Introduction

Schiff-base compounds have attracted attention over the years primarily for their biological activity,\(^1\) whilst macrocyclic Schiff bases are of potential interest given their multiple binding sites.\(^2\) We have been investigating the simplest members of this Schiff-base macrocyclic family, so-called Robson type macrocycles, derived from the \([2 \times 2]\) condensation of a diamine with a dialdehyde, specifically herein 1,3-diformylphenol in combination with the diamine 2,2’-oxydianiline, \(2-(2\text{-aminophenoxy})aniline, (2\text{-NH}_2\text{C}_6\text{H}_4\text{O})_2\text{N.}\) The structural chemistry of this particular macrocycle is unexplored, indeed a search of the CSD revealed no hits,\(^3\) other than our recently reported manganese chemistry.\(^4\) Our interest stems primarily from their coordination chemistry and the potential to bind multiple metal centres in close proximity,\(^3\), particularly those which could be of use for ring opening polymerisation (ROP) of \(\varepsilon\)-caprolactone and rac-lactide; high conversions were achieved over 30 min at 80 °C for \(\varepsilon\)-caprolactone, and 110 °C over 12 h for rac-lactide.

Structural studies of Schiff-base [2 + 2] macrocycles derived from 2,2'-oxydianiline and the ROP capability of their organoaluminium complexes\(^\dagger\)

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The molecular structures of a number of solvates of the [2 + 2] Schiff-base macrocycles \([2-(\text{OH})-5-(R)-\text{C}_6\text{H}_2-1,3-(\text{CH})_2]\{(\text{2-C}_6\text{H}_4\text{N})_2\}\}_2 \(\text{R} = \text{Me} \text{L}_1^2 \text{H}_2, \text{tBu} \text{L}_2^2 \text{H}_2, \text{Cl} \text{L}_3^2 \text{H}_2\), formed by reacting 2,6-dicarboxy-4-R-phenol with 2,2’-oxydianiline (2-aminophenylether), \((\text{2-NH}_2\text{C}_6\text{H}_4\text{O})_2\text{N\text{O}}, \text{have been determined. Reaction of \text{L}_4^2 \text{H}_2 with two equivalents of A\text{Ir}^2_3 \text{R} = \text{Me}, \text{Et} \text{afforded dinuclear alkylationumium complexes }[[\text{AlR}^2_2]\text{L}_1^2\text{H}_2] (\text{R} = \text{Me} (1), \text{R} = \text{tBu, R'} = \text{Me} (2), \text{R} = \text{Cl, R} = \text{Me} (3), \text{R} = \text{Me, R'} = \text{Et} (4), \text{R} = \text{tBu, R'} = \text{Et} (5), \text{R} = \text{Cl, R'} = \text{Et} (6)). \text{For comparative studies, reactions of two equivalents of A\text{Ir}^2_3 \text{R} = \text{Me}, \text{Et} with the macrocycle derived from 2,2'-ethylenedianiline and 2,6-dicarboxy-4-R-phenols (\text{R} = \text{Me} \text{L}_4^2 \text{H}_2, \text{tBu} \text{L}_5^2 \text{H}_2) \text{were conducted; the complexes }[[\text{AlMe}][\text{AlMe}_2]\text{L}_6^2 \text{2MeCN} \text{and }[[\text{AlEt}_3]\text{L}_4^2] \text{(8) were isolated. Use of limited AI}\text{Et}_3 \text{with } \text{L}_1^2 \text{H}_2 \text{or } \text{L}_5^2 \text{H}_2 \text{afforded mononuclear bis(macrocycle) complexes }[[\text{AI}(\text{L}_1^2\text{H}_2)^2\text{MeCN (9 4toluene) and }[[\text{AI}(\text{L}_5^2\text{H}_2)^2\text{MeCN (10 5MeCN)\text{, respectively. Use of four equivalents of AI}\text{Et}_3 \text{led to transfer of alkyl groups and isolation of the complexes }[[\text{AIr}^2_2]\text{L}_1^3\text{H}_2 (\text{R} = \text{L}_2^2 \text{H}^2, \text{R'} = \text{Me} (11), \text{L}_2^2, \text{R'} = \text{Me} (12); \text{L}_2^2, \text{R'} = \text{Et (13), L}_3^2, \text{R'} = \text{Et (14), L}_3^2, \text{R'} = \text{Et (15), where } \text{L}_1^3\text{H}_2 \text{is the macrocycle resulting from double alkyl transfer to imine, namely }[[2-\text{(OH)}-5-(R)-\text{C}_6\text{H}_2-1-(\text{CH})-3-(\text{R})\text{C}_6\text{H}_2-\text{L}_1^3\text{H}_2]]. \text{ Molecular structures of complexes 7 2MeCN, 8, 9 4toluene, 10 5MeCN and 11 12toluene 12hexane are reported. These complexes act as catalysts for the ring opening polymerisation (ROP) of } \varepsilon\text{-caprolactone and rac-lactide; high conversions were achieved over 30 min at 80 °C for } \varepsilon\text{-caprolactone, and 110 °C over 12 h for rac-lactide.}\)
how remote alkylaluminium centres bound to a Schiff-base macrocycle derived from the dianiline [(CH₂CH₂)(2-C₆H₄NH₂)₂]↓ exhibited beneficial cooperative effects in the ROP of ε-caprolactone, whereas the presence of aluminoxane type (Al–O–Al) bonding proved detrimental. Given this, we have re-focused our efforts on such Schiff-base systems and have extended our studies to [2 + 2] macrocycles derived from the dianiline (2-NH₂C₆H₄)₂O (see Chart 1). Herein, we report the molecular structures of a number of these [2 + 2] macrocycles, and find that they tend to adopt a taco-like, folded conformation. Interestingly, a series of zinc complexes bearing phenol compartmental type ligation were recently found to exhibit controllable photophysical properties by manipulation of the substituent (Me, tBu, Cl) positioned para to the phenolic group.⁷

Furthermore, we have investigated the reaction chemistry of L¹⁻³H₂ towards the alkylaluminium reagents R₃Al (R = Me, Et) and have isolated some unexpected products (Chart 1). Given this, related studies on macrocycles derived from the ethylene-bridged dianiline [(CH₂CH₂)(2-C₆H₄NH₂)₂]↓ were conducted, and the ability of these complexes to act as catalysts for the ring opening polymerisation (ROP) of ε-caprolactone and rac-lactide has been investigated. The use of alkylaluminium complexes for the ROP of cyclic esters has recently been reviewed.⁸

**Results and discussion**

**Preparation, structure and emission studies on LⁿH₂**

The [2 + 2] Schiff base macrocycles of type LⁿH₂ are readily available in high yield via the reaction of 2,6-dicarboxy-4-R-phenol, where R = Me (n = 1), tBu (n = 2) or Cl (n = 3), with 2,2'-oxydianiline, (2-NH₂C₆H₄)₂O. In the IR spectra, ν(C=N) for L¹H₂ (1626 cm⁻¹), L²H₂ (1630 cm⁻¹) and L³H₂ (1627 cm⁻¹) bands are strong and are very similar to those reported for related ethylene (-CH₂CH₂-) bridged bis(imino)phenoxide macrocycles (1627–1629 cm⁻¹),³⁴ and also lie within the range reported for other Schiff-base macrocycles.⁹ In the

**Chart 1** Synthesis of aluminium complexes 1–14 prepared herein. Reagents and conditions: (i) 2R′₃Al, hexane, Δ, 12 h; (ii) 2Me₃Al, toluene, Δ, 12 h; (iii) 2Et₃Al, toluene, Δ, 12 h; (iv) 3Et₃Al, hexane, Δ, 12 h; (v) 4R′₃Al, hexane, Δ, 12 h.
\(^1\)H NMR spectra, the imino hydrogen chemical shifts for \(L^2H_2\) (8.40 ppm) and \(L_3H_2\) (8.43 ppm) are comparable with those reported previously for bis(imino)phenol-based macrocycles [8.12 to 8.66 ppm],\(^{10}\) whilst that for \(L_1H_2\) (8.87 ppm) is shifted slightly downfield.

