

Innovative Tools and Strategies for Optimizing Yeast Cell Factories

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30 Abstract

Metabolic engineering aims to develop efficient microbial cell factories that can produce a wide 31 32 variety of valuable compounds, ideally at the highest yield and from various feedstocks. In this review, we summarize recent developments in metabolic engineering approaches to tailor 33 different yeast cell factories. In particular, we highlight the most timely and cutting-edge 34 molecular tools and strategies for biosynthetic pathways optimization (including genome 35 editing tools), combinatorial transcriptional and post-transcriptional engineering (cis/trans 36 regulators), dynamic control of metabolic fluxes (e.g. rewiring of primary metabolism), and 37 38 spatial reconfiguration of metabolic pathways. Finally, we discuss some challenges and perspectives for the adaptive laboratory evolution of yeast to advance metabolic engineering in 39 40 microbial cell factories.

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44 Towards the ideal yeast cell factory: from rational design to adaptive laboratory 45 evolution

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Medicinal **natural products (NPs)** (see Glossary) suffer from recurrent shortages, mainly due 47 to the overexploitation of their sources (https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/14/health/cancer-48 drug-shortage.html) [1-3]. While the well-known and long-established uses of synthetic 49 chemistry (SC) allow producing many NPs and their derivatives, at large scales, some 50 compounds such as plant-derived NPs (monoterpene indole alkaloids or MIAs, 51 benzylisoquinoline alkaloids or BIAs, etc.) and mammal derived NPs (such as hormones and 52 neurotransmitters) are too complex to be synthesized by SC alone at an industrial scale 53 because of asymmetric carbons, long multi-step biosynthetic pathways, and other factors [3-54 6]. Although recent progress now allows very complex NPs such as vitamin B₁₂ [7] or 55 strictosidine [8] to be produced synthetically, chemical synthesis is not always the most 56 suitable approach in terms of ecological impact and cost efficiency. Therefore, alternative 57 strategies have been considered to produce these NPs in greater quantities, such as using 58

recombinant microorganisms (Fig. 1, Key Figure). Microorganisms such as yeast have evolved 59 to maintain constant metabolic homeostasis regardless of rapidly changing environmental 60 conditions, so intensively rewiring their metabolism is essential for bioproduction of NPs with 61 high titer, rate, and yield (TRY) at scale [5, 6]. Several examples of successful 62 heterogeneous biosynthesis of mammalian and plant NPs exist (such as progesterone [9], 63 hydrocortisone [10, 11], artemisinic acid [12–14], resveratrol [15], strictosidine [2, 16], and (S)-64 65 reticuline [17]), but only a few have reached industrial-scale production. For instance, the commercialization of artemisinic acid biosynthesis (a precursor of antimalarial artemisinin), 66 produced at high levels by Saccharomyces cerevisiae, did not persist due to poor market 67 demand [14]. In contrast, the major mammal anti-inflammatory hormone hydrocortisone is 68 synthesized by S. cerevisiae [10, 11], which is still the main hydrocortisone producer. 69 However, many NPs, particularly highly valuable plant pharmaceuticals (such as anticancer 70 vinblastine and vincristine, or opioids) still cannot be produced by recombinant microorganisms 71 efficiently due to multiple limitations [1-6], which will be discussed in this review. Recently, 72 metabolic engineering (ME), which aims to rewire cellular metabolism, has empowered and 73 accelerated the development of yeast cell factories (YCFs) by enhancing the TRY of the bio-74 produced target compounds, broadening the spectrum of these compounds (e.g., taxol, 75 76 opioids), increasing the range of substrates (e.g., xylose, arabinose), and enhancing strain physiological properties (e.g., global fitness, stress tolerance) [2-6]. In particular, baker's yeast 77 78 (Saccharomyces cerevisiae), as well as some non-conventional yeasts with specific features of interest, such as high secretion ability or lipophilic compounds accumulation (including 79 Pichia pastoris and Yarrowia lipolytica [18, 19]), generally regarded as safe (GRAS) and robust 80 microorganisms, have their genome entirely known and easy to manipulate. In recent 81 82 decades, remarkable progress has been made in the field of molecular and cell biology of yeast, due to the rapid development of genome sequencing, cell engineering and synthetic 83 **biology (SB)** [3–6]. However, many limiting factors remain that make genome manipulation 84

and the construction of YCFs inefficient and time-consuming [5, 6]. Indeed, creating YCFs 85 commonly implies the integration of complex biosynthetic pathways, which requires the high-86 fidelity assembly of long DNA fragments and sophisticated genome editing tools [18, 20, 21]. 87 Novel strategies and approaches are continuously developing to facilitate multiplex marker-88 free genomic integration, DNA assembly and transformation efficiency [4-6, 20, 22]. 89 Additionally, integrating heterologous pathways in yeast generally involves fine-tuning gene 90 91 expression, which has been limited by the availability of characterized native gene regulatory elements, because they are lengthy and unable to cover the required range of the expression 92 strength [23-25]. Multiple approaches aiming at optimizing and extending transcription 93 regulation [26, 27] are still constantly evolving to further broaden the assortment of regulatory 94 elements and overcome their limitations. Moreover, the overexpression of heterologous 95 biosynthetic pathways is frequently responsible for massive stress affecting global cell fitness, 96 which includes the accumulation of toxic intermediates, carbon source competition, and a loss 97 of reducing power (i.e. oxidative stress, and/or unbalanced/competitive use of cofactors) [5, 6, 98 22]. In particular, developing an industrial bioprocess based on YCFs compatible with 99 commercial purposes, with a maximal product TRY and optimal metabolic fluxes of the 100 multiple integrated genes, demands precise control and balance and remains a key goal for 101 102 already-established recombinant strains [28, 29].

