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The American University in Cairo

School of Global Affairs and Public Policy

MUSICAL PROTEST & REVOLUTIONARY MEDIA:

Capital Transformation among Artists, Activists, and Journalists during the 14 January
Revolution

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

by Nathanael Mannone

Under the Supervision of Dr. Benjamin Geer
May 2012

Acknowledgements

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PREFACE:

During the Tunisian uprising, no one knew what would happen. Late night Skype sessions with Tunisian friends revealed that they too were uncertain about the future. The "Arab Spring" was not yet the assigned moniker as Tunisia was the only country then consumed by mass revolt. Television channels barely focused on this ostensibly tiny North African country whose regional impact was at that point perceived as negligible. Attempting to recall the emotional spectra of those days is a daily-diminishing return, as at the time of this writing the region continues to struggle frustratingly with the politics of rule. Syria is still engulfed by violence, Egyptians are split as to the next step, and Tunisia is still attempting to craft a cohesive national identity.

While chatting online during the Tunisian uprising, a friend directed me towards the music that was being made about the event. I was instantly captivated: I had in the past personally witnessed a country and a people, dominated in nearly every facet of its existence, and suddenly (or so it seemed) there was this outpouring of political dissidence. My first inclination was to articulate a thesis examining how Tunisian hip hop had become a vector of resistance against the Ben Ali regime. It seemed simple enough. However, after much research I realized that my framework itself was inadequate to responsibly capture the role of art in Tunisian politics.

The abundance of problematics within my own frameworks, and in those within the international news media framing the events, would therefore have to be overcome in order to convey an accurate depiction of my object of study. First and foremost, the concept of resistance was wholly inaccurate, especially when applied to an entire genre. Second, hip hop was not always necessarily political in Tunisia, and much of the political

contestation was made in other genres such as folk and reggae. Third, the formerly ubiquitous discourses of Tunisia's 'tradition' of political passivity, as well as the role (or supposed lack thereof) of 'traditional' Tunisian arts in the uprising would have to be revisited. Fourth, as music continued to be made after the flight of Ben Ali, at first celebratory and nationalistic, and later returning to issues both concrete and abstract immediately faced by the Tunisian people, the realization struck me: the post-revolution celebratory music was not simply a commodification of the uprising, but simultaneously a reflection and articulation of sentiments, and therefore not logically distinct from that made by artist-activists during the event. For this reason, I have decided not to make too large an ethical distinction between works before, during, and after the revolution, although I do distinguish among the types of capital(s) sought after at a given point in time. Fifth, themes of nationalism and human rights abound in different times in the lyrics of many Tunisian works, yet they are used in different ways and the suspicion framing both concepts betray the way that they may have been used by the former regime. Therefore, a brief examination of human rights and nationalism theory becomes essential and only later when lyrics are presented may the non-expert reader come to understand the aura of conflict that plagues these concepts and thus emerges in the music of political dissidence.

Sixth, and perhaps most central to the argument articulated in this thesis, Tunisian music, activism, and the international news media intersected in highly complex and nuanced ways. Therefore, to examine themes of political contestation in Tunisian music would remove a key component of the dynamic. These three fields cannot be isolated from the rest of Tunisian culture, separated from the supposedly universalist discourses

of morality projected by international news outlets, or cleaved from the many diverse

aims of all players involved. However, amid the rush to establish causality in the recent

uprisings, I hope that my examination of the interplay between the artist, activist, and

international news media fields (which despite their complexity, and the existence of

countless other fields with which they intersect, I strongly feel must be the limits of my

own reduction) will add depth and nuance to existing narratives.

I. *INTRODUCTION:*

      This thesis examines the transformations of cultural, symbolic and material capital (and power) within and among the fields of music, activism, and journalism during the recent uprising in Tunisia. Analyzing a selection of Tunisian music juxtaposed to several ubiquitous conjectures in the news media, I also challenge interpretations of the part music played in these revolutions. In the wake of Zine Abidin Ben Ali's ouster from the presidency, many in the international press and music industry credited hip-hop artists in Tunisia as being a driving force in the 14 January Revolution. Many commentators cite substantially increased levels of outspokenness against the regime among the artist community and therefore detect a significant rupture with past traditions. Yet by analyzing cultural productions of the past decade, one can find many examples of artists, bloggers, workers, and activists speaking out against the regime; thus, the contention that an unprecedented level of activism arose among the artist community in late 2010 requires further discussion. In addition, the function that the international news media played in the revolution by elevating certain artists (and thus consecration of their musical-activist capital) is often ignored or unacknowledged. However, evidence suggests that the artists in question seemed implicitly aware of this dynamic and often used it to their advantage. Music, as a cultural product, both influences and mirrors widespread public opinion(s). The interplay between political music and public sentiment is instructive when examined through transformations of capital, particularly because an increased amount of intangible capital can be converted to material capital when the artist is lauded by international observers. Additionally, by positing the regime of Ben Ali and dissident artists at opposing loci, and placing a linear hierarchy between them, the (often

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foreign) analysts ignore the breadth of power dynamics within the macro-hierarchy that they propose, within the media, as well as within the music industries.

In light of the above it is important to ask, "How did the activist, music, and journalism fields intersect and influence developments during the recent 14 January Revolution?" By using Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of *field* and *habitus* to explore capital and power dynamics (Bourdieu 1977, 1996, 1998) within the Tunisian music industry and artists as well as those who frame them in the news media with regard to the revolution, the relation of music to the regime becomes much more complex and nuanced than has been proposed. By collapsing a large category (hip-hop) into a label of "resistance," analysts ignore the immense diversity of aims and views within the genre. This process of encapsulation of a musical genre into a narrowly defined category has many parallels with historical analyses of Algerian Raï music (Dolan, 2001), as does the contention/theme that a musical work can become an "anthem of the protestors."[1] Further, because music, activism and media work in concert and often overlap in many larger arenas of social interaction, I will argue that the revolution itself became a field. It should therefore be noted that this project is not intended as a refutation of budding historical narratives of the 14 January Revolution, but rather an assertion of a more complicated web of actors who not only resisted, but also utilized, their surrounding social structures.

Conceptual Framework

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[1] Bostic, Karl, "How Rap music fueled the Arab Spring uprisings," NBC, September, 15, 2011. See Also: Skilbeck, Rod, "Mixing Pop and Politics: The Role of Rai in Algerian Political Discourse," Australasian Middle East Studies Association Conference, Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia, September 22, 1995.

In order to document the capital dynamics within any of the three fields outlined above, it is necessary to understand several underlying postulations of Bourdieu's meta-"theory of practices." Central to Bourdieu's theory, and an assumption embraced in the conceptual framework of this work, is the myth of a "disinterested act." [2] By drawing on the work of Max Weber (specifically the symbolic capital dimensions of religion), and "rejecting the rational actor mode of conduct," Bourdieu postulates that there is indeed symbolic, cultural, or material capital to be gained from any action.[3] Although the capital to be gained varies according to the field(s) hosting the act, what emerges from this view of capital formulations is an entire economy of capital wherein specific types of capital may be exchanged for others according to the rules of the field.[4] Further, certain exchanges of capital or even patterns of exchange may cause abrasion and conflict within a given field. For instance, in the art industry, and for my purposes the music industry, there is a ubiquitous tendency to label an artist who exchanges his/her cultural or symbolic capital for material capital as a "sell-out." These same perceptions provoke a view that dichotomizes undesirable, heteronomous, and materially driven "mainstream" cultural productions from supposedly desirable, autonomous, authentic, and culturally/symbolically driven "underground" cultural productions. These dichotomizing processes, while important and fascinating, are specifically relational and (mostly) relevant to those who are more heavily invested in the music field. In order to objectify these social processes, and the relational component between agent and structure within a field, Bourdieu's "sociology of symbolic interests" is indispensible and - for the purposes

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[2] Bourdieu, Pierre, *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*, Trans. Polity Press, Polity Press, (Stanford, CA: 1998)

[3] Ibid, see also: Swartz, David, *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*, University of Chicago Press, (Chicago, IL: 1997), pp. 66-67.

[4] The acceptable ratios of different capital accruement vary according to the particular field.

of this project - best allows the researcher to plot actor and structure in social space. It should also be noted that although Bourdieu uses the terms 'field' and 'market' interchangeably as an arena for competition, he stresses that to "think in terms of the field is to think relationally."[5] A field is also not an 'institution,' for it is based on the "confliction" property of social interactions, and therefore the boundaries and rules are not as firmly established as in an institution.[6] However, because Bourdieu stresses that *field* is an open concept, it is difficult to articulate what is and is not a *field* in the Bourdieusian sense of the word, and qualification is open to interpretation. I will postulate that the recent Revolution (not just in Tunisia) is a field constituted by its own rules, capital, and activists networks spanning the range from orthodox to heterodox. Although it has a duration that has yet to be determined, this field is continually collapsed into a 'universal.' This aspect of my project however, ironically requires further exploration and development in order to satisfy the orthodoxy of Bourdieusian theory.

Music, activism, and journalism are individual fields that host relevant capital transformations. Social actors exist in many fields simultaneously, and the aforementioned fields overlap, so it would be a fallacy to assume that capital relevant to one is not immediately relevant to the other. However, to objectify the above fields as well as the actors within them, it is necessary to describe more fully the type of capital(s) that drive the competition and legitimation functions in each. Further, in each field (and even in some areas of overlap) there exists a particular orthodoxy as well as heterodoxy relevant specifically to that field. A brief outline of the hypothesized capital goals and the specific orthodoxy-heterodoxy within each field is therefore necessary.

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[5] Swartz, David, *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*, pp. 199-120
[6] Ibid, pp. 120.

The music industry in its perceived bifurcation evinces both material and symbolic pursuit, resulting in not only the mainstream-underground dichotomy referenced above but also two (supposedly separate) capital markets. Record labels and producers are by their (business) nature materially driven, and most artists would not refuse money offered to them in exchange for their service. Yet, among the artists, and often when questioned in reference to their material motivations, there is a strong tendency to revert to the supposed pursuit of what Bourdieu referred to as the "universal," the 'goal for the sake of the goal,' or in this case *music for the sake of music*.[7] The artists thus claim symbolic motivations often in order to justify their material success. Just as nothing in history should be depicted as mono-causal, the myth of disinterestedness and even *singular* interest hinders description of motivations of a given actor and, thus, the most relevant and dominant capital(s) within a given field. However, because musicians and artists often cite symbolic motivations and the 'universal' as the reason and justification for their material successes, we may surmise that symbolic capital is the dominant and most legitimate form of capital within the music industry. The type of capital most legitimate in the music field is therefore significant specifically by virtue of its non-materialness. Therefore, cultural productions which appear to pursue the 'universal' will bring a new artist into favor with the dominating orthodoxy (made up of critics, intellectuals, and consecrated autonomous musicians) of a given field, which simultaneously consecrates the cultural capital of the artists (making it symbolic) and reaffirming the symbolic capital of the aforementioned orthodoxy. A relegated 'heteronomous' and perceivably material-driven musician will likely cause conflict within a field due to abrasion with the orthodoxy on account of his/her insufficient

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[7] Bourdieu, Pierre, *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*.

satisfaction of the *myth of the 'universal'* rite. Therefore, the non-material capital most highly valued within the music industry is obtainable by a convincing showcase of the pursuit of the universal along with what those in the field would laud as "good music." As a result, this project therefore necessitates further exploration of *desirable* capital within the Tunisian music field and its marriage to the musicians who define it.

An understanding of the journalist and activist fields is slightly more difficult than that of the music field. I hypothesize that additional research will show that the international news media constitutes an arena dominated by material capital as a legitimizing force. Bourdieu's short book entitled *On Television* is particularly instructive in this regard.[8] The orthodoxy within the international news media is necessarily dictated by material capital. Therefore I postulate that the heterodoxy within this particular field is comprised of alternative news sources whose lack of material capital and 'experience' translates to their supposed inability to vet facts before publication. However, the assumption that a large (often corporate) budget yields more accurate reporting will be explored in more detail below, and *On Television* is particularly helpful in deconstructing this widely-held assumption. Further, there is a large amount of symbolic capital to be gained in the journalist field; the preponderance of journalism awards stand testament to this fact. In any case, another interesting and unique dimension of the role of the news media is its ability to consecrate artists and activists to an international audience, thus constituting a legitimation function for actors outside its field-specific hierarchy. I propose that the use of polyglot and code-switching by artists evinces their awareness of this dynamic, which they use to spread their message, sell more products, and undoubtedly increase their capital.

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[8] Bourdieu, Pierre, *On Television*, The New Press, (New York, NY), 1998

If the journalistic field is dominated by material capital, the activist field on the other hand thrives strictly on symbolic and social capital. Stories, arrest histories and even scars serve as consecrated manifestations of non-material capital. Activism for material gain would therefore be seen as extremely distasteful and even despicable. Thus I hypothesize that social and symbolic capitals are the main legitimizing capital within the activism field. The significance of the diversity of capitals among the different fields, as well as their varying degrees of desirability in said fields, is that they evince the multiple capital-driven motivations of any given actor, as each exists within many different fields simultaneously. Therefore the postulation that the myth of disinterestedness may also be extended to the myth of singular interest is further bolstered.

Methodology

Using personal interviews conducted with artists, historical ethnomusicology studies from the region, as well as lyrics of the music in question, I examine the state of Tunisian urban music at the beginning of 2011 as well as its relation to musical traditions and trends in the past decade. Further, I interpret the manifestations of competition and recognition through Bourdieusian concepts of capital. This thesis is the product of fieldwork conducted in 2011 and 2012 and will therefore draw on interviews with artists and other cultural figures as well as ethnographic data. The opinions collected during fieldwork help problematize the aforementioned *Anthem of the Protestors* theme as well as document the perceived role of artists and specifically musicians in the revolution. This aspect of the project will not only illustrate where the Tunisian populace situates

artists within social space relative to the revolution, art, and international news media, but it will also help reveal where the Tunisian populace situates itself. I will also be using online news articles from mid-November 2010 onward in order to illustrate and critique the ways that the international news media began and continue to frame certain artists. Doing so will also allow me to illustrate the condition and role of the journalism field during the revolution.

Challenges

The largest challenge to this study is the complete lack of well-researched scholarship on the topic of Tunisian cultural production during the 14 January Revolution. Further, due to the recent nature of the phenomenon to be analyzed, certain parallels will have to be drawn with existing scholarship on "protest music" from other countries and regions. Additionally, a comprehensive description of all the different fields involved in the 14 January Revolution is not only outside of the scope of this thesis, but likely outside of the realm of possibility as well. However, it is a fallacy to assume that fields exist in a vacuum. Therefore, in order to examine the effect of any single field during the Jasmine Revolution, it becomes necessary to show the multidimensional motivations of any single actor within said fields, thereby illustrating the multiple fields in which an actor may exist. The resultant view of cultural production during the revolution will show that in addition to "resisting" the government of Ben Ali, all individuals (not just artists) simultaneously existed and competed within multiple legitimizing hierarchical structures. Therefore, the currently ubiquitous trend of searching

for historical causality in the recent wave of uprisings, in addition to resistors'

motivations, is an infinitely problematic process.

A second challenge to my research is that it necessitates a focus on the period that

most identify as the beginning of the protests marking the start of the 14 January

Revolution. Yet a problematized timeline reveals that the "beginning" and "end" are at

best blurry, and at worst debatable and even insignificant.[9] In any case, it will be

necessary to analyze the Tunisian musical and activist traditions up to a decade earlier in

order to understand the significance of the trends in each field as well as trace the

historical developments that led to 2011.

One of the initial goals of this thesis was to survey segments of the Tunisian

population in order to discover where they situated artists in terms of artist, activist, and

revolutionary capital. In doing so, I had hoped to not only plot where artists existed

within these fields but to compare it against the station assigned to them by the

international news media. The logistics, costs, and challenges I encountered as a foreign

researcher however, made conducting these surveys impractical (and unfortunately

impossible) given my time restraints. The inability to plot artists in social space

immediately following the uprising however, while disappointing, has left more room in

this thesis for more qualitative aspects of artist-activist production as well as theoretical

analyses.

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[9] It is interesting however, that the Tunisians mark the day Ben Ali (14 January) was deposed in the preferred nomenclature of the revolution, whereas Egyptians mark the day the protests began (25 January). This is curious, as the former uprising was seen to have produced a definitive result and positive change whereas at the time of this writing, many in the latter country still struggle to effect change upon the coercive and governmental apparati. Unfortunately however, a cognitive-linguistic exploration of revolutionary terminology is also outside of the scope of this paper.

By combining the above sources into a single analysis on the workings of non-material capital, I believe that my project will help to fill gaps in existing scholarship on the 14 January Revolution and in English-language scholarship on Tunisia, as well as contribute to the vast repertoire of ethno-musicology. Further, this project asserts that the revolution itself constituted a field in the Bourdieusian sense in that it was an arena for capital competition. If successfully defended, it will be the first (to my knowledge) to assert that the "revolution(s)" simply hosted a network of capital exchange and self interests, and itself became a commodity in the process. Therefore, individuals who capitalized on the historic event, the commodification of nationalism in order to sell wares on the street, and even the commodification of the revolution in the international news media, were not only completely natural but essential parts of the event. Postulating that the 'revolutions' themselves are in ways constituted by commodification is undoubtedly controversial. I contend however, that such an approach divorces the event from retrojective universals such as nationalism and appreciates the multitude of (self) interests that drove the recent political developments in Tunisia.

II. OPPORTUNISTIC NATIONALISM

While the conceptual framework I have outlined is useful in analyzing the aforementioned fields, we must depart from Bourdieuist rhetoric and logic in order to review two critical concepts that (as we shall see) became ubiquitous in Tunisian music during, and immediately following, the 14 January Revolution: human rights and nationalism. These slippery concepts both imply engagement with a broad range of scholarship, yet I will engage them in limited fashion (in order not to lose focus) to explain their more challenging dimensions. The simultaneous use and distrust of human rights discourses inherent in the cultural products analyzed herein requires a more general exploration of the human rights concept in order to illustrate the underpinnings of both stances. The apparent explosion of nationalist discourses within recent Tunisian music also warrants further analysis. The increase in nationalist sentiment seems easily explained by the revolution, yet the (re)emergence of nationalism (as shown by the large corpus of scholarship on the concept) is more complex. Therefore, a treatment of limited and general scholarship and its relationship to Tunisian specificities is absolutely necessary. In order to bolster my argument and to situate it within the historical analysis of other celebrated discourses of dissidence, I turn to two other examples in the Mediterranean basin: Palestinian hip hop and Algerian Raï.

People often state that music is a universal language. The language that any particular type of music employs, however, is indicative of the desires of a given artist. Artists, while both informed by culture and cultural informants to the society in which they exist, must territorially delineate the society they envision. When examining the use

of music in what has been called "resistance" and a more general political discourse, therefore, musicians must determine the segment of the population to which they wish to appeal, and which stressed identity will carry the greatest moral force for their arguments within a recognized power dynamic. Nationalism defines itself through spatial limitations, and is therefore both inclusive and exclusive. Nationalist approaches to political discourse often stress the specificity of issues and people within imagined spatial and cultural borders. Human rights approaches on the other hand are almost always used to mobilize the largest political base and identity imaginable (that of the human race) to support or decry a given law or practice. The potency of human rights approaches to political discourse is rooted in the universality of the appeal, and ideally, that no group can be excluded from participation in the discourse. Both concepts have been dissected and deconstructed by scholars for many years, and yet despite the academic problems with human rights and nationalism, both concepts continue to be powerful tools in mobilizing and disseminating ideas.

My understanding of nationalism, like most in the social science community, has been very much influenced by the landmark work of Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*.[10] Given that this project focuses on a discourse of dissidence, the above work is even more significant, as Anderson himself states very early on that, "since World War II every successful revolution has defined itself in *national* terms," and "nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time."[11] The potency of nationalism as a tool for cultural and political commentary, support, and criticism is therefore well understood.

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[10] Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso Publishers, (New York, NY: 1983).
[11] Ibid, pp. 2, 3.

Also, the fact that much of Tunisian and Palestinian hip-hop, in addition to a large portion of Algerian Raï is most often sung in the local colloquial should not come as a surprise for anyone who has read Anderson's book, as the use of a single vernacular in a given area being paramount, according to Anderson, in the formation of national identity.[12]

The problem with applying Anderson's theory is that he is speaking specifically to the use of written vernaculars (in Europe) in the formation of nationalism, whereas within the MENA region, Modern Standard Arabic has typically been the written language of nationalism. There exists a large debate on this facet of Anderson's theory when applied to the so-called 'Arab world,' however; the focus of this thesis is of course on those tenets of nationalism which are orally and electronically transmitted, and thus not written.[13]

Spoken vernacular, just like nationalism, is not static. Tunisian hip-hop artists and Algerian Raï artists often use French (as well as other languages) in their music, and in so doing they highlight a past of colonial domination in the collective memory while simultaneously expanding the comprehensibility of their music to second-generation members of the Maghreb diaspora living in France (or elsewhere) who may be unable to completely understand *derja*. Polyglot usage and code-switching therefore expands the inclusiveness of a given nationalism, while at the same time pointing out the diversity of the imagined nation.

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[12] Ibid, pp. 37-48

[13] An in-depth analysis of Tunisian print-nationalism would certainly be interesting as most of the country is bilingual and French language print-nationalism has been present in Tunisia in the past. For a more expansive critique of Anderson's theory in relation to the MENA region, see: Fahmy, Ziad, *Ordinary Egyptians: Creating the Modern Nation through Popular Culture*, Stanford University Press, (Stanford, CA: 2011), pp. 11-17

Anderson also credits the rise of print-capitalism with the expansion of not only a singular vernacular, but also by transitive property, nationalism itself.[14] The spread of print-capitalism (books, and more importantly newspapers) required of those wishing to participate directly both literacy and coin to pay for literature. Of course, those without money could always borrow, and the illiterate can always listen to someone else read the material. Music, on the other hand, is comprehensible to any who can speak the language in which the song is written, and the messages contained therein are therefore accessible to a larger portion of the population. Also, while print capitalism persists, most any song one might want to access is available online and internet access for a fee is becoming evermore widespread. This new web-capitalism (often dependent on advertising revenues) offers a faster alternative to the dissemination of ideas than that of print-capitalism. A simple and seemingly obvious observation to be sure, but when paired with Anderson's observation on the role of print-capitalism in creating and spreading *national* awareness, the efficiency of information dissemination allows nationalisms to be redefined by a larger section of society, and over a much shorter period. Anderson also paraphrases the work of John Dalberg-Acton by saying that "exile is the nursery of nationality."[15] Anderson expands on this by stating that the internet and improvements in communications only exacerbate this "exile."[16] Thus, a French-Tunisian while perhaps unable to travel to Tunisia, may be transported to those physical and cognitive spaces in which Tunisian nationalism is reproduced, on the internet, and potentially in a multitude of languages.

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[14] Ibid,.

[15] Dalberg-Acton, John. Cited in: Anderson, Benedict, "Exodus," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 20, No. 2, Winter 1994, pp. 315

[16] Anderson, Benedict, "Exodus," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 20, No. 2, Winter 1994, pp. 322

In *Nations and Nationalism*, Ernest Gellner elucidates beautifully the relationship

between socio-political tensions and language relative to nationalism:

> Industrialization engenders a mobile and culturally homogenous society, one which
> consequently has egalitarian expectations and aspirations… [a]t the same time, in its
> early stages, industrial society also engenders a very sharp and painful and conspicuous
> inequality, all the more painful because accompanied by great disturbance, and because
> those less advantageously placed, in that period, tend to be not only relatively, but also
> absolutely miserable. In that situation… latent political tension is acute, and becomes
> actual if it can seize on good symbols… Characteristically it may seize on language…
> [and] is very strongly impelled in this direction by the fact that in industrializing societies
> communication and hence culture assumes a new and unprecedented importance.[17]

Anderson's work argues that culture must be made homogenous, through language (as

well as other means) in forming nationalisms, while Gellner adds that this homogeneity

spurs a longing for equitable treatment which will manifest itself if given the proper

stimuli. The above references to egalitarianism do not necessarily apply to finance and

distribution of wealth, but could refer to institutionalized mistreatment or discrimination.

Both Anderson and Gellner stress the importance of language not only in creating and

defining nationalisms, but also in continually redefining them as well as questioning the

status quo of a given national reality. Put simply, social and political commentary

(whether it be dissidence or support) necessitates ideas, ideas necessitate a means of

communication, and in this case the means of conveyance is Tunisian music and its

lyrics.

E. J. Hobsbawm adds a cautionary note to Gellner's articulation of egalitarian

nationalism by emphasizing the demands of loyalty, that "nationalism" means,

"'primarily a principle which holds that the political and national unit should be

congruent'… [and] overrides all other public obligations, and in extreme cases (such as

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[17] Gellner, Ernest, *Nations and Nationalism*, Blackwell Publishing (Oxford, UK: 1983), pp. 72.

wars) all other obligations of any kind."[18] This view is certainly compatible with

Anderson's contention that all revolutions since World War II have needed nationalism,

and so again, mobilization of resistance, dissidence, support, or outright conformity along

nationalistic lines is not altogether supprising if we are to accept the primacy of national

identification.

Nationalism and dissidence are therefore natural partners. It seems in keeping

with Anderson's contention about nationalism and revolution, that it was natural for

Tunisian cultural producers to use nationalist discourses and symbols when

advantageous. Still, the question remains: what made nationalistic arguments so prevalent

during the period surrounding January 14, and why were they not manifest earlier, before

the revolution? A complete exploration of this particular question and an articulation of

the nationalist field in Tunisia is unfortunately outside of the scope of this project.

Additionally, I do not mean to essentialize "nationalism," but rather, to look at instances

wherein nationalist discourses are deployed or emphasized, and in contrast, rejected or

downplayed. However, the revitalization of the Tunisian nationalist field appears to have

opened up an arena wherein nationalism was once again perceived as legitimate whereas

Ben Ali, while holding a monopoly on nationalist discourse seemed to have paralyzed the

nationalism field; it was not perceived as a legitimate pursuit alone but a means to

achieving some other end such as wealth accumulation, political power, or the awarding

of contracts, just to name a few. While this dynamic surely persists in mutated form, it is

seen as more legitimate and singularly interested; the other interests at stake are more

blurred and people are more apt to trust the nationalism of a given agent, which

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[18] Hobsbawm, E. J., *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge
University Press, (New York, NY: 1990) pp. 9

encourages individuals to compete within the nationalist field. What is certain however, is that a common print vernacular was not soley responsible for the revitalization of nationalism in Tunisia. Also, despite the contentions of Anderson and Gellner, Tunisia is not necessarily homogenous (despite being 98% Muslim[19]), but an impasse occurred wherein, to use Gellner's own words, it was simply advantageous to "seize" upon these "symbols." However, nationalistic principles were not the only vectors of contestation and mobilization; the use of human rights concepts in attempts at mobilization was also quite prevalent.

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[19] Although this number does not take into account the number of atheists, agnostics, ect. For statistic, see; CIA World Fact Book, "Tunisia: People and Society," Updated February 15, 2012: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ts.html#People

III. *HUMAN RIGHTS: FROM ABOVE AND BELOW*

Human rights legislation is of course saturated with problems and contradictions, and yet the human rights concept can be very useful in mobilizing popular support for a given cause. Maha Abdelrahman and others have correctly pointed out that human rights legislation is largely dependent on the government of a particular state for its implementation.[20] Amnesty International even states on its website that "International campaigning and mass mobilization are often central to building legitimacy and convincing governments to take action on human rights issues."[21] Governments are thus perceived as central to the successful implementation of human rights reforms. The mention of "mass mobilization," however, refers primarily to international support for a more general and broadly defined human rights concept that includes microfinance, restrictions on arms trade, and landmines reduction.[22] The implementation of human rights reforms depends in large part on the state or government, and human rights abuses, even those perpetrated by non-state actors, are generally seen as a governmental failure. As a result, when people appeal a universal right, they direct their calls to national officials. The paradox is clarified when the government is itself seen to be directly responsible for a given human rights abuse.

Unfortunately, there exists a dearth in literature on human rights-oriented mobilization relative to nationalism. Yet, to anyone familiar with the recent revolutions in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, or Syria it is impossible to ignore the role of human rights

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[20] Abdelrahman, Maha, "The Nationalization of the Human Rights Debate in Egypt," *Nations and Nationalism*, 13(2), 2007, 285-300, accessed April 25, 2011: http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=9d2d8a90-f54a-443a-88c3-cc1a90f2c289%40sessionmgr14&vid=2&hid=11

[21] Amnesty International, "Learning About Human Rights: International Campaigning and Mobilization," Amnesty International, Accessed: April 30, 2011, http://www.amnesty.org/en/human-rights-defenders/issues/international-campaigning

[22] Ibid.

as a tool for mobilization. Further, most anti-colonial actions of the twentieth century

appealed to universal human rights. The very term "human rights" implies a degree of

universality, suggesting that these rights are something that all should enjoy. Yet,

comprehensively defining and delineating what rights should be universal is problematic.

That is why defining a right as a universal is most effective in mobilizing a given

populace after a particular violation; it is then that the universality of that right appears

most convincing and compelling.[23]

Human rights concepts recur continually in Tunisian cultural productions around

14 January, but rather than serving only as a tool for those who oppose oppressive

regimes, human rights arguments have also been used to frame violent interventions.[24]

One of the problems with human rights is its potential use as an excuse for international

intervention, coercion, and imperialism. Importantly, concepts of human rights was not

just a tool of protestors in mobilizing and constructing their arguments but has often been

a rhetorical justification for government initiatives to 'free' women from the 'oppression'

of their own societies. It is no surprise then that many Tunisian artists call into question

or even satirize the human rights concept.

Democratic states are responsible for grave human rights abuses as well. Consider

a case that Talal Asad highlighted during the UN intervention in Somalia: the US carried

out a bombing campaign which completely destroyed entire city blocks, and caused

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[23] The above statement by Gellner points to egalitarianism that is not necessarily financial; this is interesting because egalitarianism implies the same degree of universality as does the human rights concept.

[24] From the French colonization of Algeria, to the US occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, the liberation and protection of women framed as a human rights imperative has been an ubiquitous feature of legitimizing discourses.

untold civilian casualties and yet never held a public inquiry on it.[25] The well known

scandal at Abu Ghraib and the continued use of extraordinary renditions further

demonstrate that democracies do not uphold human rights across the board, despite oft-

cited commitments to upholding certain universal rights. In his book, *Rejecting Rights*,

Sonu Bedi postulates that just as authoritarian governments may allow their citizens

certain rights, democracies often limit the rights of their citizenry. Bedi then claims that

"the scope of liberty is 'logically distinct' from democracy."[26] It is clear, therefore, that

democracy is not a complete panacea for human rights abuses.

A government's concern regarding to the human rights abuses of another country

is always situated within unequal dynamics of power. Foreign governments that see it as

their duty, as Talal Asad put it, to "redeem" the victimized,[27] have also in the past used

human rights in order to justify an imperialist project. For example: beginning in the

1930s, French officials in Algeria started to design their policies to target women, and

their perceived status as evinced by the veil, in order to "liberate them" and in doing so

convince half of the population of the moral superiority of French culture.[28] The Judeo-

Christian "redemption" model was employed in the case of Algeria in order to "civilize"

the local population but ironically failed to account for the agency that Algerian women

did possess, and the large role they would play in colonial resistance.[29]

Beyond the messages contained within works of political contestation, an

interesting shared feature of Raï as well as Tunisian and Palestinian urban music is the

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[25] Asad, Talal, "What Do Human Rights Do? An Anthropological Inquiry," *Theory and Event*, 4:4, 2000, pp. 5, Accessed March 25, 2011: http://0-muse.jhu.edu.lib.aucegypt.edu:80/journals/theory_and_event/v004/4.4asad.html
[26] Bedi, Sonu, Rejecting Rights, *Cambridge University Press*, (New York, NY: 2009) pp. 15
[27] Asad, Talal, "What Do Human Rights Do? An Anthropological Inquiry," pp. 25-27
[28] Fanon, Frantz, and Chevalier, Haakon, *A Dying Colonialism*, Grove Press, (New York, NY: 1959), 36-38.
[29] Ibid.

degree of "freedom" musicians enjoy in dissemination of their respective media. In his

article entitled, "Alternative Alternatives: Free Media, Dissent, and Emergent Activist

Networks," Ted M Coopman has outlined what we he terms "free media:"

> There are three major attributes of what constitutes free media… freedom from/rejection
> of governmental regulation; freedom from/rejection of commercial or traditional funding
> constraints; and freedom from/rejection of organizational constraints.[30]…Funding is
> arguably the biggest hurdle facing alternative or radical media.[31]

According to this definition, Raï, Tunisian, and Palestinian music have all at some point

in their history enjoyed a certain amount of freedom. Grassroots hip-hop, for example,

can be produced on a simple laptop and uploaded to the internet almost immediately. As

of December 2009, 3.5 million Tunisians have access to the internet, out of a population

that was roughly 10.5 million in 2009.[32] The internet is a very important means of

dissemination in Tunisia, and internet penetration has only increased during the two and a

half years since the above statistics were collected. In addition, because adult literacy in

Tunisia is quite high, "surfing" the internet is quite easy. At the time of this writing, the

internet is only beginning to be regulated by states, no funding is necessary to upload

your media to popular sites such as YouTube, and the only organizational constraint

facing uploaded media is potential censorship of graphic material. Even then, many sites

host completely uncensored "raw" material no matter how graphic.

Certain conceptualizations and projections of hip hop and its unregulated

dissemination argue that lack of control is actually a detriment to the supposedly

monolithic, essentialized nature of hip hop. Carlton A. Usher in his book, *A Rhyme is a*

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[30] Coopman, Ted M., "Alternative Alternatives: Free Media, Dissent, and Emergent Activist Networks,"
Representing Resistance: Media, Civil Disobedience, and the Global Justice Movement, ed. Opel, Andy,
and Pompper, Donnalyn, Praeger Publishers (Westport, USA: 2003), pp. 198
[31] Ibid, pp. 200
[32] ATI and US Census reports, cited in: Internet World Stats: Usage and Population Statistics, "Tunisia
Internet Usage and Telecommunication Marketing Statists," 2010, Accessed February, 7, 2012:
http://www.internetworldstats.com/af/tn.htm

Terrible Thing to Waste: Hip-hop and the Creation of a Political Philosophy, argue that

lack of censorship of the hip-hop industry negatively impacts the dissemination of a

political message: "[Hip-hop Culture's] failure to self-govern and chastise elements that

undermine its political agenda will continue to derail any serious attempts at advancing

its interests."[33] I disagree on a number of points. The lack of any governance, as we shall

see, expands the potential of a political message, and simultaneously removes any

organizational or fiscal restraints that might hinder that message. It is also quite apparent

that there is no "industry" of so called "grassroots" hip-hop, in that it is diffuse and often

spontaneous. Also, given the diverse interests represented by the many forms and flavors

of hip-hop, it would be a mistake to presume there is one unified political agenda. Mike

Moore claims: "Hip hop places a microphone in the hands of marginalized members of

society…"[34] This contention results in a romanticized view of hip hop as primarily a

vehicle of political commentary (issuing from the dominated) while ignoring the

differences, competitions, and internal contestations (of field orthodoxy) inherent in the

hip hop musical field. The articulation of a hip hop "counterpublic" similarly

essentializes hip hop discourses via their confliction with the public sphere, and again,

discounts competition and contestation within the field of cultural production. Achille

Mbembe states that:

> [I]n order to account for both the mind-set and the effectiveness of postcolonial relations
> of power, we need to go beyond the binary categories used in standard interpretations of
> domination, such as resistance v. passivity, autonomy v. subjection, state v. civil society,
> hegemony v. counter-hegemony, totalisation v. detotalisation.[35]

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[33] Usher, Carlton A, *A Rhyme is a Terrible Thing to Waste: Hip-hop and the Creation of a Political Philosophy*, Africa World Press (Trenton, USA: 2006), pp. 131

[34] Moore, Mike, "The Economics of Cultural Legitimacy in Jip Hop's Counterpublic Space," *Gnovis Journal*, Fall 2007, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 8

[35] Mbembe, Achille, "Provisional Notes on the Postcolony," *Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 1992, pp. 3

Mbembe rightly points out that any introduction of binary discourses or modes of power such as government/resitance, or public/counterpublic "are not helpful… [and] cloud our understanding of postcolonial relations.[36] Mbembe further contends that:

> [It is] wrong […] to continue to interpret postcolonial relationships in terms of resistance or absolute domination, or as a function of the binary oppositions usually adduced in conventional analyses of movements of indiscipline and revolt (e.g. counter-discourse, counter-society, counterhegemony, 'the second society', etc).[37]

The differences assumed between 'publics' or nodes of power relations also obscure a multitude of processes both initiated within, and imposed on, a given field of cultural production. Raï for instance, has faced excessive governmental regulation, and for half a century or more it has been part of an organized musical industry. It is ironic, however, that this same regulation has allowed Raï musicians to be more explicit and controversial in their viewpoints. Joan Gross, David McMurray, and Ted Swedenburg postulate in their article, "Arab Noise and Ramadan Nights: Raï, Rap, and Franco-Maghrebi Identity," that as sales of audio cassettes grew rapidly, producers insisted that their artists employ increasingly risqué lyrics.[38] The Algerian state viewed the spread of cassettes as such a threat to the ban on the distribution of Raï music that it even attempted to ban the import of cassette tapes into Algeria.[39] The cassette tape, however, could not be contained, and Raï's status as contraband thus aided musicians in their pursuit of artistic freedom by consecrating their efforts in the Algerian activist field. Wide-scale

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[36] Ibid, pp. 3
[37] Ibid, pp. 5
[38] Gross, Joan, McMurray David, and Swedenburg, Ted, "Arab Noise and Ramadan Nights: Rai, Rap, and Franco-Maghrebi Identity," *Diaspora* 3, no. 1 (1994), pp. 202.
[39] Noor Al-Deen, Hana, "The Evolution of Rai Music," *Journal of Black Studies*, Sage Publications: 2005, No. 35, pp. 605.

availability, according to Noor al-Deen Hana in her article "The Evolution of Raï Music,"

forced the government's hand: "The popularity of this music was felt so strongly in

Algeria that the government was forced to acknowledge this genre of music and to lift

some of the earlier restrictions that were imposed on Raï music."[40] Rod Skilbeck has

suggested that lifting the ban on Raï originated in the continued belief that it was a

western art form and could function as a powerful tool in combating the spread of Islamic

extremism.[41] Skilbeck suggests that this tactic is not without precedent, as the Soviets

used western rock in central Asia for the same purpose.[42] By delineating the west and

Islam into discrete entities, therefore, music was perceived as a weapon to proactively

produce epistemic violence to combat essentialized social norms in a target population.

The use of music against religious thinking constitutes epistemic violence par excellence

as it was used to challenge supposed wide-spread doxa, and presumably, condition the

population to better tolerate the state.

Most accounts of Raï music trace its origins to political resistance against colonial

domination and thus ascribe it to a category of resistance music. In contrast, I argue that

calling Raï (or any other musical genre) a music of continual resistance is not completely

accurate, as it is a very large and broad genre of music. If one were to identify a general

undercurrent in Raï, it would be the continual redefining and reconstituting of Algerian

nationalism. The reconstitution of nationalism argument, in my opinion, is more

academically responsible than simply labeling Raï as resistance.

