

1 **Linking genomic signatures of selection to expression variation and direct evidence of local**  
2 **adaptation**

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15

16 **Abstract**

17 Understanding how genomic and expression variation is linked to adaptation of plants to local  
18 environments is fundamental to the fields of evolutionary biology and species conservation.

19 Using locally adapted *Arabidopsis thaliana* Italy and Sweden populations, we examine how

20 variation in gene expression under control and cold acclimation conditions, is linked to allele

21 frequency differentiation (AFD); linkage disequilibrium (LD); selective constraint at

22 nonsynonymous sites; and genetic-tradeoff quantitative trait loci (GT-QTL). Our results indicate

23 that contrary to genes showing a main effect in environment (E), expression genotype by

24 environment interactions (GxE) show significantly higher AFD along cis-regulatory and

25 nonsynonymous sites than the neutral expectation; and interestingly, highly differentiated GxE

26 genes show higher expression and inter-species selective constraint than the rest of the genes.

27 When examining the association between genomic signatures of selection along GxE/E genes

28 and GT-QTL, we find that GxE genes showing a high AFD and LD, display a significant and

29 much higher enrichment along GT-QTL than the genome-wide/E set of genes. Nonetheless, E

30 genes show a higher enrichment than the genome-wide control. In summary, our results suggest,  
31 that these highly expressed and selectively constrained GxE genes, may have been part of a cold-  
32 responsive regulon of E genes that experienced recent selection when migrating to new  
33 environments. Candidate GxE genes underlying GT-QTL reveal interesting biological processes  
34 that may underlie local adaptation to temperature, including flowering time, light-dependent cold  
35 acclimation, freezing tolerance, and response to hypoxia. Finally, we find no evidence linking  
36 lower expression of the CBF-dependent freezing tolerance pathway to genetic-tradeoffs and  
37 adaptation to warmer climates.

38

### 39 **Introduction**

40 Populations may vary in genotype, phenotype, and fitness across geographical regions that differ  
41 in abiotic variables of the environment. Such variation maybe generated after populations  
42 become adapted to local climates, where local genotypes have higher fitness than foreign  
43 genotypes at home (Kawecki and Ebert 2004; Hereford 2009; Des Marais, et al. 2013). Abiotic  
44 stress responsive gene expression (i.e., gene expression plasticity) may play a pivotal role in  
45 local adaptation, since studies have linked it to increases in stress tolerance (Rockman, et al.  
46 2003; López-Maury, et al. 2008; Thomashow 2010; Brown, et al. 2017), and the adjustment of  
47 an organism's life-cycle to favorable environmental conditions (Seo, et al. 2009; Chiang, et al.  
48 2011). Understanding the link between genetic, expression, and fitness variation under different  
49 abiotic environments is central to the fields of evolutionary biology (Hoban, et al. 2016),  
50 conservation genomics (Razgour, et al. 2019), and plant breeding (Henry and Nevo 2014).

51

52 Gene expression responses under different environments, are often conserved between genotypes  
53 from different populations (Hannah, et al. 2006; Des Marais, et al. 2012), in which case, they  
54 will exhibit a main effect in environment (“E”) when plotted in a norm of reaction plot (Baye, et  
55 al. 2011). On the contrary, they may exhibit genotype-by-environment interactions (“GxE”), in  
56 which case the ranks of genotypes (G) change or switch from one environment to another (Baye,  
57 et al. 2011). E-genes may underlie adaptations to common environmental changes, while GxE-  
58 genes may underlie adaptation to aspects of the environment that significantly differ between  
59 locations within a specie’s range. For example, across the native range of a plant, all populations  
60 may face a slight deviation in temperature during winter/summer which engages a similar  
61 response among a set of genes of essential genes (i.e., E responses). On the other hand, parts of  
62 the native range may experience much harsher winters/summers than on average, thereby  
63 causing divergent selection between genotypes and the formation of GxE responses. If  
64 expression GxE interactions reflect fitness GxE interactions, then they may represent a important  
65 mechanisms of adaptation (López-Maury, et al. 2008; Franssen, et al. 2011; Morris, et al. 2014;  
66 Lovell, et al. 2016).

67

68 Genetic variation linked to expression and fitness GxE interactions can exhibit: (a) genetic  
69 tradeoffs, where the derived genotype is advantageous in one environment but deleterious in the  
70 other; and (b) conditional neutrality where the derived genotype is advantageous (conditionally  
71 advantageous) or deleterious (conditionally deleterious) in one environment and neutral in the  
72 other (Anderson, et al. 2011; Mee and Yeaman 2019). Despite the presence of fitness GxE  
73 interactions, instances of conditionally deleterious or more correctly non-locally maladaptive  
74 mutations, do not represent instances of ‘adaptation’ (Mee and Yeaman 2019). To identity

75 candidate genetic variation underlying local adaptation at the single nucleotide level, the two of  
76 the main approaches used are: (a) identifying single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) that show  
77 significantly higher allele frequency differentiation between populations than expected under  
78 neutral models of evolution (Beaumont and Balding 2004; Foll, et al. 2014; de Villemereuil and  
79 Gaggiotti 2015) and (b) identifying alleles showing significant associations to environment while  
80 accounting for population/geographic structure (Lasky, et al. 2012; Zhou and Stephens 2012;  
81 Gunther and Coop 2013; Luu, et al. 2017; Caye, et al. 2019). Loci underlying genetic-tradeoffs  
82 are expected to exhibit significantly stronger population genomic evidence of local adaptation  
83 than the genome average and conditionally advantageous loci (Tiffin and Ross-Ibarra 2014;  
84 Yoder and Tiffin 2017; Mee and Yeaman 2019).

85

86 Some of the main difficulties in identifying SNPs underlying local adaptation is disentangling  
87 adaptive, from neutral or slightly deleterious variation generated by background/relaxed  
88 selection, and genetic drift (Zhen and Ungerer 2008b; Hoban, et al. 2016; Matthey-Doret and  
89 Whitlock 2019). Simulation studies comparing various methods used to identify genetic variation  
90 underlying local adaptation while accounting for the effects of population structure have shown  
91 that the power of each method can significantly change depending on the underlying  
92 evolutionary scenario, in addition to other factors (De Mita, et al. 2013; de Villemereuil, et al.  
93 2014; Lotterhos and Whitlock 2015; Yoder and Tiffin 2017). Furthermore, in examining the link  
94 between GWA/population-genomic methods and empirical evidence of local adaptation, the  
95 strength of this link changed depending on the method(s) used in studies (Fournier-Level, et al.  
96 2011; Lasky, et al. 2014; Yoder, et al. 2014; Exposito-Alonso, et al. 2018; Price, et al. 2018;  
97 Price, et al. 2020).

98

99 Despite these hurdles, there have been many studies examining the genetic basis of local  
100 adaptation (Savolainen, et al. 2013; Hoban, et al. 2016), but only a few linking genome-wide  
101 expression variation, sequence variation, and fitness variation across selective gradients (Kelly  
102 2019). Among the few, a study by Lasky, et al. (2014) examined the link between genomic  
103 signatures of local adaptation, patterns of expression, and fitness variation in *Arabidopsis*. The  
104 main result of the study was that expression GxE genes showed a higher enrichment of climate-  
105 correlated SNPs than genes showing a main effect in environment (E); suggesting a role of  
106 expression GxE interactions in local adaptation (Lasky, et al. 2014). Nonetheless, the enrichment  
107 of fitness associations along GxE genes was not significant despite being higher than E genes.  
108 This discordance could be the result of differences in purifying selection between E and GxE  
109 genes leading to an enrichment of slightly deleterious climate-associated SNPs in the latter set  
110 (Mee and Yeaman 2019).

