

***Supporting Information for***

**Rhodium-Catalyzed *ortho*-Cyanation of Symmetrical Azobenzenes  
with *N*-Cyano-*N*-phenyl-*p*-toluenesulfonamide**

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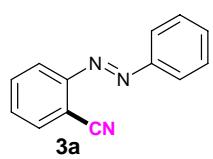
## 1. General Information

<sup>1</sup>H NMR and <sup>13</sup>C NMR spectra were recorded on a 400 MHz Bruker spectrometer using CDCl<sub>3</sub> as the solvent, and all chemical shifts are given as δ value with (CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>4</sub>Si as the internal standard. Coupling constants (*J*) are reported in Hertz (Hz). The peaks are indicated according to following abbreviations: s, singlet; d, doublet; t, triplet; m, multiplet; q, quartet. HRMS were measured on a TOF mass analyzer. C, H, and N analyses were performed on an elemental analyzer. Melting points are uncorrected.

## 2. Typical Procedure for Rhodium-Catalyzed *ortho*-Cyanation of Symmetrical Azobenzenes with NCTS.

A 20 mL reaction tube was charged with azobenzene **1** (0.15 mmol), NCTS **2** (81.6 mg, 2 equiv), [Cp\*RhCl<sub>2</sub>]<sub>2</sub> (4.6 mg, 5 mol %), AgNTf<sub>2</sub> (29.1 mg, 50 mol %), NaOAc (12.3 mg, 1 equiv) and DCE (1 mL). The reaction mixture was stirred at 130 °C for 24 h and monitored by TLC. After the reaction completed, the solvent was removed and the residue was further purified by preparative thin layer chromatography (silica gel, ethyl acetate / petroleum ether = 1:5), affording the cyanated product **3**.

## 3. Characterization Data of Products **3a-q**

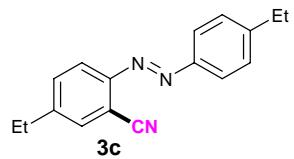


**2-Cyanoazobenzene (3a).** Yellow solid(23.3 mg, 75%), mp 57–59°C (lit,<sup>1</sup> 58.6-59.7°C); <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>): δ 8.05-8.03 (m, 2H), 7.90 (d, *J* = 8.4 Hz, 1H), 7.85 (dd, *J* = 8.0, 1.2 Hz, 1H), 7.70 (dd, *J* = 8.4, 1.6 Hz, 1H), 7.58-7.54 (m, 4H). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (100MHz,

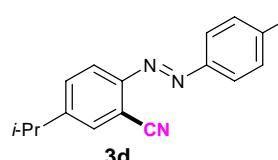
$\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  153.2, 152.3, 133.6, 133.4, 132.5, 130.9, 129.3, 123.7, 117.1, 116.9, 113.2. Anal. Calcd for  $\text{C}_{13}\text{H}_9\text{N}_3$ : C, 75.35; H, 4.38; N, 20.28. Found: C, 75.42; H, 4.31; N, 20.35.



**2-Cyano-4,4'-dimethylazobenzene (3b).** Yellow solid (25.7 mg, 73%), mp 84–86 °C;  $^1\text{H}$  NMR (400 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  7.92 (d,  $J = 8.4$  Hz, 2H), 7.80 (d,  $J = 8.4$  Hz, 1H), 7.62 (d,  $J = 0.8$  Hz, 1H), 7.48 (dd,  $J = 8.4, 1.2$  Hz, 1H), 7.33 (d,  $J = 8.0$  Hz, 2H), 2.47 (s, 3H), 2.45 (s, 3H).  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (100 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  151.4, 150.5, 143.0, 141.5, 134.2, 133.7, 129.9, 123.6, 117.1, 116.9, 113.0, 21.6, 21.2. HRMS (ESI) m/z: Calcd for  $\text{C}_{15}\text{H}_{13}\text{N}_3\text{Na}$   $[\text{M}+\text{Na}]^+$  258.1002, Found 258.1006. Anal. Calcd for  $\text{C}_{15}\text{H}_{13}\text{N}_3$ : C, 76.57; H, 5.57; N, 17.86. Found: C, 76.62; H, 5.49; N, 17.91.

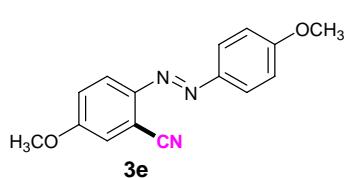


**2-Cyano-4,4'-diethylazobenzene (3c).** Yellow solid (23.9 mg, 61%), mp 47–49 °C;  $^1\text{H}$  NMR (400 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  7.94 (d,  $J = 8.0$  Hz, 2H), 7.81 (d,  $J = 8.4$  Hz, 1H), 7.64 (d,  $J = 1.6$  Hz, 1H), 7.49 (dd,  $J = 8.4, 1.6$  Hz, 1H), 7.34 (d,  $J = 8.4$  Hz, 2H), 2.74 (dq,  $J = 7.6, 3.6$  Hz, 4H), 1.29 (dt,  $J = 7.6, 1.6$  Hz, 6H).  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (100 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  151.6, 150.7, 149.3, 147.6, 133.1, 132.6, 128.7, 123.7, 117.3, 116.9, 113.0, 28.9, 28.5, 15.4, 15.1. HRMS (ESI) m/z: Calcd for  $\text{C}_{17}\text{H}_{17}\text{N}_3\text{Na}$   $[\text{M}+\text{Na}]^+$  286.1315, Found 286.1312. Anal. Calcd for  $\text{C}_{17}\text{H}_{17}\text{N}_3$ : C, 77.54; H, 6.51; N, 15.96. Found: C, 77.47; H, 6.58; N, 16.05.

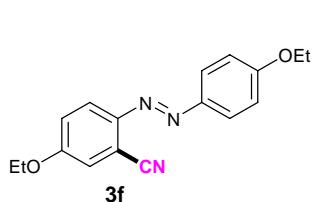


**2-Cyano-4,4'-di-iso-propylazobenzene (3d).** Yellow solid (29.2 mg, 67%), mp 57–59 °C;  $^1\text{H}$  NMR (400 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):

$\delta$  7.95 (d,  $J$  = 8.4 Hz, 2H), 7.82 (d,  $J$  = 8.4 Hz, 1H), 7.66 (d,  $J$  = 1.6 Hz, 1H), 7.52 (dd,  $J$  = 8.4, 1.6 Hz, 1H), 7.38 (d,  $J$  = 8.4 Hz, 2H), 3.02-2.97 (m, 2H), 1.30 (d,  $J$  = 6.8 Hz, 12H).  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (100 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  153.8, 152.2, 151.7, 150.8, 131.8, 131.4, 127.3, 123.7, 117.3, 117.1, 113.0, 34.3, 33.9, 23.8, 23.6. HRMS (ESI) m/z: Calcd for  $\text{C}_{19}\text{H}_{21}\text{N}_3\text{Na} [\text{M}+\text{Na}]^+$  314.1628, Found 314.1630.



**2-Cyano-4,4'-dimethoxyazobenzene (3e).** Yellow solid (19.8 mg, 72%), mp 109–111 °C;  $^1\text{H}$  NMR (400 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  7.99 (dd,  $J$  = 8.4, 2.0 Hz, 2H), 7.87 (d,  $J$  = 9.2 Hz, 1H), 7.25 (d,  $J$  = 2.8 Hz, 1H), 7.18 (dd,  $J$  = 9.2, 2.8 Hz, 1H), 7.01 (d,  $J$  = 9.2 Hz, 2H), 3.90 (s, 3H), 3.89 (s, 3H).  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (100 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  162.8, 160.9, 147.8, 146.8, 129.9, 125.4, 120.2, 118.4, 117.0, 116.9, 114.4, 56.0, 55.7. HRMS (ESI) m/z: Calcd for  $\text{C}_{15}\text{H}_{13}\text{N}_3\text{NaO}_2 [\text{M}+\text{Na}]^+$  290.0900, found 290.0903.



**2-Cyano-4,4'-diethoxyazobenzene (3f).** Yellow solid (32.3 mg, 73%), mp 114–116 °C;  $^1\text{H}$  NMR (400 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  7.97 (dd,  $J$  = 7.2, 2.0 Hz, 2H), 7.86 (d,  $J$  = 9.2 Hz, 1H), 7.23 (d,  $J$  = 2.8 Hz, 1H), 7.16 (dd,  $J$  = 9.2, 2.8 Hz, 1H), 6.99 (dd,  $J$  = 7.2, 2.0 Hz, 2H), 4.11 (qd,  $J$  = 6.8, 4.8 Hz, 4H), 1.46 (td,  $J$  = 6.8, 1.6 Hz, 6H).  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (100 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  162.2, 160.3, 147.7, 146.7, 125.4, 120.6, 118.4, 117.3, 117.1, 114.8, 114.3, 64.3, 63.9, 14.8, 14.6. HRMS (ESI) m/z: Calcd for  $\text{C}_{17}\text{H}_{17}\text{N}_3\text{NaO}_2 [\text{M}+\text{Na}]^+$  318.1213, Found 318.1217. Anal. Calcd for  $\text{C}_{17}\text{H}_{17}\text{N}_3\text{O}_2$ : C, 69.14; H, 5.80; N, 14.23. Found: C, 69.23; H, 5.73; N, 14.15.

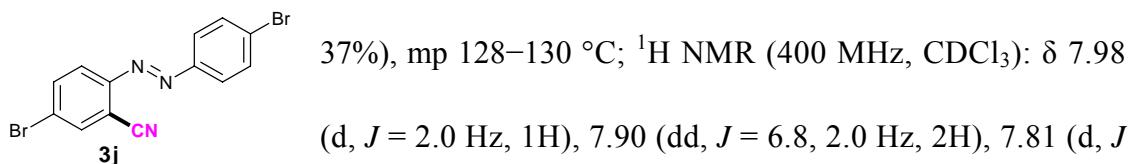
**2-Cyano-4,4'-ditrifluoromethoxyazobenzene (3g).** Yellow oil (21.9 mg, 39%);  $^1\text{H}$  NMR (400 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  8.08 (dd,  $J = 6.8, 2.0$  Hz, 2H), 7.96 (d,  $J = 9.2$  Hz, 1H), 7.69 (d,  $J = 2.0$  Hz, 1H), 7.55 (dd,  $J = 9.2, 2.0$  Hz, 1H), 7.39 (d,  $J = 8.0$  Hz, 2H).  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (100 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  152.3, 151.0, 150.5, 150.1, 125.9, 125.5, 125.2, 121.6, 121.5, 121.3, 119.0, 115.3, 114.9. HRMS (ESI) m/z: Calcd for  $\text{C}_{15}\text{H}_7\text{F}_6\text{N}_3\text{NaO}_2$   $[\text{M}+\text{Na}]^+$  398.0335, Found 398.0333.

**2-Cyano-4,4'-difluoroazobenzene (3h).** Yellow solid (20.0 mg, 55%), mp 117–119 °C;  $^1\text{H}$  NMR (400 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  8.04 (dd,  $J = 9.2, 1.2$  Hz, 2H), 7.94 (dd,  $J = 9.2, 1.2$  Hz, 1H), 7.54 (dd,  $J = 7.6, 2.8$  Hz, 1H), 7.43–7.38 (m, 1H), 7.23 (t,  $J = 8.8$  Hz, 2H).  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (100 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  166.6, 164.5, 164.1, 161.9, 149.7 (d,  $J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 3.9$  Hz), 148.7 (d,  $J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 2.9$  Hz), 125.9 (d,  $J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 9.2$  Hz), 121.2 (d,  $J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 22.7$  Hz), 120.1 (d,  $J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 25.6$  Hz), 119.2 (d,  $J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 9.0$  Hz), 116.4 (d,  $J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 22.9$  Hz), 115.6 (d,  $J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 2.8$  Hz), 114.9 (d,  $J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 9.8$  Hz). HRMS (ESI) m/z: Calcd for  $\text{C}_{13}\text{H}_7\text{F}_2\text{N}_3\text{Na}$   $[\text{M}+\text{Na}]^+$  266.0500, Found 266.0504.

**2-Cyano-4,4'-dichloroazobenzene (3i).** Yellow solid (27.6 mg, 67%), mp 117–119 °C;  $^1\text{H}$  NMR (400 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  7.97 (dd,  $J = 6.8, 2.0$  Hz, 2H), 7.86 (d,  $J = 8.8$  Hz, 1H), 7.81 (d,  $J = 2.0$  Hz, 1H), 7.66 (dd,  $J = 8.8, 2.4$  Hz, 1H), 7.51 (dd,  $J = 6.8, 1.6$  Hz, 2H).  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (100 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  151.3, 150.5, 139.0, 137.3, 133.8, 133.2, 129.7, 125.0,

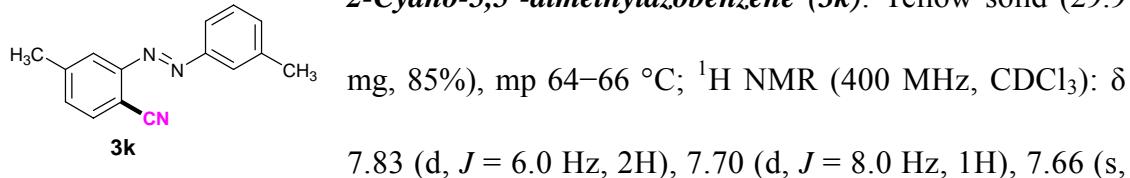
118.3, 115.5, 114.7. HRMS (ESI) m/z: Calcd for  $C_{13}H_7Cl_2N_3Na$ :  $[M+Na]^+$  297.9909, Found 297.9911. Anal. Calcd for  $C_{13}H_7Cl_2N_3$ : C, 56.55; H, 2.56; N, 15.22. Found: C, 56.64; H, 2.48; N, 15.28.

**2-Cyano-4,4'-dibromoazobenzene (3j).** Yellow solid (20.2 mg,



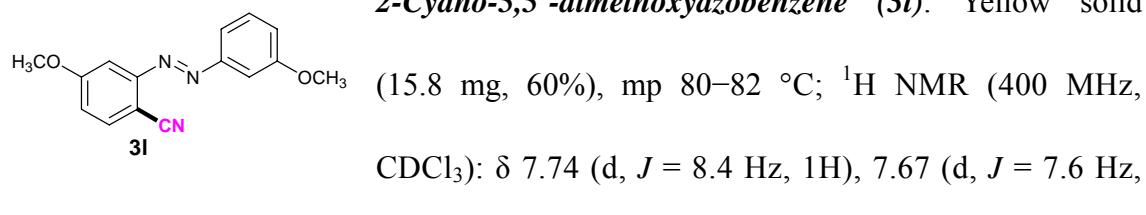
HRMS (ESI) m/z: Calcd for  $C_{13}H_7Br_2N_3Na$   $[M+Na]^+$  387.8884, Found 387.8885.

**2-Cyano-5,5'-dimethylazobenzene (3k).** Yellow solid (29.9



NMR (100 MHz,  $CDCl_3$ ):  $\delta$  153.2, 152.4, 144.6, 139.2, 133.4, 133.2, 131.6, 129.1, 123.8, 121.3, 117.5, 117.2, 110.1, 21.9, 21.4. HRMS (ESI) m/z: Calcd for  $C_{15}H_{13}N_3Na$   $[M+Na]^+$  258.1002, Found 258.1001.

**2-Cyano-5,5'-dimethoxyazobenzene (3l).** Yellow solid



163.4, 160.4, 154.9, 153.4, 134.6, 129.9, 119.5, 118.3, 118.2, 117.2, 106.1, 100.8, 60.4, 55.5. HRMS (ESI) m/z: Calcd for  $C_{15}H_{13}N_3NaO_2$  [M+Na]<sup>+</sup> 290.0900, Found 290.0904. Anal. Calcd for  $C_{15}H_{13}N_3O_2$ : C, 67.40; H, 4.90; N, 15.72. Found: C, 67.51; H, 4.82; N, 15.66.