These condensation products \([(2-(OH)-5-(R)C_6H_2-1,3-(CH)_2)\{(O)(2-C_6H_4N)2\}]_2\) (R = Me \(L_1H_2\), tBu \(L_2H_2\), Cl \(L_3H_2\)) can be recrystallized from a variety of solvents; the molecular structures of a number of solvates are described below. Selected bond lengths and angles for each of the solvates are discussed in the text or, in the case of \(L^2H_2\), are presented in Table 1, with crystallographic parameters for all structures collated in Table 5. In each case, crystals of \(L^nH_2\) suitable for an X-ray diffraction study were grown from the respective solvent on prolonged standing at ambient temperature. The molecular structure of \(L_1H_2\cdot MeCN\) is shown in Fig. 1. In the asymmetric unit, there is one macrocycle and one molecule of MeCN. The macrocycle adopts an open, taco-like conformation, and the orientation of the two sides of the macrocycle can be monitored by looking at the cleft angle \(\phi\) (\(\phi\) is defined as the angle subtended between the mean planes of the two phenolate rings (O1 C1–C6, C8, C42, N1, N4 and C21–C27, C29, N2, N3, O3) as illustrated in Fig. 2). Thus, the smaller the cleft angle, the more parallel are the sides and the more taco-like the conformation. In the case of \(L^2H_2\cdot MeCN\), the open-taco description reflects the approximate cleft angle of 89.2°. A more detailed analysis of the orientation of the rings is presented in Table S1 (see ESI†).

Intermolecular face-to-face interactions give rise to stacks along the \(c\) direction (see Fig. S1, ESI†).
In the case of L²H₂-MeCN, there are two very similar, independent molecules in the asymmetric unit, together with two molecules of solvent (MeCN), both of which are disordered in several orientations. In this case, the conformation in each macroyclic molecule is much more closed with ϕ angles of about 13 and 15°, i.e. the two sides of the cleft are almost parallel. The whole molecule shows approximate symmetry about a pseudo two-fold axis (see Fig. S2 and S3†). The pseudo symmetry axes of the two molecules are not parallel. Distinct from L¹H₂-MeCN, the solvent does not reside in a pocket and has no close interaction with the macrocyclic ring. As expected, the bond lengths in L²H₂-MeCN are similar to those observed in L¹H₂-MeCN, and in each molecule of L²H₂-MeCN, the hydroxyl hydrogen atoms of the phenol groups were all located from difference maps and refined well to show clear intramolecular hydrogen bonding with neighbouring imine nitrogen atoms [molecule 1: H1o–N1 = 1.57(3) Å and O1–H1o⋯N1 = 150(3)°, H3o–N3 = 1.79(3) Å and O3–H3o⋯N3 = 148(3)°; molecule 2: H51o–N51 = 1.68(3) Å and O1–H51o⋯N51 = 148(3)°, H53o–N53 = 1.64(3) Å and O3–H53o⋯N53 = 150(3)°].

L²H₂ can also be readily crystallized from ethyl acetate from which two different solvates were isolated on separate occasions. The molecular structure of one product is shown in Fig. S4 (ESI†), with selected bond lengths and angles given in Table 1. The asymmetric unit contains half a molecule of L²H₂ and half a disordered solvent molecule. The second half of the macrocycle molecule is generated by a two-fold symmetry axis. Again, the macrocycle possesses quite a tight cleft angle ϕ at about 17°. As in the previous solvates, there is intramolecular H-bonding involving the phenolic hydrogen and an imino nitrogen [H1o–N1 = 1.75(2) Å and O1–H1o⋯N1 = 153(2)°]. The disordered ethyl acetate solvent molecule resides over an inversion centre, and is located in a pocket between four of the macrocycles.

A separate crystallization afforded a different solvate, namely L³H₂·2(ethyl acetate), the asymmetric unit for which (not shown) contains half a molecule of the macrocycle and one solvent molecule. The main difference from the monosolvate is that there is a pronounced twist about the central bond, resulting in a C12–N1–C13–C14 torsional angle of −33.1(8)° (the same angle in the mono-solvate is −15.8(2)°). The ϕ angle of the V-shaped cleft in L³H₂·2(ethyl acetate) is about 7° (i.e. close to parallel), though it should be noted here that the distance between the rings of each side of the cleft (see Fig. S5, ESI†) is larger than in the mono-solvate, with a mean of 3.7 Å (cf. 3.5 Å for the mono-solvate).

In the case of the crystallization from acetone, the asymmetric unit contains half a macrocycle and one molecule of acetone. A similar conformation (Fig. S6, ESI†) to the ethyl acetate solvate is adopted in that the V-shaped cleft has a very tight ϕ angle (ca. 8°). Pairs of acetone molecules, arranged centrosymmetrically, reside in approximately spherically shaped pockets formed between the macrocycle molecules. Again, there is intramolecular H-bonding involving the phenolic hydrogen and an imino nitrogen [H1o–N1 = 1.68(2) Å and O1–H1o⋯N1 = 151(2)°]. The two different ethyl acetate solvates and the acetone solvate all crystallize in similar sized and shaped unit cells in space group C2/c; i.e. they are almost isomorphic (see Table 5 for unit cell geometry).

For the toluene solvate (Fig. S7, ESI† and Table 1), the asymmetric unit contains a single macrocycle and two unique solvent molecules. In this case, the conformation adopted by the macrocycle is more open such that the ‘cleft’ has an approximate ϕ angle of 89°. This open conformation allows for the formation of intermolecular π⋯π and CH⋯π interactions. The phenyl rings do not directly overlay, rather they are somewhat slipped such that a C–C bond in one ring is positioned directly below the centroid of an adjacent ring (see Fig. S8, ESI†). The shortest C to centroid distances are 3.38 and 3.42 Å. Intramolecular H-bonding is present involving the phenolic hydrogen and an imino nitrogen [H1o–N1 = 1.74(3) Å and O1–H1o⋯N1 = 150(3)°, H3o–N3 = 1.66(3) Å and O1–H3o⋯N3 = 151(3)°].

In these solvates, the range of C==N bond lengths (1.258(3)–1.289(2) Å, see Table 1 and caption for Fig. 1) compares favourably with those reported for the related ethylene bridged phenolic macrocycles [1.254(17)–1.299(7) Å],9b and those observed in bis(imino)pyridine containing macrocycles [1.246(3)–1.289(3) Å].11

In these L²H₂ derived systems, the angular variation in the V-shaped cleft can also be gauged by the gradation of tilting of the t-butyl-phenol groups, from 6.09(8)° in L²H₂-MeCOOEt, through L²H₂·2(MeCOOEt) at 6.8(2)°, L²H₂-acetone at 7.39(7)°, L²H₂-MeCN at 9.49(14) and 12.56(12)° in the two molecules (for further analysis see Table S1, ESI†). By contrast, for the L³H₂ system, the structure is more open, for example L³H₂-MeCN at 89.03(5)°. L³H₂-toluene is also more open, at 89.88(7), and in L³(tosyl)₂, where the two phenolate rings are opposed and related by a centre of symmetry, the angle is 180.0°.

Tosylated macrocycle

The precursor 2,6-dicarboxy-4-R-phenol was prepared via tosylation of the parent tris(hydroxyl) compound 2,6-dimethanol-4-R-phenol, and during these syntheses, we isolated one of the tosylated intermediates, which was subsequently reacted with oxdianiline. The resulting tosylated macrocycle L³(tosyl)₂ was crystallized from acetonitrile. The molecular structure is shown in Fig. S9, ESI (and an alternative view is given in Fig. S10 in the ESI†), with selected bond lengths and angles given in the caption. There is half a molecule in the asymmetric unit, and the molecule lies on an inversion centre. In the packing of the molecules, there is off-set π⋯π stacking: C1⋯C2′ = 3.700 Å, C2⋯O1′ = 3.456 Å and C6⋯C7′ = 3.684 Å.

Preparation, structure and ROP behaviour of organoaluminium complexes

The reaction of the [2 + 2] macrocyclic Schiff bases [L²{(OH)⁵(R)⊙H₂·1,3-CH]₂[R{O(2-C₆H₄N₂)}₄] ]₂ (R = Me L²H₂, tBu L²H₂, Cl L²H₂) with two equivalents of R’Al in refluxing hexane afforded, following work-up, cooling and prolonged standing
(1–2 days) at ambient temperature, yellow crystals in good yield (ca. 55–67%) of the dinuclear complexes [(AlR′₂)_2L] (L¹, R’ = Me (1), L², R’ = Me (2), L³, R’ = Me (3), L⁴, R’ = Et (4), L⁵, R’ = Et (5), L⁶, R’ = Et (6)). Unfortunately, we were unable to grow single crystals of 1–6 suitable for X-ray crystallography, and so our attention turned to systems derived from the ethylene-bridged dianiline [(CH₂CH₂)(2-C₆H₄NH₂)₂] prepared under the same conditions. In previous work, we have investigated the reaction of two equivalents of R’₅Al with such [2 + 2] Schiff-base macrocycles, but no structural information was reported. Herein, for R’ = Me, we were able to isolate and structurally characterize a secondary product, namely [(AlMe)(AlMe₂) L⁵]·2MeCN (7). Small, orange, plate-like crystals were grown from a saturated acetonitrile solution on prolonged standing at ambient temperature. The crystals proved to be weakly diffracting, even when using synchrotron radiation, and so data was only integrated to 2θ = 45°. The asymmetric unit contains two macrocyclic complexes and 4.5 molecules of solvent of crystallisation (MeCN). The molecular structure of one of the macrocyclic structures is shown in Fig. 3, with selected bond lengths and angles given in the caption. The interesting features of this complex are (i) the different degree of alkylation of the distorted tetrahedral aluminium centres, with Al₁ bearing two methyl groups, whereas Al₂ has only one, and (ii) the ‘trans’ positioning of the Al₁ centres. Thus for Al₁, the macrocycle binds in N₅O-bidentate fashion, whereas for Al₂, the macrocycle coordinates via a tri-dentate N₅N₀O mode. The conformation of the macrocycle is somewhat twisted to accommodate the tridentate nature of the bonding at Al₂.