111

112 *Arabidopsis* wild populations offer a valuable resource to re-examine the interplay between  
113 genetic, expression, and fitness variation across climatic conditions. The native range of  
114 *Arabidopsis* includes parts of Northern and Southern Europe that experience significantly  
115 different climatic conditions. For example, populations in North Sweden, experience average soil  
116 temperatures below freezing for about a 1/3 of the year, while in North-Central Italy such  
117 temperatures are rarely recorded (Oakley, et al. 2014). Reciprocal transplant experiments have  
118 showed strong adaptive differentiation between these populations and evidence of genetic-  
119 tradeoffs (Ågren and Schemske 2012; Ågren, et al. 2013). Among the traits suggested to underlie  
120 these genetic-tradeoffs, is freezing tolerance (Oakley, et al. 2014); and more specifically freezing

121 tolerance variation associated with the CBF pathway (Thomashow 2010; Park, et al. 2015; Park,  
122 et al. 2018). Studies have suggested that the lower freezing tolerance and expression of this  
123 pathway (Cook, et al. 2004; Hannah, et al. 2006; McKhann, et al. 2008; Gehan, et al. 2015)  
124 across *Arabidopsis* populations in warm climates (e.g., Italy), is an adaptive response that is  
125 deleterious in cold climates (e.g., Sweden) (Oakley, et al. 2014). This adaptive response has been  
126 linked to non-functionalization of the CBF-pathway (Oakley, et al. 2014; Gehan, et al. 2015;  
127 Monroe, et al. 2016). Nonetheless this hypothesis has been disputed by studies showing that this  
128 nonfunctionalization and decrease in freezing tolerance is due to relaxed selection in warmer  
129 climates (Zhen and Ungerer 2008a, 2008b; Zhen, et al. 2011).

130

131 To re-examine the link between genetic, expression, and fitness variation of *Arabidopsis*  
132 populations in different climates, and the role of the CBF-pathway in local adaptation to  
133 temperature, the current study examines the following data: (a) re-sequenced genomes of locally  
134 adapted (Ågren and Schemske 2012) South Italy and North Sweden (Price, et al. 2020); (b)  
135 expression of Italy and Sweden genotypes under control and cold-acclimation conditions (Gehan,  
136 et al. 2015); and (c) quantitative trait loci (QTL) explaining fitness variation of Italy and Sweden  
137 recombinant inbred lines grown in a series of reciprocal transplant experiments (Ågren, et al.  
138 2013). More specifically, we examine the link between allele frequency differentiation (AFD)  
139 and linkage disequilibrium (LD) at cis-regulatory (sites found 1kb upstream from the  
140 transcriptional start site) and nonsynonymous sites, to patterns of expression (E and GxE) and  
141 genetic-tradeoff QTL, while taking into account the effects of selective constraint (or purifying  
142 selection) at nonsynonymous sites. Among population genomic signatures of local adaptation we

143 chose AFD and LD, since these were previously found to be enriched along fitness QTL (Price,  
144 et al. 2020).

## 145 **Materials and Methods**

### 146 *Extraction of RNA under cold conditions and sequencing*

147 The *Arabidopsis* SW and IT accessions were collected from their native habitats in Sweden and  
148 Italy, respectively (Ågren and Schemske 2012). Plants were grown at 22°C on soil under a 12 h  
149 photoperiod for 18–26 days (control), or at 4°C under a 12 h photoperiod for 1 or 2 weeks (cold  
150 treatment). Rosette tissue was collected from plants exposed to low temperature (4°C) for 0, 1,  
151 and 2 weeks. Total RNA was isolated for each experimental replicate (three replicates). Nine  
152 replicates were collected for each accession, for a total of 18 biological replicates. Further details  
153 can be found in the study by Gehan et al. (2015).

154

155 RNA was submitted for RNAseq library prep and 100bp single-end RNAseq analysis to  
156 Michigan State University’s Research Technology Support Facility (RTSF). Sample preparation  
157 was performed by MSU RTSF with standard protocols of the mRNA-Seq Sample Preparation  
158 Kit (Illumina). Sequencing was performed on an Illumina Genome Analyzer II (Illumina). Three  
159 samples were multiplexed in a lane for a total of 6 lanes. After quality trimming, RNAseq  
160 resulted in single-end reads ~75 bp in length with an average of 45,257,092 reads passing the  
161 Illumina purity filters for each sample. To map reads to the *Arabidopsis thaliana* genome we  
162 used Tophat (Trapnell, et al. 2009) and we estimated transcript abundance using Cufflinks  
163 (Trapnell, et al. 2010).

164

165 *Identifying differentially expressed genes between Italy and Sweden accessions*

166 To identify genes showing a main effect in environment (or condition) (E) and genotype by  
167 environment interactions (GxE) we used the we used the package DESeq2 (Love *et al.* 2014) and  
168 focused on expression after one week of cold. More specifically, using the function  
169 “DESeqDataSetFromMatrix” and a design to identify genotype by environment interactions  
170 (“genotype+condition+genotype\*condition”) we identified GxE genes that showed an adjusted  
171 p-value (“p<sub>adj</sub>”) of <0.01. Thereafter, using the “contrast” argument we extracted genes that  
172 showed a main effect in environment (E) using a p<sub>adj</sub> <0.01. To ensure no main effect in  
173 genotype among E genes we removed any genes showing a main effect in genotype (G) using a  
174 p-value of 0.05.

175

#### 176 *Comparing mean expression and selective constraint across E and GxE genes*

177 To compare average expression of Italy and Sweden plants across E and GxE genes we first  
178 estimated the average “Fragments Per Kilobase of exon model per Million mapped fragments”  
179 ( $\overline{\text{FPKM}}$ ) of the three samples under each pair of conditions (“control”, “cold”). Using the  
180 average expression of each gene under control and cold conditions, we estimated the mean  
181 expression and 95% CI’s of all genes in each category (i.e., E and GxE genes). To estimate 95%  
182 CI’s we used 10,000 bootstrap samples. In addition to average expression of genes across each  
183 condition, we also estimate average difference in expression between conditions ( $\overline{\text{FPKM}}_{cold} -$   
184  $\overline{\text{FPKM}}_{control}$ ). Selective constraint/ purifying selection at nonsynonymous sites was examined  
185 using the ratio of nonsynonymous to synonymous rates of substitution (dN/dS). dN/dS ratios  
186 were downloaded from EnsemblPlants (Howe, et al. 2020) Biomart (Kinsella, et al. 2011), using  
187 *Arabidopsis thaliana* and *Arabidopsis halleri* orthologs. dN/dS ratios above 1 were ignored.

