

EDSON ARANTES DE NASCIMENTO

by Brad Reed

I was a God with a small planet at my feet.
I had the power to send it hurtling into blue
heaven over green fields with the divine touch of my foot.

I sent it orbiting into small spaces,
seeking the brush of a nylon net,
past the outreaching hands of others

who would claim themselves deity.
I was the hope of a nation, the holder of records,
They hung names around my neck like trophies:

Pérola Negra, O Rei, The King Pelé,
They etched them into stone and carved my body
in yellow jersey and extended fist.

Now that I have traded jersey for jacket,
Am I still God of my own small planet?
Now that I have traded a bicycle kick for bones

that creak in the morning,
Am I still to be carved into stone?
Perhaps a new God is already forming.

He is sweating now in the rain among the smell of orange slices,
She is cradling her own small planet home from a long summer practice,
They practice their poses for the day that the sculptor will call them deity—
And am I then forgotten?