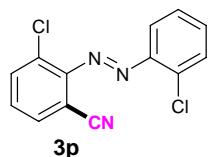
**2-Cyano-5,5'-dibromoazobenzene (3m).** Yellow solid (21.8 mg, 40%), mp 153–155 °C; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>): δ 8.16 (t, *J* = 1.6 Hz, 1H), 8.03 (s, 1H), 7.98 (d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 7.72 (d, *J* = 1.2 Hz, 2H), 7.69 (dd, *J* = 8.0, 0.8 Hz, 1H), 7.44 (t, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 1H). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>): δ 153.2, 152.8, 135.7, 134.6, 134.3, 130.7, 128.6, 126.3, 123.4, 123.2, 120.7, 116.0, 112.3. HRMS (ESI) m/z: Calcd for  $C_{13}H_7Br_2N_3Na$  [M+Na]<sup>+</sup> 387.8884, Found 387.8887. Anal. Calcd for  $C_{13}H_7Br_2N_3$ : C, 42.78; H, 1.93; N, 11.51. Found: C, 42.85; H, 1.85; N, 11.42.

**2-Cyano-4,6,4',6'-tetramethylazobenzene (3n).** Yellow solid (16.2 mg, 41%), mp 124–126 °C; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>): δ 7.66 (d, *J* = 8.4 Hz, 1H), 7.42 (s, 1H), 7.32 (s, 1H), 7.18 (s, 1H), 7.06 (d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 2.78 (s, 3H), 2.60 (s, 3H), 2.39 (s, 6H). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>): δ 150.4, 148.9, 142.8, 140.3, 139.6, 136.6, 136.3, 133.2, 132.2, 127.2, 118.9, 115.5, 102.8, 21.5, 20.9, 18.5, 18.1. HRMS (ESI) m/z: Calcd for  $C_{17}H_{17}N_3Na$  [M+Na]<sup>+</sup> 286.1315, Found 286.1310.

**2-Cyano-6,6'-dimethylazobenzene (3o).** Yellow solid (16.9 mg, 48%), mp 54–56 °C; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>): δ 7.75 (d, *J* =

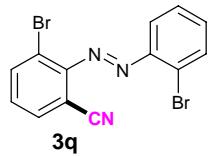
8.0 Hz, 1H), 7.63 (dd,  $J$  = 7.6, 0.8 Hz, 1H), 7.52 (d,  $J$  = 7.6 Hz, 1H), 7.43-7.36 (m, 3H), 7.26 (d,  $J$  = 6.8 Hz, 1H), 2.83 (s, 3H), 2.62 (s, 3H).  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (100 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  152.5, 150.7, 140.4, 136.6, 135.6, 132.8, 132.4, 131.7, 129.3, 126.4, 118.5, 115.6, 102.8, 18.5, 18.1. HRMS (ESI) m/z: Calcd for  $\text{C}_{15}\text{H}_{13}\text{N}_3\text{Na} [\text{M}+\text{Na}]^+$  258.1002, Found 258.1005. Anal. Calcd for  $\text{C}_{15}\text{H}_{13}\text{N}_3$ : C, 76.57; H, 5.58; N, 17.86. Found: C, 76.64; H, 5.48; N, 17.95.

**2-Cyano-6,6'-dichloroazobenzene (3p).** Yellow solid (13.2 mg,



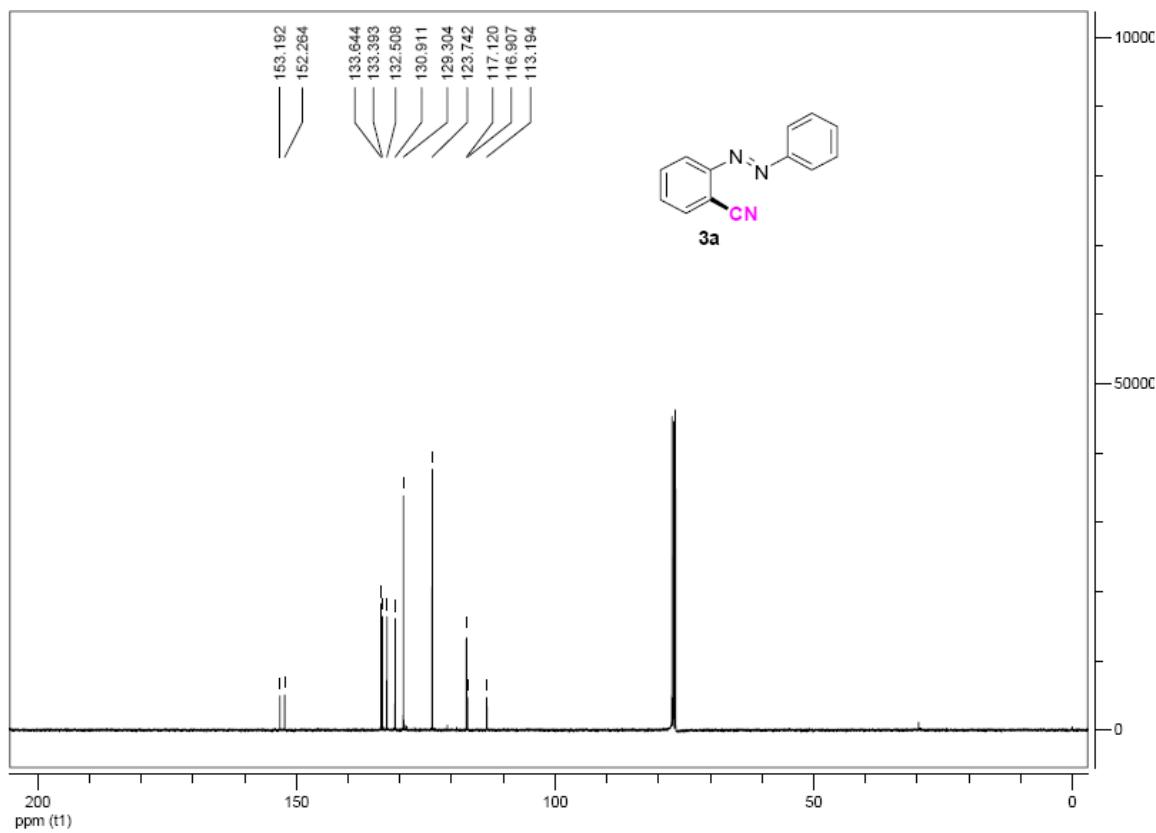
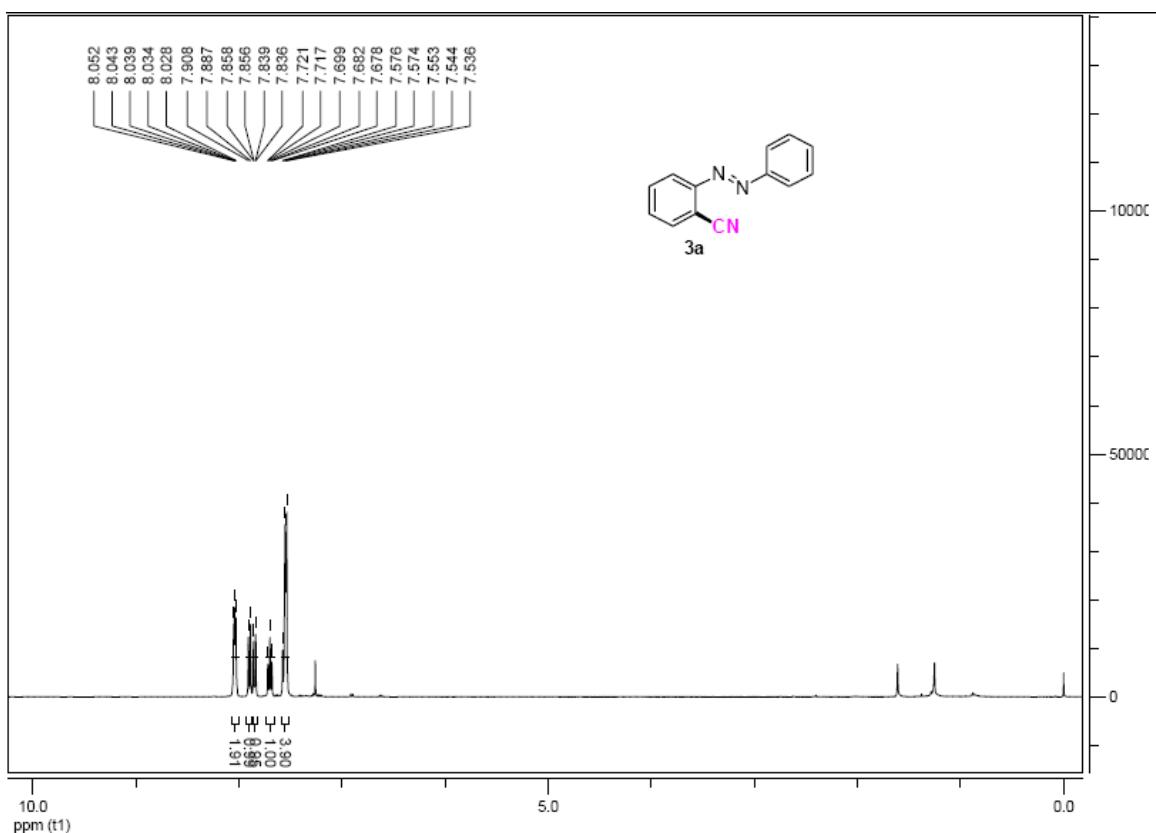
32%), mp 103–105 °C;  $^1\text{H}$  NMR (400 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  7.83 (dd,  $J$  = 8.4, 1.6 Hz, 1H), 7.77 (dd,  $J$  = 8.4, 1.6 Hz, 1H), 7.72 (dd,  $J$  = 8.0, 1.6 Hz, 1H), 7.62 (dd,  $J$  = 8.0, 1.2 Hz, 1H), 7.50 (td,  $J$  = 8.0, 1.6 Hz, 1H), 7.45 (d,  $J$  = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 7.38 (td,  $J$  = 8.4, 1.2 Hz, 1H).  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (100 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  150.9, 148.6, 137.5, 134.9, 133.8, 133.4, 133.1, 131.2, 130.4, 127.4, 117.9, 116.4, 104.5. HRMS (ESI) m/z: Calcd for  $\text{C}_{13}\text{H}_7\text{Cl}_2\text{N}_3\text{Na} [\text{M}+\text{Na}]^+$  297.9909, Found 297.9909.

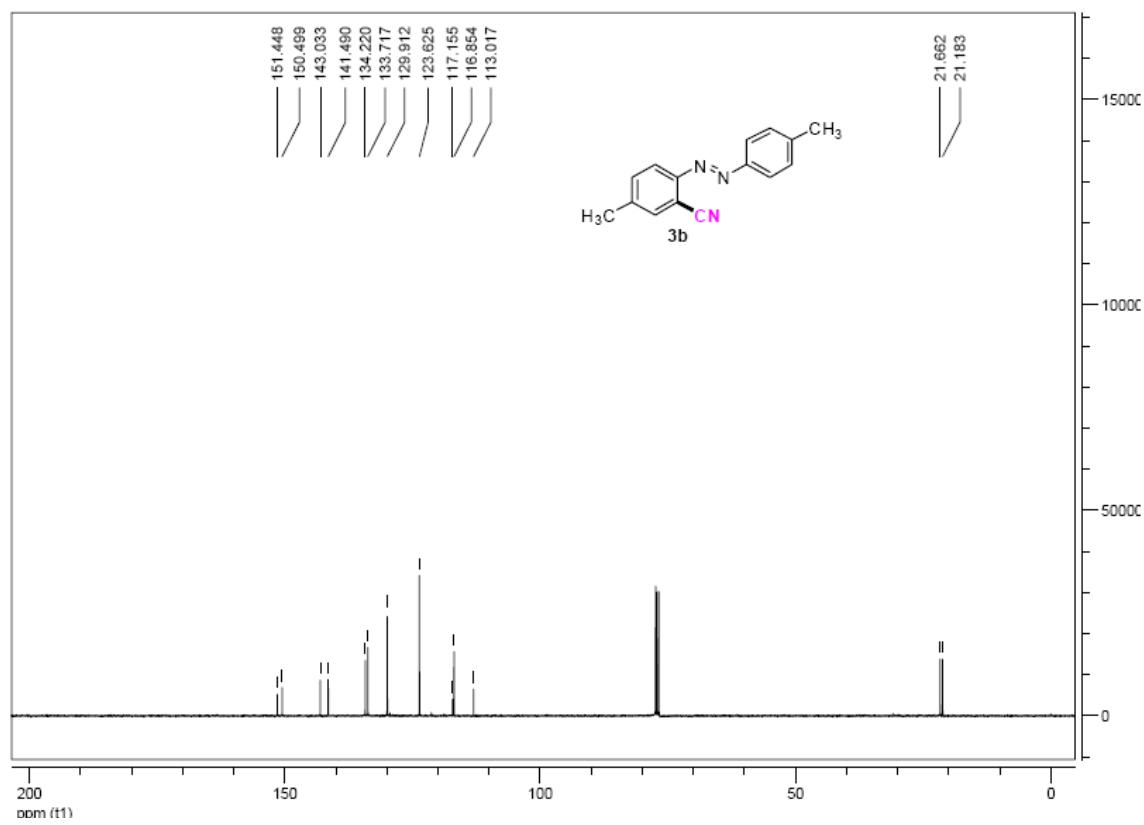
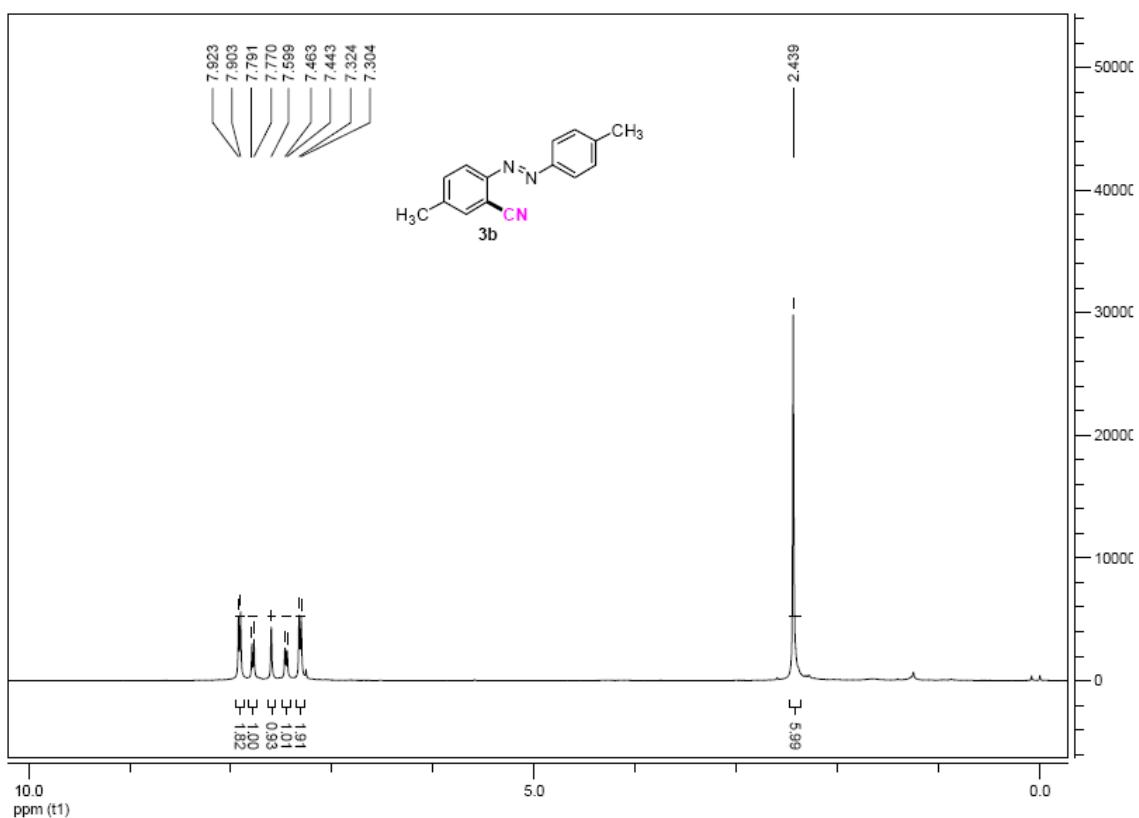
**2-Cyano-6,6'-dibromoazobenzene (3q).** Yellow solid (16.4 mg,

