

# Mammon and the Greek Oriental Muse. Rebetika as a Marketing Construct\*

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This paper is a preliminary exploration of the role of the recording industry in the construction of rebetika as a genre of Greek song in response to evolving market opportunities and constraints. Preoccupied with less mundane issues, discussion of rebetika has hitherto neglected to consider the genre as commodity unless in order to demonise recording companies as corruptors of pristine tradition, or to wallow in minutiae of empirical discography. Today genre is a major organising principle of music business and, notwithstanding the danger of crediting the Greek industry with too much foresight and control, a detailed study of the political economy of rebetika is overdue. This skirmish with some of the main issues, using data from corporate archives, aims to advance such an undertaking.

The title and main argument of this paper echo the words of Jacques Attali (1985:3): "And today, wherever there is music, there is money." By the late twentieth century the main source of money for music — and not just for musicians — was the recording industry. Indeed, as Attali

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astutely observed, live performance was progressively subordinated to phonographic recordings to the point where it became a showcase for the gramophone record, a simulacrum mimicking the recording, and a means of its promotion (1985:85).

From their earliest identification as a distinct genre, the Greek songs known as “rebetika” have been associated with the gramophone and by extension subject to Mammon, the demon of profit and covetousness.

It is therefore surprising that rebetika have seldom been analysed as a commodity. Commentators may have been seduced into ignoring this fundamental aspect of the genre’s origins and development by the romance of the anti-capitalist mythology expounded in some classic examples of rebetika such as “Those rich people” by Markos Vamvakaris (Odeon 78 rpm record GA1959 — the translations of Greek verses and song-titles throughout this paper are my own):

*Those rich people, I wonder what they do with their money.  
Will they perhaps take it with them when they die?  
I never manage to keep a penny in my pocket,  
and all my troubles go away only when I get high.  
— Here’s to you, penniless Markos! [spoken] —  
As money won’t buy anything in the other world,  
they’re just idolising it, they don’t know how to use it.*

This paper argues that, despite the ostensibly anti-bourgeois discourse and anti-Western colour associated with some (but not all) rebetika songs, the genre has been a marketing construct throughout its documented evolution. Accordingly, after half a century of romantic construction of the genre as anti-art, most recently in the context of World Music, it is high time for the balance to be redressed with some less sentimental analysis of the production and consumption of rebetika

in terms of “music business”. This paper aims to make a modest start in this direction, exploring some aspects of the commercial construction of the genre as revealed by a small selection of documents from the dauntingly abundant archives of EMI, the principal corporate player in the Greek recording industry in the twentieth century.

My access to the EMI material has been relatively recent, as is my appreciation of the value of business correspondence, sales figures, strategic plans, import costs for raw materials and factory-output data, for an understanding of the motivation of rebetika as a genre. I have, however, been aware of the close relationship between the composers of rebetika and commerce from the earliest days of my fieldwork in the 1970s. The “rebetes” whom I interviewed in 1972, including the legendary Markos Vamvakaris, Stelios Keromytis, Vasilis Tsitsanis and Michalis Yenitsaris, were far from loath to discuss rebetika as commodity. Indeed, I was a little disappointed to find that these artistic advocates of prodigality were quite preoccupied with the commerce of their art. Cynically dismissive of theories about immaterial aspects of their art, they never tired of discussing the material gains which had either accrued to them through their art or had been denied them by competitors and disloyal collaborators. Their determination to profit from the incipient revival of rebetika in the early 1970s was also manifest. I initially reasoned that acquisitiveness was merely a prelude to the profligacy for which such rebetes were famous. But there was no hiding the fact that these were competing purveyors of a commodity, and that it was above all the recording industry that had domesticated them by offering (and periodically denying) access to vast numbers of solvent consumers of the rebetika myth.

