

## Reaction Centre Quenching of Excess Light Energy and Photoprotection of Photosystem II

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**In addition to the energy dissipation of excess light occurring in PSII antenna via the xanthophyll cycle, there is mounting evidence of a zeaxanthin-independent pathway for non-photochemical quenching based within the PSII reaction centre (reaction centre quenching) that may also play a significant role in photoprotection. It has been demonstrated that acclimation of higher plants, green algae and cyanobacteria to low temperature or high light conditions which potentially induce an imbalance between energy supply and energy utilization is accompanied by the development of higher reduction state of  $Q_A$  and higher resistance to photoinhibition (Huner et al., 1998). Although this is a fundamental feature of all photoautotrophs, and the acquisition of increased tolerance to photoinhibition has been ascribed to growth and development under high PSII excitation pressure, the precise mechanism controlling the redox state of  $Q_A$  and its physiological significance in developing higher resistance to photoinhibition has not been fully elucidated. In this review we summarize recent data indicating that the increased resistance to high light in a broad spectrum of photosynthetic organisms acclimated to high excitation pressure conditions is associated with an increase probability for alternative non-radiative  $P680^+Q_A^-$  radical pair recombination pathway for energy dissipation within the reaction centre of PSII. The various molecular mechanisms that could account for non-photochemical quenching through PSII reaction centre are also discussed.**

**Keywords:** electron transport, energy dissipation, non-photochemical quenching, photoprotection, photosystem II, reaction centre quenching

Changes in irradiance, temperature, nutrients and water availability result in imbalances between the light energy absorbed through photochemistry and energy utilization through photosynthetic electron transport coupled to carbon, nitrogen and sulphur reduction. This leads to photoinhibition of photosynthesis that may result in photodamage to the D1 reaction centre polypeptide of PSII (Aro et al., 1993; Krause, 1988; Long et al., 1994; Powles, 1984). Recovery from photoinhibition in plants, green algae and cyanobacteria is thought to involve a PSII repair cycle in which photodamaged D1 is degraded and the re-synthesised D1 is reinserted to form a functional PSII reaction centre (Aro et al., 1993; Melis, 1999). It has been shown in some chilling-sensitive plant species, green algae and cyanobacteria that protection against photoinhibition may be accounted for, in part, by an increased rate of repair relative to the rate of photodamage to D1 (Melis, 1999; Nishida and Murata, 1996). Alternatively, certain cold tolerant plant species such as winter wheat (*Triticum aestivum* L.), rye (*Secale cereale* L.), barley (*Hordeum vulgare* L.), *Arabidopsis thaliana*, exhibit a minimal dependence on D1 repair in response to cold but instead increase photosynthetic capacity and reprogramme carbon metabolism to increase RuBP regeneration and to recover flux through the Calvin cycle, increasing the capacity for photochemical quenching (Adams et al., 2001; Huner et al., 1993; Hurry et al., 1995; Kim et al., 2005; Stitt and Hurry, 2002; Strand et al., 2003; Strand et al., 1997; Xu et al., 1999). This reprogramming of metabolism results in an increased capacity to keep  $Q_A$  oxidized

and PSII reaction centres open under high excitation pressure induced by either excessive irradiance or low temperatures (Huner et al., 1998; Öquist and Huner, 2003). Thus, photoprotection in these species is accomplished, in part, through an increase in photochemical quenching (qP) (Krause and Jahns, 2003).

In contrast to the D1 repair cycle and photochemical quenching, the concept of radiationless dissipation of excess energy through antenna quenching was originally developed on the basis of the Butler model for energy transfer and used to account for Chl fluorescence quenching (Butler, 1978). Non-photochemical quenching (NPQ) of excess excitation energy in the antenna pigment bed of PSII is considered to be the major PSII photoprotective mechanism (Demmig-Adams and Adams, 1992; Gilmore, 1997; Gilmore and Ball, 2000; Horton et al., 1996; Ort, 2001).

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Abbreviations: Cyt  $b_{559}$ , cytochrome  $b_{559}$ ; D1, photosystem II reaction centre polypeptide; D2, photosystem II reaction centre polypeptide;  $F_o$ , minimum yield of chlorophyll fluorescence at open PSII centres in dark-adapted leaves;  $F_m$ , maximum yield of fluorescence at closed PSII reaction centres in dark adapted leaves;  $F_v$ , variable yield of fluorescence in dark adapted leaves;  $F_v/F_m$ , maximum PSII photochemical efficiency in dark adapted leaves; LHCl, the major Chl a/b pigment-protein complex associated with PSII; NPQ, non-photochemical quenching; OEC, oxygen evolving complex; Pheo, pheophytin; PSI, photosystem I; PSII, photosystem II; PSII $\beta$ , photosystem  $\beta$  centres; PSII $\alpha$ , photosystem  $\alpha$  centres; PsbS, PSII subunit and gene product of the *PsbS* gene; PQ, plastoquinone;  $Q_A$ , primary electron-accepting quinone in PSII reaction centres;  $Q_B$ , secondary electron-accepting quinone in PSII reaction centres; qE,  $\Delta$ pH dependent high energy quenching; quenching coefficient for basal fluorescence; qP, photochemical quenching coefficient; TL, thermoluminescence;  $T_M$ , temperature of maximum thermoluminescence emission; V, violaxanthin; Z, zeaxanthin.

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There is a historic precedence for the role of reaction centre quenching in the non-photochemical dissipation of excess energy (Weis and Berry, 1987; Krause and Weis, 1991; Walters and Horton, 1993). We summarize the major mechanisms capable of dissipating excess excitation energy within the thylakoid membranes and focus on the reaction centre quenching of excess light and its role in acclimation to changing environmental conditions and photoprotection of the photosynthetic apparatus. We also summarize recent experimental evidence that supports a significant role for reaction centre quenching in the photoprotection of PSII in cyanobacteria, green algae, conifers, and herbaceous plants. Various molecular mechanisms that could account for the increased probability for energy dissipation within the reaction centre of PSII are also discussed. We conclude that, as originally suggested by Krause and Weis (1991), it is probable that both reaction centre and antenna quenching function *in vivo* to different extents, depending on the environmental conditions, to protect PSII from photodamage.