Given the unexpected nature of complex 7, we revisited the complex [(Et₂Al)[2-O]-5-{MeC₆H₄-1,3-CH(CH₂CH₂-2-C₆H₂N)}]₂ (8) and determined the centro-symmetric molecular structure of crystals grown from a saturated acetonitrile solution, see Fig. 4 and Table 6. Interestingly, again the structure reveals a ‘trans’ deposition of the distorted tetrahedral aluminium centres, though in this case there is the anticipated diorganoaluminiums present. Each is bound to the two opposite phenolic oxygen atoms and to a neighbouring imine nitrogen (N₁ or N₁′). The conformation of the macrocycle is relatively planar. The observed ‘trans’ deposition of the diethylaluminium centres in 8 could be explained in terms of steric effects, but the situation in 7 is less clear.

Conducting the reaction of L⁵H₂ with limited Et₃Al resulted in the isolation of a yellow crystalline material. Crystals grown from a saturated solution of toluene were found to be a bis-chelate structure [Al(L⁴)(L⁵H)]-4toluene (9-4toluene) (see Fig. 5,
Tables 2 and 6), in which a distorted octahedral aluminium centre is bound to two of the macrocyclic ligands.

The asymmetric unit contains one complex and four toluene molecules. The central octahedral Al centre is bound by two macrocycles, with one of the macrocycles binding through two atoms [O1 and N1] to form a nearly planar 6-membered chelate ring; the remainder of this macrocycle adopts a taco-like configuration. The remaining coordination sites at aluminium are occupied by two pairs of O/N chelators (both from the other macrocycle), again forming six membered rings that are close to planar. These two chelate rings are linked by a phenyl ring and a single oxo bridge, and are approximately perpendicular at the aluminium. The remainder of this macrocycle adopts a bowl-shaped conformation. There is a single O–H⋯N hydrogen bond formed by the unbound phenol present. Within the solid-state, the crystal packing facilitates a large number of non-classical C–H⋯N and C–H⋯Cl hydrogen bonds. Four unique, crystallographically resolved, toluene molecules lie between the complexes. There is rotational disorder in their positions but no regions of disordered solvent that could be resolved. There is evidence that C–H⋯π interactions help to locate the toluene.

Similar treatment of L3H2 again afforded a bis-chelate structure, namely [Al(L3)L2(H)], with a single crystals suitable for X-ray diffraction were grown from toluene at 0 °C.

The molecular structure of 10-5MeCN is shown in Fig. 6 and S11 and S12 (ESI†) which, along with the geometrical parameters (Table 2), reveals the similarity between complexes 9-toluene and 10-5MeCN. The asymmetric unit contains one aluminium complex and 5 molecules of acetonitrile. As for 9-toluene, the coordination at the aluminium is such that one macrocycle is bound only in chelate fashion via N,O-type ligation, whilst the second macrocycle utilizes four atoms to bind in 2× N,O-type fashion. In the bidentate ligand, there is also an intramolecular H-bond involving the phenolic group at O2 and the adjacent imine nitrogen N3. In terms of packing, the aromatic ring at C38 forms a centrosymmetric π⋯π interaction at 3.6 Å.

Treatment of LH2 with excess R′Al (four equivalents) in refluxing hexane afforded, following work-up (extraction into toluene), cooling and prolonged standing (1–2 days) at ambient temperature, yellow crystals in moderate yield (ca. 30–35%) of the tetra-nuclear complexes [(AlR′3)L2L′3] (R = L2, R′ = Me (11); L3, R′ = Et (12); L1, R′ = Et (14)), where L′3 is the macrocycle resulting from double alkyl transfer to imine, namely [(2-O)-5-(R)C6H2-1-(CH)-3-C(R)=Me]2O2(2-N=C6H4N=O)2. In the case of the reaction involving L1H2 and Me3Al, single crystals of the complex were grown from a saturated hexane/toluene (50:50) solution at 0 °C. The molecular structure is shown in Fig. 7, with selected bond lengths.
and angles given in the caption. This reveals the formation of a tetra-nuclear complex (11) akin to that formed form when using the analogous –CH₂CH₂– bridged Schiff-base macrocycle.¹² For a relatively simple compound, the crystal structure displays unwelcome complexity. There are four, symmetry unique, bowl-shaped molecules of 11·toluene·hexane occupying the asymmetric unit. Each of these binds four AlMe₂ units; subtle differences in the configuration of the macrocycles render these symmetry independent. Between these macrocycles lie crystallographically resolved and unresolved solvent to give an estimated formula (after Squeeze)¹³ of 8[[Me₂Al]₄{2-(O)-5-((Me₂Al)₄[2-(O)-5-(CH₂CH₂)b·1-tolue·9hexane. To simplify the discussion of

By ¹H NMR spectroscopic analysis.¹⁴ The methyl transfer occurs at imine groups original selective methyl transfer to two imine moieties of the macrocycle; such methyl transfers are now well established in imine chemistry.¹⁴ The methyl transfer occurs at imine groups originating from the same dianiline. In the ¹H NMR spectra of 11, the Me-Al resonances occur as eight singlets between –0.52 and –1.39 ppm (and four singlets between –0.49 and –1.01 for 12). In the case of the related ethyl derivatives 13 and 14, two of the Al-Et groups appear to be subject to ring currents which result in unusual low field chemical shifts in the ¹H NMR spectra for the CH₂ protons (see Experimental section).

**Ring opening polymerisation (ROP) of ε-caprolactone and rac-lactide**

The dinuclear alkylaluminium complexes 1–6 and the tetra-nuclear alkylaluminium complexes 11–14 have been screened for their ability to ring open polymerise ε-caprolactone (see Tables 3 and S2†) and rac-lactide (Tables 4 and S4†). Results are compared against the known –CH₂CH₂– bridged complexes 15 and 16.

**ROP of ε-caprolactone.** Runs were conducted both in the presence and absence of benzyl alcohol (BnOH). Complex 5 was used to determine the optimized conditions (Table 3). On increasing the temperature from 20 to 110 °C and using 250 : 1 : 1 (ε-CL:cat:BnOH) over 30 min (runs 1–4, Table 3), the % conversion dramatically increased, reaching around 98% conversion at 80 °C and then increasing only slightly on further elevating the temperature to 110 °C. Under the same conditions, the molecular weight (Mₙ) peaked at 80 °C. All the polycaprolactone polymers (PCLs) obtained possessed a narrow distribution/polydispersity index (PDI) with unimodal characteristics [Mₙ/Mₚ = 1.12–1.58]. The drop off in molecular weight at 110 °C results in a plot of % conversion versus Mₙ which is only approximately linear. We have also investigated the effect of the ε-CL/Al molar ratio on the catalytic behaviour (entries 3, 8 and 9, Table 3) in the presence of one equivalent of BnOH. When the molar ratio CL : Al was increased from 100 to 500 over 30 min, the molecular weight increased from 2.16

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**Table 3 ROP of ε-CL using complex 5**

| Run | Cat. | CL : Al : BnOH | T/°C | t/min | Conv./% | Mₙ × 10⁻⁴ | Mₙ,Cald × 10⁻⁴ | PDI |
|-----|------|----------------|------|-------|---------|------------|----------------|-----|
| 1   | 5    | 250 : 1 : 1    | 20   | 60    | 15.8    | 0.59       | 0.45           | 1.08 |
| 2   | 5    | 250 : 1 : 1    | 50   | 30    | 64.4    | 1.57       | 1.82           | 1.15 |
| 3   | 5    | 250 : 1 : 1    | 80   | 30    | 98.0    | 3.36       | 2.82           | 1.56 |
| 4   | 5    | 250 : 1 : 1    | 110  | 30    | 98.5    | 2.67       | 2.71           | 1.58 |
| 5   | 5    | 250 : 1 : 1    | 80   | 10    | 90.0    | 2.98       | 1.68           | 1.29 |
| 6   | 5    | 250 : 1 : 1    | 80   | 20    | 92.5    | 3.24       | 2.63           | 1.34 |
| 7   | 5    | 250 : 1 : 1    | 80   | 60    | 99.2    | 2.88       | 2.69           | 1.40 |
| 8   | 5    | 100 : 1 : 1    | 80   | 30    | 99.1    | 2.16       | 1.12           | 1.13 |
| 9   | 5    | 500 : 1 : 1    | 80   | 20    | 86.7    | 4.62       | 4.94           | 4.01 |
| 10  | 5    | 250 : 1 : 0    | 80   | 30    | 80.1    | 6.59       | 2.28           | 1.60 |
| 11  | 5    | 250 : 1 : 3    | 80   | 30    | 93.1    | 2.02       | 2.65           | 1.26 |