188



189 *Population genomic signals of selection*

190 As population genomic signatures of local adaptation we used a combination absolute allele  
191 frequency differentiation ( $|f_{N.Sweden} - f_{S.Italy}|$ ) and linkage disequilibrium (LD) between a SNP  
192 and its neighboring SNPs with a 20kb window. LD was measured using the package ‘PLINK’  
193 (Purcell, et al. 2007) and it was estimated as the mean square coefficient of correlation ( $\overline{r^2}$ ). AFD  
194 and LD were estimated in a previous study (Price, et al. 2020).

195

196 *Defining cis-regulatory and nonsynonymous variation*

197 Cis-regulatory sites of genes were defined using a maximum length of 1 kb from the  
198 transcriptional start site unless there was overlap with the transcribed region of another gene in  
199 which case the promoter region was shorter. For sites that were associated to two genes, were  
200 assigned to the nearest gene. To call nonsynonymous variation among Italy and Sweden  
201 accessions we used bi-allelic sites, a publicly available python script (callSynNonSyn.py;  
202 archived at <https://github.com/kern-lab/>), and gene models downloaded from the TAIR database  
203 (TAR10 genome release) (Berardini, et al. 2015).

204

205 *Circular permutation tests to examine evidence of local adaptation across groups of genes*

206 To examine whether the proportion of (E/GxE) genes with cis-regulatory/nonsynonymous SNPs  
207 showing evidence of local adaptation (estimated using AFD and/or LD) is significantly higher  
208 than expected by chance we used a circular permutation test. This test has been previously  
209 explained in detail (Price, et al. 2020); but in brief, AFD’s and/or LD’s are shifted across the  
210 genome (not randomly shuffled) and according to certain criteria (e.g.,  $AFD > 0.60$ ) we estimate  
211 the proportion of genes with high AFD and/or LD cis-regulatory/nonsynonymous SNPs. This

212 was repeated a thousand times and the resulting permutation distribution is compared to the  
213 observed proportion/number of genes with high AFD.

214

### 215 *Assembling CBF-regulon genes and flowering time estimates*

216 Genes predicted to be regulated by the three CBF transcription factors (CBF's 1-3) were  
217 retrieved from Park, et al. (2018) resulting in a set of 476 genes. Estimates of flowering time for  
218 835 Eurasian *A. thaliana* accessions were downloaded from the study by Alonso-Blanco et. al  
219 (2016) (1001 Genomes Consortium 2016).

220

## 221 **Results**

222

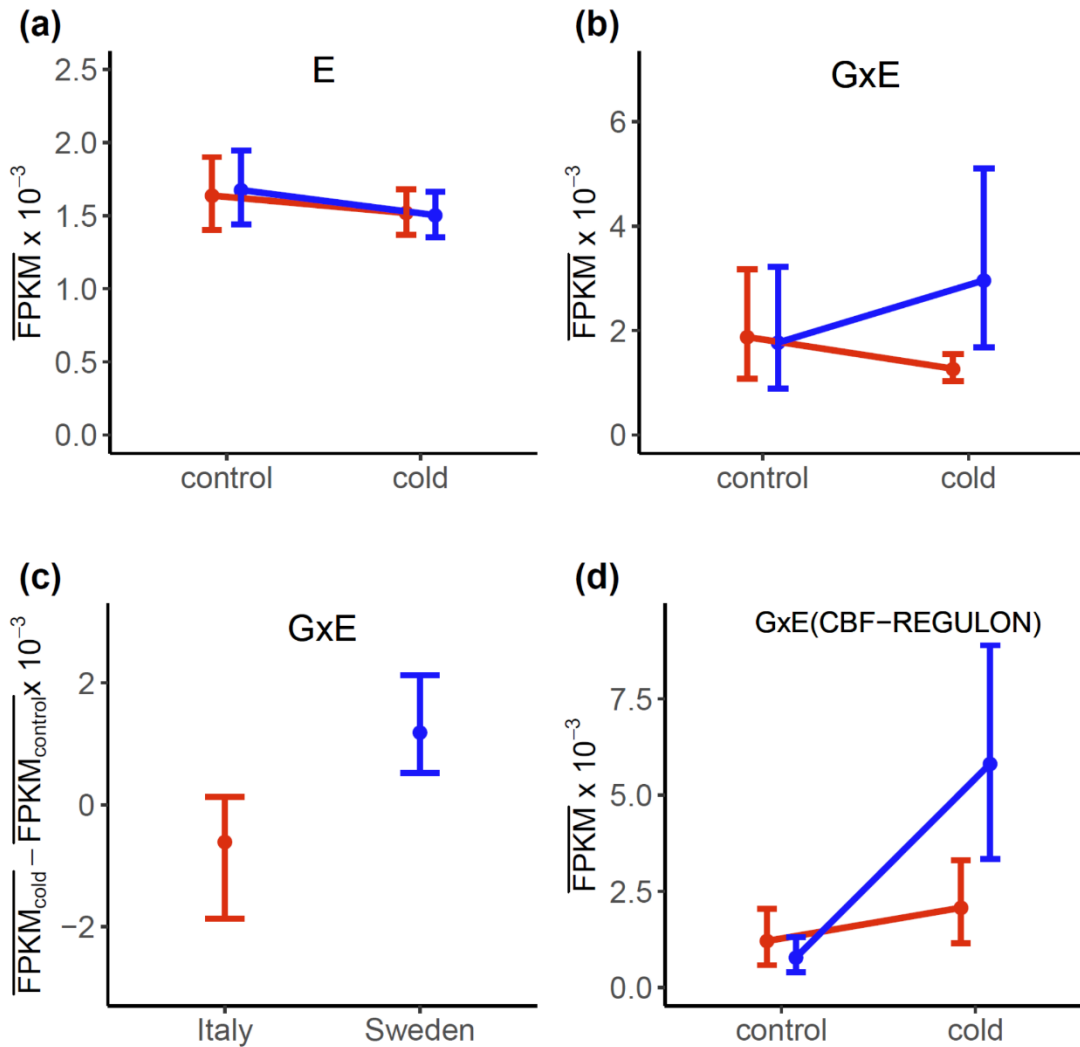
### 223 *Sweden but not Italy plants show significant upregulation of GxE genes under cold*

224 To examine gene expression in Italy and Sweden plants under control (22 °C) and cold  
225 conditions (4 °C) we used DESeq2 (Love, et al. 2014). Using an FDR of <0.01, we identified  
226 392 that showed genotype by environment interactions (“GxE”), and 2, 883 that showed a main  
227 effect in environment (“E”) after removing genes that showed a main effect in genotype at a p-  
228 value <0.05. To compare mean expression of these genes between Italy and Sweden plants we  
229 estimated mean Fragments Per Kilobase Of Exon Per Million Fragments Mapped ( $\overline{FPKM} \times 10^{-3}$ )  
230 under control and cold conditions and determined the 95% CI's using a bootstrap approach  
231 (Figures 1a & 1b). As expected, mean expression of “E” genes under control and cold conditions  
232 was identical in Italy and Sweden plants (Figure 1a). On the other hand, mean expression of  
233 “GxE” genes was significantly different between Italy and Sweden plants under cold conditions  
234 (Figure 1b); with Sweden plants showing a significant upregulation of genes when compared to  
235 control conditions ( $\overline{FPKM}_{cold} - \overline{FPKM}_{control} > 0$ ) (Figure 1c). On the contrary, Italy plants

236 showed a decrease in expression under cold conditions when compared to control conditions

237 ( $\overline{FPKM}_{cold} - \overline{FPKM}_{control} < 0$ ) (Figure 1c).

