

**ANDREW
SCHWARTZ**

Wandering
Home

Through California's bleached mountains and hot sky,
I drove, dreaming
of ocean-crossing Jews carting broken

English through Ellis Island gates.
They were shape-shifters:
Nathan apple seller—carpet salesman;

Celia bookkeeper-seamstress. When their son
returned from fighting Nazis,
he passed through these mountains, then emerged

from a Brooklyn subway, where Nathan grabbed
the bulging army duffel and paraded my father
straight-backed down 95th Street.

He moved to Long Island anyway—
for my mother, a split-level and backyard patio,
but those simple dreams were not enough

for her. When she left,
chasing Hollywood romance, salt breezes
shrunk the house and hurled me west, where

I've logged nearly forty years. I fell
in love with afternoon light off East Bay hills,
twisting motorcycle rides around dusty cliffs,

a hard-headed, soft-eyed
woman and the sons we raised
into men. But I never stopped longing

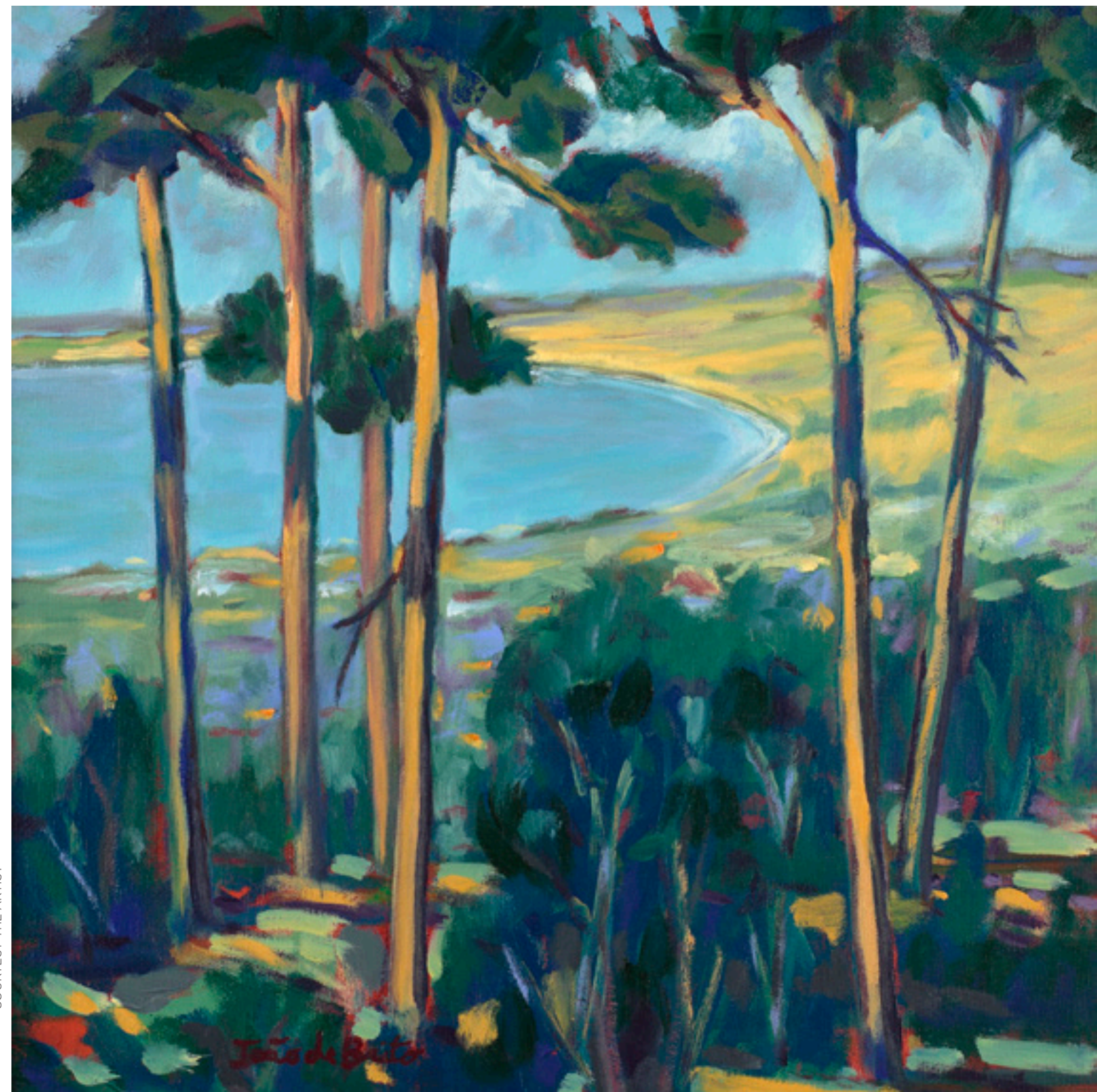
for all I left behind and
I never felt at home until
today. Until dry air, heat, and history

whistle-whipped the car. Old and New World faces,
big as mountains, wandered this desert, wailing in Yiddish,
welcoming me to this nomadic life.

Andrew Schwartz's poetry, fiction and nonfiction have appeared in *Catamaran Literary Reader*, *Columbia Journal*, *Confrontation*, *NER/BLQ*, *the Sun*, and other publications.

JOÃO DE BRITO

Secret Place, 2019
Oil on canvas, 48 x 48 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST