

# The New Criterion

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## Nocturne

by Nicholas Pierce

The nights I stayed at MD Anderson,  
tossing and turning on that green recliner  
or wandering the halls, went on and on.

Post-op, bedridden in a johnny gown  
and socks, my mother put on fresh eyeliner  
the nights I stayed. At MD Anderson,

her nurses knew me as the quiet son  
who studied poetry (with a psych minor)  
and wandered the halls. They went on and on

about my mother's strength, fooling no one  
when they described her pain meds as "designer."  
The nights I stayed at MD Anderson,

I made excuses to be on my own,  
forgetting her room number (eight or nine or . . .)  
to wander the halls, on and on and on,

sometimes till morning, waiting for the sun  
to whisk me away like an ocean liner.  
The nights I stayed at MD Anderson,  
wandering its halls, would go on and on.

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**Nicholas Pierce's** *In Transit* won the 2021 New Criterion Poetry Prize.

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