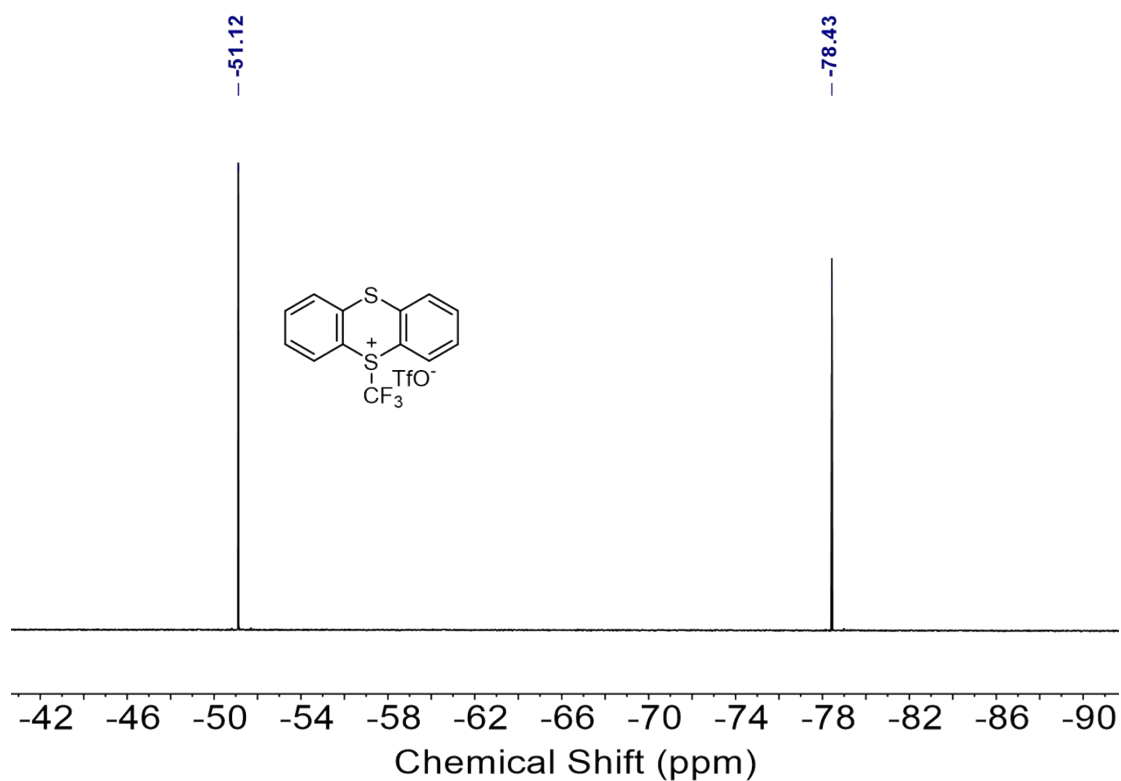


Figure S4. ¹⁹F NMR spectrum of initiator **c** (TT-CF₃⁺ TfO⁻) in acetone-d₆.

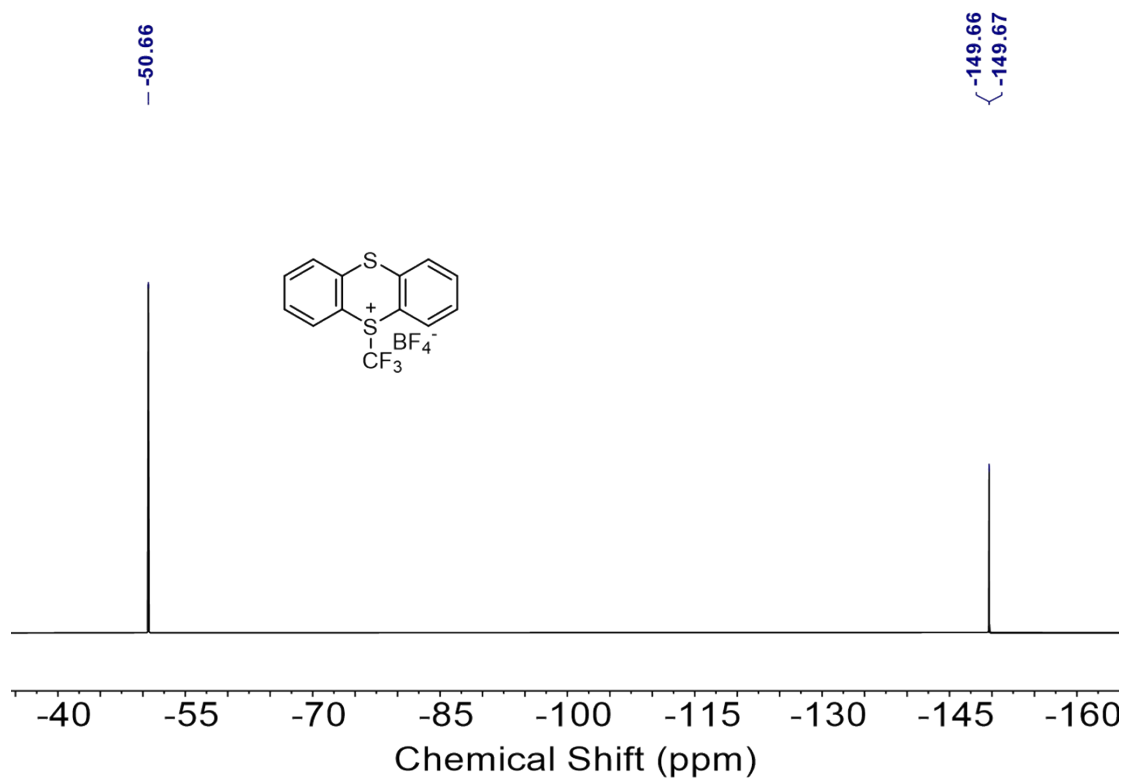


Figure S5. ¹⁹F NMR spectrum of initiator **d** (TT-CF₃⁺ BF₄⁻) in acetone-d₆.

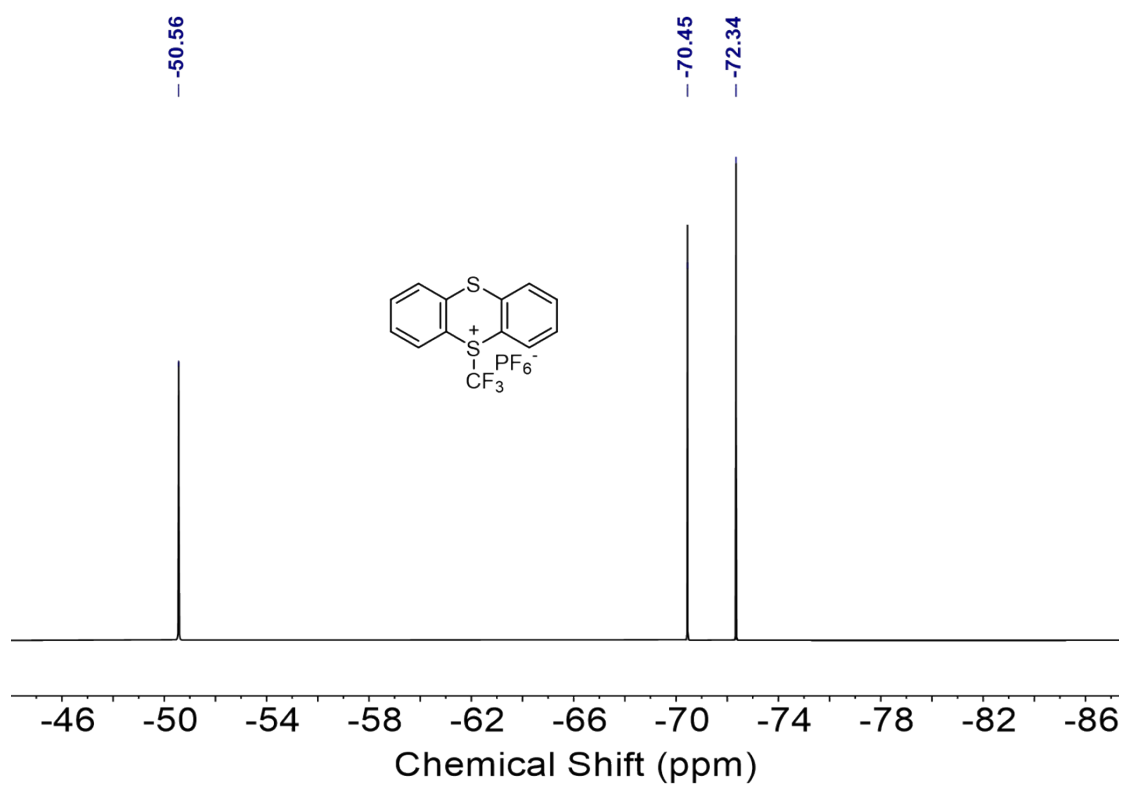


Figure S6. ¹⁹F NMR spectrum of initiator **e** (TT-CF₃⁺ PF₆⁻) in acetone-d₆.

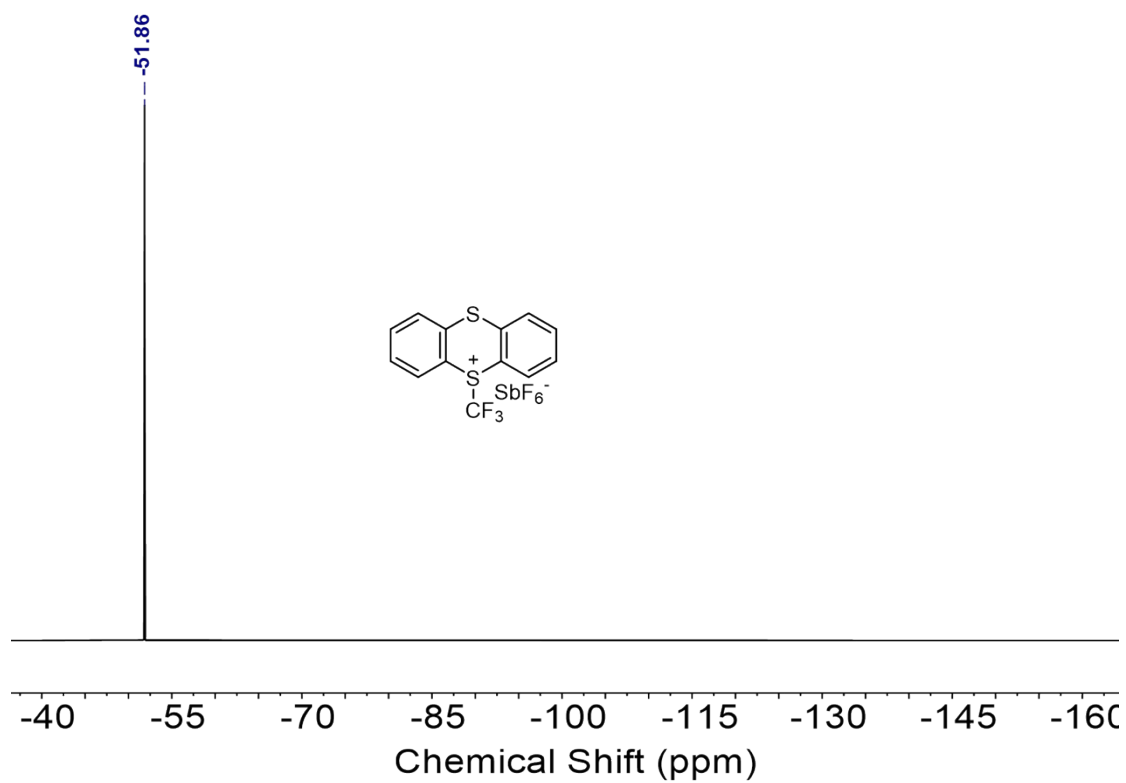


Figure S7. ^{19}F NMR spectrum of initiator **f** ($\text{TT-CF}_3^+ \text{SbF}_6^-$) in acetone- d_6 .