## PHOTOPROTECTIVE MECHANISMS OF PSII

### Zeaxanthin-dependent Nonphotochemical Quenching of Excess Light Energy

There is broad agreement that the radiationless dissipation of excess excitation energy in the chlorophyll pigment bed of LHCII, associated with the formation of the xanthophyll pigment zeaxanthin (Z), is one of the major protective mechanisms against photoinhibitory damage of PSII (for a reviews see: Demmig et al., 1987; Demmig-Adams, 1990; Demmig-Adams and Adams, 1992; Horton et al., 1996; Niyogi, 1999; Ort, 2001). The role of the pH- and zeaxanthin-dependent shifts in the oligomerisation state of LHCII (Horton et al., 1996) as well as the activation state of zeaxanthin (Ruban et al., 2002; Aspinall-O'Dea et al., 2002) in developing the rapidly relaxing energy dependent component (qE) of NPQ has been well characterized, and this mechanism is considered to reflect the indirect, allosteric mechanism for antenna quenching.

More recently, a possible involvement in NPQ has been suggested for the *psbS* gene product (Funk et al., 1995a), which belongs to the LHC protein superfamily (Wedel et al., 1992). Indeed, a *psbS* deletion mutant (Li et al., 2000) and various *psbS*-defective mutants (Peterson and Havir, 2001; Peterson and Havir, 2003; Grasses et al., 2002) are impaired in the development of the major component of NPQ. Based on the original observation that PsbS binds chlorophylls and xanthophylls (Funk et al., 1995b), and its role in the development of qE, Li et al. (2000) suggested that this protein is the site of  $\Delta$ pH and xanthophyll-dependent NPQ. More detailed biochemical analysis suggested that the PsbS protein does not bind pigments (Dominici et al., 2002) and most of the highly conserved amino acids that form the ligands for chlorophyll in most of the LHC proteins (Kühlbrandt et al., 1994; Bassi et al., 1999) are not found in PsbS. However, isolated PsbS protein was shown to bind exogenous zeaxanthin (Aspinall-O'Dea et al., 2002), making the

precise function and specific mode of action of the PsbS protein still controversial.

### Inactive PSII Reaction Centres as Quenchers of Excess Energy

In addition to  $\Delta$ pH and zeaxanthin-dependent nonphotochemical quenching, it has been demonstrated that fluorescence quenching might result from a conversion of PSII $\alpha$ -centres (dimers) to PSII $\beta$ -centres (monomers) in a low fluorescence state (Delrieu, 1998). The monomerization of PSII centres would effectively decrease the absorption cross-section of PSII (Delrieu, 1998) and can be triggered by high light (Kruse et al., 1997). The relative proportion of active PSII centres versus inactive centres is dependent both on the intrathylakoid  $\Delta$ pH as well as the proportion of closed reaction centres measured as the relative reduction state of  $Q_A$  (Weis and Berry, 1987; Krause and Weis, 1991; Krause and Jahns, 2003). Furthermore, photoinactivated PSII complexes may also effectively dissipate excess excitation energy as heat (Krause, 1988) and the role of photoinactivated centres as quenchers increases with the severity of photoinactivation (Lee et al., 2001). It has been proposed that the conversion of photochemically active, fluorescent, closed PSII reaction centres into photochemically inactive, nonfluorescent PSII reaction centres may serve as an effective mechanism for energy dissipation (Krause, 1988; Krause and Weis, 1991) and prevent further damage not only to the photoinactivated reaction centres themselves but also to neighbouring active PSII reaction centres (Lee et al., 2001; Matsubara and Chow, 2004).

### PSII Cyclic Electron Transport

Reduction of  $P680^+$  by  $Cytb_{559}$  via the cyclic electron pathway:  $Cytb_{559} \rightarrow dChl_z \rightarrow \beta\text{-Car} \rightarrow P^+_{680}$ , represented by dotted lines in Figure 2, has been also suggested as an alternative energy dissipating mechanism operating within the PSII reaction centre (Barber and De Las Rivas, 1993; Falkowski et al., 1986; Telfer et al., 1991; Allakhverdiev et al., 1997). The conversion of  $Cytb_{559}$  from its high potential form (HP) to the low-potential form (LP) (Prasil et al., 1996), may play a key role as a molecular switch allowing it to act as an electron donor to  $P680^+$  (HP form) or an electron acceptor (LP form) (Barber and De Las Rivas, 1993). The role of the high potential form of  $Cytb_{559}$  in photoprotection of PSII has been also discussed (Stewart et al., 1998; Thompson and Brudvig, 1988). It has been suggested that  $Cytb_{559}$  may act as a secondary donor to  $P680^+$  via the  $dChl_z$  chlorophyll molecule (Barber and De Las Rivas, 1993; Nield et al., 2000; Thompson and Brudvig, 1988). In support of this, the reversible oxidation of  $dChl_z$  was shown to play a significant role in fluorescence quenching in PSII (Schweitzer and Brudvig, 1997). Additionally,  $\beta$ -carotene can be photooxidized and it was suggested to facilitate the electron flow from  $Cytb_{559}$  and  $dChl_z$  to  $P680^+$  (Telfer et al., 1991, 1994). Although the involvement of  $\beta$ -carotene and  $dChl_z$  in cyclic electron flow from  $Cytb_{559}$  to  $P680^+$  has been ambiguous, the recently published structure of the oxygen evolving complex placed one of the  $\beta$ -carotene molecules of the PSII reaction centre in direct contact with  $Chl_{ZD2}$  and

between *Cyt*<sub>b559</sub> and P680 chlorophylls (Ferreira et al., 2004), supporting a role for  $\beta$ -carotene in PSII cyclic electron flow.

More recently, cyclic electron transport around PSII in intact chloroplasts was demonstrated to be almost equal to the water-water cycle driven electron flow, implying that it can effectively dissipate excess light energy and contribute to photoprotection of PSII under conditions that limit photosynthesis (Miyake and Yokota 2001; Miyake et al. 2002). The accumulation of  $\text{Chl}_z^+$ , as a result of over-oxidation of P680, has also been suggested as a site for photoprotection (Schweitzer and Brudvig, 1997; Stewart et al., 1998).