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Furthermore, enzyme and substrate differential subcellular localization [30–32], enzymatic promiscuity, and pathway lateral branches generally decrease substrate availability and metabolic fluxes by hijacking biosynthetic intermediates [33, 34]. As such, formal strategies are also required to redesign metabolic pathways in yeast. This comprehensive review provides an integrative and clear view of the most recent and innovative molecular tools and approaches dedicated to the implementation and improvement of YCFs for the bioproduction of valuable molecules. It will especially emphasize specific challenges associated with already existing

111 methods, and discuss successful examples that highlight the latest tools and advances, and 112 future perspectives.

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114 Genome editing tools

In yeast genome editing, homologous recombination and cre/lox-mediated integration have 115 116 largely been replaced by the CRISPR/Cas9 system, which is still continuously improving to facilitate and accelerate DNA assembly and genome manipulation [18, 21]. Particularly 117 laborious was the assembly of large template DNA (multiple expression cassettes), which is 118 now generally realized in vivo via overlapping single-stranded oligonucleotides and 119 homologous recombination (HR), the technique described as DNA assembler [35]. It bypasses 120 121 multistep and multi plasmid cloning and was successfully employed in an assembly of up to 122 eight-gene biosynthetic pathways in *S. cerevisiae* with the efficiency being inversely correlated to the number of genes [35]. Another limiting factor consisted of multiplex genomic integration, 123 which requires multiple gRNAs. Recently, several novel approaches were developed, aimed to 124 perform multisite targeting and exploiting the simultaneous expression of numerous gRNA 125 using Cas9-expressing yeast strains or all-in-one plasmids (Fig. 2A). For instance, in the 126 CasEMBLR method (Cas9-facilitated multi loci integration of assembled DNA parts into S. 127 128 cerevisiae chromosomes, in combination with DNA assembler techniques), DNA fragments are amplified by PCR to contain homologous overhangs for further in vivo assembly, and 129 marker-free integration was reported to be successful into up to five sites with 50-100% 130 efficiency, which implies both gRNAs-expressing plasmid and Cas9-expressing yeast strain 131 [36, 37]. All-in-one plasmids, such as gRNAs-Cas9 co-expressing vectors with an inducible 132 promoter for Cas9 (also available in constitutive version), enable dissociating cloning from 133 genome editing by yeast pre-transformation with all CRISPR/Cas9 components prior to the 134 introduction of template DNA [38]. Time-effectively, the all-in-one plasmids contain a universal 135 gRNA expression cassette, and the introduction of an appropriate gRNA targeting sequence 136

upon plasmid recircularization takes place in vivo in yeast via HR [38]. However, the 137 conventional expression and delivery of multiple gRNAs are delicate, either an individual 138 expression cassette is required for each gRNA, or a common transcript is generated and 139 further cleaved via various strategies into individual gRNAs [39]. Both approaches are limited 140 by the number of gRNAs expressed in the system and the processing efficiency. Recently, 141 alternative strategies were reported. In the GTR-CRISPR (Fig. 2B) (tandem gRNA-tRNA array 142 143 for CRISPR/Cas9) the use of a gRNA-tRNA array within the Cas9-expressing plasmid, and exploiting the endogenous tRNA-processing system, which precisely cleaves the precursor of 144 tRNA and enables the release of single gRNAs from the common gRNA-tRNA transcript. 145 resulted in the simultaneous disruption of 8 genes in S. cerevisiae with 87% efficiency [40]. 146 147 Moreover, Lightning GTR-CRISPR, an *E.coli*-free Golden Gate cloning system [41] compatible version can be employed (the Golden Gate reaction is directly transformed into 148 149 yeast), which was shown to result in 96% and 60% efficiency of correct editing, illustrated through the disruption of four and six genes, respectively [40]. Alternatively, a plasmid-free 150 gRNA delivery method gRNA- Transient Expression System (TES) was described, where 151 gRNA-encoding PCR fragments, composed of the promoter, guiding sequence and gRNA 152 scaffold (two gRNAs are required to cleave both sides of the targeted region), are transformed 153 154 together with template DNA into Cas9-expressing S. cerevisiae strain, which resulted in the substitution of different sized regions of S. cerevisiae chromosome 4 by template DNA with 67-155 156 100% efficiency [42].

In parallel, the CRISPR/Cas9 system has been explored to enhance the efficiency of its components (**Fig. 2B**). In this context Cpf1 (CRISPR from Prevotella and Francisella 1), a family of class 2/type V CRISPR bacterial endonucleases was found to display several advantages compared to Cas9. For instance, Cpf1 generates sticky ends instead of blunt ends upon DNA cleavage [42], which potentially facilitates template DNA integration. Moreover, Cfp1 possesses both RNAase and DNAse activities and does not need RNAse III, which

results in the requirement of only crispr RNA (crRNA) instead of a longer complex of *trans*activating crispr RNA (tracrRNA) and crRNA [43, 44]. Thus, *S. cerevisiae* strain producing patchoulol was generated using self-cloning Cpf1-crRNA co-expressing plasmid, where singleplex and triplex genomic integrations of *in vivo* assembled template DNA were achieved with 80% and 32% of efficiency, respectively [45].

In addition, dCas9-mediated Target-AID (Activation Induced cytidine Deaminase from 168 vertebrate), a synthetic hybrid complex that performs highly efficient C to G and C to T 169 mutations, was successfully used in high throughput loss of function screens [46], which is an 170 appealing application to screen for yeast *de novo* features. On the other hand, the σ 171 172 sequences, which are a family of repetitive DNA sequences (at least 100 copies) in the S. 173 cerevisiae genome [47], were used together with the CRISPR/Cas9 system in a novel method of genome shuffling [48]. Cas9, guided by the gRNA targeting the σ sequences, cleaves DNA 174 175 at multiple sites, thus promoting endogenous DNA repair and mutagenesis [49], which can lead to the improvement of yeast characteristics when cultivated under specific conditions (e.g. 176 thermotolerant S. cerevisiae obtained under high-temperature conditions [48]). These 177 approaches demonstrate the application of the CRISPR/Cas9 system beyond gene 178 integration, notably useful in **adaptive laboratory evolution (ALE)**, which will be presented in 179 180 the last section of this review.

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182 Transcriptional ("cis") and post-transcriptional ("trans") regulator toolboxes

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Alteration and regulation of gene expression at the transcriptional level via promoter and terminator elements have been unceasingly considered as a powerful approach. Previously characterized long native elements were initially employed (*S. cerevisiae* p*TEF1*, p*GAL1-10*, t*CYC1*, t*ADH1*, etc) [23–25], which, however, pointed out an extensive necessity of development of novel synthetic units, more compact and functionally diversified. Indeed, the

integration of complex multigenic heterologous pathways in yeast mobilizes a promoter and a 189 terminator for each gene, which considerably extends template DNA length, increases the risk 190 of self-recombination, as well as generally demands optimization of gene expression. To 191 address these issues, several regulatory sequence libraries were recently constructed and 192 investigated (Fig. 3A). For instance, a library of short 69-bp semi-synthetic promoters, 193 covering an 8.0-fold expression range, was generated from the determined minimal length of 194 S. cerevisiae native pTEF1 [51] (Fig. 3A1). Moreover, the use of upstream activating 195 sequences (UAS) expanded the library to reach a 20-fold expression range and a maximal 196 length of 130 bp. Importantly, some of the pTEF1 variants demonstrated expression strength 197 198 comparable to native pTEF1 and pPGK1. Another library of Y. lipolytica semi-synthetic promoters was generated, also based on the promoter core region between the TATA-box and 199 the transcriptional starting site (TSS) upstream the 5' untranslated region (5'UTR) sequence 200 201 [51] (Fig. 3A2). Artificial sequences of 30 bp in length were designed (various combinations of T-rich and G/C-rich fragments) and substituted in Y. lipolytica strong native pEXP1 and pGDP 202 to assess expression levels of crtY enzyme and, consequently, conversion of lycopene to β-203 carotene. The results demonstrated a population of novel Y. lipolytica promoters showing an 204 205 up to a 5.5-fold increase in lycopene conversion. On the other hand, the impact of 10-bp 206 terminator linker 1 (the sequence between the efficiency element and the positioning element) 207 on gene expression was investigated via synthetic terminator library in S. cerevisiae [52] (Fig. 208 **3A3).** A 6.0-fold expression range was achieved and it was demonstrated that sequences with 209 low GC content and enriched in T were conferring higher levels of expression.

In addition to constitutive regulation of gene expression, **metabolic biosensors** play a central role in metabolic rewiring and the optimization of productivity in YCFs. For instance, **Metabolite responsive allosteric transcription factors (aTFs or MRTFs)** from bacteria interact with their corresponding metabolites prior to acting as repressors or activators of transcription [53]. To alter transcription, MRTFs bind promoter-specific sequences and,

215 therefore, restrict or facilitate the access to RNA polymerase [53]. Thus, MRTFs enable dynamic control of heterologous gene expression and, consequently, regulate metabolic 216 activity. However, the engineering of MRTFs in eukaryotic cells remains more than 217 challenging. Recently, a novel strategy has been reported and aimed to generate user-defined 218 biosensors via evolution-guided toggled selection (directed biosensor evolution and library 219 construction, followed by the selection of mutants via alternating conditions according to the 220 221 set criteria), based on the mutagenesis of aTF effector binding domain (EBD) and Fluorescence-Activated Cell Sorting (FACS)-mediated selection [54] (Fig. 3B1). Thus, a 222 variety of *de novo* features were identified, such as inversion of function and change of 223 224 specificity, as well as modification of dynamic and operational range. Another approach focused on the optimization of biosensor reporter promoters in a binding site-dependent 225 manner [55] (Fig. 3B2). The constructed synthetic promoter libraries (from native pTEF1 and 226 truncated pCYC1) covered all the possible positions for introducing aTFs binding site within 227 promoter core region, which resulted in the identification of function-related positions for most 228 of the screened repressor or activator type aTFs [55]. The complementary aspect of gene 229 expression regulation via promoters is related to the carbon source of yeast metabolism. Given 230 that multiple commonly used native promoters are associated with glycolytic genes and are 231 232 less effective under glucose starvation [25], novel promoters, activated upon diauxic shift, are 233 required to maintain constitutive gene expression (or to disassociate growth from production if 234 required). Recently, carbon source response elements (CSRE) of gluconeogenic promoters 235 were introduced upstream UAS of S. cerevisiae pTDH3, substituting the binding site of glycolytic genes transcriptional activator Gcr1 and surrounding neutral sequence [56] (Fig. 236 237 **3C**). This approach demonstrated strong induction of reporter Yellow Fluorescent Protein 238 (YFP) in the low-glucose medium instead of a glucose-rich medium, which was validated in a vanillin- β -glucoside-producing yeast strain. Indeed, when glycolytic promoters were employed, 239 the production of vanillin-β-glucoside took place mostly during the ethanol phase leading to the 240

241 accumulation of the cytotoxic intermediate protocatechuic acid (PCA). The use of generated 242 gluconeogenic promoters to control the expression of enzymes converting PCA to vanillin- β -243 glucoside showed an enhanced yeast growth, lower accumulation of PCA, and conserved 244 vanillin- β -glucoside bioconversion [56]. Taken together, these advances are broadening the 245 collection of available gene regulation elements and deliver compelling guidance to 246 combinatorial approaches for metabolic rewiring in YCF.

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248 Rewiring of primary metabolism

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250 The strategies to enhance TRY imply the optimization of host primary metabolism, which includes the modification of native metabolic fluxes and coupling/decoupling growth with 251 production. Sufficient availability of the NADPH cofactor, required by numerous enzymes, in 252 253 some cases (excluding, for instance, hydrocortisone biosynthesis [10]) stands as a limiting factor (e.g. S. cerevisiae 3-hydroxy-3-methylglutaryl-CoA reductase Hmg1, S. cerevisiae 254 squalene synthase Erg9 etc) [57, 58], given that glucose is dispatched in both glycolysis and 255 pentose phosphate pathway (PPP) upon consumption [59]. Several successful approaches 256 have been implemented to enhance NADPH (re)generation (Fig. 4A) and, therefore, 257 258 heterologous/homologous production. For instance, a number of S. cerevisiae genes involved 259 in NADPH synthesis were deleted or overexpressed to assess the effect on NADPH 260 concentration in the cytosol and heterologous protopanaxadiol (PPD) production from 261 endogenous squalene [57]. In the best performing PPD-producing S. cerevisiae strain, the 262 deletion of NADH-generating ALD2 and overexpression of NADPH-generating ALD6 aldehyde dehydrogenases-encoding genes, involved in ethanol metabolism, resulted in a 1.3-fold 263 264 increase of NADPH cytosolic concentration and a 4.5-fold increase in PPD production [57]. 265 Likewise, the positive effect of the overexpression of the Ald6-encoding gene was demonstrated in recombinant noscapine-producing S. cerevisiae [61]. The overexpression of 266

S. cerevisiae full-length mitochondrial or truncated cytoplasmic NADH kinase Pos5, which catalyzes NADPH-generating reactions, led to the 9.0-fold and 7.0-fold enhancement of homologous squalene production respectively [58]. Similarly, the overexpression of truncated cytoplasmic Pos5 in antibody fragment-expressing *P. pastoris* was shown to significantly increase the production of recombinant protein [61].

Another important cofactor in cellular metabolism is S-adenosylmethionine (SAM), which is a 272 273 donor of the methyl group upon methylation catalyzed by SAM-dependent methyltransferases (Mtases) [62]. Methylation, being required by a wide range of cellular processes, is used in 274 biotechnological approaches for the heterologous production of valuable methylated 275 276 compounds [63]. Engineering of SAM-dependent Mtases has been challenging, mostly due to the lack of efficiency and consistency. Recently, methylation was coupled to growth by 277 combining enhanced Mtase activity and cysteine biosynthesis [64] (Fig. 4B), which was 278 279 achieved via Mtase adaptive laboratory evolution in vivo and deletion of several S. cerevisiae genes. On the other hand, certain enzymes require specific chemical elements for their 280 formation and activity such as the bacterial xylonate dehydratase (XylD, involved in xylose 281 metabolism) that contains iron-sulfur (Fe-S) cluster [65]. Although S. cerevisiae Fe metabolism 282 was not reported to be limiting for bovine Fe-S adrenodoxin and hydrocortisone biosynthesis 283 284 [10], the folding and the activity of several bacterial Fe-S enzymes were reported to be 285 insufficient in yeast [66–68], still being a key concern in the functional expression of bacterial 286 Fe-S proteins. Recently, Fe metabolism of yeast cytosolic Fe-S cluster machinery was 287 modified to enhance Fe uptake, XyID generation, and 1,2,4-butanetriol production [65] (Fig. 288 **4C**). In the best performing recombinant *S. cerevisiae* strain, the overexpression of truncated Tyw1 protein (tTyw1), unable to bind and sequestrate Fe-S clusters, and the deletion of one of 289 290 the components of negative regulation of Fe uptake, resulted in 6.0-fold and 1.4-fold higher 291 XyID activity and 1,2,4-butanetriol production, respectively [65].

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293 Spatial reconfiguration strategies

The development of valuable compound-producing YCFs usually involves complex enzymatic 294 pathways, requiring specific physicochemical conditions, substrates and cofactors, potentially 295 affected by adverse side reactions or toxic intermediates [6, 20]. To meet these challenges, 296 several approaches based on the spatial rearrangement of the desired pathway(s) have 297 emerged, from the metabolic engineering of organelles (MEO) to the construction of artificial 298 metabolons [30-32]. Recently, successful artificial compartmentalization of the triterpene 299 biosynthetic pathway in the peroxisome of S. cerevisiae allowed producing a high 300 concentration of squalene (Fig. 5A) revealing this organelle as a promising site for the 301 302 biosynthesis and storage of terpene compounds [69]. In particular, the rapid and highly efficient protein import machinery of peroxisomes, along with their high plasticity (number and 303 size dynamically adjusted according to the physiological state of the cells), combined to a 304 305 channeling effect insured by the close vicinity of overexpressed heterologous biosynthetic enzymes, make this subcellular compartment an ideal target for improvement of YCFs. 306

Previously, the successful bioproduction of hydrocortisone in yeast elegantly showed the 307 flexibility of yeast in accommodating the relocalization of membrane-bound enzymes to a 308 309 different subcellular compartment, without affecting the final titer of hydrocortisone produced 310 [10, 11]. More recently, the successful artificial compartmentalization of isoprenoid 311 biosynthesis into the mitochondria was achieved (Fig. 5B), with an enhanced supply of acetyl-312 CoA and tricarboxylic acid cycle intermediates [70]. However, as mitochondrion is gathering 313 crowds of essential proteins involved in respiration, the compartmentalization of heterologous biosynthetic pathways in this organelle might be, in some cases, responsible for metabolic 314 315 stresses. In MEO, important physiological parameters such as the size and the biogenesis of 316 organelles can increase the physical space available for enzyme encapsulation and storage of metabolites [71–74]. For example, increasing the size of lipid droplets, by modulating 317 triacylglycerol metabolism, allowed a 1.25-fold increase in lycopene bio-production in a 318

recombinant strain of *S. cerevisiae*, correlated to the improved storage capacity of hydrophilic lycopene [74]. Similarly, the overexpression of a key ER size regulatory factor gene, *INO2*, allowed a significant increase of the surface of the ER [73], associated with a drastic augmentation of production of P450s [71-73], and lead to an 8-fold increase in PPD bioproduction, along with a 7.1-fold increase of protein secretion, emphasizing the crucial role of ER in protein synthesis and folding, to circumvent potential metabolic constraints [73, 75].

325 In parallel to MEO, another approach has emerged allowing the display of enzymes directly at the surface of the yeast cells (Fig. 5C) [76]. The cell surface engineering (CSE) approach 326 enables the generation of the whole cell catalysts to achieve the hydrolysis of numerous 327 328 substrates, including lignocellulosic biomass, consecutively converted by fermentation into a variety of valuable compounds such as ethanol and xylitol [31, 76–78]. In brief, CSE consists 329 of targeting heterologous enzymes to the cell wall, through the secretion pathway, to expose 330 331 their catalytic sites toward the extracellular environment. The enzymes can be displayed either individually or gathered in association with a protein-based scaffold to form the **cellulosome**, a 332 multi-enzymatic complex structure capable of accommodating up to 63 enzymes for the largest 333 one reported to date [31, 78]. One of the main challenges in CSE resides in controlling the 334 335 efficiency of the display, as well as the anchorage position of the target protein within the cell 336 wall. In the case of the bio-production of xylitol from lignocellulose by CSE, the uptake of 337 xylose across the membrane of the cells constitutes a critical point, as the bioconversion 338 reaction requires NADH and cannot be achieved at the surface of the cells [77, 79]. 339 Interestingly, the co-expression of a homologous maltose transporter (ScMal11) along with a 340 beta-glucosidase (AaBgl) degrading cello-oligosaccharides (e.g. cellobiose) on the cell surface of S. cerevisiae allowed to enhancing xylitol production from the co-utilization of 341 342 cellobiose/xylose contained in lignocellulose [80].

To prevent the accumulation of toxic/unstable intermediates as well as the loss of the desired intermediates, another interesting option has emerged based on the spatial (re)arrangement of

enzymes into artificial metabolon, ensuring substrate channeling for a continuous metabolic 345 flux within the YCF [32, 81]. Two main approaches enable constructing such artificial 346 metabolons: one consisting of a direct fusion of the enzymes to each other (protein linker), and 347 one relying on the interaction of enzymes with protein (or nucleic acid)-based scaffolds (Fig. 348 **5D**). While protein fusion is considered as the easiest way to enhance substrate channeling. 349 this approach may alter the structure of the enzymes and is always restricted to a very limited 350 351 (two to three) number of enzymes. Nevertheless, the over-expression of an engineered tridomain enzyme (CrtB, CrtI, CrtY) harboring the full β -carotene biosynthetic pathway lead to 352 an improved bio-production of the pigment in S. cerevisiae highlighting the potential of this 353 354 approach for the improvement of YCFs [81]. On another hand, artificial metabolon using protein-based scaffold technologies allows the gathering of several enzymes in close vicinity 355 through affinity binding, leading to significantly improved xylose utilization and resveratrol bio-356 357 production in *S. cerevisiae* and to decrease the accumulation of by-product xylitol [82].

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359 Adaptive laboratory evolution strategies

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Besides pathway engineering and metabolic flux rewiring approaches, the development of 361 362 robust YCFs is crucial for industrial application purposes, due to harsh culture conditions and 363 frequent limiting toxicity of intermediates and products [83, 84]. Adaptive laboratory evolution 364 (ALE) relies on yeast adaptation capacity allowed by multiple DNA recombination events and 365 high genomic plasticity, utterly difficult to achieve through the rational engineering approach 366 alone (Fig. 6A) [83]. For instance, ALE led to improved xylose utilization ability in S. cerevisiae 367 along with an enhanced isobutanol bioproduction due to point mutations in the CCR4 and TIF1 368 genes, and fine-tuning of gene expression in the evolved strain (Fig. 6B) [85]. Associated with high throughput screening methodologies [84, 86], ALE constitutes a powerful approach 369 allowing speeding up the conception of highly efficient recombinant YCFs (Fig. 6C-E). In 370

particular, ALE allows overcoming numerous physiological limitations (i.e. thermotolerance, 371 osmotic stress, low pH, toxicity, etc) [48, 84-92] as well as to complement the rational 372 engineering approaches presented in the above sections, and providing new targets for the 373 next round of rational design [64, 83-86, 92-102]. Noteworthily, the use of CRISPR/Cas9 374 system in combination with ALE approach enabled the generation of evolved YCF with 375 improved thermotolerance, as mentioned in the "Genome editing" section of this review [48]. 376 377 Other stricking studies, such as growth-coupling strategies associated to ALE, can be cited [64, 103]. In particular, when the production of the essential amino acid cysteine was tied to 378 the activity of methyltransferases. ALE was used to select for both E. coli and S. cerevisiae 379 380 strains with mutations leading to 2-fold increases in heterologous methyltransferase activity 381 [64]. In this study, adaptive mutations were forced to preferentially target the methyltransferase activity bottleneck which was limiting for growth-rate. This approach allowed to significantly 382 383 improve activity of both N- and O-type methyltransferases, as illustrated in the "Rewiring of primary metabolism" section of this review. 384

In addition, ALE virtually allows to improve the "Design, Build, Test, Learn" (DBTL) cycle 385 classically used in ME to generate YCFs (Fig. 6E), when performed in the continuity of the 386 "Build" step for rescuing/optimizing a strain with decreased fitness [83]. Nevertheless, given 387 388 that that evolution of the strains often drives the population towards a low-production high-389 fitness phenotype, which constitutes an important limitation of ALE, an extensive effort is still 390 required to overcome this problem [83-85, 103, 104]. In that sense, combining ALE with multi-391 omic technologies is emerging as the most promising and efficient approach in YCFs engineering [48, 64, 84, 86, 95, 102, 104, 105]. 392

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395 Concluding remarks: Future Challenges and Directions396

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398 Using synthetic biology to implement YCFs is a promising approach to produce very complex compounds (including vinblastine and vincristine, among many others) that are almost 399 impossible to produce by synthetic chemistry alone because of challenges like asymmetric 400 carbons. Although several molecular tools (e.g., halogenases) have been characterized in 401 marine bacteria and plants, reports on bioproduction of halogenated NPs in yeast is scarce 402 [106-108]. This kind of subtle modification (such as chlorination or fluorination) remains a 403 404 future challenge for engineering YCFs to generate new-to-nature compounds with high pharmaceutical interest (see Outstanding Questions) [1, 2, 106-109]. Recently, an indirect way 405 406 to obtain such compounds was reported, consisting of incorporating precursor derivatives (in 407 this case, halogenated tyrosine) to produce S-reticuline derivatives [60]. Another recent study elegantly showed the bioproduction of halogenated oxo-(2-aminophenyl) and guinoline 408 scaffolds in S. cerevisiae, by overexpressing regiospecific L-tryptophan halogenases [109]. 409 410 Therefore, SC is still indispensable to generate valuable fluorinated or chlorinated NPs derivatives, usually presenting much higher pharmacodynamic characteristics, and a larger 411 demand in drug industries. One example is dexamethasone, the fluorinated derivative of 412 hydrocortisone, which is 40 times more potent than hydrocortisone and far more stable in vivo. 413 414 In that sense, a strong complementarity between SB and SC exists, while SB is a highly 415 sustainable and ecological way to produce platform compounds, SC can be employed in 416 downstream fine-tuning and upstream precursor-directed yeast-mediated biosynthesis 417 (bioconversion, [110]). Despite some technical limitations, yeast cells represent a useful 418 eukaryotic tool suitable for the bio-production of valuable and complex molecules. Meanwhile, 419 constant progress in SB has accelerated the industrial applications of YCFs [1-6]. Besides 420 model yeasts such as S. cerevisiae, several non-conventional chassis present increasing 421 interest in ME applications due to their unique features [18, 19]. While SC has made huge progress in recent years, including the recent syntheses of molecules as complex as Vitamin 422 B₁₂ [7] or strictosidine [8], tailoring ideal YCFs that can produce large-scale NPs as well as 423

their derivatives is essential to establish next-generation bio-foundries as cost- and time-424 efficient alternatives. Such progress in the field of SB will constitute an invaluable chance to 425 further achieving a better and more sustainable future, in agreement with the Sustainable 426 427 Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/). The coming 428 decade is undoubtedly going to be full of exciting improvements in the YCF technology, 429 430 leading to the ultimate convergence of SC and SB: the production of a truly infinite palette of complex molecules. 431

432

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450 Figure Legends

Figure 1. Key Figure: Comprehensive overview of cutting-edge molecular tools and 451 strategies to implement the ideal yeast cell factory (YCF). This figure illustrates various 452 synthetic biology tools that are employed for the YCF construction and optimization (grey 453 arrows). such as advanced genome editing tools, transcriptional ("cis") and post-transcriptional 454 ("trans") regulation, rewiring of yeast primary metabolism and adaptive laboratory evolution 455 (ALE), which will be discussed in this review. However, heterologous production also presents 456 several limitations/challenges, which, in tandem with synthetic chemistry (purple circle and 457 arrows), potentially can be resolved (e.g. substrate chemical synthesis, product modification), 458 459 and represent promising prospects.