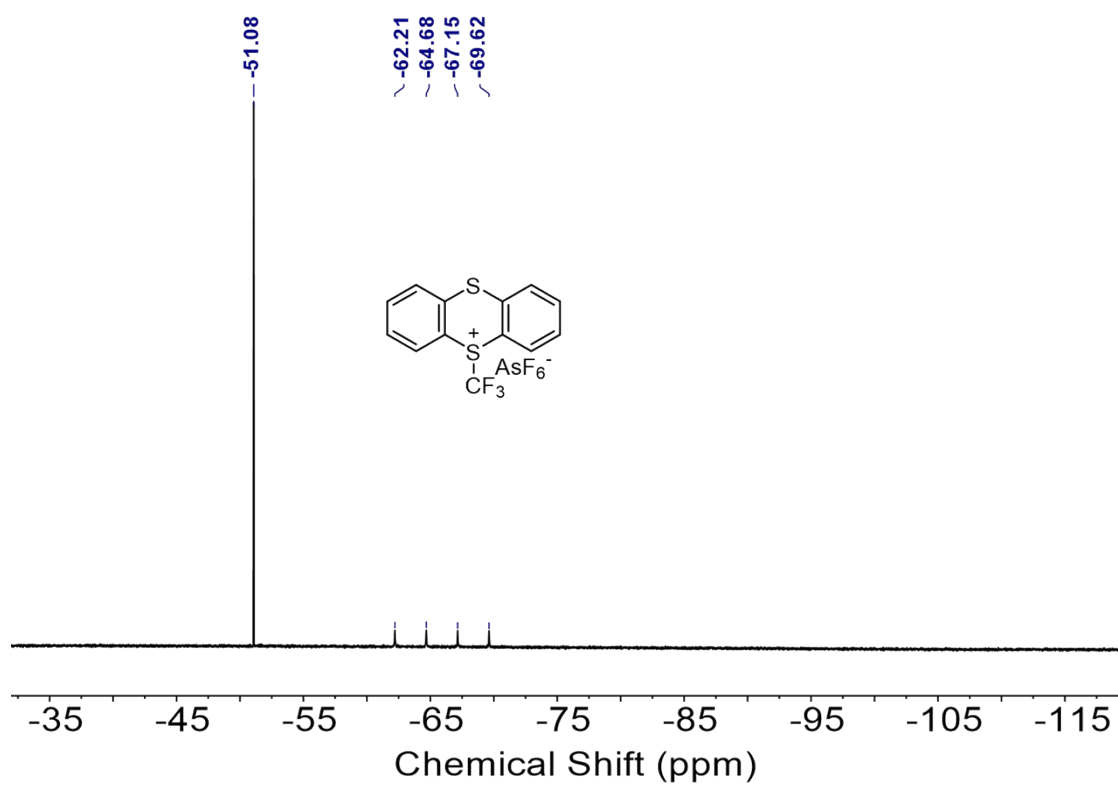


Figure S8. ^{19}F NMR spectrum of initiator **g** ($\text{TT-CF}_3^+ \text{AsF}_6^-$) in acetone- d_6 .

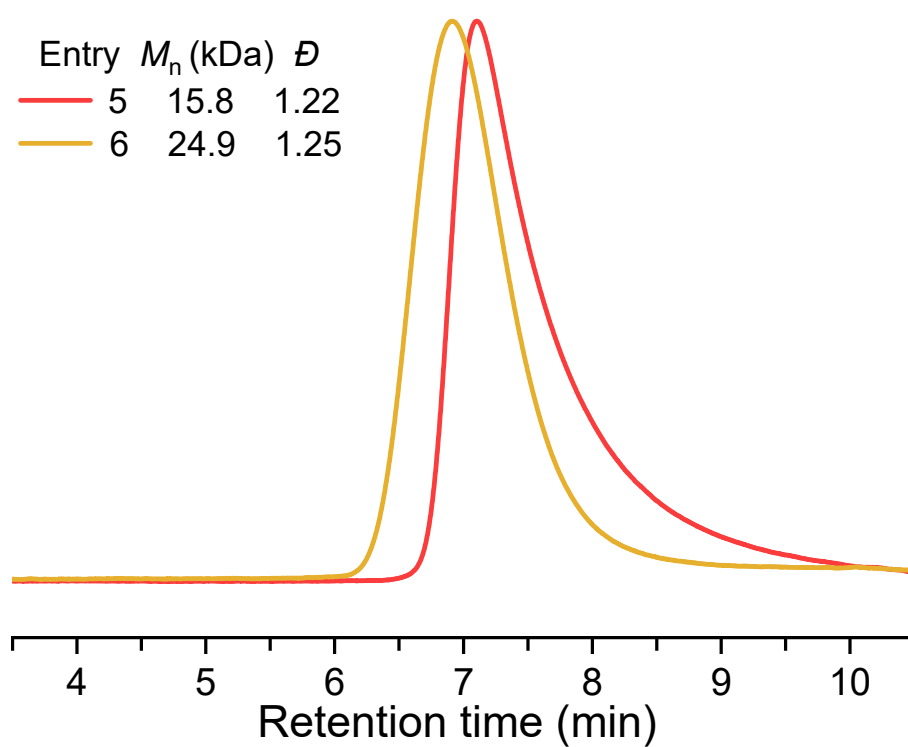


Figure S9. GPC traces of PIBVE with different counterions under air (Table 1, entries 5-6).

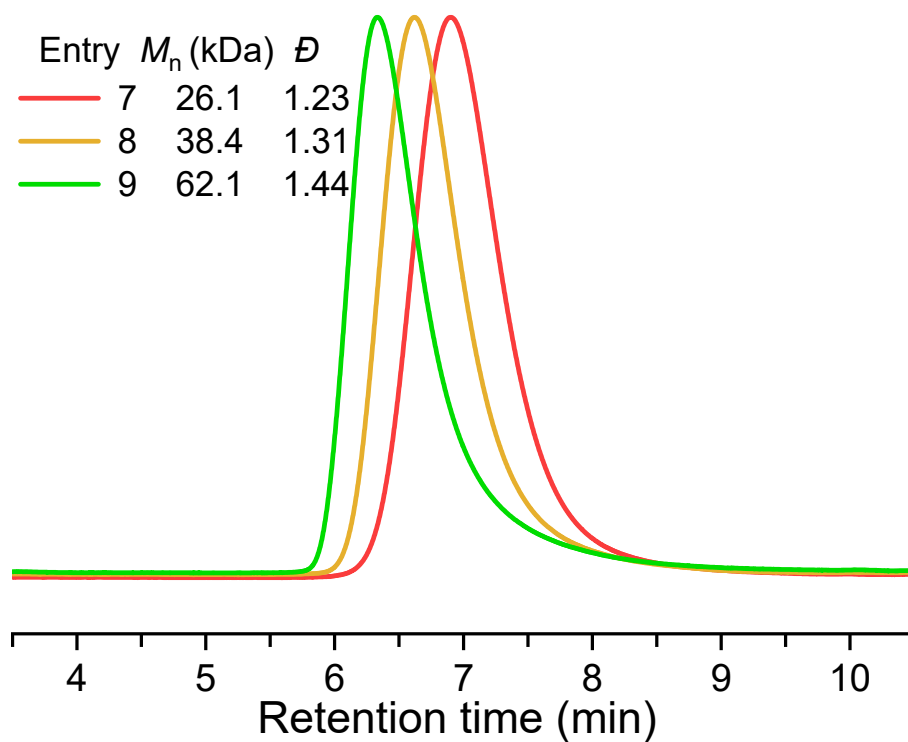


Figure S10. GPC traces of PIBVE using **e** (TT-CF₃⁺PF₆⁻) as initiator under air (Table 1, entries 7-9).

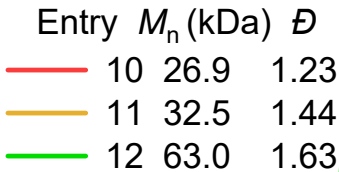


Figure 1 displays five stacked ^1H NMR spectra corresponding to different entries in Table 1, showing the chemical structure of the polymer and the chemical shift (ppm) on the x-axis (ranging from 10.0 to 0.0 ppm). The spectra are labeled as follows:

- Table 1, entry 13 (purple spectrum)
- Table 1, entry 10 (blue spectrum)
- Table 1, entry 7 (green spectrum)
- Table 1, entry 6 (olive spectrum)
- Table 1, entry 5 (red spectrum)

The chemical structure of the polymer is shown in the top left, featuring a repeating unit with a central carbon atom bonded to two methyl groups and two oxygen atoms, which are part of a cyclic ether structure. The chemical shift (ppm) is indicated on the x-axis, ranging from 10.0 to 0.0 ppm.