### State I – State II Transitions

State transitions have been also well known as an adaptive mechanism for short-term redistribution of excitation energy between the two photosystems, which may play substantial role in protecting PSII from overexcitation in all photosynthetic organisms (Anderson, 1986; Allen, 1995; Lunde et al., 2000; Haldrup et al., 2001). It is well established that state transitions involve reversible phosphorylation/dephosphorylation of the major LHCII by a thylakoid-bound kinase, which is activated by the redox state of the PQ pool and regulated by the imbalance of PSII excitation and the capacity of the acceptor side of PSI to utilize the electron flow. The phosphorylation of LHCII induces lateral migration of P-LHCII from PSII towards PSI increasing the antenna cross-section of PSI at the expense of PSII (Anderson, 1986; Allen, 1995; Haldrup et al., 2001) resulting in a redistribution of the energy in favour of PSI. *Cyt* *b<sub>6</sub>f* has been identified as the redox sensor of the PQ pool and has been involved in controlling the phosphorylation of LHCII (Anderson, 1992). Recently, the small PsaH subunit of the PSI complex has been demonstrated to play a crucial role for state transition in *Arabidopsis thaliana* (Lunde et al., 2000).

### Photorespiration, the Water-water Cycle and Chlororespiration

Photorespiration can also effectively dissipate excess light energy and can serve as an alternative sink for photosynthetic electrons by consumption of NADPH and ATP via the photorespiratory pathway (Osmond, 1981; Kozaki and Takeba, 1996). It has been demonstrated that the photorespiratory pathway may play significant role in protecting plants from photoinhibition (Osmond, 1981; Kozaki and Takeba, 1996). In addition, the role of the water-water cycle as an alternative photon and electron sink, in suppressing photoinhibition by decreasing the production of reactive oxygen species is also well established (Asada, 1999).

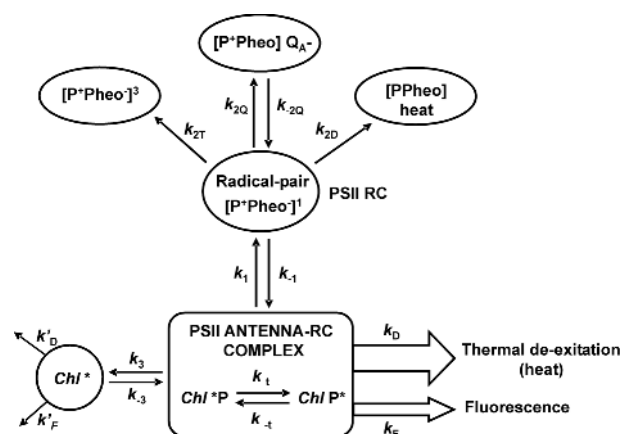
Chlororespiration, a light independent process that can maintain a trans-thylakoid proton gradient, has been also suggested as an effective alternative electron sink in alleviating over-reduction of the PQ pool and protecting PSII reaction center from photo-damage under excessive light conditions (Field et al., 1998). It has been demonstrated that the contribution of the chlororespiratory electron flux involving the NDH-complex and PTOX to total electron flow in the chloroplast and its photoprotective role as an alternative electron sink is rather limited under optimal

growth conditions (Ort and Baker, 2002; Rosso et al., 2006). However, chlororespiration has been shown to play an important photoprotective role in the high alpine plant species *Ranunculus glacialis* acclimated to low temperature (Streb et al., 2005). Furthermore, up-regulation of PTOX and the chloroplast NDH-complex have been reported in oat plants subjected to heat and high light stresses (Quiles, 2006).

## REACTION CENTRE QUENCHING

Although a major focus of recent research on photoprotection has been on the contribution of antenna quenching to NPQ (for a reviews see: (Horton et al., 1996; Niyogi, 1999), there is historical precedence for alternative mechanisms for the dissipation of excess light and of photoprotection of PSII reaction centres (Krause, 1988; Krause and Weis, 1991; Walters and Horton, 1993). Considerable experimental evidence for non-radiative energy dissipation within the reaction centre of PSII has been published (Briantais et al., 1979; Weis and Berry, 1987; Krause, 1988; Bukhov et al., 2001; Sane et al., 2002; Vavilin and Vermaas, 2000; Ivanov et al., 2003, 2005, 2006; Finazzi et al., 2004; Matsubara and Chow, 2004; Zulfugarov et al., 2007).

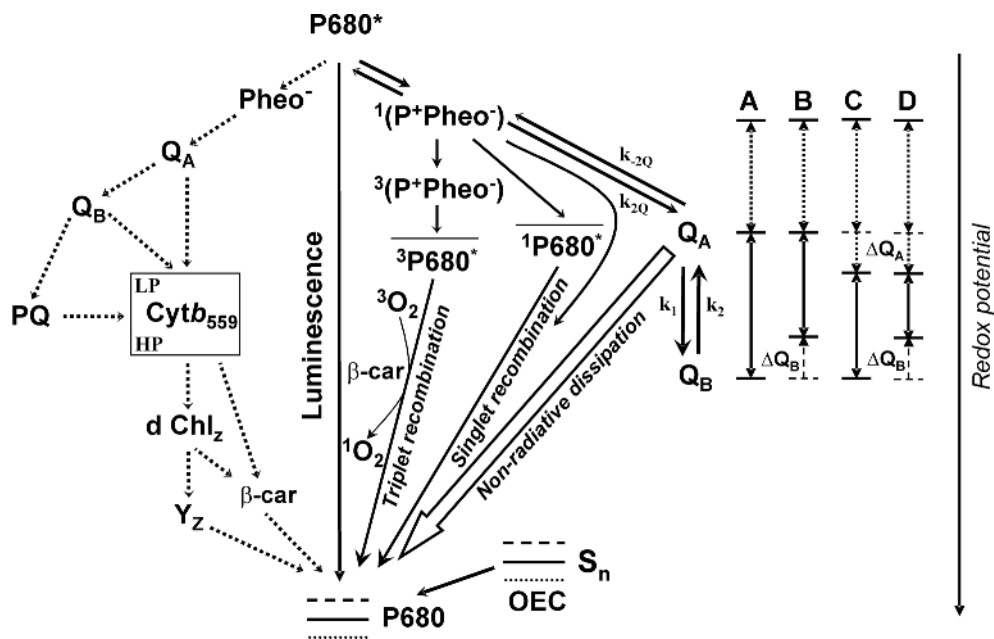
At physiological temperatures, *in vivo* chlorophyll fluores-



