

## Cultural Landscapes and Flora in the Poetry of Sophia de Mello Andresen

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*This paper belongs to a project named Landscapes as described by contemporary geographers and non-geographers, initiated in 2018. The quest about the issue: “Are novels objects of investigation in landscape geography?” was the target of previous publications, about three other Portuguese writers and one Brazilian, that proved this research question where the answer is affirmative. The case study presented here focuses exclusively on the literary production of a Portuguese poet, for the first time. She wrote novels and poems, altogether, describing flora and places in her country and elsewhere in Europe, Africa and Latin America, but Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen’s books selected for this contribution were only poetry. Methodology used was twofold: 1) Literature analysis and flora identification in three books of poems, first edited in 1947, 1967 and 1989; 2) Flora and landscape interpretation by the techniques of scientific literature comparison and online consultation of flora taxonomical links, as the places visited and plants named by the author were the object of our previous scientific missions. Thus, the paper presents the image of the world by a non-geographer, as there are such concepts as geographic alphabetisation and the poet analysed was a Classic Literature expert that devoted her life to travelling, writing and to politics. Results show that her rhymes are good sources of information about flora, gardens, and landscape research at the several locations she visited throughout her life.*

**Keywords:** literature, tranquillity, landscape, garden, sea, geography, Greece, Portugal, Brazil, Prince Island

### Introduction

Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen enjoyed travelling. In 2019 her son, Miguel Sousa Tavares, also a known Portuguese writer said in an interview that for her “*to travel is to observe*” as announced to him in Rome (Barros 2019). From the father of modern earth science, the German Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) to the contemporary geographers (Frias 2019), observation was usually the first objective of any landscape geographer while studying the Planet, and simultaneously the first step in fieldwork. This brings us to the reason why I’ve chosen these poems as study objects in my quest for the research question: Are novels (now poems) objects of investigation in landscape geography? Etymologically Geography is the description of the Earth, the planet we inhabit together with a big array of living beings such as plants. Therefore, this quest is being done in several locations around Portugal and the world, usually using novels as case studies, as with

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The most recent essay was presented at a conference, in Italy (2025), analysing not only theatre plays but also poetry, as was the example of Luíz Vaz de Camões, prose and poetry writer from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Following this line of research, here is the examination of three of the poetry books published by Sophia during her long life, 85 years from 1919 to 2004. They were written in three decades with about twenty years of spacing between them (1947, 1967, 1989). Sophia has written about several countries, cities and countryside lending another path to the research, as she mixed History and mythology with her wonderings around the world. So, the research question now is: Can poetry books also become objects of research in Geography?

This paper will argue that is the case. Let's read her rhymes about travelling:

*"I've seen rocky countries with rivers  
Where dark clouds like spiders  
Ate the violet profile of the mountains  
Amid cold pink sunsets."*

*"Dia do Mar"* or Day of the Sea (2003, p. 79) – Author's translation.

Sophia's verses are short but full of colour describing literary landscapes. The next pages will focus on the methodology and materials used for this research, on literature review, about flora, as well as on definition of literature landscapes, natural, human and cultural landscapes. Results and discussion will follow Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen's short biography, towards the conclusion. A table and figures are presented to organize and synthesize findings from the research.

## Materials and Methods

Methodology used in this contribution was twofold:

- 1) Literature analysis and flora identification in three books of poems, first edited in 1947, 1967 and 1989. The editions used in the current case study were published in the beginnings of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in 2003 and 2004, selected to update the Portuguese orthography as no English editions were found online;
- 2) Flora and landscape interpretation has been done through the techniques of scientific literature comparison and flora taxonomical platforms consultation, as the places visited and plants named were the object of our previous scientific missions, in Europe (Madaleno 2021, 2024), Africa (Madaleno 2020) and in South America (Madaleno 1996, 2025). The list of species was classified using taxonomic typologies, following Portela-Pereira et al. (2022) study-case.

Materials used were sheets of paper, laptop computers, and photo comparisons. Regarding flora, a comprehensive table was used to examine the plants mentioned

by Sophia de Mello (Rupprecht et al. 2015). The table includes the vernaculars for species in Portuguese and in English and the botanical identification of gender, species and family, whenever possible. The taxonomy used the Missouri Botanical Garden's (MBG 2026), the Flora.on (Flora 2026), and University of *Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro* (UTAD 2026) site taxonomy, available online at (<https://jb.utad.pt/flora>, <https://flora.on.pt>. and [www.tropicos.org](http://www.tropicos.org)). The American site was used for tropical species and the Portuguese site for European plants.