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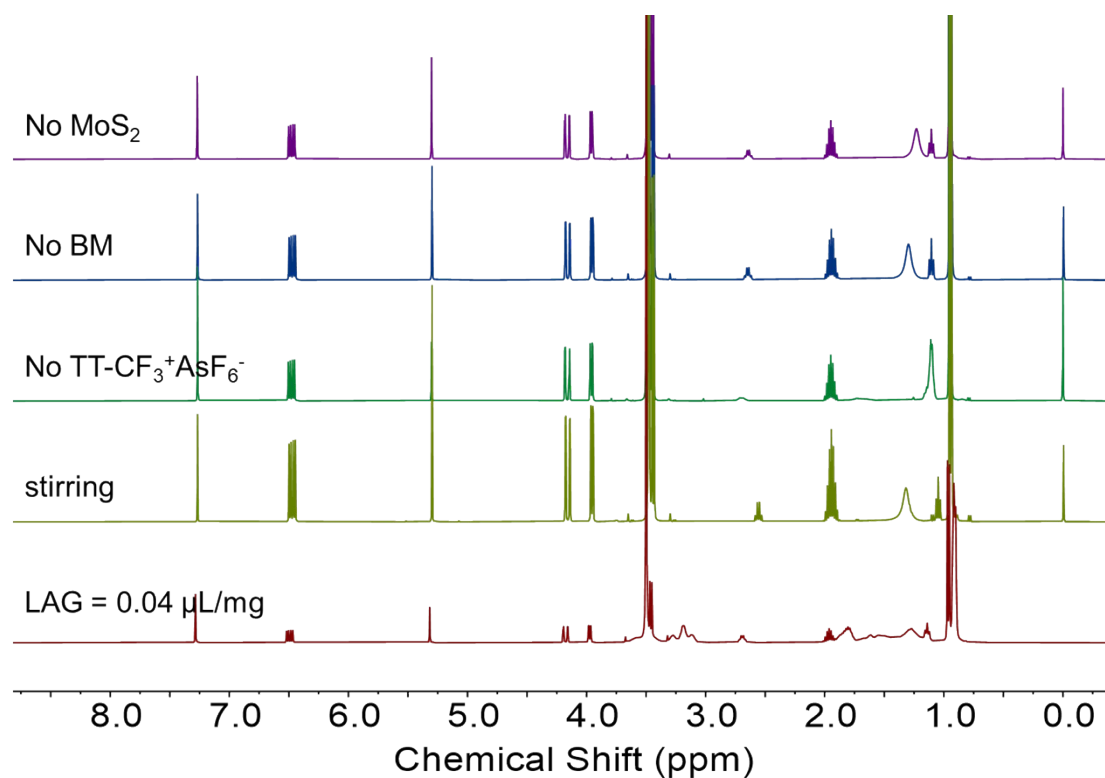


Figure S13. ^1H NMR spectra of mechano-cRAFT polymerization mixture of IBVE with different control experiments (Table S1).

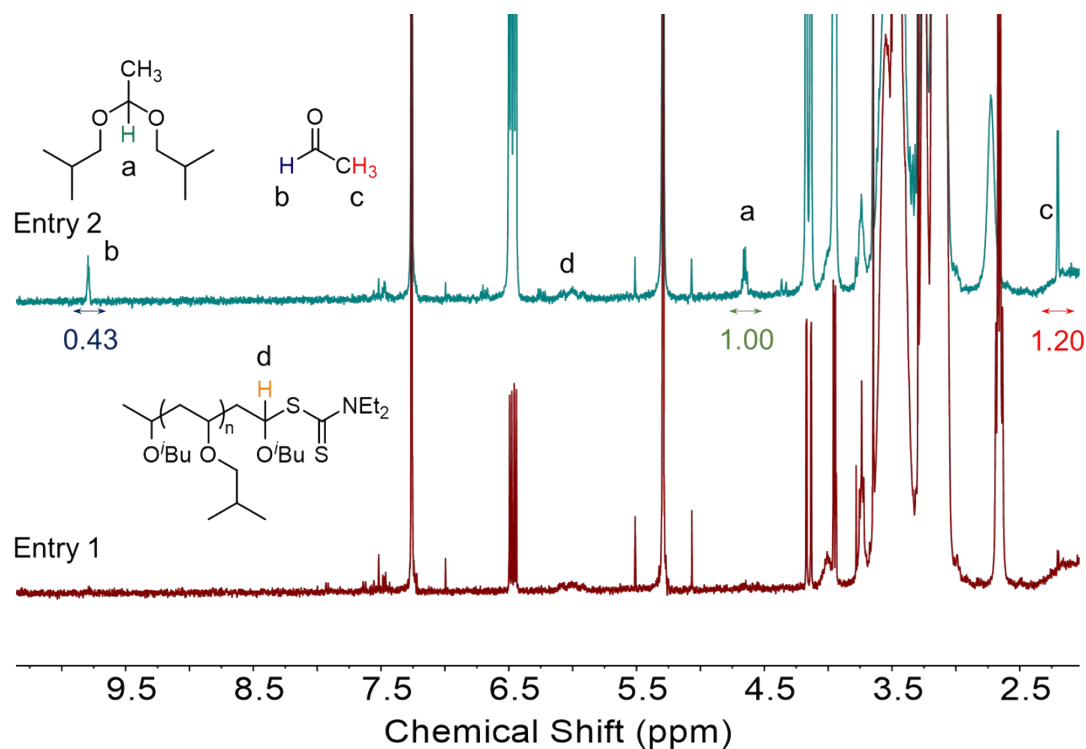


Figure S14. ^1H NMR spectra of polymerization mixture of IBVE using **g** ($\text{TT-CF}_3^+ \text{AsF}_6^-$) as initiator under the condition of adding 10 equivalents of water (Table S2).

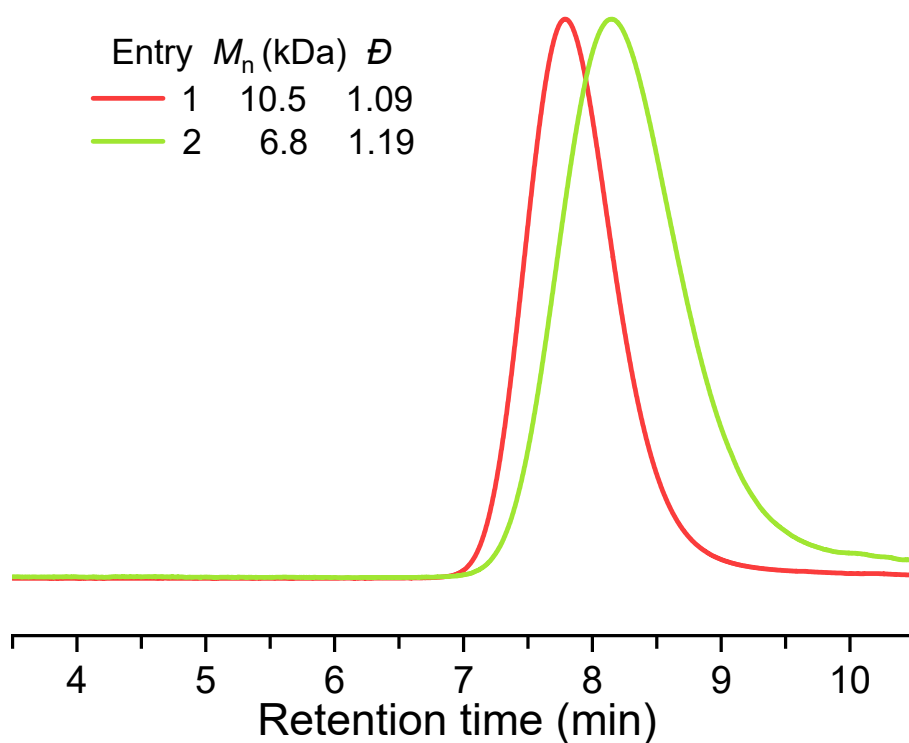
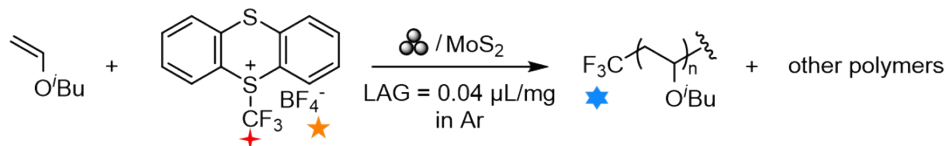


Figure S15. GPC traces of PIBVE using **g** ($\text{TT-CF}_3^+ \text{AsF}_6^-$) as initiator under the condition of adding 10 equivalents of water (Table S2, entries 1-2).



(a) Standard condition: IBVE/ $\text{TT-CF}_3^+ \text{BF}_4^-$ = 830/1



(b) Without CTA: IBVE/ $\text{TT-CF}_3^+ \text{BF}_4^-$ = 100/1

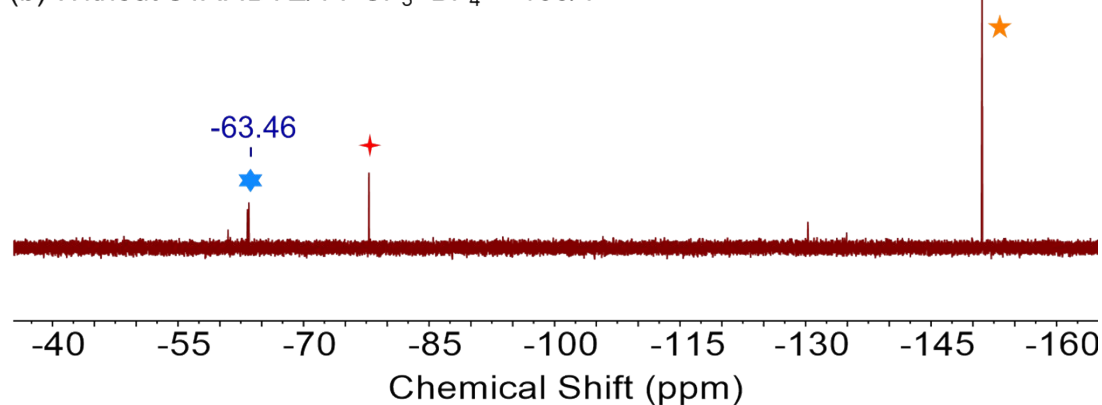


Figure S16. ^{19}F NMR spectra of PIBVE with different polymerization conditions. (a) Cationic RAFT polymerization. (b) Cationic polymerization.

