

PATHWAY TO PUBLICATION: THE WRITTEN WORD IN TUNISIA

by

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This thesis examines the current state of the publishing industry in Tunisia in order to understand the nature of writing and publishing in an international context. In discovering the publishing procedure, I have included information on how books are used in education, homes, and libraries as well as the roles of newspapers, government, and booksellers. All these aspects help determine the driving forces behind any publishing industry such as, supply, demand, cultural attitudes, and accessibility of knowledge. My research was conducted primarily using standard library research procedures, which were then anchored by several interviews with professionals involved with publishing in Tunisia.

This study presents an overview of publishing techniques and factors contributing to problems and/or successes within the industry. After considering these factors, I assert that publishers provide inadequate financial support to authors as a result of plummeting public demand for printed literary works. Additionally, increasing government interference through direct and indirect censorship of both the content and availability of books significantly hinders the growth of the industry and the cultural diversity of written works produced and sold within Tunisia.

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the collection of Oregon State University. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request. I also affirm that the work represented in this thesis is my own work.

Rachel K. Partin, Author

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PATHWAY TO PUBLICATION: THE WRITTEN WORD IN TUNISIA

INTRODUCTION

Publishing as a Product of Politics

In a region that has been conquered by the major Mediterranean empires, Tunisia's relatively recent independence became a milestone for freedom on Africa's north coast. Tunisia was under colonial rule for nearly all of its existence, and since gaining independence has been subsequently controlled by two rather dictatorial presidents. As a result, repressed expression has been endemic. This political background is common among Arab countries and has had a profound effect on writing and publishing across the Middle East and North Africa. I will be situating Tunisia among these states and making comparisons when appropriate in order to better understand the international context of publishing as an industry and outlet for personal, social, and political expression.

In 1956, Tunisia gained independence from France through the leadership of Habib Bourguiba who became the first president of the newly formed Republic of Tunisia a year later. Despite his revolutionary promises of reform, Bourguiba's governmental tactics were little different from those of colonial France. He rejected Western-style democracy for most of his 30-year presidency, even pushing a bill through the National Assembly naming him "president for life" in 1975 ("Biography"). His presidency is remembered as paternalistic and authoritarian, and while he did much for the economy and foreign relations, many basic human rights were repressed.

Bourguiba appointed Zine El Abidine Ben Ali as prime minister on October 2, 1987. Just one month later, Ben Ali staged a bloodless coup, declaring Bourguiba senile and himself the new president. Prior to his position as prime minister, Ben Ali was a military general and minister of national security (Kjeilen). He used these intimate connections with the military to carry out the coup d'état and subsequent victories over Islamist parties. Today, tourists visiting Tunisia are often surprised at the huge police presence and shocked that each officer has his rifle prominently displayed. This, however, is simply indicative of Ben Ali's governing style. Tore Kjeilen, an Islam and Tunisia scholar, notes that "since 2000, a process towards allowing Ben Ali to remain in power for life seems to have been started. The constitution was amended in 2002 to allow a president to stay in power until the age of 75 (70 before) and be reelected unlimited times." The amendments also granted Ben Ali judicial immunity during and after his presidency (United States 2). Before the amendments, a president could only be reelected three times, and Ben Ali had already won elections in 1989, 1994, and 1999 with over 99% of the vote. Ben Ali was again elected in 2004 with 94.5% of the votes; he is currently 71-years-old (Kjeilen). The only remaining obstacle to repeating Bourguiba's "president for life" status is the age limit of 75 years for a president.

Despite its government's undemocratic processes, Tunisia's political situation is quite stable compared to other Arab countries. Firearms are illegal for civilians, and social unrest is rarely displayed. Additionally, both Bourguiba and Ben Ali have instated several progressive policies regarding women's rights, education, and religious interference in state politics.

Tunisia remains a very corrupt country nonetheless. A study conducted by Transparency International and published in 2005 by the French magazine *Jeune Afrique: L'Intelligent* reports that Tunisia ranks second among African countries and 39th in the world for corruption (see table below). Government officials are guilty of bribery, abuses of power and social goods, and money laundering (Letourneux 136). All of these practices are part of the system to retain political power by the ruling party (ironically named the Constitutional Democratic Assembly) and eliminating freedom of speech is part of this system.

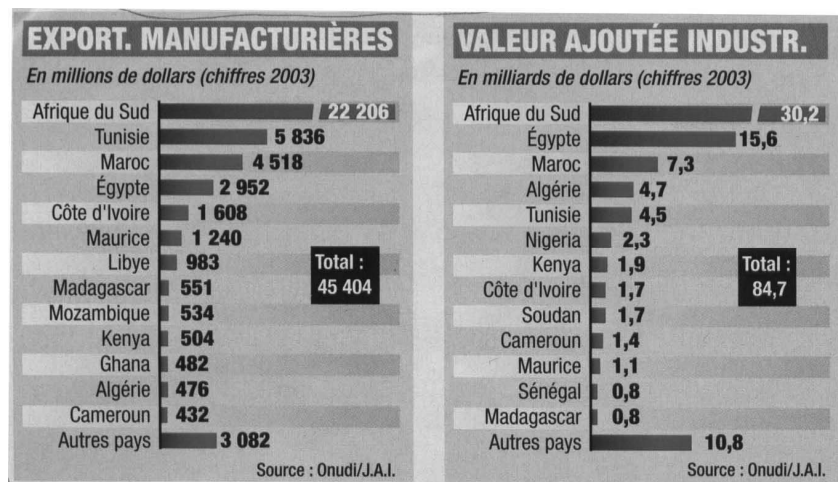
CORRUPTION EN AFRIQUE				
Rang Afrique	Rang mondial	Pays	Note 2004	Variations 2003
1	31	Botswana	6,0	+ 0,3
2	39	Tunisie	5,0	+ 0,1
3	44	Afrique du Sud	4,6	+ 0,2
4	48	Seychelles	4,4	ND
5	54	Maurice	4,1	- 0,3
5	54	Namibie	4,1	- 0,6
7	64	Ghana	3,6	+ 0,3
8	74	Gabon	3,3	ND
9	77	Bénin	3,2	ND
9	77	Égypte	3,2	- 0,1
9	77	Mali	3,2	+ 0,2
9	77	Maroc	3,2	- 0,1
13	82	Madagascar	3,1	+ 0,5
14	85	Sénégal	3,0	- 0,2
15	90	Gambie	2,8	+ 0,3
15	90	Malawi	2,8	0,0
15	90	Mozambique	2,8	+ 0,1
15	90	Tanzanie	2,8	+ 0,3
19	97	Algérie	2,7	+ 0,1
20	102	Érythrée	2,6	ND
20	102	Ouganda	2,6	+ 0,4
20	102	Zambie	2,6	ND
23	114	Congo	2,3	+ 0,1
23	114	Éthiopie	2,3	- 0,2
23	114	Zimbabwe	2,3	0,0
26	122	Niger	2,2	ND
26	122	Soudan	2,2	- 0,1
28	129	Cameroun	2,1	+ 0,3
28	129	Kenya	2,1	+ 0,2
30	133	Angola	2,0	+ 0,2
30	133	RD Congo	2,0	ND
30	133	Côte d'Ivoire	2,0	- 0,1
33	142	Tchad	1,7	ND
34	144	Nigeria	1,6	+ 0,2