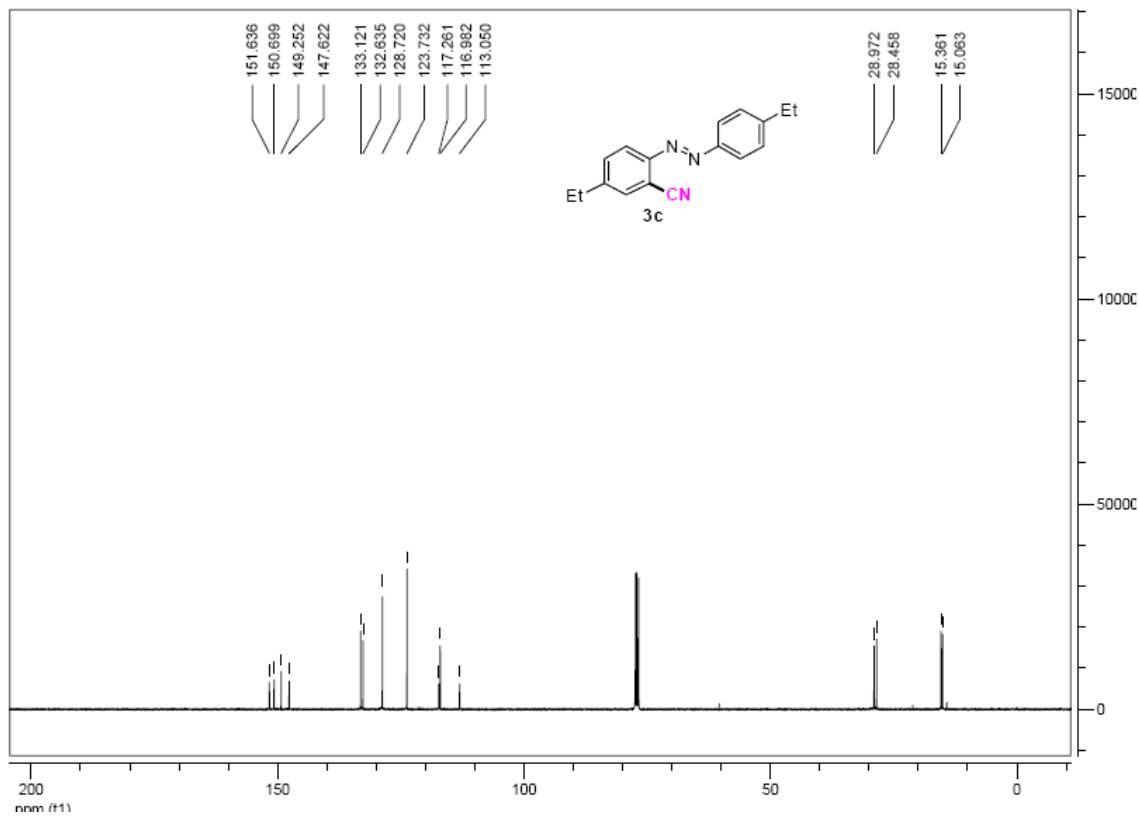
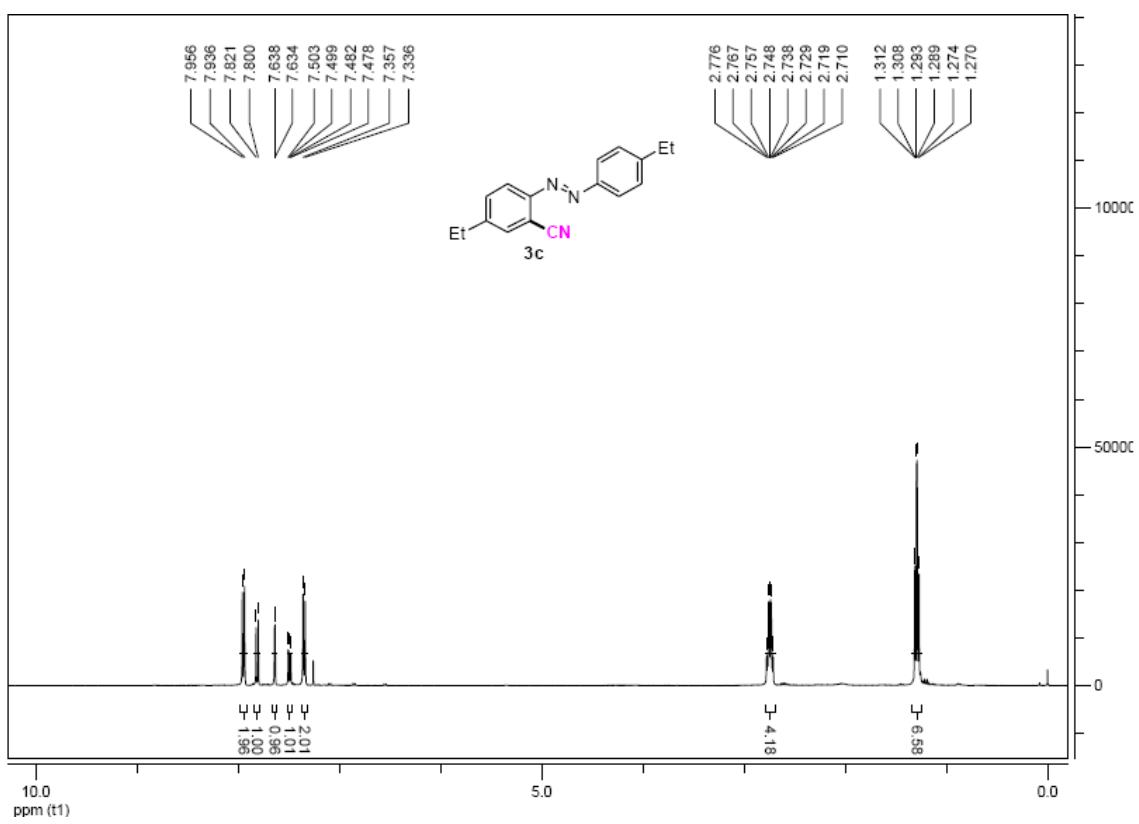


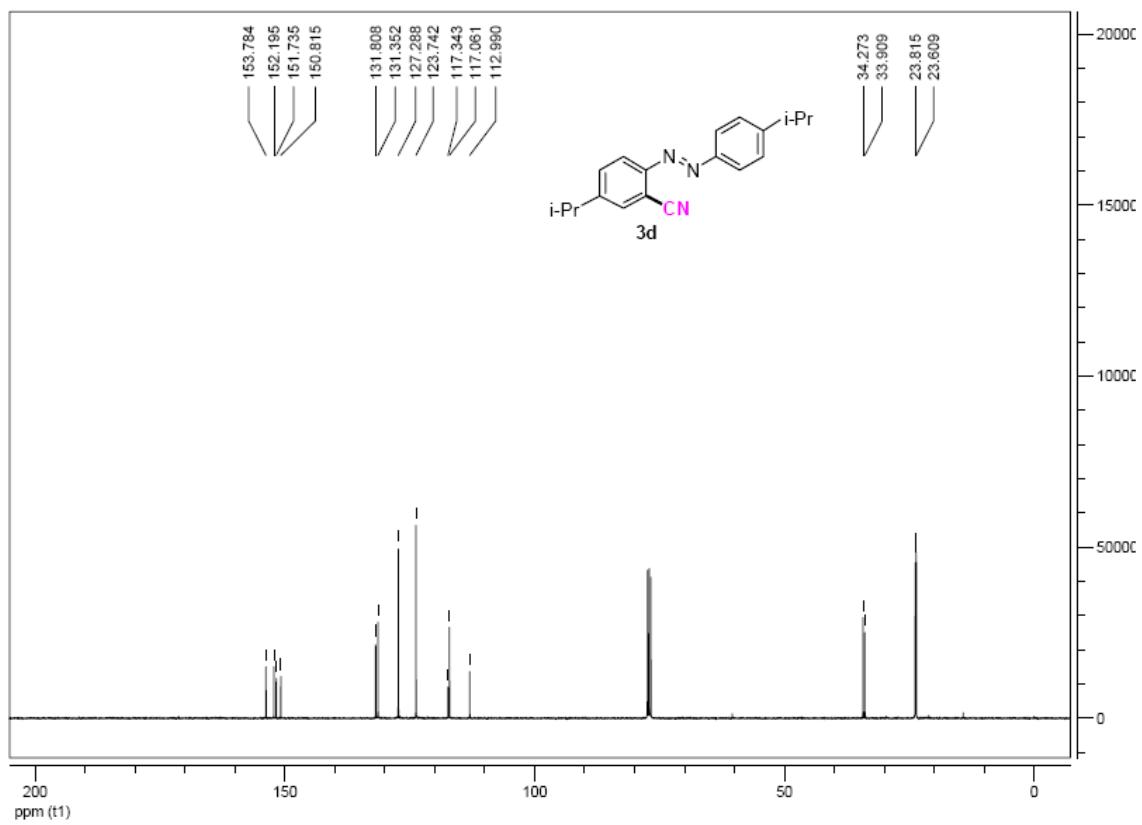
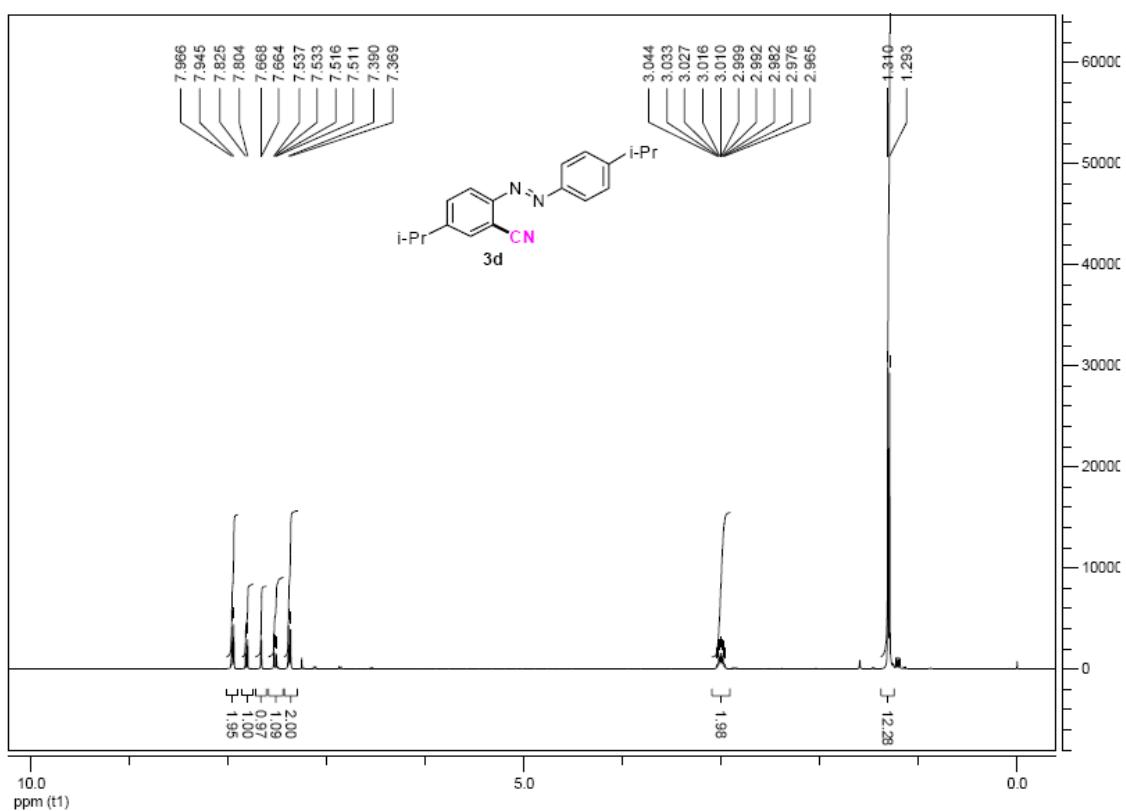
30%), mp 112–114 °C;  $^1\text{H}$  NMR (400 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  7.96 (dd,  $J$  = 8.0, 1.2 Hz, 1H), 7.84-7.78 (m, 2H), 7.76 (d,  $J$  = 1.2 Hz, 1H), 7.44-7.40 (m, 2H), 7.37 (d,  $J$  = 8.0 Hz, 1H).  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (100 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  151.8, 149.5, 138.0, 134.4, 134.1, 133.9, 130.5, 128.1, 127.8, 122.5, 118.3, 116.3, 104.3. HRMS (ESI) m/z: Calcd for  $\text{C}_{13}\text{H}_7\text{Br}_2\text{N}_3\text{Na} [\text{M}+\text{Na}]^+$  387.8884, Found 387.8882. Anal. Calcd for  $\text{C}_{13}\text{H}_7\text{N}_3\text{Br}_2$ : C, 42.78; H, 1.93; N, 11.51. Found: C, 42.81; H, 1.88; N, 11.60.