*By ¹H NMR spectroscopic analysis. Obtained from GPC analysis times 0.56. (F.W.[M]/[BnOH])[(conversion)].
to $4.62 \times 10^4$, whilst the conversion rate exhibited the opposite trend peaking at 99.1% for 100 : 1 : 1; the molecular weight distribution increased on increasing the molar ratio CL : Al from 1.13 to 4.01. On increasing the time from 10 min to 60 min, and using 250 : 1 : 1 (CL : Al : BnOH) at 80 °C (runs 3, 5–7, Table 3), the conversion gradually increased with time, whilst the molecular weight ($M_n$) and polydispersity (PDI) remained relatively constant, except in the case of run 9 where it was, surprisingly, somewhat broader (4.01). Increasing the amount of BnOH (run 12 versus 3, Table 3) was detrimental to the molecular weight ($M_n$), whilst only slightly narrowing the polydispersity, and lowering the % conversion slightly. Conducting the ROP in the absence of BnOH (run 11 versus 3, Table 3) led to a reduction in the % conversion, but afforded a significant increase in the polymer molecular weight ($M_n$); there was little change in the PDI.

Complexes 1–14 (not 8–10) were then screened using the ratio 250 : 1 : 1 (c-CL : cat : BnOH) over 30 min at 80 °C, and for comparison, the known complexes 15 and 16 were screened under the conditions employed herein. For the di-nuclear complexes 1–6 (runs 1–6, Table S2†), in terms of the % conversion, these complexes behave similarly, which does not allow for the observation of any significant structure/activity relationships. Given this, we provide only a brief discussion here and the tabulated data can be found in the ESI (Table S2† runs 1–13). For 1–6, the highest conversion was observed for 5 (R = iBu, R′ = Et: 98.0%) and the lowest for 1 (R = R′ = Me: 93.2%). For pairs of complexes where R is constant, the ethyl derivatives were more active than the methyl derivatives and the molecular weights ($M_n$) were higher; such trends have been noted previously. The opposite trends in activity have also been noted. The spread of molecular weights ($M_n$) [5.14–10.12 x 10^4] also followed no obvious trend, whilst in all cases, the PDI remained relatively constant [1.22–1.49]. However, in all cases, the performance of the oxy bridged systems was superior to that of the di-nuclear –CH₂CH₂– bridged complexes 7 and 15, for which the % conversion was only 25.6% and 38.5%, respectively under the conditions employed herein.

In the case of the tetra-nuclear complexes 11–14 (runs 8–11, Table S2†), the complexes bearing methyl at the para position of the phenolic group afforded high conversions of about 99%, whilst the systems (12 and 14), employing a para Cl, gave lower conversions of 80.9 and 94.3%, respectively. This may be attributed to observed solubility issues rather than electronic effects. The polymer molecular weight ($M_n$) associated with 12 and 14 was also somewhat lower than that observed for the other tetra-nuclear systems. Again, the performance of the related –CH₂CH₂– bridged complex, namely 16 was inferior under the conditions employed herein affording a % conversion of 29.1% and a much lower molecular weight ($M_n$). This enhanced activity is tentatively ascribed to the ability of the oxygen bridge to stabilize the catalytically active species, akin to the situation observed in dimethyleneoxa-bridged calixarene systems during ethylene polymerization. As for the di-nuclear systems, the tetra-nuclear ethylaluminium derivatives (13 and 14) were more active than the methylaluminium counterparts (11 and 12).

In general, the resulting PCL polymer molecular weights were in reasonable agreement with the calculated values, which indicates that there are, in most cases, little in the way of trans-esterification reactions occurring. However, in the MALDI-ToF mass spectra, as well as the population of peaks separated by 114.14 mass units (see Fig. S13 and S14†), there was evidence of a second, albeit minor, population which is more pronounced at 25 °C. A plot of average molecular weight ($M_n$) versus conversion (Fig. S15†) exhibited a near linear relationship. In the $^1$H NMR spectra of the PCL (Fig. S16 and S17†), signals at around 7.34 and 5.15 ppm (CH₃CH₂CH₂) and 3.62 (CH₂CH₂OH), with an integral ratio 5 : 2 : 2, indicated that the polymer chains are capped by a benzyl group and a hydroxy end group.

**ROP of rac-lactide.** Complex 5 was again used to verify the optimum condition for the ROP of rac-lactide (see Table 4). At 50 °C, there was no activity (run 6, Table 4), whilst the activity increased on raising the temperature from 80 to 110 °C. Best conversions at 110 °C were achieved with the ratio 100 : 1 : 1 for rac-Lac : Al : BnOH, whilst prolonging the screening time from 6 to 24 h only afforded a slight increase in the % conversion. In all cases, the system was relatively well controlled with polydispersities in the range 1.03–1.41.

Complexes 1–14 (not 8–10) were then screened using the ratio 100 : 1 : 1 (rac-LA : cat : BnOH) over 12 h at 110 °C.

| Run | Lac : M : BnOH | T°C | t/h | Conv. (%) | $M_n \times 10^4$ | $M_{n,Cal} \times 10^4$ | PDI |
|-----|---------------|-----|----|-----------|------------------|---------------------|-----|
| 1   | 100 : 1 : 1    | 110 | 1  | 57.8      | 0.42             | 0.83                | 1.02|
| 2   | 100 : 1 : 1    | 110 | 3  | 91.3      | 0.63             | 1.31                | 1.03|
| 3   | 100 : 1 : 1    | 110 | 6  | 93.0      | 1.56             | 1.39                | 1.21|
| 4   | 100 : 1 : 1    | 110 | 12 | 97.7      | 1.60             | 1.40                | 1.19|
| 5   | 100 : 1 : 1    | 110 | 24 | 98.6      | 1.45             | 1.40                | 1.14|
| 6   | 100 : 1 : 1    | 50  | 12 | 66.7      | 0.74             | 0.96                | 1.07|
| 7   | 100 : 1 : 1    | 80  | 12 | 94.3      | 0.80             | 0.67                | 1.41|
| 8   | 50 : 1 : 1     | 110 | 12 | 96.6      | 2.29             | 2.78                | 1.14|

a By $^1$H NMR spectroscopic analysis. b $M_n$ values were determined by GPC in THF vs. PS standards and were corrected with a Mark–Houwink factor of 0.58. c Polydispersity index ($M_n/M_w$) were determined by GPC.
(Table S2,† runs 14–23). The ROP appeared to be well controlled in terms of PDI with values in the range 1.07–1.38. There was no obvious advantage in the use of di- versus tetra-nuclear systems under the conditions employed. For the di-nuclear systems, the ethylaluminium derivatives were slightly more active than their methylaluminium counterparts and the polymers possessed slightly higher molecular weight ($M_n$), however this trend was not evident for the tetra-nuclear systems. $^1$H NMR spectroscopic investigations were conducted in order to verify the polymer molecular weights and to identify the end groups present. The results were similar (e.g. see Fig. S18†) to the results obtained for the PCL runs, i.e. insertion of a benzoxyl group during polymerization. Again, there was reasonable agreement between observed and calculated molecular weights ($M_n$) whilst MALDI-ToF spectra (e.g. Fig. S19†) revealed a number of minor populations. To assign the stereochemistry of the PLA polymers, we employed 2D J-resolved $^1$H NMR (e.g. see Fig. S20 and S21†) and assigned the peaks by reference to the literature.¹⁸ These systems gave moderately isotactic PLA with $P_i$ values in the range 0.64–0.67.

