The preceding comments from various Greek newspapers about laiko 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 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 laiko 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. Tziovas 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” (Tziovas, 1989: 323) but is seen “in terms of truthfulness to life and experience”.1 Definitions of genre are therefore 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,

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

\[2\] Most 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: “η απόμακρη στρατιωτική ανάφλοξη των τραγουδιών”. 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 ρωματικό φαινόμενο της λαϊκής μουσικής του νεοσύγχρονου” (Politis, 1947). Moreover, he equated the genre with Truth: “[το λαϊκό τραγούδι [...] τραγούδει 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 χαριμά 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 μουζούκια” to describe the rebetikallai'ka 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 μουσικός” (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. Lai'kos 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-lai'ka 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 “λαϊκό συνθέτες”, no matter what their music might be called. Acceptance of them logically led to acceptance of their music. The next stage was to re-name their music “bouzouki music” or “laiko tragoudi”. Since “laiko” 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” laiko 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, laika tragoudia (see Yiannakopoulos, 1960) or vice versa. The Left, however, remained adamantly 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 against the infiltration of rebetika. An early article in 1953, for example (Avgi: 20/9/53) categorically denied that rebetika were laika tragoudia. The anonymous writer defined “το υγείς 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 κοινότητας”. 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.

3This advertisement depicts Tsitsanis as being “ο λαϊφιλος Β. Τσιτσανίδης με την γλυκές μενωνία του” whilst Ninou (pictured with him) is called “[... η ασύγκρες [... ερμηνεύει Λαϊκών Τραγούδιων”. 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”.

4Rizospastis had been banned in 1947.
Accordingly, most of the writers in Avgi tended to equate laīkī mousikē with dēmotikē mousikē, the latter being the true reflection of the Greek people (Avgi: 20/9/53). When the term laīkī 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 Arkadinos was still warning people about rebetika: “τους πολλαπλούς κινδύνους που θα προκύψουν από την διάδοση και επικράτηση του κατ’ ευφημισμον ‘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 éntrχηθ μουσική, 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

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

6 This 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.

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Tsitsanis and the “new” laïko tragoudi

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. 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 βοηθητικός μέσα του ως το κοιτελο [...] δηλαδή σε τέλεια ανάλυση, φιλοδοξούσα να γίνει 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” 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. The critics, however, remained for the most part, sceptical. Arkadinos

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

8 In 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).

9 Theodorakis himself had always insisted that rebetika was a “κατανόησα της λαϊκής Μουσικής” (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 ξεκινήσε, μα στο σύνολο του λαού”. On this basis, Theodorakis called it laïko tragoudi.

10 In April, 1961, the newspaper Avgi had, in fact, invited letters from
(1960), for example, asked whether it was necessary "να υπάρξει ξείμπλεκτικο και χασάπικο για να πάρει ένα κομμάτι χαρακτήρα λαϊκού τραγούδιον;" bearing in mind that for him laiko tragoudi had always means rural demotic music. Nevertheless, by the end of his article, he did concede that Theodorakis’ Επιτάφιος had "η 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 άδηση 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 laiko tragoudi. In fact, the terms were essentially interchangeable. In their accounts of the history of laiko tragoudi, rebetika play a crucial role and are in fact, the new form of laiko tragoudi: "το νέοτερο 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 laiko tragoudi (Macheras, 1961) and that they were definitely laiko tragoudia (whether new or old) were now becoming more widespread and acceptable, even among some of rebetika’s most hardened opponents (see for example, Psathas, 1962).

It is readers about the issue of laiko tragoudi. The overwhelming majority of responses denied that rebetika were authentic laiko 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.


Tsitsanis and the “new” laiko tragoudi

The debate did not end here, but it had lost some of its former virulence. By the early 1960s the term laiko 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 laiko 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 laiko 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 εταιρείες, αλλά και ο όρος που προτιμούσαν οι άνθρωποι 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*, *μέγκικα* 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 *laiko/laika* remained (Gauntlett, Paivanas and Chatzinikolaou, 1994: 44). Obviously it would not have been very wise to promote *rebetika* in a blatantly way under the Metaxas regime, even given the laxity of the censorship. The brief, successful reign of *rebetika* achieved mainly through the new

13 Th. 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 *laiko* 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 *laiko tragoudi* was *rebetiko*.

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

15 Tsitsanis 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” *laiko tragoudi* (Chr. Ts., 1983). Clearly, then, *laika*, as perceived by Tsitsanis, had preceded this period.

The 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 *laiko 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 *laika* were being promoted and music was being described as *laiki* 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 *laiko 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 Ζέτσπος” is one such example of the apparent irrelevance of musical genre for the working musician. 17 The

16 Georgiadis’ book (1993) and its title, *Ρεμπέτικα και πολιτική*, is an extreme example of the exploitation of the word *rebetiko* for commercial reasons. Georgiadis apparently opted to include the term ρεμπέτικα 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 *laiko tragoudi*, in its socio-political dimensions. See note 12 above.

17 V. Papadimitriou, despite being a virulent critic of *rebetika*, held out hope that the genre could be “cleaned up” and become “true laiko” (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

*Zeptos*” by Yiannis Papaioannou, which were true *laiko*. Did anyone tell him that Papaioannou was one of those “low-type *rebetis*” 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.

\(^{18}\)It should also be noted that one of Tsitsanis’ earliest songs, “Η Γερακιά”, 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: “Στις καλέ κου στις την άμαξα”. Similarly, Bayianteras’ famous “Σεκινά μια ψαροποθόλα”, clearly a song heavily influenced by island music, appears to contradict the later claim that portrayed him as one of the great *rebetis* 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) “Εγώ έβγα εσώς και τραγούδια ελαφρό και οι ήμοια ρομπέτας και μάγκας”.

\(^{19}\)Many 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.

\(^{20}\)Tsitsanis, 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, “Σέ είνα τέεε σκαροστήγε” the heavy influence of this very same musical form. See pp. 76–9 below for a more extensive discussion.

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non-*rebetis* record a *rebetikos* 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 *αμανέδες* 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.
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 laiko 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 laiki 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 laiki mousiki (see Papadimitriou, 1949b; Yiannakopoulos, 1960; Macheras, 1961; Petropoulos, 1966; Holst, 1975: 58; 1985: 9/2; 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: “Ό Θεόφιλος της ελληνικής λαϊκής μουσικής” and his contribution was compared to Homer’s (Tachsis, 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 laiko 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 reoccurred; his songs, in particular, were used as paradigms for the virtues (or vices) of the genre variously called rebetika or laiko 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 expend. 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 “laiko tragoudi”. Hatzidakis called him “το μεγαλύτερο ταλέντο στο είδος του [...].” (1951, cited in Christianopoulos, 1979: 180; cf. Hatzidakis’ freer use of both rebetiko and laiko 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 Τσίτσανη”. Rebetika with “vulgar” or “low-life” themes were being cast aside or purged from the pristine body of the authentic laiko tragoudi. What remained were the refined rebetika such as those Tsitsanis composed, which could henceforth be called laika (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 laika. 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

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22Anoyianakis had, a few years earlier (1947), drawn that same line between Greek identity and music: “Έχουμε τόσο απουσιαστικά της
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 laikos) 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 
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 
fluenced Greek popular culture (Vournas, 1961; Hatzidoulis, n.d.; 32, 
108, 201; Ellinaiadis, 1983: 20; Kontoyiannis, 1986; Rizospastis: 

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 
contradictions

(see Petropoulos, 1966; Holst, 1975: 53, 58; 

see also a transcript of a 1963 radio interview with Tsitsanis in 
which Tsitsanis strongly implies this image of himself (in Maniatis, 

Did laiko tragoudi precede rebetika or was it co-existent with 
rebetika? According to Papadimitriou (1949a) laiko tragoudi definitely 
existed before rebetiko arrived with the refugees from the Asia Minor 
Catastrophe and began to contaminate the laiko genre with its Anatolian 
elements. What, then, was laiko? 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’ Επιστάμονας, the traditional demotic 

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Rovertakis, 1973: 19; Theodorakis, 1984: 72; Skaros, 1976; Loupakí, 
1979; Rizospastis: 25/8/83, 27/8/83; Ta Nea: 19/3/76, 15/4/76, 

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. 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 τραγούδιου [όπως] να γίνουν οι φασινινή καθηγήσεις σ’ 
εκείνους που απαλλούνται με το είδος της λαϊκής μουσικής”. 

The question of whether laikí moussíkí had existed earlier

was
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 laiko 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 unchanged 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 laiko genre’s foremost exponent, regardless of the fact that, for many, he was still a composer and performer of rebetika. Certainly, the Left remained unchanged 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 laiko tragoudi in words which were to become part of the standard interpretation: “[Το 1945–50 ο Τσιτσανής έκανε] μια προσπάθεια να ξεκινήσει το ρεμπέτικο από το χορηγήθηκε τον αιώνα και η κυριαρχία του από την κοινωνική και η κοινωνική στοιχεία”. Christianopoulos (1961) also saw Tsitsanis’ role as crucial: “το καθόρισε [το ρεμπέτικο] από κάθε πρόστιμο και χωμπλο […] τόσον ν’ ανεγκυλώσει τα μεράκια και τα πτέρυγια της ελληνικής ψυχής […] έκανε το ρεμπέτικο περί τη ελληνικό και πιο

song form and nothing more? According to the writers in Avgi, laiko 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 laiko tragoudi was the term preferred to describe traditional demotic music because it more accurately referred to the “laos”, 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] χαμηλάσουν το πνευματικό επίπεδο του λαού” (Pagalis, 1963a; Argyakis, 1953). There was no mention of the pre-existing urban (non-rebetika) laiko 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 laiko tragoudi and rebetika are indeed different musical genres.

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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 laika; his apparent change of heart was, not surprisingly, greatly influenced by the new laika that Theodorakis was producing.20 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 laiko 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 “Ιντσκρατία”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 laiki mousiki

26Psathas (1960, 1962, 1966) alternately described Tsitsanis as the bridge between rebetika and laika or the bridge between laika 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 “ρεμπέτικα” (see, for example, Tachtis 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 “Ιντσκρατία” 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 laiko 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
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
Tsitsanis could still be.

As early as 1943 Tsitsanis was calling himself: "ο καλύτερος συνθέτης και ερμηνευτής του λαϊκού τραγούδιού" (Christianopoulos, 1994: 15).30 Despite this almost presumptuous title which sought to link his name irrevocably with the genre of laïkì musikì, Tsitsanis was nevertheless still writing songs which seemed to be portraits of, or at the very least, inspired by, the life of the "χαστικές" 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,51 remain at variance with and in contradiction to his later

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

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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 καλόμο: τα χασίσι κι ον φουμάρο εγώ κανέναν δεν πειράζω είμαι μάγκας και αλάνης μπήκα στον τεκέ χαρμάνης.33

Εμάζεινα 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 rebetika35 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 tekedes. 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.

34“Η λιτανεία του μάγκα” in Tsitsanis, 1979: 214
35For example: “Βρε, μάγκα μου”, “Οι μπάτσοι”, “Ο Νίκος ο τρελάκιας”, “Ένοχο μάγκας φαινόμενο”, “Μάγκες μπουκάραν στον τεκέ”, “Ο λουλάς”, etc. (all of which can be found in Petropoulos, 1982: 14, 22, 38, 53, 54, 71 respectively).
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popular among his audiences the song “Η λιτανεία του μάγρου” 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 βραδύ τραγούδεται από τα πλάκα.”

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 laiko tragoudi so successfully (Christianopoulos 1961; Manasisou, 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 saying that he was “και οι Γερμανοί ακόμα του αγαπάνε” (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 “Τζιμπς ο Χονδρός” (during the late 1940s and early 1950s): “70% ήταν παπαουάδες”.

36 The tekès 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 tekès. 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 indeed an owner of a tekès 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 tekès 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.

37 According 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.

39 In ERT–1’s 1985 Tribute to Tsitsanis (1985) Zoe Tsitsanis had this
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 laiko 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 δύο δουλειές” (1971) whose theme was the life-style of the low-life μάγκας, and the second “Το καρδιά 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.

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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 laiko 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:

φθέγγομε στη διαχρονική γραμμή του ’36 πως το ρεμπέτικο τραγούδι παραδίδει τη σκοτάδι στο νεογέννητο λαϊκό. Από δω αρχίζει η χρυσή περίοδος του Λαϊκού τραγούδιο, και από την εποχή αυτή μέχρι σήμερα, εγώ μιλώ όχι για Ρεμπέτικα αλλά για Λαϊκό τραγούδι. (Chrs. 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).

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 laiko 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 κρατησει ακόμα για πολλά χρόνια” (Tsitsanis, 1979: 39).
considerations, one unavoidable fact, however, remains: in 1937 Tsitsanis recorded his first song, “Σ’ ένα τεκέ σχαρώσανε” 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 that 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 laikos 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 “χαστικάλιθες” (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). Despite these attempts, Tsitsanis has never been clearly and categorically associated with any one Greek political party. The music manager 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 εμφανίζειν στο έπιστημό κρότος και τα κόμματα, ενώ στο βουνό ο λαός τραγούδιζε τον "Τραματία" 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 Apostolidis, 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 ακομάδητος. Δεν ξέρω από μηχανισμούς κομμάτων [...] Ήμουνα όπως ο λαός που υπέφερε καρτερικά το βάσανα του […]”.

It 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.

Curiously, 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-marketeers, collaborators and even Germans themselves. Who else could afford to go and see him? Moreover, Tsitsanis’ kouμπαρος 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.
Tsitsas, 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). 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 (laïkos) composer as opposed to a rebetis composer and the ways in which this was brought about over his entire career.

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) there is also enough circumstantial evidence to show that it was a course on which he had set himself much earlier. The term laïkos 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 laïkos 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 laïki 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 laïkos could be used instead. 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 (laïkos) composer was the bearer of authentic Greek music, the reflection of the hopes and aspirations of the majority.

In 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.

Even 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 laïkos synonyme, δισκαλος, 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 μεγαλότερος 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 δισκαλος του ρεμπέτικου τραγουδιου”. Two articles in Rizospastis likewise call him “ο κορωφιας του ρεμπέτικου τραγουδιου” (Loupakli, 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.

These 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.
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 fame 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” laiko 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 του καθεμον 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 work.

M. Argyris, for example, described the effect of Tsitsanis and his music in cultural and spiritual terms: “Η μουσική αυτή φλέβα ήταν πολύ πολυά, αλλά κρυμμένη, όχι θαμμένη [...] γεμάτη από τον πόνο του Νεοέλληνισμού η φονή του Τσίτσανη, που καταλαβαίνουμε πως ήταν η ίδια η δική μας, η μυστική μας φονή” (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 στο δύο στρατόπεδα για να ενώσει τα χέρια σε συμπλίçση”.

As a 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 (laikí) 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.

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 laika and what was rebetika was resolved up to a point by subsuming rebetika into the corpus of laiko tragoudi, this interpretation was further refined by calling post-Second World War rebetika songs the “new” laika.

The old (especially pre-War) rebetika were those which had unsavoury content and needed to be set aside. The new rebetikallaikí or just laika 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.

Perhaps 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 laiko 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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Οι Πνευματικές Πλαίσιομηβεις του Γιωργου Θεοτοκά απο το Ελευθέρο Πνεύμα στα Τετράδια Ημερολογίου

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 ορισμένα προτεινόντας από το τέλος της δεκαετίας του έκκοινις την Ευρώπη και ιδιαίτερα τη Γαλλία ως κέντρο πνευματικού του σοιού η Ελλάδα αποτελεί περιφέρεια. Έτσι, από το πρώτο του έργο, το δοκίμιο Ελευθέρο Πνεύμα, πρότεινε κάσσια λειτουργική και οργανική ένταξη της ελληνικής λογοτεχνίας στην Ευρώπη και πλασίονο το δοκίμιο "Ελευθέρο Πνεύμα, 1929-1953", δύο αξίωμα και έντονα ντόκιμα, να καλύπτουν ένα μεγάλο μέρος της πνευματικής πορείας του Θεοτοκά.

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Το 1929 κυκλοφόρησε στην Ελλάδα το πρώτο έργο του Γ. Θεοτοκά, το δοκίμιο Ελευθέρο Πνεύμα. Με το έργο αυτό ο συγγραφέας προεπεξεργάζεται την "τελευταία" κατάσταση της ελληνικής λογοτεχνίας της εποχής του και ταυτόχρονα να εκφράζει την προσωπική του γνώμη για τη σχέση της ελληνικής λογοτεχνίας παραγγελα με την αντίστοιχη ευρωπαϊκή. Παράλληλα προβάλλει δυναμική τις προσωπικές του προτάσεις πάνω σε ζητήματα της