Table 1, presented in appendix, gives us one or several excerpts of the text, to contextualise the flora cited and the place where the plant was seen or imagined, as History and mythology are frequently utilised in Sophia's poems. Neither History nor mythology were objects of this paper, though. Thus, the analysis of poetry will focus specifically on the geography of the places mentioned and on flora. Furthermore, no tool using Boolean functions was applied in this research, because Sophia's poems are not viable for blind computer systematic searches, as they are full of symbolic landscape descriptions that need to be examined and interpreted by human eyes.

## Literature Review

Regarding flora, some of the most valuable research comes from students' fieldwork and phytogeographical inventories (Lozano-Valencia et al. 2023). According to Lozano-Valencia et al. "Even though it is not a function of the biogeographic expert to determine the taxonomical classification, it is in their assignment the knowledge of plant species, and their correct identification, using dichotomic keys" (2023, p. 96). It is also necessary to stress that the branch of biogeography that studies plants is called phytogeography. Biogeography research covers therefore both the plants and the animals, their habitat, and the different ecosystems existent on Planet Earth, where we all live (Lacoste and Salanon 1969). These animals and plants have an interrelationship with humankind that has evolved through time (Elhai 1968). Because geographers are not qualified to classify plant species, an expertise of botanists, in this paper we will use the taxa available online in certified sites, as stated (MBG 2026, UTAD 2026). Taxonomic plant typologies were analyzed using Portela-Pereira et al. (2022) study-case, from Portugal.

This paper presents the image of the world by non-geographers, as there is the concept of geographic alphabetization, meaning: "the capacity of understanding and utilising geographic knowledge to understand our environment" (Trigo and Ondoño 2023, p. 121). The usage of Literature books in geographical learning has been done in Spain, as was the case of "Jack and the Magic Beans" and "Thumbelina", in the research of García et al. (2023). In their words: "We have started from a constructivist methodology, with project-based learning." Using the above-mentioned tales, "we have learned geographical concepts, among them: relief, climate, soil, flora, fauna." As to teaching, tales "improved students (...) understanding of the world around them and the relationships between man and the environment" (Trigo and Ondoño 2023, p. 242).

Cultural landscapes are, on the other hand, part of landscape research in geography, traditionally divided into physical and human geography. The "European Landscape

Convention, of the Council of Europe, (...) underlines the dual nature of landscape, both the physical reality as a result of the action and interaction of human and natural factors, and the spatial representation we make of the landscape itself” (Kratochvíl et al. 2023, p. 610). In this paper, cultural landscapes are built-up by the observer, a detailed construction, using written words, photography or drawings. Depending on the quality of the observer, the formation and information of the writer, cultural landscapes can be richer or poorer. Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen had remarkable observation powers and thus her poems are quite good sources of landscape research.

Literature landscapes are representations of natural or human landscapes, idealised or not by the writer. Natural landscapes are original, untouched environments composed of landforms (mountains, valleys, plains), water bodies (lakes, rivers, seas), and native vegetation. Human landscapes have men and women intervention. In case of flora, exotic species were introduced along time. Thus, the landscapes described (...), the real and the symbolic, are cultural landscapes. This contribution emphasizes the places mentioned in Sophia’s verses; some are places she visited and immediately wrote about, (Greek landscapes); other places where she travelled along her life (Brasilia) and that she remembers in her rhymes. Flora is omnipresent and thus it is to flowers and fruits, trees and bushes that we give utmost attention, analysing the context in which they are mentioned, as they are integral parts of cultural landscapes.

### Sophia’s Biography

Sophia was born in the northern city of Porto (Figure 1), to an aristocratic family and was sent to study Classic Literature at the University of Lisbon (1936-1939). In an unedited beginning of her life memories, that she never finished, here is an excerpt of her childhood, as published by her daughter, Maria Andresen (2016):

*“I was born in Porto.*

*There were the enormous linden trees, the foggy mornings, (...) platanus and cherry trees, camellias. (...)*

*There was the river, the cascaded houses, the boats floating close to the marginal road, during the winter cold coloured afternoons”.*

*(...) We heard Mahler before the time when Mahler became fashionable. (...).*

*We read Proust, the medieval Songs of Friendship, Horacio, Goethe, Rilke, Lorca”.*

*Because I was born in Porto, I know the names of the flowers and the trees (...)*

*“A Casa Desmedida” or Organised House (2016, p. 4) – Author’s translation.*

**Figure 1.** Riverine Northern Portuguese City of Porto

Source: Portogalist (2025).

