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He Still Dances

by John Nizalowski

The dry cottonwood leaf curls—
a sail,
a woman's breast,
a smooth femur
under the desert sun.

It is the ghost
of all the sacred dances
never performed,
all the clocks never created.

This leaf reminds us
that the moon does not exist
unless we see it,
that the ocean's revelation
is its creation,
and two bodies are
fully real only in the
touch of skin to skin,
hand to waist,
thigh to hip.

The wind blows—
the leaf becomes a rattle
in the hands of a Hopi elder
dancing the kiva floor's
tight round.

Thank the gods
he still dances,
the void held back
another year.