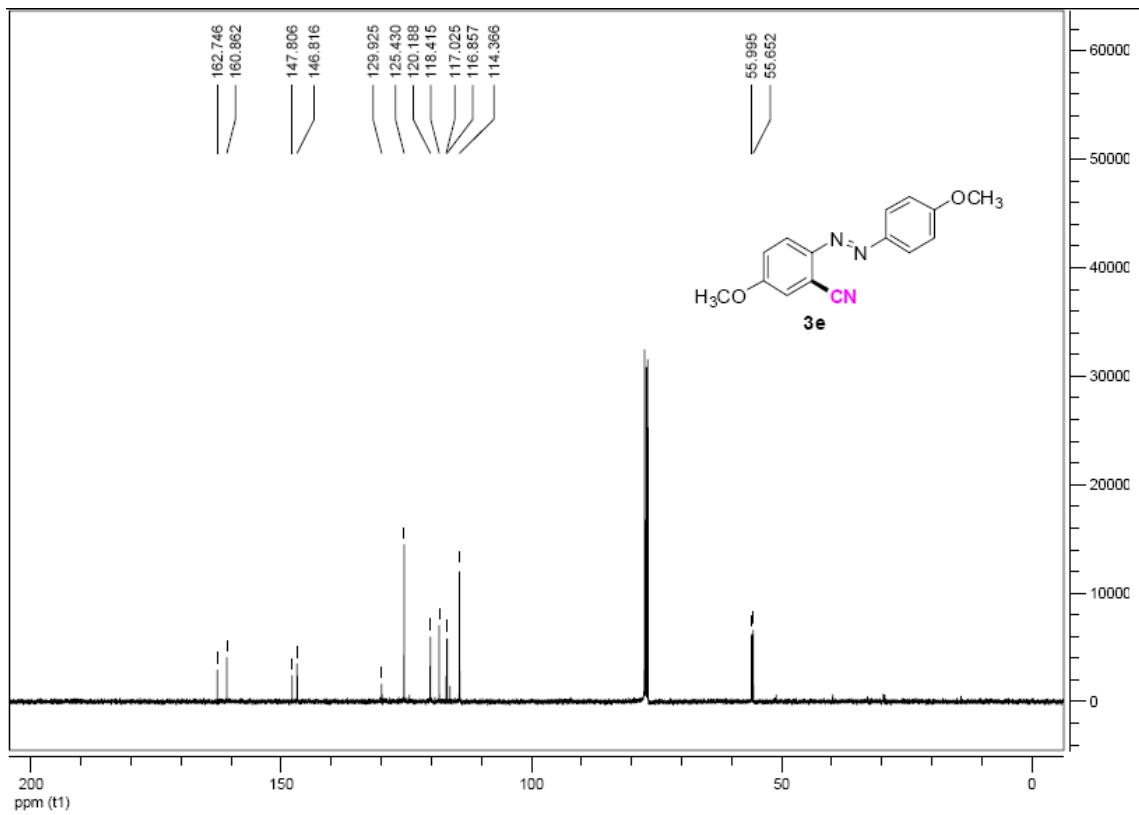
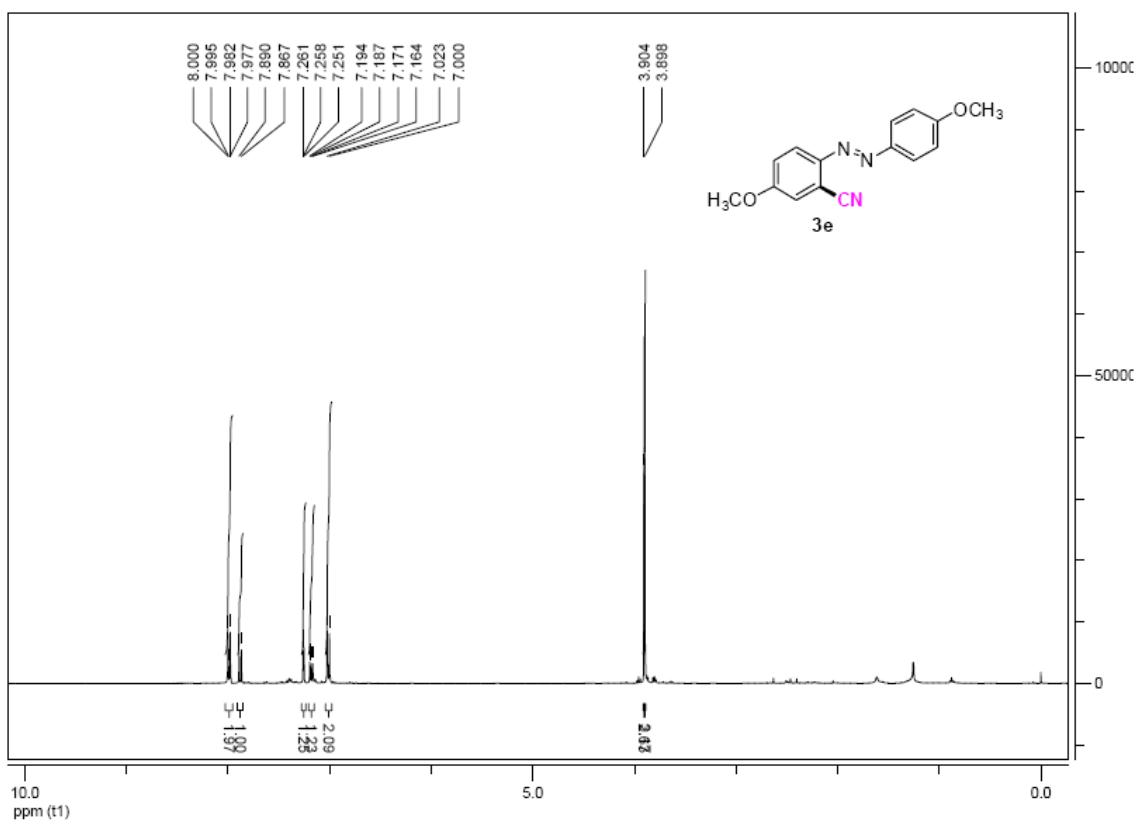
#### 4. Spectral Copies of $^1\text{H}$ and $^{13}\text{C}$ NMR of Products 3a-q

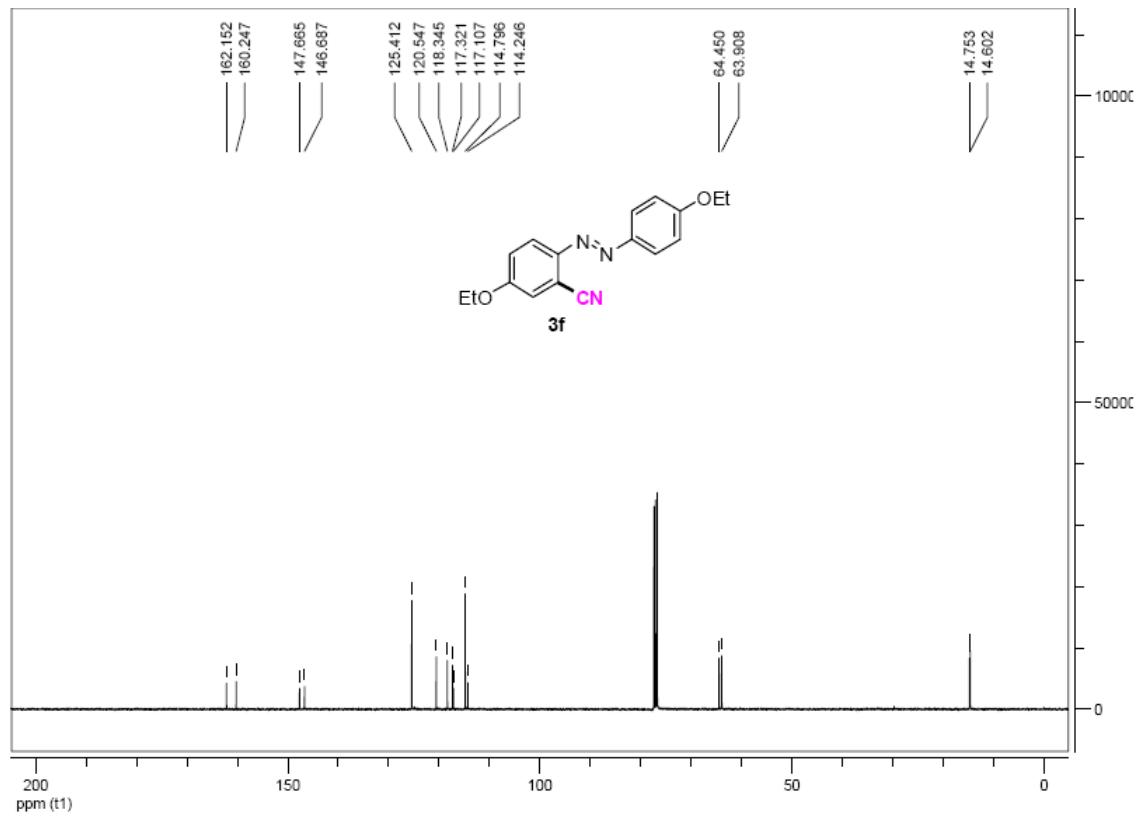
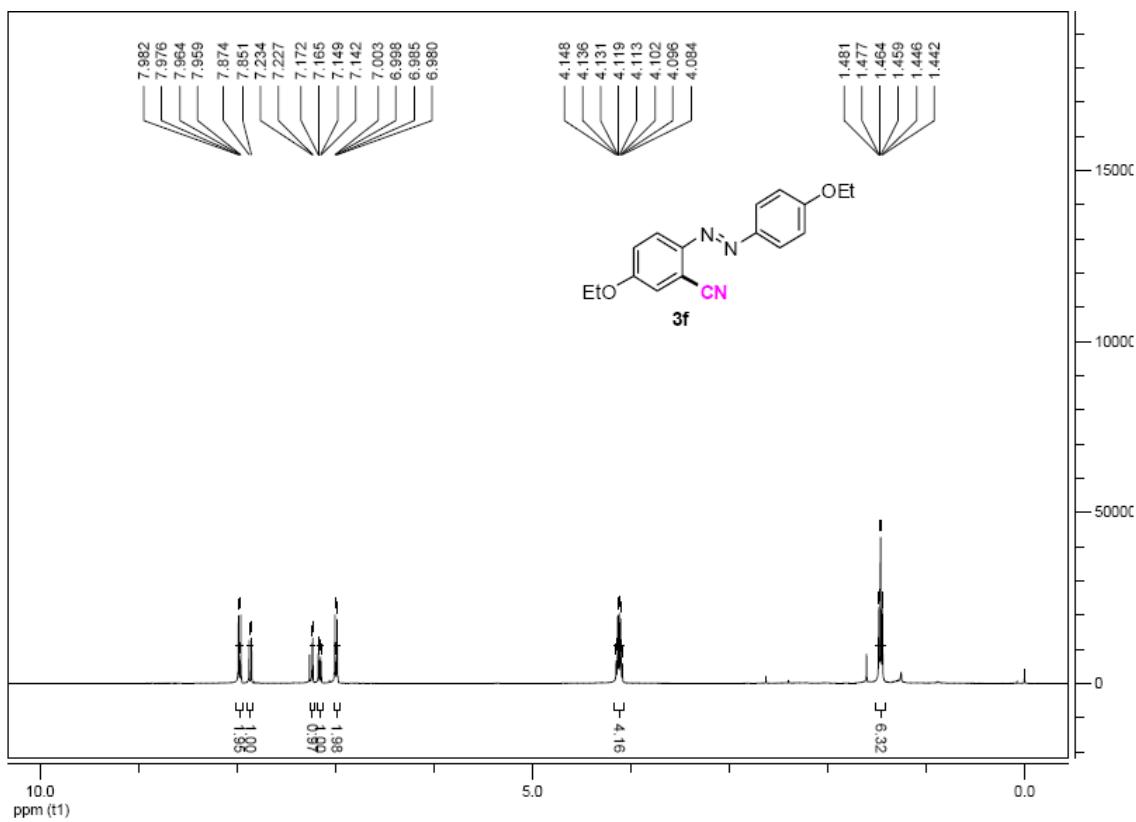


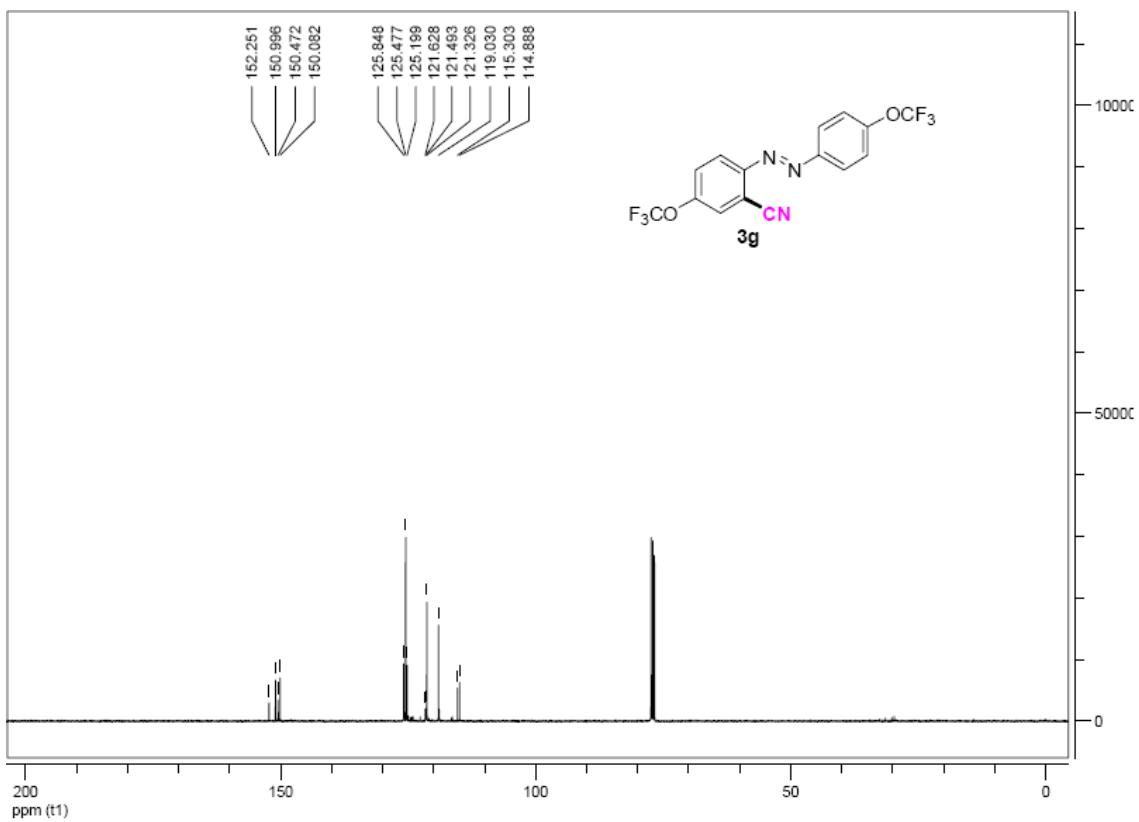
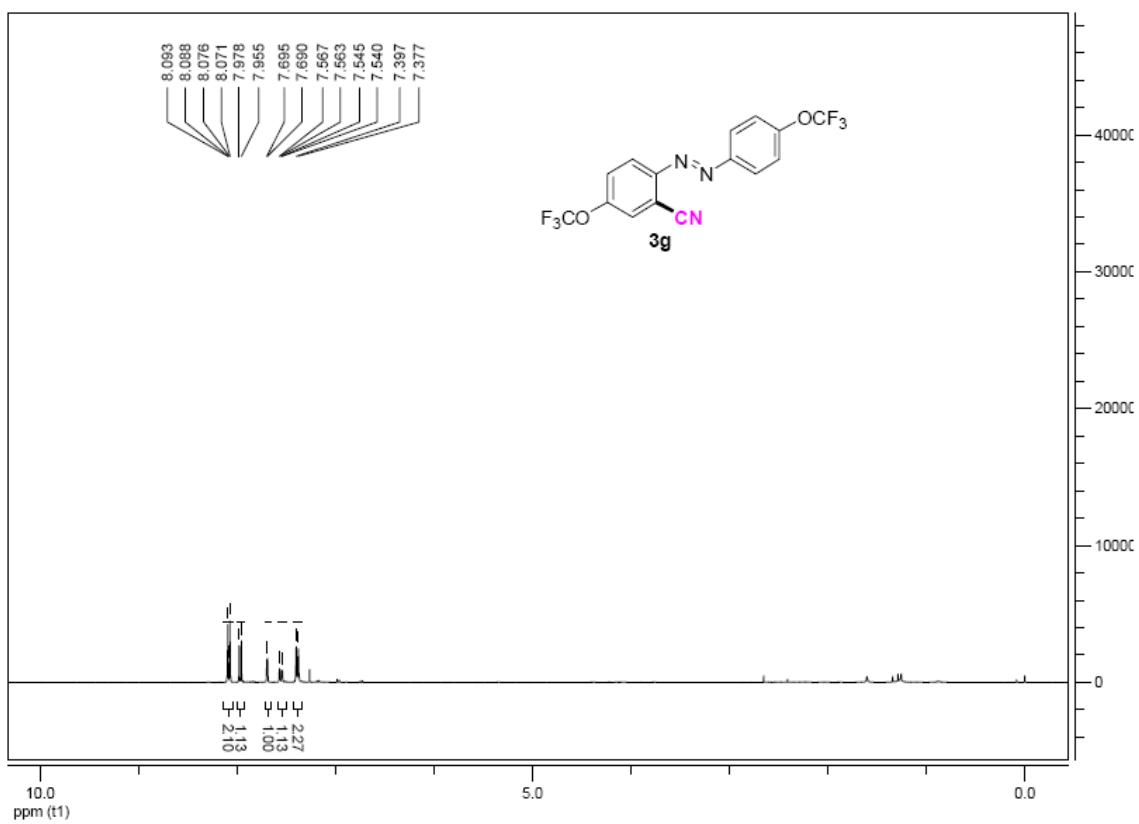


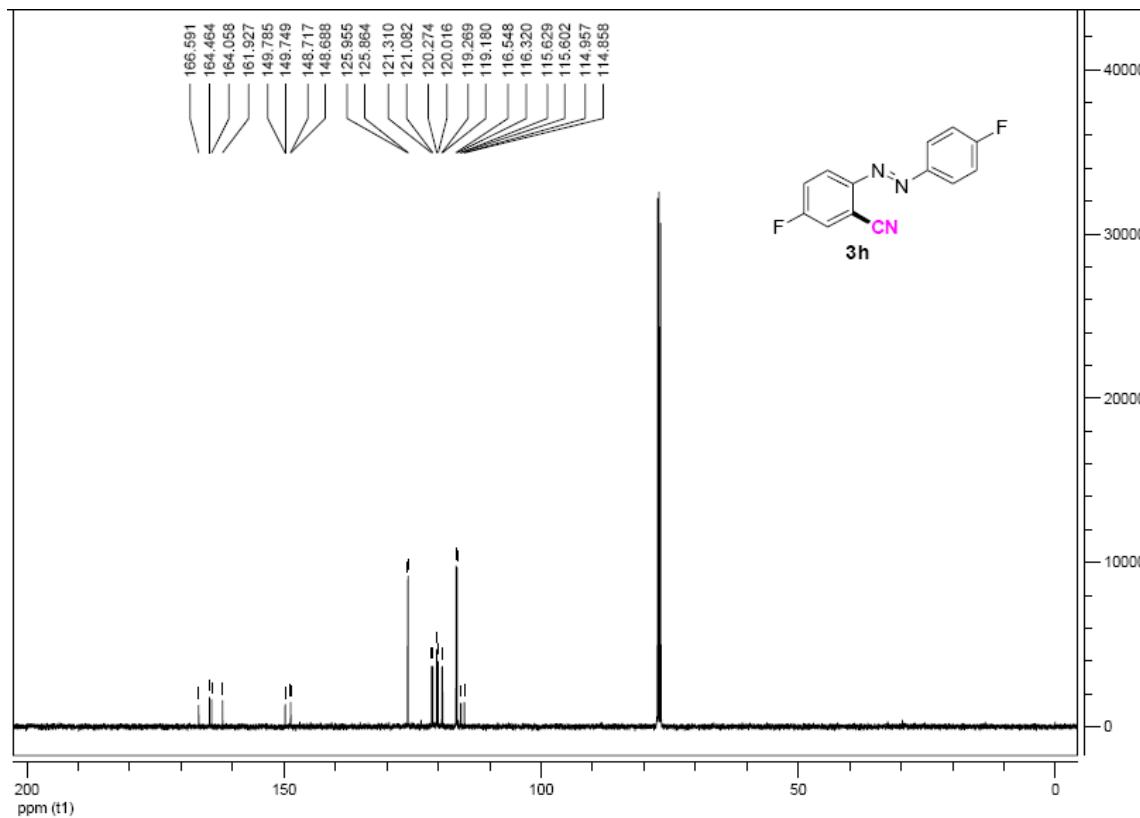
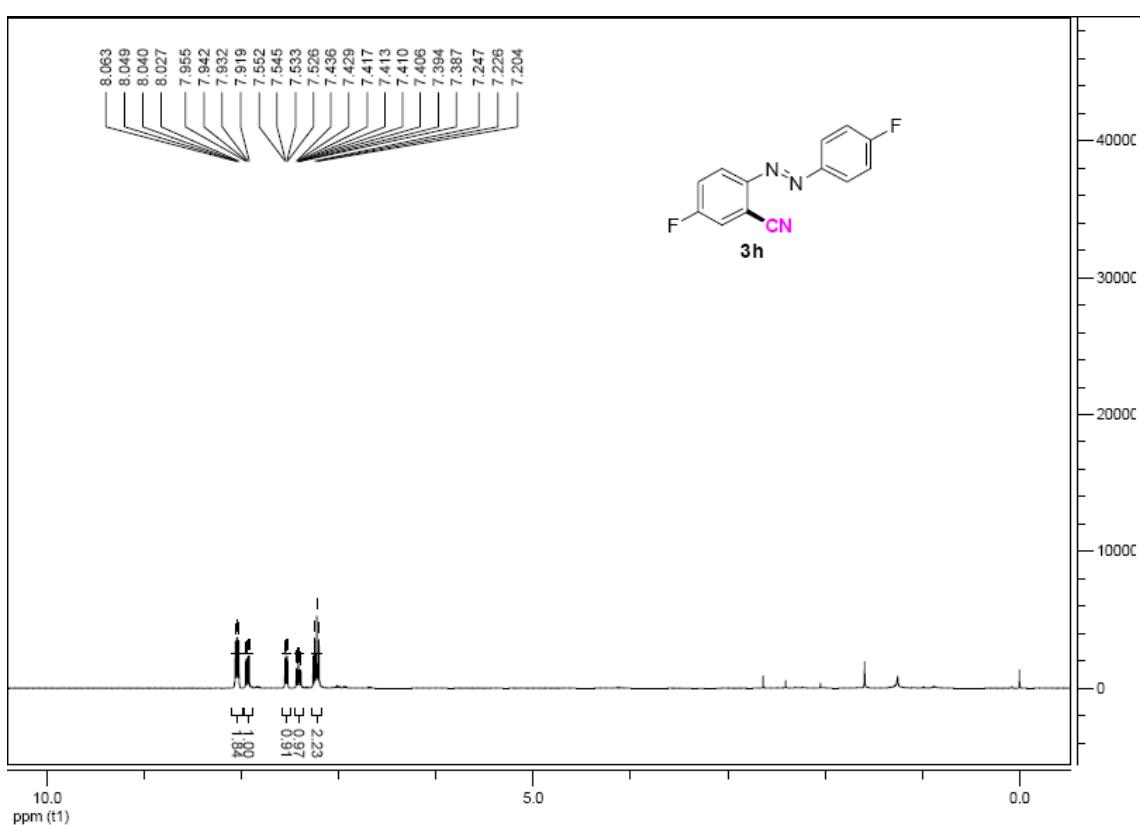


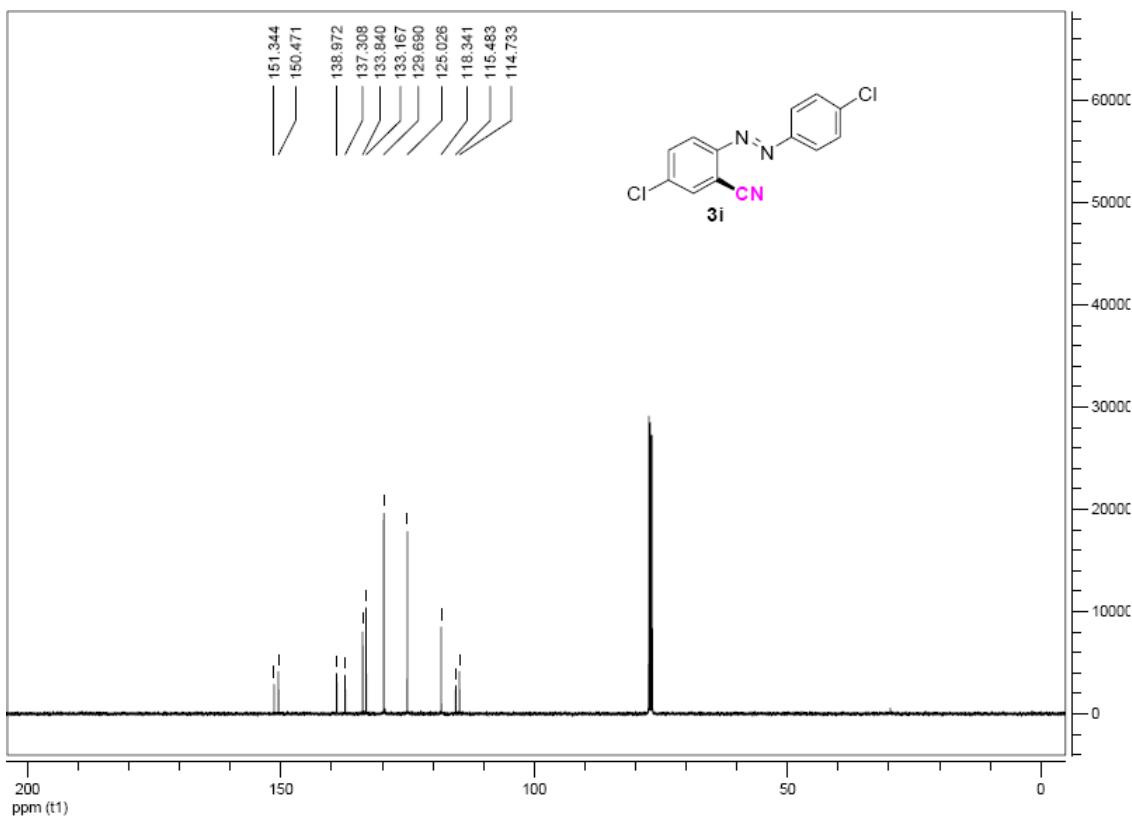
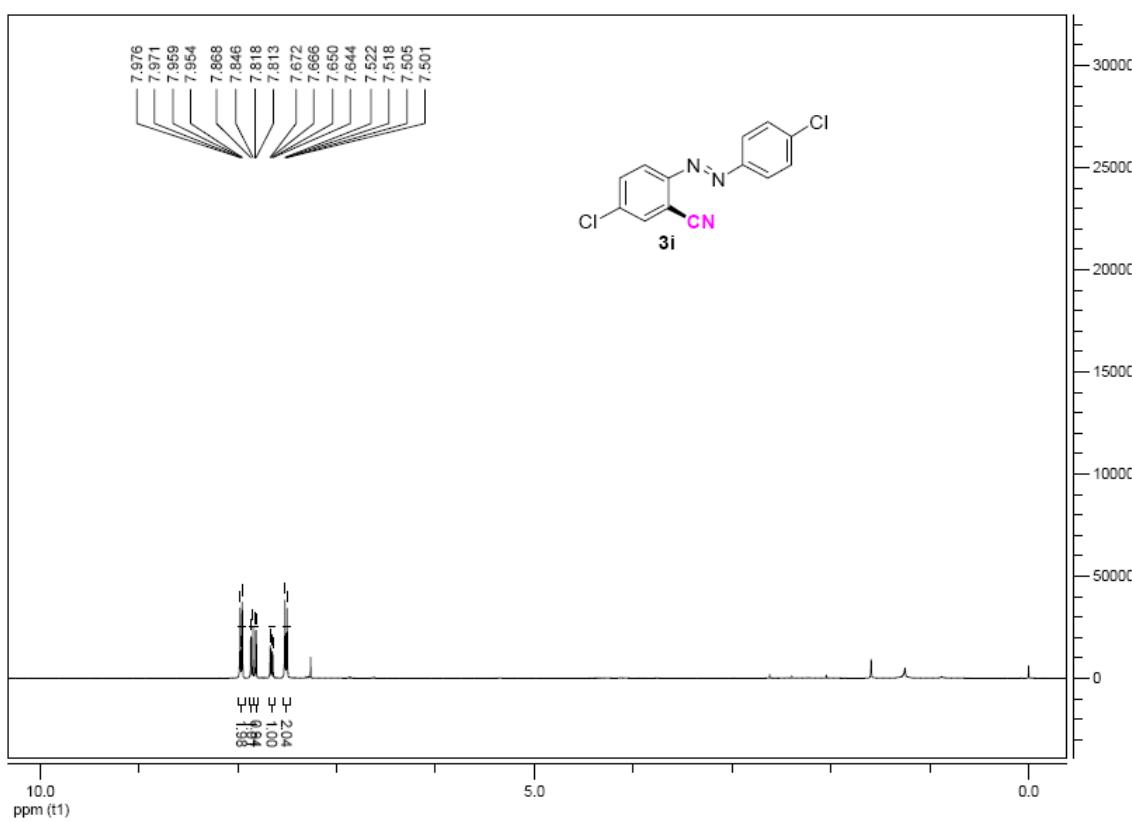


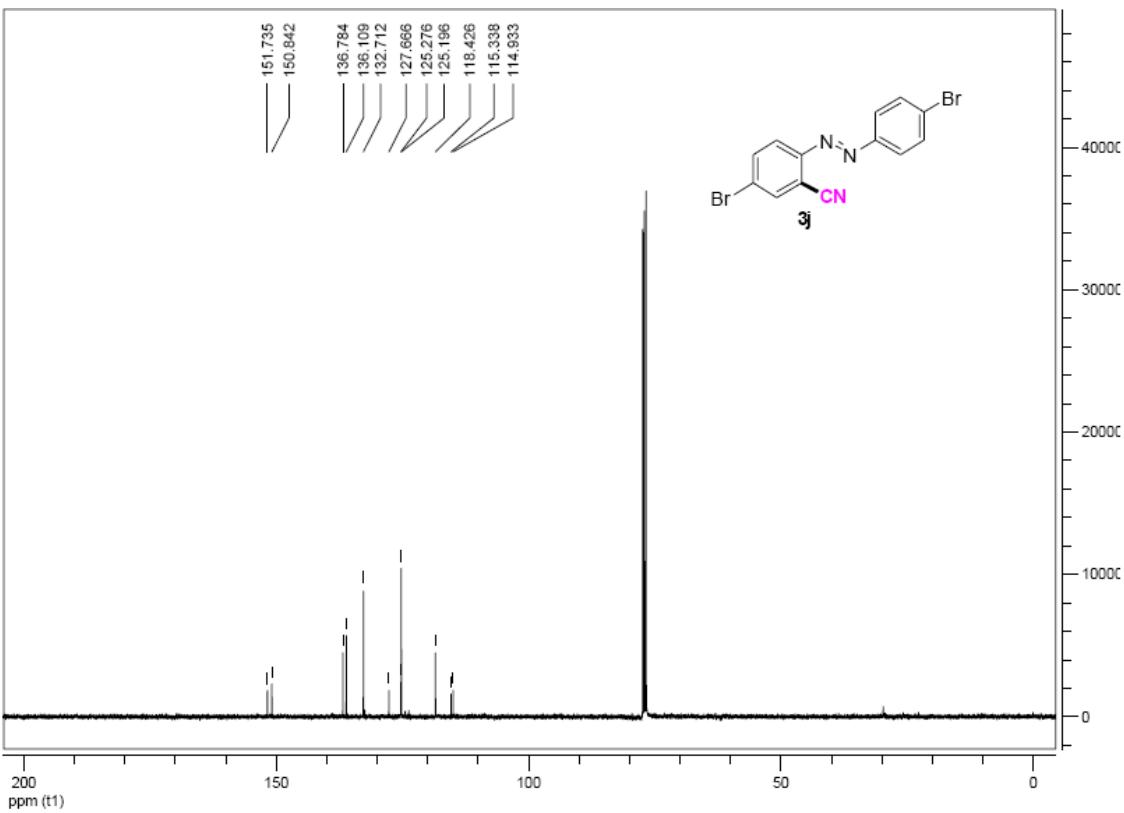
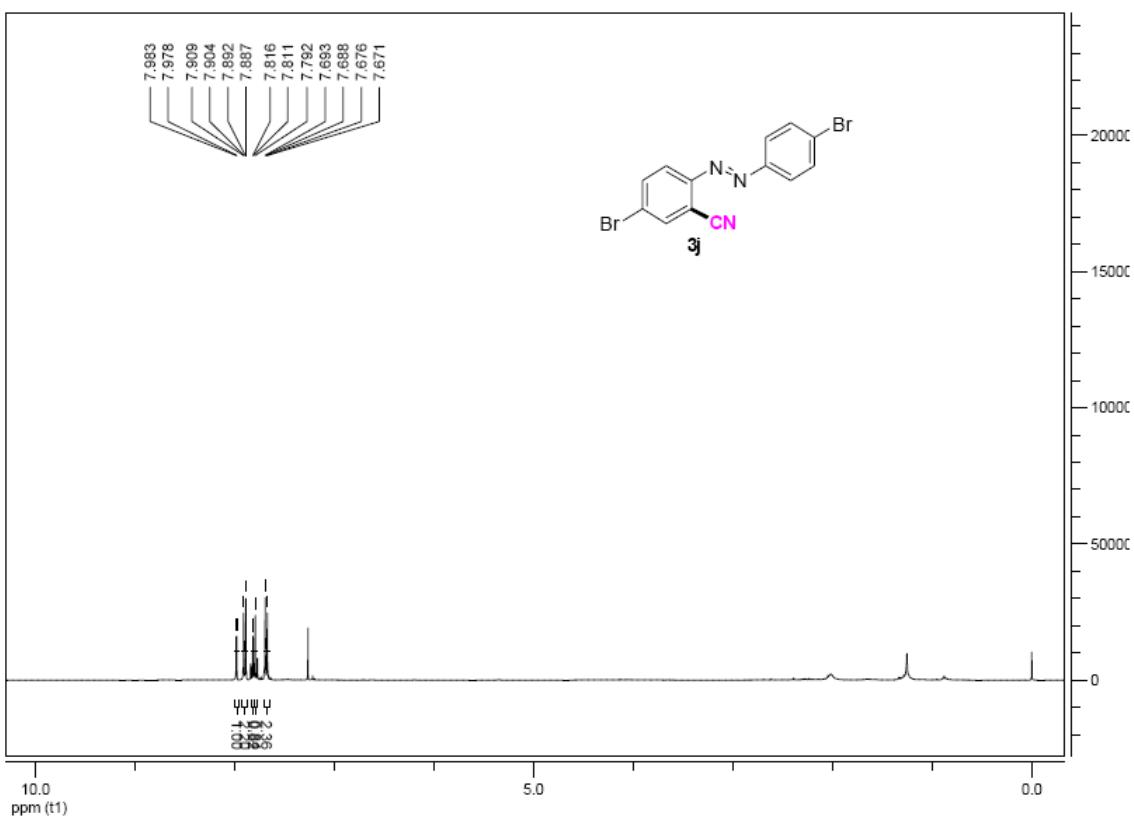


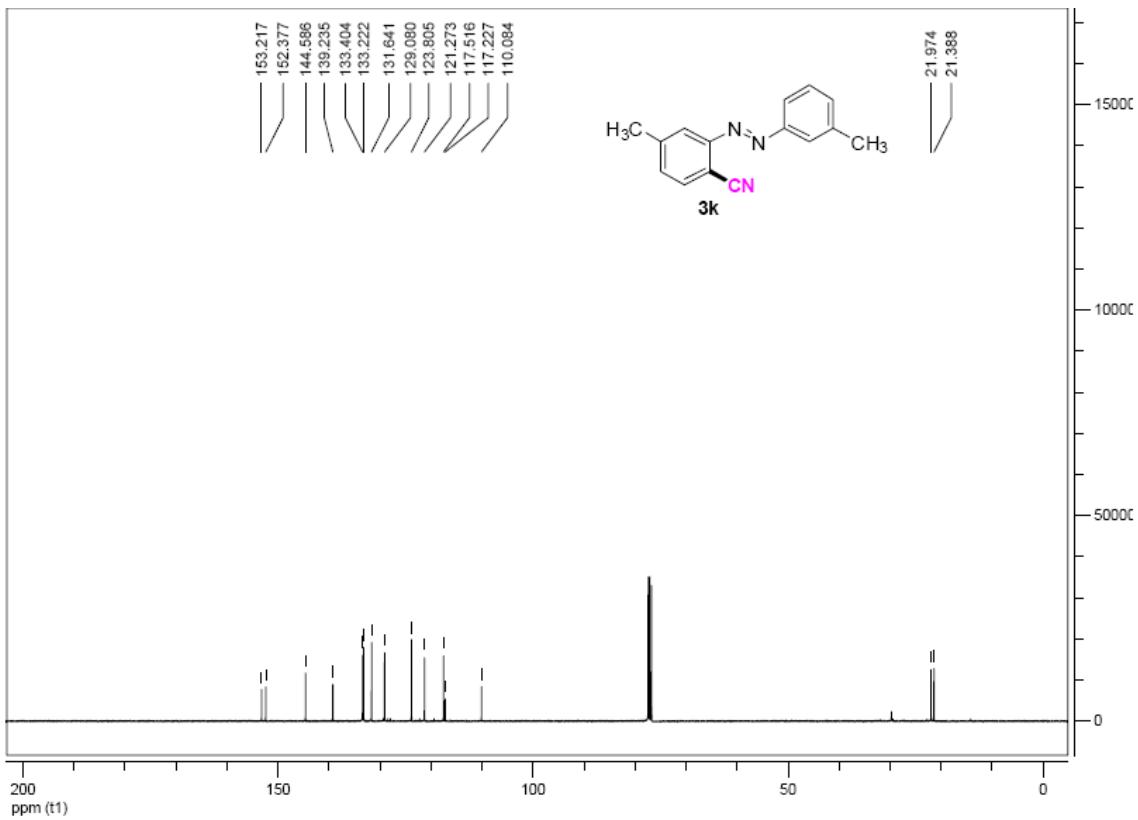
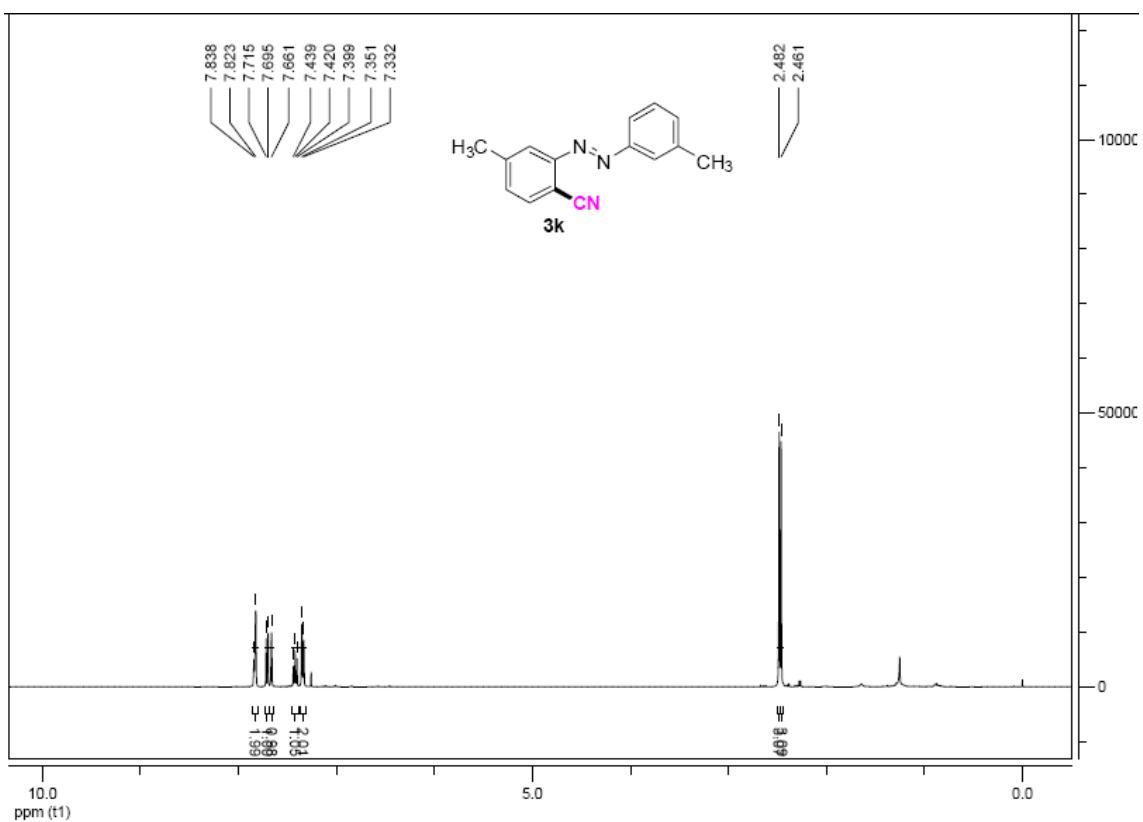


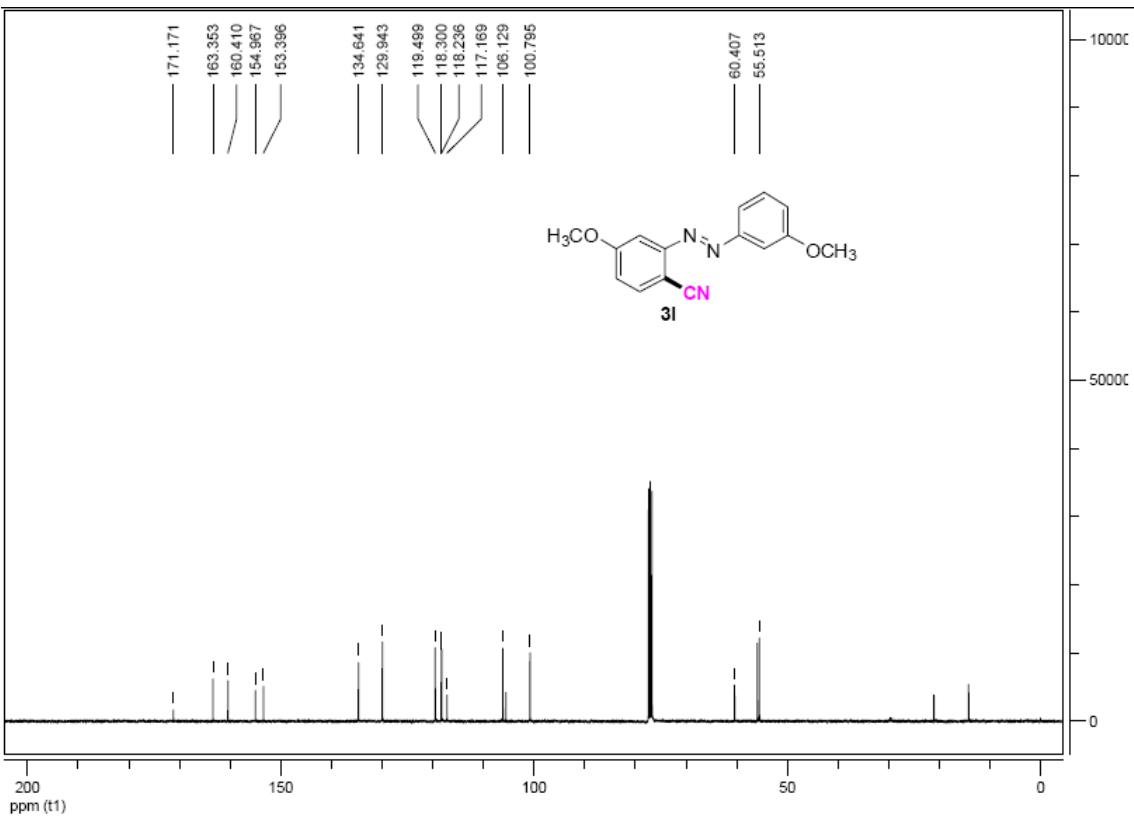
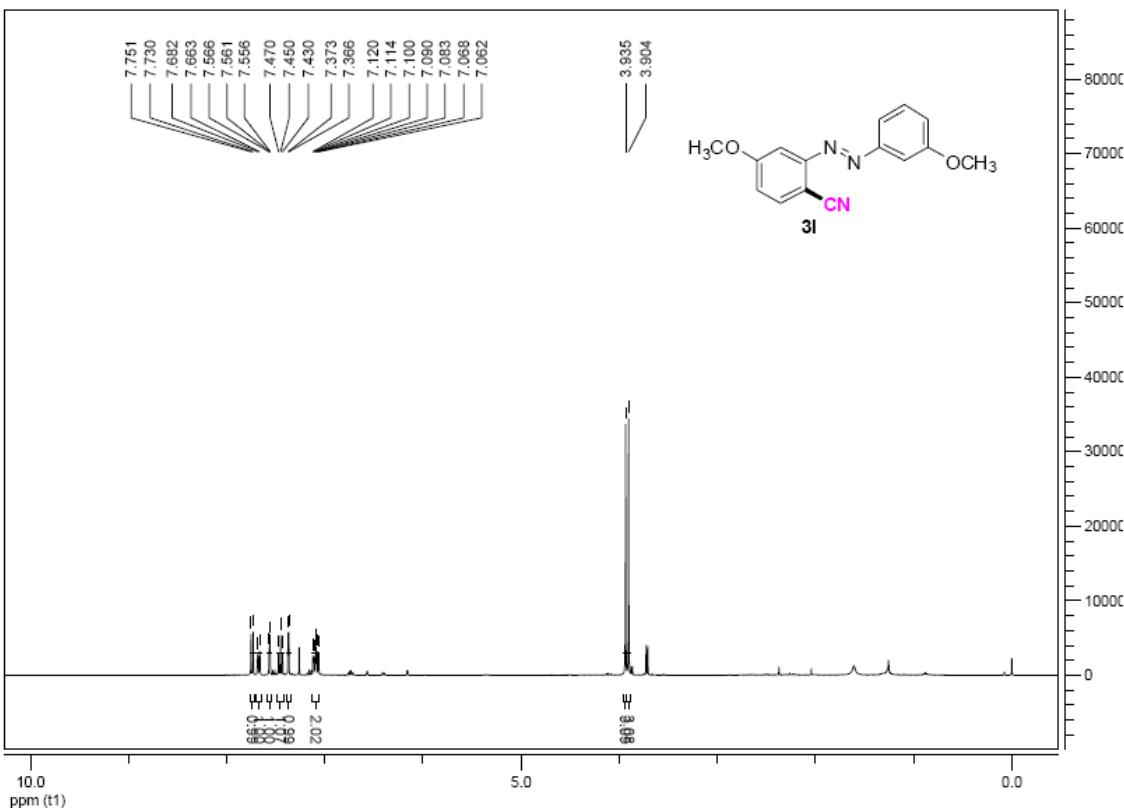


