

*Gary Metras*

**BENEATH THE BLUE REALM**

The daughter of the tavern owner on Mykonos only half smiles as she takes our order. She knows at this late hour Americans only want desert. Small fare. Tea and honey-cakes. She knows the tourist trade, lives it, inhales it, the lulls and rushes of dollars and euros, a stew of tongues swirling in and out her fair head, born and raised among these white-washed homes and shops of stucco without edge, the sills rounded, the corners curved, and the wood trim blue as the Aegean sky at sunrise, a color so liquid and solid it could stop escape, as if anyone would leave this island except for another, except to flee an angry father whose daughter was soiled by a love and passion that was neither. Not even the old gods to help him, busy as they are up in that blue realm, keeping the eternity machine well-oiled. But this woman, tall, attractive, wedding-ring-less, widow-ring-less, indifferent to celestial mechanics, goes about the business of serving, smiling, gathering tips beneath the grapevine arbor that is a breathing roof above us, its great years laced in crisscrossed branches grown over all the trysts, the false pledges, the quick disappearances of handsome men. Soon we will board ship for Rhodes under a night sky that refuses to blacken, and we don't know it yet, but sea swells will rise until all thoughts of love-making drown and we'll huddle alone in perpendicular berths, yawing and pitching that counteracts romance, while she, on that rocky island, sleeps in a steady bed, solitary or not, dreaming or not dreaming.