In 1944 she published her first poetry book. According to the National Library record, she has published a total of twelve (12) books, all deposited there (BN 2025). Her work has been translated into such languages as Italian, French, English and Mandarin (University of Aveiro 1998). As written by her in 1988, to be recited at Sorbonne University, “before I knew how to read, I heard the ancient Portuguese poem *Nau Catrineta*” (Andresen 1989, p. 76).

*“There goes the Portuguese ship  
That has a lot to tell us  
Listen now, gentlemen  
Its remarkable story*

*One more year and one day  
And it was still navigating  
Nothing to eat there is anymore”*

Almeida Garrett (1851) “*Nau Catrineta*” from “*Romanceiro*” – Author’s translation.

So, Sophia first learnt how to recite oral tradition related to the History of Portuguese navigations. She wrote that she thought poems weren’t written by people but told tales the world produced by itself. That’s again a measure of the importance of geography in her young mind. Earth was a divine entity, placed above all things and people. “I also thought that, if I could sit still and quiet in certain mythical places of the garden, I would be able to listen to those poems” (Andresen 1989, p. 76). The importance of gardens and of silence in literature was enforced with her attraction for travelling, around Greece (Figure 2). “One day at

Epidaurus – making good use of silence left by tourist’s lunch break – I placed myself in the centre of the theatre and recited out loud the beginning of a poem” ...:

*“My voice climbs the last steps  
And I hear the impersonal word flying  
That I recognize being not my own, anymore”*  
(Andresen 1989, “*Ilhas*” or Islands, p. 76) – Author’s translation.

It must be emphasized that her youth garden is now the Botanical Garden of the University of Porto (Melo 2014). According to Cortez (2013) the challenges of Sophia’s lifetime, marked by dictatorship (1926-1974) and wars (the 2<sup>nd</sup> world war and Portuguese colonial war) required not only an answer using the aesthetic but also the ethics of social conscience. Having married a lawyer (1946) engaged in defending prisoners of conscience, her life had plenty of experience with people in need of both financial and human rights aid. She was from Danish descent, and she received several national and international prizes, including the prestigious Camões (1999). She was deputy to the Portuguese Parliament, during the period of 1975-76, one of the 19 ladies elected and the only one that presided a commission charged with writing the Constitution, following the Carnation Revolution (1974).

## Results and Discussion

Figure 1 was placed above (Sophia’s biography) to illustrate better her words from the unedited memories (Andresen 2016). The river is Douro, a water body where the city of Porto (Portuguese word that means port) was developed through times, on a mountainous slope, thus there are “cascaded houses”, a river where “the boats float”, and on the margin is “the riverside road” where cars and a tram circulate. Her observations are accurate, as the reader can see for himself on the photo caption. Landscape geography is present in the observation of river movement (water body), the built-up spaces (the houses), whereas the flora is named accurately, “linden trees, (...) platanus and cherry trees, camellias”. Sophia explains also that “because I was born in Porto, I know the names of the flowers and the trees”. No argument about that given attribute of any person that was born in this northern Portugal city.

Next the poet states: “before I knew how to read, I heard the ancient Portuguese poem *Nau Catrineta*” (Andresen 1989, p. 76). History as knowledge is not an objective of this research, but here it is clearly written by her, why Sophia’s poems are charged with this focus on time, as her upbringing was a construction of both literature and history studies. It gives us good information about her memory skills also, as her memory was trained from a very young age, even before learning to read and write. That attribute was quite important for acquisition of geographical skills related to flora observation and vernacular name cataloguing.

The third message, while interpreting her written words comes from the third quotation from her short biography analysis, the Epidaurus theatre: I “recited aloud the beginning of a poem” and, further on: “My voice climbs the last steps, And I hear the impersonal word flying”. Fieldwork in geography, nowadays, recognizes the requirement to observe the landscape as the need to hear all the sounds around

the observer. The Brazilian geographer Frias examines this requirement in his work entitled “Fieldwork in Geography: Fundamental characteristics and an invitation to listen” (Frias 2019). The poet Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen, a non-geographer, practiced both abilities when she travelled, the usage of the eyes (observation) and of the ears (listening). Then, again, she told us in her unedited memories: “We heard Mahler before the time when Mahler became fashionable”. Sophia’s trained ears heard Classical music as much as environmental noises (birds, tourist voices, the sound of silence, and that of her own voice).

Gusmão (2005) has analysed the book of poems “Geography” (1967) where he found that her poems were written images of the world. The clear sky of Mediterranean seas and remarkable places as Greek beaches or monumental theatres (see Figure 2), appears described frequently in her lyrics, mingled with mythological figures, in clear contrast with the Northern European cloudy skies. Among her poems are Epidaurus, as said, a place in history and in geography that repeats itself in the 1967 “Geography” and in her “Islands” book of poems (1989). As Martelo (2005) drew attention to the chaos of the minotaur where she contraposes the order of things in her written words. And order is freedom whereas disorder is anarchy.