238



239

240 **Figure 1.** (a-b) Mean expression ( $\overline{FPKM} \times 10^{-3}$ ) of E and GxE genes under control and cold  
 241 conditions (FPKM: Fragments Per Kilobase Of Exon Per Million Fragments Mapped). Shown  
 242 are the means and 95% confidence intervals estimated using a bootstrap approach. Mean

243 expression of Sweden plants under cold conditions was significantly higher than in Italy plants

244 (c) In comparison to control conditions ( $\overline{FPKM}_{cold} - \overline{FPKM}_{control} \times 10^{-3}$ ) Sweden plants showed

245 a net upregulation ( $>>0$ ) under cold, while Italy plants showed a net downregulation ( $<<0$ ) (d)

246 Despite the opposite trends (c), mean expression of CBF-regulon GxE genes in Italy and Sweden

247 plants, was higher under cold than control conditions; with Sweden plants showing the largest  
248 increase (>2 times higher).

249

250 To examine whether this decrease was also present among known freezing tolerance genes we  
251 examined mean expression of 53 CBF-regulon genes that showed GxE interactions. As shown in  
252 Figure 1d, expression of GxE CBF-regulon genes was significantly higher under cold than  
253 control conditions, in both Italy and Sweden plants. The increase in Sweden plants, however,  
254 was twice as high than in Italy plants. Among the set of 476 CBF-regulon genes (Park, et al.  
255 2018), we identified 23 “E” genes and 53 “GxE” genes. In comparison to the total number of “E”  
256 and “GxE” genes (E: 2883, GxE: 392) CBF-regulon genes showed a significant enrichment (p-  
257 value<0.01) in GxE interactions according to single tail fisher’s test (“fisher.test” implemented in  
258 R).

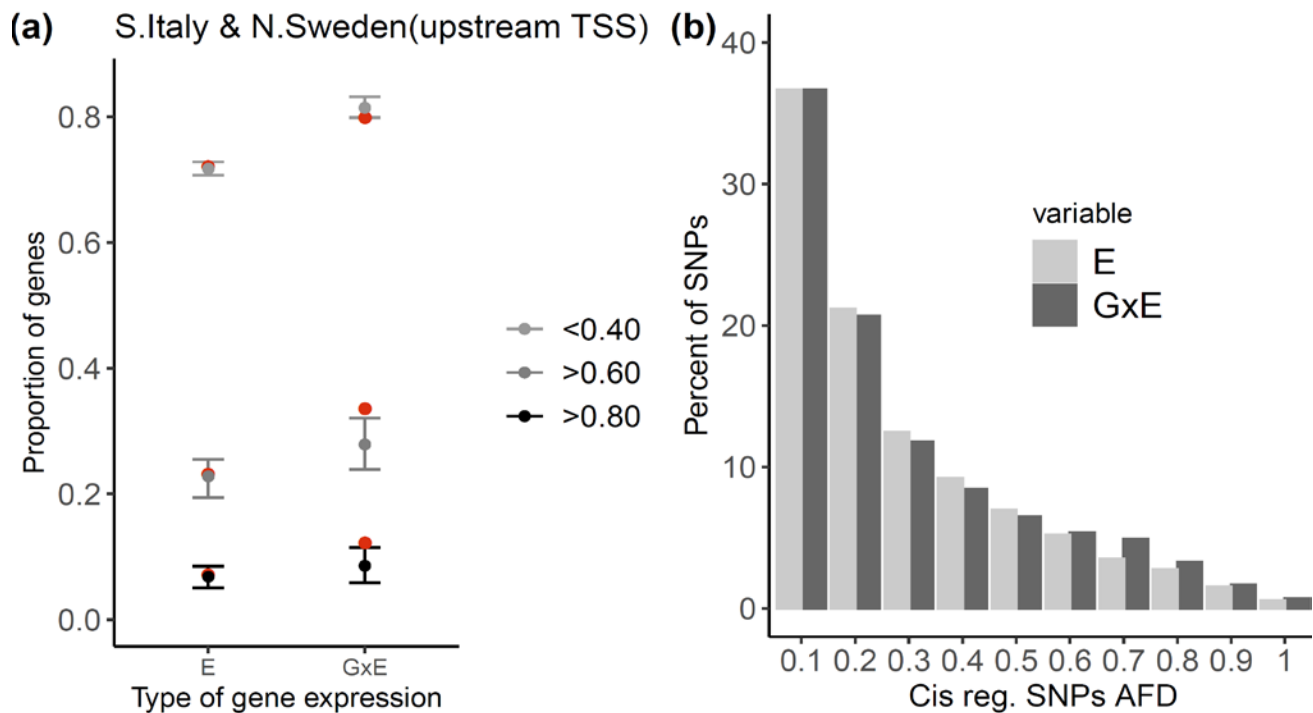
259

260 *GxE but not E genes show significant allele frequency differentiation at cis-regulatory and*  
261 *nonsynonymous sites*

262 Loci underlying local adaptation are expected to show significant allele frequency (Tiffin and  
263 Ross-Ibarra 2014) between populations. To examine such evidence along E and GxE genes, we  
264 looked at allele frequency differentiation at cis-regulatory and nonsynonymous SNPs. As a  
265 measure of allele frequency differentiation we used absolute allele frequency difference of the  
266 non-reference allele between Italy and Sweden populations (AFD:  $|f_{N.Sweden} - f_{S.Italy}|$ ) (Berner  
267 2019; Price, et al. 2020); which showed a strong correlation ( $R^2$ : 0.96, Figure S1) with a two  
268 population, two allele,  $F_{ST}$  measure (Bhatia, et al. 2013).

269

270 Along candidate cis-regulatory sites, the observed proportion of E genes (Figure 2a) with Cis-  
271 regulatory SNPs showing different levels of AFD's (AFD<0.40, AFD>0.60, 0.80) did not  
272 significantly differ than the expected proportion (Figure 2a). On the other hand, the proportion of  
273 GxE genes with cis-reg. SNPs showing low AFDs (<0.40) was significantly lower than the  
274 expectation, while the proportion associated with high AFD's (>0.60, 0.80) was significantly  
275 higher (Figure 2a). The difference in AFD's along cis-regulatory SNPs can also be seen when  
276 comparing the histograms of E and GxE genes. As shown in Figure 2b, GxE genes show a higher  
277 proportion of cis-reg. SNPs with high AFD's (>0.60) than E genes. The two histograms were  
278 found to be significantly different according to a X<sup>2</sup> test (X-squared = 25.177, df = 9, p-value =  
279 0.0028).



280

281 **Figure 2.** (a) The proportion of GxE genes showing high allele frequency divergence (AFD) at  
282 cis-regulatory sites was significantly higher than the expectation derived using circular  
283 permutations of genome wide SNPs. E genes on the other hand, showed no significant genetic  
284 differentiation along these sites. (b) The significantly higher differentiation is also observed

285 when comparing the AFD distributions along cis-regulatory sites of E and GxE genes (X-squared  
286 = 25.177, df = 9, p-value = 0.0028). GxE genes show a higher proportion of cis-regulatory SNPs  
287 with an AFD>0.60.

288

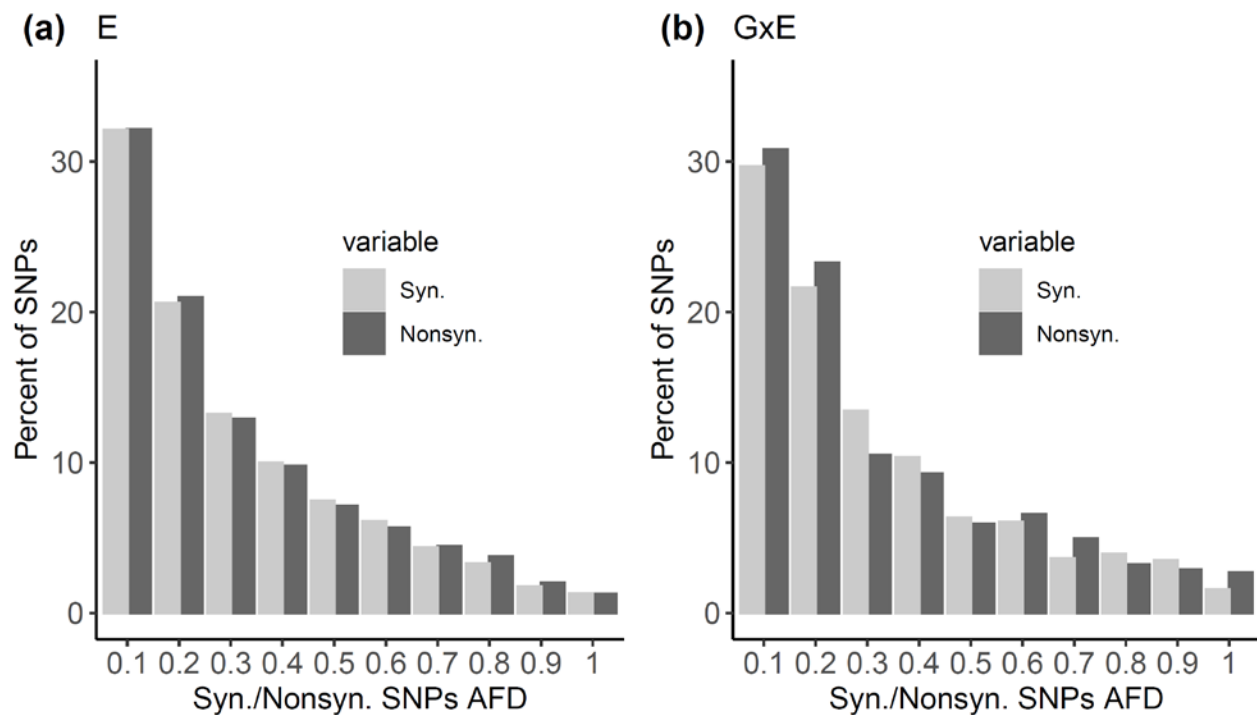
289 To test whether nonsynonymous variation across “E” and/or “GxE” genes showed evidence of  
290 local adaptation we compared AFD distributions of nonsynonymous and synonymous variation.

291 As depicted in Figure 3a, the distribution of AFD’s at nonsynonymous and synonymous sites of  
292 “E” genes is not significantly different according to a X<sup>2</sup> test (X<sup>2</sup>: 11.0, df:9, p-value: 0.28).

293 Contrary to “E” genes, the distribution of AFD’s at nonsynonymous sites of “GxE” genes was  
294 significantly different (X<sup>2</sup>: 18.5, df: 9, p-value: 0.03) than synonymous sites (Figure 3b). More

295 specifically, nonsynonymous sites across “GxE” genes showed an enrichment in low AFD’s and  
296 high AFD’s (Figure 3b) which can be caused by recent local adaptation and/or purifying

297 selection (Nielsen 2005).