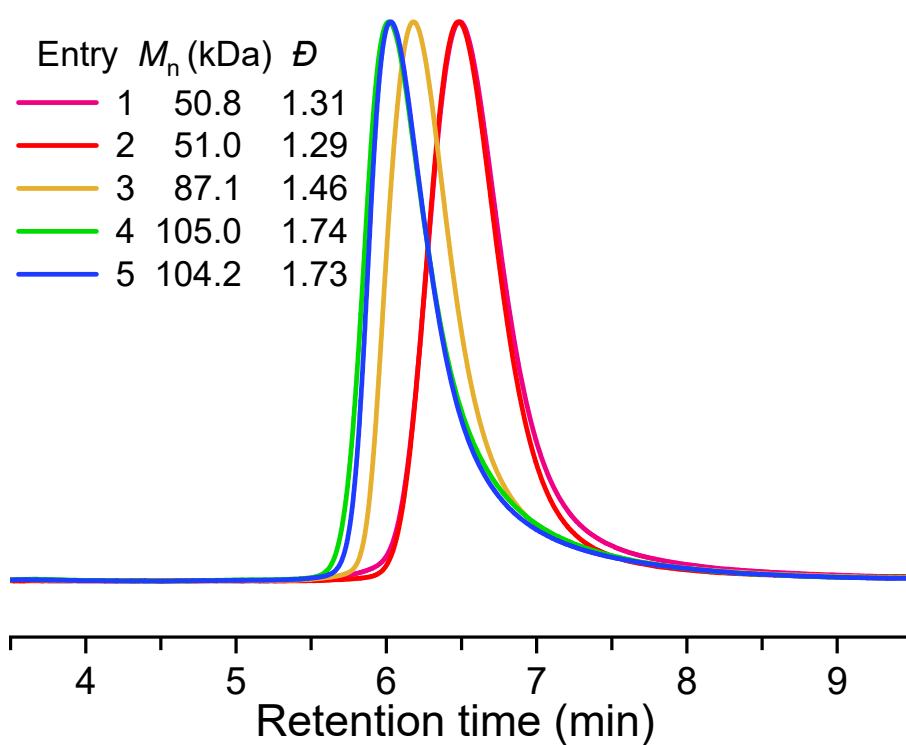


Figure S17. GPC traces of PIBVE using **d** ($\text{TT-CF}_3^+ \text{BF}_4^-$) as initiator under Ar (Table 2, entries 1-5).

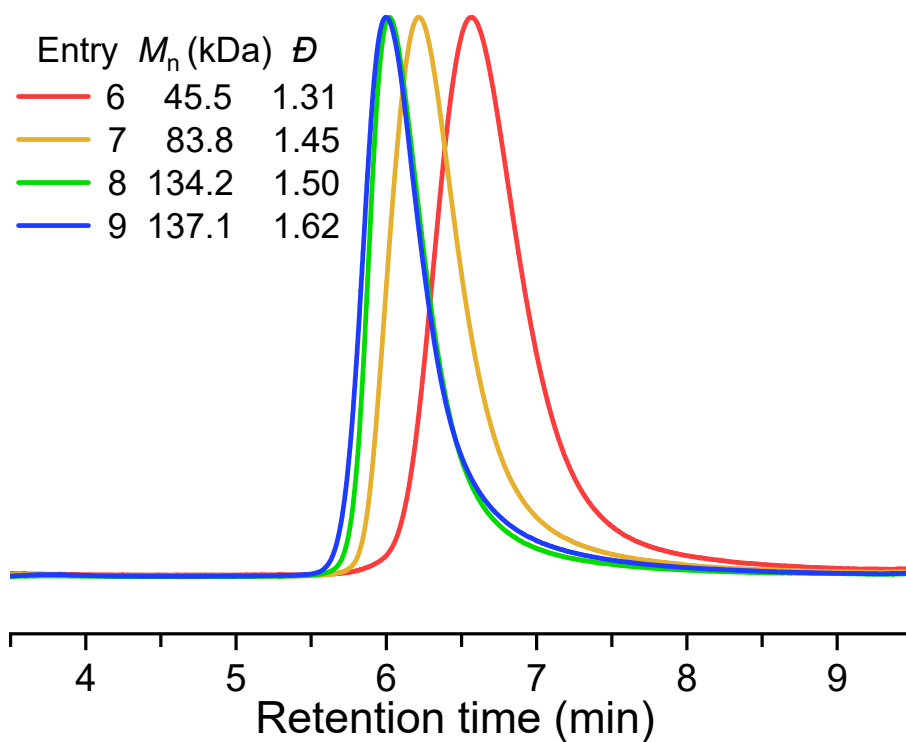


Figure S18. GPC traces of PIBVE using **e** ($\text{TT-CF}_3^+ \text{PF}_6^-$) as initiator under Ar (Table 2, entries 6-9).

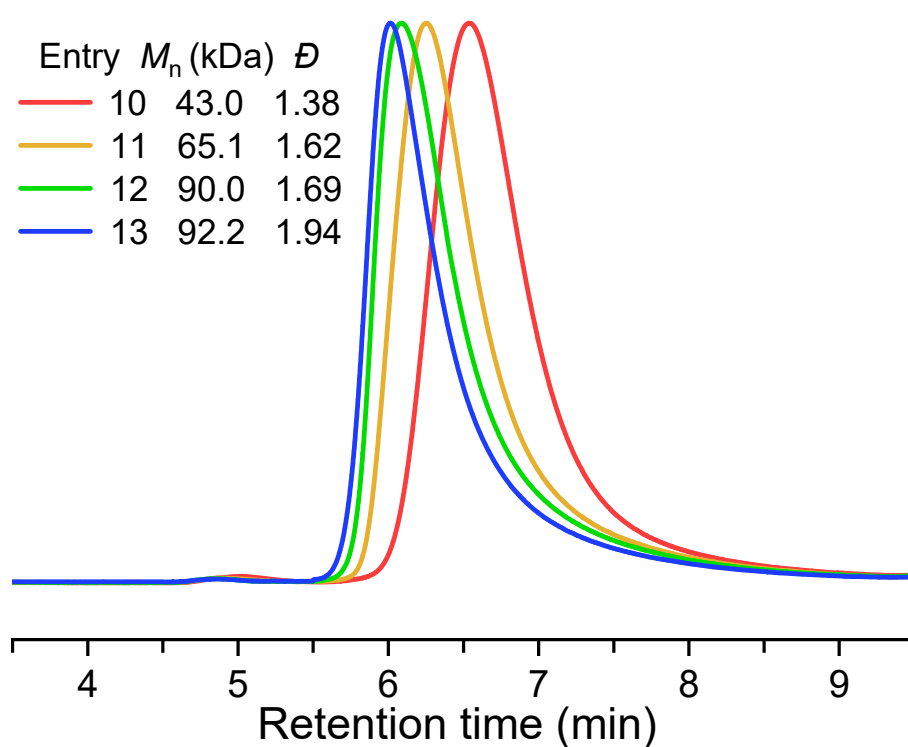


Figure S19. GPC traces of PIBVE using **f** ($\text{TT-CF}_3^+ \text{SbF}_6^-$) as initiator under Ar (Table 2, entries 10-13).

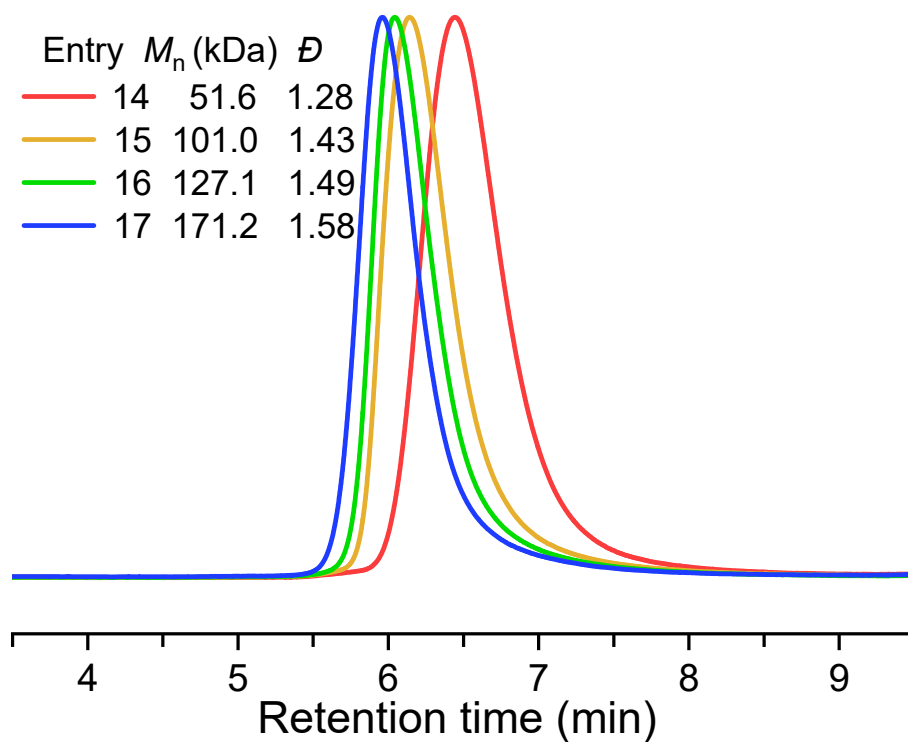


Figure S20. GPC traces of PIBVE using **g** ($\text{TT-CF}_3^+ \text{AsF}_6^-$) as initiator under Ar (Table 2, entries 14-17).

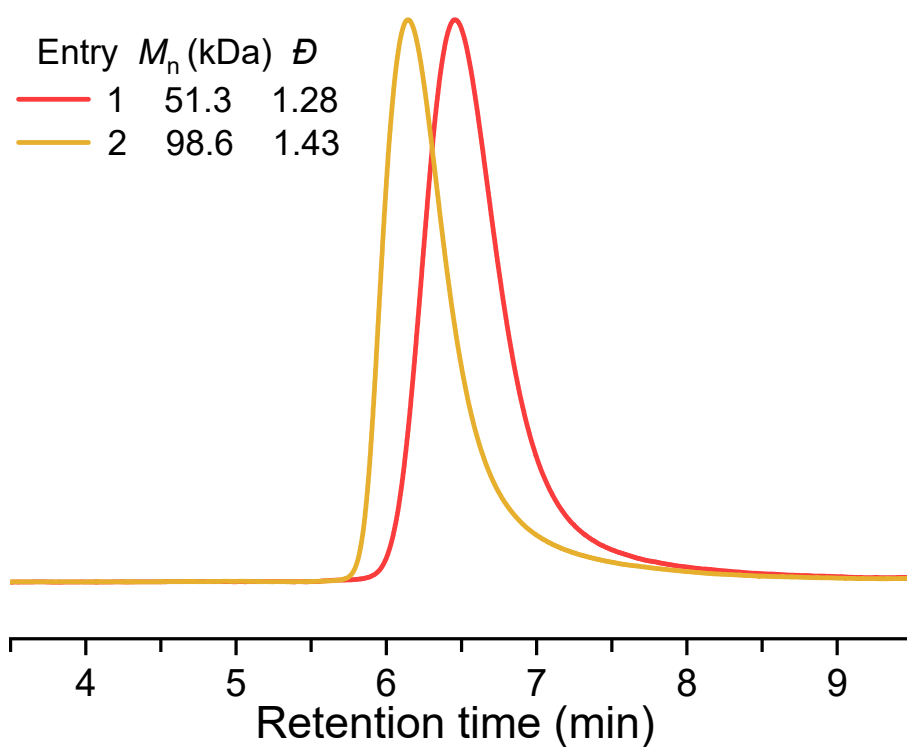


Figure S21. GPC traces of PNBVE with different DP_T (Table S3, entries 1-2).

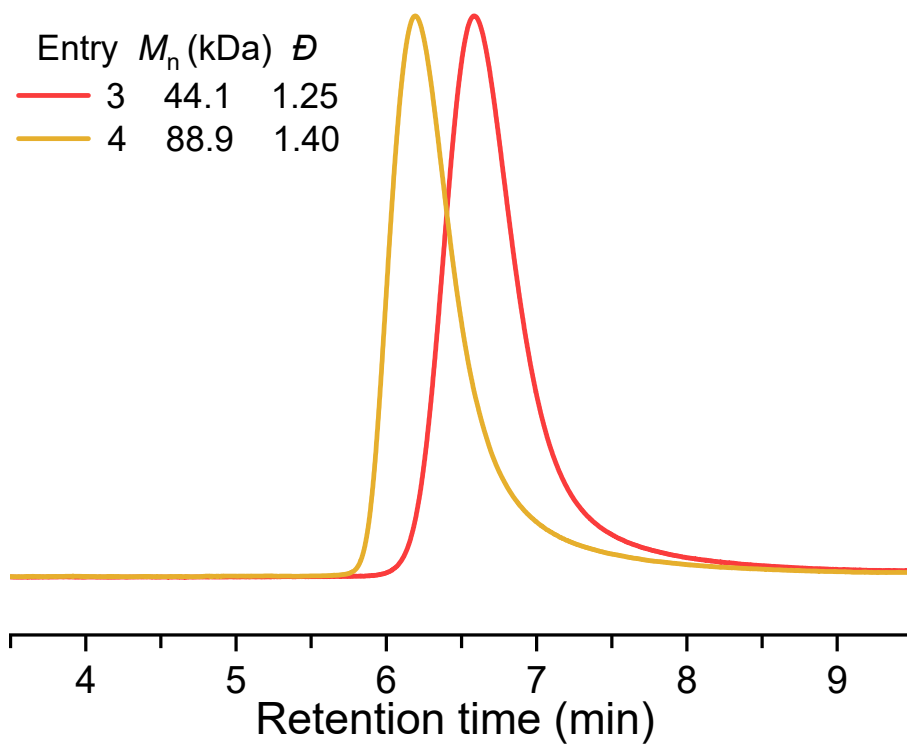


Figure S22. GPC traces of PNPVE with different DP_T (Table S3, entries 3-4).

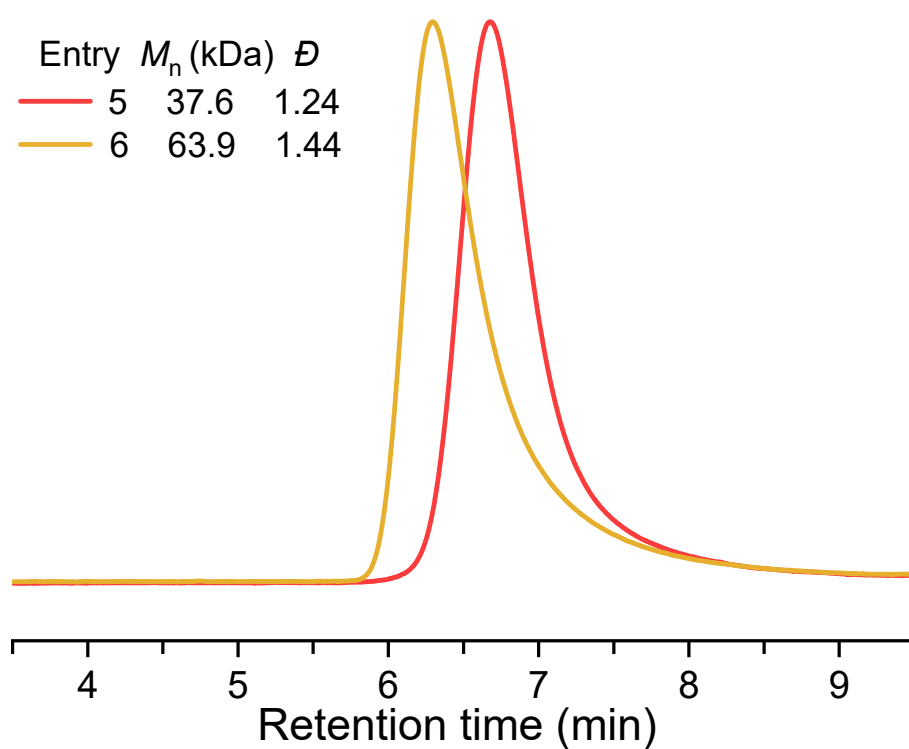


Figure S23. GPC traces of PEVE with different DP_T (Table S3, entries 5-6).

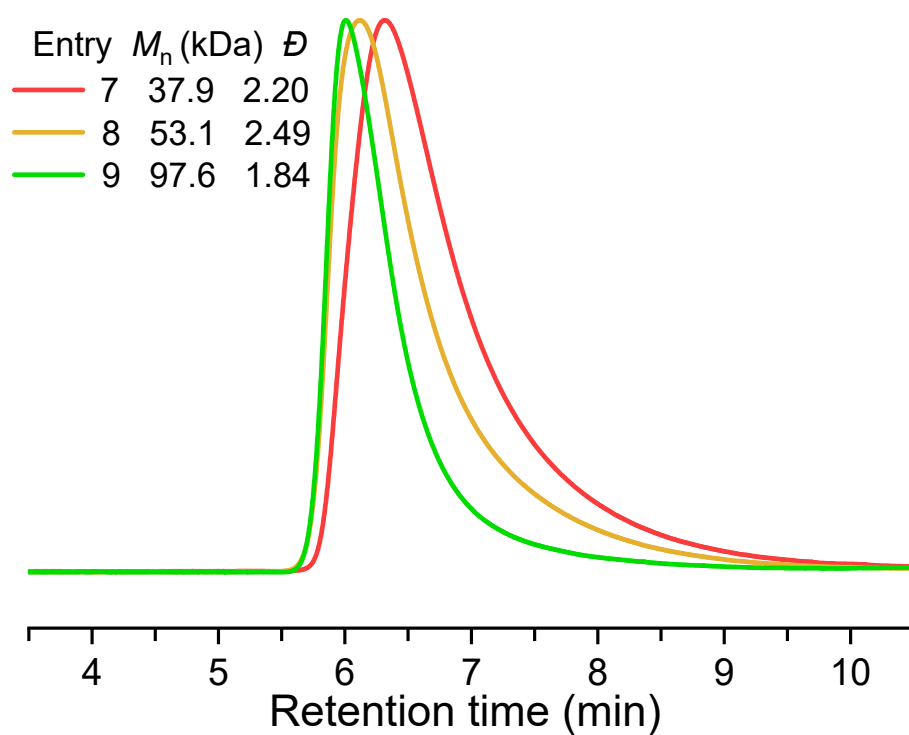


Figure S24. GPC traces of PCyVE with different DP_T (Table S3, entries 7-9).

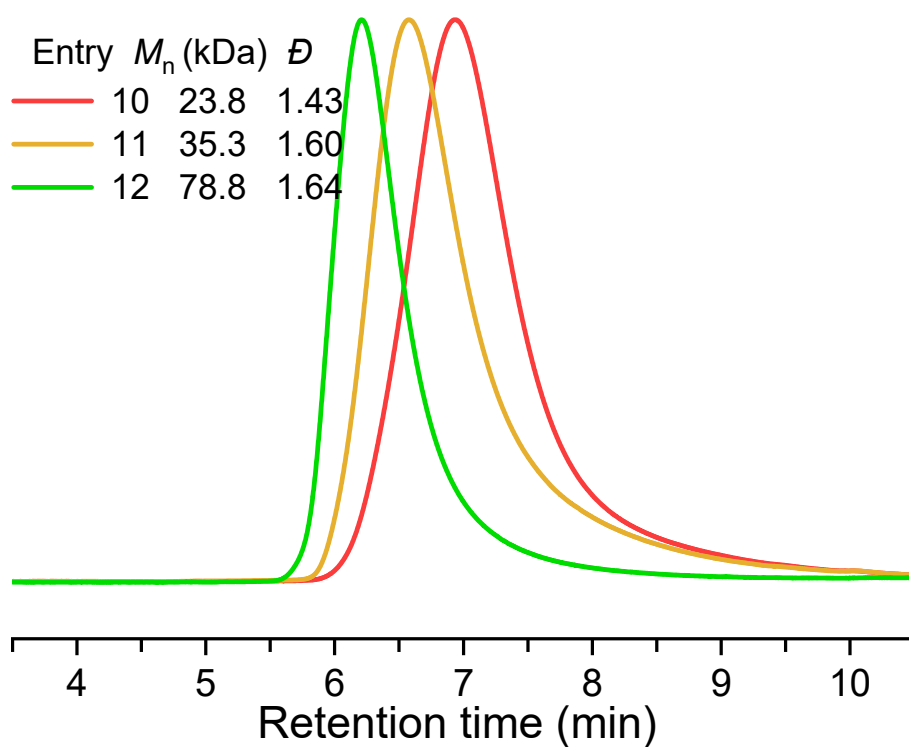


Figure S25. GPC traces of PDHF with different DP_T (Table S3, entries 10-12).