In the mid-1980s Raï became so popular that the Algerian state could no longer

ignore its influence and at this time sensed an opportunity to co-opt Raï musical influence

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[40] Noor Al-Deen, Hana, 605.
[41] Skilbeck, Rod, "Mixing Pop and Politics: The Role of Rai in Algerian Political Discourse."
[42] Ibid.

into the national agenda; the state-run radio service subsequently edited and infused lyrics with nationalistic messages.[43] Gross, McMuray and Swedenburg highlight one particular example: "A line originally sung by several Chebs as 'we made love in a broken-down shack' was broadcast on Algerian radio as 'we did our military service in a broken-down shack.'"[44] This co-opting of Raï into the state agenda is one of many examples of nationalism redefined throughout Raï's history: at first nationalism that was anti-colonial, later defining itself in opposition to Islamist elements within Algerian society, and later still, being effectively co-opted to serve the national government's interests.

Palestinian hip-hop has been well documented in the academic community, as well as the film industry. Nasser al-Taee's "Voices of Peace and the Legacy of Reconciliation: Popular Music, Nationalism, and the Quest for Peace in the Middle East," highlights past and present nationalist undertones and messages in Palestinian music.[45] Still, the dominant trend in analyzing the Palestinian hip-hip at present is to highlight examples of artists calling for increased cooperation between Israel and Palestine, Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation, or Palestinian appeals for ratified statehood. The prevalent yet diverse themes of resistance, nationalism, or cooperation, highlighted by analysts, are evidence that the message in Palestinian hip hop is not always one of subversion.

Examining human rights and nationalism based arguments in the variations of music listed above allows us to understand only a few of the dimensions of these musical genres. Both arguments can mobilize large segments of the population, and indeed might

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[43] Gross, Joan, McMurray David, and Swedenburg, Ted,, 202.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Al-Taee, Nasser, "Voices for Peace and the Legacy of Reconciliation: Popular Music, Nationalism and the Quest for Peace in the Middle East," *Popular Music*, Vol. 21, No. 1, January 2002, pp. 41- 61, accessed April 30, 2011, http://www.jstor.org/stable/853586?seq=8

be among the most effective (non-religious) mobilizing techniques. By examining the aforementioned musical categories, I hoped to examine the role of music in resistance and/or political discourse while displaying the ubiquitous use of nationalism and human rights based arguments in said discourse. Still, it became clear that calling the music simply "resistance" might imply that it is, at heart, simply a reaction to the status quo. This music however, does not only refute an old image, but also proposes a new one.

In addition to betraying the very fluid nature of both the music and the categories themselves, labeling any of these genres as "resistance" or "subversive" is a myopic interpretation that is unfortunately employed by many commentators on the subject. It is impossible for one to speak accurately of any genre of music (even one so laden with socio-political commentary) in such a generalization. Unfortunately this mistake is ubiquitous especially when speaking of hip-hop. It has been often argued that hip-hop is a subversive (or "resistance") genre,[46] which arose out of dissatisfaction with socio-economic conditions in which the artists lived. This contention wholly ignores the actual value of hip-hop and music in general: it is malleable and can be adapted to any specific purpose, characteristics that this thesis aims to illustrate in detail. For example, those who encapsulate hip-hop in a narrowly defined category might be surprised to learn of the 2006 hip-hop opera ("hip-hopera") based on the life of Muammar Gaddafi, produced by the English National Opera company (ENO) and performed in the United Kingdom.[47]

It may be easier to categorize a musical genre when looking at a specific point in its history, but even then, complications arise. For instance, throughout its history Raï has

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[46] Hibbard, Noah, "Popular Public Resistance: Hip-Hop Culture's Role in Challenging Neoliberal Hegemony and Globalization," Presented at the Fourth Annual Kent State Symposium on Democracy, no date cited, accessed May 20, 2011: http://upress.kent.edu/Nieman/Popular_Public_Resistance.htm
[47] Lawless, Jill, "Hip-hop Gadhafi?" Tulsa World, September 6, 2004, (Tulsa, OK) pp. D3.

been a vehicle for many arguments: anti-colonialism, anti-government (post independence), pro-government, anti-Islamist, pro-Algerian, anti-debauchery, and even pro-debauchery (drinking and fornicating). Palestinian hip-hop is no different, as different works and different artists over the years have made arguments ranging from pro-collaboration (with Israel), to anti-colonialism, nationalism, anti-violence and anti-drug use. The above categories are as diffuse and fluid as the works they supposedly encapsulate. In addition, both of these genres at any precise moment have claimed a multitude of the above themes, often in the same works.

If one is attempting to generalize, it would be more accurate to analyze a single work in order to find dominant themes within it. For example, examine the following (translated) lyrics of Cheb Khaled's *Wahran Wahran*: "Oran! Oran! You've lost/ many great citizens/ emigrated from you/ they dwelt in exile confused/ and exile is hard and traitorous."[48] In this work, Khaled is simply lamenting the diaspora and Algeria's turbulent political landscape, rather than posing a fundamental challenge to authority. How can this song be classified within the 'resistance' genre?[49]

It is true that much Raï openly challenged government and cultural norms. More than four decades ago, Cheikha Rimitti was openly performing lyrics such as, "when he embraces me, he pricks me like a snake,"[50] and in another Rimitti states that, "people adore God, I adore beer."[51] In her article entitled "The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Power Through Bedouin Women," Lila Abu-Lughod at one point is

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[48] Khaled, Cheb, "Wahran Wahran," trans. Rai, January 10, 2008, accessed April 25, 2011: http://lyricstranslate.com/en/Wahran-Wahran-Wahran-Wahran.html
[49] Cheikha Rimitti, "Cheikha Rimitti-2001," and interview with Banning Eyre, Afropop Worldwide: Music and Stories from the African Planet, New York, 2001.
[50] Cheikha Rimitti, Quoted in: Gross, Joan, McMurray David, and Swedenburg, Ted, "Arab Noise and Ramadan Nights: Rai, Rap, and Franco-Maghrebi Identity," *Diaspora* 3, no. 1 (1994), 201.
[51] Ibid, 201

elucidating on a specific kind of Bedouin poetry, as she states that, "people's opinions that this type of poetry was risqué and un-Islamic, suggested their uneasy recognition of the subversiveness of the genre."[52] She goes on to state that in the house where she lived, however, "poetry was cherished."[53] Likewise, Raï may have been viewed as a subversive genre but has attained a "cherished" station in Algerian society.

The lyrics of Cheikha Rimmiti's songs showcased above most surely were perceived as risqué, like the Bedouin poetry mentioned by Abu-Lughod. It is certainly true that many perceive Algerian Raï as a similar "subversive genre" due to a high number of popular works which have openly challenged authorities (colonial authorities, post-colonial authorities, Islamists). Nevertheless, many works within the genre are merely formulations of existential commentary.

Palestinian hip-hop is also expresses diverse political and social messages. In their song "A Stranger in My Own Country," the Palestinian hip-hop group DAM state, "We encounter faces that don't want us, looks full of disgust, whispers full of swearing, just wishing to expel us. What? Did you forget who made the foundations for these buildings?"[54] While the above lyrics certainly challenge openly what the artists perceive as injustices and invoke the themes of nationalism and human rights, again, to collapse the genre to one entirely of resistance would ignore projects such as the Sulha Peace Project in which Arab and Israeli hip-hop artists performed together.[55] Although DAM was not in attendance at the Sulha Peace Project, they have attempted to collaborate with

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[52] Abu-Lughod, Lila, "The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Power Through Beduin Women," *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 17, No. 1, February, 1990, pp. 47.
[53] Ibid, pp. 47
[54] DAM, "A Stranger in My Own Country," as quoted in: Thomas, Amelia, Israeli-Arab Rap: An Outlet for Youth Protest," *Christian Science Monitor*, July 21, 2005, pp. 11.
[55] Gelfand, Alexander, "Hip Hop as Conflict Resolution," *The Forward*, September 8, 2006, pp. 14.

Israeli artists in the past; most notably Y-Love, who performs in the attire of an Orthodox Jew. Perhaps one would label mutual recognition a form of resistance, but in the words of Amelia Thomas, "[t]he message of their music isn't always political."[56] It is clear that labeling a genre as *anything* forces one to overlook any evidence that would refute that label. Yet, individual songs can be interpreted more easily as it is more difficult to generalize about them.

Although there is virtually no academic work on Tunisian music produced during the 2011 revolution at the time of this writing, Aljazeera and other news agencies have highlighted specific examples of hip-hop artists using their work as political activism during the revolution. A look at the work of a Tunisian rapper named El Général properly illustrates that the increasing potential for accuracy of descriptive labels runs concurrent with collapsing scope. His song *Rayes Lebled* ("President of the Country") was released on November 7, 2010 (the twenty-third anniversary of former president Ben Ali's takeover and approximately one month before the "start" of the 14 January Revolution). The danger of generalizing with regards to theme and motivation is less present in an individual work than with an entire genre. For example, if the reader examines the lyrics present in *Rayes Lebled* and bears in mind the time at which it was released, the political nature of the song cannot be overlooked. Consider the refrain for instance:

> Mr. President your people are dead. Many people eat from the garbage and you see what is happening in the country; misery everywhere. People have not found a place to sleep. I am speaking to you now in the name of the people who are suffering and were put under-foot. [57]

[56] Thomas, Amelia, Israeli-Arab Rap: An Outlet for Youth Protest."
[57] El Général, "Rayes Lebled," trans. kapdkjumb, ed. by the author, *Youtube.com*, posted: January 10, 2011, accessed January 30, 2011: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IeGlJ7OouR0

He goes on to criticize the country's institutions: "The law of the Constitution, put it in water and drink it."[58] El Général also criticizes what he calls a "direct robbery that dominated the country by force. Not to name any names, everyone knows who they are."[59] It is quite certain that with the above line, El Général is referring to the widespread sentiment that Ben Ali's wife, Leila Trabelsi, and her family were spending the country's wealth as their own. Their rapacious greed as well as the Tunisian citizenry's knowledge of it, continued until the end; French intelligence officials claim that Trabelsi had left with 1.5 tonnes of gold bars when she and her husband fled the country, supporting local rumors.[60]

El Général also claims the right(s) to eat, work, and express political opinions: "There are still people dying on the street who want to work to survive but their voice was not heard… Where is the right of expression? They are only words."[61] El Général was promptly arrested by Tunisian police shortly after the release of this song, which further supported his assertion that the Tunisian people had no freedom of expression. However, to label El Général's speech acts (or indeed, anyone else's) simply as "resistance" or "acts of resistance" would posit a binary division between state and populace while overlooking the breadth of power dynamics informing, and being utilized by, dissident groups.

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[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Agence France-Presse, "French Intelligence claim that Ben Ali fled Tunisia with 1.5 tonnes of gold," *Hindustan Times*, January 17, 2011, accessed May 25, 2011: http://www.hindustantimes.com/French-intelligance-claim-Ben-Ali-fled-Tunisia-with-1-5-tonnes-gold/Article1-651535.aspx
[61] El Général, "Rayes Lebled,"

IV. THE LIMITATIONS OF RESISTANCE

In "*Rayes Lebled,*" El Général makes it clear that his lyrics were a message to then-President Ben Ali. The themes elicited ranged from poverty to the horrors of rapacious kleptocracy and were directed at the chief authority figure within Tunisia. However, any study outlining the use of subversive action propelled by nationalism(s), human rights, or other motives should pay special attention to power dynamics, their effect on formulating the self, and transitively the subversive subject in question. Consider Saba Mahmood's bridging of Michel Foucault with Judith Butler in order to articulate the relation between power, resistance, and identity:

> Power… can not be understood solely on the model of domination as something possessed and deployed by individuals or sovereign agents over others, with a singular intentionality, structure, or location that presides over its rationality and execution… power is to be understood as a strategic relation of force that permeates life and is productive of new forms of desires, objects, relations, and discourses. Central to his formulation is what Foucault calls the paradox of *subjectivation*: the very process and conditions that secure a subject's subordination are also the means by which she [/he] becomes a self-conscious identity and agent.[62]

I would add that the power structure in which a form of "resistance" can be located is always multifaceted, which further complicates the notion of resistance. One therefore cannot examine resistance in all of its forms outside the context of forms of power that intimately permeate the lives of everyone involved in the dynamic. Abu-Lughod observes that there is a tendency to interpret "all forms of resistance as signs of the ineffectiveness of systems of power and of the resilience and creativity of the human spirit in its refusal to be dominated."[63] The problem of an observer interpreting resistance in this way,

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[62] Mahmood, Saba, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, Princeton University Press, (Princeton, NJ: 2005) pp. 17. Commenting on: Foucault, Michel, "Truth and Power," *Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977*, ed. and trans. by Gordon, C., Pantheon Books (New York, NY: 1980), pp. 109-133. See also: Butler, Judith, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex,'"* Routledge, (New York, NY: 1993).

[63] Abu-Lughod, Lila, "The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Power Through Beduin Women," *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 17, No. 1, February, 1990, pp. 42.

according to Abu-Lughod, is that "we collapse distinctions between forms of resistance and foreclose certain questions about the workings of power."[64] Foucault stated: "Where there is power there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequentially, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power."[65] Therefore any type of resistance should be analyzed within its power dynamic to understand what is being resisted. As Abu-Lughod phrased Foucault's postulation: "Power is something that works not just negatively, by denying, restricting, prohibiting, or repressing, but also positively, by producing forms of pleasure, systems of knowledge, goods, and discourses."[66] Therefore, it is natural for "resistors" to attempt to gain advantage through parts of the established power dynamic while challenging other segments. In his 1849 treatise, *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience*, which has shaped ideas of nonviolent resistance, Henry David Thoreau wrote: "In fact, I quietly declare war with the state, after my fashion, though I will still make what use and get what advantage of her I can, as is usual in such cases."[67] It is possible to challenge one section of an existing power dynamic while simultaneously ignoring or taking advantage of other segments with in the same matrix.

At any given time one can resist a singular and unitary power structure, while subverting several others simultaneously. Multiple power structures rely and reflect on each other as in a hall of mirrors. If an individual takes a book in a public library (funded and maintained by the state) and, rather than check it out, hides it in the library so that it would be accessible only to them, is the individual in question resisting the state, the

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[64] Ibid. pp. 42.

[65] Foucault, Michel, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1: An Introduction. Random House, (New York, NY: 1978) pp. 95-96, as quoted in Abu-Lughod, Lila, "The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Power Through Beduin Women," pp. 42.

[66] Abu-Lughod, Lila, "The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Power Through Beduin Women," pp. 42.

[67] Thoreau, Henry David, *Walden or Life in the Woods and On the Duty of Civil Disobedience*, Signet Classics, (New York, NY; 1963) pp. 236.

library, the catalogue system, the structure of late fees and process, or morality in general? All of these structures exist within a singular state power structure, but the authority that the book-hider intended to undermine would still be impossible to discern without questioning him or her closely. Concluding such an act is a violation of state power simply because all of these structures exist within the umbrella of state would reduce the intended and resulting forms of resistance. Abu-Lughod postulates, "[s]ince the moral code is one of the most important means of perpetuating the unequal structures of power, then violations of this code must be understood as ways of resisting the system and challenging the authority of those who represent and benefit from it."[68] How then would this type of resistance be applied to the aforementioned case of ousted President Ben Ali and his wife absconding from Tunisia with a portion of the country's sovereign wealth? Is it possible to label their opportunism as "resistance?" It is true that they resisted the moral force of the Tunisian populace's wishes, but it is absurd that we employ the same word to describe the actions of individuals such as Maikel Nabil who was arrested in Egypt for criticizing the military after former President Hosni Mubarak was deposed.[69] The word 'resistance' therefore reveals itself as insufficient to explain the diverse actions of individuals acting outside of commonly accepted norms or hierarchies.

The problem with the notion of resistance is that power is diffuse and resistance(s) atomized. In the above analogy, the person who hid the book in order to maintain prolonged although limited possession of it did not necessarily want to

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[68] Abu-Lughod, Lila, "The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Power Through Beduin Women," pp. 47.

[69] Ibrahim, Ekram, "Majority of activists in military prisons released, criticism of SCAF continues," *Ahram Online*, May 24, 2011, accessed May 24, 2010:
http://english.ahram.org.eg/~/NewsContent/1/64/12804/Egypt/Politics-/Majority-of-activists-in-military-prisons-released.aspx

challenge the state, but rather a more localized power structure. If we disregard the actor's motives because the state has permeated the power structure and ultimately formed the agent, the actor may be perceived as challenging the state in a minor way. However, because the state depends on institutions such as a subsidized public library to permeate the daily life of its subjects, a given institution may seem like a singular and discrete power matrix to a given actor in a seemingly one-dimensional interaction. There exist both simultaneity and symbiosis between the different "mirrors" (to continue the analogy) that make up the singular power matrix. As Abu-Lughod puts it:

> [d]espite the considerable theoretical sophistication of many studies of resistance…
> because they are ultimately more concerned with finding resistors and explaining
> resistance than with examining power, they do not explore as fully as they might the
> implications of the forms of resistance they locate.[70]

Due to the amorphous and slippery nature of the term "resistance," therefore, for my purposes of analyzing different politically charged musical lyrics, it is more useful to understand them as operating in a localized context that can be perceived within a vast cultural array of (sometimes illicit) open political expression(s). It may also be helpful here to consider the power of a vast array of cultural products in shaping political discourse, and ultimately helping to define political issues as well as the observers/participants who will define themselves in relation to those issues. For this reason, I have made an effort in this thesis to outline themes of 'political contestation' rather than 'resistance' in order to highlight continually the multitude of poles and not fall into the simplified binary division between individual and state.

Upon beginning this project my principal goal was to determine whether the political statements in Tunisian hip-hop and other forms of music would qualify as

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[70] Abu-Lughod, Lila, "The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Power Through Beduin Women," pp. 41.

resistance, and if so, what their effect was on the general populace. I have concluded that the question of "resistance" is itself irrelevant. Within these musical works, the intent, capacity for mobilization, and effect of the political statements are more important than glorifying an entity or person for resisting. More important than the classification of the works or genres listed in this thesis is the effect that those works have had on the political landscape. The aforementioned works have repeatedly invoked the themes of human rights and nationalism (among others), but their result (without the problematic(s) of resistance) continues to be understudied by those who comment and research on Raï, hip hop, and other musical genres. Most importantly, in labeling a musical genre simply "resistance" the observer separates the cultural product from the governing dynamic, placing the subject before power and making it an object of study devoid of socio-political and historical context. Resistance and government are not the lone dichotomy obscuring interpretations of music, government, politics, and how they intersect. A look at the dichotomy between 'tradition' and 'modernity,' beginning with their function in the historical Tunisian music field, and later in post-independence government policy, therefore becomes necessary.

V. *TUNISIAN HISTORY AND MUSICAL 'TRADITION'*

In 1888, Rodolphe d'Erlanger arrived in Tunisia and began what would become a life-long affiliation with the village of Sidi Bou Said.[71] Even the age of sixteen, d'Erlanger knew that he was only beginning a career that would define both him and Tunisian culture.[72] The contemporary accounts of d'Erlanger's enchantment with Tunisia, his contributions to Tunisian cultural production, as well as his diverse body of work detailing and even promoting Tunisian 'traditional' music, often frame his presence in Tunisia in a favorable light. His efforts to preserve the 'traditional' within Tunisian culture represents a growing trend within Tunisian society that not only continued, but intensified to this day: the perceived encroachment of the "modern" on the "traditional" and those who either celebrate or denounce it.