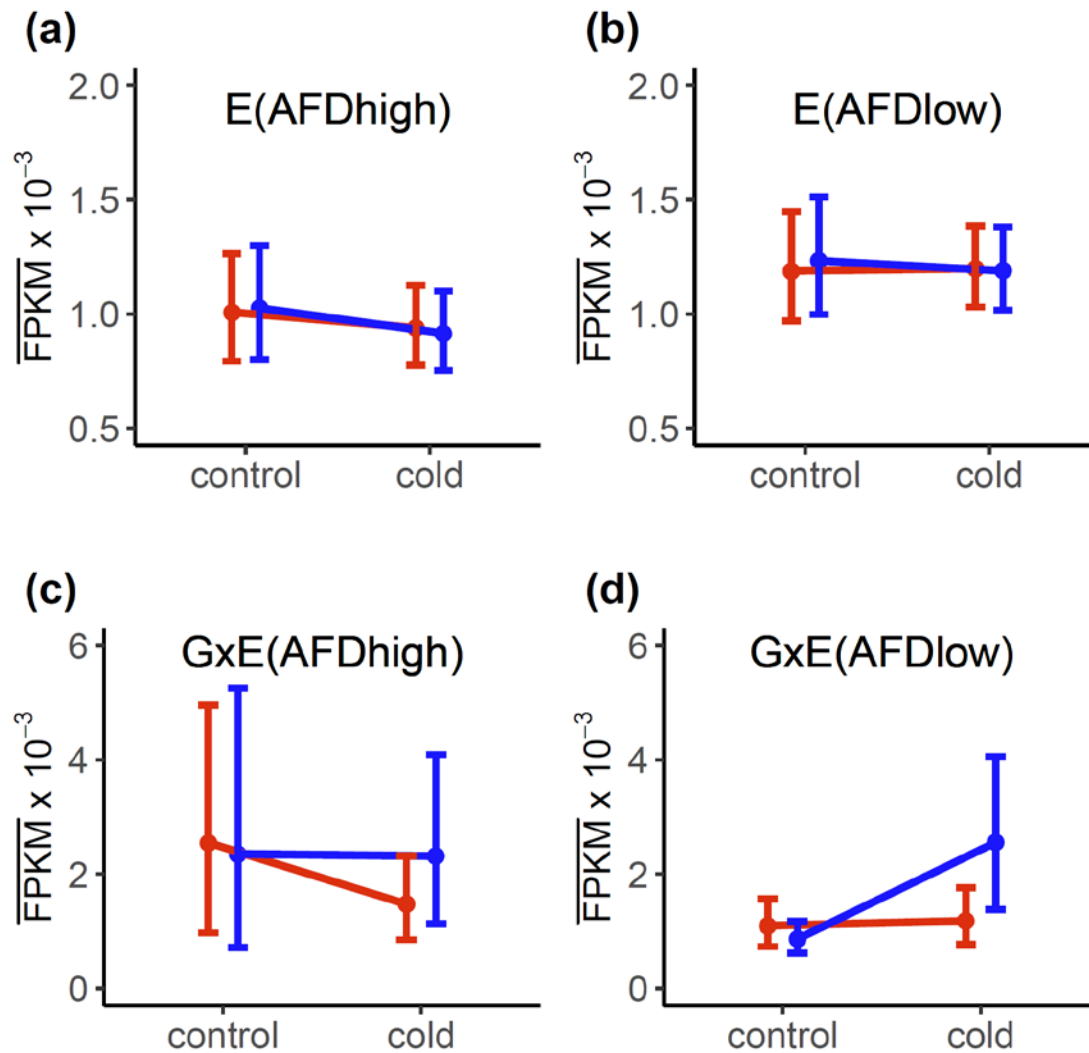


298

299 **Figure 3.** (a) Allele frequency divergence (AFD) between synonymous and nonsynonymous  
300 sites of E genes did not significantly differ according to a X<sup>2</sup> test (X-squared = 11.002, df = 9, p-  
301 value = 0.28). (b) When comparing AFD between synonymous and nonsynonymous sites of GxE  
302 genes identifies a statistical significance (X: 18.546, df = 9, p-value = 0.029). The proportion of  
303 nonsynonymous SNPs with AFD's <0.2 and >0.6 was higher than synonymous sites. Such  
304 deviations could be caused by both recent selection and purifying selection.  
305

306 *Contrasting patterns of expression and purifying selection between GxE and E genes exhibiting*  
307 *low and high AFD*

308 Variation in allele frequency differentiation between nonsynonymous sites of genes can result  
309 from differences in purifying selection, in addition to local adaptation. Furthermore, these  
310 differences could be associated with variation in gene expression among genes. To examine the  
311 link between AFD, purifying selection, and expression we first split E and GxE genes into ones  
312 that showed an AFD>0.60 at least one cis-regulatory/nonsynonymous site (AFD<sub>high</sub>) and ones  
313 that did not (AFD<sub>low</sub>); furthermore, we narrowed down the sets of genes to those that we had  
314 estimates of dN/dS (dN: rate of nonsynonymous substitutions per site; dS: rate of synonymous  
315 substitutions per site); a measure of purifying selection at nonsynonymous sites.



316

317 **Figure 4.** (a-b) E genes with at least one nonsynonymous/cis-regulatory SNP showing an  
318 AFD>0.6 (AFDhigh) were expressed at significantly lower levels when compared to the rest of  
319 the E genes with SNPs at cis-regulatory/nonsynonymous sites (AFDlow). Mean expression  
320 ( $\overline{FPKM} \times 10^{-3}$ ) of AFDhigh E genes across ecotypes and conditions was  $\approx 1$ , while that of  
321 AFDlow E genes was  $\gg 1$ . (c-d) On the other hand, AFDhigh GxE genes showed a higher mean  
322 expression ( $\approx 2.13 \overline{FPKM} \times 10^{-3}$ ) across ecotypes and conditions than AFDlow GxE genes ( $\approx$   
323  $1.47 \overline{FPKM} \times 10^{-3}$ ).

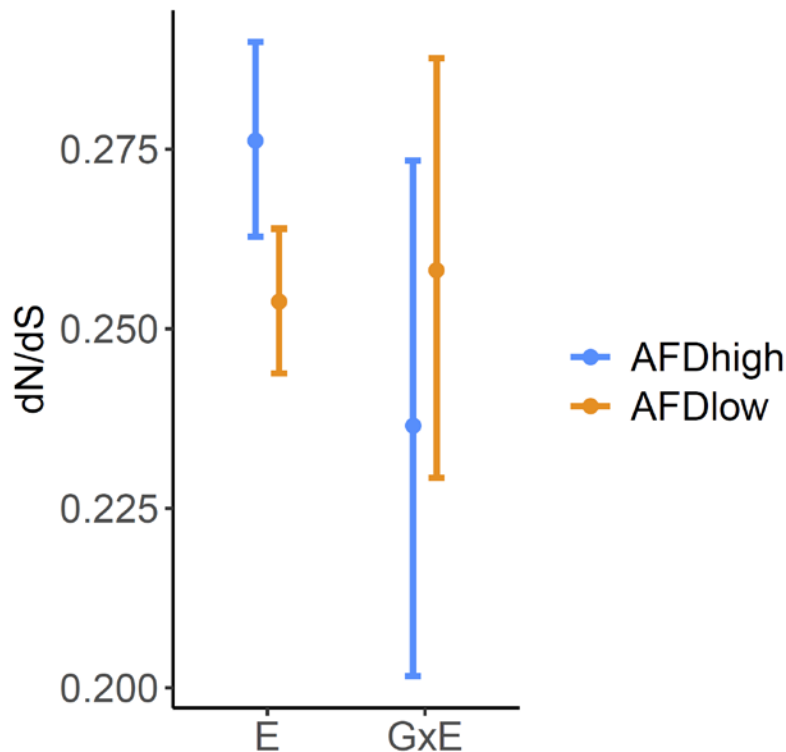
324

325 E genes with high AFD SNPs showed a mean  $\overline{FPKM} \times 10^{-3}$  of  $\approx 1$  across all conditions and  
326 ecotypes, while E genes with low AFD showed an  $\overline{FPKM} \times 10^{-3}$  significantly higher than 1



327 (Figures 4a-4b). The opposite trend was seen across GxE genes. GxE genes with low AFD SNPs  
328 showed significantly lower expression ( $\approx 1.47 \overline{FPKM} \times 10^{-3}$ ) across the two conditions and  
329 ecotypes, than GxE genes with high AFD SNPs ( $\approx 2.13 \overline{FPKM} \times 10^{-3}$ ) (Figures 4c-4d). In  
330 association with the levels of expression we observed a change in patterns of selective  
331 constraint/purifying selection along protein coding genes. As shown in Figure 5, E genes that  
332 contained high AFD SNPs, and were expressed at lower levels than AFDlow E genes, also  
333 showed a higher dN/dS, which translates to lower levels of purifying selection. On the other  
334 hand, AFDhigh GxE genes showed higher expression than AFDlow GxE genes, and a lower  
335 dN/dS (Figure 5).

336



337

338 **Figure 5.** Patterns of purifying selection differed significantly between GxE and E genes that  
339 showed different levels of allele frequency divergence (AFD) at nonsynonymous sites/cis-

340 regulatory sites. E genes with high AFD SNPs (AFD<sub>high</sub>) showed significantly lower purifying  
341 selection (higher dN/dS) at nonsynonymous sites, than E genes with low AFD SNPs (AFD<sub>low</sub>)  
342 and GxE genes with high AFD SNPs (AFD<sub>high</sub>). GxE genes with high AFD SNPs also showed  
343 a lower dN/dS than GxE genes with low AFD SNPs. These patterns of dN/dS seem to correlate  
344 with the level of expression associated with these genes (Figure 4). The ration dN/dS was  
345 estimated using pairs of *A. thaliana* and *A. halleri* orthologous genes.

346

### 347 *Significant evidence linking GxE genes to recent selection and genetic tradeoffs*

348 So far, we have showed that GxE genes showed significantly higher genetic differentiation than  
349 E genes at both cis-regulatory and nonsynonymous sites, in addition to higher levels of  
350 expression and purifying selection (Figures 2-5). To examine the association of E and GxE genes  
351 to fitness variation of Italy and Sweden genotypes at native sites, we used a set of 20 fitness QTL  
352 that were previously assembled into six genetic trade-off QTL that spanned ~18.6 Mbs of the  
353 genome (Ågren, et al. 2013). More specifically, we examined the distribution of genes showing  
354 high allele frequency differentiation (AFD) and linkage disequilibrium (LD) along genetic  
355 tradeoff QTL.

