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## Third Planets

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# Third Planets

by Barry Ballard

If you imagined a planet, would you  
imagine it blue and then green, heat it  
and then freeze it—and then heat it again?  
Would you imagine it a cool liquid  
emptiness and then fill it with life, your spewed  
out breath surfacing like volcanic fists  
under the sea? Could you foresee the problems  
of its gauging reach and self-conscious skid

through the outer atmosphere, its questions  
trapped in orbiting spheres of geometric  
shape (some of them igniting in the friction  
of their own descent, while the others sleep  
in an unguided drift of memory holding  
to itself in the very womb of knowing)?