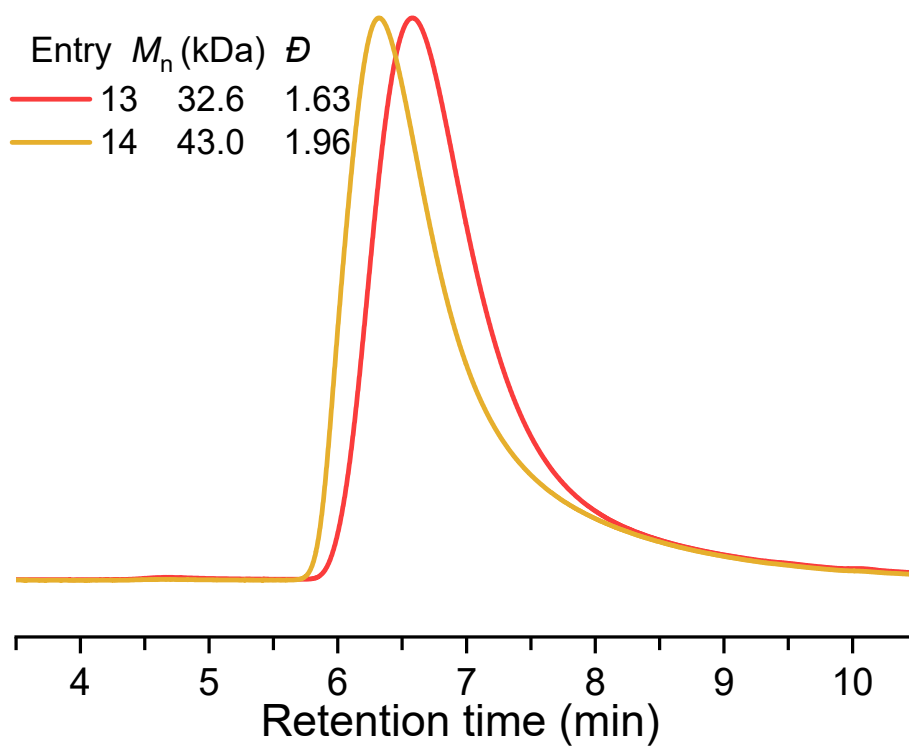


Figure S26. GPC traces of P(Cl-EVE) with different DP_T (Table S3, entries 13-14).

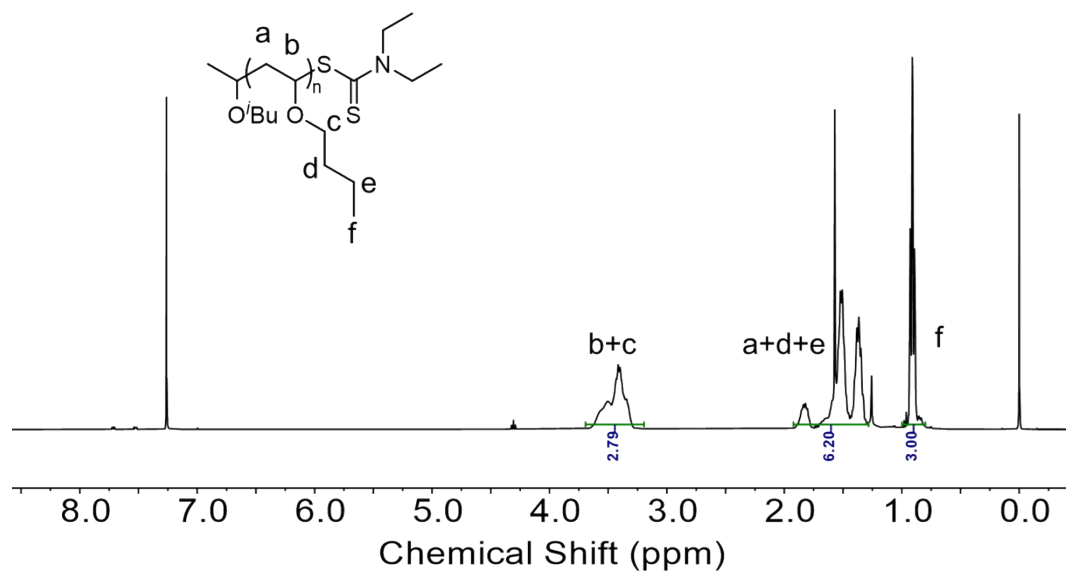


Figure S29. ¹H NMR spectrum of P(NBVE) in CDCl₃ ($M_n = 51.3$ kDa).

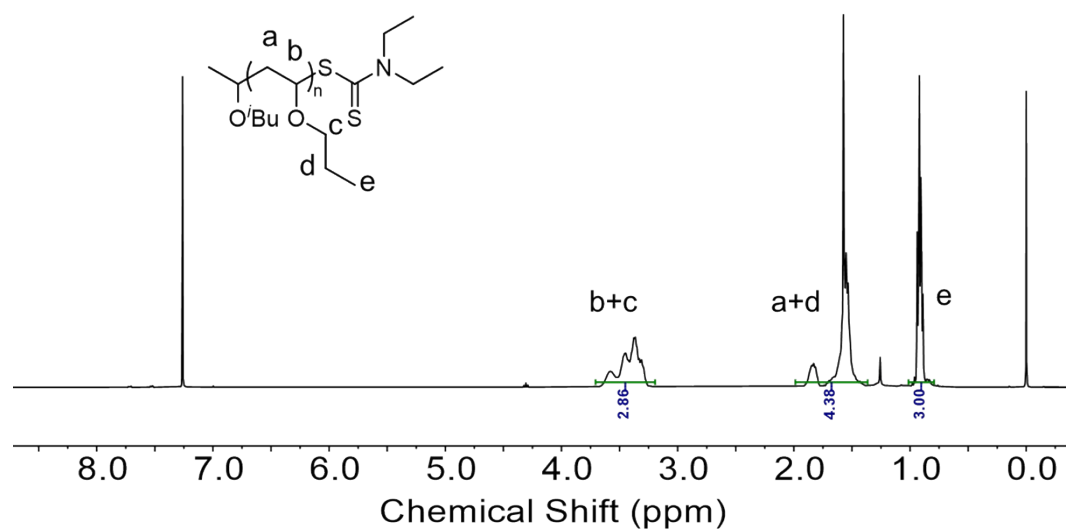


Figure S30. ¹H NMR spectrum of P(NPVE) in CDCl₃ ($M_n = 44.1$ kDa).

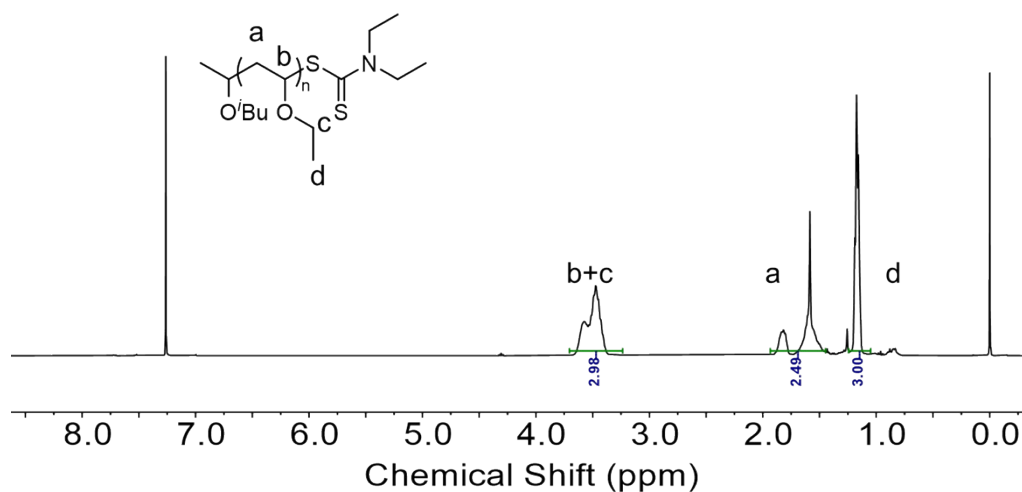


Figure S31. ^1H NMR spectrum of P(EVE) in CDCl_3 ($M_n = 37.6$ kDa).

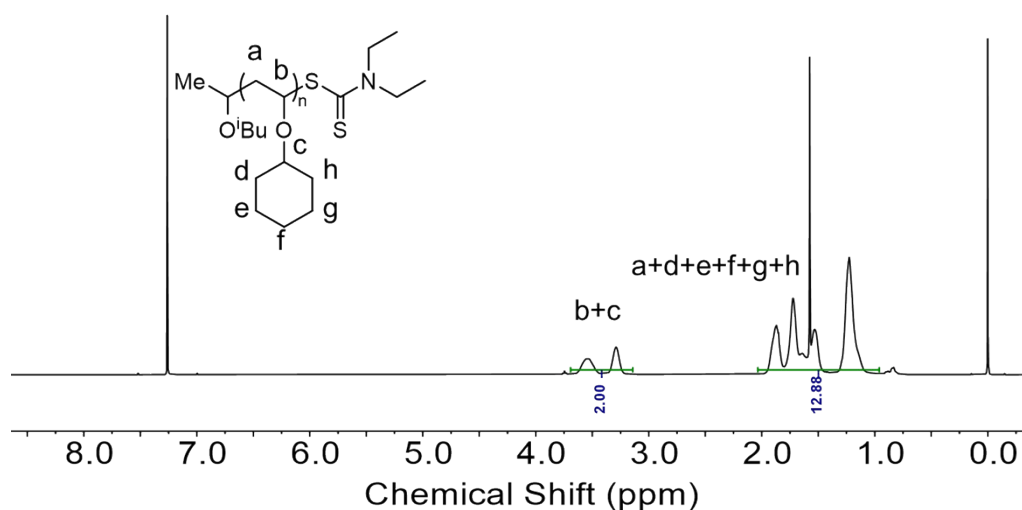


Figure S32. ^1H NMR spectrum of P(CyVE) in CDCl_3 ($M_n = 37.9$ kDa).

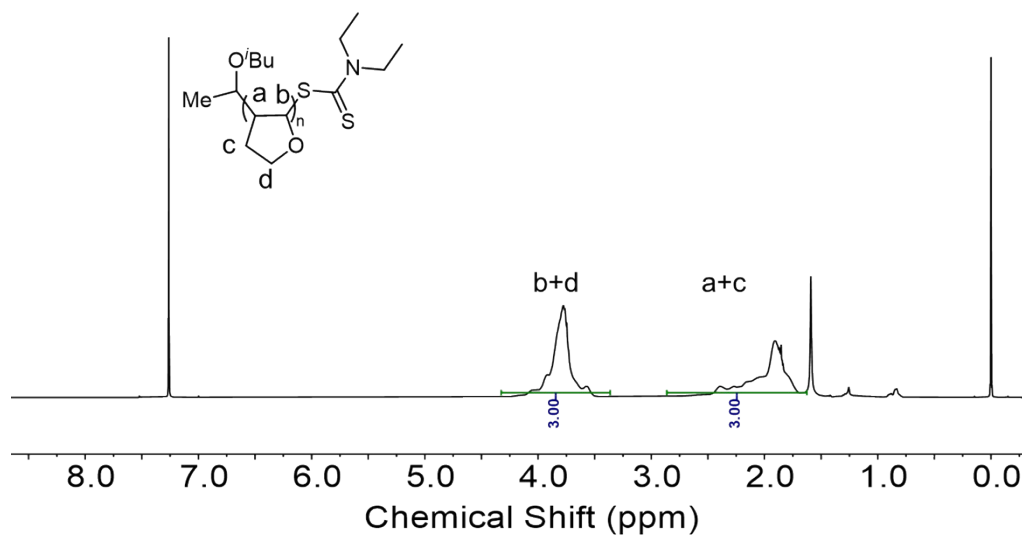


Figure S33. ^1H NMR spectrum of PDHF in CDCl_3 ($M_n = 23.8$ kDa).