It also soon became clear to me that these veteran musicians had been “inscribed in the world of money”, to quote Attali again (1985: 22), for some time. In the 1930s Vamvakaris, an unlikely musical entrepreneur *prima facie*, had displayed a precocious degree of business acumen in pioneering the recording of a variety of rebetika advertising the artist by name, extolling his artistry and asserting his popularity (e.g. “Markos from Syros” [HMV 78 rpm record AO2065], “Syros”

[Parlophone B21875], “1912” [Parlophone B21883]). In the late 1930s Tsitsanis recorded similarly self-promoting autobiographical songs (such as “In the signals corps” [Odeon GA7127]), but also inserted his name in the titles of patently fictitious songs with Hollywood settings such as “Tsitsanis in the jungle” (Columbia DG6511) and “Tsitsanis at Monte Carlo” (HMV 2448), ostensibly elevating himself to the status of a film star. In the 1940s he raised self-promotion in song to a fine art, advertising by name the bouzouki-clubs where he was playing, and using the verses of his songs to provide role-models for conspicuous extravagance at these venues (Gauntlett, 1985:124, 135). The 1950s saw the promotion of brand-names in rebetika, the wine label “Markó” (Markopoulo) featuring in more than one song (Gauntlett, 1985:139).

During the rule of the military junta (1967–74), what passed for rebetika started to gain commercial ascendancy over other types of Greek song and under the first PASOK administration (1981–85), the genre reached a level of popularity denounced as “rebetomania” by Mikis Theodorakis (1984:47). Throughout this period the Greek recording companies and various other devotees of Mammon (from advertising agencies to publishing houses) took a hand in the continuing construction of the genre as they pursued the evolving commercial opportunities. The fad abated in the 1990s amid signs of saturation, but the new millennium finds commerce in the genre keeping step with current merchandising practice: collector’s sets of digitally (re-)recorded rebetika are distributed by telemarketing, on the internet, via tokens printed in newspapers, and as give-aways in magazines (Gauntlett, 2001:136). Rebetika “ring-tones” for mobile telephones are the latest commercial application of the genre.

This degree of commercialism may be a disappointingly far cry from the origins of rebetika in the hashish dens and prisons of Aegean ports posited by one widespread creation-myth for the genre. Yet at the most literal level, rebetika have been associated with commercial recording from the very inception of the genre. The earliest evidence for the existence of rebetika as a genre occurs on the label of a gramophone record (Favorite Record 78 rpm record 45–q, 7–55014)

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recorded in Istanbul and then pressed in Hanover c.1913 (Strötbaum, 1992:172 f., 188). The song, whose onomatopoeic title “Tiki Tiki Tak” evokes the palpitations caused to the narrator by the object of his desires, was sung by Yiangos Psamatialis to the accompaniment of an accordion and in a performance style quite unlike what is expected of rebetika today. However, the song has been regularly re-recorded in various styles over subsequent decades, including a more typical, gruff “Piraeus” rendering by Markos Vamvakaris (Kalyviotis 1994:375 f.).

Usage of the generic term “rebetika” on record labels, in record catalogues and other gramophone industry documents seems to have gained in frequency not only in Greece, but also in Egypt and the USA, after the Asia Minor catastrophe of 1922. This reflects the documented role played in the production and consumption of rebetika by expatriate Greeks, particularly Greek-Americans, whose access to modern technology and sophisticated commercial distribution in the early days of recorded sound had a catalytic effect on developments in Greece itself. For current purposes though, it is more important to note that the diffusion of usage of the term “rebetika” over three continents may account for some of the divergence apparent in its early application. The small independent label Greek Record Co. of Chicago applied the term to bel canto renderings of popular songs of Smyrna by the soprano Marika Papagika as early as 1924 (Gauntlett et al., 1994:43). By the late 1920s the USA branch of Columbia seems to have become particularly enamoured of the term “rebetiko”, using it on a whole sequence of records bearing review-theatre songs including pastiche and parody of low-life songs. An example is the Columbia 78 rpm record 56137-F, produced in New York in 1928, which includes the term “rebetiko zeibekiko” on both of its labels and offers by way of English translation “Greek bum song”. The two songs thus described, “These cops who’ve just arrived” (matrix no. 206147) and “Under the tomato vines” (matrix no. 206148), were sung to a bouzouki accompaniment, by the Greek-American review-player Yiannakis Ioannides in an affectedly uncultured manner, complete with repeated cries of “wa-wa” in the first song, presumably to denote intentional caterwauling.

At approximately the same time, the English branch of Columbia was translating “rebetiko” more demurely as “Greek popular song” (Gauntlett, 2001:32). In other bilingual catalogues “rebetika” was merely transliterated in a variety of ways (“rebetika” in Tzoulakis [Alexandria], 1930:15–20; “rembetika” in Gramophone Co. [Athens] 1926:6; “rempetiko” in Columbia [USA] 1930:37; “rebetika” in Odeon [Athens] 1927–28:25).

All this early evidence for the genre survives to us thanks to the recording industry, but the term “rebetika” does not seem to have been a precise industrial specification. The types of song and styles of performance thus denoted are quite diverse: in addition to the styles of performance already mentioned, “rebetika” also covers performances with mandolins and male choirs and in the *café-aman* style with fiddles and dulcimers playing *alla turca*. The diversity is illustrated in the range of the entries listed under “rebetika” in the catalogue issued by the Tzoulakis agency of Alexandria (1930:20–23). Another significant inconsistency observed in the usage of the generic term is the fact that the same songs are not uniformly styled “rebetika” in different recorded performances (Gauntlett et al., 1994:56–58). Arguably, songs do not necessarily have a single, definitive genre but can be interpreted in many idioms and can be variously classified according to performance. Thus in 2001 a version of “Tiki Tiki Tak”, the earliest recorded “rebetiko”, is reported to have appeared on an album of children’s songs (*Ta Nea* 25.2.2002). Usage of the term “rebetika” in record catalogues can also be blurred by hyphenation with the term “laika” (Odeon, 1931:18) or by placement in a string of contiguous generic names: “Manes et diverses chansons populaires (rembetika, manghika, hasiklidika, zeibekika)” (Gramophone Co., 1926:6).

Overall it seems that from the outset, the industrial usage of “rebetika” was far from precise, settled or universally accepted. But then, marketing “buzz-words” do not need to be fully understood or to form a precise designation; they just need to be noticed. “Rebetika” is certainly more alluring than the appellation “hasiklidika” used in the Gramophone Co. catalogue for 1926.

For all the speculation about the origins of rebetika, we know nothing concrete of the usage of the term “rebetika” prior to its first appearance in the commerce of gramophone records c. 1913, except that it did not find favour with any of the notable literary figures of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century anywhere in the Greek-speaking world. Their writings accommodate a generous range of terms denoting what might be supposed to have been the rebetika of their time — “koutsavakika”, “karipika”, “ah-vahika” — but never the term “rebetika” (Gauntlett, 2001:30–31). The earliest extant use of “rebetika” beyond record catalogues, record labels and company documents, occurs in an issue of the Athenian magazine *Bouketo* dating from as late as 1936, by which time industrial usage was more than twenty years old. Cited in Kostas Vlisidis’ admirable bibliography of rebetika (2002:206), this example of usage is unhelpfully imprecise. The author, “Reporter”, places the term first in a list of musical tempos, which also includes the designation “hashish-song”, and then in a list of the types of Markos Vamvakaris’ “lulling” compositions which also include “asikika” (songs of bravado) and “mangika” (rakish songs).

Grounds for assuming that early commercial reference to “rebetika” presupposed widespread general usage are, therefore, weak, and a detailed comparative study of the early usage of “rebetika” and other contemporary generic terms in corporate documents is needed to shed light on what seems to have been their establishment and management by the recording industry.

There is evidence that professional artistes and amateurs all over the Greek Levant were composing and performing what has subsequently been called “rebetika” long before they used that word for them (Gauntlett, 2001:71–73). But it is also true that the range of songs retrospectively classified as “rebetika” is so broad as to be contradictory. Indeed, some of the earliest usage of the term encompasses parody — cf. the previously mentioned “bum songs” recorded by Yiannakis Ioannides in 1928. To privilege one stream of later usage of a generic term and apply it retrospectively is to risk anachronism and circular argumentation.

Rebetika are a good illustration of the truism that genre is by its

nature unstable and dynamic, and that any genre is only ever provisionally defined within the evolving context of the other genres from which it is differentiated. The context thus forms part of the constructed meaning of the term, and a preliminary examination of the early industrial usage of “rebetika” leads to the conclusion that it served as a generic flag of convenience, a hold-all term for use in cases where other generic terms did not obviously fit.

A greater measure of standardisation was achieved by the recording industry in Greece by the late 1930s, possibly in response to a heightened appreciation of its marketing appeal at a time when the recording industry was subjected to state censorship. Vlisidis (2002) has brought to light a number of journalistic attestations to the ascendancy of the genre marketed as rebetika in that era. Of particular interest are first an article in the Athenian newspaper *Ethnos* (25.10.1937) by D. Evangelidis about the recording industry on the eve of the imposition of pre-emptive censorship by Metaxas, which reports that more than 80% of successful records are either of tango music or rebetika (Vlisidis, 2002:86); second an article by Sophia Spanoudi, the resident music critic of the Athenian newspaper *Eleftheron Vima* (7.10.1938), praising the Metaxas regime’s ban on the recording of “amanedes”, which she denounces as appalling wailing threnodies imported illegally from Turkey, and calling for a similar prohibition to be applied to “rebetika”. Spanoudi specifies that rebetika are native to Greece but “flow in the same stinking sewer” as the imported amanedes (Vlisidis 2002:225).

The recording industry duly sacrificed “rebetika” to Metaxas’ censor, inasmuch as the term disappeared from record labels and catalogues printed in Greece, but songs displaying many features of erstwhile “rebetika” continued to be recorded and marketed as “laika”, as the HMV Catalogue of Greek Records for 1938 attests (HMV, 1938:18–23).

The return of the designation “rebetika” to record labels and catalogues in Greece was considerably delayed. It is testimony to the opportunism of industrial usage of “rebetika” that it fell into abeyance during the long-running series of acrimonious debates in the post-War Greek press where it appeared mainly as a term of abuse, par-



ticularly in left-wing publications (Gauntlett, 2001:74–78). The term was still a commercial liability in the early 1960s, to judge by the fact that the songs with which Markos Vamvakaris, the archetypal rebetika musician, resumed recording were not styled “rebetika” until much later (Gauntlett, 2001:91–92).

The taboo-word seems to have first returned to records on the covers of LP albums, starting with the reissue of “The Rebetika of Sotiria Bellou” in 1966 on the relatively small and eclectic “Lyra” label (Lyra LP record 3224). The EMI labels were not slow to capitalise on the rebetika revival which followed the spate of deaths of veteran exponents in the early 1970s (Gauntlett, 2001:96–97). The reissue of 78 or 45 rpm records of rebetika on LPs and cassettes (and subsequently on CDs and the internet) duly reached deluge proportions, with multi-volume series of albums and collector’s sets becoming as much the norm for rebetika, as for blues and jazz (Gauntlett, 2001:132).

Given the revivalist nature of this development, it was perhaps predictable that contestation of authenticity should become a prominent marketing strategy in all forms of publication of rebetika. A transgressive life-style, often explicitly labelled “sin”, became the hallmark of supposedly pristine rebetika, ever less subtly as the competition between revivalists increased. One CD titled “Authentic sinful rebetika” carried a mock health-warning on the cover, “Rebetika seriously damage your health”, by way of both parody and exploitation of the stridency of the record industry’s constitution and manipulation of a target market for rebetika (Gauntlett, 2001:133 n.7). Another sign of the times was the following superlative parody (as I choose to read it) of the pretentious lyricism which had become commonplace in globalised “rebetology” by 8 May 1997 when it appeared anonymously in English on the internet site “Rebetiko Forum”:

Markos [Vamvakaris] was really a musical genius in the order of Mozart or Chopin [...]. He (Vamvakaris) certainly understood his country. I sometimes think that you can hear the entire history of Greece in Markos’s music: the clang of the swords before the gates of Thebes, the slap of the oars on the foam of Sounion, the circumflexed vocatives of Ephebes debating with

Socrates in the agora, [...] the Hagia Sophia, the leathery squeak of the skin of Daskaloyiannis being stripped of his flesh, the hiss and stamp of the death dance of the women of Souli, the ecstatic fizzing of the fuse which led to the powder kegs of Arcadi, the heart-breaking arpeggios of the laterna players of Plaka, the crackling flames of Smyrna. But most of all his style harks back to the great heroic age of the Hellenes as reflected in the masterpieces of Attic black-figure vase paintings, a style which, like Markos's, is muscular, architectonic, energetic, humorous, tragic and severe.

(<http://www.Physics.uch.gr/songs/frames/first.eng.html>, cited in Horn, 2002:15 n.9)

The flagrant kitsch increasingly associated with rebetika has been invoked by purist commentators as a reason for declaring the genre to be dead, beginning with Elias Petropoulos, who in 1961 dated the genre's demise to 1952 and the intervention of Manos Hadjidakis and Mikis Theodorakis in its evolution (Gauntlett, 2001:89). I have argued elsewhere that such claims are predicated on a romantically puristic perception of the genre and a platonic view of genre in general, and that the escalating commercialism of rebetika throughout the twentieth century is an evolutionary process, a matter of degree, not kind (Gauntlett, 2001:134–35). It is germane to present purposes to add that the process is best seen in the context of other genres of Greek song and the vagaries of the record business in Greece, and that both can be documented from corporate archives.

Beyond documenting the minutiae of discography, commentators on rebetika have hitherto made little productive use of such archives, with the exception of Nicholas Pappas (1999), who documents the contribution of Anatolian refugees to the recording industry from the EMI Archive. In my view, a more pressing desideratum for rebetika is a “big-picture” discography of the genre with a view to revealing how the recording industry constituted and developed the market for rebetika and other Greek musical genres in the context of evolving political and economic imperatives — what Attali might have called “a political economy of rebetika”. The “political” part of such an undertaking might proceed to analyse rebetika as an example of the use of commercial pressures by monopolies or oligopolies to control the circulation of

oppositional or marginalised ideas in Greece. For it is surely a paradox that a multinational corporation such as EMI should have promoted, in the form of rebetika, the apparent rear-guard of oriental Greece in defiance of the Westernising agenda of successive conservative governments and their censorship. Commentary on such issues in Greek popular music has hitherto taken the form of polemic, such as Mikis Theodorakis' book *Star System* (1984), which expounds a theory of corporate conspiracy against "progressive song" and its composers.

Like Theodorakis, I have borrowed some of the rhetoric of Attali (and his predecessor Theodor Adorno) in the first part of this paper, but what I think is needed for rebetika is not so much their demonising type of political economy, as the "music-business" approach pursued by Keith Negus in his book *Music Genres and Corporate Culture* (1999). Here Negus demonstrates that genre is one of the key implements of corporate control, enforcement of accountability, and maximisation of profit. One only has to visit a record shop to see how genre permeates commerce in recorded music, from the positioning of stock on shelves to the pre-printed, self-adhesive labels issued with blank cassettes (classical, country, folk, jazz, pop, rap, reggae, rock). Genre differentiation has developed in the recording industry to a point where there are distinct, genre-specific divisions of corporations in separate locations: most famously, country music is centred on Nashville (genre headquarters for seven labels), while Latin music is focused on Miami. Negus reveals that genres have become strategic business units, each continually struggling for greater recognition and extra resources within corporations.

These are extreme, but indicative instances. Rebetika as a strategic business unit is an unlikely proposition, but there is evidence of "genre-wars" in Greek music albeit on a much less exalted scale. There have been songs ridiculing musical imports (Gauntlett, 2003b:258), and in the rebetika of the 1930s there is evidence of intra-generic "style-wars", with cafe-aman musicians denigrating both the bouzouki and its exponents (eg "The ex-mangas" by V. Papazoglou, HMV 78 rpm record AO 2247; cf. Pappas 1999:362–65). More significant evidence of corporate management of genres from the early days of recording in Greece is to

be found in the archives of EMI, and doubtless in the several archives of its Greek concessionaires. Here comparative data on the commercial performance of genres is invoked in quarterly and annual reports, in market intelligence and in analyses of competitors' activities. Such data reveal the context of the marketing of both rebetika and the other genres against which rebetika have periodically been defined and constructed.

These archives further reveal the little-known role played in the management and promotion of musical genres in Greece by an assortment of non-Greek business executives. Long before Xan Fielding and Patrick Leigh-Fermor included rebetika in their travelogues, or Francis King and other novelists alluded to them by way of exotic local colour (Gauntlett, 2001:85–86), English and German businessmen appreciated the capacity of rebetika to create wealth for recording companies. One of the earliest occurrences of the word “rebetika” in English is in a report written by Edmund Michael Innes, an executive of the British Gramophone Co. visiting Athens on a trouble-shooting mission in 1930 (EMI Archives: Greece 1930 E.M. Innes, “Report on a visit to Greece April-May 1930”). He signalled to company headquarters in Hayes, Middlesex, that rebetika were then among the most popular types of song with the great mass of the urban population of Greece and that more money could be made by recording and marketing them effectively. Moreover, Innes remonstrated with company headquarters for sending contradictory signals about rebetika to the Gramophone Co. concessionaire in Greece, Demetrios Kissopoulos. Having been reproached some years earlier for recording too many rebetika, Kissopoulos was now being reprimanded for recording too much “highbrow” music. The diffidence inspired by his corporate overlords might partly explain Kissopoulos' erratic use of “rebetika” on HMV record labels and his coy, parenthetical use of the term in catalogues — eg “Laika Asmata (Rebetika)” (Popular Songs [Rebetika]) (HMV, 1933:42).

Annotations on documents in the EMI Archives suggest that the Overseas Division at Hayes had also previously intruded into the programme of Greek recordings proposed by K.F. Vogel, the Gramophone

Company's concessionaire in Alexandria, whose territory included Egypt, Greece and Turkey in the mid-1920s. Among the genres affected are "Rebetika (popular Estudiantinas)" (EMI Archives: Greece 11.2.1927 Vogel to Gramophone Co.). Kissopoulos was to experience again the "hands-on" management of the Greek repertory exercised by executives from Hayes. Having persuaded Antonis Dalgas, one of the premier exponents of rebetika, to sing 80 titles per annum exclusively for HMV and to curtail a contract with Odeon in the process (EMI Archives: Greece 27.9.1929 Kissopoulos to Williams, International Artistes Dept., Hayes), the hapless Kissopoulos received a telegram from Hayes informing him "REFERENCE PROPOSED DALGAS CONTRACT CONSIDER EIGHTY TITLES PER YEAR TOO MANY STOP" (EMI Archives: Greece 14.10.1929 Williams to Kissopoulos). On a subsequent visit to Athens, the Gramophone Co. executive J. Carr was instructed to impress on Kissopoulos in person that his proposed recording programmes were required for perusal at Hayes well ahead of any attempt at their implementation (EMI Archives: Greece 2.4.1931 J. Dunn, Foreign Factories Division, Hayes, to J. Carr, Athens).

These instances of corporate colonialism occurred at a time when the parameters of the rebetika genre were being established on Greek labels, catalogues and associated corporate documentation. Evidence of Hayes' involvement in the management of the Greek repertory is less obvious after the transfer of Kissopoulos' contract to Lambropoulos Brothers in January 1935. However, the Greek concessionaires of EMI labels remained accountable to Hayes via the surveillance of the EMI-appointed manager of the Columbia factory in Athens. Except for the years of German occupation, this manager was always a British businessman, from 1931 when production started to 1991 when it ceased. Even in the 1950s strategic decisions affecting the production and distribution of Greek song were being taken in Britain: in 1954 Hayes decided against the manufacture of long-playing records in Greece, against the advice of R. Mackenzie, the Manager in Athens (EMI Archives: Greece 25.2.1954 J. Dunn, Foreign Factories Dept., Hayes, to Forbes, International Dept., Hayes). The selection, compilation and pressing of LPs continued to be a

source of friction between Mackenzie and EMI headquarters for several years thereafter (see Gauntlett, 2003a:36 n. 17).

The ascendancy of rebetika in the 1930s occurred in the context of an underperforming local factory in Greece. Archival documents reveal that the Columbia factory worked initially for only three days a week because of a lack of orders and depressed sales, despite the lower price of locally pressed records (EMI Archives: Greece n.d., G. Giras "Columbia-EMI in Greece. History of the foundation of the foremost and largest phonographic company in Greece"). The need to increase output at the factory may partly explain the strategy whereby the recently amalgamated EMI maintained four separate labels in Greece (HMV, Columbia, Odeon and Parlophone), which in turn led to the almost obligatory production of successful titles on several different labels with different artists. In vain did Kissopoulos complain to Hayes that this diminished the commercial value of each recording (EMI Archives: Greece 22.8.32 Kissopoulos to Hayes Overseas Dept.).

Such factors, together with periodic fluctuations in currency exchange-rates, levels of taxation and importation duties for recording wax and "biscuit" (shellac mix for 78 rpm records), all impacted on the volume of production, the pricing and consumption of the product. Ultimately they influenced the commercial construction of rebetika as a genre and contributed to determining what now survives as the recorded repertory of artistes whom we may prefer to admire for their capacity to evoke the "leathery squeak" of Daskaloyiannis' flayed hide.

Exactly how volatile business environments and technological changes affected the rebetika genre over the decades has yet to be established. There is obviously danger in crediting the industry with too much foresight and control. A revisionist creation-myth for rebetika exclusively based on commercial determinism will prove as unsatisfactory as the current orthodoxies. My concern here has been to establish a *prima facie* case for at least exploring the paradox, distasteful to some devotees of the Greek Oriental Muse, that rebetika, the counterdiscourse *par excellence* to the Westernisation of Greece, has in reality always been the handmaiden of Western corporate culture.

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