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TSITSANIS AND THE BIRTH OF THE "NEW" *LAÏKO TRAGOUDI*

"[...] πού γίνεται σήμερα λαϊκό γλέντι σε σπίτι ή σε συγκέντρωση χωρίς ρεμπέτικο τραγούδι, μιας κι' αυτό με το ζωντανό περιεχόμενό του συγκινεί και εκφράζει την λαϊκή ψυχή;" (Politis, 1947)

"Τα ρεμπέτικα του Τσιτσάνη είναι ένα μουσικό είδος αξιοπρόσεχτο και μεστό από καλλιτεχνική ουσία." (Spanoudi, 1951)

"[...] καίτοι το ρεμπέτικο έχει κάποια δόση λαϊκότητας —γιατί εκφράζει τα συναισθήματα μιας ομάδας ανθρώπων— δεν είναι λαϊκό τραγούδι." (Letter to Avgi: 1/4/61)

The preceding comments from various Greek newspapers about *laïko tragoudi* and *rebetika* — of which there is an abundance — highlight and reflect the assumptions, the different perceptions and usages of the various terms that have been used since at least the turn of this century, to define the different forms of Greek music. They also represent the conflicts that ensued for over two decades in the post-War era over the question of what was "real" or "authentic" Greek music and what was not. These were issues that appeared to be concerned with musical genres and their exponents; what they were really about, however, were issues of nationhood, national identity, cultural inviolability and historical integrity. In that sense and in that context, the discussion about musical genres was highly relevant to the modern Greek's perception of himself and could, therefore, become highly political as a result.

This study is concerned with examining how the terms *laïko tragoudi* and *rebetika* have been variously used since the late 1940s, particularly in the popular press. It will trace the evolution of these terms, especially in response to and with reference to the life and work of Vasilis Tsitsanis. Tsitsanis' career is, in fact, an excellent representation of the ambivalent usage of these terms and how they can,

at times, be interchangeable, at other times, quite distinct, depending on the social and political climate of the day. Tsitsanis appears to have been very conscious of these factors and was able to create for himself the image of a unique position in Greek music. That is, he was presented (and he presented himself) as a λαϊκός συνθέτης who also happened to create *rebetika* songs. The confusion of these terms is, therefore, exemplified in the way that they were used to describe him and his contribution to the history of Greek popular music (which was soon thought to be seminal). As an exponent originally of the *rebetika* genre he (and others) could, at the same time, be seen as simply and exclusively popular (*laikoi*) composers or musicians. The term *rebetika* was therefore shed when it became a liability and embraced when it was fashionable to do so. Or, to make the situation even more complicated, the term *rebetika* could be used to describe the songs or the music but not to describe the creator who was himself a popular (*laikos*) composer.

During the 1950s and 1960s when the debate about the meaning of these terms was at its fiercest and when Tsitsanis' star was in the ascendant, it was not at all clear what λαϊκή μουσική was, let alone *rebetika*. Furthermore, that same lack of clarity pervades much of the available literature on Greek popular musicians. The emphasis here seems to be the re-iteration of the (often idealised) image of the musician rather than on the “objective facts” that make up his life and career. In modern Greece, where, arguably, an essentially oral-based, traditional society is reluctantly surrendering to the imprint of the twentieth century industrial and technological revolutions, this approach to reality is, in fact, a version of the truth, just as myths, folk tales and/or dreams can be in other societies. D. Tziouvas in his article about residual orality in Greek culture, made the acute observation (1989: 323) that Greeks: “underemphasized the features of their culture which were based on textuality and writing, features which rationalise and distance, and that they highlighted the idea of a lifeworld and of human immediacy which an oral culture generates”. Truth is then not a matter of “logical coherence” (Tziouvas, 1989: 323) but is seen “in terms of truthfulness to life and experience”.¹ Definitions of genre are therefore

¹In her study of the representations of *rebetika* in Adelaide, D. Tsounis

not crucial in the context of this perception of truth. Likewise, the presentation of the life and work of a musician such as Tsitsanis, where so much ambiguity and seeming contradiction is clearly in evidence (see Petropoulos, 1973; Schorelis, 1977–81, 4: 18–22; Christianopoulos, 1994: 16), becomes acceptable because it conforms to the notion of a reality that embraces image more than facts.

Moreover, any understanding of this confusion of terms and definitions requires an awareness of the socio-political realities of the time and of the fears which prompted people to accept ambivalence (as in the paradoxical usages of *laiko tragoudi* and *rebetika*) in preference to challenging outright whatever ruling (political) ideology happened to be prevalent at any given time. During the immediate post-war period Greece was still rent by division after the disastrous Civil War. Order was slowly being re-established by the Greek right-wing government and its foreign allies, England and America. The persecution of the Left was continuing and was to continue arguably, until most recent times. Clearly, it was not a time to use terms or be identified with musical genres that had previously been suspect, held in low regard or outcast from mainstream culture. For the working musicians and composers (Tsitsanis included), it appears that their ability to operate freely with what appears to us to be an obvious contradiction, was a pre-requisite for survival.

The ambivalence of genre

The terms *laika*, *rebetika* and *demotika* describe some of the musical genres that make up modern Greek music and which have dominated the discussion of Greek music especially since the end of the Second World War. There was in the post-war period (and to some extent, still is) an assumption that everyone understood what these terms referred to and,

(1995: 153, 168–9) argues that the various “cultural constructions of Rebetika” are, in fact, ultimately interpreted as “ideological constructs” which, despite their often inherent ambiguity are eventually accepted as “true” and “natural” by members of society. She, too, argues that the shifts in perception of the genre depends greatly on the specific needs of that society, whether they are cultural, emotional, ideological or political. If these needs are met, the contradictions and ambiguity present in the genre are overlooked or re-interpreted to suit the current “ideological construct”.

more to the point, shared some kind of agreement about their unstated definitions. This was, as the evidence shows, not the case at all. The lack of cohesion and uniformity of definition revealed in articles written during this period is highly conspicuous. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the debate about *rebetika* conducted in the popular press during the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s.² Most of the writers involved in this debate believed that it was the Greek nation and its (national and historical) identity which was at stake. As a result, the differences of opinion expressed in their respective articles, are, understandably, marked and often hostile. Often it seems that the writers are involved in delivering monologues and not really participating in any dialogue at all. The nature of the “debate” is therefore coloured by the incongruous situation whereby the participants are arguing using terminology whose definitions they have not agreed on, or, alternatively, presuming that everyone shares a similar understanding of the same terms and there is no point questioning it further. As S. Gauntlett has already shown (1982/3: 81, 92), a feature which is common to most more recent commentators on *rebetika* is their “preconceived definition of the term *Rebetiko tragoudi*” and their conflicting usage of “the generic terms *demotiko tragoudi* and *laiko tragoudi*”. This attitude or treatment of these terms has continued till the present day, so much so that the terms themselves have, to some extent, been rendered meaningless.

While political ideology no doubt played a significant role in any commentator’s understanding of these terms, differences of opinion could be just as virulent within a particular political context as without. There was little, if any, homogeneity amongst writers of any camp. In the pages of the Communist newspaper, *Rizospastis*, for instance, *rebetika* were synonymous not only with hashish-dens and the criminal underworld, but with everything decadent and corrupt in capitalist society (Xenos, 1947). Moreover, writers like V. Papadimitriou (1949a) denied that *rebetika* had anything to do with *laika*. The real *laika*, in his view, were those popular songs sung in urban clubs alongside *demotika*

²Most of the articles to which I will be referring appeared in the Athenian newspapers, *Rizospastis*, *Ta Nea*, *I Avgi*, and also in the Thessaloniki-based newspaper, *Ellinikos Vorras*. Some mention will also be made of other newspapers and journals of the time, including the Greek-Australian newspaper, *Neos Kosmos*.

and *kantades*. They contained no “contaminating” Turkish or Eastern elements and presumably, their content, in contrast to *rebetika*, was “ethical” (that is, did not refer to the underworld, immoral behaviour, etc.). Papadimitriou conceded that once the “contaminating elements” were taken out of *rebetika* there was a chance for them to become part of *laika*: “να μπουν στα πλαίσια ενός πραγματικού λαϊκού τραγουδιού”. It was this view that prevailed among the left-wing throughout the 1950s even though there continued to be some dissenting voices.

F. Anoyianakis (1947) and N. Politis (1947), for example, both saw *rebetika* as being a continuation of the demotic tradition. The main difference between *rebetika* and *demotika* was that the former existed in an urban, not a rural setting; *rebetika*, however, were still a true expression of the “λαϊκή ψυχή” (Politis, 1947). Moreover, Anoyianakis (1947) called the genre “λαϊκό ρεμπέτικο τραγούδι”, which indicates that there were, in post-war Greece, tendencies towards combining the genres (if indeed they were separate) or of subsuming one into the other, usually *rebetika* into *laika*. This tendency occurred among commentators of any political ideology.

In his famous 1949 lecture about the cultural value of *rebetika* M. Hatzidakis, for example, had also variously called the genre *rebetiko* and *laiko tragoudi*. Hatzidakis made it clear that he believed *rebetika* to be unequivocally Greek and that they reflected “το συναισθηματικό κόσμο μιας μερίδας του λαού μας” (Hatzidakis, 1949). Moreover, he equated the genre with Truth: “[το λαϊκό τραγούδι] [...] τραγουδάει την αλήθεια”. The conservative Psathas (1948), writing at about the same time in *Ta Nea*, likewise seemed to have no problem in joining the two together, even though he was personally disgusted with *rebetika*: “[το ρεμπέτικο είναι] το πιο σέρτικο χαρμάνι της λαϊκής μουσικής παραγωγής”.

An article by P. Paleologos (1948), however, skirted the whole issue of genre by referring to the musical instruments or the venues where the music was being played rather than to the music itself. Hence, he used the term “τα μπουζούκια” to describe the *rebetikallaika* that were becoming so popular among the upper middle class. This tendency to talk about “bouzouki music” and “bouzouki players” rather than about *rebetika* or *rebetes* continued, particularly in *Ta Nea*, for

some years (Psathas, 1951b, 1955b); see also *O Odigitis*, 1982. By 1951, when S. Spanoudi wrote her landmark article about Tsitsanis, which was, firstly, her apologia for the *rebetika* genre and secondly, her panegyric on one of its chief exponents whom she called “λαϊκός συνθέτης” or “λαϊκός μουσουργός” (rather than *rebetis*), it was clear that there was some sort of unresolved ambivalence at work (Spanoudi, 1951).

Throughout the 1950s, especially in *Ta Nea*, a slow separation between the popular musician and the *rebetiko* genre began to occur. *Laïkos* gradually became the most commonplace appellation for the creator of the music (*Ta Nea*: 20/12/51;³ Psathas, 1960, 1961a, 1962) which was, to all intents and purposes, previously called *rebetiko*. Slowly, too, the latter term was replaced or used in conjunction with “bouzouki music” (Psathas, 1951b, 1955a, 1961a; see also *O Odigitis*, 1982). When, in the early 1960s, Theodorakis appeared, it all became “λαϊκό τραγούδι” and it is this term that was and is still used to describe popular music far more than any other. From the late 1940s until the late 1950s, the response of the conservative and/or right-wing press to the *rebetika-laïka* issue may be described as a steady progression towards acceptance of what once was a highly suspect musical genre; part of this acceptance required a partial, albeit significant re-naming of the genre, even if both terms continued to be used haphazardly for some time. Certainly, from early on, the composers were re-named. Even Psathas did not call Tsitsanis a *rebetis* outright, much as he seems to have, at times, despised the latter’s music (Psathas, 1951b, 1955a, 1955b).

In other words, Tsitsanis and popular composers like him were given a new respectability and credibility by being described as “λαϊκοί συνθέτες”, no matter what their music might be called. Acceptance of them logically led to acceptance of their music. The next stage was to

³This advertisement depicts Tsitsanis as being “ο λαόφιλος Β. Τσιτσάνης με την γλυκεριά πεννιά του” whilst Ninou (pictured with him) is called “[...] η ασύγκριτη [...] ερμηνεύτρια Λαϊκών Τραγουδιών”. Note should be taken of how a direct reference to the genre which Tsitsanis presumably represents is subtly avoided; he is simply “popular” and his partner (Ninou) who sings his songs, also happens to be a performer of “λαϊκά τραγούδια”.

re-name their music “bouzouki music” or “*laïko tragoudi*”. Since “laïko” ostensibly suggested “the people” or being “of the people”, the term was broad enough to be applied to virtually any popular musical form, including *rebetika*. The newly-named musical genre which had thus taken into its body this previously highly suspect form (that is, *rebetika*) could then be easily incorporated into what was perceived to be mainstream Greek culture. It is no accident, I think, that the birth of the “new” *laïko tragoudi* coincided with the appearance (in many of the aforementioned newspaper articles) of concerns about Greek nationalism and identity; indeed, they often made up the underlying theme. Nor should it be forgotten that many of these aforementioned articles were questioning what, in fact, made up Greek culture (see especially Spanoudi, 1951; Psathas, 1951, 1953, 1955a, 1955b, 1960, 1961b). These nationalistic concerns clearly form a standard motif that exists side by side with the issues of musical genre. By the 1960s, many writers in the conservative press had succumbed to the idea that the old *rebetika* were, in fact, *laïka tragoudia* (see Yiannakopoulos, 1960) or *vice versa*. The Left, however, remained adamant that this was not the case at all.

The belief that *rebetika* were the products of capitalist decadence, that these pessimistic hopeless songs were designed to seduce the working class away from active resistance and draw it into numbing apathy still remained. Throughout the 1950s the more moderate but nevertheless left-wing *Avgi* took up the battle begun by *Rizospastis*⁴ against the infiltration of *rebetika*. An early article in 1953, for example (*Avgi*: 20/9/53) categorically denied that *rebetika* were *laïka tragoudia*. The anonymous writer defined “το υγιές λαϊκό τραγούδι” as being that song-form “που εκφράζει τις αρετές του λαού μας”.

Clearly, *rebetika* with their low-life themes, fatalistic tones and sense of despair did not fit this idealistic definition of not only the musical genre but all Greek people as well. At best, *rebetika* could be called: “αδύνατη πλευρά της λαϊκής καρδιάς”. Again, just as it was for the writers of the articles in *Ta Nea*, the issue at the heart of the discussion about music was Greek culture and Greek national identity.

⁴*Rizospastis* had been banned in 1947.

Accordingly, most of the writers in *Avgi* tended to equate λαϊκή μουσική with δημοτική μουσική, the latter being the true reflection of the Greek people (*Avgi*: 20/9/53). When the term λαϊκό was used in *Avgi*, it usually referred to demotic music (Pagalis, 1953b): “που συνεχίζει την παράδοση κι’ εκφράζει τους λαϊκούς πόθους” and was actively and clearly differentiated from the cheap and vulgar *rebetika* which had lowered “το πνευματικό επίπεδο του λαού” (Pagalis, 1953a). As late as 1959 and on the eve of Theodorakis’ presentation of *Επιτάφιος*, the writer Arkadinos⁵ was still warning people about *rebetika*: “τους πολλαπλούς κινδύνους που θα προκύψουν από την διάδοση και επικράτηση του κατ’ ευφημισμὸν ‘λαϊκού’ αυτού τραγουδιού” (Arkadinos, 1959).

In his view *rebetika* could not really be called *laïka* and hence could not seriously be taken to be representative of the latter genre. Like Psathas and many others, however, Arkadinos finally began to relent in his estimation of *rebetika* and the question of what was really *laïko tragoudi* with the arrival of Theodorakis’ *Επιτάφιος* (see Arkadinos, 1960a, 1960b; Psathas, 1960, 1961c, 1962). This was another major turning-point in the evolution of the new *laïko tragoudi* and was instrumental in securing the importance not only of the bouzouki in so-called έντεχνη μουσική,⁶ but also the reputation of the popular composers who had for so long used this instrument to play *rebetika* and *laïka*.

Theodorakis (1960) made it clear from the outset that he owed a significant debt to these composers claiming that his own new creation

⁵According to Christianopoulos (1979: 178) V. Arkadinos was the pseudonym that V. Papadimitriou used when he wrote for *Avgi*.

⁶This category of music referred to “artistic” music or “composed” music. That is, the act of creating the music was more in the Western written or educated tradition than in the Eastern oral tradition, where music was learned by ear and improvisation played a major part in its creation and performance. Both Theodorakis and Hatzidakis who were the foremost exponents of this new “Greek” sound had been educated in the Western musical tradition. The essential dichotomy between these two traditions has added another dimension to many Greek musicians’ self-perceptions (often in a detrimental way); it appears to be another reflection of the conflict between orality and textuality mentioned by Tziovas (1989). That is, the traditional oral culture has to contend with and/or absorb the new literate or written culture, even if their fundamental difference continues to create friction or uneasiness.

was based on the old (*demotika* and *laïka*) which in turn had their roots in Byzantium. The bouzouki, he said, was: “το σύγχρονο εθνικό λαϊκό όργανο” and Hiotis’ musical instinct was: “Ελληνικό, λαϊκό 100%”. The emphasis on national identity and reinforcing historical, cultural continuity of the Greek race via its musical instruments and its music was simply a continuation of the same debate of twenty and thirty years before.⁷ Furthermore, Theodorakis justified his use of *laïko tragoudi* in his own (supposedly more refined and artistic) music, by identifying himself with the people:

το λαϊκό τραγούδι δεν το είδα καθόλου απ’ έξω, αλλά ότι ήμουν ο ίδιος βουτηγμένος μέσα του ως το κούτελο [...] δηλαδή σε τελευταία ανάλυση, φιλοδοξούσα να γίνω ένας από τους λαϊκούς συνθέτες. (Theodorakis, 1960)

This suited his Communist leanings of the time and his political and musical aspirations, however, it also acted as a validation from “above”⁸ of this popular and heretofore underestimated musical genre.

As a result of the outrage and controversy provoked by Theodorakis’ creation new definitions of *laïko tragoudi* began to appear.⁹ The critics, however, remained for the most part, sceptical.¹⁰ Arkadinos

⁷That is, in the debate over the Greekness of *αμνέδες*. See note 21 for a more substantial exploration of this issue.

⁸In fact, this is not so different from the poet Seferis’ revisionary interpretation of Makriyannis’ memoirs and his validation of Makriyannis’ status as a culture hero. This had a significant impact on “modern Greek sensibility” especially in terms of new perceptions of nationhood (see Lambropoulos, 1988: 45–65). Like Tsitsanis’ work, Makriyannis was presented as concrete evidence for the “continuity of the Greek race and culture” (Lambropoulos, 1988: 55). Moreover, as representatives of the more humble, “common”, uneducated classes both Tsitsanis and Makriyannis were seen to truly exemplify the “spiritual wealth of [the] race” especially because they spoke (or sang) “the real language which real people speak” (Lambropoulos, 1988: 54–5).

⁹Theodorakis himself had always insisted that *rebetika* was a “καινούργια λαϊκή Μουσική” (see Theodorakis, 1986: 159 ff.) linked to demotic and ecclesiastical music. Over time, this new form had shed its previously narrow preoccupations with low life and hashish smoking and moved into the themes and content of the (pre-existing?) *laïka*: “δεν απευθύνεται στο στενό κύκλο απ’ όπου ξεκίνησε, μα στο σύνολο του λαού”. On this basis, Theodorakis called it *laïko tragoudi*.

¹⁰In April, 1961, the newspaper *Avgi* had, in fact, invited letters from

(1960), for example, asked whether it was necessary “να υπάρχει ζεϊμπέκικο και χασάπικο για να πάρει ένα κομμάτι χαρακτήρα λαϊκού τραγουδιού;” bearing in mind that for him *laïko tragoudi* had always meant rural demotic music. Nevertheless, by the end of his article, he did concede that Theodorakis’ *Επιτάφιος* had “τη σφραγίδα μιας γνήσιας λαϊκής τέχνης”. Theodorakis’ response (Theodorakis, 1986: 194 ff.) was to admit that while he had always been ambivalent in his feelings about the bouzouki, he nevertheless believed that it was possible to use it in a new way with new content and thus provide (p. 197): “μια νέα ώθηση στο λαϊκό τραγούδι”. He thus justified his use of the instrument in *Επιτάφιος* and simultaneously placed himself at the forefront of this new impulse.

Other commentators such as Vournas (1961), Anoyianakis (1961) and Macheras (1961) had already incorporated *rebetika* into the body of *laïko tragoudi*. In fact, the terms were essentially interchangeable. In their accounts of the history of *laïko tragoudi*, *rebetika* play a crucial role and are in fact, the new form of *laïko tragoudi*: “το νεότερο λαϊκό τραγούδι” (Macheras, 1961). Whereas the writers of the 1940s and 1950s had often clearly demarcated the two terms as describing different musical forms by the early 1960s this demarcation was becoming increasingly blurred. The notions that *rebetika* were older than previously thought, that they were the music of the urban Greeks, that they had been “cleaned up” by *laïko tragoudi* (Macheras, 1961) and that they were definitely *laïka tragoudia* (whether new or old)¹¹ were now becoming more widespread and acceptable, even among some of *rebetika*’s most hardened opponents (see for example, Psathas, 1962).

its readers about the issue of *laïko tragoudi*. The overwhelming majority of responses denied that *rebetika* were authentic *laïka tragoudia* because of their pessimism and negativity. However, many praised Theodorakis for his new work which was “opening up a new road” in Greek music. One reader even made the observation that the bouzouki when it was used in the performance of positive, happy songs could itself become an uplifting instrument. The point to be made here is that the dialogue and the debate were continuing and new understandings and/or definitions were being attempted in response to the new trends in modern Greek music. Not surprisingly, there was still no consensus.

¹¹See especially Macheras, 1961, Christianopoulos, 1961, Vournas, 1961 and Petropoulos, 1966 for these arguments.

The debate did not end here, but it had lost some of its former virulence. By the early 1960s the term *laïko tragoudi* had, in many ways, become synonymous with the word “bouzouki” and with the word “rebetika” (if only at times by implication). Even for some of the left-wing writers in *Avgi* the issue was no longer as clear-cut as it had once been. The success of Theodorakis’ and Hatzidakis’ music, both in Greece and abroad, had helped, in some measure, to bring this about. At the same time, the image of the humble popular composer, “ο λαϊκός συνθέτης” who had for so long espoused the genre variously called *rebetiko* and *laïko* was also undergoing significant changes.

The role of the record companies

While the question of the definition of musical genre and the resulting cultural implications were an on-going concern for many journalists, writers and commentators during the post-war period, it does not appear to have been as great a concern (either now or in the past) to the actual musicians or to the Greek recording industry as a whole.¹² There is no substantial proof which shows, for example, that any of those early musicians who were later strongly identified (and identified themselves) as *rebetes* (such as Markos Vamvakaris) ever disputed either the recording companies’ marketing and naming of their product, or the easy use of both *rebetiko* and *laïko* to describe their music. It may be that, while formal conventions of nomenclature had to be observed, or

¹²N. Georgiadis (1993: 11), for example, in the preface to his book *Ρεμπέτικο και πολιτική* went to great lengths to explain that despite the title of his book, he intended to use the term *λαϊκό τραγούδι* instead of *ρεμπέτικο*, throughout the body of his work, because, he claimed, it was the more precise term for the musical genre (and its exponents) with which he was concerned: “όχι μόνον η επίσημη ονομασία του είδους, όπως το αποκαλούσαν οι δισκογραφικές εταιρίες, αλλά κι ο όρος που προτιμούσαν οι ίδιοι οι συνθέτες”. Georgiadis cites examples to show this presumed preference, but it is hardly substantial proof of the claim that not only did the famous popular composers of the 1930s have a preference for the term *λαϊκό* but they actually were conscious of the difference between it and the term *ρεμπέτικο*. Based purely on commercial reasons and obvious socio-political concerns, it can be no great surprise that the early *rebetes* (if that is what they were) did not, it appears, act contrary to the recording companies’ methods or question whether the description of their music as *λαϊκό* was, indeed, accurate.

especially when in print and with the watchful censor in the background, nevertheless, the public knew that they were actually listening to or buying, *rebetika*, just as the musicians and the composers presumably knew. On the other hand, it could be argued that even from early on, both terms were used interchangeably without necessarily causing confusion or conflict, as it remained unclear what the differences, if any, were.¹³

As early as the 1920s, both terms had been used in the record catalogues distributed in retail outlets in Greece. The songs that these terms referred to were very varied although it can be safely assumed that this did not perturb the prospective buyers or interfere with their understanding of what the songs were. The terms *χασικλίδικα*, *μάγκικα* and *κλέφτικα* were also being used in these catalogues. The evidence from very early recordings indicate that the term *rebetiko* did appear on some record labels but it was used haphazardly and seemed to appear mostly on records where the dance-form was the *hassapiko*.¹⁴ During the 1930s this was no longer the case: *rebetiko* appeared much more frequently. After the Metaxas censorship laws of 1936, however, the situation changed.¹⁵ By 1940 the term *rebetiko* had virtually disappeared from the catalogues and only *laïko/laïka* remained (Gauntlett, Paivanas and Chatzinikolaou, 1994: 44). Obviously it would not have been very wise to promote *rebetika* in a blatant way under the Metaxas regime, even given the laxity of the censorship. The brief, successful reign of *rebetika* achieved mainly through the new

¹³Th. Anastasiou (1995: 15–20) has written a fascinating introduction to his study of Tsitsanis' songs which, attempts to determine the musical elements which constitute the *rebetiko* and *laïko* genres as a way of establishing a clearer definition of the genres. On the basis of this examination, he argues, quite rightly, that the differences between the two are more imagined than real, that they are, in fact, political constructs (pp. 16–17) created during the post-war period. He therefore concludes that the only true *laïko tragoudi* was *rebetiko*.

¹⁴I would like to thank Associate Professor Stathis Gauntlett for giving me access to the Melbourne Corpus Rebeticorum for this crucial information.

¹⁵Tsitsanis later claimed that it was in 1936, that is, the year that Metaxas introduced his censorship law, that the *rebetika* gave way to the birth of the “new” *laïko tragoudi* (Chr. Ts., 1983). Clearly, then, *laïka*, as perceived by Tsitsanis, had preceded this period.

recording industry in Greece was apparently over. In order for the genre to survive in the post-war era, a new term had to be found to describe these songs which were still commercially viable; at the same time, their form and content had to be modified somewhat for the same commercial reasons. The term *laïko tragoudi* was vague and general enough to create this safety net (see Anastasiou, 1995: 18) although it was not accepted by everyone (especially the Left). Moreover, as already indicated, it had been used, in a seemingly random way, to describe these songs in the 1920s and 1930s.

By the mid-1940s *laïka* were being promoted and music was being described as *laïki* because it was far more commercially viable to do so, whereas, in actual fact, and in many instances, *rebetika* were really being delivered to the public. In contrast, from the 1970s onwards the process began to operate in reverse: the word *rebetiko* began to have, from at least the early 1970s, considerable selling power whereas *laïko tragoudi* had been so widely used that it was almost meaningless.¹⁶ This was, of course, due to the *rebetika* renaissance which occurred at this time, apparently encouraged by both the Junta and later by the PASOK government (see Gauntlett, 1990 and 1991). The point to be made here is that, in both instances, the socio-political context acted on the question of musical genre and ultimately transformed it to suit the demands of the authorities and the needs of the audience. It is clear that musicians are and were similarly subject to such influences, and that, in such a constantly shifting, social context, the issue of what to definitively call a particular musical form was, generally speaking, not a high priority for these musicians.

Papaioannou's famous song “Ο Ζέππος” is one such example of the apparent irrelevance of musical genre for the working musician.¹⁷ The

¹⁶Georgiadis' book (1993) and its title, *Ρεμπέτικο και πολιτική*, is an extreme example of the exploitation of the word *rebetiko* for commercial reasons. Georgiadis apparently opted to include the term *ρεμπέτικο* in the title of his work, presumably because it would be noticed by a particular audience who identify the word with controversy (at the very least) and then, delivered, instead, to the reader, a work about the history of *laïko tragoudi*, in its socio-political dimensions. See note 12 above.

¹⁷V. Papadimitriou, despite being a virulent critic of *rebetika*, held out hope that the genre could be “cleaned up” and become “true *laïko*” (Papadimitriou, 1949a). He claimed that it was songs such as “Αντρέας

song is clearly a *syrtos* dance, even though Papaioannou was an avowed and passionate *rebetis*.¹⁸ Even if the music of a particular musician was equated with his overall identity and/or image then there is an abundance of evidence to show that musicians did not restrict themselves to one musical form to the exclusion of all others. The issue of identity and image as linked to a particular genre seems, in fact, to be a later development.¹⁹ Certainly, in the 1930s and the early 1940s the situation appears to have been much more fluid and flexible.²⁰ Just as a *rebetis* could write and record a *syrtos* or an island song, so, too, could a

“Ζέπκος” by Yiannis Papaioannou which were true *laika*. Did anyone tell him that Papaioannou was one of those “low-type *rebetes*” who also happened to write a *syrtos* which was very successful? Or was that the point that Papadimitriou was trying to make? That is, the potential for the development of the “lowly” *rebetika* into the “higher”, more refined *laiko tragoudi*.

¹⁸It should also be noted that one of Tsitsanis’ earliest songs, “Η Γερακίνα”, was a *kalamatianos* dance song (see Tsitsanis, 1979: 154). Also, the first song which Tsitsanis ever recorded was with Perdikopoulos and again, it was another *kalamatiano* called: “Σιγά καλέ μου σιγά την άμαξα”. Similarly, Bayianteras’ famous “Ξεκινά μια ψαροπούλα”, clearly a song heavily influenced by island music, appears to contradict the later claim that portrayed him as one of the great *rebetes* of the past (see *Rizospastis*: 11/11/76, 21/11/85; *Ta Nea*: 19/2/77; Schorelis, 1977–81, 1: 274). As we can see, however, in such a fluid situation, this was not the case. Similarly, the prototypical *mangas* and *rebetis* Nikos Mathesis made this remark (Hatzidoulis, n.d.: 108) “Έγραψα όμως και τραγούδια ελαφρά και ας ήμουνα ρεμπέτης και μάγκας”.

¹⁹Many of the musicians themselves may not have had such a clear consciousness then of being *rebetes* (to the exclusion of all else) as they later claimed in the 1960s and 1970s. It cannot be stressed enough that much of the evidence that has been used to describe the history of the development of *rebetika* and the “new” *laiko tragoudi* has been the autobiographies, biographies, or interviews with the surviving musicians and/or composers many, many years after the event, when it was comparatively safe and blatantly fashionable to do so. Obviously, hindsight may lead to wisdom but it also propagates and extends myth-making.

²⁰Tsitsanis, for example, who later claimed that he had never had any interest in *rebetika* as a musical genre (Gauntlett, 1975/6; Chr. Ts., 1983; Christianopoulos, 1994: 10, 12), clearly showed in some of his early songs, at least, (for example, “Σ’ ένα τεκέ σκαρώσανε”) the heavy influence of this very same musical form. See pp. 76–9 below for a more extensive discussion.

non-*rebetis* record a *rebetiko* song, safely in the disguise of a *laiko*. As long as the censor allowed the song to be recorded and the musician had a chance to thus assure for himself an income and a measure of fame, it was, it seems, immaterial to the musician and to the recording company to which musical genre the song ultimately belonged. This, however, changed significantly, when the debate about *rebetika* began to get heated in post-war Greece. That is, *rebetika* as a term describing a musical genre became so controversial and problematical that it became clear, for many musicians, that their future may have hinged on whether or not they decided to be identified with that form of music.²¹

In the post-war period it seems that decisions had to be made and some sort of definitive identity forged for and by various popular musicians and composers. For those musicians who had survived the war and occupation, it was imperative that their careers be re-established, especially once the recording companies began to operate again and the censorship returned eventually with all its previous intrusiveness. That is not to say that musicians had to suddenly opt for one musical form or another (although for some this may indeed have been the case). The pre-war controversy about *αμυνέδες* had been followed by the controversy about the bouzouki, bouzouki-players and their so-called underworld connections. After the war the controversy continued even more energetically. More than ever the focus of greatest concern was *rebetika* and what they represented in a cultural, societal and nationalistic sense. The socio-political context for this change are the impending final rounds of the Civil War and the drastic polarisation

²¹Previous to that, in the early 1930s, it should be noted, the controversy about the *αμυνέδες* and its place in Greek culture (see Gauntlett, 1991) had also been an issue of major contention. The reasons for exiling the latter song form were virtually the same as those used to justify the banning of *rebetika* in the post-War period: the Eastern sounds which could not possibly be Greek and only served as a reminder of the four hundred year Turkish Occupation (Xenos, 1947; Papadimitriou, 1949a; cf. Papaioannou, 1973). In other words, just as the controversy over *rebetika* assumed a cultural and nationalistic character, so, too, had the controversy over the *αμυνέδες* earlier. In fact, it could be argued that the preoccupation with such “suspect” musical forms and questions about genre constitutes a pattern that is repeated in modern Greek history in the constant attempts made, especially by the intelligentsia, to establish, once and for all, what Greek identity meant, both in its national and cultural aspects.

of Greek society into Left and Right. Society and culture, inextricably linked to national identity were now subject more than ever to the ideological claims of one group as opposed to the other.

Tsitsanis: the politics of necessity and the transcendence of genre

Throughout the forty-eight years of his career Tsitsanis was presented, sometimes explicitly, but mostly by implication, as an exemplary composer of *rebetika*. He was also depicted as a “founding father” (Maniatis, 1994: 10–11) of the variously named *rebetiko* or *laïko* genres, which was initially a sub-culture or fringe-dwelling musical milieu that slowly began to dominate the whole of Greek popular music. Parallel to this, despite the contradictions, Tsitsanis was presented as the father of *laïki mousiki*, in clear contradistinction to *rebetiki*; it was he, after all, who had ennobled the latter, “cleaned it up” as it were, in order to create (virtually single-handed) the new and more authentically Greek *laïki mousiki* (see Papadimitriou, 1949b; Yiannakopoulos, 1960; Macheras, 1961; Petropoulos, 1966; Holst, 1975: 58; *Ta Nea*: 9/2/85; Lianis, 1986; Christianopoulos, 1979: 181; Theodorakis, 1984: 68, 72; Maniatis, 1994: 11). In addition, he was accorded a cultural role of significant magnitude by members of the Greek intelligentsia. Theodorakis called him: “Ο Θεόφιλος της ελληνικής λαϊκής μουσικής” and his contribution was compared to Homer’s (Tachtsis, cited in Petropoulos, 1966).

Some of the earliest written references to Tsitsanis were made in the post-war period and indicate, from the outset, the ambivalence or duality of Tsitsanis’ image with regards to the *rebetiko* and *laïko* genres. Whilst none of the writers explicitly labelled Tsitsanis as a *rebetis*, the implications were nevertheless clear. Amidst all the controversy about *rebetika*, the name of Tsitsanis constantly recurred; his songs, in particular, were used as paradigms for the virtues (or vices) of the genre variously called *rebetika* or *laïko tragoudi* (see Anoyianakis, 1947; Spanoudi, 1951; Hatzidakis, 1951 in Christianopoulos, 1979: 180). His talents became the focus for many commentators, regardless of which genre he was thought to expound. N. Matsas (1952, cited in Christianopoulos, 1979: 181), for example, described Tsitsanis’ talents as superlative and gave him a central role in

the development of this relatively new “*laïko tragoudi*”. Hatzidakis called him “το μεγαλύτερο ταλέντο στο είδος του. [...] από τον καιρό της Άραπιάς” δίνει συνεχώς αριστουργήματα λαϊκού τραγουδιού” (1951, cited in Christianopoulos, 1979: 180; cf. Hatzidakis’ freer use of both *rebetiko* and *laïko tragoudi* in his 1949 lecture).

What was this “είδος”, though? Did Tsitsanis himself really know? In a 1952 interview Tsitsanis supposedly said: “το ρεμπέτικο [είναι] συνέχεια του δημοτικού”. The interviewer then concluded that “γνήσιο λαϊκό είναι μόνο το τραγούδι του Τσιτσάνη”. *Rebetika* with “vulgar” or “low-life” themes were being cast aside or purged from the pristine body of the authentic *laïko tragoudi*. What remained were the refined *rebetika* such as those Tsitsanis composed, which could henceforth be called *laïka* (Matsas, 1952, cited in Christianopoulos, 1979: 181).

S. Spanoudi (1951) likewise praised Tsitsanis’ talent, classified his songs as “ρεμπέτικα” and called Tsitsanis “μεγαλοφυής λαϊκός συνθέτης”. Tsitsanis and his songs were archetypal (positive) examples of the *rebetiko* genre. In her view, his *rebetika* were orthodox, modest, pure, emotional songs and, more to the point, quintessentially Greek. Moreover, in her subtle presentation of Tsitsanis as the exponent of one genre and his songs as representative of another, Spanoudi was able to separate Tsitsanis’ name from the stigma of being a *rebetis*. Obviously, this term still had too many negative, low-life connotations. Spanoudi’s article forms some of the earliest and clearest evidence of the usage of both terms in a seemingly natural fashion that does not obscure the meaning she wished to convey. What, however, was that meaning? Tsitsanis was a great popular composer who happened to compose *rebetika* which could also be called *laïka*. Regardless of the nomenclature, however, he was primarily a great Greek composer whose songs revealed the historical roots of his music and the continuity of his culture. The historical and cultural validation of a popular art-form was, it seems, the real aim of her article; the affirmation of Greek identity through the music and lyrics of a popular composer was of crucial importance to Spanoudi as it was to many other writers.²² The terminology used to describe musical genres was

²²Anoyianakis had, a few years earlier (1947), drawn that same link between Greek identity and music: “Έχουμε τόσο απομακρυνθεί απ’ τις

essentially irrelevant to this more important aim, and, in the ambiguous and almost haphazard way the terms were used, rendered almost meaningless, anyway.

The tension or, at least, contrast between the two images (*rebetis* and *laïkos*) may be apparent to us but they do not seem to have been a great problem for the writers of the innumerable articles about Tsitsanis which were published during the whole course of his career. Depending on the particular slant, political or otherwise, of the journalist, Tsitsanis could be presented in any number of ways, as long as the overriding image of great composer and national hero was not interfered with too much. In other words, the images that became a part of the myth that perpetuated itself throughout most of Tsitsanis' career and after his death, did not depend on the different musical genres he may or may not have been a part of. Certainly, a particular musical genre might be a starting-point for a musician's image but, once a complete image has been established the genre can become obscured as other concerns take precedence and greatly influence any subsequent image-making. The image of Tsitsanis, for example, as a great musician and popular composer who created *rebetika/laika* was later subsumed by the image of the "teacher", the image of the "national hero" who wrote resistance songs and of the man who symbolised and so greatly influenced Greek popular culture (Vournas, 1961; Hatzidoulis, n.d.: 32, 108, 201; Elliniadis, 1983: 20; Kontoyiannis, 1986; *Rizospastis*: 30/8/83; *Ta Nea*: 20/9/68, 10/8/76, 13/8/86; Hatzidoulis, 1977). Political and nationalistic dimensions of the musician's image therefore take on a greater significance than musical genre. That is why Tsitsanis and his work could so easily be described in the context of *rebetika* or *laika* without undue concern about definitions and ensuing contradictions²³ (see Petropoulos, 1966; Holst, 1975: 53, 58;

πηγές του [ρεμπέτικου] ακολουθώντας το δικό μας δρόμο, που κάποτε με δυσκολία ξαναβρίσκουμε τους εαυτούς μας". Hatzidakis' lecture in 1949 also had one central message to convey: the ultimate and undeniable Greekness of the form which he variously called *rebetiko* and *laïko* (Hatzidakis, 1949) and its essential role in reinforcing this Greek identity in the people who listen to it.

²³In fact, when *rebetika* became so popular again in the 1970s, it was politically expedient to bring Tsitsanis back "into the *rebetika* fold" and

Rovertakis, 1973: 19; Theodorakis, 1984: 72; Skaros, 1976; Loupaki, 1979; *Rizospastis*: 25/8/83, 27/8/83; *Ta Nea*: 19/3/76, 15/4/76, 19/2/77, 27/4/77, 20/2/78; Politopoulou, 1980; cf. *Ta Nea*: 29/7/80).

Tsitsanis was perceived as the progenitor of a new musical genre that may or may not have had its basis on the old *rebetika*, but which had certainly taken on a new character with the advent of this popular composer. Matsas (1952) put it this way: "Διαμορφώνουμε σιγά σιγά μια γνήσια ελληνική μουσική, που δεν δανείζεται κανένα στοιχείο από τα ξένα πρότυπα" which was, again, an echo of Spanoudi's sentiments and which reflected the search for a new Greek identity, free from the destructive influences of foreign powers and foreign intervention. If post-war Greece had to put up with the latter politically, it did not have to culturally. If the most popular musical genre in Greece during and after the Second World War was still the previously despised *rebetiko* (as Hatzidakis indicated in his 1949 lecture) then it had somehow to be incorporated into mainstream culture and given a new credibility, if only as a statement of Greek cultural autonomy and independent national identity. Thus was born "Το νεότερο λαϊκό τραγούδι" (Macheras, 1961) and the image of Tsitsanis as its chief creator.²⁴ Papadimitriou, despite his negative feelings about the *rebetiko* genre had, as early as 1949, basically called on Tsitsanis and others to do just that (1949b): "[να συμβάλουν στη δημιουργία] του νέου λαϊκού τραγουδιού [ώστε] να γίνουν οι φτωχοί καθηγητές σ' εκείνους που ασχολούνται με το είδος της λαϊκής μουσικής".

The question of whether *λαϊκή μουσική* had existed earlier²⁵ was

add to his already burgeoning image the picture of the *rebetis* (usually depicted only in an implicit way) who had also been a resistance fighter during the German Occupation (see Hatzidoulis, 1977).

²⁴See also a transcript of a 1963 radio interview with Tsitsanis in which Tsitsanis strongly implies this image of himself (in Maniatis, 1994: 17–19).

²⁵Did *laïko tragoudi* precede *rebetika* or was it co-existent with *rebetika*? According to Papadimitriou (1949a) *laïko tragoudi* definitely existed before *rebetika* arrived with the refugees from the Asia Minor Catastrophe and began to contaminate the *laïko* genre with its Anatolian elements. What, then, was *laïko*? Was it simply an urban form of demotic music intermingling with Western styles (foxtrot, tango, *kantades*)? Was it only, as the writers in the newspaper *Avgi* and the left-wing continued to claim, until the arrival of Theodorakis' *Επιτάφιος*, the traditional demotic

essentially irrelevant for those members of the post-war generation in Greece who wished to create a new sense of cultural integrity and identity. They looked forwards, not backwards. They sought new icons, even if some of them were merely old ones transformed. By the early 1950s, therefore, people like Hatzidakis, Anoyianakis, Spanoudi, Matsas and even Papadimitriou, were convinced that the new *laïko tragoudi* was the way of the future. Tsitsanis' popularity and great recording success further convinced them that he was indeed this new genre's foremost exponent, regardless of the fact that, for many, he was still a composer and performer of *rebetika*. Certainly, the Left remained unchanging in their attitudes towards the whole issue and although Tsitsanis is not mentioned by name, it is safe to assume that he was perceived to be, and dismissed as, a *rebetis*, and hence a corruptor of the proletariat. When, however, Theodorakis began his campaign for the use of bouzouki music in his own compositions and cited Tsitsanis as one of his main influences, the Left eventually began to modify its views (Arkadinos, 1960; Dromazos, 1961; *Avgi*: 1–2/4/61).

By 1961 Macheras was describing Tsitsanis' role in the development of *laïko tragoudi* in words which were to become part of the standard interpretation: “[Το 1945–50 ο Τσιτσάνης έκανε] μια προσπάθεια να ξεκαθαρίσει το ρεμπέτικο από τα χασικλήδικα και κουτσαβάκικα στοιχεία”. Christianopoulos (1961) also saw Tsitsanis' role as crucial: “το καθάρισε [το ρεμπέτικο] από κάθε πρόστυχο και χαμηλό [...] τόκανε ν' αγκαλιάσει τα μεράκια και τα ντέρτια της ελληνικής ψυχής [...] έκανε το ρέμπετικο πιο ελληνικό και πιο

song form and nothing more? According to the writers in *Avgi*, *laïko tragoudi* was tied to Greek history and full of healthy, beautiful and positive images which revealed the strength of the Greek character (Pagalis, 1953b). This was the definition used by *Avgi* throughout the 1950s (see pp. 61–2 above) and *laïko tragoudi* was the term preferred to describe traditional demotic music because it more accurately referred to the “λαός”, that is, the people. These writers considered the music being presented in the urban taverns and clubs to be the corrupt and unethical *rebetika* whose ultimate aim was “[να] χαμηλώσουν το πνευματικό επίπεδο του λαού” (Pagalis, 1963a; Argyrakis, 1953). There was no mention of the pre-existing urban (non-*rebetika*) *laïko tragoudi* that Papadimitriou had alluded to in 1949. Moreover, it seemed that for most commentators, this was a non-issue. See also Anastasiou's (1995) response to the whole question of whether *laïko tragoudi* and *rebetika* are indeed different musical genres.

ανθρώπινο”. Even Psathas (1953, 1961b) gave way and conceded that Tsitsanis was a master composer of many great songs, although he continued to call these songs *rebetika* more than he called them *laïka*; his apparent change of heart was, not surprisingly, greatly influenced by the new *laïka* that Theodorakis was producing.²⁶ The image of Tsitsanis as “λαϊκός συνθέτης” had, in fact, reached its final stage of evolution by this time²⁷ (Psathas, 1960, 1962; Platanos, 1966; Yiannakopoulos, 1960; Theodorakis, 1960).

This does not mean that the terms *laïko tragoudi* and *rebetika* had suddenly become clear to the average Greek or to the musicians themselves. If this issue had been resolved in some way with regards to Tsitsanis' image it was a nebulous, fluctuating victory, one that had to be fought for, again and again.²⁸ When, in the 1950s, Tsitsanis spoke out against the new “Ινδοκρατία”²⁹ that he believed was eroding the authenticity of Greek music (Tsitsanis, 1979: 39–42; Politopoulou, 1980; Chr. Ts., 1983; Virvos, 1985: 64), it was at the time that he was beginning to be presented as the “father” or “founder” of *laïki mousiki*

²⁶Psathas (1960, 1962, 1966) alternately described Tsitsanis as the bridge between *rebetika* and *laïka* or the bridge between *laïka* and the new sounds of Theodorakis (cf. Stathi, 1984; and Dragoumis, 1994).

²⁷That this did not prevent some writers, however, from continuing to label his songs, at least, as “ρεμπέτικο” (see, for example, Tachtsis cited in Petropoulos, 1966). However, the term “λαϊκός συνθέτης” was the most common used to describe Tsitsanis throughout the 1960s.

²⁸There were, for example, D. Psathas' incessant attacks on the *rebetiko* genre and its chief exponents made in the newspaper *Ta Nea* throughout the 1950s and continuing even into the 1960s, though in a much tamer form. These articles, ostensibly about *rebetika*, were frequently entwined with implicit and explicit attacks on Tsitsanis, who was presented by Psathas as one of the arch-exponents of the *rebetiko* genre (Psathas, 1953, 1955a, 1955b). In 1951 Psathas complained that Greek high society had betrayed Beethoven and Mozart “για χάρη του Τσιτσάνη” and his “ρεμπέτικη ορχήστρα” (Psathas, 1951b). In a later article (1953) he grudgingly accepted that there were in fact *rebetika* masterpieces and he cited one of Tsitsanis' songs as an example of this. However, his attacks on Tsitsanis did not cease until the early 1960s.

²⁹The term “Ινδοκρατία” has been used to describe the period from approximately the mid-1950s onwards when an influx of Eastern melodies, deliberately sought out by Greek composers were used to transform the *laïko tragoudi* (or corrupt it, depending on your viewpoint). The singer, Stelios Kazantzidis, is possibly the most well-known exponent of this form.

of the *laïko tragoudi* (Papadimitriou, 1949b; Hatzidakis, 1951) which, it seems, was the image that Tsitsanis chose to cultivate. By the 1960s it was this image which prevailed and which was virtually unquestioned. This simplistic and almost definitive resolution in the 1960s, at least as far as the image of Tsitsanis was concerned, of what was an inherently complex historical and social issue, clouded the fact that this outcome had been hard to achieve. The late 1940s and the 1950s in particular, reveal, particularly in the newspaper articles published in both the right and left-wing press, how tenuous and ambiguous most definitions of *laïko tragoudi* and *rebetika* were and how, by implication, precarious the status of musicians such as Tsitsanis could still be.

Tsitsanis himself had not always, it seems, been so resolute about his *laïkos* status. An examination of Tsitsanis' earliest songs reveal his own adoption of the mannerisms, language and ethos (that is, the image) that *rebetika* were said to portray and there is no evidence, at least at the beginning of his career, that he wished to distance himself in any way from the genre or from his closest colleagues in the field. At some stage, however a clear demarcation line was drawn and Tsitsanis became linked far more with the term *λαϊκό* than *ρεμπέτικο*.

As early as 1943 Tsitsanis was calling himself: “ο καλύτερος συνθέτης και ερμηνευτής του λαϊκού τραγουδιού” (Christianopoulos, 1994: 15).³⁰ Despite this almost presumptuous title which sought to link his name irrevocably with the genre of *λαϊκή μουσική*, Tsitsanis was nevertheless still writing songs which seemed to be portraits of, or at the very least, inspired by, the life of the “*χασικλήδες*” or hashish-users, who were, of course, closely associated with the whole *rebetiko* genre. These songs, written and/or recorded between 1937 and the late 1940s,³¹ remain at variance with and in contradiction to his later

³⁰ From a self-penned advertisement in the newspaper *Νέα Ευρώπη*: 13/2/43.

³¹ See particularly the following songs (Tsitsanis 1979: 200–19): “Σ’ ένα τεκέ σκαρώσανε” (1937 recording), “Μη χειρότερα” (1942, never recorded), “Πριγκιπομαστούρηδες”, (1944, never recorded), “Η λιτανεία του μάγκα” (1941–5, recorded 1983 [Anastasiou, 1995: 227]), “Της μαστούρας ο σκοπός” (1946 recording), “Κάτσε ν’ ακούσεις μια πενιά” (1949 recording), all of which refer to hashish and/or the life-style of the

carefully articulated and politically correct³² words and his repeated denials that he had ever created *rebetika*. Typical of these songs are not only the images of the aforementioned low-life but a sense of amoral exultation and social satire or irony:

Τεκετζή μου, βάστα να σου πω,
σου μιλάει ο μάγκας με καϋμό:
τα χασίσι κι αν φουμάρω
εγώ κανέναν δεν πειράζω
είμαι μάγκας και αλάνης
μπήκα στον τεκέ χαρμάνης.³³

Εμάζεψα τα σέα μου κι ένα κομμάτι μαύρο
και ξεκινώ, ρε μάγκες μου, να πάω στον Άγιο Μάμα.³⁴

The code of behaviour for the *μάγκας* evident in many other *rebetika*³⁵ is presented in much the same way in these Tsitsanis songs. In his *Autobiography* where these songs were reprinted in the section tantalisingly called: “*Ανέκδοτα και Απαγορευμένα Τραγούδια*”

“*μάγκας*”. Similarly, the songs “*Δροσούλα*” (1946 recording) and “*Μπλόκος*” (1941–5, never recorded) refer to the hashish dens or *τεκέδες*. If Tsitsanis was not himself a *rebetis* at that time he certainly produced enough songs to allow him to slip into that category if he chose to. On the other hand, Beaton (1980: 193–4) makes the interesting comment that “hashish-smoking [...] did not really count as a criminal activity before the introduction of new drug laws in 1936”. Presumably, the effects of such laws would not have been immediate: hence, songs of this type may have been seen as a kind of “norm”, not as controversial as later made out. This might account for Tsitsanis’ use of these themes in so many of his early songs.

³²Tsitsanis’ ability to be politically correct throughout his career and in spite of the especially slippery political situation in his own country undoubtedly contributed significantly to the longevity of his career. In ERT–1’s *Tribute to Tsitsanis* (1985) the musician Takis Fitsioris remarked on Tsitsanis’ ability to placate and befriend anyone regardless of his political persuasions or social status. It seems that this ability also extended to being able to befuddle the popular press with many and varied contradictory statements.

³³“*Δροσούλα*” in Tsitsanis, 1979: 210.

³⁴“*Η λιτανεία του μάγκα*” in Tsitsanis, 1979: 214

³⁵For example: “*Βρε, μάγκα μου*”, “*Οι μπάτσοι*”, “*Ο Νίκος ο τρελάκις*”, “*Εγώ μάγκας φαινόμενα*”, “*Μάγκες μπουκάραν στον τεκέ*”, “*Ο λουλάς*”, etc. (all of which can be found in Petropoulos, 1982: 14, 22, 38, 53, 54, 71 respectively).

(Tsitsanis, 1979: 200) Tsitsanis explained their dubious content by claiming that they were either products solely of his imagination or that they stemmed from real events upon which he had used creative licence and transformed them (pp. 205, 209): “Οι εικόνες αυτές σφηνώθηκαν στο μυαλό μου. Ήμουν και παιδάκι”, “[...] εγώ με τη φαντασία μου έπλασα το μύθο του Σιδέρη και του τεκέ”.³⁶ In interviews which he gave in the 1970s Tsitsanis denied having had any connection with the life-style associated with the τεκές (Pilichos, 1973; Gauntlett, 1975/6; Tsitsanis, 1979: 208–9; see also Mathesis 1969 in Petropoulos, 1983: 261–4 and Binis in Maniatis, 1994: 24; cf. Kalantzis, 1989: 29–49) and claimed, moreover, that he had never even taken hashish (Tsitsanis, 1979: 208, 214; Mathesis, 1969; Christianopoulos, 1994: 16).³⁷ In contrast, Nikos Mathesis, the supposed archetypal *rebetis* or *mangas* claimed that: “αυτοί που ακούγανε τέτοια τραγούδια, τα ζούσανε μαζί μ’ αυτούς που τα λέγανε” (Hatzidoulis, n.d.: 109). He was implying that in order to write these songs you more or less had to be part of the lifestyle otherwise, the credibility of the creator of the song was at stake.³⁸ There is no doubt that for many years, a significant number in any of Tsitsanis’ audiences would have been this hashish-smoking, low-life or fringe society.³⁹ Tsitsanis himself clearly stated how

³⁶ The τεκές belonging to Sideris was mentioned in Tsitsanis’ songs “Η Δροσούλα” and “Μπλόκος”. Tsitsanis (1979: 208–9) categorically insisted that none of the contents of the songs were true and the real Sideris was certainly not the owner of a *tekes*. The writer Kalantzis based his short story “Η Δροσούλα” (1989) on this so-called myth. In it he presented the reverse situation. The real Sideris was indeed an owner of a *tekes* and Tsitsanis did work there. Tsitsanis wrote his songs about Sideris but later found it necessary to cover up his past and his own participation in the *tekes* life-style. Hence, he later claimed that he made the whole thing up. The narrator of the story who is also an eye-witness to the whole situation expresses his anger at Tsitsanis’ betrayal of his origins and the people who represent these origins.

³⁷According to the lyricist C. Kolokotronis (Maniatis, 1994: 45) Tsitsanis remained troubled by the fact that he had been unsuccessful in his attempts to stop Papaioannou from his hashish-smoking habit.

³⁸ Mathesis was, it seems, interested in exaggerating his own role in the creation, recording and popularisation of *rebetika* and hence, he seems to be using his own credentials as a *mangas* to further embellish or vindicate his own role and his authenticity.

³⁹In ERT-1’s 1985 *Tribute to Tsitsanis* (1985) Zoe Tsitsanis had this

popular among his audiences the song “Η λιτανεία του μάγκα” had always been (Tsitsanis, 1979: 215) despite the fact that the censor had never allowed it to be recorded: “[...] είναι πασίγνωστο και πολύ αγαπητό στον κόσμο. Κάθε βράδυ τραγουδιέται από τα πάλκα”.

It remains uncertain however, whether one had to be a *mangas* to sing and/or compose these sorts of songs.⁴⁰ It may be that popular image-making was also occurring at this level (within the social context of the taverns). That is, the songs may have implied that Tsitsanis was a *mangas* or a *rebetis*, but he didn’t have to concur officially, one way or another. If he was able to reap the rewards (in terms of money and popularity) of this assumption on the part of his audience while at the same time overtly also portray himself as a “λαϊκός συνθέτης” then he had the best of both worlds. In fact, this is consistent with his repeated claims that he addressed himself to all Greek people (see Pilichos, 1973; Hatzidoulis, 1977; *Ellinikos Vorras*: 30/7/78; Chr.Ts., 1983; Kounti, 1985) and had never limited the consumption of his songs to any one class or group. Indeed, this was given as the reason why he was able to disseminate the new *laïko tragoudi* so successfully (Christianopoulos 1961; Manasidou, 1971; Theodorakis, 1987). What may have been, in fact, only his clever perception of the reality of the time and his means of surviving in it, later became a cornerstone to Tsitsanis’ personal myth.

It should be noted that when, in the 1970s, Tsitsanis emphatically denied all connection with *rebetika*, the myth surrounding his life and work had been virtually institutionalised; his place in the history of Greek music was assured and in many ways unassailable. In addition to

to say about her husband’s audiences: “Και οι Γερμανοί ακόμα τον αγαπούσαν” (meaning the Nazis during the Occupation). In the same program the musician Tolis Harmas commented on how difficult it sometimes was, playing for the left and the right wing who were often part of the same audience (presumably during the Civil War). Finally, Takis Fitsioris (same program) said that during the Occupation the customers were still “τα μαγκάκια” while the composer Dimitris Christodoulou went on to say that the audiences who went to see Tsitsanis at the tavern “Τζίμης ο Χονδρός” (during the late 1940s and early 1950s): “70% ήταν πιστολάδες”.

⁴⁰G. Zambetas in 1992 said that despite Tsitsanis’ lack of contact with the world of the *manges*, he was nevertheless able to create such songs because of his in-born talent (Maniatis, 1994: 35).

this, the Junta had not been long gone from Greek politics and the Karamanlis conservative government which succeeded the Colonels was perceived by many to be just as restrictive and reactionary (see *Ta Nea*: 4/12/74, 31/8/76; Beaton, 1980: 195). In spite of the resurgence of interest in *rebetika* at that time, Tsitsanis still opted for the security of the term *laïko tragoudi* which could be used to describe almost any creation by a contemporary composer, and was therefore inherently vague, benign and all-encompassing. He also chose, at this time, to stay as true to his established image as it was possible.⁴¹

It did not matter that *rebetika* had once more become popular and fashionable. Tsitsanis had already lived through this once before, in the 1950s, and he had also watched how the genre had continued to be treated with suspicion and hatred by certain sections of the community.⁴² Tsitsanis had said many times that his music was for all Greek people, regardless of class or political persuasion (Petropoulos, 1966; Pilichos, 1973; Tsitsanis, 1979: 13, 20; see also Christianos, 1986). The *rebetiko* genre could not be thus described, even if a section of the upper middle class had made it their own in the 1950s and Theodorakis had likewise adapted the music to suit his avowedly left-wing aspirations in the 1960s (Theodorakis, 1960, 1961b). Clearly, the *rebetiko* genre would always have some sort of political or class affiliations (thus excluding other sections of Greek society) or remain, at the very least, a contentious issue, socially, culturally and historically.

⁴¹The contradictory nature of this image however continued. Two songs were written by Tsitsanis in the 1970s that quite clearly dealt with traditional *rebetika* themes. The first, “Ο μάγκας κάνει δυο δουλειές” (1971) whose theme was the life-style of the low-life μάγκας, and the second “Το καρόβι απ’ την Περσία” (1976) whose theme was narcotics, could easily be categorised as *rebetika* of the more notorious kind. The question remains, if Tsitsanis was not a *rebetis* as he claimed, and his songs had nothing to do with the genre, how could he so flagrantly create two songs which could not really be described as anything but *rebetika*?

⁴²Petropoulos, after all, had been imprisoned after the publication of his work on *rebetika* in 1969 — which more than suggested that the genre was still suspect if not despised by at least some powerful sections of the Greek community.

Whatever the reasons, Tsitsanis in the 1970s and 1980s remained firm in his own presentation of the image that had become inextricably linked with his name: the image of the founder of *laïko tragoudi*. Furthermore, his responses to mention of *rebetika* were ambivalent at best, and, depending on the commentator or writer, sometimes downright hostile (Pilichos, 1973; Chr. Ts., 1983; Notaras, 1991: 63).⁴³ Typical of Tsitsanis’ vagueness and ambivalence is this comment reported in *Rizospastis* in 1983:

φθάνουμε στη διαχωριστική γραμμή του ’36 που το ρεμπέτικο τραγούδι παραδίδει τη σκυτάλη στο νεογέννητο λαϊκό. Από δω αρχίζει η χρυσή περίοδος του Λαϊκού τραγουδιού, και από την εποχή αυτή μέχρι σήμερα, εγώ μιλώ όχι για Ρεμπέτικα αλλά για Λαϊκό τραγούδι. (Chr. Ts., 1983)

The interview came less than a year before his death and after Tsitsanis’ name had been mentioned innumerable times in articles about *rebetika* (for example, *Rizospastis*: 21/4/77, 27/6/79; *Ta Nea*: 27/4/77, 11/1/78, 15/5/79; Stamatiou, 1988), after he had been given awards as a *rebetis* from other *rebetes* (*Rizospastis*: 19/2/77; *Ta Nea*: 17/2/77) and after the issuing of his own *Autobiography* which classified him and by implication, at least some of his songs in the genre of *rebetika* (1979: 179).⁴⁴

It may be that Tsitsanis was, as he claimed, being misquoted or misunderstood and that the desire to place him at the forefront of a musical genre that was undergoing a major revival overshadowed considerations of accuracy or of reporting the composer’s words faithfully. As indicated earlier, in the creation of image, the purposes of the given writer (nationalistic, political, cultural or otherwise) tend to supersede all else. At the same time, Tsitsanis’ ambivalence can surely be partially attributed to the ambivalence in the terms *laïka* and *rebetika* that had existed since at least the 1940s. In spite of all these Notaras,

⁴³Cf. Tsitsanis’ more placatory or neutral tones in *Rizospastis*: 15/4/76 and *Ta Nea*: 14/9/79; cf. also, instances when Tsitsanis seemed to acknowledge working within the genre as in Matsas (1952), Virvos (1985: 52).

⁴⁴In that same *Autobiography* he had claimed, for example, that if it were not for the invasion of the “Ινδοκρατία” in the 1950s: “Το ρεμπέτικο τραγούδι μπορούσε να κρατήσει ακόμα για πολλά χρόνια” (Tsitsanis, 1979: 39).

considerations, one unavoidable fact, however, remains: in 1937 Tsitsanis recorded his first song, “Σ’ ένα τεκέ σκαρώσανε” and it was clearly a song about hashish smoking and the sub-culture in which it existed. Despite his later rationalisation, the whole issue remains problematic and symptomatic of this confusion of genre that has prevailed, in some form or another, until modern times.

Tsitsanis’ case is a clear example of how definitions of musical genres in the modern Greek context are at the same time both vague and specific, depending on their value in a political sense and at a given time. His early career clearly points to a dalliance with the *rebetiko* genre since it was so commercially viable in the pre-war years and since most bouzouki-players of the time were thought to be *rebetes* also. It may be that Tsitsanis leapt into the fray, not feeling himself to be a *rebetis* but aware that by playing the bouzouki he would be classified in this way, especially by the authorities. It is no surprise then, surely, that he began to promote himself as a popular composer (λαϊκός συνθέτης) in order to establish his own credentials and talent in a slightly different way and also to open himself up to a much wider audience.

If, by 1943, Tsitsanis had wisely taken the course of calling himself *laïkos* and thus distancing himself somewhat (but not completely) from *rebetika*, at least insofar as the latter term might impinge on his own personal image, it can be assumed that part of this was a conscious decision made as a response to the Metaxas government’s persecution of hundreds of musicians who were said to be drug-users or “χασικλήδες” (Christianopoulos, 1994: 12–13). The fact that he might continue to write songs whose content could easily be labelled as *rebetika* was, it seems, irrelevant; if his own image was of a popular composer (λαϊκός συνθέτης) whose repertoire was wide enough to include such songs, but who claimed he was not, in any way, a representative of the alleged life-style that went with the songs, then Tsitsanis had, indeed, been able to skirt the whole issue and guarantee his own survival in post-war Greece.

Similarly, he was able to avoid party politics throughout his career although recent commentators have attempted to place him in left-wing politics (Virvos, 1985: 133; Georgiadis, 1993: 138, 163–4 and

passim).⁴⁵ Despite these attempts, Tsitsanis has never been clearly and categorically associated with any one Greek political party.⁴⁶ The musician George Dalaras made the valid point (*Tribute to Tsitsanis*, ERT–1, 1985) that Tsitsanis was politically aware without being politically active:

[...] Ο Τσιτσάνης χωρίς ποτέ να πολιτικολογεί ήταν ένας βαθιά πολιτικοποιημένος και σκεπτόμενος άνθρωπος [...] και δεν είναι τυχαίο που στον εμφύλιο τον κυνήγησαν και το επίσημο κράτος και τα κόμματα, ενώ στο βουνό ο λαός τραγουδούσε τον “Τραυματία” και στα ξερονήσια το “Κάποια μάνα αναστενάζει”.

In other words, Tsitsanis was fully aware of his socio-political environment but refused to be associated with any party. When asked, for example, about the censorship laws after the war his curt response was (Tsitsanis, 1979: 24): “[...] όχι, δε γνωρίζω απ’ αυτά [...] ήμουν αφοσιωμένος στη δουλειά μου”. Likewise, in an interview given a few months before his death (E. K., 1983) Tsitsanis re-iterated the universal, national image which had been used to describe him as early as the 1950s (see Apostilidis, 1951: 42; Spanoudi, 1951; Matsas, 1952 in Christianopoulos, 1979: 181) and which he opted for as a way of explaining his non-involvement in politics: “Εγώ είμαι ακομμάτιστος. Δεν ξέρω από μηχανισμούς κομμάτων [...] Ήμουνα όπως ο λαός που υπέφερε καρτερικά τα βάσανά του [...]”.

⁴⁵It should be noted that Georgiadis bases these claims on his own interpretations of Tsitsanis’ songs and on statements made by Virvos in his *Autobiography* (1985). No other “proof” is presented.

⁴⁶Curiously, no one has as yet attempted to explicitly place Tsitsanis in a more right-wing context (see, however, Schorelis, 1977–81, 4: 21). It should be noted that during his time in Thessaloniki under the German Occupation his main audiences would have been made up of black-marketeters, collaborators and even Germans themselves. Who else could afford to go and see him? Moreover, Tsitsanis’ *κουμπάρος* and one of his greatest admirers was none other than Mouschountis, the then Chief of Security in Thessaloniki. Whilst Tsitsanis’ apparent right-wing associations were possibly more significant than has previously been thought, there is no substantial evidence that it meant anything to Tsitsanis other than his desire to be on good terms with everyone, the ultimate aim remaining the promotion of his career. Nevertheless this issue adds another dimension to an already complex story.

Tsitsanis, however, was renowned for contradicting himself in many of the interviews he gave and it can be argued that he is an unreliable source for himself (Schorelis, 1977–81, 4: 18–19).⁴⁷ Whatever the truth in this matter, the analysis of his words and the words of others about him form, of necessity, the basis of this examination. And these words should not be underestimated in their ability to create a vivid picture of the images that were being employed to represent him as a popular (*laikos*) composer as opposed to a *rebetis* composer and the ways in which this was brought about over his entire career.⁴⁸

Since any discussion of musical genre could become politically oriented, it may be that his decision, presumably taken very early on in his career, to avoid party politics was bound up with his decision to avoid precise labelling of himself and his music. While this apolitical or “populist” stance was certainly cultivated by him in the 1970s and 1980s (see Pilichos, 1973; Gauntlett, 1975/76; Tsitsanis, 1979: 24; Falireas, 1982: 12–13; Kimonas, 1986)⁴⁹ there is also enough

⁴⁷In a written interview of 1972 (Gauntlett, 1975/6) however, Tsitsanis claimed that he had often been misquoted by irresponsible journalists and this was why he appeared to be self-contradictory. He also gave this as the reason for insisting on a written interview.

⁴⁸Even during the 1970s and early 1980s when the *rebetika* renaissance was at its peak, it was rare for anyone to explicitly call Tsitsanis a *rebetis*. See the following articles for references to Tsitsanis as λαϊκός συνθέτης, δάσκαλος, βάρδος, δημιουργός etc.: G.K.P., 1972; *Ta Nea*: 18/9/74, 23/7/75, 15/4/76, 28/9/77; *Rizospastis*: 29/6/79, 17/6/80, 27/8/83; cf. the few rare articles that refer to Tsitsanis in the context of *rebetika*: *Ta Nea*: 11/1/78 when he was called “Ο μεγαλύτερος στη ζωή εκπρόσωπος του ρεμπέτικου”, 14/9/79 when he was reported talking about his music as if it were part of the *rebetiko* genre and 29/7/80 when he was called “ο δάσκαλος του ρεμπέτικου τραγουδιού”. Two articles in *Rizospastis* likewise call him “ο κορυφαίος του ρεμπέτικου τραγουδιού” (Loupaki, 1979) and “ο βάρδος της ρεμπέτικης μουσικής” (27/6/79). It should be noted that even in this incorporation of his music into the *rebetiko* genre he is not directly called a *rebetis* except in two obituaries in 1984 (Xanthidis, 1984; *O Rizos*: 23/1/84). These are, however, extremely rare and represent a very small minority of articles.

⁴⁹These claims however, are as contradictory as so many others. For example, in an article in *Ta Nea* (7/3/87) Tsitsanis’ close friendship with PASOK leader Andreas Papandreou is mentioned. In an interview with Chr.

circumstantial evidence to show that it was a course on which he had set himself much earlier. The term *laikos* offered him a way out of a very complicated situation since he would surely not have wanted to alienate his colleagues who were quite obviously part of the *rebetiko* milieu or some of his audiences who went to see him for his *rebetika*. The word *laikos* was, on the one hand, clear, in the sense that it implied being part of “the people” or the masses who formed the basis of his success and, on the other, it was vague enough to allow him entry into other social classes or arenas, especially once the middle classes became enamoured of bouzouki music in the 1950s. Being an exponent of *laiki mousiki* also permitted him to cross over the barriers put up by party politics. Moreover, the Eastern and Turkish associations which the *rebetiko* genre was said to have and the concomitant anti-Greek sentiments that were thought to be part of any espousal of this genre could be completely avoided if the image of *laikos* could be used instead.⁵⁰ In contrast to the *rebetes* who were often perceived as a reminder of the humiliation of the Greek people during the Turkish Occupation, the popular (*laikos*) composer was the bearer of authentic Greek music, the reflection of the hopes and aspirations of the majority

Ts. for *Rizospastis* (10/4/83) Tsitsanis claimed that he had written three Resistance songs during the Occupation. While this does not necessarily implicate him in Greek party politics it nevertheless indicates that he was not, strictly speaking, completely apolitical. In ERT–1’s 1985 *Tribute to Tsitsanis* Takis Fitsioris said that Tsitsanis definitely wrote political songs (again, presumably Resistance songs) but “δεν τα ’λεγε δημόσια [...] για τους λόγους που ξέρουμε” (see also Maniatis, 1994: 216). Those “λόγοι”, it may be assumed, were the threat of imprisonment and exile. This is verified by Virvos in the same programme. However, Dimitris Christodolou (same programme) presents a completely different interpretation of Tsitsanis’ songs and his concerted attempts to elude the censorship of the late 1940s and 1950s. According to him Tsitsanis deliberately used “ένα είδος συμβολικού λόγου” in his songs as his way of dealing with the censorship: but this did not necessarily make him a political activist.

⁵⁰This may account for Tsitsanis’ almost obsessive attacks on Ινδοκρατία. By setting up a model of a non-authentic Greek musical genre which, moreover, was said to contain the despised Turkish elements, Tsitsanis promoted himself, in contrast, as the bearer of *authentic* Greek music. At the same time, he dissociated himself, very subtly, from *rebetika* and the “Anatolian” style *laika*, which were both genres said to contain “polluting” Eastern elements.

of Greek people and therefore the creator and validator of a new Greek identity.

It should also not be forgotten that in the post-war period and amidst the chaos of the Civil War, Tsitsanis had returned to Athens (Schorelis, 1977–81, 4: 18; Stathi, 1984) seeking to re-establish his fame⁵¹ and reinforce his image as a popular composer whose songs were clearly a reflection of the issues and feelings that beset most Greeks, whatever their class or political persuasion. At the same time, since the Metaxas dictatorship, the censorship and the German Occupation itself had swept away a whole generation of *rebetes* musicians, so that the field was basically clear for Tsitsanis and his remarkable melodies (Gauntlett, 1975/76; Georgiadis, 1993: 91, 98, 102; Kounadis, 1994).

Tsitsanis may have begun his career as a *rebetis* (as was so often stated and implied) and subsequently continued it as the founder of the “new” *laïko tragoudi*, but he ended it as an embodiment of true Greekness, as an artist who expressed the spirit of his people and the agonies of his country: “η ενσάρκωση των καημών του Νεοέλληνα” (*Akropolis*: 19/1/84); he became a symbol of unity and of the pre-eminence of Greek values and the Greek ethos as expressed in his songs. When Tsitsanis died in 1984 the innumerable obituaries focussed on these more abstract dimensions of his image and his work. M. Argyrakis, for example, described the effect of Tsitsanis and his music in cultural and spiritual terms: “Η μουσική αυτή φλέβα ήταν πολύ παλιά, αλλά κρυμμένη, όχι θαμμένη [...] γεμάτη από τον πόνο του Νεοελληνισμού η φωνή του Τσιτσάνη, που καταλαβαίναμε πως ήταν η ίδια η δική μας, η μυστική μας φωνή” (Argyrakis, 1984). He was seen as the conciliator of his people (*Akropolis*: 19/1/84): “Εμπαινε με το τραγούδι του [...] όπως με το ‘Κάποια μάνα αναστενάζει’ ανάμεσα στα δύο στρατόπεδα για να ενώσει τα χέρια σε συμφιλίωση”.⁵² As a

⁵¹Tsitsanis’ popularity and great success had been well-established by the eve of the Second World War (Gauntlett, 1975/76; Tsitsanis, 1979: 13–16; Yenitsaris in *Tribute to Tsitsanis*, ERT–1, 1985) but, since the recording companies had been closed for the duration of the war and Tsitsanis had spent most of his time in Thessaloniki, it was clear that he had to go about re-claiming this success.

⁵²This role had been accorded Tsitsanis not simply as a posthumous

result, such roles conferred on Tsitsanis and his music far outweighed any musical genre Tsitsanis may have attached himself to. True, he was also presented as the father of Greek popular (*laiki*) music (*Ta Nea*: 19/2/77; 9/2/85; Virvos, 1985: 60–1; Dragoumis, 1986) but the emphasis here was not so much on the genre itself but rather on what it appeared to represent: Greek identity and historical continuity.⁵³

The transcendence of genre is, in fact, a common tendency in the image-making of the Greek musician and goes a long way towards explaining how such patently contradictory models of the same musician (as in the case of Tsitsanis) could co-exist quite happily and remain generally unquestioned and, it is to be presumed, even irrelevant to the real issues which are primarily nationalistic and/or political in character. Theodorakis may, for example, have spoken in hyperbole when he called Tsitsanis “Θεόφιλος της λαϊκής μας μουσικής” but he spoke for many when he highlighted the importance of Tsitsanis and his music in nationalistic terms: “σημασία [...] είναι ότι διατηρεί και αναπτύσσει στη μουσική του το εθνικό ελληνικό χρώμα και χαρακτήρα”.

Tsitsanis’ contribution to and influence on, the evolution of modern Greek music was perceived to be seminal, its impact growing with the passing of each year. While the issue of what was *laïka* and what was *rebetika* was resolved up to a point by subsuming *rebetika* into the corpus of *laïko tragoudi*, this interpretation was further refined by calling post-Second World War *rebetika* songs the “new” *laïka*. The old (especially pre-War) *rebetika* were those which had unsavoury content and needed to be set aside. The new *rebetika/laïka* or just *laïka* were songs of a different quality, gentler, nobler (thematically) and

panegyric but thirty-three years earlier by the writer Renos Apostilidis (1951: 42) who, when writing about the Civil War, made the same claim for Tsitsanis’ song. The irony of course is in the fact that this was one of the songs whose authorship by Tsitsanis was disputed (see Schorelis, 1977–81, 4: 18; cf. Virvos, 1985: 57). This consideration, however, did not deter the creation of this image for Tsitsanis.

⁵³Perhaps the best early example of this theme is S. Spanoudi’s article in *Ta Nea* which set out to vindicate *rebetika* and show a continuity of the music by comparing it to Byzantine “τρόποι” and claiming it had a Doric character which ennobled it (Spanoudi, 1951). See also Hatzidakis, 1949; Theodorakis, 1961a; Psathas, 1968.

hence accessible to a much wider audience. Their evolution had primarily been brought about by the intervention of the creative genius of Tsitsanis and, as a result, the foundation for modern Greek popular music had been laid. Tsitsanis' career is representative of the various stages that *laïko tragoudi* as a descriptive term of a genre of Greek music passed through and the socio-political reasons why it was ultimately selected in preference to the more potentially volatile *rebetika*. Tsitsanis' talent, originality and careful self-promotion were apparently the pivotal elements that tipped the balance in favour of the former.

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Ελληνικός Βορράς, 21–22 Ιουνίου

ΟΙ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙΚΕΣ ΠΑΛΙΝΔΡΟΜΗΣΕΙΣ ΤΟΥ ΓΙΩΡΓΟΥ ΘΕΟΤΟΚΑ ΑΠΟ ΤΟ *ΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΟ* *ΠΝΕΥΜΑ* ΣΤΑ *ΤΕΤΡΑΔΙΑ ΗΜΕΡΟΛΟΓΙΟΥ*

Ένα από τα βασικότερα ζητήματα προβληματισμού στην πνευματική αναζήτηση του Γ. Θεοτοκά αποτελεί το θέμα της σχέσης της ελληνικής λογοτεχνίας με τις αντίστοιχες ευρωπαϊκές. Ο ίδιος οραματίστηκε από τα τέλη της δεκαετίας του είκοσι την Ευρώπη και ιδιαίτερα τη Γαλλία ως κέντρο πνευματικό του οποίου η Ελλάδα αποτελεί περιφέρεια. Έτσι, από το πρώτο του έργο, το δοκίμιο *Ελεύθερο Πνεύμα*, πρότεινε κάποια λειτουργική και οργανική ένταξη της ελληνικής λογοτεχνίας σ' ένα ευρύτερο ευρωπαϊκό πλαίσιο με σκοπό τη δημιουργία μιας αμφίδρομης και αμφίρροπης σχέσης ανάληψης και προσφοράς.

Εδώ θα προσπαθήσουμε να σκιαγραφήσουμε τη σχέση μεταξύ της "κεντρικής" ευρωπαϊκής λογοτεχνίας και της αντίστοιχης "περιφερειακής" ελληνικής, έτσι όπως αυτή φυσικά λειτουργεί στο θεωρητικό πλαίσιο του Θεοτοκά. Ειδικότερα θα εξετάσουμε τις απόψεις του συγγραφέα πάνω στο θέμα της σχέσης των δύο λογοτεχνιών, της ελληνικής και της ευρωπαϊκής, χρησιμοποιώντας ως πηγές πληροφόρησης το δοκίμιο *Ελεύθερο Πνεύμα* και τα *Τετράδια Ημερολογίου* (1939–1953), δύο αξιόλογα και ενδιαφέροντα ντοκουμέντα, τα οποία καλύπτουν ένα μεγάλο μέρος της πνευματικής πορείας του Θεοτοκά.

Το 1929 κυκλοφόρησε στην Ελλάδα το πρώτο έργο του Γ. Θεοτοκά, το δοκίμιο *Ελεύθερο Πνεύμα*. Με το έργο αυτό ο συγγραφέας φιλοδοξούσε να αναταράξει την "τελματώδη" κατάσταση της ελληνικής λογοτεχνίας της εποχής του και ταυτόχρονα να εκφράσει την προσωπική του γνώμη για τη σχέση της ελληνικής λογοτεχνικής παραγωγής με την αντίστοιχη ευρωπαϊκή. Παράλληλα πρόβαλλε δυναμικά τις προσωπικές του προτάσεις πάνω σε ζητήματα της