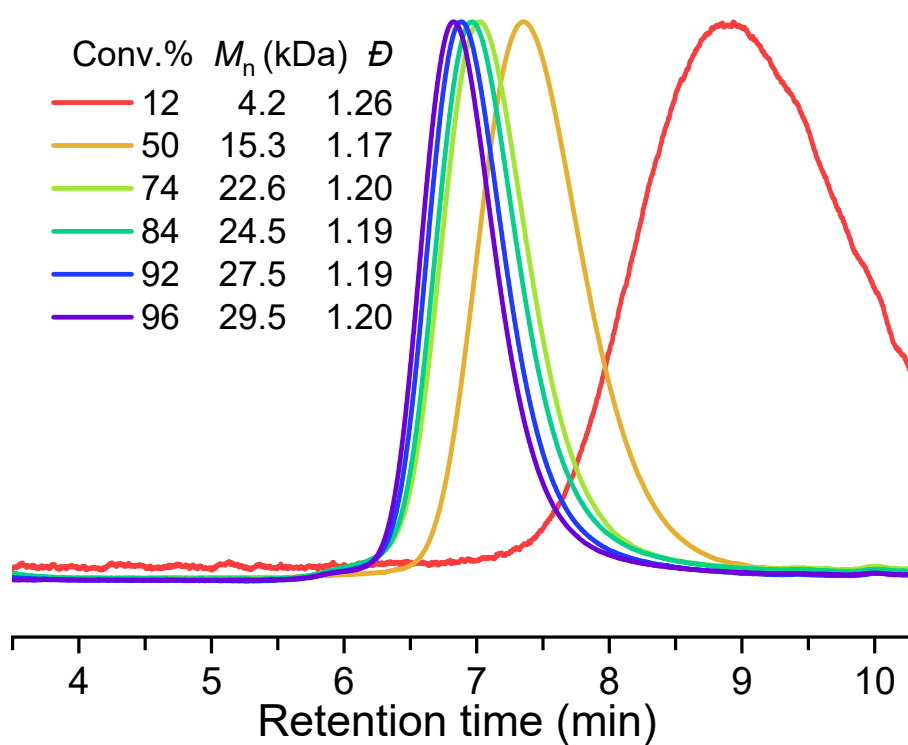


Figure S34. GPC traces of PIBVE at different conversions in polymerization kinetics using **d** ($\text{TT-CF}_3^+ \text{BF}_4^-$) as initiator.

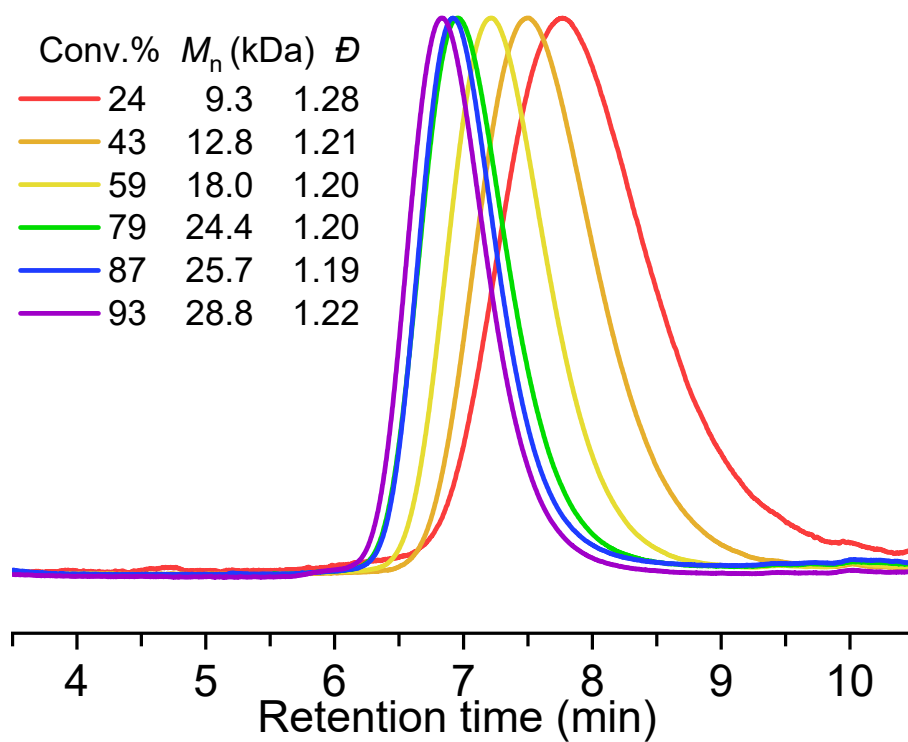


Figure S35. GPC traces of PIBVE at different conversions in polymerization kinetics using **e** ($\text{TT-CF}_3^+ \text{PF}_6^-$) as initiator.

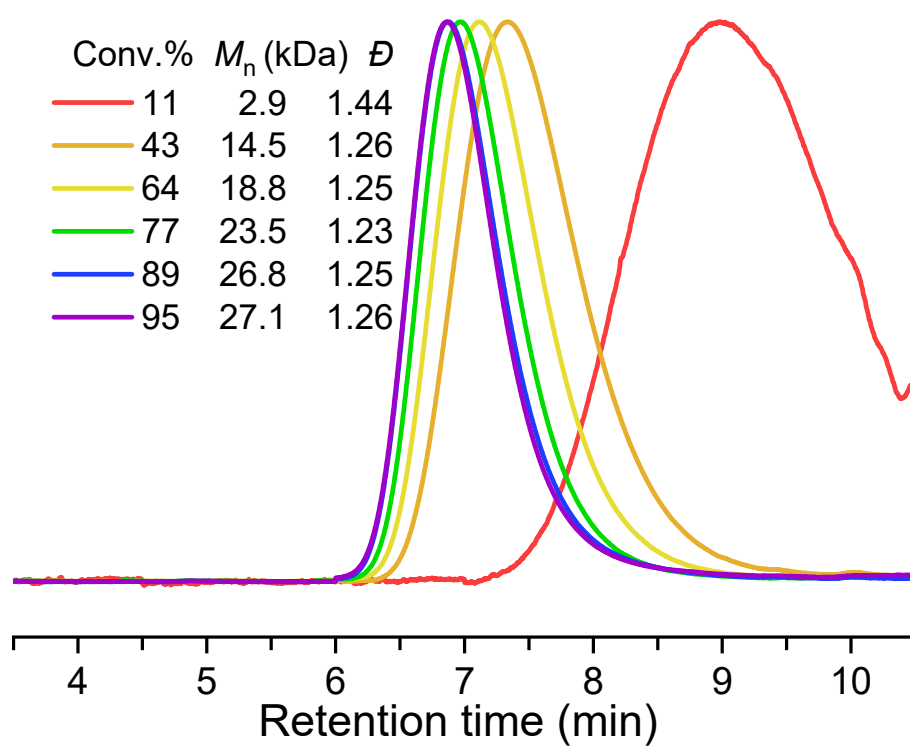


Figure S36. GPC traces of PIBVE at different conversions in polymerization kinetics using **f** ($\text{TT-CF}_3^+ \text{SbF}_6^-$) as initiator.

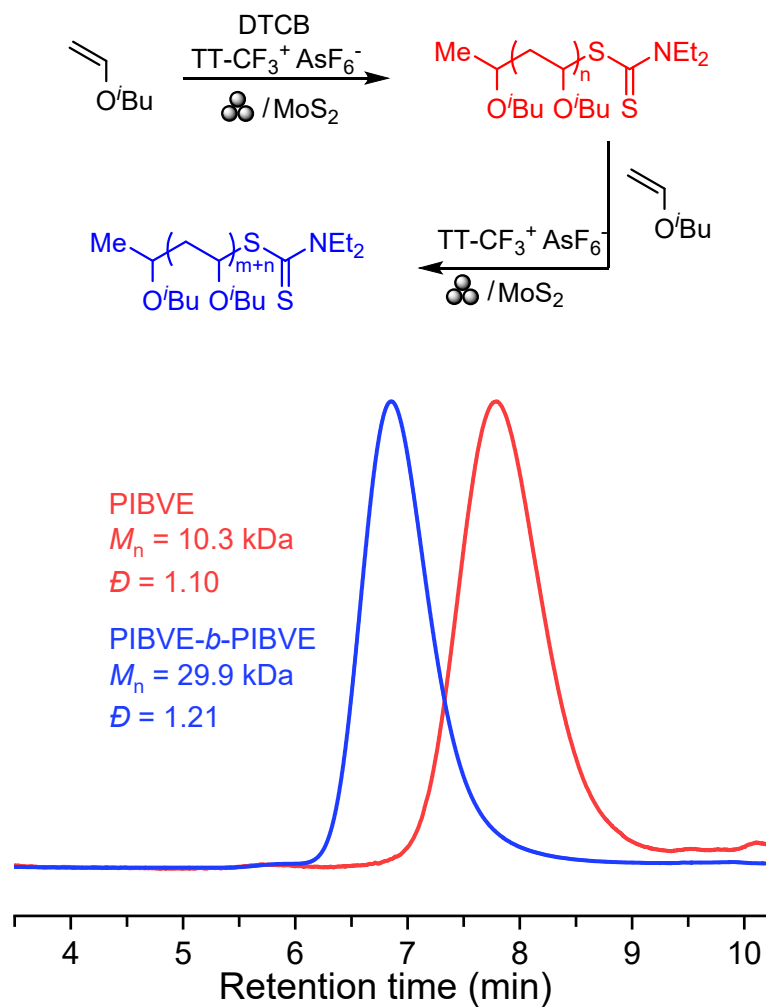


Figure S37. GPC traces for PIBVE-*b*-PIBVE ($DP_{T, \text{IBVE1}} = 100$, $DP_{T, \text{IBVE2}} = 200$).