Source : Transparency International

(Letourneux 136)

Ben Ali's presidency has been marked by a roller coaster economy. Kjeilen explains that "Ben Ali's economic politics are a kind of social democracy, the government trying to control the activities of investors and private companies. This has

sometimes killed incentives.” Recently, there has been a trend toward privatization, especially in the agriculture and telecommunications sectors, as a result of pressures from North American and European trading partners. Tunisia’s strong ties to the United States and European Union have added credence to economic reform policies, creating a relatively stable economy with a growing middle class. These reforms have included incentives for small and medium-sized businesses in the industrial manufacturing sector, which has resulted in increased manufacturing exports to other industrialized nations (“A la recherche” 94). The graphs below show Tunisia as the second highest exporter with the fifth highest industrial income among African countries.



(“A la recherche” 94)

As Tunisia becomes increasingly industrialized and aligned with the EU, highly skilled jobs are prioritized, while lower-skilled positions disappear. In Tunisia, unemployment rates are exceptionally high. Tunisian scholars Mohamed Abdelbasset Chemingui and Chokri Thabet say that “recent official estimations by the National Institute of Statistics establish [an unemployment] rate of 14%” (Chemingui 6).

Unfortunately, these reforms have also had a negative effect on the publishing industry. With emphasis placed on heavy industry such as textiles, minerals, and

agricultural products such as olive oil, the manufacture of resources needed for print production (paper, ink, printing presses, etc.) has not been particularly promoted.

Though it may seem like a growing middle class would provide more flexible income for purchasing books and a large section of the population without jobs would create leisure time for reading, this has not been the case, and Tunisia's publishing industry continues to lose profits.

The Social Appetite for Published Works

Currently, the most available market for books is not to the general public, but within the education system. Bourguiba was a strong proponent of education as a way to modernize his country, and passed a law requiring parents to send girls to school shortly after he attained presidency (United States 3). Today, Tunisian children are required to attend school for nine years. Post-secondary education has gained in both public popularity and governmental support within the last ten years, and the foundation laid by Bourguiba, by which females are given educational opportunities, has held fast into this century. More than 50% of current university students are women (United States 3).

Prioritized education has led to extremely high literacy rates in relation to other Arab countries. The Arab Human Development Report (AHDR) of 2004 stated that "about one third of Arab men and half of Arab women [were illiterate] in 2002" (United Nations Development Programme 16). In contrast, over 74% of Tunisians are literate (83.4% male, 65.3% female) following the adoption of the National Plan to Fight Illiteracy on January 3, 1992 (United States 1; Ayed 2.2). This plan was instituted in order to "further the development of the economy, society, and personality" (Ayed 2.2).

While there is no way to empirically measure the relationship between literacy and the development of these areas, it is noteworthy that as literacy programs have become widely available for both children and adults, the economy has expanded, university enrollment has increased, and, most interestingly, voter support for Ben Ali has decreased (94% in 2004 compared to 99% in every previous election).

With more than one in four Tunisians attending school, textbook authors have a known distribution network among the country's universities and secondary schools ("Société"). Conversely, authors of other genres, such as fiction and poetry, have a harder time selling their books because public demand has been falling sharply since the 1980s. The three major reasons for this are easy and inexpensive access to the internet, values shifting away from book-based knowledge in the younger generation, and the prevalence and preference for audio-visual entertainment like movies and video games.

Tunisia prides itself on its modernity, often citing its telecommunications industry as an example of progress toward the standard set by Western industrialized nations. The chart below shows that in 2004 Tunisia was the fourth most connected country in Africa in terms of cellular phone usage.



(Sandouly 107)

Ben Ali put his country on display in November 2005 when Tunis hosted the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). It became an opportunity for the entire country to celebrate its technological achievements; signs, banners, and billboards decorated buildings and streets country-wide in the weeks before and after the summit. Technology schools even set up booths or tents in public places where they could showcase their latest computers and provide free internet use for demonstration.

The internet is, in fact, easily accessible, especially in the capital city of Tunis where it is relatively cheap at about 75 cents to \$1.50 per hour of use at the public cyber cafes. Though the connection speed is often quite slow, many young people spend hours online surfing the web and playing games. An increasing number of Tunis middle-upper class families are getting the internet at home as well, and the number of personal computers is steadily rising.

The global phenomenon of reliance on technology has not passed over Tunisia. As the younger generations are increasingly exposed to technology at home, school, and in public places like shopping centers and restaurants, their values are shifting. No longer do they place worth on tangible communication found in newspapers, periodicals, and books. Instead, they invest their time and money into online forms of interaction like email, instant messaging, chat rooms, and social networking websites. Every professor interviewed at one Tunis university lamented the lack of appreciation their students had for books. When required to read, they would prefer to do so online. Indeed, when I asked one high school student if he owned any books, he said “No! Why would I? I do

not like to read and my friends don't either. There is no reason for it. We watch the television and movies" (Interview 5)¹.

The audio-visual market in Tunisia is truly booming. Cable and satellite TV are very common in the larger cities, and though anti-piracy laws are technically in effect, nearly every shopping center has a store in which the only merchandise for sale are movies that are downloaded and burned onto CDs before the customer's eyes. These movies are cheap, costing anywhere from \$4 to \$8. The business owners and shop clerks at these stores are generally in their twenties or thirties and either download movies from internet databases or purchase one copy legally and then burn many successive copies. The soaring demand for visual entertainment causes these small businesses to be so profitable that officials simply turn their heads and gratefully augment their economic activity indicators.

The political and social climates in Tunisia are not altogether conducive to a thriving publishing industry, and yet complete collapse is not in the foreseeable future. The challenges facing Tunisian business leaders are global. Publishers everywhere are struggling to remain socially relevant within the framework of changing tastes and values. For Tunisia, the difficulty will be acknowledging and meeting new demands in a market with decreasing profits.

¹ Due to concerns about safety and other unexpected and undesirable consequences, all interviews were conducted in strict confidence. Therefore, the interviewees will not be cited by name, but rather, by number.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite a lack of published research on publishing in Tunisia, there are multiple sources documenting the repression of freedom of expression and the effects it has had on literary life throughout the country, especially in the capital city of Tunis. The great majority of these documents rely on testimonies, interviews, first-hand experiences, and brief reports in the Tunisian and foreign (mostly French) press. The documents to which I refer are generally newspaper and magazine articles, government and legal documents, and publications from human rights groups. While these sources offer great insight into the political and literary environment, none of them expand their scope to include the Tunisian publishing industry as a whole. For that reason, my study is rather unconventional both in its scope – it provides an industry overview – and its methods, which are academic and research-based.

Human rights groups such as Human Rights Watch, The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, the International Federation of Human Rights, and the Tunisia Monitoring Group have published accounts of their “fact-finding missions” aimed at discovering the true state of human freedoms in Tunisia. These groups have sent open letters to officials in the United Nations and governments of Tunisia, France, and the entire European Union urging immediate attention and action be given to counter the oppression of freedom. Overall, the majority of these works have originated in and through organization-based efforts, and as such, are designed to fulfill the missions of those organizations. While this may intentionally or unintentionally exclude some information, it is imperative to note that government censorship precludes

critical works from being published within Tunisia. Therefore, this not only limits the amount of published works on the subject, but also drives potential critics to associate with human rights groups in order to publish anything at all.

Fortunately, there have been academic and comparative studies of education and literacy in the Arab world. These studies provide information on both the author and the reader. Work is being done regarding conditions for scholarly research, writing, and publishing in the developing world, while other scholars are looking at the struggles of many copyright-based industries across the Arab world. The United Nations Development Programme provides continual comparative research in their annual Arab Human Development Reports. Their 2003 and 2004 Reports are particularly useful for literacy and freedom analyses, respectively.

A Human Rights Perspective

The “Arab Human Development Report, 2003: Building a Knowledge Society” broadly examines the progress of factors contributing to a knowledge society among all Arab countries. For the purposes of my study, it is useful to understand the conditions of knowledge acquisition, preservation, and development and their effect on writing and publishing among socially and politically similar countries. The two issues raised most prominently in this report are described by Fathi Khalil el-Biss, Vice President of the Arab Publishers Union: “The author and the publisher are forced to submit to the moods and instructions of 22 Arab censors and this prevents a book from moving freely and easily between its natural markets” (4). Strict, though occasionally fluctuating, government oppression has a profound effect on the success of writing as a profession

and publishing as a business. The censorial restrictions take the form of business closure, search, and seizure, while journalists face no assurance that their activities will not lead to penalties, detention, and arrest since it is widely known that some journalists have been persecuted by intimidation, physical assault, and even assassination (62).

As a result, a large number of religious books are published in Arab countries, comprising 17% of total number of books published, compared to 5% of the total number of books in other parts of the world. The reluctance of writers to only write on “safe” topics is evidenced by decreased overall production. In 2003, the study found that “the number of books published in the Arab world...does not exceed 1.1% of world production, although Arabs constitute 5% of world population” (4). According to an article published in the French-language daily *La Presse*, these numbers have not improved in 2007, but have actually decreased slightly to 1% of the world’s total book production. The authors also acknowledged the abundance of religious books (Hazgui, “Problèmes” 1).

In addition to regular assaults on freedom of expression, the industry is also ill-equipped to keep up with the same caliber of production as the rest of the world. The report shows how the infrastructure of a modern information society, such as technological equipment, programs, and networks, is inadequate in most Arab countries (62). These problems also directly effect authors because “the absence of a direct relationship with the readers’ market undercuts [the authors’] financial independence...Many authors are also practicing journalists, a profession which helps them to reach readers” (78). El-Biss explains further financial hardships:

A lack of major specialized book distributors with wide distribution networks...further hampers book production and circulation. Books are usually only available in a limited number of bookshops in major cities, reflecting weak demand. These bookshops offset their financial losses by selling popular periodicals, stationery, gifts, and other items. (79)

As a “banned commodity,” book imports are subject to “censorship and bureaucratic procedures that place exorbitant costs on publishers” (82).

The United Nations Development Programme further investigates issues of censorship in the “Arab Human Development Report 2004: Towards Freedom in the Arab World.” Again, there is little distinction made among data from every Arab country, but the report gives a thorough overview of general conditions and trends that shape the publishing industry across borders. Many of the issues surrounding freedom of expression involve the media. Arab journalists occasionally find publishing in the Western world to be less problematic, however, their home countries may persecute them for doing so. It has been reported that “some journalists [have] received prison sentences because they were connected with articles published in the foreign press” (40). Tunisian law does not assure a journalist’s right to obtain information and news, and press freedom is blocked or curtailed by regulations that permit prior and post-printing censorship (13). This is accomplished by “laws impos[ing] restrictions on the right to publish newspapers by requiring a license whose withdrawal, or threat of withdrawal, are used by the executive to deter newspapers from crossing set boundaries of freedom of expression” (13).

Muhammad Al-Charfi, Tunisia's former Minister of National Education, explains how this routinely, and lawfully, occurs:

Although censorship is outlawed, publishers must provide pre-distribution copies of any newspaper or book so that the administration is informed of its content and can apply to the court for an order of seizure if it finds that a work violates public order or offends decency. In essence, this is the democratic system at work. The administration, however, refrains from giving the required receipt for copies provided whenever it is unhappy with a text to be published. Freedom of the press and publication therefore lacks any substance. (130)

This curtailment of freedom stifles creativity among Arab literary and artistic intellectuals. Freedom is imperative to their work, and without it, production has inevitably declined (85).

At the time the AHDR 2004 was being written, a coalition of 16 international organizations was created to monitor freedom of expression in Tunisia in the run up to and following the 2005 WSIS. This coalition, the Tunisia Monitoring Group (TMG), recently released a report entitled "Freedom of Expression in Tunisia: The Siege Holds," which documents the regression in freedom since the WSIS. It states:

We have disappointingly witnessed serious deterioration in the conditions related to freedom of expression in Tunisia, particularly with respect to independent organisations [sic], harassment of journalists and dissidents, independence of the judiciary, blocking of books and websites, and the

imprisonment of the human rights lawyer Mohamed Abbou, for voicing his opinion in articles on the Internet. (3)

In order to actively counteract these regressions, the TMG has met with Tunisian government representatives to discuss several recommendations for improved human rights conditions.

These meetings have had little result. One positive change since 2005 is that prison conditions have slightly improved, however, “police brutality is becoming an almost daily event in the public spaces and people are becoming increasingly frightened” (16). The TMG has also corresponded with under-secretary-general of the United Nations. At the time of the report’s publication, there had not yet been any action taken by the UN, despite their knowledge of these alarming conditions in Tunisia.

