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Aromatic character and aromaticity

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Contents

Preface	page vii
1 Introduction	
1.1 <i>Aromatic character</i>	1
1.2 <i>The structural formula of benzene</i>	3
1.3 <i>The application of physical methods to the benzene problem</i>	5
1.4 <i>The application of wave mechanics</i>	10
1.5 <i>Polycyclic benzenoid hydrocarbons</i>	18
1.6 <i>Heterocyclic aromatic compounds</i>	24
1.7 <i>Aromaticity</i>	36
2 Some consequences of aromaticity	
2.1 <i>Bond lengths</i>	38
2.2 <i>Resonance energies</i>	43
2.3 <i>Electronic absorption spectra</i>	53
2.4 <i>Induced ring currents</i>	61
3 Non-benzenoid hydrocarbons	
3.1 <i>Hückel's rule</i>	71
3.2 <i>2π-Electron systems</i>	73
3.3 <i>4π-Electron systems</i>	77
3.4 <i>6π-Electron systems</i>	81
3.5 <i>8π-Electron systems</i>	88
3.6 <i>10π-Electron systems</i>	92
3.7 <i>12π-Electron systems</i>	95
3.8 <i>14π-Electron systems</i>	96
3.9 <i>16π-Electron systems</i>	99

vi		<i>Contents</i>
		<i>page</i>
3.10	<i>18π-Electron systems</i>	100
3.11	<i>20π-Electron systems</i>	107
3.12	<i>24π-Electron systems</i>	107
3.13	<i>30π-Electron systems</i>	107
3.14	<i>Examination of Hückel's rule</i>	108
4	More complex systems	
4.1	<i>Fulvenes and fulvalenes</i>	110
4.2	<i>Metallocenes</i>	113
4.3	<i>Bicyclic systems</i>	118
4.4	<i>Tricyclic and other systems</i>	124
	References	126
	Index	131

Preface

Aromatic compounds have provided many intriguing problems for chemists. At first, attention was directed to benzene and its derivatives; and the term 'aromatic' was once regarded as synonymous with 'benzenoid'. It was soon recognized, however, that the structures and reactions of many unsaturated heterocyclic compounds are similar to those of substituted benzenes, and the former were therefore called heterocyclic aromatic compounds. They are now commonly called hetero-aromatic compounds. In the last two or three decades there has been an increasing interest in non-benzenoid unsaturated cyclic compounds having 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28 or 30 π -electrons. Many new non-benzenoid compounds, both monocyclic and polycyclic, have been synthesized and studied; and it must be asked whether these substances are aromatic? Physical methods for the study of cyclic compounds have been improved, and new techniques have been devised, so that new evidence is now available.

This book attempts to summarize the evidence relating to the nature, and to the electronic structures, of aromatic compounds. Like the other books in this series, it is directed to students in the final year of an undergraduate honours chemistry course, and to those who are beginning graduate work. The physical evidence relating to the shape and size of the benzene molecule is first summarized, and this is followed by the wave-mechanical picture of its electronic structure. The polycyclic compounds and the hetero-aromatic compounds are similarly pictured, and aromaticity is then defined in terms of the electronic structure.

The second chapter is concerned with the physical methods which can be used to determine whether an unsaturated cyclic compound possesses aromaticity. The remaining chapters summarize recent studies on non-benzenoid cyclic compounds, and discuss the extent to which these compounds possess aromatic character and aromaticity.

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[More information](#)

viii

Preface

It is a pleasure to express my thanks to Dr Jillian Teubner, whose help in the preparation of this book has been invaluable. I am also greatly indebted to my friends and colleagues, Dr J. A. Elix, Dr G. E. Lewis and Dr T. M. Spotswood, for many helpful discussions. Finally, I am grateful to Dr K. Schofield, and to the officers of Cambridge University Press, for the skilled attention which has greatly simplified my task in the publication of the book.

G. M. B.

Adelaide, 1968