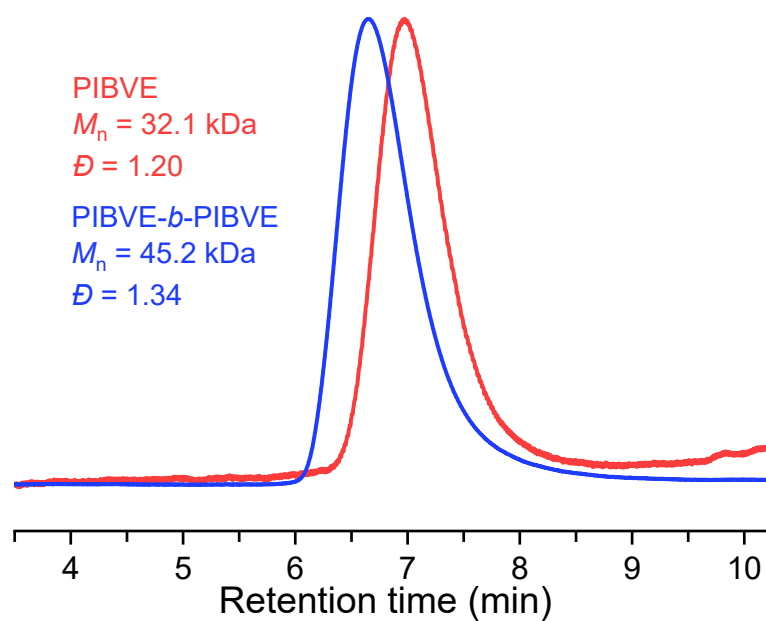


Figure S38. GPC traces for PIBVE-*b*-PIBVE ($DP_{T, \text{IBVE1}} = 300$, $DP_{T, \text{IBVE2}} = 300$).

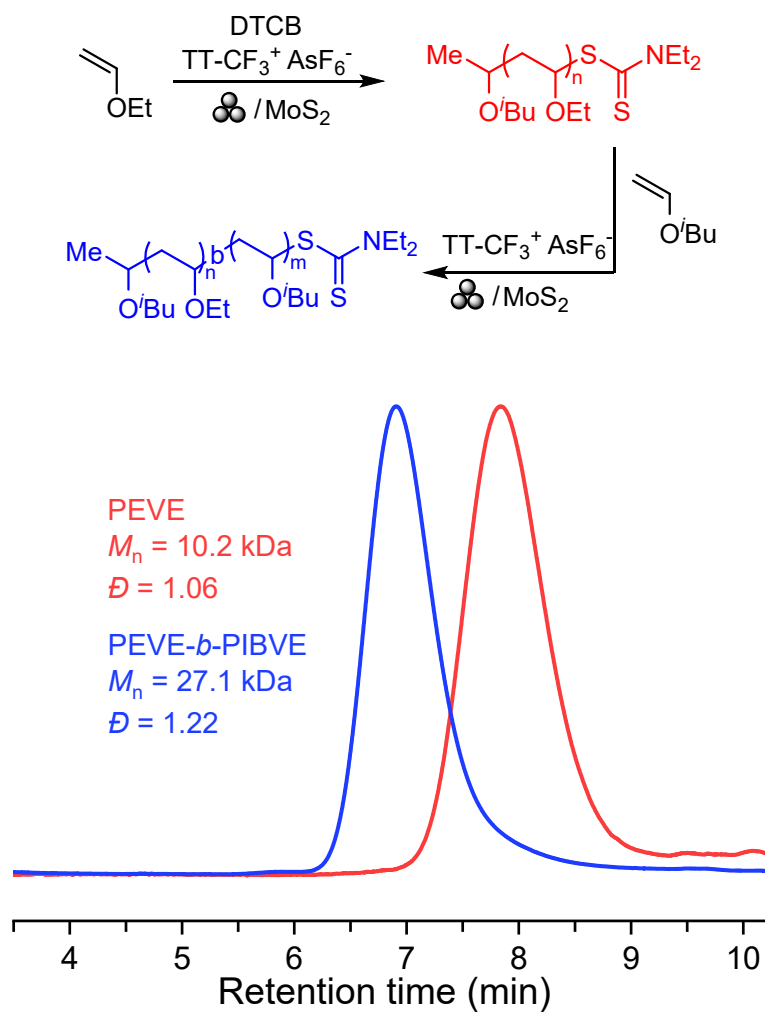


Figure S39. GPC traces for PEVE-*b*-PIBVE ($DP_{T, \text{EVE1}} = 140$, $DP_{T, \text{IBVE2}} = 200$).

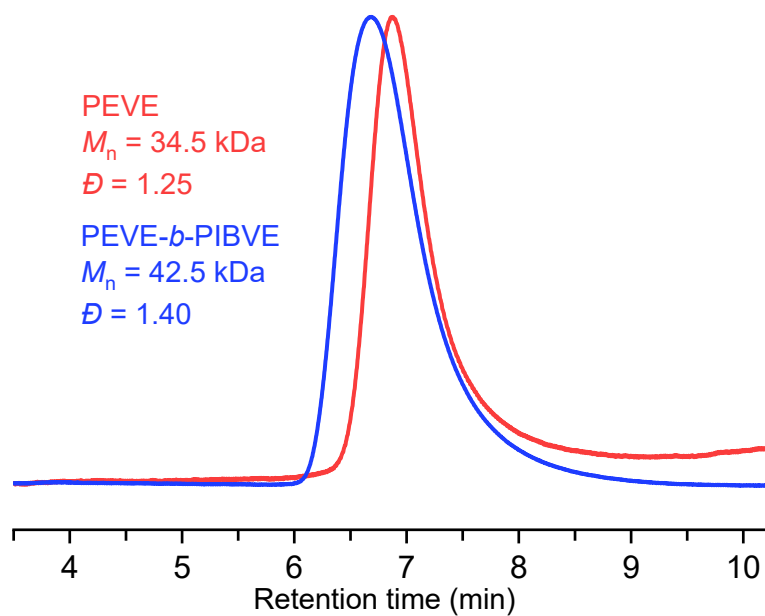


Figure S40. GPC traces for PEVE-*b*-PIBVE ($DP_{T, \text{EVE1}} = 420$, $DP_{T, \text{IBVE2}} = 300$).

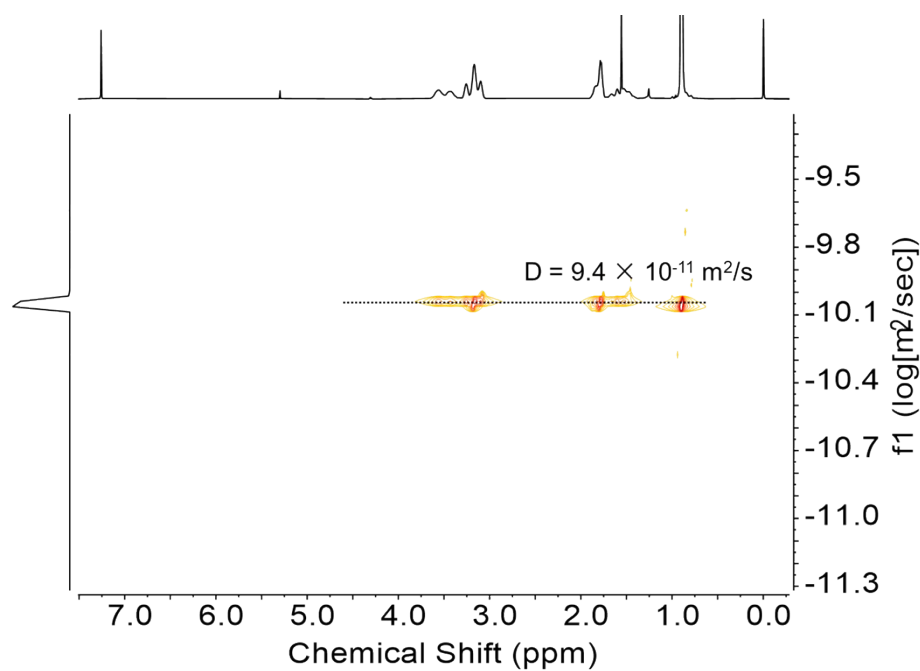


Figure S41. ^1H DOSY spectrum of PIBVE-*b*-PIBVE ($M_n = 29.3$ kDa; Figure 3e).

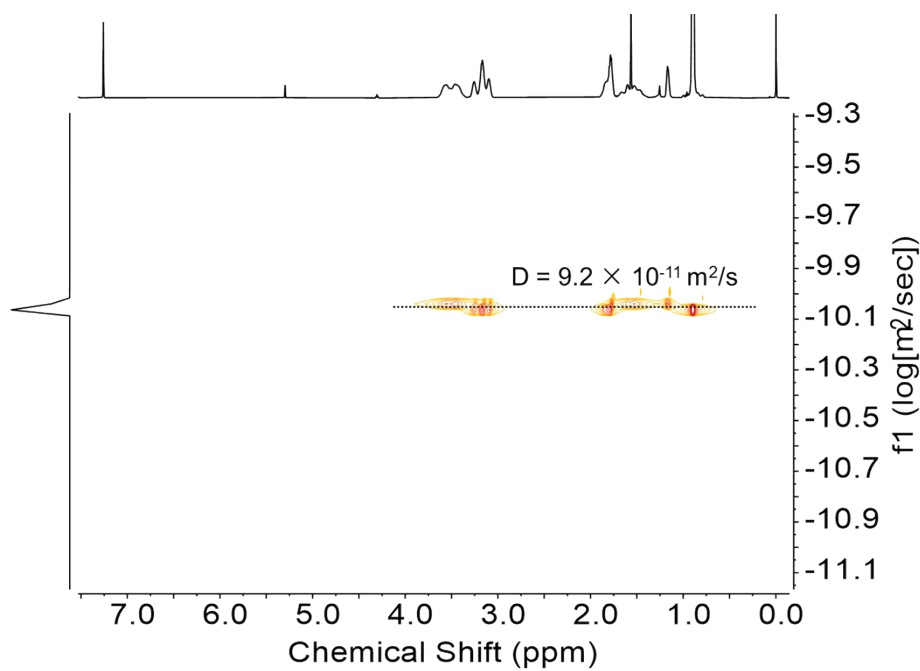


Figure S42. ^1H DOSY spectrum of PEVE-*b*-PIBVE ($M_n = 29.6$ kDa; Figure 3f).

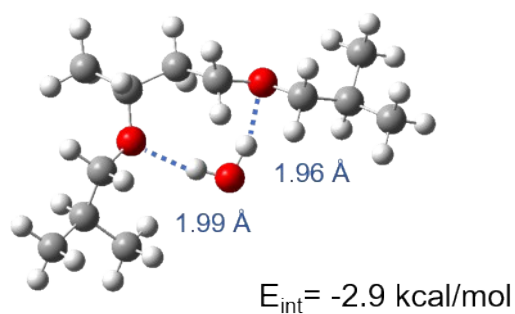


Figure S43. DFT calculation of the interaction between water and oxocarbenium ion. (Noting: The computational method, SMD solvation model, and all other parameters were kept consistent to ensure comparison at the same theoretical level. The calculated interaction energies may contain deviations due to factors such as the choice of DFT functional, basis set, initial molecular conformation, and the specific solvation environment applied in the SMD model.)

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