More human rights abuses are documented in “A Lawsuit Against the Human Rights League, an Assault on all Rights Activists,” a 2001 joint publication of Human Rights Watch and The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders. The premise of the report is that even though human rights groups occupy an officially celebrated position, Tunisian officials are continually harassing human rights activists in order to quell criticism. The report focuses specifically on a lawsuit brought against the Tunisian League for Human Rights (LTDH) by a few of its own members to resolve an internal dispute regarding voting procedures for its steering committee. Many members of the LTDH are journalists, publishers, writers, and independent intellectuals who have been able to use the organization as an intermediary with the state. The LTDH is the oldest independent human rights group in the Arab world, and has provided an example to those wishing to start similar groups in other countries. Now this example is

threatened by unnecessarily swift and destructive police action following a court-ordered injunction freezing the league's activities (2, 7). This injunction was granted before there had even been a hearing in the case.

This report brings up several important issues regarding the independence of the judiciary in Tunisia. The president officially heads the Supreme Court of Judges, which "renders judges susceptible to pressure in politically sensitive cases" (15). Similar to the authors of TMG, the authors of this report conclude with recommendations to the governments of Tunisia, France, and the entire European Union. Tunisia/EU and Tunisia/France agreements stipulate that "respect for human rights and democratic principles shall guide the domestic and international policies of all parties" (24). With a legally biased judicial system granting police and other security forces free rein in handling human rights workers, there is little chance of any serious work getting done in the LTDH, rendering it useless in its watchdog role and violating important foreign agreements.

Reporters Without Borders, a Paris-based international NGO focusing on press freedom, frequently publishes articles about the hardships and restrictions that journalists face in Tunisia. During the 2005 WSIS, the group released strongly worded documents protesting the abusive treatment one French reporter received when covering the summit. These articles point out the irony of such actions during a convention hosted by a country supposedly celebrating the free flow of information. The 2004 AHDR, citing Reporters Without Borders, noted "the Middle East was the region that enjoyed the least press freedom in the world that year [2004], with few independent media outlets. In a number of countries, correspondents exercised strict self-censorship" (AHDR 2004, 40). The

2005 World Press Freedom rankings by Reporters Without Borders placed Tunisia number 147 out of 167 countries for its lack of press freedom (United States 2).

Reporters Without Borders' 2005 Annual Report documents the ruling party's abuse of the media during the 2004 presidential election. The Tunisian people were not allowed any independent news on the election, but rather, were only offered "mutilated, partial, and pompous" information (1). As expected, Ben Ali was reelected. In the same year, *La Presse* wrote an unprecedented open letter to Prime Minister Mohamed Ghanouchi asking for clarification on what was publishable and what was not. They wrote about "total confusion at the newspaper" ... citing 18 explicit bans including one on 'publishing photos of John Kerry, the Democratic candidate in the US presidential election'" (1). By tightly controlling what information is available within Tunisia, officials are successfully suppressing their opposition.

Copyrights, Market Values, and Academic Prejudice

Citing the general impression that creative and artistic activities are in decline in Arab countries, a team of researchers headed by Najib Harabi of Al Akhawayn University in Morocco set out to find empirical evidence to either discredit or support that impression. Harabi followed common economic theory in surveying copyright-based industries. The findings were published in a 2004 report entitled "Copyright-Based Industries in Arab Countries," which concludes that the overall economic performance of book publishing is seen as negative in Tunisia. Using the enforcement of Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) as an indicator, the study concludes that the industry is weak because copyright protection is not widely used as a positive means of enhancing

economic performance. Harabi writes, “the perceived adverse position of the book publishing industry in Morocco and Tunisia is due to poor production factor conditions (mainly lack of capital), weak support from peripheral industries (especially downstream firms), and insufficient government support (lack of demand stimulation)” (9). The concluding recommendations for Arab governments encourage investment of capital and other resources, strict copyright laws, and improved infrastructure. Harabi believes these industries would flourish if the states would strike an economic policy that is neither laissez-faire nor strongly interventionist (11-12).

The independent French-language magazine *Réalités* published an issue in 1999 devoted to the future of the written press in Tunisia. Though it was printed nearly ten years ago, the issues of their concern at that time are still germane to present-day publishing issues. Taieb Zahar’s editorial cites decreasing profits as the result of a declining market for “serious” publications. According to him, the only truly successful periodicals were those that catered to society’s taste for the humorous, spectacular, and scandalous. Financial instability, in turn, led to business closures and the tenuous existence of those that were left. These tenacious few, however, were quickly losing ground to their foreign competition with whom they could not compete (Zahar 9). In another article, Hatem Ben Aziza concluded that the only way for the news and political publications to survive was to offer a “total package” publication, mixing their serious articles with lighter fare like sports and entertainment news (Ben Aziza 36).

A. Suresh Canagarajah similarly discusses the problem of foreign competition, but in a different context. His book, *A Geopolitics of Academic Writing*, aims to reveal the disadvantage at which the Western intellectual tradition places those in less developed

countries. His own experiences working as a researcher and professor at a university in the war-torn city of Jaffna, Sri Lanka and in the same position at various universities in the U.S. allowed him to see huge disparities in facilities, knowledge dissemination, and language usage preferences. Canagarajah's work exposes the bias and outright discrimination that researchers in developing countries face when attempting to publish their work in international journals or present at academic conferences. He writes, "One couldn't do respectable research when even the basic facilities were unavailable" (15). Basic facilities include access to current research by other academics. In places where postal services are inaccessible or slow, or where government regulations prohibit the distribution of journals, reports, invitations to conferences, and even emails and entire websites (like Tunisia), there is no way that intellectuals can stay abreast of new information and current trends in their fields of study.

Using the metaphor of a circle with intellectuals in developing countries inhabiting the periphery and those in advanced industrial nations occupying the center, Canagarajah explains that "if our story had to be suppressed simply because we didn't have the conditions and resources to undertake "empirically valid" research, then this is a form of silencing that would indirectly suit center interests" (15). Some direct forms of silencing include denying presentation experiences at conferences due to the potential presenter's lack of technological ability and refusing to publish journal articles because the language was not written in a way suitable to an academic publication. This latter practice is extremely common, according to Canagarajah, and directly affects any writer whose native tongue is not English, the current lingua franca of academia. For instance,

Tunisian professors who submit an article to an American academic journal may be rejected because their tone is not detached enough or their vocabulary not quite right.

Canagarajah concludes that this is the new imperialism and continued subjugation of developing countries is institutionalized under the guise of academic thoroughness. If I, as an American student researcher, cannot locate any writings by a Tunisian author in academic journals, this is in part because “for discursive and material reasons, Third World scholars experience exclusion from academic publishing and communications; therefore the knowledge of Third World communities is marginalized or appropriated by the West, while the knowledge of Western communities is legitimated and reproduced” (6). A key solution to this problem lies within the editorial boards of academic publications. If editors were willing to have a collaborative relationship with a Third or Developing World scholar, then more voices would be heard within academia, and these important stories would not be lost.