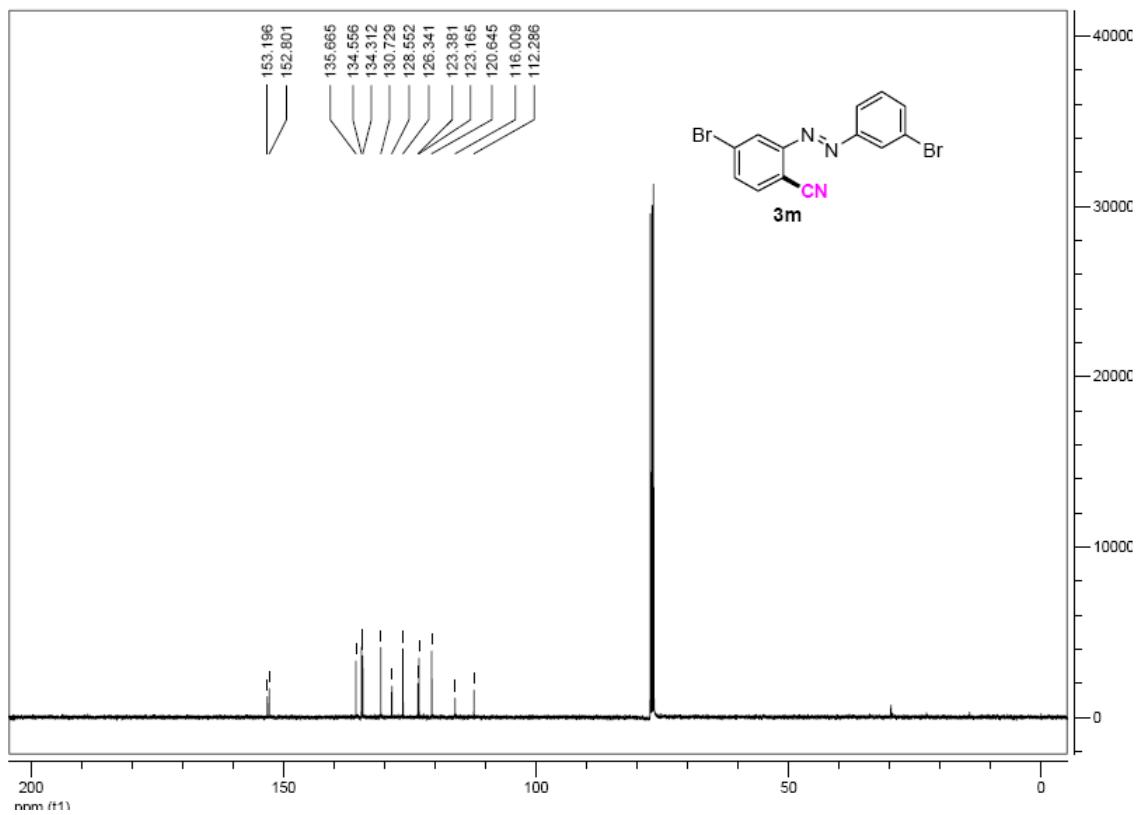
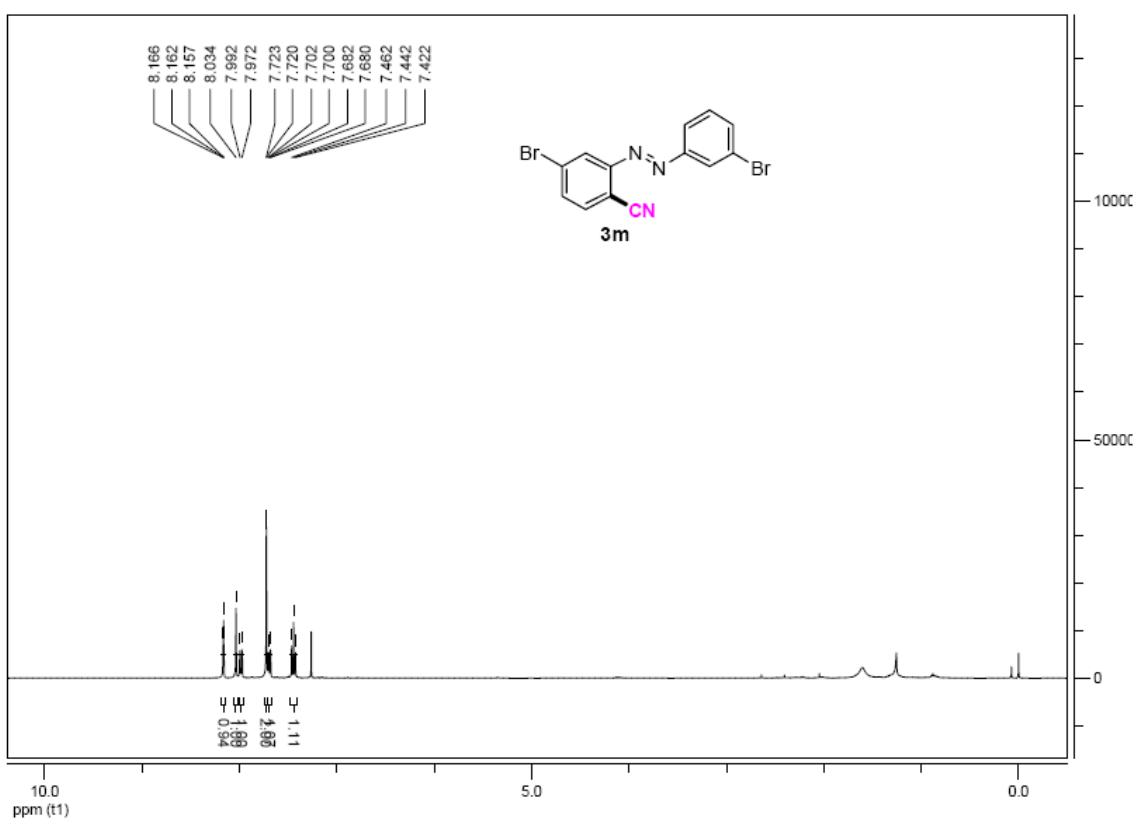


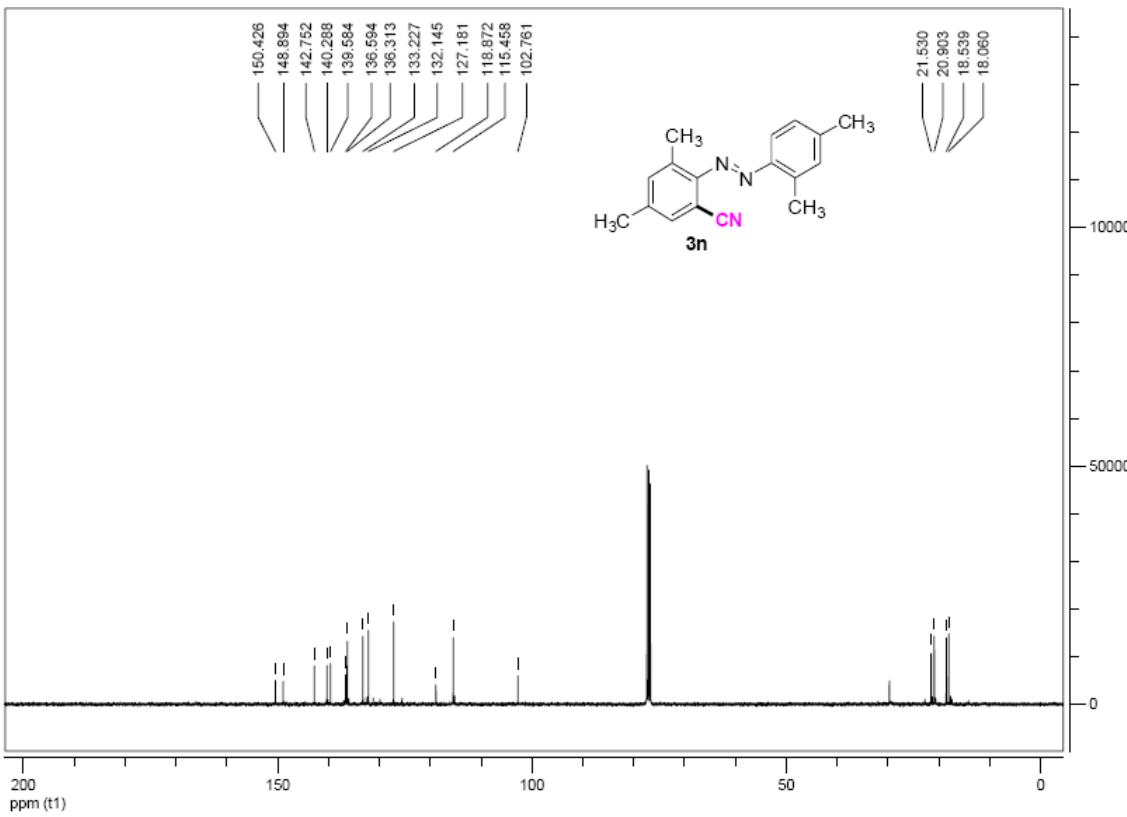
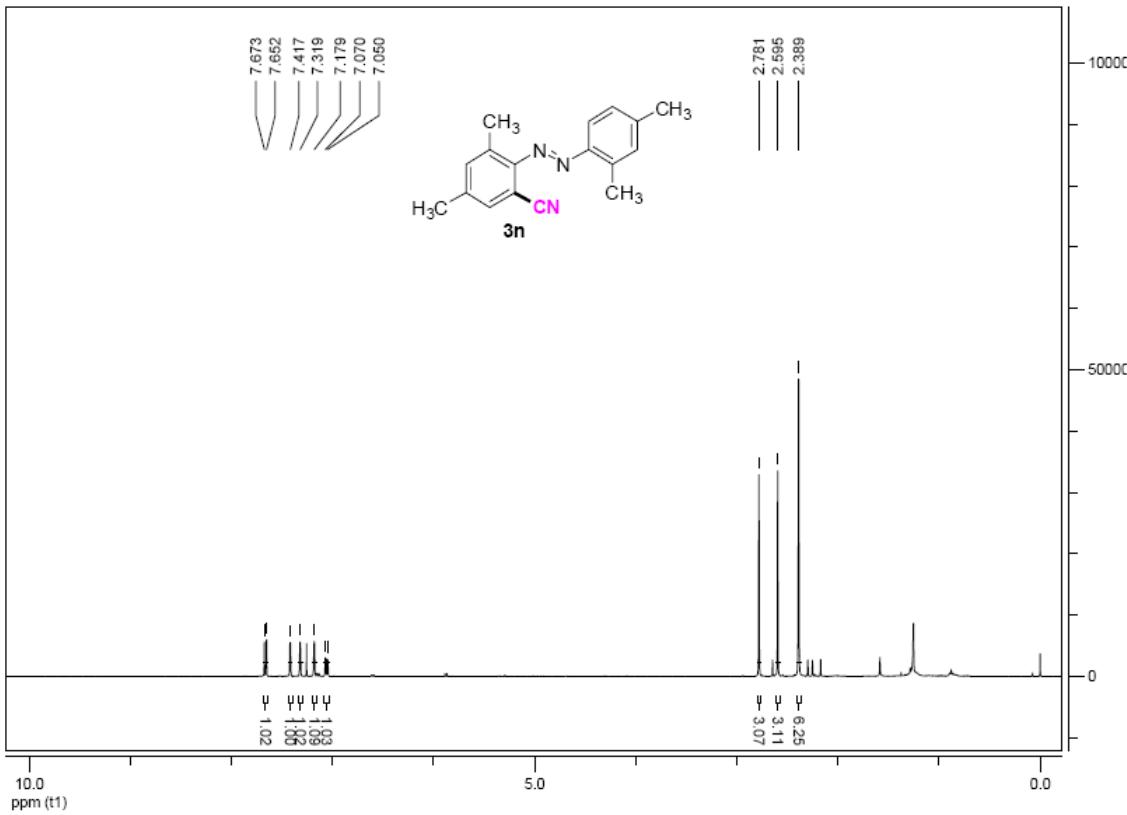


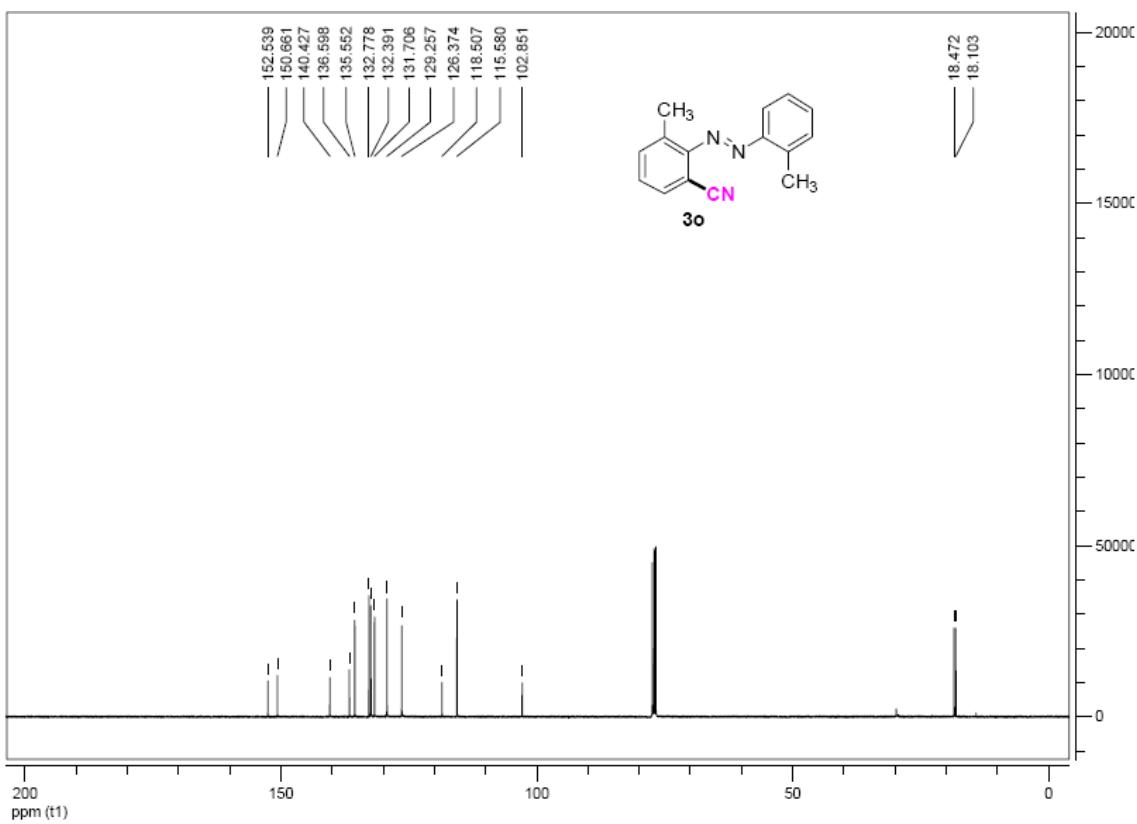
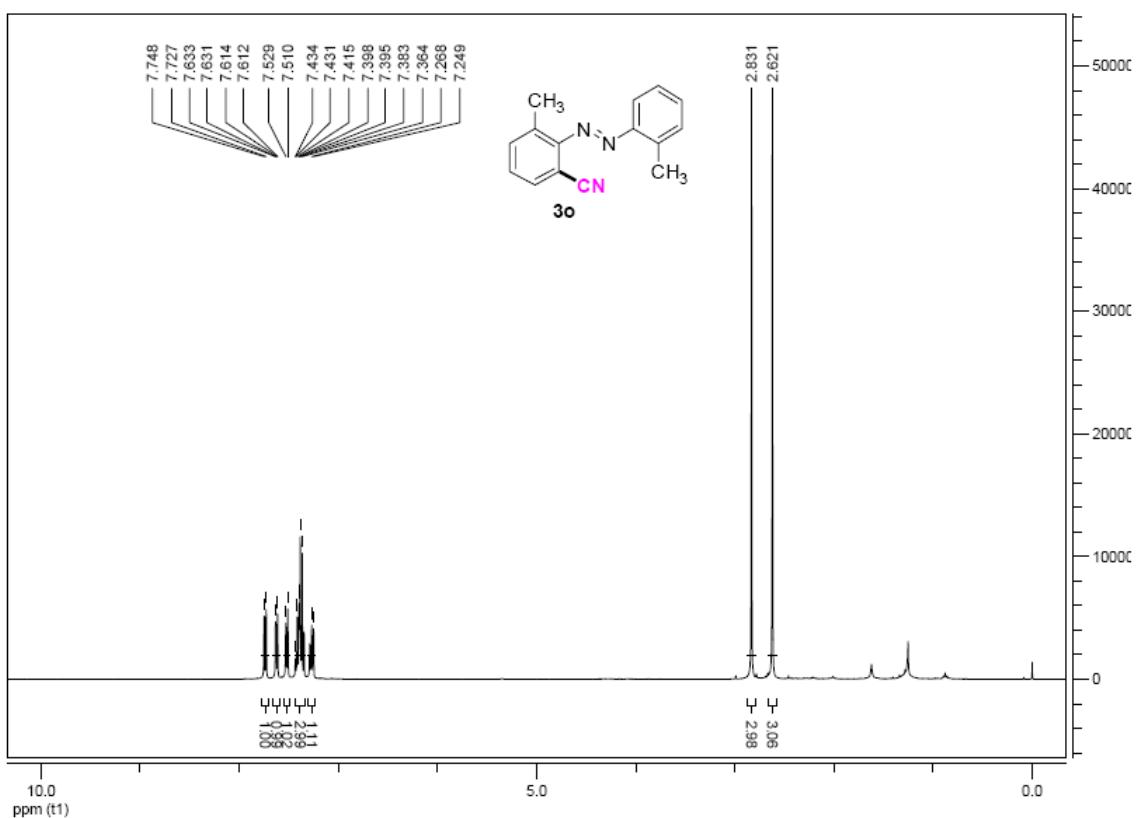