460

461 Figure 360. An author presentation of Figure 1.

462 Figure 2. Advanced genome editing tools in yeast (A) DNA assembly and CRISPR/Cas9-463 464 mediated yeast transformations. Cas9 is expressed in yeast (plasmid-encoded under constitutive or inducible promoter, according to user needs). This is achieved either in tandem 465 with gRNA(s) [38], followed by the Cas9-gRNA(s)-expressing strain transformation with 466 template DNA, or yeast pre-transformation with Cas9-expressing plasmid only, further followed 467 by the transformation of Cas9-expressing strain with template DNA and gRNA(s) plasmid [36, 468 37]. A recent gRNA delivery method transient expression system (TES) was described, where 469 470 the PCR fragments encoding the gRNAs (and containing the promoter, the guiding sequence and the gRNA scaffold) are transformed together with template DNA into Cas9-expressing 471 yeast strain [42]. The template DNA (multiple expression cassettes, composed of promoter 472 473 and terminator for each gene of interest) is assembled *in vivo* via overlapping oligonucleotides (here represented as colored lines at the extremities of expression cassettes, black lines 474 represent the so-called Arms - the sequences homologous to the specific yeast genomic 475 regions) and homologous recombination (HR) [36, 37]. The schematic example of a single 476 expression cassette is shown. (B) Advances in CRISPR/Cas9 system. The GTR-CRISPR 477 (tandem gRNA-tRNA array for CRISPR/Cas9) is based on the use of a gRNA-tRNA array 478 encoded in a plasmid with Cas9, and the native tRNA-processing system (the precursor of 479 tRNA is cleaved, which releases the individual gRNAs from the common transcript) [40]. Cpf1 480 (CRISPR from Prevotella and Francisella 1 endonuclease) demonstrates several advantages 481 compared to Cas9 (generation of sticky ends, RNAse and DNAse activity, requirement of only 482 483 crRNA) [44]. dCas9-mediated Target-AID (Activation Induced cytidine Deaminase from vertebrate) is a synthetic hybrid complex, which performs C to G and C to T mutations with 484 high accuracy [46]. 485

486

487 Figure 3. New tools for the regulation of gene expression in yeast. (A) Generation of synthetic gene regulatory element libraries. Promoter (P) core region between the TATA box 488 and the transcriptional starting site (TSS) was mutated. 1) The determined minimal sequence 489 of S. cerevisiae pTEF1 core region was mutated. The variants, with or without UASs, were 490 screened by measuring yECitrine (yECit, yellow-green fluorescent protein) fluorescence [50]. 491 492 2) The artificial sequences enriched in T and/or G/C were substituted in Y. lipolytica pEXP1 and pGDP core regions. The screening - colony-color spectrum due to crtY activity 493 (accumulation of carotene pigments) [51]. 3) In the S. cerevisiae terminator library terminator 494 495 (T) linker 1 sequence between the efficiency element (EE) and the positioning element (PE) was randomized. The screens were done using green fluorescent protein (GFP) fluorescence 496 as a reporter [52]. (B) Engineering of metabolite sensing and downstream regulation in S. 497 *cerevisiae*. 1) The method enables the design of user-defined MRTFs by random mutagenesis 498 of the MRTF effector binding domain (EBD) upstream DNA binding domain (DBD). The 499

selection of MRTFs with de novo features is GFP fluorescence-activated cell sorting (FACS) -500 based. ON state - dark green (presence of inducer), OFF state - light green (control medium). 501 The dashed line rectangle - variant selection, the purple background - control strain not 502 expressing MRTF. The criteria for selection vary according to user needs [54]. 2) Activator- or 503 repressor-type MRTF binding site (BS) were inserted in front of every nucleotide of native 504 pTEF1 or truncated pCYC1 core regions to generate MRTF operator library [55]. (C) 505 Construction of synthetic gluconeogenic promoters in yeast [56]. Native promoters were 506 reshaped from glycolytic to gluconeogenic via substitution of the glycolytic genes 507 transcriptional activator Gcr1 BS by carbon source response elements (CSRE) of native 508 gluconeogenic promoters. sP - synthetic promoter, purple and black circles/curves - ethanol 509 and glucose, respectively. Overlapping of curves - diauxic shift. 510

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Figure 4. Engineering of primary metabolism in yeast. (A) Redox engineering. PPP stands 512 for the pentose phosphate pathway. The best performing strains are illustrated. Green color 513 indicates overexpression while velvet color - deletion. ALD6 was overexpressed [57, 60] and 514 ALD2 deleted [57]. Full-length POS5/truncated tPOS5 were overexpressed [58], as well as 515 POS5 [61]. NADPH availability is estimated by the activity of heterologous NADPH-dependent 516 enzymes. (B) Coupling methylation to growth via Mtase selection (adapted from [64]). Black 517 arrows represent the native SAM cycle. SAH stands for S-adenosylhomocysteine, velvet cross 518 represents the inhibition of reaction by gene deletion, green arrows show heterologous 519 reactions. The graphics demonstrate the growth (optical density OD) of yeast strains (the 520 tested strain on the left and the control strain on the right) over time, in the presence (+X) or 521 absence (-X) of the corresponding heterologous Mtase substrate. (C) Fe metabolic 522 engineering to enhance heterologous Fe-S enzyme activity (adapted from [65]). The assembly 523 of Fe-S clusters is mediated by the assembly complex. The targeting complex guides Fe-S 524 525 clusters to the corresponding apoprotein to form Fe-S proteins. Tyw1 binds Fe-S clusters to regulate Fe-S excess in the cell. Truncated Tyw1 (tTyw1) is not able to bind Fe-S clusters. 526 Aft1/2 TFs enhance Fe uptake in the case of Fe deficiency, which is inhibited by the inhibitory 527 528 complex. Yap5 TF promotes Fe sequestration when in excess. All the represented complexes contain several components omitted here. In the best performing strain, tTyw1 was 529 overexpressed and the inhibitory complex component Bol2 was deleted ($\Delta bol2$). The red cross 530 represents the abolishment of inhibitory complex activity. 531

532 Figure 5. Strategies of spatial (re)configuration for the metabolic engineering of YCF. (A) Artificial compartmentalization of the triterpene biosynthetic pathway in the peroxisome of 533 S. cerevisiae, leading to a significant increase in squalene bio-production (adapted from [69]). 534 (B) Artificial compartmentalization of the isoprenoid biosynthetic pathway in the mitochondria 535 of S. cerevisiae, leading to a significant increase of geraniol bio-production (adapted from 536 [70]). (C) Cell surface engineering of *S. cerevisiae* for the efficient bio-production of ethanol 537 538 and xylitol from lignocellulosic biomass (adapted from [77, 78, 80]). (D) Two different types of 539 artificial metabolons in S. cerevisiae (adapted from [32]).

540

Figure 6. The integrated approach of adaptive laboratory evolution (ALE) to improve YCF, (adapted from [83, 85]).

(A) Initial YCFs, obtained by rational ME steps, are cultured in desired growth conditions for an
extended period, allowing natural selection to enrich for mutant strains with improved fitness.
ALE then occurs via *n* repetitions of propagation of batch cultures, until obtaining the most
efficiently evolved YCF (endpoint). (B) Enhancement of D-xylose utilization and isobutanol
production by combining the rational DBTL approach and ALE. The ALE experiment was

548 conducted in the presence of 2% D-xylose as a unique carbon source over 12 cycles of cell 549 culture. The pathway has been simplified and the cofactors and certain steps are omitted for easier comprehension. Enzymes written in green color are overexpressed. RE - Reverse 550 Engineering. LI - Lactococcus lactis, Ss - Scheffersomyces stipitis, Sc - S. cerevisiae. Fine-551 tuning of gene expression - supplementary copies of LIKivD, ScADH7, ScIvl2, ScIvl3 and 552 Sclvl5. (C) Evolved strains are characterized for phenotype improvements relative to the 553 parental strain. (D) Evolved strains have their DNA sequenced to reveal the adaptive 554 mutations enabling phenotype improvements. (E) Augmentation of the typical "Design, Build, 555 Test, Learn" (DBTL) cycle used in ME to generate YCFs. Here, ALE is performed in the 556 continuity of the "Build" step to either rescue a strain that displays decreased fitness due to a 557 perturbation or to optimize a strain after removal or addition of genetic content. 558

560 **Glossary**

561

562 **Adaptive laboratory evolution (ALE):** integrated approach relying on the capacity of 563 microorganisms to evolve in response to specific cultivation conditions, under selection 564 pressure, and along an extended period (hundreds to thousands of generations), to obtain 565 improved strains (growth, tolerance, titer, etc).

566 **Carbon source response elements (CSRE):** short promoter sequences, identified as 567 activating motifs of yeast gluconeogenic genes, and responsive to ethanol.

568 **Cell surface engineering (CSE):** recombinant protein expression and incorporation into the 569 yeast cell wall, to generate a whole-cell catalyst capable to accommodate different enzymatic 570 reactions directly on the extracellular interface.

571 **Cellulosome:** multi-enzyme complexes associated with the cell surface of cellulolytic 572 microorganisms, mediating cell attachment to insoluble substrates for degradation into soluble 573 products.

**Design, Build, Test, Learn" (DBTL) cycle: an integrated iterative approach for metabolic
engineering of high-performance microbial biocatalysts and improvement of the commercially
relevant metrics of titer, rate, and yield.

577 Genome editing: genetic modification using genome editing tools that result in DNA deletion,
578 integration or substitution within a genome.

579 **Global fitness:** physiological state of living cells at a given time.

580 **Metabolic biosensors:** biomolecules able to detect/respond to specific metabolites within 581 metabolic pathways.

582 **Metabolic engineering (ME):** an optimization process of cellular activity to enhance/adjust the 583 production of desired compounds.

584 **Metabolic flux:** a movement of metabolites through metabolic pathways over time, which 585 characterizes enzymatic activity.

586 **Metabolite responsive allosteric transcription factors (aTFs or MRTFs):** 587 activator/repressor type transcription factors, which are activated through conformational 588 changes upon the direct interaction with metabolites via specific inactive binding sites.

589 **Metabolons:** molecular complexes that are dynamically formed within a metabolic pathway, 590 including enzymes, cellular structures and annex proteins.

591 **Natural products (NPs):** chemical compounds found in nature, including functional 592 specialized metabolites produced by microorganisms (mostly bacteria and molds...), 593 mushrooms, marine animals, algae, or land plants, often used in human pharmacopeia.

594 **Spatial reconfiguration:** the modification of protein subcellular localization according to the 595 employed strategies via truncation/substitution/addition of targeting sequences.

596 **Synthetic biology (SB):** a recently emerged multidisciplinary research area that focuses on 597 the *de novo* engineering/(re)design of biological components with user-defined features.

598 **Titer, rate, and yield (TRY):** refers to production metrics of product concentration, the time 599 required to generate it, and the final amount.

Yeast cell factories (YCFs): an approach in bio-engineering, which relies on metabolic
 engineering and employs yeast cells as a production unit.

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