Her verses look for order and repel or reject all tendency for injustice, as to be fair to people is to abide with law. A law that is just, not oppressive to the living beings. That’s why Sophia was engaged politically during all her existence. Macé (2013) wrote a long thesis about Nature in the Greek classics, from the Homeric Iliad and the Odyssey to Plato and Aristotle, noticing that the skies and earth, the gods and men were subject to order. Martelo (2005) analysed this issue about Sophia’s writings on the minotaur tale that she wrote in her rhymes during a voyage to Crete. However, Sophia’s attraction for order stems from her classical literature studies and is present in several poems. It must be stressed that her poetry is written according to the canons of literature, in itself a good way to organize words and ideas altogether.

It is under Martelo’s (2005) lens that one can understand her poem about Brasilia, that Sophia compares to city and order in Greece:

*“Brasília  
 Drawn by Lúcio Costa, Niemeyer and Pythagoras  
 Logic and lyric  
 Greek and Brazilian  
 Ecumenic  
 Proposing to all men and races  
 The universal essence of just forms  
 Brasília (...)  
 Clear like Babylon  
 Tall like the trunk of a palm tree ...  
 “Geografia” or Geography (2004, p. 80) – author’s translation.*

**Figure 2.** *Epidaurus Theatre Located about 130 km of Athens, Greece*

Source: <https://turistaprofissional.com/teatro-de-epidauro-grecia/>.

The last verse has driven us to the recurrent issue in Sophia's poems: the flora. The verses reflect the preferred places to write – her gardens. Used in metaphors and periphrases, a total of 30 different plants is mentioned in the 3 poetry books selected for this essay (see Table 1 in the Appendix). But returning to Brasilia, this city drawn by the urbanist Lúcio Costa, using square and rule to design an orderly third capital of Brazil, favourably impressed Sophia. Located in the inner and dry highlands, Brasilia was designed to meet the needs for shelter of about half a million fonctionnaires that would work for government, the judicial system and for parliament, following the abandonment of the mundane Rio de Janeiro. All residents should inhabit regularly conceived neighbourhood units and modernist apartment blocks. The centre of work drawn by the famous Oscar Niemeyer was the *three powers core* of Brasilia. There, like hands open to the sky, Niemeyer drew the cathedral (see Figure 3).

The spectacular architecture of the Catholic cathedral reminds us of another book of poems written twenty years earlier and another plant, a biblical one (Revelation 8: 3-4), incense:

*“The hand that places the flower in a jar  
The hand that lightens incense  
The hand that unrolls the tapestry  
The hand that sings and makes music out of harp... ”*  
“*Ilhas*” or Islands (2004, p. 14) – author's translation.

About Brazil, Sophia was proud to make a trip from Brasilia (Madaleno 1996) to Rio de Janeiro. Sophia de Mello also wrote about a good Brazilian friend, Helena Lanari:

*“I like to hear Brazilian Portuguese Idiom  
Where words recuperate their total substance  
(...) When Helena Lanari said ‘the coconut tree’  
The coconut tree became much more vegetable”  
“Geografia” or Geography (1989) – author’s translation.*

Plants and gardens were recurrent in her verses, as said, and Sophia enjoyed the peace and tranquillity of green spaces to write her poetry, as stated. As Imamkhodjaeva (2026) stressed, the “philosophy of Epicureanism, arguing that its emphasis on ataraxia (tranquillity)” are essential not only for hedonism but also for sustainable venues, as gardens, where one can feel safe and reliable for artistic production. Imamkhodjaeva (2026) wrote that “Epicurus himself cultivated a small, self-sufficient community”. What we want to emphasize is that several notable painters preferred flora, water and forests for inspiration. It was the case with impressionists, like Monet, and poets like Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen, that often looked for the serenity of blue and green spaces to feel the “angel”. The angel is perceived by many Catholics as the inspiration of “divine voices”, for clarity and orientation necessary for creativity in general, and writing poems, in particular (Lourenço 2004). This drives us to the next discussion of flora in Sophia’s verses.

**Figure 3.** *Cathedral of Brasilia, Located on the Central Axis of the Capital of Brazil*



Source: Author’s Photo (2008).

