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Old Age

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OLD AGE

Today in my dreams I saw clearly
that youth has passed and even maturity.
Old age alone remains.

No, it wasn't round, like a field
nor like a tree nor a broken stalk of straw,
just whiteness to the right and left.

It didn't shuffle its feet, calling nuns
to the hospital bed with the tap of its staff,
and it didn't play hide-and-seek with the shadows.

Pitcher, broth, finger, plague, axe—
a nightmare from the middle ages,
its last tatters flapping.

Grasping its sides a pair in red hats dragged it along,
those two pushing it, perhaps,
on its final path, to the heretic's pyre.