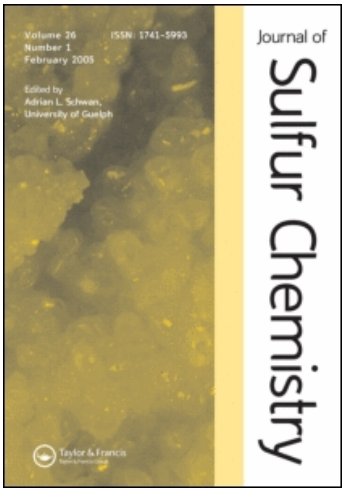

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A review of: "Azolides in Organic Synthesis and Biochemistry"

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BOOK REVIEW

H.A. Staab, H. Bauer, K.M. Schneider, *Azolides in Organic Synthesis and Biochemistry*, Wiley-VCH, Weinheim etc., 1998, xiii + 502 pp., £95.00, ISBN 3527-29314-0.

This book is of obvious interest to practicing synthetic chemists and also treats the preparation (via azolides) of many sulfur and selenium compounds, i.e. thionocarboxylic esters, thioloesters, selenoloesters, thionocarbonates, thiolactones, thioamides, thiocarbamates, thiohydrazides, thioureas, thiosemicarbazides, thiocarbazides, sulfur-containing heterocycles, isothiocyanates, *N*-sulfinylamines, sulfonates, sulfinates, sulfonamides, sulfoxylates, sulfones, sulfoxides, sulfites, sulfates, sulfanes, and oligosulfanes. Moreover, several key azolides such as *N,N'*-thiocarbonyldimidazole and *N,N'*-sulfinyldiimidazole are *per se* of special interest to sulfur chemists. The senior author is the inventor of the methodology in question and thus in a unique position to assess its status and potential even though, as mentioned in the preface, Professor Staab's laboratory has not directly participated in the last 25 year's development.

To take the bad news first this book's English has a distinct German flavor, containing an inordinate amount of spelling errors related to chemical nomenclature. Nomenclatural monstrosities like "toluene-benzylsulfoxide" (p. 295), however, cannot be explained even by unenlightened transmogrification of German chemical names. The artwork, while always structurally correct, is remarkably uneven with regard to font size and more often than not sloppily reproduced. Contrary to common practice compounds are not numbered as they appear in the text and in the artwork which makes the book somewhat cumbersome to read. In some places (such as the discussion of acetylaranotin on p. 82) lack of relevant artwork makes the text unnecessarily obscure. Alas the

book's price does not reflect the substantial savings due to the minuscule editorial effort on the publisher's side.

Chapter 1, *Reactivity of Azolides*, is with its 12 pages and 38 references remarkably short and unsophisticated. Short of reading the cited literature the reader is left to his own devices with regard to the rational experimental design of azolide assisted syntheses. It would have been exactly here where the book could return its money's worth by a well presented overview of the principles involved.

Chapter 2, *Preparation and Properties of Azolides*, again requires the reader's evaluation of the cited literature and fails to present explicit optimized prescriptions for the synthesis of key intermediates in the fashion of, say, *Houben-Weyl.*

The remaining chapters 3–24 plus a somewhat frugal subject index give an excellent impression of the synthetic potential of the azolide methodology including its recent more sophisticated ramifications. This is not a how-to book, but rather a broad source of inspiration due to the fact that it cannot replace a specific literature check of alternative synthetic approaches to any target compound in the reader's mind.

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