**Figure 1.** A schematic kinetic model of energy migration in PS II modified from the original reversible radical pair model (Schatz et al., 1988) including additional kinetic compartment of loosely connected PSII antenna (Moise and Moya, 2004). The rapid excitation equilibrium between the antenna of PSII and the primary donor P (P680) represented by the trapping and detrapping rate constants  $k_1$  and  $k_{-1}$  are not explicitly considered since the model assumes trap-limited exciton decay. The apparent rate constant for the primary charge separation which results in the primary singlet radical pair  $[\text{P}^+\text{Pheo}]^1$  is represented by  $k_1$ . The primary singlet radical pair may recombine back to the excited state of the primary donor ( $k_{-1}$ ) or by three separate reactions to recombine (nonradiative decay) back to the ground state ( $k_1$ ), to the triplet (spin dephasing) excited state ( $k_{2T}$ ), and under Fo conditions by photochemical conversion (charge stabilization) to transfer an electron to  $\text{Q}_A$  ( $k_{2Q}$ ) (Schreiber and Krieger, 1996).  $k_3$  and  $k_{-3}$  describe the excitation energy exchange between the main PSII antenna-RC complex and the loosely connected PSII antenna.  $k_D$ ,  $k'_D$  and  $k'_F$  represent the apparent rate constants for nonradiative (thermal deexcitation) and radiative (fluorescence) deactivation processes in the main PSII antenna-RC complex and the loosely connected PSII antenna, respectively.

cence originates from the light harvesting antenna of PSII and its magnitude reflects the competing processes of photochemistry and non-photochemical dissipation of the absorbed light energy (Butler, 1978; Krause and Weiss, 1991). As postulated in the bipartite model (Butler, 1978) there are three pathways for available dissipation of an exciton within the PSII antenna (Figure 1): 1) thermal de-excitation ( $k_D$ ); 2) it can be re-emitted as fluorescence ( $k_f$ ) and 3) it can be transferred to the reaction centre of PSII ( $k_t$ ). It is considered that if an exciton is transferred to an open reaction centre (primary quinone acceptor  $Q_A$  is oxidized) it can be used for photochemistry by transferring an electron from water to  $Q_A$  ( $k_1$ ). Based on fluorescence lifetime measurements a reversible radical pair model, featuring rapid excitation equilibrium between the PSII antenna and the reaction centre P680 (P) was proposed by Schatz et al. (1988). In this model, excitation trapping is described by the apparent rate constant  $k_1$  for the primary charge separation, resulting in the primary radical pair  $[P^+Pheo^-]^1$  in a singlet state. This process is considered to be reversible and the rate constant  $k_{-1}$  describes the recombination of  $[P^+Pheo^-]$  back to the excited state of the donor  $P^*$  (Fig. 1). When the reaction centre is open under  $F_o$  conditions, three further deactiva-

tion pathways could be considered: 1) photochemical energy conversion by charge stabilization reactions ( $k_{2Q}$ ); 2) spin dephasing processes resulting in a triplet radical pair state ( $k_{2T}$ ); and 3) recombination of the singlet radical pair by nonradiative decay to ground state ( $k_{2D}$ ) (Schatz et al., 1988; Wagner et al., 1996; Schreiber and Krieger, 1996). Although the original model proposed by Schatz et al. (1988) does not assume the formation of a triplet state of the primary radical pair, later nanosecond flash absorption spectroscopy analysis of charge recombination reactions in PSII has demonstrated that the yield of the triplet state  $^3P680$  was high in preparations with both open or closed reaction centres (Van Mieghem et al., 1995; Hillmann et al., 1995). However, if the reaction centre is closed (when  $Q_A$  is reduced under  $F_m$  conditions) the reversible radical pair model predicts that only radiative and non-radiative recombinations to the ground state are possible. Assuming all of the above, it is clear that the fluorescence yield ( $k_f$ ) reflects the excitation density in PSII antenna-reaction centre complex, determined by light absorption, primary radical pair recombination ( $k_{-1}$ ) and competing nonradiative decay ( $k_D$ ). The increase in fluorescence yield when the primary stable electron acceptor is reduced is defined as variable fluores-



**Figure 2.** Simplified model of possible pathways associated with non-photochemical chlorophyll fluorescence quenching localised within the reaction centre of PSII. The primary electron donor P680 accepts light excitation energy and the charge separation via the first singlet excited state results in the radical pair  $P680^+Pheo^-$  followed by the electron transfer from  $Pheo^-$  to  $Q_A$ . If the water splitting complex is inhibited the probability for charge recombination will arise due to reversible back electron transfer from  $Q_A^-$  to  $Pheo^-$  resulting in a singlet  $^1(P680^+Pheo^-)$ , or by spin dephasing to triplet  $^3(P680^+Pheo^-)$  radical pair. Both radical pairs are unstable and will recombine via **singlet recombination** [ $^1(P680^+Pheo^-)$ ] to the ground state P680 or the first singlet excited state  $^1P680^*$  and via **triplet recombination** [ $^3(P680^+Pheo^-)$ ] resulting in the triplet excited state  $^3P680^*$ , which may be quenched by  $\beta$ -carotene via singlet oxygen. When forward electron transfer from  $Q_A^-$  to  $Q_B$  is favoured ( $k_1 \gg k_2$ ) radiative energy dissipation pathway probably involves the back-reaction via the  $P680^+Pheo^-$  radical pair (A). Shifting the redox potential of  $Q_B$  toward  $Q_A$  favours the  $k_2$  rate constant and would result in increased steady state proportion of reduced  $Q_A$  (B). Shifting the redox potential of  $Q_A$  to more positive values will decrease the  $k_{-2Q}$  rate constant and increase the free energy gap between  $P680^+$  and  $Q_A^-$ . This will decrease the probability for a charge recombination pathway involving  $P680^+Pheo^-$  and will also cause stabilization of  $S_2Q_A^-$  pair (C). It is proposed that this will increase the probability for direct recombination of  $Q_A^-$  with  $P680^+$  via **non-radiative dissipation**, thus avoiding triplet recombination and production of singlet oxygen. Shifting the redox potentials of  $Q_A$  and  $Q_B$  in opposite directions (D) would cause further stabilization of  $S_2Q_A^-$  and further increase the probability for non-radiative energy dissipation. The cyclic electron pathway:  $Cytb_{559} \rightarrow dChl_z \rightarrow \beta-Car \rightarrow P^+_{680}$  is represented by dotted lines. The key role of  $Cytb_{559}$  as one electron protectant against donor or acceptor side photoinhibition is emphasized by the presence of its high potential (HP) and low potential (LP) forms, which may allow it to act as an electron acceptor (for acceptor side protection) or as an electron donor (for donor side protection) (Barber and De Las Rivas, 1993).

cence ( $F_v$ ) and it is assumed to reflect a decrease in  $k_1$  and an increase in  $k_{-1}$ . Schreiber and Krieger (1996) proposed that an increase in the rate of nonradiative energy dissipation processes ( $k_{2D}$  and  $k_{2T}$ ) in the presence of reduced  $Q_A$  ( $Q_A^-$ ) would also result in a decrease in  $[P^+Pheo^-]$  recombination ( $k_{-1}$ ), thus modulating the magnitude of  $F_v$ . In support of this hypothesis, a picosecond time-resolved study showed that zeaxanthin-independent  $\Delta pH$  non-photochemical quenching (Wagner et al., 1996) and the slow reversible ql type nonphotochemical quenching in photoinhibited leaves (Richter et al., 1999) does involve nonradiative decay of the primary charge separated state to its ground state and/or triplet excited state ( $k_{2D}$  and  $k_{2T}$ ) localized within the reaction centre of PSII.