In conclusion, [2 + 2] Schiff base macrocycles of the type ([2-(OH)-5-(R)C₆H₄-1,3-(CH₃)₂O][2-(C₆H₄N)₂]₂ (R = Me $L^1$H₂, tBu $L^1$H₂, CI $L^1$H₂) are readily accessible by reacting 2,6-dicarboxy-4-R-phenol with the diamine 2,2′-oxydianiline, (2-NH₂C₆H₄)₂O. The molecular structures of a number of solvates have been determined. The molecular structures of the various solvates reveal a tendency to form a taco-shaped conformation, the cleft angle $\phi$ associated with the latter varies greatly with about 89°, whilst the other solvates (MeCN, acetone and ethyl acetate) of $L^2$H₂ were more closed with cleft angles $\phi$ in the range 8–17°. The solvent is only encapsulated by the macrocycle in $L^1$H₂·MeCN. Ethyl acetate and acetone reside in similar locations $\alpha$ to the macrocycle in a series of three pseudo-isomorphic structures. Furthermore, we have found that the interaction of alkylaluminium reagents can be more complicated than originally thought (from studies of the –CH₂CH₂– bridged systems) and a number of unexpected products can be formed. In particular, we have found that for the di-nuclear species, ‘trans’ as well as the previous ‘cis’ structures can readily be isolated, as can complexes in which one of the methylaluminium centres is bound in tridentate fashion by the macrocycle. Moreover, species in which there are no alkyl groups at aluminium, but where two macrocycles bind such that the Al centre is near octahedral, are readily formed in the presence of limited organoaluminium reagent. Tetra-nuclear complexes can be accessed which have undergone alkyl transfer (>2) to one side of the macrocycle by employing excess organoaluminium reagent. These organoaluminium species are capable of the ROP of $\varepsilon$-caprolactone and rac-lactide and can out-perform the related systems bearing –CH₂CH₂–bridged Schiff-base macrocycles under similar conditions. However, there appears to be little benefit in the use of di-versus tetra-nuclear species under the ROP conditions employed herein.

**Experimental**

**General**

Methanol was dried over magnesium. Hexane was refluxed over sodium and benzophenone. Toluene was refluxed over sodium. Acetonitrile was refluxed over calcium hydride. IR spectra (nujol mulls, KBr windows) were recorded on a Nicolet Avatar 360 FT IR spectrometer; $^1$H NMR and $^{13}$C NMR spectra were recorded at room temperature on a Varian VXR 400 S spectrometer at 400 MHz or a Gemini 300 NMR spectrometer or a Bruker Advance DPX-300 spectrometer. The $^1$H NMR spectra were calibrated against the residual protio impurity of the deuterated solvent. Elemental analyses were performed by the elemental analysis service at the London Metropolitan University, the Chemistry Department at the University of Hull or at Sichuan University, Chengdu. The precursors 2,6-(CHO)₂-4-R-C₆H₄OH and 2,2′-ethylenediamine and the complexes 15 and 16 were prepared by the literature methods.¹²,¹⁹,²⁰ The Schiff-base ligands were prepared as outlined below, and the respective solvates were crystallized by taking about 100 mg of the macrocycle and dissolving in the appropriate solvent. In the case of acetonitrile and toluene, the solvates crystallized out at ambient temperature, whereas for acetone and ethyl acetate, cooling to −20 °C was required. For the organoaluminium complexes, all manipulations were carried out under an atmosphere of dry nitrogen using conventional Schlenk and cannula techniques or in a conventional nitrogen-filled glove box. All solvents were distilled and degassed prior to use.

**Synthesis of $L^1$H₂.** 2,6-Dicarboxy-4-Me-phenol (0.82 g, 5.0 mmol) and (2-NH₂C₆H₄)₂O (1.00 g, 5.0 mmol) were refluxed in dry methanol (50 ml) for 12 h in the presence of a few drops of acetic acid. On cooling, the solvent was removed in vacuo, and the residue was extracted into toluene (30 ml). An orange crystalline sample of $L^1$H₂ was formed on prolonged standing (2–3 days) at ambient temperature, yield 1.20 g, 74%. Single crystals suitable for X-ray crystallography can be grown from a saturated acetonitrile or toluene solution on prolonged standing (slow evaporation) at room temperature. Anal. calcd for $C_{48}H_{44}N_4O_4$: C, 78.59; H, 5.83; N, 7.48; Found C, 78.77; H, 5.28; N, 7.15%. IR (cm$^{-1}$): 3068 (w), 3028 (w), 2964 (w), 1626 (s), 1579 (s), 1480 (s), 1345 (m), 1214 (s), 1240 (s), 1125 (m), 1195 (m), 1032 (m), 1008 (m), 854 (m), 837 (m), 786 (m), 745 (s), 700 (w), 653 (w), 603 (w), 538 (w), 511 (w), 454 (m); MS [M$^+$] $\approx$ 657 [M$^+$]. $^1$H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d$_6$) $\delta$: 14.11 (s, 2H, OH), 8.87 (s, 4H, $-CH=O$), 7.54 (s, 4H, Ar-N), 7.12–7.24 (m, 16H, Ar-NH), 2.27 (s, 3H, $-CH_3$), 2.24 (s, 3H, $-CH_3$). $^{13}$C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-d$_6$) $\delta$: 20.4, 116.0, 116.6, 117.7, 120.1, 124.2, 127.7, 140.1, 143.6, 149.7, 160.4.

**Synthesis of $L^2$H₂.** As for $L^1$H₂, but using 2,6-dicarboxy-4-tert-butyl-phenol (1.03 g, 5.0 mmol) and (2-NH₂C₆H₄)₂O (1.00 g, 5.0 mmol), yield 1.1 g, 60%. Anal Calcd for $C_{48}H_{44}N_4O_4$ (sample dried in vacuo for 12 h): C, 77.81; H, 5.99; N, 7.56; Found: C, 77.35; H, 6.43; N, 7.96%. IR (cm$^{-1}$): 3063 (w), 2954 (m), 2932 (m), 2864 (w), 1630 (s), 1578 (m), 1484 (m), 793 (m), 756 (s), 704 (w), 642 (w), 596 (w), 542 (w), 511 (w), 484 (s), 460 (s), 430 (s), 360 (w), 340 (w), 315 (w), 270 (m), 230 (s), 210 (s), 170 (s), 150 (s), 135 (s), 125 (s), 115 (s), 100 (s), 86 (s), 75 (s), 65 (s), 55 (s), 45 (s), 40 (s), 30 (s), 20 (s), 10 (s), 0 (s). $^1$H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d$_6$) $\delta$: 14.11 (s, 2H, OH), 8.87 (s, 4H, $-CH=O$), 7.54 (s, 4H, Ar-N), 7.12–7.24 (m, 16H, Ar-NH), 2.27 (s, 3H, $-CH_3$), 2.24 (s, 3H, $-CH_3$). $^{13}$C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-d$_6$) $\delta$: 20.4, 116.0, 116.6, 117.7, 120.1, 124.2, 127.7, 140.1, 143.6, 149.7, 160.4.
1452 (w), 1357 (m), 1316 (s), 1238 (s), 1192 (m), 1185 (m), 1158 (m), 1108 (m), 1012 (s), 965 (w), 937 (w), 915 (w), 890 (m), 866 (m), 798 (w), 749 (s), 692 (w), 647 (w), 597 (w), 564 (w), 517 (w), 417 (w). MS [E(\')] \text{m} / \text{z}: 698 [M^+]_2^1. \text{H NMR} (400 MHz, DMSO-d_6): \delta 14.89 (s, 2H, -OH), 8.84 (s, 4H, -CH=N), 7.58 (s, 4H, Ar-H), 7.22–7.34 (m, 12H, Ar-H), 7.07 (d, J = 11.2 Hz, 4H, Ar-H). This compound proved to be too insoluble to obtain meaningful \textsuperscript{13}C NMR spectra, even after heating in DMSO-d_6.

**Synthesis of L^2(tosyl)_2.** The oxadiazoline (1.00 g, 4.99 mmol) was combined with 2,6-bicarboxy-4-tert-buty1-phenoxyslate (1.80 g, 4.99 mmol) in ethanol (30 ml) and the system was refluxed for 12 h. The volatiles were removed in vacuo, and the residue was extracted in acetonitrile (30 ml). Prolonged standing at ambient temperature afforded orange crystals of L^2(tosyl)_2 (1.86 g, 71%). C_{26}H_{15}N_7O_6S_2 (sample dried in vacuo for 12 h): C, 70.97; H, 5.38; N, 5.34. Found: C, 70.56; H, 5.16; N, 5.09%. IR (cm\textsuperscript{-1}): 3624 (w), 1927 (w), 1770 (s), 1721 (s), 1620 (s), 1340 (s), 1302 (s), 1261 (s), 1154 (s), 1093 (s), 981 (m), 926 (m), 907 (s), 888 (s), 855 (s), 801 (s), 721 (s), 623 (s), 542 (s), 510 (w), 486 (m). MS [E(\')] \text{m} / \text{z}: 895 [MH^+ - tosyl].