356

357 As shown in Table 1, in most instances the proportion of E genes withing genetic-tradeoff QTL  
358 was significantly higher than the genome-wide proportion; even when not filtering for high AFD  
359 and LD. On the other hand, GxE genes did not show any significant enrichment when not  
360 filtering for a high LD (Table 1). On the other hand, when we filtered for a high AFD (>0.60)  
361 and LD (>0.19, 0.32) (0.32 represents the 99<sup>th</sup> percentile of the genome wide distribution of LD)  
362 the proportion of GxE genes along genetic-tradeoff QTL was significantly higher than the  
363 genome-wide proportion and the proportion of E genes satisfying these criteria (Table 1). In

364 addition to examining the proportions along the six genetic tradeoff QTL, we also examined the  
 365 proportions of these genes within 100kb of fitness QTL peaks (Table S1). The only significant  
 366 enrichment was observed when examining the proportion of GxE genes with a high AFD (>0.60)  
 367 and LD (>0.32) (Table S1). This proportion was significantly higher than the genome-wide set of  
 368 genes, and E genes (Table S1).

369

370 **TABLE 1.** Comparing the proportion E and GxE genes exhibiting different signatures of local  
 371 adaptation and selection, and found within six genetic tradeoff (GT) QTL peaks explaining  
 372 fitness variation between Italy and Sweden populations (Ågren, et al. 2013). The table splits a set  
 373 of genome-wide, E, and GxE genes according to their location along GT QTL and signatures of  
 374 selection (AFD: Allele frequency divergence & LD: Linkage disequilibrium). The odd ratios  
 375 depicted are derived by comparing the proportion of E/GxE genes to the genome-wide set of  
 376 genes. A significantly higher proportion relative to the genome-wide set is indicated by a \*, and  
 377 significantly higher proportion when comparing E and GxE genes is indicated by a †.  
 378 Comparison of proportions was done using a fisher’s one-tail test (p-val<0.05) implemented in R  
 379 (“fisher.test”).

	NON-QTL			GT-QTL			E (Odds- ratio)	GxE (Odds ratio)
	Genome- wide	E	GxE	Genome- wide	E	GxE		
No filtering	24253	2166	305	5725	624	74	1.22*†	1.03
AFD>0.60	9082	734	128	2343	246	31	1.30*†	0.94
AFD>0.60 & LD>0.19	1209	105	11	419	49	11	1.35*	2.88*†
AFD>0.60 & LD>0.32	192	22	0	71	9	6	1.10	Inf*†

380

381

382 To identify potential candidates underlying genetic tradeoffs, we chose GxE genes with cis-  
 383 regulatory/nonsynonymous SNPs with high AFD (>0.60) and LD (>0.19) (Table 2). As shown in  
 384 Table 2, GxE genes within genetic tradeoff QTL showed twice the expression levels than GxE  
 385 genes outside the QTL. Two of these genes (AT2G35050, *FLDH*) were previously identified as  
 386 candidate genes (Price, et al. 2018; Price, et al. 2020) and four of the genes (AT2G35050,  
 387 AT3G56408, AT4G33180, AT5G65860) have no known function. The rest of the genes have  
 388 been associated with some very interesting biological processes, such as shade avoidance, light-  
 389 dependent cold tolerance, drought and freezing tolerance, and response to hypoxia (Table 2).  
 390 *COL7* which is located within genetic tradeoff QTL 1:3, is also located within a high confidence  
 391 flowering time QTL (Chr1: 27.4-29.1 Mb) where the Sweden genotype showed significantly  
 392 longer flowering time than the Italy genotype in Italy (Ågren, et al. 2017). As shown in the  
 393 rooted *COL7* tree (Figure S2) Eurasian accessions with a similar sequence at the Swedish  
 394 genotype flower significantly later, than accessions with sequences as the Italy genotype.

395

396 **TABLE 2.** Genes showing significant genetic differentiation (AFD>0.60) and linkage  
 397 disequilibrium (LD>0.19,0.32) along genetic tradeoff (GT) QTL (ID's shown from Ågren, et al.  
 398 2013). Shown is also the mean expression ( $\overline{FPKM} \times 10^{-3}$ ) of these genes under control (Ct. – 22  
 399 °C) and cold acclimation conditions (Cl.- 4 °C). † indicates genes with cis-reg./nonsyn. SNPs  
 400 with an AFD>0.60 and LD>0.32). The Biological process were taken from the TAIR database  
 401 (Berardini, et al. 2015).

Gene ID's (common names)	GT QTL ID	Italy		Sweden		Biological processes
		Ct.	Cl.	Ct.	Cl.	

AT1G73870 (COL7)	1:3	0.85	1.42	0.88	0.63	positive regulation of transcription, secondary shoot formation, shade avoidance
AT2G35050 †	2:2	3.00	1.41	2.71	2.03	Unknown
AT2G36530 (LOS2)	2:2	6.22	23.55	8.40	18.84	Involved in light-dependent cold tolerance, glycolytic process, response to abscisic acid, cadmium ion, cold, light stimulus
AT2G36580	2:2	0.94	2.54	1.24	1.70	cellular response to hypoxia, glycolytic process
AT2G36830 (GAMMA-TIP) †	2:2	2.16	1.48	2.22	0.50	Response to salt stress, gibberellic acid mediated signaling pathway, hydrogen peroxide, urea, and water transport
AT3G56408	3:3	0.44	0.22	0.15	0.22	Unknown
AT4G33180 †	4:2	0.16	0.07	0.14	0.19	Unknown
AT4G33360 (FLDH) †	4:2	0.37	0.42	0.06	0.02	farnesol metabolic process, negative regulation of abscisic acid-activated signaling pathway
AT4G33470 (HDA14) †	4:2	0.86	0.60	0.48	0.55	negative responses to salinity stress, tubulin deacetylation
AT5G62530 (P5CDH) †	5:5	0.66	1.45	1.05	1.01	Drought and freezing tolerance, proline catabolic process to glutamate, reactive oxygen species metabolic process, response to salt stress
AT5G65860	5:5	0.15	0.42	0.22	0.31	Unknown
	QTL	1.44	3.05	1.60	2.36	
	NON - QTL	0.6	1.03	0.44	1.06	

402

403

404 *No evidence linking large decreases in mean expression of cold-induced and CBF pathway*

405 *genes do adaptation in warm climates*

406 Mean expression of high AFD and LD (AFD>0.60 & LD>0.19) GxE genes that showed

407 significant enrichment along genetic tradeoff QLT did not show significant difference in mean

408 expression (Table 1), as reflected in Figure 4c. The filtering for high LD maybe linked to

409 instances of genetic tradeoffs but removes instances conditional neutrality where linkage  
410 disequilibrium is expected to be weaker but nonetheless higher than the neutral expectation. To  
411 test whether conditional neutrality is linked to the lower expression of some GxE genes in Italy  
412 (Figure 4c), we removed the genes in Table 2 from the set of high AFD GxE genes, and tested  
413 whether there was a significant difference in LD between 89 genes where Italy plants showed  
414 lower expression than Sweden plants under cold, and the rest of the 48 genes. Mean LD of these  
415 sets of genes was approximately the same (LD ~0.09), and not significantly different than the  
416 genome average (LD ~0.06), at cis-regulatory and nonsynonymous SNPs of LD<0.19. In  
417 addition to just choosing genes with a lower expression in Italy, we also looked at LD across  
418 genes where Italy plants showed lower or equal to half the expression of Sweden plants under  
419 cold. This resulted in 21 (out of the 89) genes, that also showed approximately the same LD  
420 (~0.09).