RESEARCH METHODS

Like any research project, I began my investigation in the library. I employed standard library research procedures and also took advantage of the Orbis Cascade Library Alliance and Interlibrary Loan to obtain hard-to-find publications from other university libraries. While living in Tunisia, I joined the Center for Maghrib Studies in Tunis (CEMAT), an overseas research center of the American Institute for Maghrib Studies, in which I had access to a library of works on Maghrib- and Arab-related topics, a quiet work environment, and administrative support to navigate the extensive red tape that academic researchers must negotiate within that country.

First-hand observation played a key role in this study as I was able to note many attitudes, customs, etc. simply by visiting newsstands, bookstores, markets, and tourist shops within Tunisia. My own trying experience attempting to obtain the correct textbook for my French class was a small taste of what many students must go through every semester and highlights the distribution difficulties publishers and writers are dealing with. Though I, an obvious foreigner, initially encountered some strange looks and resistance when I visited my neighborhood newsstand, this eventually dissipated as the months wore on and my face became familiar. My presence became commonplace and business went on as usual, allowing me the opportunity to observe these interactions as just another member of the crowd.

Finally, I anchored my research and observations with interviews conducted with professionals in the field of publishing. I prepared a set of ten interview questions (see appendix), and when possible, gave that document to the interviewee in advance of the

actual interview. In most cases, the questions were not inhibiting to the flow of natural conversation, but were, rather, a framework from which to build a solid understanding of each person's perspective. There was one case in which the interview took place via email, so the questions provided the entire basis for the interaction.

Limitations

My study was quite limited by the order in which I performed the research. I had only recently chosen my research topic when I traveled to Tunisia, so I had little previous knowledge before conducting the interviews. The information I got from them was full of rich and varied insights, but I feel that I could have had much deeper conversations had I been aware then of some of things I know now. Ideally, I would have done all or most of my library research before the interviews.

The second significant limitation was the small number of people with whom I was able to speak. I encountered quite a bit of resistance and confusion from professionals from whom I requested an interview. Understandably, some Tunisians were hesitant to speak with me for fear of ramifications, despite my assurances of confidentiality. As a result, many appointments were cancelled, phone calls and emails unreturned, and in once case, a business closed at the time of a pre-arranged meeting.

One of the themes of this project became government censorship as I continually discovered what a large influence it has over all cultural production. As a result, I was forced to question some of the documents I used in my research because they originated in Tunisia and were thus subject to censorship. It was unfortunate that in some cases, the

only information available on a particular topic was published within Tunisia, and had to be read with a critical eye.

The official language of Tunisia is Arabic, but nearly everyone speaks fluent French. English is present, but it is more common to encounter English speakers among the younger generations. The limits of language, however, did not present an insurmountable problem. I conducted all of the interviews near the end of my stay, and therefore, my French skills were more than adequate for conversing after months of intensive formal study and cultural immersion. In addition, it was sometimes possible to use English for clarification purposes because some of my interviewees had at least basic conversational skill in my native language. A small drawback to this code switching technique is that my written notes from the interviews became a jumble of French and English words. This occasionally caused some momentary confusion when I was typing them later, but was generally not a problem. The vast majority of my research is written in French, and therefore, I have provided a few direct translations where appropriate in this text.

PATHWAY TO PUBLICATION: THE WRITTEN WORD IN TUNISIA

Limitations and Benefits of Networks and Financing

In a country roughly the size of Georgia, it is to be expected that relationships among members of the same industry are simultaneously intimate and competitive. Most essential is the author/editor relationship as it not only shapes the quality of the finished product, but it also affects the success and expediency of a work meeting all of the many requirements for publication. The process that a written work must go through in order to gain the interest of a publisher, attain governmental approval to print, and get access into bookstores and other market venues is very much affected by social networking.

When asked the path books take to become published in Tunisia, one professor, author, and former editor-in-chief of a news and science magazine replied, “Oh, they always pass through one’s friends. There is no official path, but if one does not have connections, one can do nothing” (Interview 2). Since new literature is becoming less and less profitable, publishers are reluctant to invest in an author’s work unless there is a friendship and mutual trust already established. My interviewee explained that an editor would never read any manuscript unless the author’s name is known to him/her, be it through previous popularity and success or simply through social connections. Additionally, if an editor has a personal connection to the author, he/she has increased motivation when providing a publishing pitch to others within the company.

After a work has gone through all of the initial revision, design, and printing processes, it must be sent to the Minister of Culture to be approved for print and distribution. Publishing houses have reputations within the Ministry, and these

reputations can either help or hinder the approval of a work. Government officials keep a close eye on publishing activities. The relationships that result from these interactions are key in expediting works through the Ministry. It is also beneficial if the author has a positive reputation with the government and/or knows someone within the Ministry. One author of over 30 literary works said he has a friend within the Ministry of Culture, which invariably helps his books pass through those channels more quickly than others (Interview 3). This government office has no accountability to the publishers or authors, so there is no reason that they cannot hold on to a work for years without explanation. If there are friendly relations between a publishing house and the Ministry or an author and the Ministry, the approval process can be expedited.

Ministry approval is the final step before a book can be printed in volume for distribution. Because of the decreasing public demand, authors often have to do their own legwork in order to get their works into bookstores or other venues like public and university libraries. Business owners and university directors are obviously more likely to accept a work if they know the author. In Tunisia, the contents of school libraries are under the control of the school's head. The director of one university said, "When authors come to me with their books, I always buy at least ten copies if I know the author. If I don't, then I may only buy one or two copies" (Interview 4).

A correlating situation happens with the reputations of publishing houses. Bookstores know that certain publishers produce more bestsellers than others and adjust their purchases accordingly. However, a friendship between a business owner and an author supercedes generalizations based on the publisher of a work. One interviewee commented that journalists who write book reviews are some of the most wine and

dined people in Tunis because every author wants their book reviewed and reviewed well (Interview 3). They know that lagging book sales have had little affect on the popularity of daily newspapers, and the exposure from even one positive book review could potentially escalate their sales.

Even though there are decreasing sales, publishing houses are still able to stay in business. Their continued existence is due in part to government subsidies. It is official policy to provide 75% of the cost of production for cultural books, children's books, and high-quality artistic books ("Quel avenir pour le livre?"). This includes subsidizing the cost of paper, which is quite expensive, according to the director of a Tunis university (Interview 4). In May 2005, a law was passed providing reimbursement of 60% of the costs of newspaper production for opposition party newspapers. The same law also granted indirect assistance, such as exemption from customs duties for all printing materials, to the entire press ("Media and the Internet").