### Flora Location in Sophia de Mello's Poems

The thirty plants identified in Sophia's verses belong to twenty-two different families. The most abundant family is Rosaceae, 13.3%, belonging to four genders: *Malus*, *Prunus*, *Rosa* and *Rubus* (Flora 2026). Poaceae follows, registering 10%, with three genders: *Bambusa*, *Triticum* and *Oryza*. The third group constitutes about 6.7% each, and possesses three separate genders: 1) Arecaceae, the Coconut and *Palmae*; 2) Pinaceae, the *Pinus* and the *Cedar*; 3) Malvaceae presents the genders *Tilia* (European) and *Ceiba* (Africa and America). All the remainder present a unique gender and species, giving the flora named in Sophia's poems a remarkable diversity.

Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen has travelled throughout the world and wrote poems about remote places like the "Prince" island, that before 1975 still belonged to Portugal, as one of the African colonies or overseas territories.

*"I've arrived later amid the noise of the airplane  
On a brusque speed  
But I also had the opportunity to bathe on the waves  
Of the beautiful beaches of the genesis  
And crossed the greenery of the forest  
And I've smelled the scent of recently cut oca  
"Ilhas" or Islands (2004, p. 73) – Author's translation.*

Oca is *Ceiba pentandra*, a known tropical forest tree (Rivers and Mark 2017), that Sophia enjoyed as much as the paradisiac beaches of the Prince Island (see Figure 4). Regarding the flowers, the vernaculars vary from Japanese *camellias* (*Kimono of camellias*) to Portuguese *lilies* (*on a plane where lilies grow*), *magnolias* (*beauty as carnal as magnolia*), *narcissus* (*narcissus undulate*), the childhood *Linden* trees (see Figure 5) and Greek *roses* (*venom from the most ancient June rose*).

As to fruits the array of vernaculars are: apples (*There is a wooden and apple like flavour*); blackberries (*light like blackberry spreads westwards*); cherries (*I left a scissor forgotten within the cherry tree branches*); coconuts, the tree already cited about Brasilia; coffee beans (*coffee has the powder of the Turkish*); figs (city with some fig trees); and *grapes* (*I touch the shadow of a fresh vineyard*). Let's contextualise better her verses in Table 1 (Appendix):

1) Apples that Sophia mentions were seen and tasted in the northern Portuguese city of Amarante (Islands 1989, p. 58). 2) Blackberries were observed in Greece, on the Gulf of Corinth landscapes, whenever she travelled around Greece (Geography 1967, p. 62). 3) Cherries were named in a poem about the Brazilian poet Manuel Bandeira and are an analogy with one scissor forgotten within the tree branches, in her youth garden of Porto (Geography 1967, p. 78). 4) The coconut was a metaphor for Brasilia's buildings, used in the poem she wrote (Geography 1967, pp. 80–81). 5) Coffee is mentioned in a poem about Greece, written on unnamed island (Islands 1989, p. 47). 6) The fig and fig trees appear during a voyage to Greece (Geography 1967, p. 65). 7) Oca is associated with Prince Island, as said (Islands 1989, p. 73). 8) Linden tree is named in her summer poem about Lagos, Algarve, where Sophia had a house (Geography 1989, p. 95).

**Figure 4.** *Ceiba Pentandra, the Oca*



Source: Author's photo (2013).

**Figure 5.** *Linden Tree from Sophia's Childhood*



Source: Author's photo (2013).

Concerning food, Sophia names several staples like wheat (*The clarity of the wheat on her face*) or rice (*Teeth shine as rice grains*). This cereal appears on verses about Spain, Santiago de Compostela (Islands 1989, p. 24). Rice on the contrary is



(*boxwood, roses and linden trees*). Mediterranean countries, such as Italy (*I touch the shadow of a fresh vineyard*), Greece (*The silence of grapes and of wheat*) and Cyprus (*the clarity of the wheat on her face*) are recurrent in Sophia's poetry. Spain appears in a poem to Santiago of Compostela (*It has the sweetness of the wheat*), as commented.

The Middle East and the Asian Oriental environments are cited when wondering along museum corridors, whereas observing statues (*Beauty as carnal as magnolia and its fruit*), paintings (*A country of tigers and palm trees*) or (*Roses flowering in Persian gardens*), and Screens (*Kimono of camellias*). This drives us to perfumes, like nard (*Secret flavour of rose and nard*), roses (*venom from the most ancient June rose*), and again oregano (*the perfume of oregano invades happiness*). Let's examine some more poems:

*"Nambam screens tell us  
The merry story of navigation  
Stunned people suddenly  
Encountered face to face"*

*"Ilhas"* or Islands (1989, p. 60) - Author's translation.