A simplified model of possible pathways associated with non-photochemical chlorophyll fluorescence quenching localised within the reaction centre of PSII is presented in Figure 2. The primary electron donor P680 accepts excitation energy and charge separation via the first singlet excited state results in formation of the radical pair  $P680^+Pheo^-$ , followed by electron transfer from  $Pheo^-$  to  $Q_A$ . If the water splitting complex is inhibited by  $Ca^{2+}$  depletion under increased  $\Delta pH$ , changing the redox properties of both the donor and acceptor sides of PSII (Johnson et al., 1995; Krieger et al., 1993, 1995; Krieger and Weis, 1993), conditions will be right for alternative pathways for  $P680^+$  reduction and the probability for charge recombination will increase. The release of  $Ca^{2+}$  cations from the donor side has been shown to shift the redox state of  $Q_A$  towards higher values (Johnson et al., 1995; Krieger et al., 1993, 1995; Krieger and Weis, 1993), inhibiting electron transfer from  $Q_A$  to  $Q_B$  and promoting recombination of the radical pair  $P680^+Pheo^-$ . Bruce et al. have also proposed that, in addition to this reaction centre quenching based on charge recombination between  $P680^+$  and  $Q_A^-$ , nonphotochemical energy dissipation may occur via direct quenching by  $P680^+$  (Bruce et al., 1997).  $P680^+$  can be also reduced by reverse electron transfer from  $Q_A^-$  to  $Pheo$  via singlet  $^1(P680^+Pheo^-)$ , or by spin dephasing of pair electrons, by triplet  $^3(P680^+Pheo^-)$  radical pair resulting in the formation of singlet  $^1P680^*$  or a triplet  $^3P680^*$ , respectively (Schreiber and Neubauer, 1990). Both radical pairs are unstable, and the singlet radical pair  $^1(P680^+Pheo^-)$  will recombine via singlet recombination to ground state P680 or the first singlet excited state  $^1P680^*$  (Liu et al., 1993; Takahashi et al., 1987). The triplet recombination of  $^3(P680^+Pheo^-)$  results in the triplet excited state  $^3P680^*$  (Takahashi et al., 1987), which is quenched by  $\beta$ -carotene directly or indirectly via singlet oxygen (Takahashi et al., 1987; Telfer et al., 1994).

Under conditions, when forward electron transfer from  $Q_A^-$  to  $Q_B$  is restricted ( $k_1 \ll k_2$ ), the radiative energy dissipation pathway probably involves the back-reaction via the  $P680^+Pheo^-$  radical pair (Fig. 2). The possible back reaction of reduced  $Q_A$  with  $P680^+$  has been suggested previously (Krieger-Liszky and Rutherford, 1998; Prasil et al., 1996) and this may be enhanced when  $Q_A$  remains reduced (Vavilin and Vermaas, 2000). Shifting the redox potential of  $Q_B$  toward  $Q_A$  favours the  $k_2$  rate constant and would result in an increase in the steady state proportion of reduced  $Q_A$ . In addition, an increased free energy gap between  $P680^+$  and

$Q_A^-$  would decrease the probability for a charge recombination pathway involving  $P680^+Pheo^-$  and will also cause stabilization of  $S_2Q_A^-$  pair. The accumulation of  $Q_A^-$  has been shown to inhibit the formation of radical pair  $P680^+Pheo^-$ , preventing  $P680$  triplet formation (Schatz et al., 1988; Vass et al., 1992). Furthermore, it has been suggested that there is a non-radiative pathway of charge recombination between  $Q_A^-$  and the donor side of PSII (Briantais et al., 1979; Vavilin and Vermaas, 2000; Weis and Berry, 1987). Such a pathway would increase the probability for non-radiative dissipation of excitation energy within the reaction centre of PSII (Bukhov et al., 2001; Weis and Berry, 1987), avoiding triplet recombination and production of singlet oxygen.

### PHOTOPROTECTION THROUGH REACTION CENTRE QUENCHING

Over-reduction of  $Q_A$  has been suggested to be a major prerequisite for efficient dissipation of the excess light within the reaction centre of PSII (Bukhov et al., 2001; Krause, 1988; Öquist and Huner, 2003). Based on a theoretical assessment of alternative mechanisms for NPQ in *Hordeum vulgare*, Walters and Horton (1993) concluded that reaction centre quenching is operative only when reaction centres are closed, that is, when  $Q_A$  is in the reduced state. Non-radiative charge recombination between  $Q_A^-$  and the donor side of PSII has been suggested as a mechanism for dissipating excitation energy via PSII reaction centre quenching (Briantais et al., 1979; Krieger et al., 1992; Vavilin and Vermaas, 2000; Weis and Berry, 1987). There is now a mounting body of experimental evidence for zeaxanthin-independent dissipation of excess light energy within the reaction centre of PSII, involving several possible pathways for nonradiative  $Q_A^-$  decay. In an early study, Jursinic and Govindjee (1982) estimated that more than 90% of recombinations between  $Q_A^-$  and the oxidized primary donor  $P^+$  occurred via a non-radiative pathway in thylakoids with an impaired oxygen-evolving system. Similarly, charge recombination between  $Q_A^-$  and the oxidized primary donor  $P^+$  was reported to occur predominantly via a nonradiative pathway in bacterial reaction centres (Woodbury et al., 1986). Donor side induced shifts in the redox properties of  $Q_A$  have also been reported during photoactivation of the Mn cluster in PSII (Johnson et al., 1995) and Ca depletion of the oxygen evolving complex (Krieger and Rutherford, 1997; Krieger et al., 1995). From these studies, it was proposed that the increase in  $E_m$  of  $Q_A/Q_A^-$  could result in photoprotection of the reaction centre against excess light by inducing a nonradiative charge recombination pathway that did not involve the formation of the  $P680^+Pheo^-$  radical pair, and decreased the yield of  $P680$  triplet and singlet oxygen (Krieger and Rutherford, 1997; Krieger-Liszky and Rutherford, 1998).