Of course all of these subsidies require application and approval by the Minister of Culture, and these applications are sometimes "not received," "misplaced," or simply denied without explanation (Interview 3). Furthermore, the subsidies for books require a subjective ruling by the Minister regarding the level of quality and/or culture within the book. It is entirely possible for the Minister to deny payment because, for example, a book of photography depicted something unfavorable toward the ruling party. This book could then be determined to be not "high-quality" enough and consequently, not eligible for subsidization. This is one of the main reasons that books on Islam are produced in such high numbers. The Minister does not deny the cultural value of such books, and their publishers receive quick approval on their applications for subsidy.

Often, the Minister of Culture does not consider books of fiction, theater, and poetry cultural works. If a publisher foresees this, they will either deny a contract to the author or offer a 50/50 split of the costs of production in order to alleviate the lost subsidy. As one author and former publisher explained, “The publisher is the one who calculates the expenses, so he just tells the author that the total cost will be double the actual figure. This way, the author’s “50 percent” actually pays for the entire cost and the publisher makes a large profit” (Interview 3). An author usually does not see any profit for about a year, and even then, it is only about 10-15% of the total profit received by the publisher. In one case, a scholar co-authored a book on religion and only received 10 dinars, or approximately \$7.82, in profit the whole year (Interview 4)². For this reason, there are very few professional authors in Tunisia. As the 2003 AHDR states, most authors are forced to make their living in journalism or teaching.

If an author is either turned down or required to pay production costs, the most common course of action is to self-publish. This is often called “vanity publishing” in the U.S., but in Tunisia, it has no such pejorative label. The necessity and the frequency of self-publishing has greatly diminished the stigma associated with the practice in other countries. According to one author/publisher, 60-70% of the total books published in Tunisia are self-published (Interview 3). Another author estimated that number to be as high as 75% because of the augmentation of literary and history books turned down by publishers (Interview 2). If an author does not have money to self-publish or even contribute to the publisher’s costs, it can take as long as two to three years before enough money is raised to even begin the publishing process (Interview 3). The most successful

² Tunisian currency is called the Tunisian dinar; the Tunisian “cent” is called the millime. All calculations are based on the currency exchange rate of 1.297 on May 18, 2007.

self-publishers are teachers who then require their students to buy their textbooks (Interview 1). Other authors must find their own customers, and often, booksellers are not eager to purchase from independent authors unless, as previously mentioned, there is a pre-existing social connection.

This hesitation is due to bookstores' increasing profit losses. Literary books are relatively expensive in Tunisia, costing at least 5 dinars and often as much as 15 dinars (about \$3.90 to \$11.50). Comparatively, magazines and journals usually cost only 500 millimes (about \$0.39). These prices may look extremely cheap to Western eyes, but they are expensive enough that Tunisians are reluctant to pay. A university director admitted that most of his faculty photocopy entire books because it is cheaper than buying a new book. By law, only 10% of a book can be photocopied for educational purposes (Interview 4). The difficulty for booksellers has been balancing the cost of books with decreased demand and the necessity to make a profit. One textbook author explained that the price of books is so low that it is virtually impossible for an author to make a living, yet bookstores must compete with considerably cheaper forms of entertainment like the Internet, television, and movies. Every person interviewed remarked that there are books available online and Internet usage is cheap, and even free for university students. As one author and editor put it, "books are expensive, and young people prefer to read for free" (Interview 2). As a result, literary books in print are seen as luxury goods (Interview 1).

Production and Distribution

All of the above economic factors have greatly influenced literary production. According to authors, there are only about 30 novels published in both French and Arabic per year (Interviews 2 and 3). The bi-lingual nature of Tunisia provides an advantage for authors because they have more than one outlet for publishing; however, this has done little to ameliorate demand. Because production has fallen, printers and technicians are nearly always available and willing to work when a job comes their way (Interview 3).

According to the Tunisian Industry Promotion Agency, there are 108 paper-producing businesses, 112 printing companies, and 46 publishing houses within Tunisia. The paper industry increased production value by 30% between 2000 and 2004 in order to meet the high demand and lower production costs for publishers. Despite increased paper production and what would seem a disproportionate ratio of paper companies to printers and publishers, Tunisia is a net importing country for paper products. In fact, the imports are nearly double the exports, contributing to the high cost of paper and the necessity of government subsidization (Industry Promotion Agency 1, 3-4). Notwithstanding paper subsidies, *La Presse*, recently increased its price from 400 to 450 millimes (approximately \$0.76) citing “the price of paper and other products necessary to the paper-making process” (“La Presse à 450 millimes”). Similarly, the cost of books has been slowly increasing to reflect the rising paper costs.

With high paper costs and mainly imported materials, it would be expected that the quality is adequate for making long-lasting publications. In 2004, however, institutions were just beginning to establish policies regarding the quality of paper used in their publications. Bechir Bouraoui, director of the National Pedagogy Center, said, “For

the first time, we have produced books...with a paper density of 80 grams compared to the 60 grams we used previously.” The new policies ensured that educational books were produced with standardized printing techniques. Bouraoui demanded that printers slow down their process to enable better quality for color photographs and to reduce the chance of error, thereby reducing waste and lowering final costs (C.C.).

Bouraoui’s concerns about the fast pace of printing presses were well founded. In countries with more developed publishing industries, mistakes are not as disastrous as they are in Tunisia. Quality control standards are lax because by the time a mistake has been caught, there have already been thousands of subsequent pages printed with the same error. With prices so high, a re-print is unaffordable. As a result, it is common to find typos, misaligned print, fuzzy or otherwise marred pictures, and any number of other small printing mistakes. Furthermore, if the paper is too thin, ink cannot properly soak in and book readers end up with the same black fingers one has after paging through a newspaper. More stringent standards have been put in place since 2004, especially regarding the minimum weight of paper used for printing a book, but there is still room for improvement.

Distribution to bookstores is difficult, particularly for authors who self-publish literary or artistic books. Currently the most popular book genres are scholarly and parascholarly, such as workbooks, textbooks, and dissertations, and “utility,” such as religious, cooking, and gardening books. These works literally crowd out the other genres in the bigger stores that sell all types of books (Interview 2). Smaller, more specialized bookstores may have trouble getting enough quality literary works from distributors as a result of the prevalence of scholarly and utility books. Additionally, works published by

educational institutions are often only sold in such institutions, and if these works are the most produced and most popular, business at other bookstores is going to suffer.

Consequently, even if bookstores have access to literary books and room to accommodate them in their inventory, owners may not stock such works because demand is so low. In this case, distributors are stuck with these books and thus absorb 40-45% of the total cost of publication (Interview 4).