In fact, history books show that the Portuguese Jesuits were the first to reach Japan, having the aim of converting extreme-orient people. As written in Portuguese Chronicles, by earlier colonization authors, such as de Couto: "From the Islands of Sunda" and from Ceylon the Portuguese brought cinnamon. Regarding the spices islands: "at the door of Ternate fortress is a beautiful tree named catopa (...) that looks like the European chestnut (1778, volumes 4, 5 and 8). By the way, catopa in English is known as Tropical Almond or Indian Almond. So, Portuguese navigators not only discovered the maritime route to India, looking for oriental spices in need to preserve food, but they went Eastwards towards the Chinese seas, because the caravan's route was distraught by the Ottoman Empire expansion (1299-1922). The discovery of Japan by Europeans is dated to 1543 when three Portuguese landed on the island of *Tanega Shima* "During approximately one century (and until the "Edict of Exclusion" of foreigners) the two countries maintained intense commercial relations" (MNE 2025, p. 1).

### Flora Location Along Time in Sophia de Mello's Poems

Portugal, and in particular, northern Portugal, is described in the 1947 book but not absent from the later ones, as in Sophia's letter to Maria do Carvalhal Alvito:

*Dear Maria – suddenly the thinness  
Of this first cold mixed  
with the flavour of wood and apples  
(...) I come inside your house, and you are my shelter*

Written in Lisbon, 1986, and published in "Ilhas" or Islands, 1989, p. 58.

The earlier book “Day of the Sea” contains a total of six plant names: roses (3); pine trees (4); lilies (2); narcissus (1); boxwood (1); and cactus (1). The book presents several poems about Greek mythology, and about paintings such as a Michel Angelo drawing:

*“From human chaos, confuse and hostile,  
Miraculously appears your profile”  
“Dia do Mar” or Day of the Sea, 1947, p. 30 - Author’s translation.*

This excerpt shows how she did not appreciate anarchy or chaos, preferring instead contemporary ideology, the beauty, harmony and order of her aligned verses. Sophia wrote about the Portuguese poet Camões, another Classic culture admirer, even though in the 16<sup>th</sup> century poets used Greek culture as part of the canons of Renaissance (Madaleno 2025a), whilst in Sophia it is owed to her Classic literature education (Macé 2013). However, this paper will not explore the Classics in Sophia’s poetry as Geography and landscapes are the object of the paper. Several poems are about Lagos, during her trips to Algarve, in southern Portugal as much as, again, about Greeks Cassandra, Medeia, Eurydice and even Roman Catilina, in this beautiful sonnet:

*“I am solitary and never lie  
I’ve torn all vanity piece by piece  
And walk fearlessly and without lies  
At the crepuscular light of my instinct”  
“Dia do Mar” or Day of the Sea, 1947, p. 44 – Author’s translation.*

Thus, any mythological or historical figure that could remind her about the sea (Tristan and Isolde) was edited in this Day of the Sea, written after the Second World War:

*“The waves broke one by one  
I was alone with the sand and the foam  
Of the sea that sang only for me”  
“Dia do Mar”, 1947, p. 9 - Author’s translation.*

The sea, both the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea are, however, mingled with gardens, pines and roses: *“The garden is brilliant and flowery (...) It is the acid and multicoloured May”* (p. 17). Pines are particularly praised, as we have noticed:

*“One day dead, wasted, we will return  
To live freely like animals  
And even if we are tired, we will flourish  
Brothers living from the sea and pine trees it finishes with”  
“Dia do Mar” or Day of the Sea, 1947, p. 57 - Author’s translation.*

Angels and gods are intertwined with landscapes, lost Edens and leaves, light, wind and shadows. It’s poetry, rhythmic and colourful.

*“Among countries and landscapes  
They walk towards images  
And the earth hugs them warmly  
Members made of flesh and leaves”*

“Dia do Mar” or Day of the Sea, 1947, p. 32 - Author’s translation.

Regarding the 1967 book, called “Geography” (II. In Table 1), it names a total of fourteen (14) plants: lilies (1); oreganos (3); fig trees (2); cypress (3); roses (3); cedars (1); pine trees (1); laurel (1); palm trees (4); coconut trees (2); vineyards (4); wheat (1); blackberries (1); and thistle (1). The poem that mentions more *taxa* is in page 57:

*“There, then, in the ancient world  
Shadowed by the cypress and the vineyards  
Looking at the long wavery seas  
In a silence of moons and of wheat”*

*(...) In a perfume of wine and roses  
(...) Everything is so close to the seas  
As it was in the first day of creation”*

“Geografia” or Geography (1967, p. 57) – Author’s translation.