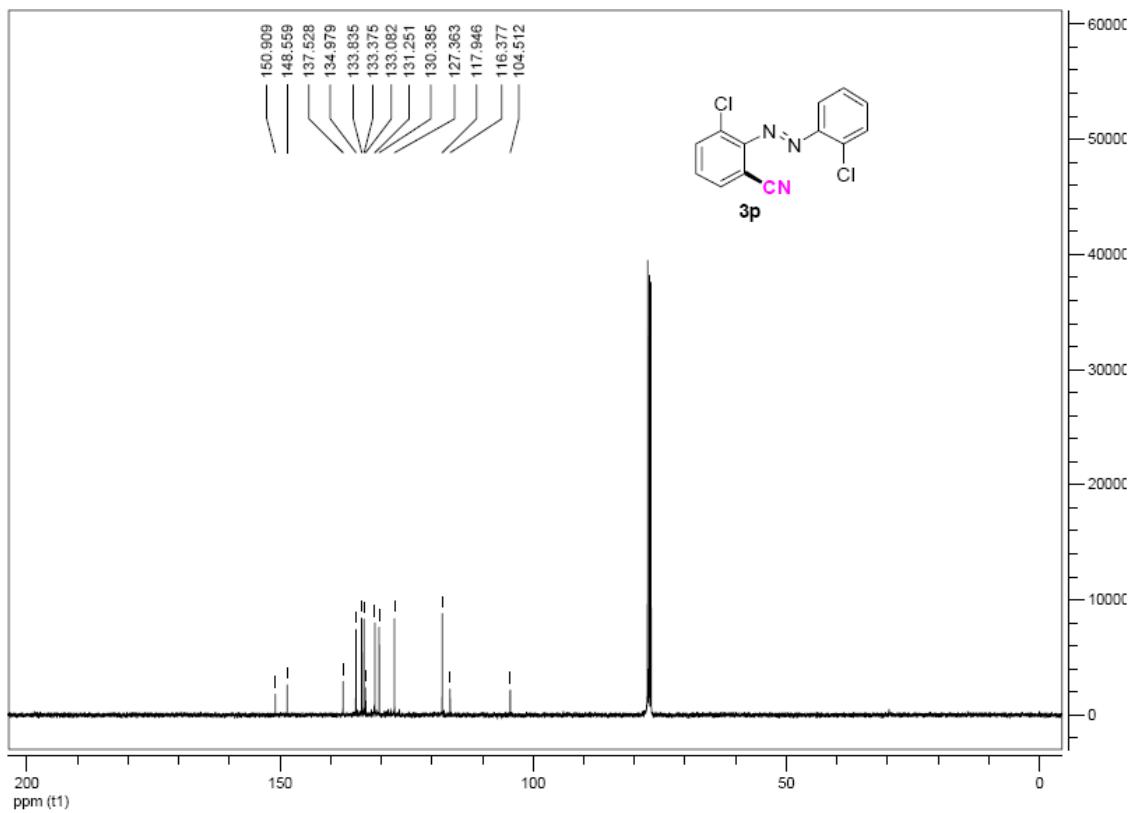
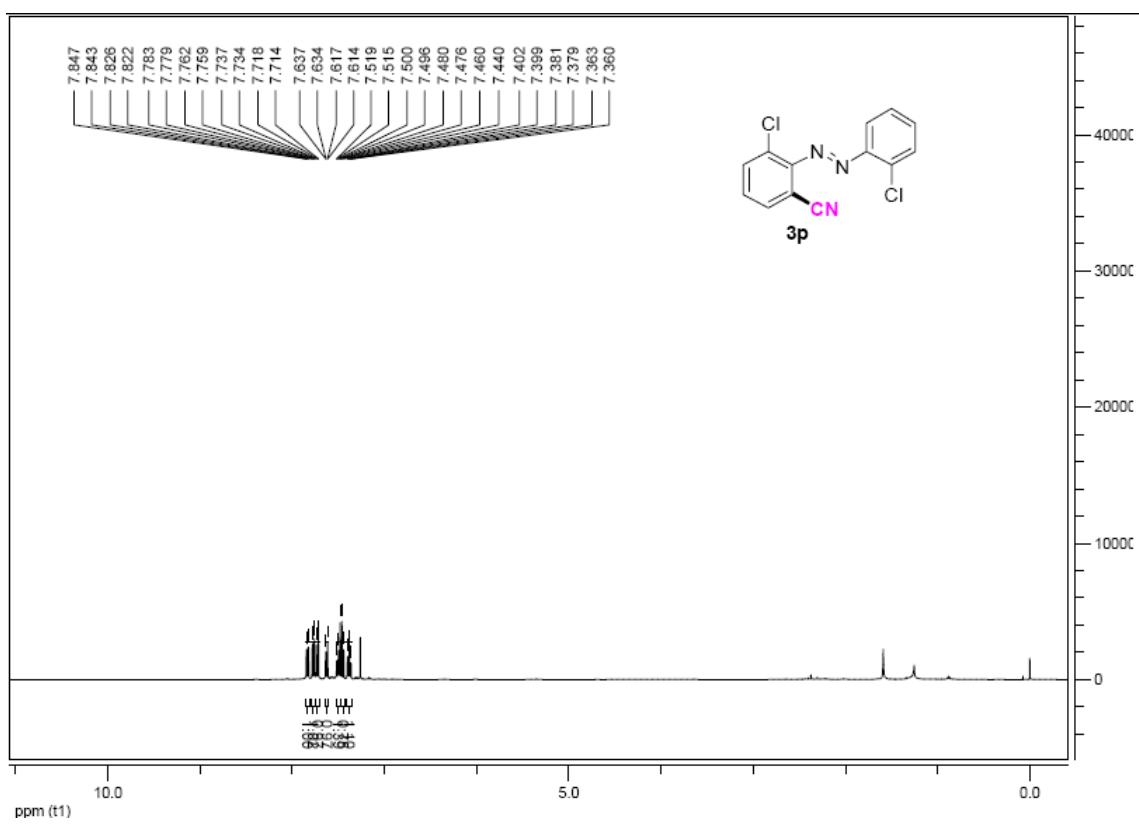


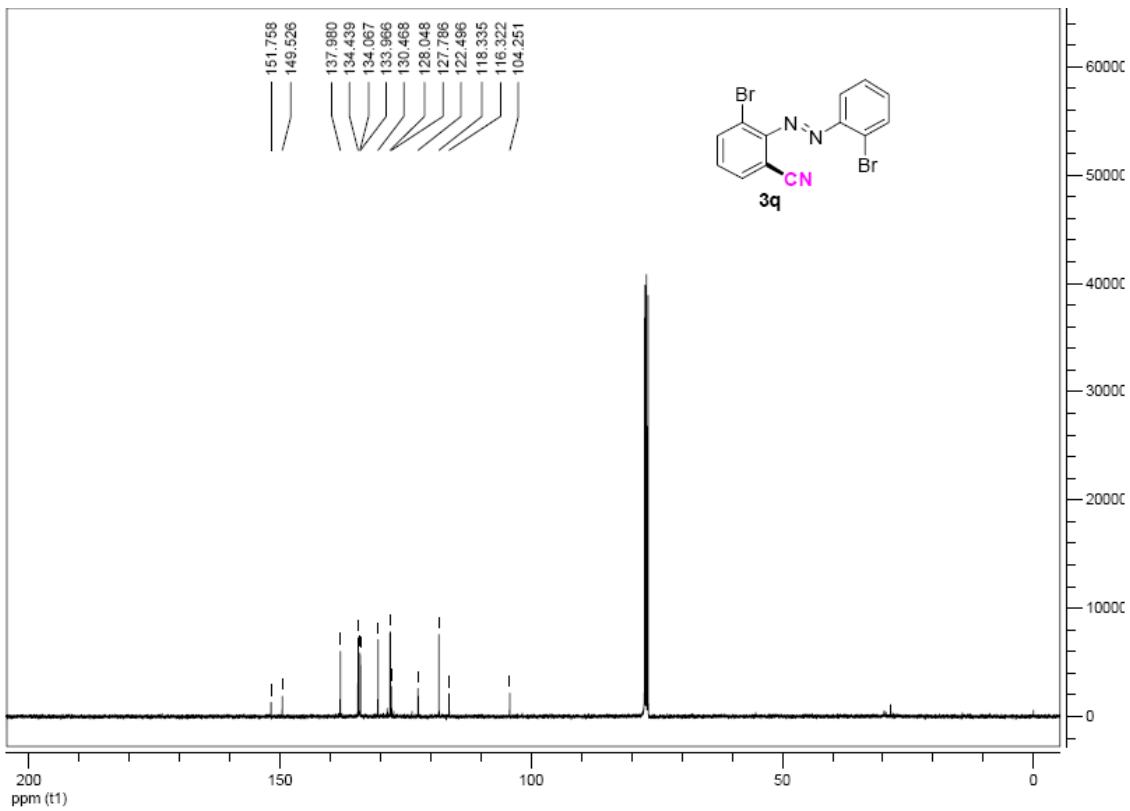
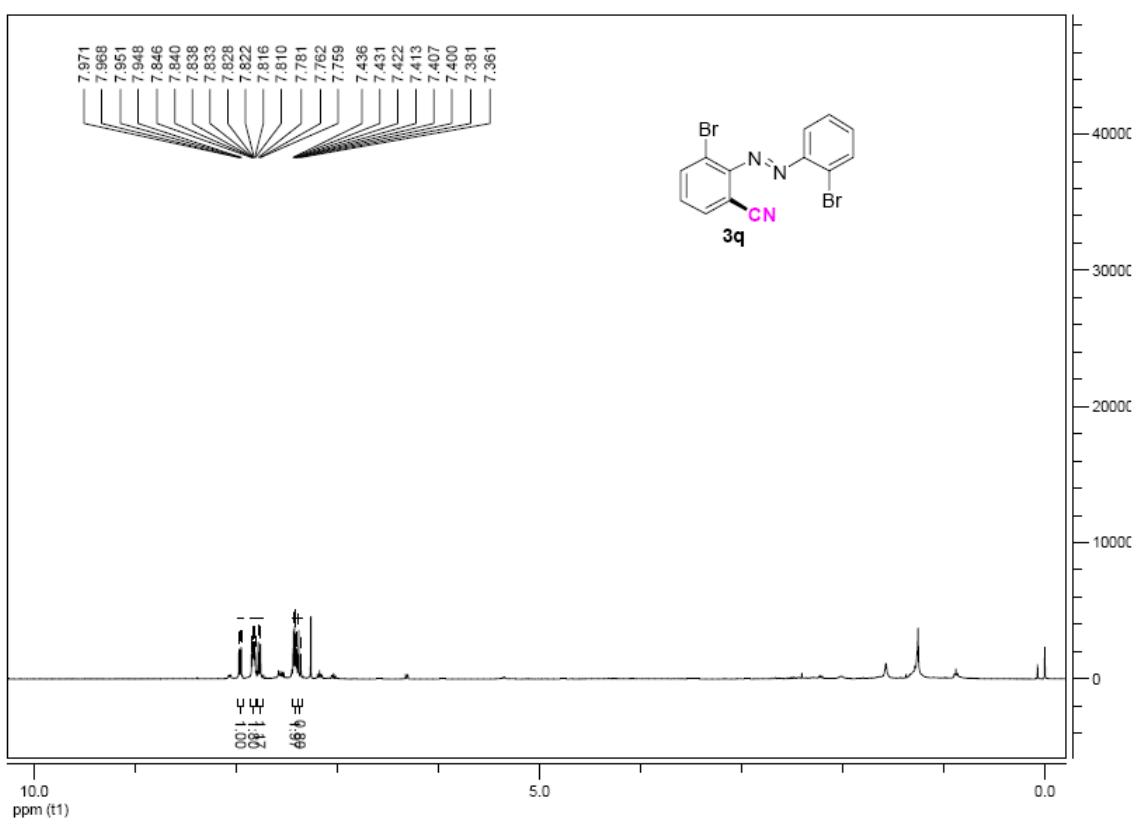




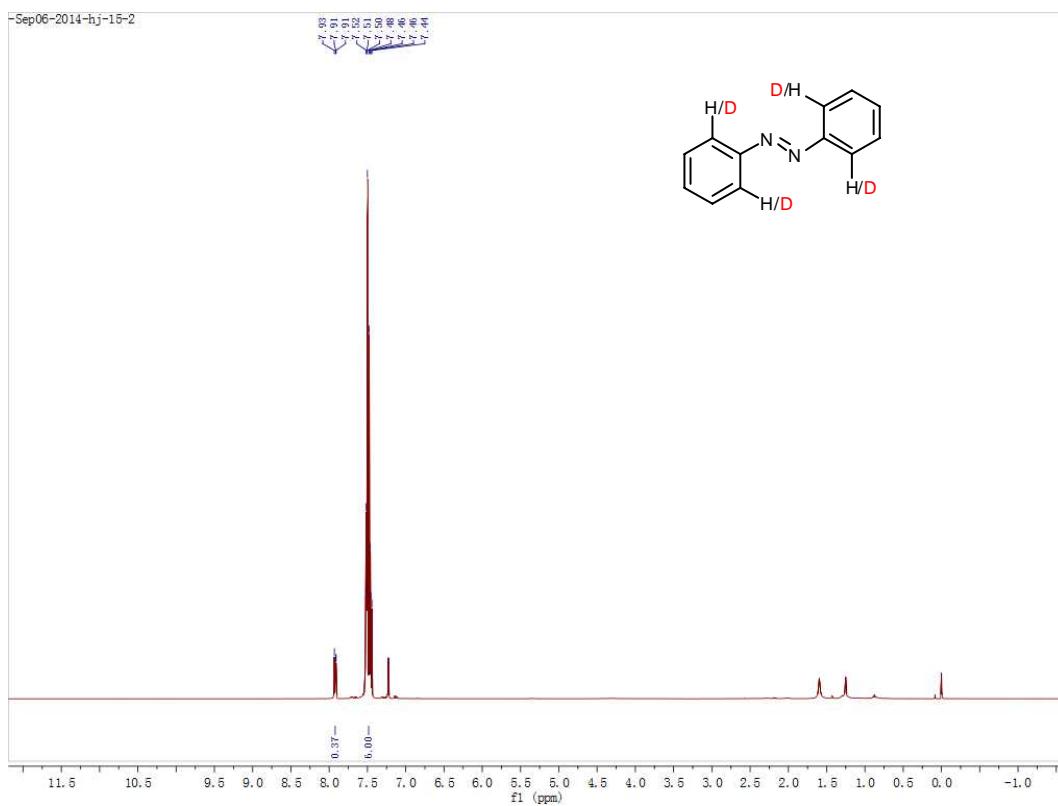








## 5. The $^1\text{H}$ NMR Spectrum of $[\text{D}]_n\text{-1a}$



$^1\text{H}$  NMR(400MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ ) of  $[\text{D}]_n\text{-1a}$  :  $\delta$  7.93-7.91(m. 0.37 *ortho*-H), 7.52-7.44(m, 6H).

## 6. References

- [1] L. D. Shirtcliff, J. Rivers and M. M. Haley, *J. Org. Chem.* 2006, **71**, 6619-6622.