Although, the concept for nonradiative dissipation of excitation energy within the reaction centre of PSII (reaction centre quenching) was developed mostly from *in vitro* experiments, *in vivo* Stern-Volmer analyses of NPQ in a marine diatom *Phaeodactylum tricorinitum* also suggested that changes in NPQ resulted from thermal dissipation in both the PSII antenna and the reaction centre of PSII

(Olaizola et al., 1994). It was demonstrated that the contribution of reaction centre quenching to NPQ may affect the relationship between antenna quenching and changes in photochemical efficiency, resulting in a decrease in fluorescence yield that may not necessarily be accompanied by a decrease in photochemical efficiency (Olaizola and Yamamoto, 1994). Experimental analysis of fluorescence quenching based on a model involving three separate quenching mechanisms, two based in the reaction centre and one in the antenna of PSII, clearly demonstrated that reaction centre quenching is important, if not predominant, in spinach and *Arabidopsis* (Bukhov et al., 2001). Additionally, as distinct from higher plants,  $\Delta\text{pH}$ -dependent qE was shown to be independent of the xanthophyll cycle in *Euglena gracilis* (Doege et al., 2000). Moreover, no evidence was found that the qE was localised in the PSII antenna in *Euglena gracilis* and reaction centre quenching of excess energy was suggested to be the major mechanism involved (Tschiersch et al., 2002). Similar  $\Delta\text{pH}$ -dependent energy quenching occurring in the reaction centre of PSII, but not in the antenna, was proposed to be predominant in the red alga *Rhodella violacea* (Delphin et al., 1996). The possible involvement of enhanced charge recombination of  $\text{Q}_\text{A}^-$  and  $\text{P680}^+$ , favouring nonradiative reaction centre dissipation of excess light, was suggested recently from an *in vivo* global analysis of PSII lifetime distributions in photoinhibited *Capsicum annuum* L. leaves (Matsubara and Chow, 2004). In addition, a zeaxanthin-independent non-photochemical quenching identified as a form of high-energy state quenching mechanism localized in the PSII core complex was shown in low light illuminated barley plants (Finazzi et al., 2004). This reaction centre quenching was suggested to be a common transient characteristic during illumination depending on the balance between light and carbon fixation fluxes (Finazzi et al., 2004).

Our recent data also implicate reaction centre quenching as an alternative mechanism for nonradiative dissipation of excess light energy (Ivanov et al., 2003). From this work it is evident that exposure to low temperature results in major alterations in the redox properties of the acceptor side of PSII in photosynthetic organisms as diverse as the cyanobacterium *Synechococcus* sp. PCC 7942 (Sane et al., 2002), the conifer *Pinus sylvestris* (Ivanov et al., 2001, 2002), the model plant species *Arabidopsis thaliana* (Sane et al., 2003) and barley (Ivanov et al., 2006). The shifts in the characteristic  $T_\text{M}$  of  $\text{S}_2\text{Q}_\text{A}^-$  and  $\text{S}_2\text{Q}_\text{B}^-$  recombinations in cold-acclimated *Arabidopsis* and barley plants with the  $\text{Q}_\text{A}^-$  and  $\text{Q}_\text{B}^-$  associated peaks appearing at higher and lower temperatures respectively (Sane et al. 2003; Ivanov et al., 2006), imply substantial changes in the activation energies associated with de-trapping of the electron from reduced  $\text{Q}_\text{A}$  and  $\text{Q}_\text{B}$  (Fig. 2). Similar changes in the redox properties of PSII associated with a downshift in the  $T_\text{M}$  of the B-band ( $\text{S}_2\text{Q}_\text{B}^-$ ) have been reported in cold acclimated spinach (Briantais et al., 1992) and more recently in low temperature grown maize (Janda et al., 2000). Because the activation energies have been shown to be directly related to the redox potentials of the participating species (Devault and Govindjee, 1990), narrowing the temperature gap between the characteristic  $T_\text{M}$  for  $\text{Q}_\text{A}$  and  $\text{Q}_\text{B}$  reflects a narrowing of the redox potential gap between  $\text{Q}_\text{A}$  and  $\text{Q}_\text{B}$  as a result of cold accli-

mation (Fig. 2). Furthermore, the high temperature shift in the  $T_\text{M}$  of  $\text{S}_2\text{Q}_\text{A}^-$  corresponding to increased activation energy of  $\text{Q}_\text{A}/\text{Q}_\text{A}^-$  (Sane et al., 2003; Ivanov et al., 2006) would increase the free energy gap between  $\text{Q}_\text{A}^-$  and  $\text{P680}^+$ . This could cause stabilization of  $\text{S}_2\text{Q}_\text{A}^-$  and decrease the probability for the back reaction through  $\text{P680}^+\text{Pheo}^-$  (Minagawa et al., 1999; Vavilin and Vermaas, 2000). Moreover, the preferential localization of the electron on  $\text{Q}_\text{A}$  in cold acclimated *Arabidopsis* could also result from a change in the redox potential of  $\text{Q}_\text{B}$ . Lowering the redox potential of  $\text{Q}_\text{B}$  will narrow the gap between the redox potentials between  $\text{Q}_\text{A}$  and  $\text{Q}_\text{B}$  even further and will decrease the probability for electron transfer between the two quinone acceptors by shifting the redox equilibrium between  $\text{Q}_\text{A}^-/\text{Q}_\text{B}$  and  $\text{Q}_\text{A}\text{Q}_\text{B}^-$  towards  $\text{Q}_\text{A}^-/\text{Q}_\text{B}$  (Minagawa et al., 1999). The retention of electrons preferentially on  $\text{Q}_\text{A}$  through a modification of the redox potentials of  $\text{Q}_\text{A}$  and  $\text{Q}_\text{B}$  in opposite directions would inhibit the reoxidation of  $\text{Q}_\text{A}^-$  by either forward or back electron flow (Mäenpää et al., 1995). This would ensure that the  $\text{Q}_\text{B}$  site remains occupied by a quinone, which would protect PSII from photoinhibition and D1 degradation (Ohad and Hirschberg, 1992). More detailed studies of DCMU effects on the redox properties of PSII acceptor side have demonstrated that DCMU binding increases the free energy gap between  $\text{P680}^+\text{Pheo}^-$  and  $\text{P680}^+\text{Q}_\text{A}^-$  by raising the redox potential of  $\text{Q}_\text{A}$  (Krieger-Liszky and Rutherford, 1998; Fufezan et al., 2002). It was suggested that this would favour a direct non-radiative charge recombination pathway without the formation of singlet oxygen (Krieger-Liszky and Rutherford, 1998; Fufezan et al., 2002). Supporting evidence for this argument comes from experiments in which the addition of DCMU had a protective effect on D1 turnover under photoinhibitory conditions (Komenda and Masojidek, 1998). When the  $\text{Q}_\text{B}$  site is occupied in the presence of DCMU and  $\text{Q}_\text{A}$  is in a reduced state, PSII shows increased resistance to photoinhibition.

In this regard, it is important to note that acclimation to low temperatures is strongly correlated with an increased proportion of reduced  $\text{Q}_\text{A}$  at the given growth temperature (Huner et al., 1993; Huner et al., 1998). Hence, it seems very likely that the increased population of  $\text{Q}_\text{A}^-$  due to the altered redox potentials of  $\text{Q}_\text{A}$  and  $\text{Q}_\text{B}$  during the shift and acclimation to low temperature may enhance the dissipation of excess light within the reaction centre of PSII via non-radiative  $\text{P680}^+\text{Q}_\text{A}^-$  recombination, protecting the  $\text{Q}_\text{A}$  site from excessive excitation pressure (Huner et al., 1998; Öquist and Huner, 2003). However, upon extension of our results on low temperature acclimation in cyanobacteria, *Arabidopsis* and pine, our recent results on the energy partitioning in barley indicated that the probability for non-radiative dissipation of excess energy (reaction centre quenching) increases not only in cold acclimated plants, but also in plants acclimated to high growth irradiance. Since either low temperature or high light induced a comparable reduction state of  $\text{Q}_\text{A}$ , this implies that reaction centre quenching is correlated with the excitation pressure (Ivanov et al., 2006). Thus, it would now appear that any environmental condition which increases the reduction state of  $\text{Q}_\text{A}$  will enhance the probability of photoprotection through reaction centre quenching.

## MOLECULAR MECHANISMS REGULATING REACTION CENTRE QUENCHING

### Protein Modifications

Considering that conditions favouring nonradiative pathway of energy dissipation in PSII reaction centres could be induced by changes in the redox properties of both the donor and acceptor sites of PSII, it is clear that certain structural modifications to the molecular organization and/or local electrostatic environment of the water splitting complex and the binding sites of  $Q_A$  and  $Q_B$  electron acceptors could be involved. It has been well documented that donor side dependent shifts in the redox properties of  $Q_A$  could be induced by modification in structural and/or functional integrity of the donor side during photoactivation of the Mn cluster in PSII (Johnson et al., 1995) and by Ca-depletion of the oxygen evolving complex (Krieger and Rutherford, 1997; Krieger et al., 1995). Furthermore, a single change in a crucial amino acid residue on the donor side of D1 (Minagawa et al., 1999; Ohad and Hirschberg, 1992) or a deletion of the PEST-like sequence of D1 (Nixon et al., 1995) has been shown to result in shifts of the  $S_2Q_B^-$  TL peak towards lower temperatures. In addition, over-reduction of the S-states *in vitro* might also influence the  $S_2Q_A^-$  recombination (Messinger et al., 1997; Schmid et al., 1994). Interestingly, in addition to these earlier *in vitro* reports, formation of super-reduced states ( $S_{-1}$  and  $S_{-2}$ ) was recently reported to occur *in vivo* (Quigg et al., 2003). The generation and accumulation of the over-reduced state ( $S_{-1}$ ) and super-reduced state ( $S_{-2}$ ) due to backward transition of the S-states (Messinger et al., 1997; Quigg et al., 2003) would increase the population of PSII reaction centres retaining reduced  $Q_A$ , which is believed to be prerequisite for the induction of nonradiative reaction centre quenching (Bukhov et al., 2001).

In higher plants, the D1 polypeptide of PSII is subject to at least five post-translational modifications: C-terminal processing in the conversion of 34 kDa precursor polypeptide to the 32 kDa mature polypeptide; removal of the initiating methionine residue; N-acetylation of the N-terminal threonine residue; covalent palmitoylation mapped to the N-terminal two thirds of the polypeptide and, finally, reversible phosphorylation of the N-terminal threonine catalyzed by a light-dependent, redox-regulated kinase (Mattoo et al., 1993; Rintamärki and Aro, 2001). Although the functional role of D1 palmitoylation remains unknown, palmitoylation has been shown to regulate signal transduction through G-protein linked receptors by regulating protein-protein interactions (Milligan et al., 1995). There is no evidence for the role of D1 palmitoylation in altering the  $T_M$  for  $S_2/S_3 - Q_A^-/Q_B^-$  recombinations. However, alterations in protein-protein interactions within PSII may be important since *Arabidopsis thaliana npq4* mutants lacking only the PsbS protein exhibit significant downshifts in the  $T_M$  for  $S_2/S_3 - Q_A^-/Q_B^-$  recombinations under normal growth conditions (Huner et al., 2006). Recent studies demonstrating that decreased oligomerization of LHClI proteins in *Costata 2/133* pea mutant correlates with increased probability for reaction center quenching (Ivanov et al., 2005) and reaction center-type energy quenching depends on PSII antenna size (Zulfugarov

et al., 2007) also support the importance of protein-protein interactions within PSII complex in modulating the redox properties of PSII acceptor side.