As to the “Islands” book (1989), Sophia lists the biggest number of flora genders, eighteen *taxa*: rice (1); incense(1); bamboos (1); poplar (1); wheat (2); pine trees (2); sandalwood (1); lilies (1); palm trees (1); *ocá* (1); linden trees (1); roses (1); nard (2); coffee (1); vineyards (2); apples (1); camellias (1); and magnolias (1). By contrast, in this book, the most beautiful rhymes do not mention flowers, but coastal Mediterranean Sea cities:

*“Inside this room or in another one  
Like a Carpaccio on the streets of Venice  
Second image is a surprise whisper  
As are the streets of Venice”*

“Ilhas” or Islands, 1989, p. 23 – Authors translation.

*“They went together to Olympia, the place of athletes  
To where they belonged  
Their large shoulders and narrow hips  
Their slender, thick strength swinging  
And the narrow forefront like veal”*

“Ilhas” or Islands, 1989, p. 38 – Authors translation.

In fact, the light of the southern European historical sites was among Sophia’s preferences and thus all poetry books refer to these Italian or Greek locations she admired. Regarding plants, let’s appreciate the roses and nards, the biblical perfume with which Maria Madalena anointed Jesus Christ (Matthew 26:6–13; Mark 14:3–9; Luke 7:36–50; John 12:1–8):

*“Large long, sweet horizons  
The unfolded light of sunset*

*A scent of beach on the city streets  
Secret flavour of rose and nard burns”*  
“*Ilhas*”, 1989, p. 46 – Authors translation.

That reminds us of another species mentioned in the Bible, the *lilies* and another Poetry book Sophia published earlier:

*“My hope inhabits  
On the wind and mermaids –  
It is the fantastic blue of dawn  
And the lily of the sands”*  
“*Dia do Mar*” or Day of the Sea, 1947, p. 95.

## Conclusion

The research question was: Can poetry books also become objects of research in Geography? The answer is affirmative. Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen has travelled throughout the world and wrote poems about remote places from Africa, landscapes from Brazil and mostly about Southern European gardens, beaches, theatres. She wrote both about cities and rural areas. Her landscapes were seen in space and imagined through time. The geographies of her life are in these three books of poetry, and one can recognize modern landscapes and flora species in her rhymes. Gardens were the places of the angel, where tranquillity and Greek mythology met her. Inspiration also came from looking at the sea, both the Mediterranean and the Atlantic Ocean, in her country, Portugal or in southern Europe, not to forget the tropical Prince Island or Brazil.

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## Appendix

**Table 1.** Flora Mentioned in Three of Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen Books

Vernaculars (Portuguese)	Botanical Names	Excerpt Text Books (I, II, III)	Places	Pages
1. Apple (Maçã)	<i>Malus domestica</i> L. ROSACEAE	I. There is a wooden and apple like flavour	Portugal: Amarante city	58
2. Bamboo (Bambu)	<i>Bambusa mitis</i> (Lour.) Poir. POACEAE	I. The colloquium of bamboos went silent	Orient and Middle-East	14
3. Blackberry (Amoras)	<i>Rubus ulmifolius</i> var. <i>ulmifolius</i> Shott ROSACEAE	II. A light like blackberry spreads westwards	Greece: Gulf of Corinth	62
4. Boxwood (Buxo)	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> L. BUXACEAE	III. Boxwood Garden	Portugal	20
5. Cactus (Catos)	CACTACEAE	III. Twisted Cactus a thousand ways	Portugal	10
6. Camellias (Camélias)	<i>Camellia</i> sp. THEACEAE	I. Kimono of camellias	Japan	60
7. Cedar of Lebanon (Cedro)	<i>Cedrus libani</i> Subspecie <i>Libani</i> A. Rich. PINACEAE	II. Swallows the blue cedars and the vines	Portugal	39
8. Cherry tree (Cerejeira)	<i>Prunus avium</i> L. ROSACEAE	II. When I left a scissor forgotten within the cherry tree branches	Brazil (to the poet Manuel Bandeira)	78
9. Coconut tree (Coqueiro)	<i>Cocos nucifera</i> L. ARECACEAE	II. the skyscraper has the delicate thinness of a coconut tree.	Brazil: Brasília	80 81
10. Cypress (Cipreste)	<i>Cupressus sempervirens</i> L. CUPRESSACEAE	II. The cypress contemplated its own silence	Portugal: Algarve	22 35 57
11. Incense (Incenso)	<i>Boswellia sacra</i> Flueck. BURSERACEAE	I. The hand that lightens incense.	Middle-East	14
12. Coffee (Café)	<i>Coffea arabica</i> L. RUBIACEAE	I. “The coffee has the powder of the Turkish”	Greece	47
13. Fig tree (Figueira)	<i>Ficus carica</i> L. MORACEAE	II. The city with some fig trees II. The sweetness of the day opens the fig	Portugal: Algarve  Greece Crete	11  65
14. Kapok (Ocă)	<i>Ceiba pentandra</i> (L.) Gaertn MALVACEAE	I. I’ve smelled the scent of recently cut <i>ocá</i>	Ilha do Príncipe (Prince)	73
15. Laurel (Loureiro)	<i>Laurus nobilis</i> L. LAURACEAE	II. Phebo no longer possesses the shack nor the prophetic laurel	Greece	71
16. Lilies (Lírios)	<i>Lilium longiflorum</i> Thunb. LILIACEAE	II. So I brough lilies with me III. On a plane where lilies grow	Portugal: Igrina (Algarve) Portugal	9  95
17. Linden tree	<i>Tilia tomentosa</i> Moench	I. The whisper of		