Returning to Tunisia two decades later as an educated "Baron," d'Erlanger was by then well-known for his paintings as well as work on Arab musicology.[73] Throughout his career, Baron d'Erlanger published six volumes chronicling Tunisian and "Arab" musical styles, most notably *Ma'luf* and *Stenballi*, and he was integral in the sending of "traditional" musicians from Tunisia to the first International Congress of Arab Music in 1932.[74] According to Roth Davis, d'Erlanger believed *Ma'luf* vulnerable to extinction and "blamed corruptive European influences for contributing to this condition, and he criticized the Tunisian aristocracy in particular for inviting European music teachers to

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[71] Cookson, Linda, "Tunisia: The blue and white village of Sidi Bou Said," *The Independent*, September 13, 2008, http://www.independent.co.uk/travel/africa/tunisia-the-blue-and-white-village-of-sidi-bou-said-928152.html

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Davis, Roth, "Traditional Arab Musical Ensembles in Tunis: Modernizing al-Turath in the Shadow of Egypt," *Asian Music*, Vol. XXVIII, Spring/Summer 1997, pp. 73.

their courts."[75] In retrospect, it seems quite absurd that a European immigrant to North Africa would criticize the locals for not preserving more of their traditional cultural practices. This reality is made all the more ironic for anyone familiar with the violent colonial history of the Maghreb as d'Erlanger was himself, French.

On a bluff overlooking the Gulf of Tunis, d'Erlanger constructed his magnificent palace, *Dar Ennejma Ezzhara* (or, "the House of the Star of Venus") which took over a decade to build.[76] During my fieldwork, I was taken to his home by one of my interlocutors who remarked, "If you study Tunisian music, you must see the home of Baron d'Erlanger." Upon arriving to the grounds one is struck by an awesome view complimented by the peaceful, faint sound of music being rehearsed in what used to be the home of the groundskeeper, which itself is no small dwelling. Entering the main house, I was immediately reminded of Beiteddine in Lebanon; the palace more closely reflected a turn of the 19th Century Arab notable's taste than that of a French immigrant. Fountains run throughout, arabesque-like woodwork decorates that which is not already laden with carved stucco, and the floors house stones that resemble the once-valuable dacite of the structures flanking the famous medieval *Moez Eddin* street in Cairo.

Throughout his career in Tunisia, through writing books, promoting events, in his speech itself, and even in the construction of his own home, it seems that d'Erlranger sought to archive the 'traditional.' By focusing on the traditional and the promotion of it in order to save or redeem it, d'Erlanger both endorsed and became part of a teleological narrative of the *modern* as rupture. Archiving, such as that done by d'Erlanger, has historically been an integral part of colonial projects. The works and styles "saved" by

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[75] Ibid.
[76] Cookson, Linda, "Tunisia: The blue and white village of Sidi Bou Said."

d'Erlanger thus became images, representations, of a world which would inevitably be subsumed by the force of supposedly modern, enlightened, Western culture. These same images (books, paintings) were often brought to the colonial capitals and placed in museums, whereupon onlookers could quietly whisper to each other on the primitive and strange nature of their vanquished foe, thus further legitimizing continued colonization.

Even stranger than the role of archiving and redeeming of the traditional, is d'Erlanger's success at constructing the traditional. The word"traditional" itself implies specificity and attachment: As a category for analysis and when essentialized by an outsider to said tradition, "traditional" bears remarkable symmetry to the boundaries of tradition set forth by one who self-actualizes as traditional. What becomes part of a people's traditions (and how it became so) is infinitely more complicated than is typically politically advantageous to point out. Consider the work of Sami Zubaida as presented by Ulrich Beck:

> …Sami Zubaida has shown, the 'Indian restaurant' is an invention of Bengalis living in London, as are the 'exotic dishes' which are now celebrated and consumed all over the world as ambassadors of Indian traditions. In the source of its march to globalization, the Indian restaurant and its characteristic menu were also ultimately exported to India, which stimulated Indian households to cook Indian food in accordance with the London inventions. Thus it came to pass that one could eat 'Indian' food even in India, thereby confirming the myth of origins.[77]

Just as Zubaida's Indian food was transformed into an Indian tradition, d'Erlanger's grand *Dar Ennejma Ezzhara* has now become home of the Tunisian National Center for Arab and Mediterranean Music.[78] Thus the internalized *traditional* re-issued by a European actually came to represent, host, and embody tradition.

This blend of influences within a given tradition is of course, nothing new. Andalusian music, as the name would suggest was imported from Spain into the Islamic

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[77] Beck, Ulrich, *The Cosmopolitan Vision*, Polity Press, 2006, (Cambridge, UK) pp. 10.
[78] Cookson, Linda, "Tunisia: The blue and white village of Sidi Bou Said."

Maghreb. Despite the name, however, the musician largely credited (in many sources) with inventing the *andalusi* musical style was actually a Persian[79] ex-slave known as *Ziryab* (Blackbird) who, after arriving in Cordoba in the early ninth century, founded a new music school.[80] In the long-sustained Moorish diaspora, and specifically in the thirteenth century, waves of immigration flooded into the Maghreb and brought with them this distinctive style of music.[81]

In many of the 'traditional' Tunisian ceremonies, there exist any number of instruments that are not said to be originally of Tunisian origin, such as the *gombri*; a three stringed instrument which according to several of the musicians I spoke with, arrived in Tunis from West Africa over four centuries ago. The *gombri* is, however, used in many Tunisian ceremonies, especially in Sufi circles, as it is said that its sound is known to scare away the *jinn*. During a 'traditional' Tunisian *stanbelli* ceremony, one may likely witness participants descend into a trance which can become so intense it may require someone to intercede on their behalf by forcibly removing them from the ceremony. All of the above has evolved into a web of practices that some Tunisians believe, is (purely) Tunisian tradition, despite "Tunisia" as an independent nation-state has not yet existed for a century, and it should be mentioned, the proponents of this tradition are simultaneously aware of the mixed origins of their tradition's components.

There is no purity of tradition as far as music is concerned. The relevance of this point cannot be over-stated as many have asked, why during the revolution did Tunisians issue statements of political contestation via more contemporary [often read as: *foreign*]

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[79] Although some sources claim *Ziryab* was of mixed race.
[80] National Geographic, "Andalusian Classical Music" National Geographic Music Online, Last update not available, Accessed: May 1, 2011.
[81] Ibid.

forms of musician expression? It is my contention that the forms of artistic political contestation that are visible to the foreign observer are not only limited, but directly influence the forms of expression embraced by Tunisian dissidents. However, the answer to the above question is quite complicated as involves the role and position of different variations of musical tradition within Tunisian society. A detailed look at Tunisian society since independence therefore becomes necessary.

Bourguiba, Ben Ali, and the Formation of Contemporary Tunisian Cultural Climate(s)

In many studies of post-colonial history, academics have represented the colonial period as a rupture. Whether representing the multiple ruptures of invasion, occupation and independence, or viewing the contemporary 'post colonial' state as still existing in a position of continued (economic and political) [neo]colonization, commentators locate significant historical schism(s) and rupture(s) in colonial occupation. There is indeed much value in this approach. However, the changes and reforms of Tunisian society in the period immediately following independence are much more instructive when trying to understand Tunisian society today and no study of this period can exclude the changes initiated by former president Habib Bourguiba. Bourguiba, a charismatic although certainly dictatorial leader, was French educated, and it seems that during his time abroad he internalized the leading theories of teleological development of the period [82]. The particular brand of nationalism issued from Bourguiba and his Neo-Destour ("New Constitution") party would cause many social changes in Tunisia towards an end that many today perhaps mistakenly, label as 'secularism.' In fact, there was certainly a tinge

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[82] Moore, Clement Henry, *Tunisia Since Independence: The Dynamics of One Party Rule*, University of California Press, (Berkeley, USA: 1965), pp. 41.

of internalized orientalism(s) within his policies but as we shall see, 'secularist' is not an appropriate term for Bourguiba's policies or his rhetorical basis for initiating them.

It is true, as Clement Henry Moore has pointed out, "Bourguiba had little respect for the political extremists; he once said of the Pan-Arabists in Tunis and Cairo that "their Oriental mentality does not allow them to understand that politics is the art of attaining the possible."'[83] That being said, the set of policies Bourguiba put forward, and the decisions he made (collectively known as "Bourguibism"), displayed remarkable dynamism and adaptation. While Bourguiba completely rejected French influence over the country in a colonial setting, even to the point of being influential in stirring the guerrilla movement against France,[84] after achieving independence, one might argue that he actually advanced several of France's former colonial cultural initiatives. While it is debatable whether Bourguiba was a secularist (with all the problems inherent in that term), it is quite certain that he sought to impose ostensibly *modern* forms of state and social organization onto a society that, he gave every indication he believed, still clumsily clung to its traditions.

Tunisia won its independence from France on March 20, 1956, and within the year Bourguiba had unleashed a massive reform program on the country's institutions. Both cohorts of *sharia* courts (*Malaki* and *Hanafi*) were "absorbed" into the state by August of the same year. By citing its capitulation to the former colonialists, Bourguiba was able to dismantle the *habus* system (*waqf* or lands that supported Islamic institutions).[85] One might say that Bourguiba immediately used much of his revolutionary

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[83] Ibid, pp. 44
[84] Ibid, pp. 45
[85] Perkins, Kenneth J., *A History of Modern Tunisia*, Cambridge University Press, (Cambridge, UK: 2004), pp. 135

capital in absorbing the Islamic apparati within the state. Despite the immensity of these initial changes, Bourguiba was only getting started. The revised Personal Status Code that followed only continued this trend. Kenneth Perkins, one of the leading authorities on contemporary Tunisian history summarizes the changes wrought by the new law:

> Women won new rights, including those of divorce and the approval of arranged marriages, and expanded existing entitlements in questions of child custody and inheritance. At the same time, the code explicitly placed obligations on women, such as contributing to the maintenance of the household if their means allowed. Other provisions outlawed polygamy, ended the male right of repudiation, and set minimum ages for marriages.[86]

To Moore, this represented a "legal step which the French Protectorate for political reasons had never dared."[87] Therefore, many abroad were convinced that Bourguiba was a secularist, and indeed the jury is still out. More significant than some of the reforms made during his tenure, however, were his (often Islamic) arguments framing some of them. Moreover, it is important, as Perkins points out, to consider the increasing feminist demands for reform in 1955, a year before independence.[88] Bearing this in mind, Bourguiba's apparently pro-feminist reforms could be seen as a way of co-opting the momentum of the feminist political movement, and bringing it under the umbrella of the state, as was done consistently with many forces which could have potentially challenged the dominance of the state. The co-option of the religious apparatus, as a result, becomes one more instance of state monopoly.

After Bourguiba convinced (initially at least) many leading Tunisian sheikhs of his Islamic credentials,[89] Moore explains, Bourguiba was, during the initial years,

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[86] Ibid, pp. 135
[87] Moore, Clement Henry, *Tunisia Since Independence: The Dynamics of One Party Rule*, pp. 51
[88] Perkins, Kenneth J., *A History of Modern Tunisia*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 138
[89] Ibid, pp. 48-50

referred to as *mujahid al-akbar* ("supreme combatant"),[90] which is not bad for a man who

once referred to the *hijab* (veil) as an "odious rag."[91] Perkins contends that his arguments

could be seen as an exercise of *ijtihad* (an Islamic tradition commonly translated as

"independent reasoning").[92] However, within the first year, as he was stripping their

power in both the political and social realms, many pillars of the religious community

began to object and oppose Bourguiba.[93] In an interview with *Asia Source*, Partha

Chatterjee stated:

> In the historical process of the emergence of the state, a great deal of mobilization had
> used religion, had depended on extremely powerful religious reform movements, of
> actually shaping what were seen to be religious beliefs and practices but also changing
> them, and reformulating them, in order to conform to what were seen to be the new
> challenges of the modern world.[94]

This above quote seems as if Chatterjee was actually speaking about Bourguiba in

his continued attempts to reform religious practices in order to reformulate the

state and Tunisian society's practices. If we accept Chaterjee's above postulation,

and view Bourguiba in this light, than his attempts at *ijtihad* and reformulation of

religious institutions and practices may be seen as an example of a ruler

attempting to strengthen the Tunisian government in order to, again, succeed in

the 'modern' world.

 As dissent steadily began to increase, Bourguiba oversaw a continuation of

reforms over religion, state, and society. A dual focus was placed on literacy and family

planning, and within a few years, literacy rates were steadily increasing as birth rates

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[90] Ibid, pp. 48
[91] Perkins, Kenneth J., *A History of Modern Tunisia*, pp. 137
[92] Ibid
[93] Ibid
[94] Chatterjee, Partha, "Towrads a Postcolonial Modernity," *Asia Source*, interviewed by Nermeen Shaikh, pp. 9, last update: July 4, 2009: http://www.sciy.org/2009/07/04/towards-a-postcolonial-modernity-asiasource-interview-with-partha-chatterjee/

decreased.[95] Despite the Malthusian convictions that framed Bourguiba's reforms, he was easily able to obtain support for them from much of the Tunisian populace. Bourguiba's focus on the schools is very significant for anyone attempting to understand the multi-lingual, multi-ethnic, and multi-cultural population of Tunisia today. In 1957, 96% of the total female population in Tunisia was illiterate.[96] Beginning in 1958, one fifth of the government's total budget was devoted to improving the educational system of the country.[97] By the middle of their primary school career, students at this time could expect the remainder of their coursework throughout secondary school to be in French.[98] However, Arabic was not targeted for elimination (unlike during the colonial period) and continued to be the dominant colloquial language.

Bourguiba's prediction that French could, in the words of Perkins, "serve as a bridge to the rest of the world,"[99] was indeed a good one. In much of the music produced today in Tunisia, including the music that came out during the revolution, it is quite common to hear the use of polyglossia and code-switching often culminating in a song that draws on Arabic, French, Italian, and English (among other languages). The ability of these works to be understood by speakers of other languages should not be underestimated, and of course, an artist typically desires their work to be received by the largest number of people possible. By incorporating different languages into their music, artists increase the potency of a given work, especially among the Maghrebi diaspora living in France.[100]

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[95] Perkins, Kenneth J., *A History of Modern Tunisia*, , pp. 138
[96] Ibid, pp. 138
[97] Ibid, pp. 139
[98] Ibid
[99] Perkins, Kenneth J., *A History of Modern Tunisia*, pp. 139
[100] For a more detailed discussion of the use of polyglossia, see: pp. 59-60.

In 1960, amid increasing political unrest, Bourguiba apparently had stepped over the line for many Tunisians: During one of his speeches, Bourguiba articulated that because Tunisia was in an economic *jihad* against poverty within their country, fasting was hurting the economy and was not obligatory when undertaking such a *jihad*. Therefore, he concluded, the Muslim masses of Tunisia should not fast for Ramadan.[101] When Bourguiba could not obtain the support he sought from the *Mufti* in the form of a supportive *fatwa*, he simply relieved him of his position, thus inciting riots in Kairouane.[102] For the next seventeen years, Bourguiba was to institute a number of reforms that would prove increasingly unpopular, such as agricultural reform and several measures aimed at economic liberalization, which served to motivate and empower the rhetoric and force of his opposition.

Nevertheless, Bourguiba's legacy is assured. According to UNICEF, the total adult literacy of females in Tunisia is 82% for the period from 2005-2009 in a population whose total adult literacy from 2005-2008 was 78%.[103] Tunisian society simply cannot be fathomed without its remarkable levels of education relative to its neighbors, and that education cannot be understood without considering the state-centered educational reforms initiated by Bourguiba and continued by Ben Ali.

At the very least Bourguiba was not secretive or in denial about his place within the Tunisian governmental body. Moore claimed in 1965 that, "when recently asked about Tunisia's political system, [Bourbuiba] exclaimed, 'The system? What system? I

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[101] Ibid, pp. 141
[102] Ibid
[103] UNICEF, "Women" Country Statistics, Tunisia, Last update: March 2, 2010, Accessed February 23, 2012: http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/Tunisia_statistics.html

am the system!'"[104] Bourguiba, although regarded in some circles, in a favorable light because of the reforms he ruthlessly imposed on the Tunisian populace, was nonetheless considered by many to be an elitist autocrat, and by the end of his tenure as president this view was widely held.

By 1986, dissidence directed against Bourguiba and his reforms was done openly and increasingly by those who would frame their arguments in Islamic contexts.[105] Derek Hopwood argues that it was this "militant Islamic" threat which prompted Bouguiba to assign to his interior minister, a young Zine Abidin Ben Ali, the task of ruthlessly (or so Bourguiba had hoped, claims Hopwood) crushing the dissent.[106] The Tunisian Islamic movement (known by its French acronym, MTI) was headed by Rachid Ghannouchi, now leader of the ruling Ennahdha party in post-revolution Tunisia. MTI was responsible for much of the dissent which became violent, detonating a series of bombs around the country on August 2, 1987, which killed fourteen tourists.[107]

The role of the current Ennahdha leader in these attacks is still unclear but anyone who feels compelled to employ the all-neutralizing term "moderate" when referring to his party, should view these events as a caveat. The trial that ensued against those accused of the bombings resulted in a death sentence for seven men, among whom, Ghannouchi was not present. According to Hopwood, this event is what finally drove Bourguiba to the brink of insanity,[108] and indeed the loss of his mental facilities is often present in popular narratives of Bourguiba's later years. However, recent historiographies are tending to glorify Bourguiba, and paint the narrative of his cognitive decline as simply an excuse for

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[104] Moore, Clement Henry, *Tunisia Since Independence: The Dynamics of One Party Rule*, pp. 41
[105] Hopwood, Derek, *Habib Bourguiba of Tunisia*, Macmillon Press, (London, UK: 1992), pp. 101.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid, pp. 102
[108] Ibid.

Ben Ali to take power. Indeed, many of the Tunisians are now nostalgic about the reforms initiated by Bourguiba; I even heard some Tunisians refer to themselves as "Bourguiba's children," which speaks volumes about the paternalistic style of his rule, as well as the internalization of teleological notions of 'progress' within the nation-state.[109]

On October 2, 1987, Bourguiba appointed Ben Ali as Prime Minister yet refused to approve his cabinet appointments.[110] On the night of November 6-7, Ben Ali made his move: Using a cadre of military officers loyal to him, he bloodlessly took over the presidential palace, arrested loyalists, and had the requisite number of doctors attest on paper that Bourguiba was no longer competent to hold office.[111] Bourguiba, who had slept through the entire coup, awoke the next morning to a radio address from Ben Ali attesting that he was now the constitutional leader of Tunisia.[112]

At this point, much of Tunisia celebrated the deposition of Bourguiba, believing that Ben Ali was sincere in patriotism and promises. In his 1997 article in *Middle East Report*, Chistopher Alexander summed up the initial promises and the following decade in a way that seems beyond eerie to all who have watched the so called "Arab Spring:"

> The new president promised to establish the rule of law, to respect human rights and to implement the kind of democratic political reforms that Habib Bourguiba had steadfastly refused. Along with Algeria, Jordan and Yemen, Tunisia rode the leading edge of what many hoped would be a wave of democratic transitions in the region. Ten years later, it would be difficult to find another country that has moved so far in the opposite direction.[113]

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[109] Interestingly, in February of 2011, immediately following Ben Ali's deposition, one of the songs most flooding the radio airwaves in Tunisia was from a French group known as Sexion d'Assault entitled, "Désolé," and a dominant theme of the song is feeling neglected by society and family, in addition to the hard life for an immigrant in Paris. While one must be careful not to over-read such a fact, it should not be brushed aside considering the past half-century of markedly paternalistic and ostensibly forced 'secularist' rule in Tunisia and the many parallels one could draw within the song to Tunisian life formulated by the policies of Bourguiba and Ben Ali. See: Sexion d'Assaut, "Désolé," *L'École des points vitaux*, 2010.

[110] Ibid, pp. 103

[111] Ibid, pp. 104

[112] Ibid, pp. 104-105

[113] Alexander, Christopher, "Authoritarianism and Civil Society in Tunisia: Back From the Democratic Brink," *Middle East Report*, 205, Vol. 27, Winter 1997, Acessed February 25, 2012: http://www.merip.org/mer/mer205

However, contrary to Bourguiba's fears,[114] Ben Ali continued to carry the feminist torch in Tunisia and did not repeal Bourguiba's gender policies. He also did not attempt to appease Islamists in his policies, apart from releasing many political prisoners and allowing Islamists a small degree of freedom to conduct activities in public space. In fact, by allowing the Islamists to operate in the public eye, Ben Ali also was able to more closely watch, and thus control, their activities.