421

422 To further examine the possible role of the CBF pathway in causing genetic-tradeoffs we  
423 examined the proportion of CBF-regulon genes with high AFD, or high AFD and LD, cis-  
424 regulatory/nonsynonymous SNPs within genetic tradeoff QTL (Table S2). Relative to the  
425 genome-wide set of genes none of the categories examined showed a significant enrichment  
426 along the QTL (Table S2). In addition to CBF-regulon genes, we also examined whether the  
427 genomic region that included the three CBF transcription factors (CBF1-3), showed any genetic  
428 differentiation. Using a sliding-window approach we examined the proportion of high AFD  
429 (>0.60) SNPs along these genes (Figure S3). The proportion of high AFD SNPs across these  
430 genes was below the genome average (Figure S3). Under the assumption of genetic-tradeoffs we  
431 would expect these regions to show a significant increase in allele frequency differentiation

432 (Tiffin and Ross-Ibarra 2014). Furthermore, we did not find any significant evidence for recent  
433 selection, since 19 cis-regulatory (no nonsynonymous SNPs) SNPs of the three CBF genes  
434 showed a very low mean LD ( $\sim 0.05$ ).

435

## 436 *Discussion*

437 The current study re-examines the link between genome-wide sequence and expression variation  
438 to fitness variation of Arabidopsis populations showing significant evidence of local adaptation  
439 in their native environments (Ågren and Schemske 2012; Ågren, et al. 2013). The enrichment of  
440 genes showing a main effect in environment (E) along the low-resolution fitness QTL, in  
441 combination with the even higher enrichment of GxE genes showing significant genetic  
442 differentiation and linkage disequilibrium, suggest that plastic responses play an important role  
443 in adaptation. More specifically, E genes may represent regulon of genes that are necessary for  
444 facing common environmental challenges, while GxE genes represent instances of loci that  
445 underwent divergent evolution to adapt to extreme environmental differences. Furthermore, our  
446 results suggest that local adaptation occurs through highly expressed and selectively constraint  
447 genes. Finally, we find no significant evidence linking significantly lower expression of the  
448 CBF-pathway, to adaptation to warmer climates.

449

450 Local adaptation is expected to cause allele frequency differentiation (AFD) between  
451 populations; especially in the case of genetic tradeoffs (Tiffin and Ross-Ibarra 2014).  
452 Furthermore, if local adaptation is recent, loci should also exhibit high linkage disequilibrium  
453 (LD) (Nosil, et al. 2009). The importance of these signatures were shown in a previous  
454 Arabidopsis study (Price, et al. 2020), where we found that high AFD and LD SNPs were

455 enriched along fitness QTL, and genes involved in life-history traits that are thought to play a  
456 major role in local adaptation; such as flowering time. One of these genes (*PIF3*) showed  
457 significant evidence of local adaptation in an evolutionary distant species of tree (*Populus*  
458 *balsamifera* L.) (Keller, et al. 2012). In the current study, we find that expression GxE genes  
459 with high AFD and LD SNPs are significantly enriched along individual fitness QTL and paired  
460 genetic tradeoff QTL, providing strong evidence for their possible role in local adaptation.  
461 Candidate GxE genes were tied to interesting biological processes such as: flowering time, light-  
462 dependent cold acclimation, freezing tolerance, and response to hypoxia.  
463  
464 Our final set of GxE genes with high AFD and LD did not show any significant differences in  
465 mean expression between Italy and Sweden (Table 2). On the other hand, high AFD GxE genes  
466 with lower LD ( $LD < 0.19$ ) showed large decreases in mean expression under cold in Italy plants  
467 (Figure 4C). These genes, however, did not show any enrichment along genetic-tradeoff QTL,  
468 and significant increases in LD. Some of the factors that may contribute to this observation, are  
469 that some of these expression interactions are neutral/nearly-neutral, or they involve adaptive  
470 mutations of small effect size (Yeaman 2015; Hoban, et al. 2016; Forester, et al. 2018; Mee and  
471 Yeaman 2019).  
472  
473 Among the set of genes showing no significant evidence of local adaptation were the tree  
474 freezing tolerance CBF transcription factors and CBF-regulon genes exhibiting GxE interactions.  
475 Among the GxE-CBF-regulon genes with cis-regulatory/nonsynonymous SNPs (51/53), only  
476 20% contained high AFD SNPs ( $> 0.60$ ), which is similar to the proportion observed by E genes  
477 (Figure 2a). Furthermore, high AFD and/or LD GxE-CBF-regulon genes did not show significant



478 enrichment along genetic-tradeoff QTL (Table S2). Finally, we did not find any significant  
479 evidence of local adaptation (i.e., in AFD and/or LD) along the three CBF transcription factors,  
480 supporting evidence that lower expression of these genes in warmer climates is under relaxed  
481 (Zhen and Ungerer 2008b; Zhen, et al. 2011) and not positive selection (Monroe, et al. 2016). It  
482 will be quite surprising if there is a unique genomic signature of adaptation underlying the three  
483 CBF genes, since high AFD and LD SNPs were enriched along the same genetic tradeoff QTL  
484 (GT QTL 4:2) but in a different region (Price, et al. 2020).

485  
486 Interestingly, we find that GxE genes showing evidence of adaptation, show high expression and  
487 selective constraint/purifying selection—a pattern observed in other species (Wollenberg Valero,  
488 et al. 2014; Maddamsetti, et al. 2017; Boissot, et al. 2020). An interesting hypothesis that could  
489 be tested in future studies using Crispr-Cas9 technology (Cong, et al. 2013), is whether the effect  
490 size of candidate adaptive variation is positively correlated with levels of expression and  
491 selective constraint. This is partially supported by our study, since genes underlying the small  
492 number of high effect size QTL (Table 2) show higher mean expression than other genes.  
493 Unfortunately, we could not compare selective constraint between genes in Table 2 and the  
494 genome average given the very small sample of genes (n=9) with orthologs in *A. halleri*.

495  
496 In conclusion, our study shows how genomic signatures of local adaptation, recent selection, and  
497 selective constraint, are linked to expression and fitness variation between Italy and Sweden  
498 ecotypes. Temperature is one of the environmental variables that may underlie local adaptation  
499 underlying *Arabidopsis* populations, therefore, examining more variables (e.g., precipitation  
500 (Postma, et al. 2016; Exposito-Alonso, et al. 2018; Monroe, et al. 2018)) may help us further

501 understand the genetic architecture of local adaptation (Dittmar, et al. 2016) and the selection  
502 forces underlying it.

503

504

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