**Synthesis of \text{[Me}_2\text{Al})_2(2\text{-O}-5\text{-ClC}_6\text{H}_4\text{H}_2\text{(CH}_3)_3\text{]}_2\text{[O}(2\text{-C}_6\text{H}_4\text{J}_2\text{N}_2)]_2.** (1). To the ligand \text{[2,2'-O}(\text{C}_6\text{H}_4\text{N})_2\text{]-2,6-(4-MeC}_6\text{H}_4\text{OH)}]_2 (0.50 g, 0.76 mmol) in hexane was added two equivalents of AlEt\textsubscript{3} (0.76 ml, 1.52 mmol) affording 4 as a yellow solid (yield 0.39 g, 62.3%). Elemental analysis calculated for C_{50}H_{50}N_4O_4Al_2: C 72.80, H 6.11, N 6.79%; found: C 72.45, H 5.98, N 6.95%. IR (KBr): 3434 (s), 3067 (w), 2925 (w), 2891 (w), 2855 (w), 1793 (w), 1734 (w), 1625 (s), 1595 (s), 1525 (s), 1485 (s), 1452 (s), 1383 (s), 1333 (w), 1304 (w), 1273 (m), 1233 (s), 1217 (m), 1192 (m), 1163 (s), 1111 (m), 1043 (w), 990 (m), 946 (w), 932 (w), 877 (w), 859 (w), 832 (w), 791 (w), 754 (m), 742 (m), 670 (w), 647 (w), 612 (m), 565 (w), 545 (w), 454 (w), 419 (w). MS (E.I.): 849.8 [M + Na]\. 1\textsuperscript{H} NMR (CDCl\textsubscript{3}, 400 MHz): \delta 8.34 (d, J = 2.8 Hz, 2H, C(=CH\textsubscript{2})) 7.27 (s, 2H, CH(=N)), 6.97–7.58 (m, 18H, arylH), 6.59 (dd, J = 2.8, 2H, CH(=N)), –0.67 (s, 6H, Al–CH\textsubscript{2}H\textsubscript{3}), –0.73 (s, 6H, Al–CH=CH\textsubscript{2}).

**Synthesis of \text{[Et}_2\text{Al})_2(2\text{-O}-5\text{-MeC}_6\text{H}_4\text{H}_2\text{(1,3-CH}_3\text{)}_3\text{[O}(2\text{-C}_6\text{H}_4\text{J}_2\text{N}_2)]_2.** (4). To the ligand \text{[2,2'-O}(\text{C}_6\text{H}_4\text{N})_2\text{-2,6-(4-MeC}_6\text{H}_4\text{OH)}]_2 (0.50 g, 0.76 mmol) in hexane was added two equivalents of AlEt\textsubscript{3} (0.76 ml, 1.52 mmol) affording 4 as a yellow solid (yield 0.39 g, 62.3%). Elemental analysis calculated for C_{50}H_{50}N_4O_4Al_2: C 72.80, H 6.11, N 6.79%; found: C 72.45, H 5.98, N 6.95%. IR (KBr): \text{cm}^{-1}: 3434 (s), 3067 (w), 2925 (w), 2891 (w), 2855 (w), 1793 (w), 1734 (w), 1625 (s), 1595 (s), 1525 (s), 1485 (s), 1452 (s), 1383 (s), 1333 (w), 1304 (w), 1273 (m), 1233 (s), 1217 (m), 1192 (m), 1163 (s), 1111 (m), 1043 (w), 990 (m), 946 (w), 932 (w), 877 (w), 859 (w), 832 (w), 791 (w), 754 (m), 742 (m), 670 (w), 647 (w), 612 (m), 565 (w), 545 (w), 454 (w), 419 (w). MS (E.I.): 849.8 [M + Na]\. 1\textsuperscript{H} NMR (CDCl\textsubscript{3}, 400 MHz): \delta 8.16 (d, 2H, \text{J} = 4.8 Hz, C(=CH\textsubscript{2})) 7.89 (s, 2H, CH(=N)), 7.57 (d, \text{J} = 8.0 Hz, 2H, aryH), 7.52 (s, 2H, CH(=N)), 7.34–7.48 (m, 2H, aryH), 7.34 (m, 4H, aryH), 7.06–7.13 (m, 6H, aryH), 6.39 (dd, \text{J} = 8.0 Hz, \text{J} = 1.6 Hz, 2H, aryH), 6.39 (d, 2H, \text{J} = 2.4 Hz, C(=CH\textsubscript{2})) 2.19 (s, 6H, CH(=CH\textsubscript{2})), 0.94 (t, \text{J} = 8.0 Hz, 6H, Al–CH(=CH\textsubscript{2})), 0.70 to –0.09 (overlapping m, 8H, Al–CH(=CH\textsubscript{2})).
residue was extracted in MeCN (30 cm³), and on prolonged standing at room temperature afforded small yellow/orange crystals of 9-toluene. Yield: 0.24 g, 48%. Elemental analysis calculated for C₉₀H₸₈N₴O₂Cl₂Al: C 67.67, H 3.35, N 7.89%. Despite repeated analyses, this was the best result for % C. IR (KBr) cm⁻¹: 3436 (w), 3184 (w), 2962 (m), 1643 (w), 1595 (s), 1547 (m), 1480 (m), 1436 (m), 1362 (m), 1307 (s), 1270 (s), 1233 (s), 1184 (s), 1152 (s), 1124 (s), 1047 (s), 1016 (s), 962 (s), 929 (s), 891 (s), 843 (m), 785 (s), 759 (s), 731 (m), 699 (m), 588 (s), 465 (s). MS (positive ion nanospray): 1278.3 (M⁻ + 4Cl⁻); (MALDI-ToF, no matrix): 722.5 (M⁻ - L₂H₄⁻).

Synthesis of [Al(L₁)(L₁H)₄]·5MeCN (10-5MeCN). To the ligand [2,2'-O-(C₆H₄N₂)-2,6-(4-ClC₆H₄OH)]₂ (0.50 g, 0.65 mmol) in hexane (30 ml) was added AlEt₃ (0.20 ml, 1.9 M, 0.38 mmol), and the system was refluxed for 12 h. Following removal of volatiles in vacuo, the residue was extracted in MeCN (30 cm³), and on prolonged standing at room temperature afforded small yellow crystals of 10-5MeCN. Yield: 0.19 g, 37%. Elemental analysis calculated for C₁₁₃H₉₁N₂O₄Al: C 78.30, H 6.63, N 9.78%; found (sample dried in vacuo for 12 h): C 77.89, H 6.44, N 9.48%. IR (KBr) cm⁻¹: 1630 (s), 1588 (m), 1573 (s), 1307 (m), 1262 (s), 1206 (m), 1155 (m), 1089 (s), 1034 (s), 1018 (s), 880 (w), 861 (w), 801 (m), 770 (w), 753 (s), 722 (s), 647 (w), 636 (w), 516 (w), 506 (w), 546 (w). MS (MALDI-ToF, no matrix): 790 (M⁻ - LH⁻⁻) H NMR (CDCl₃, 400 MHz): δ 8.83 (2H, CH=N), 8.71 (2H, CH=N), 8.35 (2H, CH=N), 8.29 (2H, CH=N), 7.91-6.18 (overlapping m, 32 H, arylH), 5.88 (2H, aryllH), 5.86 (2H, J = 18.0 Hz, aryllH), 5.62 (2H, J = 14.4 Hz, aryllH), 5.34 (2H, 2H, CH₂), 4.56 (2H, 2H, CH₂), 3.86 (2H, 2H, CH₂), 3.74 (2H, 2H, CH₂), 3.30 (2H, 2H, CH₂), 3.13 (overlapping m, 2H, CH₂), 3.07 (2H, 2H, CH₂), 2.91 (2H, 2H, CH₂), 2.44 (2H, 3H, MeCN), 2.01 (2H, 3H, MeCN), 0.92 (2H, 6H, MeCN), 1.56 (2H, 9H, C(CH₃)₃), 1.41 (2H, 9H, C(CH₃)₃), 1.29 (2H, 9H, C(CH₃)₃), 1.19 (2H, 9H, C(CH₃)₃).