To portray Ben Ali as completely nefarious, however, would unfairly dismiss many of the institutional reforms initiated during his tenure, which continue to structure and inform Tunisian society to present day. In fact, among other reforms, Ben Ali repealed presidency for life (resolving instead to simply rig elections continually). He dismantled the state security apparatus, and he also created the Rassemblement Constitutionel Democratique (RCD) party seperate from Bourguiba's own Parti Socialist Destourien (PSD).[115] Ben Ali's initial reforms led many to believe (in Tunisia as well as abroad) that he would do away with Bourguiba's repressive state and fulfill his countrymen's hopes for a more representative government. By 1991 a law was issued making school attendance mandatory for all Tunisians between the ages of six to sixteen.[116] Alexander claims that by refusing to legalize Ennahdha, Ben Ali showed his true colors for the first time.[117] This sentiment, however, is somewhat anachronistic, given the situation in neighboring Algeria. Youth riots in 1988 culminated in the 1991-2002 Civil War in which, Islamist groups were an integral component of the instability. No doubt, Algeria's democratic experiment was observed by the region's leaders with

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[114] Hopwood, Derek, *Habib Bourguiba of Tunisia*, Macmillon Press, pp. 130.
[115] Alexander, Christopher, "Authoritarianism and Civil Society in Tunisia."
[116] Perkins, Kenneth J., *A History of Modern Tunisia*, pp. 140
[117] Ibid.

great interest. There is no arguing against the dictatorial nature of Ben Ali's regime, but given that Ennahdha and the other groups that would eventually become its constituents had only recently bombed numerous areas of the country, killing tourists (in a country where tourism constitutes a large source GDP and employment[118]), it would seem unlikely that even the most democratic of states would consider legitimizing such opposition.

Despite initially dismantling of the state security apparatus, installing what we might refer to as pseudo-due process (at least on paper), and ratifying treaties banning torture,[119] the state jailed over eight thousand people between 1990 and 1992 alone.[120] This process of coercion and the continuation of Ben Ali's police state steadily intensified until he was overthrown in 2011. A leaked diplomatic cable published on WikiLeaks, drafted by US diplomats during a 2009 meeting in Tunis, includes a private statement from the Former Canadian ambassador to Tunisia, Bruno Picard, that reveals how widely dismissed was Tunisia's commitment to upholding human rights: "The Canadian ambassador said the GOT's [government of Tunisia's] statements that it does not torture are 'bullshit.' The Canadian ambassador said he had direct, first-hand evidence of torture/mistreatment of a prisoner that lasted several months."[121] The state of the Tunisian security apparatus and the treatment of its citizens was therefore well known.

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[118] Tourism accounted for a sizable source of revenue in 2010; roughly 7% of Tunisia's GDP and 12% of its total employment. See: Eymen Gamha, "Why is Tunisian Tourism in Crisis?" *Tunisia-Live*, November 11, 2011, accessed Febrary 25, 2012: http://www.tunisia-live.net/2011/11/11/hows-out-to-ruin-tunisian-tourism/

[119] Alexander, Christopher, "Authoritarianism and Civil Society in Tunisia."

[120] Susan E. Waltz, *Human Rights and Reform: Changing the Face of North African Politics*, University of California Press, (Berkeley, CA: 1995), pp. 72. Cited in: Ibid.

[121] Picard, Bruno, as cited in: CBC News, "Tunisia's no-torture claim 'crap' – Canadian Envoy," CBC News, December 2, 2010, accessed: Febrary 25, 2010, http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/story/2010/12/02/wikileaks-tunisia002.html

Despite his initial reforms, Ben Ali turned out much like his predecessor; a dictatorial, paternalistic (despite the trumpeting of women's rights issues), Western-friendly leader who continued to cling to power as he advanced in age. The elitism inherent in the discourse and policies of both Ben Ali and Bourguiba was obvious and palpable. By embracing widely accepted notions of teleological development and *progress*, these leaders advanced a body of politics openly hostile to the country's 'traditions.'

There could be no room in the state for supposedly 'backward' traditions such as polygamy, and state institutions were to lead the charge to eradicate these cultural practices. *Modernity* was to become Tunisia's new cultural tradition. Strangely however, just as Baron d'Erlanger impregnated and imbued tradition with his own (non-'traditional' or foreign) interpretation, and while the former leaders' attempts to eradicate traditions they thought hostile to a sense of progress heavily informed by western theories, the population now seeks to recover some of those same 'traditional' practices pursuant to new-found freedoms of expression and liberty.[122] The irony in the liberty to pursue recovery of 'tradition,' is that these liberties often draw heavily on the discourses of democratization which betray internalized theories of teleological progression most often issued from (mostly western) human rights groups and NGOs: "Is [country X] ready for democracy?" This discourse and sentiment implies that democracy is a necessary endpoint upon a historically linear trajectory reachable through growth and maturity. Since Tunisia has proven to most of the world its 'readiness' to exist as an *adult* (if we accept the parent-infant motif ubiquitous in colonial discourse), we are to believe it

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[122] The reemergence of the *hijab*, *niqab* as well as other 'traditional' styles of dress, on Tunisian streets following the revolution of 2011 evince this trend.

has moved one step closer to western political normalities and has therefore 'advanced.'

At this latest 'stage' in Tunisian history, the lines between traditional and modern,

religious and secular, will continue to be redrawn, redefined, and renegotiated. Yet the

supposedly binary division between that which is traditional and inherently hinders

development, and that which is modern and supposedly erodes tradition, shows no signs

of abating. This process is in itself telling, and the words of Stefania Pandolfo in her

ethnography entitled, *Imapasse of the Angels: scenes from a Moroccan space of memory*,

encapsulate it better than any I could muster:

> In its partial and fragmented style, then, this text aims to listen to the dissonant, often
> idiosyncratic voices, of an absolutely contemporary society, elaborating in its own ways
> the fractures, wounds, and contradictions, and a certain intolerable, of the Maghrebi
> postcolonial present.[123]

The epistemic violence still induced by the traditional-modern dichotomy is

indeed contemporary, and regardless of its origins (secularism, colonization, ect.), this

bipartite classification represents a useful tool for (Tunisian) people seeking to articulate

what belongs to the national identity and what does not. Thus, the perceived opposition

between traditional and modern cannot be excised from cultural-productions, especially

those which elaborate national narratives.

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[123] Pandolfo, Stefania, *Impasse of Angels: scenes from a Moroccan space of memory*, University of
Chicago Press, (Chicago, IL: 1997), pp. 6

VI. *THE CONTEMPORARY FIELDS OF TUNISIAN MUSIC*

Music takes many forms in Tunisia. In addition to the more 'traditional' styles

mentioned above, in public places alone one could expect to hear reggae, folk, rock, hip-

hop, R&B, and even soul, among many other genres. Together, all of these differing

styles of music, with their attendant linkages and competition, not only between artists

and producers but between the fields themselves, for prominence in a particular niche of

the market, culminate in a Tunisian musical field.

As is mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, the Tunisian musical field

constitutes an arena of competition wherein non-material motivations and interests are

seen to be the most legitimate. Bourdieu contends:

> As everyone knows, priceless things have their price, and the extreme difficulty of
> converting certain practices and certain objects into money is only due to the fact that this
> conversion is refused in the very intention that produces them, which is nothing other
> than the denial (*Verneinung*) of the economy.[124]

While artists may appear or even claim to pursue material interests and still enjoy a

certain level of success in the musical field, they still risk being perceived as

heteronomous actors and thus resulting in abrasion for their perceived motivations. The

autonomous sector of any field of cultural production however, and in this case the

Tunisian art field, to again borrow the words of Bourdieu, "excludes the pursuit of profit

and does not guarantee any sort of correspondence between investments and monetary

gains… it condemns temporal greatness… [and] the absence of any academic training or

consecration may be considered a virtue."[125] Bourdieu further states that "[t]he literary

and artistic world is so ordered that those who enter into it have an interest in

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[124] Bourdieu, Pierre, "The Forms of Capital," Originally published as: "Ökonomisches Kapital, kulturelles Kapital, soziales Kapital," *Soziale Ungleichheiten (Soziale Welt, Sonderheft 2)*, ed. Reinhard Kreckel, trans. Richard Nice, (Goettingen, Otto Schartz & Co.:1983), pp. 242
[125] Bourdieu, Pierre, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, pp. 39

disinterestedness."[126] This disinterestedness is present in many other fields and is most visible when the universal (*the goal for the sake of the goal*) is readily apparent. The more autonomy is cultivated among actors in a field, the more the field itself becomes more autonomous, thus lending advantage to those already in a position of orthodox autonomy. Further, the more the field "favors" these autonomous producers, "the more clear-cut is the division between the field of restricted production, in which the producers produce for other producers, and the field of large scale production [*la grande production*]… is *symbolically* excluded and discredited."[127]

The example presented to me by one of my interlocutors, Bendir Man (Beyrem), is instructive. Bendir Man is an artist who is widely known in Tunisian society for his acoustic political ballads that challenged the regime long before the onset of mass uprisings in 2011. Beyrem, who had long-struggled in an ostensibly autonomous mode of activist production within the field of musical contestation, is now reaping the benefits of his patient strategy. Indeed, during the summer of 2011 posters for his upcoming concerts seemed to be posted on every street corner and plastered in every platform of the TGM, the train that travels north from Tunis to Sidi Bou Said.

Bendir Man's autonomy is the result of his long struggle within the activist music field, but he does not contend that he was the only one who did so. He claimed that protest songs actually began, in the forms we now witness, two to three years ago. Even so, he stated that many people have made music "outside of the hand of government." He added that there were many musicians during the 1970s and 1980s, such as Egyptian singer Sheikh Imam, who spoke about "the problems of our society." While Beyrem

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[126] Bourdieu, Pierre, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, pp. 40
[127] Bourdieu, Pierre, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, Polity Press, (Cambridge, UK: 1993), pp. 39

considers himself a member of this group of long-active activist musicians, and while his

music is well-known, he contended that, "a song cannot be the anthem of a revolution."

When asked about the role of El Général's music, Beyrem was quick to point out that he

does not say "[Ben Ali should] leave the country… [rather] he says these are our

problems." This is indeed a valid point, as nowhere in his popular songs before the mass

uprising did El Général advocate that the Tunisian populace take to the streets in protest.

Somewhat contradictorily, Beyrem also pointed out that while he considers himself a

protestor by making music, "music is music, [and] music of the revolution doesn't exist."

While Bendir Man may seem to be policing the bounds of the activist-music field with

some of the above points, he has most certainly (and in the eyes of many Tunisians I

spoke with) earned his orthodox position. His works before the revolution such as "99%,"

which references the margin of victory Ben Ali claimed in the 1999 elections, brought the

government's attention upon him long before he enjoyed the mass praise of a liberated

Tunisia.[128] I asked him what measures the government took to silence him and

unsurprisingly he stated that they "arrest[ed] me, beat me, stole my guitar, forbid my

media [blog, Facebook, ect.] and any concerts." Beyrem's long career in the field, and

that treatment which he is widely recognized to have endured at the hands of the Ben Ali

regime, culminate in his ostensible autonomy within the field.

Another factor in the creation of autonomy or its corresponding heterodoxy is the

'proximity to necessity' of a given artist. That is, some artists are unable to labor long in

a field of cultural production without financial compensation because of personal

constraints. A perfect example of this 'proximity to necessity' is that of Ahmed Mejri.

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[128] Bendir Man, "99%," *youtube.com*, posted: September 18, 2009:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X5ynIXvGFnw

Mejri, an artist in reggae and fusion among other genres, once lived in Paris, where he had wanted to become a policeman to support his two children. After returning to Tunis, however, he continued making music. Despite hearing from many that he had made "protest music," Mejri claimed that he "did not protest before [the revolution], my face is too well-known, there would be no way for me to eat."[129] This statement is a perfect example of heteronomy due to proximity to necessity. Mejri simply could not afford to make music that would bring little to no profit, and his family would have suffered if he had.

In December of 2010 into January of 2011, Mejri began to attend protests and play political music publicly. As there was now an audience for it, and thus preexisting demand, making activist music was presumably more profitable at this time (in both the material and non-material senses of the word). Mejri stressed the importance of music in the face of repression: "[at the protests] they took my guitar… but people were aggressive… you can stop everything but music." So he continued playing. When I asked him what he sang about during those days, he replied: "revolution everywhere, revolution cleanse the earth, Tunisians cleanse the earth's pollution!" Mejri then pointed out to me that in the past, nearly everyone made music that was for dancing, so that they may dance to forget: "when you dance, you think of nothing else." Now, claimed Mejri, the new musicians "talk about problems... [and] there is violence in this music." While he is right to point out the epistemological violence in these new narratives, it is interesting and informative that his original aversion to political music was rooted in his proximity to

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[129] Mejri was not lying when he said his face is too well-known in Tunisia. During our interview at an outdoor café, it seemed every five minutes someone would pass and begin talking to him including three other musicians, a television talk show host, a music professor, and others. Custom dictated that he greet and give salutations to them all. Frustrated by all the distractions, in my notes for the interview I even scribbled, "this guy knows EVERYONE."

necessity. Arguably, it was this same necessity which drove his trajectory toward making political music when the rewards were apparently higher. Thus, if we are to take Mejri's account of events and assign to him some degree of heteronomy, then it should be noted that autonomy or heteronomy within the field was not (and *is* not) simply a function of choice, but is determined by many other factors and socioeconomic restraints.

Autonomy also entails a certain level of (at least perceived) freedom; freedom from institutions, bureaucracies, and for my purposes as Bendir Man stated, freedom from the "hand of government." Nowhere is this freedom and its importance in Tunisian cultural production more clear than in the case of the declining role of Bab Athaqafa after the revolution. Bab Athaqafa was similar to a ministry of culture, but can better be described as a state institution that exercised a structural control over cultural production within the country. This institution awarded money and lent equipment to aspiring artists as long as they appeared (according to my interlocutors) to have no intention of issuing a work of dissent, or 'rocking the boat' as we say in English. One of my interlocutors, Hichem Ben Farhat, a cinematic director, civil jurist, and film critic whose cinema club was harassed heavily by the former regime for some of its members' political activities, was friends with the then-president of Bab Athaqafa in Ariana, Tunis. Ben Farhat told me that the president allowed his club to continue to meet so long as they did not 'stir up' any trouble, as his mandate was to "put the culture to sleep" or to "make it lay down" (*tarqud athaqafa*). The various fields of Tunisian cultural production were therefore structured to favor those artists whose works were politically neutral or focused on social issues that would have favored the regime's policies. Bab Athaqafa's role in stifling political dissidence is most apparent when examining cinema under Ben Ali. The

perceived freedom associated with autonomy mentioned above however, requires the artists to already possess "substantial economic and social capital" to live on while engaging in their *disinterested* pursuits,[130] especially when they were operating outside of the realm condoned and promoted by Bab Athaqafa.

Despite Beyrem's conviction that there could be no "anthem of the revolution," music maintains a unique importance in culture. As Will Atkinson has highlighted, "'nothing… more clearly affirms one's 'class, nothing more infallibly classifies, than tastes in music."[131] While Bourdieu's above postulation had to do with class distinctions, it might be said that music can also be an indicator of sentiments within a class or segment of the population and thus, reflect the tensions, contradictions, and ills of a society. Music therefore can be a very useful indicator, as well as a driver, of public opinions.

Not everyone agrees that music is so indicative. In *Warring Souls: Youth, Media, and Martyrdom in Post-Revolution Iran,* Roxanne Varzi contends that western journalists and policy makers are simply so obsessed with finding the secular in Iran, they skim the "surface" in order in order to find it. Examples of this focus on the "surface," Varzi contends, consist of highlighting "Baseball caps, pushing back the hijab a bit further, listening to rap music, or painting graffiti all over Tehran."[132] Unsurprisingly, I disagree; these things are not all indicative of the "Western" or "secular" (whatever that word entails), but are in fact embodied in and saturated with deeper meanings, which Varzi

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[130] "The length of time for which a given individual can prolong his acquisition process depends on the length of time for which his family can provide him with the free time, i.e., time free from economic necessity, which is the precondition for the initial accumulation (time which can be evaluated as a handicap to be made up)." See: Bourdieu, Pierre, "The Forms of Capital, pp. 246

[131] Bourdieu, Pierre, cited in: Atkinson, Will, "The context and genesis of musical tastes: Omnivorousness debunked, Bourdieu buttressed," *Poetics*, No. 39, 2011, pp. 170

[132] Varzi, Roxanne, *Warring Souls: Youth, Media, and Martyrdom in Post-Revolution Iran*, pp. 173

herself documents quite effectively in this book. Rap, hip hop or any other musical form is not necessarily a *sign* to be read by a putative outside analyst, but when the musical form exists in a capacity surpassing simple entertainment or distraction; it automatically gains significance, especially if it contains themes of political contestation at a politically unstable time.

When I asked Bendir Man how the widely-noticed hip hop artists may have influenced society, he replied that "rapper influence is a mirror." He continued by saying that after the revolution there were two types of music: those works that conveyed "disappointment" and those that were "celebratory." Of those who sang celebratory music, he claimed (with seemingly no value judgment in his tone) that "these are the same [type of] singers who celebrated the 7th of November (the date Ben Ali took power)." He paused for a moment and simply stated, "it's normal." Based on the other statements Beyrem made during the interview we may safely assume that he located himself within the disappointed camp and believed that there was still much work to be done. However, despite associating those who made celebratory music with the former regime, the tone of his voice and his statement that "it's normal," lead the researcher back to the seemingly obvious point that music will often mirror a diverse array of popular sentiments.

The Genre as a Field

In addition to representing essential components in an all-dominating musical field, each musical genre is itself a field containing: (1.) A dominant form of capital (described in th introduction of this thesis) that, it should be noted, does not remain static.

(2.) Competition among actors involved and more particularly, an orthodoxy being persistently contested by heterodoxy within the field. (3.) Established and recognized means of consecration within or excommunication from the field. (4.) Rules that loosely structure the actions of those within the field; and that depending on how they are followed and/or broken, these rules can determine the consecration or excommunication of any agent within the genre.

Genres and categories of music, while sometimes arbitrary, often distort and alter the struggles with the asserted category. Atkinson shows that:

> categories of music… [only] obscure the patent hierarchies of legitimacy within such categories (e.g., 'difficult' versus 'light' classical, 'underground' versus 'pop' rap music), the different meanings that may be attributed to classifications (e.g., what counts as 'classical' for one person might not for another), the various ways of consuming the same products (e.g., with irony, aestheticisation, passivity) and the impact of struggles and evolutions in the fields of production.[133]

This is indeed true although I would add that the same obscuring role of Atkinson's categories is present in most fields, in that recognition of the field alone distorts and disguises the differences, rules, and competition within it.

Despite a formidable structure of rules for competition, cultural pressures habituating participants to aspire to certain forms of capital, and an apparatus to reward cooperation as well as discourage deviation within the system, there can be no encapsulating of a genre into a label without committing the sin of generalization. In his book entitled, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics*, Charles Hirshkind begins by (among other arguments) chastising those who label cassette sermons as Bin Laden's "low-tech weapon" and claim that these sermons are responsible

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[133] Atkinson, Will, pp. 171

for radicalizing many in the MENA region.[134] Hirshkind argues against this trend by

stating:

> To read the cassette sermon primarily as a technology of fundamentalism and militancy
> reduces the enormous complexity of the lifeworld enabled by this medium, forcing it to
> fit into the narrow confines of a language of threat, rejection and irrationality.[135]

Examples of analysts and governments perceiving music as a "weapon" similar to these

cassette sermons are numerous. Varzi illustrates how Sufism has become so "cool" in

Northern Iran that the government's "response has been to produce its own brand of

popular mystical music (a recording of Rumi being the first) in order to appropriate or

compete with the Islamic influences that are outside the state's influence."[136] Tunisian

hip-hop is afflicted by similar analyses. All too often, people around the world slap the

reductionist moniker of "resistance" on hip-hop and similarly pack the entire genre into a

category (with no regard even for national specificities) with the connotations of

dissidence, alternative moralities, and sometimes even violence.