During the PSII damage-repair cycle in higher plants, both the D1 and D2 reaction centre polypeptides undergo reversible phosphorylation. The extent of D1 phosphorylation appears to be regulated by excitation pressure (Rintamärki and Aro, 2001) as well as by an endogenous circadian rhythm (Booij-James et al., 2002). Site-directed mutagenesis of *PsbA* in *Synechocystis* PCC 6803 indicates that alterations in a single amino acid can result in significant changes in the  $T_M$  for  $S_2/S_3 - Q_A^-/Q_B^-$  recombinations (Minagawa et al., 1999; Vavilin and Vermaas, 2000). Thus, it is conceivable that post-translational modification of D1 and/or D2 PSII reaction centre polypeptides by either palmitoylation or phosphorylation may alter the local conformation and/or the electrostatic environment of the  $Q_A$  and  $Q_B$  binding sites localised on these polypeptides. This, in turn, may result in shifts in the  $T_M$  for  $S_2/S_3 - Q_A^-/Q_B^-$  recombinations and hence the changes in the redox potentials of  $Q_A$  and  $Q_B$ . Unlike seed plants, no phosphorylation of the D1 polypeptide has been detected in *Chlamydomonas reinhardtii* (Rintamärki and Aro, 2001) but the decrease in  $HCO_3^-$  concentrations in the chloroplast under saturating irradiance has also been shown to affect the redox potentials of  $Q_A$  and  $Q_B$  (Demeter et al., 1995; Govindjee, 1993). Thus, limitation of chloroplastic  $HCO_3^-$  concentrations may also contribute to modulating the redox potentials of  $Q_A$  and  $Q_B$  through its regulatory role in the electron flow from  $Q_A$  to  $Q_B$ , acting as a fifth ligand to the nonheme Fe in PSII (Hienerwadel and Berthomieu, 1995). In the recent structural model of the PSII reaction centre, the bicarbonate anion is positioned close to D1Tyr<sup>246</sup> and D2Lys<sup>264</sup>, which could stabilize it by hydrogen bonding (Ferreira et al., 2004).

### Lipid Environment

While environmental modulation of D1 protein exchange (Sane et al., 2002) and various post-translation modifications of PSII polypeptides mentioned above may well be responsible for alteration of the redox properties of the acceptor site of PSII, changes in the lipid environment surrounding D1/D2 protein complex may also affect the redox characteristics of the electron accepting quinones  $Q_A$  and  $Q_B$ . Growth temperature and growth irradiance have a significant impact on the lipid and fatty acid composition of thylakoid membranes of cyanobacteria and higher plants (Harwood, 1998; Los and Murata, 2002; Nishida and Murata, 1996). The contribution of specific lipid classes and the unsaturation of membrane lipids to enhance the tolerance of the photosynthetic machinery of cyanobacteria and higher plants towards chilling and high light stress have been well established and reviewed (Nishida and Murata, 1996).

Crystallographic X-ray diffraction analysis (at 2.55 Å resolution revealed close interactions between three lipid molecules (cardiolipin, phosphatidylcholine, glucosylgalactosyl diacylglycerol) and the reaction centre of *Rhodospira sphaeroides* (Camara-Artigas et al., 2002). The lipid molecules were localized on the surface of the protein at three distinct sites: the glycolipid chains make contact with the isoprenoid chain of  $Q_A$ ; the phosphatidylcholine binds at

the interface between L and M subunit and comes in contact with the isoprenoid chain of  $Q_B$  which lies 9.5 Å apart from the lipid; the polar group of the cardiolipin is over 15 Å from any of the electron accepting quinones. Based on the structural model, it has been suggested that specific lipid-protein interactions may affect the functioning of the electron accepting quinones within the reaction centre (Camara-Artigas et al., 2002). In support of this, an earlier study of the charge recombination process in PSII demonstrated that lipid rigidity modulates  $P680^+Q_A^-$  recombination in *Rhodospseudomonas viridis* and *Rhodobacter sphaeroides* (Sebban et al., 1991). In addition, a very recent study demonstrated that the redox midpoint potential ( $E_m$ ) of  $Q_A$  in bacterial reaction centres was significantly lowered by the native lipid cardiolipin (Rinyu et al., 2004). This effect was discussed in terms of a specific lipid induced modification of the structure of the  $Q_A$  binding site (Rinyu et al., 2004). In addition, lipid phase transitions also affect the second electron transfer reaction in bacterial reaction centres by modifying the free energy gap between  $Q_A$  and  $Q_B$ , most probably via an electrostatic effect due to the segregation of the reaction centre proteins (Taly et al., 2002).

Precise information of the specific lipid binding sites within the PSII reaction centre complex of higher plants are still not available, but it is well known that chloroplast lipids play a key role in the assembly and functioning of PSII (Nishida and Murata, 1996; Pali et al., 2003). For example, the phospholipid phosphatidylglycerol (PG) has been suggested to be a functional effector and membrane anchor of the D1 protein in the PSII core complex (Kruse and Schmid, 1995). It has been also shown that PG is directly involved in the dimerization of the D1/D2 heterodimer of PSII (Kruse et al., 2000) and in the function of the secondary electron acceptor,  $Q_B$ , in the PSII reaction centres (Gombos et al., 2002). In a recent study Sakurai et al. (2003) demonstrated that the absence of PG increased the susceptibility of *Synechocystis* sp. PCC6803 mutant (*pgsA*) cells to photoinhibition due to impaired dimerization of PSII core monomers and the reactivation of photoinhibited PSII core complexes. Furthermore, Dobrikova et al. (1997) showed that the asymmetric surface charge distribution and electric polarizability of thylakoid membranes are significantly altered in the *fadB* and the *fadC* mutants of *Arabidopsis* that are deficient in lipid fatty acid desaturases. In addition, the *dgd1* mutant of *Arabidopsis*, deficient in digalactosyldiacylglycerol (DGDG), exhibits modified properties for the oxygen evolving complex, providing direct evidence that specific lipids may play an important role for the functional and/or structural integrity of the water oxidizing complex (Reifarth et al., 1997). Thus, it is conceivable that light- and temperature-induced changes in the thylakoid lipid and fatty acid composition could also alter the microenvironment of PSII reaction centres by altering lipid-protein interactions causing a shift in the  $T_M$  for the  $Q_A$  and  $Q_B$  recombinations.

## SUMMARY

We conclude that, as originally suggested by Krause and Weis (1991), both reaction centre and antenna quenching

function *in vivo* to different extents to protect PSII from photodamage depending on the species as well as the environmental conditions. Reaction centre quenching may replace antenna based non-photochemical quenching and enhance the protection of PSII against photoinhibition induced either by high light or low temperature in organisms such as cyanobacteria which lack xanthophyll-cycle-dependent antenna quenching and complement the capacity for antenna quenching under conditions where the enzyme-dependent xanthophyll cycle is thermodynamically restricted (Öquist and Huner, 2003). Any condition which increases the reduction state of  $Q_A$ , enhances the probability of reaction centre quenching. However, further research is required not only to assess the contribution of any one of these mechanisms to the shifts in the  $T_M$  for  $S_2/S_3 - Q_A^-/Q_B^-$  recombinations and hence reaction centre quenching but also to assess the timing for the onset of reaction centre quenching versus antenna quenching associated with NPQ during exposure to increased excitation pressure.

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