Synthesis of [(Me₃Al)(AlMe₃)(O)(C₆H₄Me₂N₂)·4toluene] (11-1.75toluene-1.25hexane). As for 1, but using [2,2'-O(C₆H₄N₂)-2,6-(4-ClC₆H₄OH)]₂ (0.50 g, 0.68 mmol) and AlMe₃ (1.7 ml, 2.70 mmol) and then recrystallisation from a saturated hexane/toluene (50:50) solution at 0 °C afforded 11-1.75toluene-1.25hexane as a red crystalline solid on prolonged standing.
C50H54N4O4Cl2Al4: C 62.96, H 5.71, N 5.87%; found: C 62.39, H 0.30 g, 43.8%. Elemental analysis calculated for prolonged standing at ambient temperature (1 day). Yield: 0.25 g, 36.9%. Elemental analysis calculated for C58H52N4O4Cl2Al4: C 65.87, H 5.96%, found: C 65.47, H 6.63, N 4.94%. MS (EI): m/z 1116.4 [M + Na]+. IR (cm−1): 1618 (w), 1551 (w), 1304 (s), 1261 (s), 1208 (w), 1153 (w), 1096 (s), 1020 (s), 918 (w), 890 (w), 722 (m) 660 (w), 619 (w), 467 (w). 1H NMR (CDCl3, 400 MHz): δ 8.07 (s, 2H, CH=N), 7.43 (td, 2H, J = 8.4 Hz, 1.2 Hz, arylH), 7.36 (m, 2H, arylH), 7.32 (dd, 2H, J1 = 7.2 Hz, J2 = 1.6 Hz, arylH), 7.27 (dd, 2H, J1 = 2.8 Hz, C(H)), 7.18 (m, 2H, arylH). 0.08 (td, 2H, J1 = 8.4 Hz, J2 = 1.6 Hz, arylH), 6.99 (dd, 2H, J1 = 7.6 Hz, arylH), 6.71 (dd, 2H, J1 = 2.4 Hz, C(H)), 6.52 (m, 4H, arylH), 4.47 (q, 2H, J = 7.2 Hz, CH2CH3), 1.59 (d, 6H, J = 7.2 Hz, CH3CH3), -0.49 (s, 6H, Al-CH3), -0.73 (s, 6H, Al-CH3), -0.83 (s, 6H, Al-CH3), -1.01 (s, 6H, Al-CH3).

Synthesis of [(Et2Al)2(2-O)(5-MeC6H12-1-(CH)-3-C(Me)H)−(O)(2-N′-2′,6′-C6H3OCH3)]2 (14). As for 9, but using [2,2′-O(C6H4)N]2−2,6-(4-Cl-C6H3OH)] (0.50 g, 0.72 mmol) and AlEt3 (1.44 ml, 2 M, 2.88 mmol) affording 14 as a purple solid on prolonged standing at ambient temperature (1–2 days). Yield: 0.43 g, 54%. Elemental analysis calculated for C60H74N4O4Cl2Al4: C 65.87, H 5.96%. IR (cm−1): 3068 (s), 2929 (m), 1624 (s), 1608 (m), 1576 (s), 1447 (s), 1384 (m), 1321 (m), 1301 (s), 1246 (s), 1183 (m), 1160 (w), 1014 (s), 1031 (s), 940 (w), 868 (w), 839 (w), 810 (m), 752 (m), 709 (w), 699 (m), 685 (w), 636 (w), 579 (w), 447 (w), 529 (w), 476 (w). MS (EI): m/z 1116.4 [M + Na]+. IR (cm−1): 1618 (w), 1551 (w), 1304 (s), 1261 (s), 1208 (w), 1153 (w), 1096 (s), 1020 (s), 918 (w), 890 (w), 722 (m) 660 (w), 619 (w), 467 (w). 1H NMR (CDCl3, 400 MHz): δ 8.07 (s, 2H, CH=N), 7.43 (td, 2H, J = 8.4 Hz, 1.2 Hz, arylH), 7.36 (m, 2H, arylH), 7.32 (dd, 2H, J1 = 7.2 Hz, J2 = 1.6 Hz, arylH), 7.27 (dd, 2H, J1 = 2.8 Hz, C(H)), 7.18 (m, 2H, arylH). 0.08 (td, 2H, J1 = 8.4 Hz, J2 = 1.6 Hz, arylH), 6.99 (dd, 2H, J1 = 7.6 Hz, arylH), 6.71 (dd, 2H, J1 = 2.4 Hz, C(H)), 6.52 (m, 4H, arylH), 4.47 (q, 2H, J = 7.2 Hz, CH2CH3), 1.59 (d, 6H, J = 7.2 Hz, CH3CH3), -0.49 (s, 6H, Al-CH3), -0.73 (s, 6H, Al-CH3), -0.83 (s, 6H, Al-CH3), -1.01 (s, 6H, Al-CH3).

ROP procedure

e-Caprolactone. Typical polymerisation procedures in the presence of one equivalent of benzyl alcohol (Table 4, run 1) are as follows. A toluene solution of 2 (0.010 mmol, in 1.0 mL toluene) and BnOH (0.010 mmol) were added into a Schlenk tube in the glove-box at room temperature. The solution was stirred for 2 min, and then e-caprolactone (2.5 mmol) along with 1.5 mL toluene was added to the solution. The reaction mixture was then placed into an oil bath pre-heated to the required temperature, and the solution was stirred for the prescribed time. The polymerisation mixture was then quenched by addition of an excess of glacial acetic acid (0.2 mL) into the solution, and the resultant solution was then poured into
Table 5  Crystallographic data for L1H2·MeCN, L2H2·MeCN, L2H2·n(MeCOOEt), n = 1 and 2, L2H2·2(Me2CO), L2H2·2(PhMe) and L2(tosyl)2

| Compound | L1H2·MeCN | L2H2·MeCN | L2H2·MeCOOEt | L2H2·2(MeCOOEt) | L2H2·2(PhMe) | L2(tosyl)2 |
|----------|-----------|-----------|---------------|------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Formula  | C_{42}H_{32}N_{4}O_{4}·C_{2}H_{3}NC | C_{48}H_{44}N_{4}O_{4}·C_{2}H_{3}NC | C_{46}H_{44}N_{4}O_{4}·C_{2}H_{8}O_{2} | C_{46}H_{44}N_{4}O_{4}·2(C_{2}H_{6}O_{2}) | C_{46}H_{44}N_{4}O_{4}·2(C_{3}H_{6}O) | C_{62}H_{56}N_{4}O_{8}S_{2} |
| Formula weight | 697.77 | 781.92 | 828.97 | 857.02 | 857.02 | 1049.23 |
| Crystal system | Triclinic | Triclinic | Monoclinic | Monoclinic | Monoclinic | Monoclinic |
| Space group | P1 | P1 | C2/c | C2/c | C2/c | P2/n |
| Unit cell dimensions |  |
| a (Å) | 11.0841(6) | 15.1737(5) | 24.8335(10) | 24.9034(15) | 24.5582(10) | 13.8127(5) |
| b (Å) | 12.2117(6) | 15.3473(6) | 15.9714(11) | 16.9261(12) | 16.0892(7) | 13.0196(9) |
| c (Å) | 13.8841(7) | 19.2180(7) | 11.2046(4) | 9.0 | 90 | 90 |
| α (°) | 86.1299(8) | 98.169(13) | 101.497(6) | 96.003(6) | 98.942(4) | 90 |
| β (°) | 74.9778(8) | 109.862(3) | 91.656(3) | 91.656(3) | 98.42(4) | 90 |
| γ (°) | 89.6361(8) | 91.656(3) | 91.656(3) | 91.656(3) | 90 | 90 |
| V (Å³) | 1810.81(16) | 4152.13(16) | 4354.9(4) | 4836.4(5) | 4749.3(4) | 2627.4(10) |
| Z | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Temperature (K) | 150(2) | 140(2) | 120.0(2) | 120.0(2) | 130.0(1) | 130(2) |
| Wavelength (Å) | 0.71073 | 0.71073 | 0.71073 | 0.71073 | 0.71073 | 0.71073 |
| Calculated density (g cm⁻³) | 1.280 | 1.251 | 1.264 | 1.259 | 1.199 | 1.219 |
| Absorption coefficient (mm⁻¹) | 0.08 | 0.08 | 0.083 | 0.084 | 0.078 | 0.076 |
| Transmission factors (min./max.) | 0.947, 0.979 | 0.942, 1.062 | 0.784, 1.000 | 0.799, 1.000 | 0.952, 1.000 | 0.709, 1.000 |
| Crystal size (mm³) | 0.66 × 0.45 × 0.25 | 0.38 × 0.29 × 0.10 | 0.49 × 0.40 × 0.38 | 0.48 × 0.42 × 0.27 | 0.20 × 0.20 × 0.30 | 0.50 × 0.40 × 0.30 |
| θ(max) (°) | 29.0 | 22.5 | 27.5 | 25.0 | 25.0 | 25.0 |
| Reflections measured | 6102 | 33814 | 12474 | 12476 | 9158 | 27782 |
| Unique reflections | 8329 | 10738 | 4880 | 4267 | 4173 | 8856 |
| R₁ | 0.013 | 0.086 | 0.631 | 0.032 | 0.018 | 0.053 |
| Reflections with F² > 2σ(F²) | 6933 | 5230 | 3517 | 3777 | 3045 | 6118 |
| Number of parameters | 487 | 1093 | 303 | 365 | 323 | 654 |
| R₁ [F² > 2σ(F²)] | 0.050 | 0.043 | 0.049 | 0.117 | 0.047 | 0.059 |
| wR₂ (all data) | 0.141 | 0.083 | 0.130 | 0.253 | 0.133 | 0.154 |
| GOOF, S | 1.023 | 0.788 | 1.058 | 1.222 | 1.049 | 1.048 |
| Largest difference peak and hole (e Å⁻³) | 1.30 and −0.53 | 0.32 and −0.28 | 0.25 and −0.31 | 0.37 and −0.39 | 0.14 and −0.16 | 0.68 and −0.36 | 0.33 and −0.54 |
methanol (200 mL). The resultant polymer was then collected on filter paper and was dried in vacuo.

**rac-Lactide.** 5 mL of dry toluene were transferred into a Schlenk tube containing the desired amount of catalyst. The solution was stirred and maintained at the polymerisation temperature with the aid of an oil bath. Benzyl alcohol was then added from a 0.6 M solution in toluene. After an additional five minutes, the polymerisation was started by the addition of 1.0 mL of rac-lactide.

**Experimental crystallography**

Diffraction data for L\(^1\)H\(_2\)MeCN and L\(^2\)(tosyl)\(_2\) were measured on Bruker SMART 1000 CCD and APEX 2 CCD diffractometers respectively, with Mo-K\(_\alpha\) radiation, at 150(2) K using 0.3\(^0\) \(\omega\)-scans.\(^{21}\) Corrections were made for absorption and for Lorentz and Lp effects.\(^{21}\) The structures were solved by direct methods and refined on \(F^2\) by full-matrix-least-squares.\(^{22}\)

For the L\(^1\)H\(_2\)-solv. samples, diffraction intensities were measured on Oxford Diffraction Xcalibur-3 or New Gemini CCD diffractometers equipped with Mo-K\(_\alpha\) radiation and graphite monochromator. The data for L\(^1\)H\(_2\)-2(acetone) were recorded at room temperature but the other samples were measured at temperatures between 120 and 140 K. Intensity data were measured by thin-slice \(\omega\)- and \(\varphi\)-scans. Data were processed using the CrysAlis-CCD and \(-\text{RED}\)\(^{23}\) programs. The structures were determined by the direct methods routines in the SHELXS program\(^{22}\) and refined by full-matrix least-squares methods, on \(F^2\), in SHELXL.\(^{22}\)

For 7-2\(^4\)MeCN, data collected at Daresbury Laboratory Station 9.8.\(^{21}\) The crystal was weakly diffracting, so data were only integrated to \(2\theta = 45^\circ\). The tBu group at C89 was modeled as two-fold disordered with a major component of 72.8(9)\%, whilst the MeCN containing N12 was refined at half weight. For 8, data were collected using an Agilent Xcalibur diffractometer with an Eos detector. Single crystal diffraction data for 9-4toluene and 10-5MeCN were collected by the UK National Crystallography Service using a Rigaku FR-E\(_\gamma\) diffractometer. This operates with a SuperBright rotating anode X-ray generator and high flux optics. For 10-5MeCN, one MeCN was refined as point atoms, the other four as regions of diffuse electron density using the Platon Squeeze procedure.\(^{13}\) Squeeze identifies 2 voids per unit cell, each containing 207 electrons. Inspection of the residual electron density prior to squeeze strongly suggested 4 MeCNs. Each MeCN contains 22 electrons so, although 207 electrons indicate ca. 9.4 MeCNs, only 8 were added per void, or 4 per metal complex. For 11-1\(^4\)toluene-1\(^3\)hexane, data were collected with an Agilent Gemini diffractometer using molybdenum radiation and an Eos S2 detector. Disordered solvent was modelled using the Squeeze routine, which identified two voids per unit cell containing a total of 1210 electrons. This was modelled using 9 toluene and 4 hexane molecules (the ratio of disordered toluene to hexane cannot be estimated by this technique).

**Table 6 Crystallographic data for 7-2\(^4\)MeCN, 8, 9-4toluene, 10-5MeCN and 11-1.75toluene-1.25hexane**

| Compound | 7-2\(^4\)MeCN | 8 | 9-4toluene | 10-5MeCN | 11-1.75toluene-1.25hexane |
|----------|---------------|---|----------|----------|---------------------------|
| Formula  | C\(_{59.58}\)H\(_{66.75}\)Al\(_2\)N\(_6\)O\(_2\) | C\(_{64.58}\)H\(_{68}\)Al\(_2\)N\(_4\)O\(_2\) | C\(_{108.75}\)Al\(_3\)N\(_8\)O\(_8\) | C\(_{114.29}\)Al\(_4\)N\(_9\)O\(_4\) | C\(_{264.50}\)H\(_{342}\)Al\(_{16}\)N\(_{16}\)O\(_{16}\) |
| Formula weight | 955.40 | 849.00 | 1787.58 | 1759.17 | 4433.20 |
| Crystal system | Triclinic | Triclinic | Triclinic | Monoclinic | Triclinic |
| Space group | P1 | P1 | P2\(_1\)| P2\(_1\)/c | P2\(_1\)/c |
| Unit cell dimensions | | | | | |
| a (Å) | 15.2938(19) | 9.7916(5) | 13.859(4) | 13.759(6) | 36.2145(5) |
| b (Å) | 15.671(2) | 11.2215(6) | 10.919(4) | 10.919(4) | 31.8640(5) |
| c (Å) | 25.086(3) | 11.7840(6) | 14.7463(10) | 27.3761(3) | 13.1640(3) |
| \(\alpha\) (°) | 93.9493(17) | 84.624(4) | 95.508(7) | 90.95.712(2) | 94.715(2) |
| \(\beta\) (°) | 112.5747(16) | 97.1008(16) | 101.879(7) | 107.9523(6) | 95.712(2) |
| \(\gamma\) (°) | 112.5747(16) | 97.1008(16) | 101.879(7) | 107.9523(6) | 95.712(2) |
| \(V\) (Å\(^3\)) | 5464.4(12) | 1176.81(10) | 4401.9(4) | 10 019.5(2) | 13 759.6(4) |
| Z | 4 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 4 |
| Temperature (K) | 150(2) | 143(2) | 143(2) | 120.0(2) | 120(2) |
| Wavelength (Å) | 0.6884 | 0.71073 | 0.71073 | 0.71073 | 0.71073 |
| Calculated density (g cm\(^{-3}\)) | 1.161 | 1.198 | 1.343 | 1.166 | 1.072 |
| Absorption coefficient (mm\(^{-1}\)) | 0.100 | 0.107 | 0.209 | 0.080 | 0.113 |
| Transmission factors (min./max.) | 0.987, 0.997 | 0.906, 1.000 | 0.514, 1.000 | 0.973, 0.990 | 0.564, 1.000 |
| Crystal size (mm\(^3\)) | 0.14 x 0.10 x 0.03 | 0.80 x 0.50 x 0.40 | 0.35 x 0.30 x 0.20 | 0.35 x 0.25 x 0.12 | 0.80 x 0.50 x 0.40 |
| \(\theta\) (max) (°) | 22.6 | 26.4 | 27.4 | 25.0 | 29.5 |
| Reflections measured | 36 298 | 9795 | 67 195 | 191 662 | 155 744 |
| Unique reflections | 15 657 | 4806 | 20 011 | 17 619 | 64 526 |
| \(R\) (data) | 0.065 | 0.023 | 0.067 | 0.105 | 0.051 |
| Reflections with \(F^2 > 2\sigma(F^2)\) | 9183 | 3428 | 12 308 | 13 161 | 43 448 |
| Number of parameters | 1319 | 283 | 1054 | 1095 | 2792 |
| \(R\) (\(F^2 > 2\sigma(F^2)\)) | 0.082 | 0.047 | 0.099 | 0.066 | 0.085 |
| \(wR_2\) (all data) | 0.263 | 0.127 | 0.291 | 0.153 | 0.255 |
| GOOF, \(S\) | 1.030 | 1.030 | 1.021 | 1.026 | 1.029 |
| Largest difference peak and hole (e Å\(^{-3}\)) | 0.76 and −0.32 | 0.45 and −0.35 | 0.90 and −0.51 | 0.28 and −0.29 | 1.44 and −0.59 |
Structures of the complexes 7–11 were solved using Direct Methods implemented within SHELXS-2013 and refined within SHELXL-2014. Further details are provided in Tables 5 and 6.

Acknowledgements

Sichuan Normal University and the National Natural Science Foundation of China (grants 51273133 and 51443004) are thanked for financial support. The Special Funds for sharing large precision equipment (no. DJ2014-22) at Sichuan Normal University is also thanked. CR thanks the EPSRC for a travel grant (EP/L012804/1) and the National Crystallographic Service at the University of Southampton (for data collection of 9-toluene and 10-MeCN). The CCLRC is thanked for the award of beamtime (complex 7-2-MeCN) at SRS Daresbury Laboratory (Station 9.8), and the EPSRC Mass Spectrometry Service at Swansea is thanked for data.

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