<i>(Tílias)</i>	MALVACEAE	Linden trees close to the house of childhood. II. Perfume of linden and oregano.	Portugal	37
			Algarve: Lagos	95
18. Magnolia <i>(Magnólia)</i>	<i>Magnolia</i> sp. MAGNOLIACEAE	I. Beauty as carnal as magnolia and its fruit (1987)	Orient (Statue of Buda)	63
19. Narcissus <i>(Narciso)</i>	<i>Narcissus</i> sp. AMARYLLIDACEAE	III. Narcissus undulate	Portugal	20
20. Nard or spikenard <i>(Nardo)</i>	<i>Nardostachys jatamansi</i> (D. Don) DC. CAPRIFOLIACEAE	III. Secret flavour of rose and nard	City smell with scent	46
21. Oregano <i>(Orégão)</i>	<i>Origanum vulgare</i> L. LABIACEAE	II. The perfume of oregano invades happiness II. The perfume of oregano inhabits the wall. The perfume of oregano	Portugal	9
			Algarve	10
			Lagos	94
22. Palm trees <i>(Palmeiras)</i>	Palmae sp. ARECACEAE	I. A country of tigers and palm trees II. In a paper noise the wind blows the palm tree  Tall like the trunk of a palm tree	Orient	72
			Portugal	53
				54
			Brazil: Brasília	80
23. Pinus tree <i>(Pinhal e pinho)</i>	<i>Pinus</i> sp. PINACEAE	I. Do not forget Thasos nor Egina, the pinewood...  I. His face looks like pinewoods shades and sorrows  II. Late in autumn under pine trees from Adriana  III. Here and there, thin and straight pine trees  Landscape of Pine trees and hills  The greenery of pinewoods, the voice of the sea III. Each pine	Ancient world and lack of humanity. Teixeira de Pascoais revisited (Portugal)	16
				25
			Greece	68
			Portugal	10
				48
				57
				75

		contained ... the explanation for all heroes		
24. Poplar ( <i>Choupo</i> )	<i>Populus alba</i> L. SALICACEAE	I. The face like poplar at moon light	Portugal	35
25. Rice ( <i>Arroz</i> )	<i>Oryza sativa</i> L. POACEAE	I. The teeth shine as rice grains	Orient	13
26. Roses ( <i>Rosas</i> )	<i>Rosa</i> sp. L. ROSACEAE	I. Secret flavour of rose and nard	City smell	46
		II. the rose bushes' leaves	Portugal	39
		II. venom from the most ancient June rose	Greece	74
		III. Roses flowering in Persian gardens	Persia	16
27. Sandalwood ( <i>Sândalo</i> )	<i>Santalum album</i> L. SANTALACEAE	I. The bed made of sandal	Orient	13
28. Thistle ( <i>Cardo</i> )	<i>Silybum marianum</i> (L.) Gaertn. ASTERACEAE	II. The thistle flourishes over day clarity	Greece Creete	65
29. Vineyards ( <i>Vinho e Uvas</i> )	<i>Vitis vinifera</i> L. VITACEAE	I. Resin wine from fresh vines.	Greece	47
		II. Perfume of wine and roses	Portugal:	57
		II. I touch the shadow of a fresh vineyard	Italy: Pompey	69
30. Wheat ( <i>Trigo</i> )	<i>Triticum</i> sp. POACEAE	I. It has the sweetness of the wheat	Spain: Santiago of Compostela	24
		I. The clarity of the wheat on her face	Cyprus	28
		II. The silence of grapes and of wheat	Greece	57

Source: I. Ilhas or Islands (1989); II. Geografia or Geography (1967); III. Dia do Mar or Day of the Sea (1947).