　　While they may (or may not) contain argumentative political discourse, hip-hop

works are not necessarily vehicles of dissent, violence or alternative moral goods. Quite

the contrary; the lyrics sung by hip-hop artists are often more informative of the power

structures that the artists not only exist in, but adopt and support. For instance, an artist

may not openly state their love of capitalism, but one may easily detect admiration for its

commonly-supposed tenets (however erroneous the association may be) such as social

mobility. Simultaneously, if the artist presents a 'rags to riches' narrative, the same

hypothetical artist may also give his/her estimation of the forces that produced their

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[134] Hirshkind, Charles, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics*, Columbia University Press, (New York, NY: 2006), pp. 3-6
[135] Ibid, pp 5
[136] Varzi, Roxanne, *Warring Souls: Youth, Media, and Martyrdom in Post-Revolution Iran*, Duke University Press, (Durham, NC: 2006) pp. 21

impoverished origins to begin with, such as labor exploitation or poor education. A hip-hop artist most certainly would not state that they came from wealth and lost it all; for these heteronomous artists, status can often be measured by accrual of wealth. Therefore there exist many artists worldwide who in ways support the governing power dynamics while simultaneously denouncing other facets of them.

Complicit in the distortion of our perception are the mechanisms by which we come to learn of works, genres and categories. Atkinson shows how "compilation CDs" of classical music highlight "the gap between knowledge and recognition." Someone may get "snippets of well known pieces" but not in-depth knowledge of classical music in general.[137] Mix CDs of 'revolutionary' music, such as ones I encountered during research for this thesis, are therefore a distillation, yet another image, and provide only a small window into consecrated yet (and again to use the words of Atkinson), "popularized forms of legitimate culture."[138] We as foreign researchers of 'revolutionary' music are thus mostly doomed only to "recognize," as "knowing" lies beyond that which has been presented to us, on the internet, television, and even in person.

The foreign status of many observers is not the only barrier encountered when attempting to analyze such expansive worlds of cultural production. Indeed, the barriers erected to maintain definite boundaries of a specific form of cultural production and its products can be equally stifling to those who share national, cultural, ethnic and other identities with the producers of the works they hope to understand. In *Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception,* Michel Foucault speaks of the use of language and linguistic devices in the esotericization of the medical discipline:

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[137] Atkinson, Will, pp. 183
[138] Atkinson, Will, pp. 183

> This new esotericism is different in structure, meaning, and use from that which made Molière's doctors speak in Latin: then it was simply a matter of being understood and of preserving at the level of linguistic formulation the corporate privileges of a profession; now operational mastery over things is sought by accurate syntactic usage and a difficult semantic familiarity with language. Description, in clinical medicine, does not mean placing the hidden or invisible within reach of those who have no direct access to them; what it means is to give speech to that which everyone sees without seeing- a speech that can be understood only by those initiated to true speech.[139]

For Tunisian music of political contestation, speech acts too may be issued to target the largest possible audience or (and sometimes simultaneously) issued to construct a further barrier to those attempting enter into the discipline.

Language, and for that matter the metrics of communication (accent, target demographic, etc.), become important criteria for an applicant of many different fields; hip hop and Tunisian urban music(s) are no exception. The overwhelming use of *Derja Tunsiyya* (Tunisian dialect), despite interspersing of polyglossia and code switching, by Tunisian vocalists is instructive. In the documentary film about him, Pierre Bourdieu stresses that if it were not for the lesser, more stigmatized forms of French being spoken, then the prestigious dialect of the dominant classes would not have the worth it now enjoys.[140] Likewise, if it were not for the preponderance of French encountered daily in the coastal towns of Tunisia, in government offices and academic spaces, or the *Fus'ha* (Classical Arabic) also being spoken by government officials and within the media, than the use of Tunisian dialect would not have the same importance and potency it enjoys in these musical productions. This dynamic was not lost on Ben Ali whose oft-quoted last speech before he left the country employed an extensive and obviously tactical use of Tunisian dialect in an attempt to encourage his audience to sympathize with him. Ben Ali even made it a point to state "I am speaking to you in the language of all Tunisians, male

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[139] Foucault, Michel, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, Trans. Smith, A.M. Sheridan, Vintage Books 1994, pp. 115.
[140] Bourdieu, Pierre, in: "Sociology is a Martial Art,"

and female" (*kalimkum fi lugat kul et-tunisi wa tunisiat),*[141] thus affirming the

overwhelming legitimacy of Tunisian dialect in the field of national politics at that time.

The use of Tunisian dialect, or the use of French or any other language, does not

always preclude the other language's inclusion. Quite the contrary, often the use of

several languages at the same time in a given statement or even sentence are crafted and

can specifically apply to a certain audience, class, and level of education. This

intersection of many languages can represent poly-linguistic exclusivity, and can itself be

used as a bulwark against those who do not share the linguistic capabilities (and therefore

class and education) of a statement's issuer. Examples of this unique mixing of languages

are abundant. In several of the songs originally sent to me from friends on a mix album of

music from the Tunisian revolution, English, French, Spanish, Arabic, and Italian are

mixed seamlessly. One song from the artist Nordo, contains a sample of Ben Ali's

opening phrase from his last speech "*ay muwatinun,*" to which the artist responds, *"te*

vaffanculo" which means "yes citizens" (Arabic), "go fuck yourself" (Italian).[142] In the

same song the artist asks, "*Weenu Ben Ali? No si después, Tahya Tunisi*" ("Where is Ben

Ali?" (Tunisian dialect) "If no then" (Spanish) "long live Tunisia" (Tunisian dialect).[143]In

Niz-Art and Emino's "*Menni Lik*" the artists state "*attini* ("give me" Tunisian dialect) my

liberty."[144] In another profane yet humorous example, El Général says in his song "Ta7ya

Tounes," "*Alhamdulillah* ("Thank God" Fus'ha) *fucking ala tool ("constantly" or "all*

the time" Tunisian dialect)."[145] These are not simply examples of meaningless

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[141] For the video of Ben Ali's last speech with English subtitles (although I added to the translation) , see: Muirr025, "Tunisian Dictator's Final Speech (English Translation)," Uploaded January 29, 2011: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ou6Oqnz4O4I
[142] Nordo, "Revolution," *La Révolution 2011*, Rap-Tunisien.Net
[143] Nordo, "Revolution," *La Révolution 2011*, Rap-Tunisien.Net
[144] Niz-art & Emino, "Menni Lik," *La Révolution 2011*, Rap-Tunisien.Net
[145] El Général, "Tahya Tounes."

polyglossia, they both target and appeal to certain sections of the Tunisian population while eluding others. The polyglot exclusivity above may also be seen as an esotericization of the legitimate language of Tunisian hip hop and thus a barrier to entry for aspiring artists as well as a 'carving out' of the target audience.

Differences, Legitimacy, & Evolution

Hip hop, and for that matter all urban music, showcases a plethora of discourses. A hip hop artist's discourse is not necessarily political, and even when it is, it doesn't necessarily have to be against the state or governing power structure. Hip hop can be used for any number of purposes. Hip hop (and perhaps music in general), while perhaps a useful tool to deliver a political message in a potent distillation, is now being used by new groups in new ways. Islamist groups such as Ennahdha (in Tunisia) and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt have recently enlisted hip hop artists who continually voice their support for the Islamic movements. Nouri Gana expands on what he called Tunisian rapper Psycho M's **"fifteen minute [long]… attack on Arab nationalists and secularists alike and [he] accused them of involvement in a Euro-Zionist plot against Islam."**[146] The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt caught on a little bit later and posted their "first rap" video on Youtube on December 2, 2011.[147] This particular video is quite interesting as forty five seconds into the song an Eminem album cover is then featured as the graphic for a full twenty seconds with an overlaid, long apology about how the graphic was included

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[146] Gana, Nouri, "Rap, Rage, Revolt," *Jadaliyya*, August 5, 2011, Accessed: October 11, 2011, http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/2320/rap-rage-revolt

[147] Author unknown, "اول اغنية راب حزب الحرية والعدالة" posted: December 2, 2011, Accessed December 3, 2011: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=u8z4TwqBKhw

by mistake.[148] Also, the only caption to the video reads, "first rap of the [Muslim] Brothers. Picture of Eminem entered by mistake."[149] For anyone familiar with Eminem's sometimes violent and obnoxious lyrics, this mistake is beyond surreal; and hilarious because it could have been easily fixed with a few minutes of editing. The choice not to edit the video along with this "first rap" is a good example of how these categories can be further obscured, and how a genre, even Islamic hip hop incorporates much of that which came before it, in different fields, regardless of an original work's apparent logical opposition to the new work.

Bourdieu wrote that the, "artistic field is a *field of forces*, but it is also a *field of struggles* tending to transform or conserve this field of forces."[150] Therefore the contemporary Tunisian soundscape of political contestation cannot be separated from its past forms, which it seeks to either modify or continue. Given that hip hop seemed to become the preferred (or most internationally consecrated) vector of political contestation during and following the revolution, this musical tradition both builds and expands upon a longer history of folk, reggae, and acoustic music that ostensibly challenged the regime in years past. More importantly, Bourdieu contends that the "effect" of a given work even "transforms" the conditions of its reception.[151] The work of Bendir Man (and others before him) therefore helped to transform not only how his work was received, but the field(s) of both the production and consumption of political contestation, wherein other artists would arise and use new strategies to the same end in a field (and pursuant to capital) that most certainly was viewed as legitimate. In other words, the game and the

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[148] Ibid.

[149] "اول راب اخوا... صورة ايمينم دخلت عن طريق الخطأ" Translation by the author, See: Ibid.

[150] Bourdieu, Pierre, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, Polity Press, (Cambridge, UK: 1993), pp. 30.

[151] Bourdieu, Pierre, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, pp. 31

stakes may have remained somewhat the same, although the methods of playing were constantly evolving.

This evolution and adaptation of political contestation first from acoustic musical forms, and later to hip hop is explainable by the catalyst provided by external events, ie the revolution. Indeed, Bourdieu speaks to this by stating that the "position takings which clash with the prevailing norms of production and expectations of the field, they cannot succeed without external changes. These may be political breaks, such as revolutionary crises, which change the power relations within the field… or deep-seated changes in the audience of consumers who, because of their affinity with the new producers, ensure the success of their products."[152] It is this change and this heterodoxy which challenge existing norms within the field by introducing new "doxa" and new methods.[153] In the case of Tunisian music of political contestation, this translated into new political messages issued through a different vector; hip hop. Thus, the supposed genesis of musical contestation in Tunisia may be partly explained by the vastly increased use of hip hop and other urban music, during the revolution, in ways not particularly prevalent before the change that the uprising constituted in the political landscape. Yet Bourdieu stresses, that "as a producer but also as a consumer, one has to possess the whole history of a field."[154] It therefore seems quite obvious that Tunisian hip hop artists who began their messages of contestation must have encompassed and built up the work of those such as Bendir Man, not only departing from the norms such work created.

An interesting example of the ways in which a field must embody histories can be found in the short Tunisian film "Cuirasse Abdelkarim," a play on words mimicking the

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[152] Bourdieu, Pierre, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, pp. 58
[153] Bourdieu, Pierre, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, pp. 58
[154] Bourdieu, Pierre, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, pp. 61

French title of the Soviet film "Battleship Potemkin": "Le Cuirassé Potemkine."[155] This silent film published roughly seven years before the 14 January Revolution, depicts a number of Tunisian youth attempting to get visas at a government office and once rejected, they rebel with the caption reading "Mais non, la seule solution c'est de se révolter!" After their initial act of rebellion, and just as in the Soviet film, the police crack down harshly and the protestors flee down an iconic staircase. One protestor pushing a stroller is shot and the carriage begins to roll down the stairs as the people flee to the water signaling a boat.[156] This film not only modeled itself on the Soviet revolutionary film and borrowed even its sound score, but seemed to postulate that something similar would happen in Tunisia soon thereafter. The last caption is eerily prophetic of governing narratives of the uprising's causality: "Et de cette façon a été [sic] la révolution[,] une révolution déclenchée par un homme deviendra le seul moyen[,] pour la réalisation des rêves d'un peuple entier." ("And in this way the revolution, a revolution brought by one man, becomes the only way for the realization of the dreams of an entire people").[157] It is also interesting that the last bit of the movie contains an audio dialogue of a man attempting to escape to the island of Lampedusa (presumably aboard the boat the people were signaling) and being refused because he has no seat.[158] This is interesting as many Tunisians did indeed flee to Lampedusa during the revolution and after, but also because the man in the film like many of those seeking refuge, was refused.[159] The incredibly interesting facets of this short film cannot be overlooked, and its message is surely one of

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[155] Mattar, Walid, "Cuirasse Abdelkarim," *La Fédération Tunisienne des Cinéastes Amateurs* (FTCA), June 2003, see: http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x1hw7n_cuirasse-abdelkarim_shortfilms
[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid, translation by the author.
[158] Ibid
[159] See: Median, Ahmed, "Lampedusa: Confrontations Between Police and Tunisian Migrants," *Tunisia-Live*, September 23, 2011: http://www.tunisia-live.net/2011/09/23/lampedusa-confrontations-between-police-and-tunisian-immigrants/

political contestation, but it is most telling that this movie embraced and utilized the model set forward by a Soviet production. This is but one example of how those within a field must indeed encompass the entire history of the field and how that field (such as that of revolutionary activity) embodies and borrows from the histories of other nation-states.

In addition to encompassing broad histories within a field, as methods and delivery of cultural products evolve so too does the status of their producers whether they are willing or not. After interviewing Mejri, I spoke with him on the telephone and he jokingly insinuated that it was because of the revolution that anyone cares about Tunisian musicians and their struggles against the repressive state. I of course, vehemently disagreed. The way in which others spoke of Mejri ('he has been making protest music for a long time'), despite Mejri's claim that no one really made protest music before the revolution and "it was all '*habibi* I love you'" adequately conveyed to the researcher that he is perceived as somewhat of a 'classic' of the contestation realm. [160] Mejri's above statement therefore may be better interpreted as evidence of his awareness that (seemingly) external events pushed his work and himself into the realm of a "classic."

The length of the production cycle of a given producer is also important;[161] some may figure artists such as Bendir Man to be more autonomous and dominant within the field of musical contestation simply because he has been striving in his labors for several years preceding the revolution. Still some others may come to regard El Général as more heteronomous simply by virtue of his quick success, creating a product for which a demand already existed, and seemingly cashing in. This is however not the argument of

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[160] Bourdieu contends that as a new production challenges existing norms and methods, "it modifies and displaces the universe of possible options; [and] the previously dominant productions may, for example, be pushed into the status either of outmoded [déclassé] or of classical works." See: Bourdieu, Pierre, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, pp. 32
[161] Bourdieu, Pierre, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, pp. 48

this thesis, as it is quite obvious that El Général's works helped to form the field and therefore produce the demand for his music and his message. Yet his quick success most assuredly registers as a threat to the orthodoxy of the field. When speaking about the newly arrived and quickly consecrated (within the international news media) artists, Bendir Man was quick to point out as was stated earlier, that he was happy not to be on a "list of people like Lady Gaga."

The converses of these hyper-visible artists are those that neither the journalist nor the academic can see. Popular artists before the revolution included artists such as Saber, Balti, as well as others, and yet their music was never overwhelmingly political or dissident. In addition to El Général, Emino, Klay BBJ and many others were visibly making politically charged hip hop after the revolution. One may speculate that these artists are simply now able to do what they could not before, without legal penalty. However, the negative effects of the state repressive apparati are but one dimension of this dynamic. Another facet to consider is the effect of the rewards that were available to those who complied via government institutions such as Bab Athaqafa. Again though, the artists that are visible to the observer do not constitute the entire body of Tunisian musicians and the mechanisms that made those apolitical artists visible before the revolution, are the same mechanisms whose absence contributed to the state of the field now.

Conclusion

The Tunisian musical field contains many works and artists of every stripe. The many tacit rules and implied norms that these works and artists adhere to or reject are quite visible if one applies Bourdieu's theory on the field of artistic production. The same

structures appear when looking at a genre such as activist music as well and although many analysts trumpet the *music as a weapon* motif, labeling an entire genre or category of music as a weapon collapses the many political realities and power struggles within the object of analysis, thus committing the same mistake as those who label Raï or hip hop as "music of resistance." One may issue such a label but to do so ignores the competition (among producers) and "resistance" (to the rules of the field) within the genre itself.

The mechanisms of consecration both utilized and imposed on those within the Tunisian music field distort as well as alter the realities and social structures within the field. These mechanisms of consecration, although some seem ostensibly despised by certain actors, have become an integral part (and tool) of the competition(s) within the field. Yet, many barriers exist which limit the availability or penetration of the mechanisms. Language is perhaps the largest barrier to an outside researcher despite its role in defining the audience of a particular product, and polyglot as well as poly-linguistic exclusivity, both make a given message (often simultaneously) more accessible to some, and more esoteric to others.

Differing political and apolitical discourses also blur objectification of a genre as large as hip hop. The advent of Islamic hip hop artists, state co-opted Raï music, and Iranian government-issued Sufi music show how a genre can be adapted to any purpose. These adaptations and the apparent evolution of a genre that follows are therefore natural and help in creating the vibrant world within a field that we may observe at any point in time. When examining Tunisian music (cinema, and other cultural productions) of political dissidence and contestation, nothing so altered the field as did the revolution and the resultant declining influence of Bab Athaqafa. Thus the reality of the musical and

political realm is laid bare; Bab Athaqafa most assuredly held structural controls over cultural productions, while in the end, these same cultural productions (whether inside the bounds of Bab Athaqafa's mandate or not) helped in not only mirroring public sentiment but as was discussed, influencing a populace which brought about the changes that effectively neutralized Bab Athaqafa. The nature of these 'structuring structures' was cyclical indeed.

VII. *JOURNALISTIC CONSECRATION: Mutual exploitation?*

Journalism is an interesting field in any country as it maintains an unparalleled ability to convey news and ideas across vast distances with ever-increasing speed. Before 14 January 2011, much of the international news media was not yet fixated on a revolutionary Middle East as Tunisia has a small population relative to other countries in the MENA region and was also not seen as having the strategic importance of a country such as Egypt. With the outbreak of mass protests, followed by the flight of Ben Ali and his wife, the country gained added significance in the media's eyes as the former president's overthrow justified and legitmized the efforts of the protestors. The few journalists reporting on events in Tunisia became many as the 'Jasmine Revolution' became a news headline and the slow flourishing of human interest stories had begun. Like the artists mentioned in previous chapters who made protest music only after Ben Ali's abdication, however, the international news media did not simply commodify the event to sell their product. The international news media was an important part of not only the revolution itself and the creation of its historiography, but was also a key component in shaping actors within the revolt and the methods they used.

Television, according to Bourdieu, maintains a tight monopoly on the "instruments of diffusion" of information.[162] More importantly, the journalistic field represents a unique mechanism of consecration which has permeated every field[163] and maintains a corrupting, heteronomous impact on the autonomy of a given field. Over the past half-century claims Bourdieu, structures have changed to allow any actor from any

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[162] Bourdieu, Pierre, *On Television*, The New Press, (NY, New York: 1990), trans.Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, pp. 1
[163] Bourdieu, Pierre, *On Television*, pp. 56

field to gain consecration through the journalistic world.[164] Bourdieu states that those

within the "journalistic field owe their importance in society to their defacto monopoly

on large-scale informational instruments of production and diffusion of information…

They control in effect… ones ability to be recognized as a *public figure*."[165]

Naturally television and journalism are well-known tools to reach a mass

audience and are used as epistemological battlegrounds (the frontline to continue the

metaphor) by both politicians and protestors alike. Despite the perception within the artist

field that marketing art to a mass audience detracts from individual autonomy and is thus

often avoided, Tunisian artists (and indeed all artists) are influenced by popular media in

subtle yet substantial ways. Additionally, when one mixes activism with art, the 'rules of

the game' change as do the capital goals. This is not to suggest that artist-activists simply

sought consecration (or renown) but rather; the *universal* of activism (and the importance

of a political message's dissemination) overtook the 'rules of art' temporarily. The

consecratory role of the news media has thus changed (and continues to alter) all the

fields of cultural production forever.

The journalistic consecratory apparatus is not without its price and the result of

the competition for "the scoop" is a simplified, reductionist, and often homogenous

presentation of events. The international news media deals with a "highly perishable

good" which only increases "competition for the newest news ('scoops')."[166] This

dynamic, in tandem with the journalistic tendency to "focus on simple events, that are

simple to cover,"[167] produce an inaccurate image which distorts reality and alters it as

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[164] Bourdieu, Pierre, *On Television*, pp. 59
[165] Bourdieu, Pierre, *On Television*, pp. 46
[166] Bourdieu, Pierre, *On Television*, pp. 71
[167] Bourdieu, Pierre, *On Television*, pp. 8

well. The journalistic field is inaccurate as it simplifies events, and modifying, as it highlights (and consecrates) specific figures over others, making them important and bestowing upon them significant symbolic capital. This of course causes detectable abrasion within a more autonomous field of cultural production, such as activist-music. Between artists immediately recognized (and almost universally lauded) for their contribution to the revolutionary/activist field such as El Général, and those whose presence in the international news media's narrative of events is more limited such as Bendir Man, there exist many differences and therefore tensions. Artists such as Bendir Man follow an archetype: they produce something for which no demand necessarily exists, but over time "create their own audience."[168] Artists such as El Général, having been quickly picked up by the international news media, appear more heteronomous, and due to resultant shorter cycle of production do not always satisfy the orthodoxy of the artist-activist realm. The consecratory role of the journalistic field may therefore simplify and collapse the cycle of production within activist-artist production, simultaneously elevating a producer in the eyes of the *masses* and staining their value in the eyes of *other producers* for not having followed the 'rules.'

The reader will recall how the last chapter highlighted the quote by Bendir Man that he was happy not to be on a "list of people like Lady Gaga," thus evincing suspicion and even disdain for not only those who are quickly consecrated (and have shorter cycles of production), but also for the faults and distortions inherent in the journalistic mechanism(s). Ahmed Mejri also commented on the role of television and the media in altering the fields of Tunisian cultural production. He stated that "too many people watch television" where unauthentic musicians "make it [music] commercial." Despite his

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[168] Bourdieu, Pierre, *On Television*, pp. 27-28

proximity to necessity ("I have to eat") dictating the extent of heteronomy of his own work (he was not completely free to choose), Mejri still internalized and reissued the tacit rules of conduct within the music field. Mejri's 'policing of the bounds' of his field is certainly important, but it should be noted that by reinforcing the primacy of the more autonomous within his field, Mejri was buttressing and reproducing the orthodox-heterodox hierarchy of the music field as well as his place within it.

The journalistic field spent much time on hip hop artists, ignoring those who have been producing activist music through more acoustic productions and early twentieth century poets such as Abul-Qasim Al-Shabi whose works such as "To the Tyrants of the World," were reportedly part of the soundscape of demonstrations not only in Tunisia, but in Egypt as well.[169] Instead what one encounters is a view of cultural producers, very much homogenized in their assigned importance and the trumpeting of similar narratives. In the Tunisian case, El Général has received much more attention than Al-Shabi in the news media despite Al-Shabi's more universalist discourse. Although it is difficult to measure the effect of any one work or artist, and despite El Général's calls for Egypt, Algeria, Libya and Morocco to rise up following Tunis' example,[170] one seriously doubts that his mostly Tunisia-specific works were sung or chanted in another country's protests as were the poems of Al-Shabi.

Despite the specificity of his messages, journalists have lauded El Général unstintingly. Chistopher R. Weingarten stated in an article that El Général's music had a "direct role in the Tunisian uprising and [its] potential role in the current instability in the

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[169] NPR, "Tunisian Poet's Verses Inspire Arab Protestors," NPR, January 30, 2011, http://www.npr.org/2011/01/30/133354601/Tunisian-Poets-Verses-Inspire-Arab-Protesters
[170] El Général, feat, Mr. Shooma, "Ta7ya Tunis," *Mish B3edd*, January 23, 2011, for free download, see: Khalas, "Mish B3eed: Khalas Mixtape Vol. 1," www.enoughgaddafi.com, For stream of music video: see: http://www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=146810385377483

Middle East may make it one of the most influential hip-hop songs of all time."[171] In her

article "Hip Hop and Global Unrest" Sujurtha Fernandez claims that "rap emerged as a

soundtrack for youth rebellion… [El Général] became an icon for the movement in his

own nation and beyond… [he and other rappers around the world] are being seen by

many young people as emerging leaders in their nations."[172] One wonders which if any of

the "young people" Fernandez mentions might have postulated the above, as the people I

spoke with (including the musicians) overwhelmingly found the ubiquitous assertion that

a small cadre of musicians led the movement (or caused it) extremely offensive and

misguided. David Peisner asserts that "hip-hop brought down a dictator," and in Egypt as

well as Bahrain, protestors "adopted 'Raïs Lebled.'"[173] It is no surprise that Peisner also

highlights the importance of social networking sites such as Facebook.[174] Both Facebook

and political rap reveal themselves to these journalists as not only western-friendly, but

supposedly western in origin. By celebrating the role of rap and Facebook, these

journalists are also celebrating themselves and their countries' contributions that (as we

are led to believe) made these revolutionary movements possible. In an article for NBC,

Karl Bostic claims that El Général's *Rayes Lebled* was an "anthem [that] helped to ignite

the spark which eventually ended with thousands of people taking to the streets in

January. Ben Ali later fled the country."[175] Bostic's above narrative distills then-already

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[171] Weingarten, Christopher R, "Meet Hamada 'El General' Ben Amor, the Tunisian Rapper Who Changed the World," Popdust, January 28, 2011: http://popdust.com/2011/01/28/meet-hamada-el-general-ben-amor-the-tunsian-rapper-who-changed-the-world/

[172] Fernandez, Sujurtha, "Hip Hop and Global Unrest," *Huffington Post*, September 7, 2011: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/sujatha-fernandes/hip-hop-and-arab-spring-libya_b_951491.html

[173] Peisner, David, "Inside Tunisia's Hip-Hop Revolution," *Spin*, August 24, 2011: http://www.spin.com/#articles/inside-tunisias-hip-hop-revolution

[174] Ibid.

[175] Bostic, Karl, "How rap music fueled the Arab Spring uprisings," NBC, September 15, 2011: http://worldblog.msnbc.msn.com/_news/2011/09/15/7758131-how-rap-music-fueled-the-arab-spring-uprisings

prevalent accounts, as it delivers in two sentences the most powerful and erroneous elements circulating in the international news media: *There was a song, people listened to it, rebelled, and Ben Ali left town.*

The importance assigned to El Général's *Rayes Lebled* was nothing new, and it is a pleasantly romantic fiction to present one man whose single act of defiance 'ignited' the entire "Arab Spring." Unfortunately, this is simply not true, and the analysts asserting this narrative obviously lack any in-depth understanding of a whole range of Tunisian cultural productions over the past few years that embodied palpable dissidence. Sami Tlili's 2006 short film named "Sans Plomb" is a perfect example of the limits of the journalistic gaze. This film begins with a teary-eyed man filling a container with petrol, taking it to the place of his former employment and preparing to self-immolate. The workers emerge from the building and plead with him not to do it. His old boss then appears and offers him his job back if he will just abandon his course of action. The screen then fades to black and reopens with a line of the workers cuing at the petrol pump, all carrying gas cans.[176] The film's name "Sans Plomb" (Unleaded) is in Arabic "Bedoun Rasas," (alternative meaning: "without bullets") which was intentionally used (according to my interlocutors) to imply that the Tunisian populace was being killed "without bullets." In his article "Turning the Gendered Politics of the State Inside Out?" Paul Amar explains how self immolation turns the state's violence against itself, and that self immolators "erupted onto history as explicitly non-bomber, non-terrorist reconfigurations of parahumanity."[177] The effect of self-immolation in neutralizing any perception of violent radicalism in an agent challenges the state's portrayal of dissidents as violent killers or

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[176] Tlili, Sami, "Sans Plomb," FTCA, 2006, see: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Akhb8q4MeCw
[177] Amar, Paul, "Turning the Gendered Politics of the State Inside Out? *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 13, No. 3, 2011, pp. 316

thugs. Bearing this in mind, "Sans Plomb" can and should be viewed as a work of intense political dissidence which utilized an allegory in order to challenge the powerful doxa of the state. Tlili's film is just one of many works in the decade leading up to the 14 January that has been completely glossed-over, unnoticed, or ignored by the news media when highlighting 'works of resistance' and indicates the limits of journalistic penetration into the various fields of cultural production. A more expansive and complicated narrative of the revolution as well as dissident works is unfortunately unappealing in a field that, as was discussed, values simple stories that are easy to report.

Journalism, and more specifically *journalists*, continue to present an inaccurate view of events. A recent article by Asma Ghribi describes protestors in front of the Tunisian National Television offices, whose demands, the article suggests, are as trivial as they are recent in origin.[178] During my August 3, 2011 interview with Bendir Man, he made it a point to state: "Now my big fight is with the Tunisian media. The boss of the [state] media was with Ben Ali, so now I have more problems… [The] fight for free expression is too long, [it is a] very long and difficult fight." More than seven months later articles such as Ghribi's are implying that these are new demands and portraying them as superfluous. Bendir Man concluded the above statement by saying that "freedom of expression *is* democracy," thus illustrating his belief that if the revolutionary movement was to be successful, there was still much work to be done in dismantling and restructuring vestiges of the former regime. Further, the above statement stands as evidence that Bendir Man and others were reliant upon the international news media to

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[178] Ghribi, Asma, "Demonstrators Camp Out in Front of Tunisian National Television," Tunisia-Live, March 12, 2012: http://www.tunisia-live.net/2012/03/12/demonstrators-camp-out-in-front-of-tunisian-national-television/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=demonstrators-camp-out-in-front-of-tunisian-national-television

gain recognition as the Tunisian media under Ben Ali would not typically highlight

dissidents and their activities. Still the news media(s) misrepresent actors, opinions, and

circumstances not only due to their pursuit of higher ratings, but also due to personal

opinions (and even ignorance) of reporters.

Just as Bourdieu contended that the educational system conditioned the

population to be able to decipher and appreciate the arts (among other things),[179] so too

do journalists educate the population for consumption and perceived importance of

'revolutionary' productions. This dynamic is also evident in the increased embrace of hip

hop for the purposes of political contestation as the ever-touted potency of hip hop for

this purpose has been incorporated into the habitus of artists as well as the general public.

This dynamic does not always work as planned and often causes visible resentment

among cultural producers. One of my interlocutors who preferred not to be named stated

that the trend in the media now is to focus on "women, women women" and their

problems in the MENA region. She further stated that there is an exploitation of

"stereotypes in order to make money" and that the current problems with the Salafis

"wont last long… we're not savages." My interlocutor resented the media for not only

exploiting stereotypes in order to make money but also furthering them. In a similar vein,

Bendir Man stated: "My music is to the occidental people, not the media." This statement

is evidence of several themes. Chiefly, it is clear that Bendir Man resents the influence of

the media on his field while at the same time he acknowledges his efforts to communicate

with a mass audience outside of Tunisia, likely necessitating his use of many different

forms of media to do so. This seeming paradox is but another example of how one may

deplore one aspect of a structure, while utilizing other elements of it in order to

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[179] Bourdieu, Pierre, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, pp. 37

accomplish a goal. It does make sense however, as artists were unable to utilize the media within Tunisia due to the lack of journalistic freedoms which contributed to many artists configuring their careers to reach audiences outside of Tunisia.

We may say that the global journalistic field, at least in the short term, during the revolution(s) and for a short period after, held an international "monopoly" on the ability to legitimize those revolutionary musicians it identified. This monopoly was all the easier to maintain as the local media did not typically cover dissident activities, leaving the international news media to select anyone they wanted without fear of being refuted by local news reports. Although the press' original selection of musicians was trivial, the legitimacy bestowed upon them became important and concrete. Bourdieu once wrote: "One has only to think of the *concours* (competitive recruitment examination) which, out of the continuum of infinitesimal differences between performances, produces sharp, absolute, lasting differences…"[180] Operating in a manner similar to the *concours*, the news media helped produce differences in the Tunisian musical field which became "lasting" and important. The influence of the international news media and its effect on cultural production is yet another element contributing to the angst, frustration, and suspicion inherent in the comments of Bendir Man and the unnamed interlocutor. Again, to put it simply, it was not only the news media's tendency to misconstrue facts and realities, it was their ability to pervade and alter them as well that so frustrated some agents within the field.

It is necessary here to outline Bourdieu's articulation of three "competing principles of legitimacy." Firstly, there is the legitimacy "granted by the set of producers who produce for other producers… by the autonomous self-sufficient world of 'art for

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[180] Bourdieu, Pierre, "The Forms of Capital," pp. 248

art's sake', meaning art for artists." Second, there is the "consecration bestowed by the dominant fractions of the dominant class and by private tribunals... or public, state guaranteed ones, such as academies, which sanction the inseparably ethical and aesthetic (and therefore political) taste of the dominant." Lastly, there is the "consecration bestowed by the choice of ordinary consumers, the 'mass audience.'"[181] As the international news-media contains more than just the dominant factions of the dominant class, as well as serving to shape public opinion, it would seem that the journalism field largely employs the latter two of the above-stated principles of legitimacy. Therefore the international news media's consecratory abilities are doomed to heteronomize the artists they highlight in the eyes of their peers, because the consecration the news media bestows does not originate from producers in the same field.

In most forms of contemporary journalism, economic success yields perceived success in the field, and indeed as Bourdieu pointed out, "heteronomy arises from *demand*."[182] Still, despite being a predominantly heteronomous field, journalism does contain autonomous elements and agents who pursue cultural, social, and symbolic capital within the field as well as the universal of 'journalism for journalism's sake.' The existence of awards such as the Pulitzer Prize testifies to the existence of a consecratory apparatus completely separate from ratings or popularity within the general public, and could be perceived as analogous to the "academies" mentioned above. Independent journalists whose 'cycle of production' is quite long also stand as evidence of autonomous elements within the journalistic field. Further and as in any field, professional reputation and therefore symbolic capital is important for all personalities in

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[181] Bourdieu, Pierre, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, pp. 51
[182] Bourdieu, Pierre, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, pp. 45-46

the journalistic field. Therefore, while autonomous actors are certainly present within the (corporate) international news media, the journalistic field as a whole constitutes a largely heteronomous field. More importantly, the effect that journalistic consecration has in heteronomizing certain cultural producers in the eyes of their peers make its heteronomy two-fold: the perceived heteronomy of the news media is able to 'rub off' onto the producers it highlights.

In a rare simplification of his arguments, Bourdieu states that "Journalists end up acting like the fireman who sets the fire."[183] The journalistic field not only misinterpreted and misconstrued the whole of Tunisian musical activist cultural production, but directly aided in its creation as well. While the simplifications and reductionist narratives abounded in their discourse, journalists performed a role of consecration for many actors (as well as, to be fair, bringing some international transparency and with it pressure, to revolutionary events). Tunisian cultural production during the 14 January revolution therefore cannot be divorced from the international news media which helped to create it, however limited or simplified their gaze may have been.

Conclusion

The journalistic field holds a monopoly on instruments of diffusion and with it, a unique ability to consecrate those in every field and Tunisian music (political or not) is no exception. The race for the big 'scoops' combines with this monopoly on consecration and yields a homogenization of information and opinions that distorts and alters realities within a field. The ability to alter dynamics within a field is often viewed with suspicion and the heteronomy of the corporate international news companies spills over into the fields it affects and in Tunisian fields of cultural production, onto the artists it

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[183] Bourdieu, Pierre, *On Television*, pp. 64

consecrates. The differences and competition encouraged by the international news media create visible secondary and tertiary differences, which ripple throughout a field before ossifying into a more concrete reality. The largely heteronomous principles of legitimation imposed on and sought by the news media are projected perhaps unintentionally onto the fields of cultural production. However, there are some who struggle in a more autonomous sector of the international news media and further research is necessary to determine if these more autonomous actors have the same heternomizing effect on their objects as do more heteronomous actors.

VIII. *ACTIVISM AND REVOLUTION*

Despite the distorting effect of the news media and other commentators, cultural production, and more simply cultural norms, played a large role in the recent uprising. Ahmed Mejri succinctly stated that, "there is no revolution without culture." In the previous chapter, I described how a comprehensive understanding of Tunisian cultural production during the past decade was lacking in the international news media's coverage of the uprising. There were many different forms of dissident cultural production such as direct challenges to the regime, allegorical stories, and the cinematic metaphors described in previous chapters. Likewise, the regime had many different responses for each individual work and artist. As one of my interlocutors pointed out, "soft" resistance was tolerated by the regime and often showcased in a politically charged effort to display to Tunisians and the world just how 'tolerant' the Ben Ali regime really was.

Many of the people I interviewed highlighted how the regime tolerated opposition to a point. For example, Ben Farhat[184] described the case of a man named Mohamed Abd Allawi. I will comprehensively convey Ben Farhat's story, not to assert the factual nature of his account but rather, the overarching theme of the narrative he told. Ben Farhat had been somewhat of a protégé of Abd Allawi within the cinematic community. A man of importance within Tunisian cinema, Abd Allawi was also active in other spheres of Tunisian life. Ben Farhat claimed that he had been the Secretary General of the Tunisian Socialist party and an ardent human rights activist. Beginning in 2004, Abd Allawi's life started to take a turn for the worse. Right before a (cinematic) business trip to France, Abd Allawi was attacked in the street and robbed of only his passport (implying the work of government forces attempting to keep him from leaving the country). Abd Allawi then

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[184] For introduction of Ben Farhat, see: pp. 53

mysteriously began to have "problems at home" (understood to be trouble with his family) where there had never been any such trouble before. Soon there after, Abd Allawi was found dead and immediately ruled to be a suicide. Ben Farhat however, claimed that Abd Allawi had privately conveyed to him just one week prior to his death that he believed someone was trying to kill him, and so he wrote a letter to the local police station stating his concerns. After Abd Allawi's death, Ben Farhat and friends went to the police to ask about the letter but were coldly told that it had never been received.

After Ben Farhat told me the above story, he paused and his eyes conveyed much of his conviction that this *was* what happened. The look on his face seemed to ask, 'do you get it now? Do you understand what I'm telling you?' Astounded by his honest and emotional account of what happened, I asked if he would prefer that when conveying this story I keep my source (him) anonymous. Ben Farhat then calmly but sternly leaned across the table and resolutely stated, "I am responsible for *everything* I've just said to you," then sat back into the hard backrest of his wooden chair. In saying this, Ben Farhat was not attempting to alleviate my doubts; his tone, eyes and posture all suggested that *this* was what happened, and he would never be afraid to tell anyone the truth about it. A film critic and a jurist, Ben Farhat had read my consent form very closely before he signed it and had even humorously suggested some corrections for making the document stronger. He no doubt had read the clause on risk and how the opinions he conveyed during our meetings could possibly be published. For this reason, his assertion that he was "responsible" paired with his tone and gesticulations seemed an outright invitation to anyone who might want to challenge his account of what happened.

Ben Farhat's account was instructive and fell neatly within other accounts that I had heard. The regime had attempted to make dissident cultural production very difficult through artists' reliance on Bab Athaqafa, and would also not hesitate to repress, intimidate, or kill anyone whose dissidence became too high profile for its liking. Some dissidence was tolerated and there was a threshold to what the regime would endure. However, it is impossible to define the comfortable space in between the two and where the regime drew the line. This is why highly visible and well-known dissident artists such as Bendir Man are so intriguing. How did they stay in this 'sweet spot' for so long? How did they negotiate activism within a violently repressive state, public personas, and survival? These are complicated questions that deserve more attention than I can give them in this thesis. Nevertheless, an understanding of the capital transformations within the activist field and how capital could be transported into and out of the journalistic and musical fields will aid in answering some of questions about how and why these artist-activists conducted themselves.

Ben Farhat claimed that although the former regime was "killing talent" with Bab Athaqafa and subsequent economic constraints, "Tunisia was boiling with ambition." Bendir Man claimed that "not just music, but the urban, underground art" was the "spirit of the revolution." The term 'underground' in the Tunisian case was necessarily used to describe cultural products that were made not only outside of mainstream, heteronomous production (as is the connotation in much of the west) but more accurately, art that was made outside of the government's control.

To understand just how far the government stretched into the various fields of cultural production, a look at the immediate pre-revolution structure of a few Tunisian

cinematic clubs is informative. The Tunisian Federation of Cinema Clubs (FTCC) and the Tunisian Federation of Amateur Cinema (FTCA) embody fields of competition unto themselves. Ben Farhat claimed that the resource distribution, leadership, filming and screening policies were all unfair. Some of the leaders in these organizations according to Ben Farhat have held their positions for twenty years or more which has prompted younger members' attempts to dislodge them. The leaders were well-known he claimed, to distribute equipment and resources only two to three weeks before the big film festivals which would constrain what young cinematographers could produce in such a short time. Ben Farhat contended that this in combination with leaders privileging their cronies in the distribution of resources caused a noticeable degradation in Tunisian cinema over the years. If Ben Farhat's contentions are accurate, they would explain why many within the cinematic community have attempted to change this system and even create their own cinematic clubs. The competitions within the cinematic communities in Tunisia not only shows how government-favored leaders held onto their post and stifled artistic production, but also how competition and contestation within the various fields of cultural production are subsumed or ignored by narratives of the recent uprising. While the political struggles within the cinema clubs alone may be seen as a sort of microcosm of the recent uprising, it is important to realize that the structures of the clubs were also made possible by the former political structure of Tunisia.

So like the metaphor of the 'book hider' outlined previously in this thesis, while agents within the cinema club were contesting certain norms which were brought about due to the broader structures of power, it is impossible to discern whether members were contesting the Ben Ali regime by contesting leadership within the cinema clubs. Still, the

club members were most likely aware that the leadership of these organizations mirrored the power structure of the state, and that agents within the clubs were appointed by the state. Similar to the challengers within the cinema club structure, while discerning intentions among general fields of cultural production is not possible, capital and capital goals surface and inform the analyst of how the activist field was structured.

I shall now turn to the structure of the activist field and its dominant form of capital. According to Bourdieu social capital is:

> the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition -- or in other words, to membership in a group --which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a "credential" which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word… The profits which accrue from membership in a group are the basis of the solidarity which makes them possible.[185]

Social capital thus keeps groups functioning and cohesive. Bourdieu further claims that accrued social capital within a given actor makes them well-known, and when "their work of sociability… is exerted, is highly productive."[186]

The social capital of artists and more specifically dissident artists, may be used in the activist field. When I asked Bendir Man if he made music during the days of mass uprising he replied: "[I] didn't make songs during the revolution, I was in the street." Bendir Man's dedication to the revolution (and the revolutionary field as will be described below) dictated that he assert his presence and thus his activist capital within the movement. As we have seen, by utilizing and asserting his social capital within the activist field, Bendir Man aided in keeping the movement alive, cohesive, and growing. I also asked him the ubiquitous question of causality, and of the origin of the revolution: "when and where did the revolution start?" He responded wryly: "Not yet." His

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[185] Bourdieu, Pierre, "The Forms of Capital," pp. 248-249
[186] Bourdieu, Pierre, "The Forms of Capital," pp. 250-251

dedication to continued revolution and speaking out on behalf of Tunisians dominated by repressive systems of government and economics was therefore unfazed by the departure of Ben Ali.

Bourdieu points out that the "cultural producers, who occupy the economically dominated and symbolically dominant position within the field of cultural production, tend to feel solidarity with the occupants of the economically and culturally dominated position within the field of class relations."[187] It is therefore no surprise that my first interview with Bendir Man took place inside of one of the many emerging socialist partys' headquarters downtown. The implications of this location are meaningful. We met on Avenue Bourguiba, which is considered by many to exemplify downtown Tunis, and walked across the street and into an office where volunteers for this particular socialist party were busy preparing pamphlets in un-air conditioned rooms, strewn with maps of what I presumed were electoral districts. Those laboring inside of this office looked up taking notice of my presence, and then went back to work. The ease and comfort to occupy a central position (literally in the center of the offices) displayed by Bendir Man, and the quick acceptance of the other workers indicated an assumed simultaneity of struggle, or of unified purpose; whatever he was doing, those in the office knew he was with them. Here I do not intend to collapse the meaning of "socialist" to any one definition. One need only look to its differing meanings in Europe and the US in order to complicate the term. It should also be stated that many of the "secular" were also involved with the former regime, which may explain the suspicion cast upon them by large segments of the population. However, if they were with Beyrem, they were most assuredly never allied with the Ben Ali regime, and the themes throughout the interview

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[187] Bourdieu, Pierre, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, pp. 44

often elucidated his speaking on behalf of ordinary people, further proving Bourdieu's postulation above.

The Revolutionary Field

Beyond the long-present types of activist capital, evidence abounds on what we may call 'revolutionary capital.' The presence of this new type of capital is complimented by the genesis of a revolutionary field with its own inherent boundaries and rules. The production within this field certainly was comprised of activism, but those political acts that constituted this activism must have been perceivably directed within the framework of the ongoing revolt, or against it. Competition within the revolutionary field contributed and even fueled the revolutionary movement(s). Many of the artist-activist productions were aimed at accruing revolutionary capital, and some others, while not necessarily aimed at anything other than a political statement, would be assigned either a positive or negative amount of revolutionary capital regardless of an artist's intent.

The revolutionary field was not necessarily separate from the fields of journalism, activism, or art; indeed, in many ways it encompassed nearly all fields of cultural production for a certain period of time. The all-encompassing nature of the revolutionary field is due to the relation of external realities to the structure of fields, and the way they alter each other. Bourdieu stated:

> The structure of the distribution of the different types and subtypes of capital at a given moment in time represents the immanent structure of the social world, i.e., the set of constraints, inscribed in the very reality of that world, which govern its functioning in a durable way, determining the chances of success for practices.[188]

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[188] Bourdieu, Pierre, "The Forms of Capital," Originally published as: "Ökonomisches Kapital, kulturelles Kapital, soziales Kapital," *Soziale Ungleichheiten (Soziale Welt, Sonderheft 2)*, ed. Reinhard Kreckel, trans. Richard Nice, (Goettingen, Otto Schartz & Co.:1983), pp. 242

The structure of the social world, from the outset of the rebellion onward, caused the genesis of this new kind of capital and the field in which it is competed over. Further, this was an exponential process which pushed the revolutionary field into a more relevant and legitimate position while simultaneously making the capital accrued (or assigned) within it more powerful. To put it simply, more participation in the revolution caused increased (capital) benefits of participating. The more revolutionary capital was sought therefore, the more power accrued to all holders of revolutionary capital (especially the orthodoxy[189]) and the social movement. Bourdieu summarizes an analogous process: "Everything suggests that as the cultural capital incorporated in the means of production increases… so the collective strength of the holders of cultural capital would tend to increase."[190] However, accruing certain types of capital, even within the revolutionary field is not simply a matter of choice. Autonomy within the revolutionary field was dictated not only by capital accrual, but also, initially upon the ability *to* protest. In her article entitled, "The privilege of revolution: Gender, class, space, and affect in Egypt," Jessica Winegar shows how because of certain circumstances, she was initially unable to participate in the Egyptian revolution as she was stuck at home caring for her child.[191] This constitutes another example of Bourdieusian 'proximity to necessity' that by its nature inhibits autonomy within a field.

The ways by which certain actors achieved a position of orthodoxy within such a newly created field was determined by a number of factors including: ability to mobilize, perceived self sacrifice (including martyrdom), speech acts, and pre-established levels of

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[190] Bourdieu, Pierre, "The Forms of Capital, pp. 247
[191] Winegar, Jessica, "The priviledge of revolution: Gender, class, space, and affect in Egypt," *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 39, No. 1, pp. 68-69.

other forms of relevant capital such as activist capital. There were of course, many other ways to gain revolutionary capital and as we have seen, the mechanisms of consecration and legitimization for a mass audience, while producing a air of heterodoxy about the agent within certain fields (such as art), occupied a central role in determining levels of perceived importance during the revolution and thus, revolutionary capital.

Of the ways to achieve and obtain revolutionary capital, this thesis is primarily concerned with speech acts. Dissident musical poetics before and during the most intense periods of mass protest often earned the responsible actor revolutionary capital which in turn yielded a cohesive social movement. As Elliot Colla stated, "This poetry is not an ornament to the uprising-it is a soundtrack and also composes a significant part of the action itself."[192] Colla goes on to highlight the importance of the poetic chants during these protests, and the one in particular which was heard in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and other places:

> Consider the most prominent slogan being chanted today by thousands of people in Tahrir Square: "Ish-sha'b/yu-rîd/is-qât/in-ni-zâm." Rendered into English, it might read, "The People want the regime to fall"—but that would not begin to translate the power this simple and complex couplet-slogan has in its context.[193]

Unlike the ubiquitous narratives asserting that hip hop rallied the protestors and became their "soundtrack," this chant (*ashab/ yurid/ isqat/ al-niẓam*) was actually present in many of uprisings across the MENA region in 2011. Ahemd Mejri claimed that this chant was Tunisian in origin and that the rhythm and meter appeared in many other political chants since the era of Bourguiba: "*biruh/ bidam/ nafidik/ ya Bourguiba*" ("With our blood and souls we sacrifice for you Bourguiba"), and "*biruh/ bidam/ nafidik/ ya*

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[192] Colla, Elliot, "The Poetry of Revolt,"
[193] Colla, Elliot, "The Poetry of Revolt," *Jadaliyya*, January 31, 2011, accessed November 17, 2011: http://www.jadaliyya .com/pages/index/506/the-poetry-of-revolt

waton" ("With our blood and souls we sacrifice ourselves for the nation").[194] If one were looking to find linkages between the recent uprisings in the MENA region, perhaps one need only look to the "*ashab yurid*" chant. More importantly, as Colla pointed out, this chant represented a political act. As it was such an act, those who spoke it earned an amount of social capital. They stood in the protest, participated in an act of defiance, and did so in full view of their friends and fellow citizens. While the capital assigned to such a seemingly subsidiary role is not equal to that of a high profile dissident artist, chanting and simply being in close proximity to the physical 'heart' of the protest, does allow an individual a small amount of positive revolutionary capital.

The social and symbolic capital accumulations resulting from participation in revolutionary movements help to reproduce the hierarchical structure of revolutionary activists (or simply 'revolutionaries'). Those in the upper echelon orthodoxy have a unique ability to consecrate or excommunicate individuals in the revolutionary field. Bourdieu tells us:

> If the internal competition for the monopoly of legitimate representation of the group is not to threaten the conservation and accumulation of the capital which is the basis of the group, the members of the group must regulate the conditions of access to the right to declare oneself a member of the group and, above all, to set oneself up as a representative (delegate, plenipotentiary, spokesman, etc.) of the whole group, thereby committing the social capital of the whole group.[195]

As I have attempted to show, it was not only those in a position of orthodoxy within the revolutionary field who had the power to consecrate or excommunicate. That power also belonged to the news media as well as other participants within the field. The power to excommunicate someone within the revolutionary field is as diffuse as those who comprise the movement. Evidence of excommunication from the revolutionary field

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[194] ‏"بالروح بالدم نفديك يا بورقيبة"‏ and ‏"بالروح بالدم نفديك يا الوطن"‏ ‏"بالروح بالدم نفديك يا الوطن"‏
[195] Bourdieu, Pierre, "The Forms of Capital," pp. 251

abounds: In Egypt, there is a website showcasing a blacklist (or "lists of shame") of actors, artists, and personalities who are categorized as anti-revolution.[196] Also in Egypt, the "*fallul*" ("remnant") graffiti movement demonstrated that anyone with a can of spray paint may use public space to denounce the negative revolutionary capital of a given figure, and thus symbolically excommunicate them (although perhaps not as strongly as someone in a position of orthodoxy is able to do). This previously rare word, which has hardly been used except in strictly military contexts before 2011, has become in itself, a marker for drawing boundaries between revolutionaries and non-revolutionaries in Egypt.

In Tunisia many of the excommunicative acts also pertain to products that come from companies that are (or were) owned by persons with negative revolutionary capital. During the summer of 2011, I asked for a particular item in the grocery store that I could no longer find. One of the workers responded that it was "Trabelsi" (the company was owned by the former first lady's family) and thus was no longer stocked. By refusing to stock this "Trabelsi" item, this grocery store was helping to excommunicate the Trabelsi family from, and simultaneously asserting their positive capital within, the revolutionary field. Despite the aforementioned "denial of the economy" that occurs in many fields, the financial benefits and detriments to those who respectively possess positive or negative revolutionary capital was thus laid bare. Bourdieu states that economic capital, despite the "denial of the economy" in many fields, "is at the root of all the other types of capital and that these transformed, disguised forms of economic capital, never entirely reducible to that definition, produce their most specific effects only to the extent that they conceal...

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[196] See: Author unknown, "قوائم العار," (or "Lists of Shame"), *ANHRI.net*, Accessed December 1, 2011: http://el3ar.info/

the fact that economic capital is at their root…"[197] With this in mind, there is little difference between those artist-activists who made political music before, during, or after the initial uprising. My original belief that there existed "commodifications" (in the Marxist sense) of nationalism or the revolution after the departure of Ben Ali was upended by Bourdieusian theory: There were no cultural productions that were non-commodified, only those which better disguised their economic capital goals and those which failed to convincingly do so, yielding the dichotomy between the autonomous and heteronomous respectively.

In this chapter we have seen that activist capital is largely comprised by social capital and can be consecrated and made into symbolic capital by those within the field and those outside of it. The capital gained by a dissident artist could often be used in activism alone although the position of a given artist may vary in each individual field. For example: an autonomous artist in pursuit of political activism may use all tools available in order to target the largest possible audience. The artist's short cycle of production and attempts to use tools such as the news media (recognized as heteronomizing) to disseminate a political message may induce other artists to perceive them as more heteronomous than previously. The tacit 'rules' within the activist field allow for dissidents to use all media available to them, whereas those within the art field do not allow for full use of all media and harm the image of any agent utilizing certain "instruments of diffusion." In this way, a given actor could be perceived as autonomous and orthodox within the activist field, and simultaneously heterodox within the field of art. With these social structures to negotiate, it is no wonder that symbolically dominant cultural producers often identify with those dominated in many other fields.

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[197] Bourdieu, Pierre, "The Forms of Capital," pp. 252

The genesis of the Tunisian revolutionary field (and perhaps an international one as well) helped to further orient these producers as well as the movement that they had become a part of. The more cultural producers participated in the revolutionary field, the more the movement grew and the more power was wielded by the more highly-visible artists within the movement. This power which was brought about through the holding of revolutionary capital, like all forms of power, does carry financial incentives to participation and orthodoxy as well as disadvantages for those who resist the field and work against it. The revolutionary field is not alone in this regard and, despite the widespread "denial of the economy," material capital is a determinant in all the fields explored within this thesis.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I began by deconstructing the ideas of resistance and tradition in order to challenge governing narratives on the role of music in civil unrest and have also tried to illustrate the problems involved with stuffing an entire genre of music into any label. Although the 'music as a weapon' motif has continually surfaced in Iran, southwest Asia under the Soviets, Algeria during and after colonization, and now in Tunisia, we should be careful when interpreting works in this way as we have an effect on not only which works are consecrated and noticed, but also on the political realm from which these works have come. Further, while a potent distillation of political sentiments and easily accessible to foreign analysts, music was not the only body of cultural productions to challenge the Tunisian government. The connection between cinema, music and other productions clearly merits further research.

Journalism as we have seen, quite clearly elevated and consecrated certain artists as well as cultural producers and many artist-activists positively used this to their advantage. The overlapping nature of the different fields of production in combination with the differing capital goals within them, affect perceptions of artists, activists, and journalists alike, at home and abroad. Perhaps most importantly, the declining role of Bab Athaqafa, and the vectors of governmentality that came with it,[198] in the structures governing fields of cultural production caused profound changes, and was influenced by equally profound changes, within the fields, capital goals, and the artists themselves. The realms of Tunisian cultural production have thus been in a state of flux during and since the revolution, which may have yielded the narratives clearly visible in the international

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[198] Foucault, Michel, "Governmentality" trans. Rosi Braidotti and revised by Colin Gordon, in Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller eds., *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press), pp. 87- 104

news media that dissidence suddenly exploded onto the scene in November 2010 to January 2011. Those within these fields continue to redefine the rules and structures governing production and despite the historical precedence of political dissidence within cultural production, the artists are in many ways entering new territory.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not mention the role academics alongside jounalists as critics maintain in the consecration of actors. A stalwart advocate of reflexive sociology, Bourdieu stated: "All critics declare not only the judgment of the work, but also their claim to talk about it and judge it. In short, they take part in a struggle for the monopoly of legitimate discourse about the work of art, and consequently in the production of the value of the work of art."[199] In this dynamic, those celebrating the importance or denouncing irrelevance of a work of art are declaring their own importance in its deciphering and interpretation. Academics are of course no exception to this rule and attempts to explain the recent so-called "waves" of protest scouring the political landscape of the MENA region, constitute competition not only within the academic field but within the revolutionary field as well. This power arises from the ability of scholars to consecrate or denounce those within a revolution as important or not. This power is not, as was shown in this thesis, that of academics alone, but also that of journalists, filmmakers, bloggers, graffiti artist, general public opinion, etc. However, it is only right that we acknowledge this power and this dynamic, in order to show a more expansive view of the actors involved in recent revolutionary events, and the limitations of our own gaze because of the tools we use. Academics, however, should be more aware of this dynamic (than the other consecratory mechanisms/analysts) in order to be careful when

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[199] Bourdieu, Pierre, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, pp. 36

engaging in this rat race to explain the revolutions, and thus the people and social bodies we empower and neutralize in the process.

Bourdieu also warned that "the social scientist's job is not to draw a dividing line between agents involved in it [the boundaries of a field] by imposing so called operational definition, which is most likely to be imposed on him by his own prejudices and presuppositions, but to describe a *state* (long-lasting or temporary) of these struggles and therefore of the frontier delimiting the territory held by competing agents."[200] This advice is well-founded, and I have attempted to portray the temporary state of the Tunisian musical, journalism, activism, and revolutionary fields in addition to competing definitions within the fields of Tunisian cultural production as well as within academic scholarship. In so doing, I hope the reader is convinced that they were indeed that; temporary. These boundaries and categories are in a constant state of flux and what I have attempted to illustrate is an interpretation of these fields at a precise moment in time in order to complicate the simplistic, reductionist, and essentializing analyses that abound at the time of this writing. I am also quite aware, as is stated above, that the analysis of consecratory agents may also be applied to any researcher, academic or otherwise. Therefore Bourdieu was indeed right in his warning, and yet, just as he often advocated the application of sociological analytics to the social science field, this analysis hopefully does speak to the current frustrating competition among academics to analyze these historic events. Thus I submit this work aware (with 'eyes open' as is said) of its ability to creep beyond what is articulated herein, and be applied to myself as well. Simply by being aware of capital dynamics of the fields in which we are active unfortunately does not mean that we are able to transcend them.

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[200] Bourdieu, Pierre, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, pp. 42-43

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