Newspaper and periodical distribution is not so difficult, but only if the company has the funds for printing materials. Newsstands are abundant in Tunis, and the cover price on Tunisian publications is quite cheap. Tunisian magazines benefit from a large price disparity with imported magazines (about 1.5 dinars, or about \$1.17, for a Tunisian magazine as compared to at least 10 dinars, or about \$7.78, for some of the major French magazines).

Newspapers are significantly cheaper than magazines. The foreign newspapers are about equal in price to those produced in Tunisia, however, and competition is fierce. The foreign-based press has a significant advantage in the ability to afford producing a greater quantity of both newspapers and magazines, thus augmenting their distribution and readership. As previously mentioned, the Tunisian government subsidizes opposition party newspapers. Unfortunately, this fund only covers “the production and printing costs of a weekly publication with a circulation of 15,000 copies,” according to a government website (“The Press in Tunisia”). With a total country population of over ten million, opposition voices have quite a challenge being heard if their readership comprises less than 0.15% of the population. This example can be extrapolated to the

entire Tunisian press. Since production costs are high, their ability to produce quantities proportionate to the available readership is reduced.

Readers who live in Tunis are more fortunate than those who must rely on this imperfect distribution network to deliver publications to their towns. In February 2006, the National Library re-opened its doors to the public after having received over 28 million dinars (about \$22 million) for new facilities. Though the National Library had been in operation since 1965, its impressive new building increased both its stock of books, periodicals, maps, etc. and the number of spaces available for reading, researching, conferencing, and using the Internet to access the new library portal (Mezzi). A separate research library was inaugurated in Tunis in 1988. Its mission is to provide researchers with past and current media resources such as cartoons, encyclopedias and dictionaries, sound recordings, and other types of audio-visual sources. Every effort is made to include works in all languages available (“Médiathèque – Ariana”). Both of these libraries are open to the public, but require subscriptions for access. Other, smaller libraries exist throughout Tunis and in other cities. These include specific institutions’ libraries, internationally sponsored research libraries, and libraries specializing in specific genres, such as the House of Poetry located in the heart of Tunis. Though these establishments do not significantly alleviate the publishing industry’s distribution problem, they do aid the dissemination of knowledge among a population reluctant to purchase books.

In order to celebrate and promote the book industry, Tunisia holds an annual book fair. The International Book Fair is sponsored by the Minister of Culture and members of the press and publishing industry. In 2003, the fair concentrated on the rise of virtual

books and how publishers were keeping up with the trend to go online (V.M.). Since then, the fair has focused in part on Internet access and the development of electronic information. The participation of international publishers and distributors from around 35 to 40 nations has helped diversify the books available within Tunisia and the opinions expressed in the colloquiums and other events surrounding the fair. Unfortunately, the international publishers come expressly to sell their own books, not to help with Tunisia's distribution problem. In fact, the two featured authors at the 2006 fair were foreign: Brazil's Paulo Coelho and Libya's Ibrahim Al Kouni, who resides in Switzerland (D.B.S.). The annual book fair has been a success in enabling publishers to gather, discuss issues, and address the future of the industry. There is no data on how the fair may or may not help the distribution and sale of Tunisian titles. It seems safe to assume, however, that the event provides an opportunity for beneficial publicity and exposure, but may also exacerbate the problem of foreign competition for Tunisian publishers.

Never shy about self-promotion, the Tunisian government provides funding for representatives of Tunisian publishing houses for travel to other countries to participate in conferences, book fairs, and other such endeavors ("Quel avenir pour le livre?"). At the 2007 Book Salon of Paris, publishers from Tunisia and Morocco shared a booth in which they displayed their books and offered the public a chance to speak to their leading authors. Ahmed Mansouri, head of the society for the diffusion of French-language literature in Tunisia and abroad, explained that attending such fairs is very helpful for sales because "the main purchasers of Tunisian publications are libraries and universities

who do not buy in large quantities (around 40 copies maximum), so it proves most advantageous for North Africans to sell their books abroad” (O.B.).

The government also provides help for exporting books in the form of reductions of the cost of aerial transportation of books and of international newspaper distribution (“Le livre culturel,” “The Press in Tunisia”). Exports play a large role in the distribution of Tunisian publications, gaining 3.5 million dinars (about \$2.7 million) in 2004. As is to be expected, scholarly works were the most exported, followed by religion, law, economy, politics, and, finally, literary works. Literary, history, and geography books combined only collected a few thousand dinars that year. In order to improve these figures, publishing professionals are trying to form a society for the exportation of books (Hazgui, “Problèmes”). The conception of such an organization is, as yet, unrealized, and one can only hope that its existence will ameliorate the stagnant distribution system.

Public Interest and Support of Authors

Traditionally, literature has been very important and respected among Tunisians. Muslims are, after all, often called “the people of the book” (Interview 3). Literacy programs are very high on the government’s list of social programs because it is seen as a way to simultaneously boost economic activity and counter religious extremism. Consequently, Tunisia has one of the highest literacy rates when compared to both Arab and African countries. It would seem an anomaly, then, that book sales are dropping and public interest in literary pursuits is waning.

Economist Ghazi Majbri, director of a statistics school and head of Clé Publishing, studies the number of writers, editors, and patrons of libraries and bookstores.

He concludes only that it is “difficult to quantitatively and qualitatively analyze these numbers” because few businesses keep such records and, obviously, not every writer is a member of a (recognized) writers’ union (Hazgui, “Livre” 1). If publishers do not have access to statistics about their consumer base, their ability to understand and serve the public’s needs is significantly hindered. Further, Karim Ben Smaïl, director of Cérés Publishing, argues that too many independently published authors are contaminating the marketplace. He believes that “any body can publish books, but it is rare to find someone who can edit books for quality and satisfy the real needs of the public” (Hazgui, “Livre” 2). Any industry that has a real or perceived inability to serve the needs of society will necessarily lose value in the eyes of the public.

According to one professor and author, “the popularity of books will inevitably decline with the evolution of the world. The young are interested in audio-visual entertainment, not in reading. If they cannot read online, they will watch the TV or a movie because they are lazy. The older generations no longer have time to read, so no one reads at all” (Interview 2). Many professionals agree with this opinion, but others have a different point of view. They believe that books on paper will continue to be produced as a part of educational programs, and books will never be fully replaced because they are accessible at any moment and in any place (“Quel avenir pour le livre?”). This is an important argument in the developing world where access to the Internet is not always guaranteed. Even so, the publishing industry has its base in the capital city of Tunis where an increasingly wealthy middle class has easy access to online information.

Public libraries are increasing the availability of the Internet as well. There are 366 public libraries in Tunisia, of which 28 cover rural routes with what is known as a “book mobile” in the U.S. These institutions are estimated to serve more than five million readers with over 12 million available titles as well as access to the Internet (F.A.). A library subscription is available for only 500 millimes for children and 1.2 dinars for adults (\$0.38 and \$0.92, respectively) and provides not only access to books and other media materials, but also a quiet space for reading or researching (“Médiathèque – Ariana”). Those who like to read books or would like easy access to online information prefer library subscriptions because they are cheap compared to the price of books (Interview 1). These prices are proving beneficial and harmful for the Tunisian economy. Cheap and easy access to information only improves the flow of knowledge throughout the society and provides a catalyst for rising literary rates. However, bookstores are suffering as the public becomes less and less willing to pay for books and cheaper options are readily accessible.

Despite the insufficient financial support, Tunisian authors continue to write. Numbers provided by the Minister of Culture indicate that 1,500 works were produced in 2006, with an annual increase of about 100 books. The number of publishing houses is in constant evolution as well, with approximately ten new enterprises and seven business failures each year. “But these numbers do not indicate real activity in the sphere of books,” cautions Majbri. “The Ministry counts every business operating in the domain of publishing, even though many of them are just writers’ or editors’ associations and cultural operations” (Hazgui, “Livre” 1-2). Nevertheless, Tunisian authors and publishers remain active.

Their work is aided by some of the best copyright laws in the Arab world. Tunisia passed definitive Intellectual Property Right laws in 1994 and created the Tunisian Body for the Protection of Authors' Rights (L'Organisme tunisien de protection des droits d'auteurs) in 1996 ("Les Droits d'Auteur en Tunisie"). This organization is responsible for ensuring that IPRs are properly applied and providing a means of recourse for authors who have complaints ("L'Organisme tunisien"). However, according to Harabi's study, "Copyright-Based Industries in Arab Countries," these laws are poorly enforced and rarely followed. A perfect example is provided in the admission of the university director who knows the faculty photocopy entire books, but does nothing to stop the practice (Interview 4). If copyright laws can be so easily and blatantly ignored in a government institution, it is no surprise that profits are suffering from weakening book sales.

Along with copyright laws, the early 1990s saw the creation of the House of the Writer, the home of the National Union of Tunisian Writers. This union, dating back to the 1960s, is extremely active in Tunisian cultural circles, hosting colloquiums for international writers, attending the annual book fair, and petitioning the Minister of Culture on behalf of Tunisian writers. The union serves as a place where authors can discuss issues and trends in the publishing industry, conduct workshops, and, most importantly, form social networks ("La Maison de l'Ecrivain"). The nominees and winners of Tunisia's literary awards are nearly always members of this union, and in early 2007, members of the union were instrumental in the creation of a new literary award called the "Grand Prize for the Tunisian Novel." This award is key in their

attempts to revitalize the publishing industry as it is awarded only to novels that are published in Tunisia, written by Tunisians, and edited by a Tunisian publisher (Bourial).

Though the National Union of Tunisian Writers is the only official writers' union, others do exist. Most notably, the League of Free Writers, founded less than ten years ago, is active in publicizing rights abuses by the Minister of Culture. The League recently published a list of over 40 books that have been blocked by the Minister in an attempt to bring international awareness to the restrictions Tunisian writers face. The small group of authors who founded the League were disgruntled about the autocratic nature of the official Union, which is now headed by Slaheddine Boujah, a member of Parliament (Interview 6). League members complain that if the Union's President is an official representative of the state, there is no way he can fairly represent the concerns of the Union's members.

Some writers have been so frustrated by the omnipresent interference of the government that they have become expatriates in countries like France, Canada, and the United States. Many writers are reluctant to leave the country (if they can even obtain clearance to travel) because, as one author said, "if you leave and speak out, your family left in Tunisia will suffer unofficially" (Interview 3). There have been numerous reports of plain-clothes police beating males related to authors who have published critical texts in foreign countries. There are less obvious forms of harassment as well. One author knows a family in which no person can drive because every time they do, their vehicles are stopped by the police and their driver's licenses and identification papers confiscated and "misplaced" (Interview 3). In a country with numerous bureaucratic processes, being without the proper documents at any given time is grounds for incarceration. The

literature review provides numerous other examples of human rights abuses and copious evidence of the oppression of expression within Tunisia.

CONCLUSIONS

Tunisian culture has traditionally held great respect for the written word. Abou el Kacem Chebbi is a hero in Tunisian history and is considered the country's national poet. His mausoleum is a national monument and his hometown a tourist attraction. Ironically, his poems were used to incite revolution against the French colonizers who had oppressed Tunisia for nearly a century. Tunisia's national anthem is one of his works celebrating the blood shed for freedom and glorifying the independent nation of Tunisia. Perhaps it is his courage in speaking out against oppression that inspires current Tunisian authors who refuse to be silenced.

The publishing industry in Tunisia has two main challenges: financial and censorial. Reduced demand for printed works, especially literary works, has nearly paralyzed the industry's ability to produce works of both intellectual and material quality. Self-censorship is entrenched in the reporting, writing, and printing practices of the press, and fiction writers must limit their creativity in order for their books to pass through the Ministry of Culture. Government censorship is officially illegal and, in theory, never occurs. However, numerous reports by independent organizations and researchers prove the opposite, and the industry is greatly inhibited as a result.

I undertook this project in the hope that it would provide a concise overview of the publishing industry in Tunisia, and thus inform those who are interested or involved in the industry. I hope to inspire increased appreciation and support for works published in Tunisia and to provide a collaborative voice to those who have dared to publish elsewhere. In order for these voices to be heard, we must support those involved with

every aspect of the industry and bring greater awareness to the Tunisian government's oppressive censorial practices.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How are you involved with publishing in Tunisia?
Quel est votre rôle dans l'édition en Tunisie?
2. How long have you been in the field?
Depuis quand avez-vous travaillé dans ce domaine?
3. What changes have you seen take place?
Quels changements avez-vous constaté pendant cette période?
4. What challenges do authors/distributors/publishing firms have?
Quels sont les défis qui confrontent les auteurs/ distributeurs/ entreprises du domaine?
5. What are some advantages or good attributes of publishing in Tunisia?
Quelles sont les avantages et/ou les qualités de l'industrie d'édition en Tunisie?
6. How important are books in Tunisian society?
Quelle importance est-ce que la société tunisienne donne aux livres?
7. What is the path a manuscript takes to go from the author to a printed book?
Quel cheminement un document prend-il de l'auteur à l'édition finale?
8. What kind of support does the government provide for cultural production in Tunisia?
Quel est le soutien que le gouvernement fournit à la production culturelle en Tunisie?
9. What changes do you foresee in the next 5, 10, 15 years?
Quels changements prévoyez-vous dans les 5, 10, 15 années à venir?
10. Are you optimistic about the future of the field? Why or why not?
Etes-vous optimiste quant à l'avenir du domaine de l'édition? Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas?