

## 1      Cultural Landscapes and Flora in Sophia de Mello's 2      Poetry 3

4      This paper belongs to a project named *Landscapes* as described by  
 5      contemporary geographers and non-geographers, initiated in 2018. The quest  
 6      about the issue: "Are novels objects of investigation in landscape  
 7      geography?" was the target of previous publications, about three other  
 8      Portuguese writers and one Brazilian, that proved this research question  
 9      answer to be affirmative. The case study presented here focuses exclusively  
 10     the literary production of a Portuguese poet, for the first time. She wrote  
 11     novels and poems, altogether, describing flora and places in her country and  
 12     elsewhere in Europe, Africa and Latin America, but Sophia de Mello Breyner  
 13     Andresen books selected for this contribution were poems only. Methodology  
 14     used was twofold: 1) Literature analysis and flora identification in three books  
 15     of poems, first edited in 1947, 1967 and 1989; 2) Flora and landscape  
 16     interpretation by the techniques of scientific literature comparison and online  
 17     flora taxonomical links consultation, as the places visited and plants named  
 18     were the object of our previous scientific missions of the author. Thus, the  
 19     paper presents the image of the world by non-geographers, as there is the  
 20     concept of geographic alphabetization and the poet analysed was a Classic  
 21     Literature expert that devoted her life to travelling, writing and to politics. She  
 22     was deputy to the Portuguese Parliament, during the period of 1975-76, one  
 23     of the 19 ladies elected and the only one that presided a commission charged  
 24     of writing the Constitution. Results show that her rhymes are good sources of  
 25     information about flora, gardens, and landscape research on several locations  
 26     she visited throughout her life.  
 27

28      **Keywords:** Literature, tranquility, landscape, garden, sea, geography, order  
 29      versus chaos, Greece, Portugal, Brazil, Prince Island.  
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### 32      Introduction 33

34      Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen enjoyed travelling. In 2019 her son,  
 35      Miguel Sousa Tavares, also a known Portuguese writer said in an interview that  
 36      for her "to travel is to observe" as announced to him in Rome (Barros, 2019).  
 37      This brings us to the reason why I've chosen the poet as a study object in my  
 38      quest for the research question: Are novels objects of investigation in landscape  
 39      geography? Etymologically Geography is the description of the Earth, the planet  
 40      we inhabit together with a big array of living beings like plants. Therefore, this  
 41      quest is being done in several locations around Portugal and the world, usually  
 42      using novels as case studies, as with Agustina Bessa-Luís (Madaleno, 2021),  
 43      Almeida Garrett (Madaleno, 2024), Camões (Madaleno, 2025a) and the  
 44      Brazilian Jorge Amado (Madaleno, 2025b).

45      The most recent essay was presented at a conference, in Italy (2025),  
 46      analyzing not only theatre plays but also poetry, as was the example of Luíz Vaz  
 47      de Camões, writer from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Following this line of research, here is  
 48      the examination of three of the poetry books published by Sophia during her long

1 life, 85 years from 1919 to 2004. They were written in three decades with about  
 2 twenty years of difference between them (1947, 1967, 1989). Sophia has written  
 3 about several countries, cities and countryside lending another path to the  
 4 research, as she mixed Greek mythology with her wonderings around the world.  
 5 So, the research question is: Can poetry books also become objects of research  
 6 in Geography?

7 This paper will argue that is the case. Let's read her rhymes about travelling:  
 8

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

13      " Dia do Mar" (2003, p. 79) – Author's translation  
 14  
 15

## 16 Methods and Materials

17      Methodology used in this contribution was twofold: 1) Literature analysis  
 18 and flora identification in three books of poems, first edited in 1947, 1967 and  
 19 1989. The editions used in the current case study were published in the  
 20 beginnings of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in 2003 and 2004, an application done to update  
 21 the Portuguese orthography; 2) Flora and landscape interpretation has been done  
 22 through the techniques of scientific literature comparison and online flora  
 23 taxonomical links consultation, as the places visited and plants named were the  
 24 object of our previous scientific missions, within Europe (Madaleno, 2021,  
 25 2024), Africa (Madaleno, 2020) or in South America (Madaleno, 1996, 2025b).

26      Materials used were sheets of paper, laptop computers, and photo's  
 27 comparison. Regarding flora, a table was used to examine the plants mentioned  
 28 by Sophia de Mello. The table includes the vernaculars for species in Portuguese  
 29 and in English and the botanical identification of gender, species and family,  
 30 whenever possible. The taxonomy used the Missouri Botanical Garden's (MBG  
 31 2025) and University of *Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro* (UTAD, 2025) site  
 32 taxonomy, available online. The American site was used for tropical species and  
 33 the Portuguese site for European plants. Table 1 gives us the excerpt of the text,  
 34 in order to contextualize the flora cited and the place where the plant was seen  
 35 or imagined, as mythology is frequently utilized in Sophia's poems.  
 36

37

38

## 39 Literature Review

40

41      Regarding flora, some of the most valuable research comes from students'  
 42 fieldwork and phytogeographical inventories (Lozano-Valencia, Varela-Ona and  
 43 Díaz-Sanz, 2023). According to Lozano-Valencia et al. "Even though it is not a  
 44 function of the biogeographic expert to determine the taxonomical classification, it is  
 45 their assignment the knowledge of plant species, and their correct identification, using  
 46 dichotomic keys" (2023, p. 96). It is also necessary to stress that flora is only one  
 47 chapter that studies vegetables in the larger branch that researches natural beings,

1 therefore known as phytogeography. And biogeography is a branch of geography that  
 2 research both the plants and the animals, their habitat, and the different ecosystems  
 3 existent on Planet Earth, where we all live (Lacoste and Salanon, 1969). These  
 4 animals and plants have an interrelationship with humankind that has evolved through  
 5 time (Elhai, 1968). Because geographers aren't qualified to classify plant species, in  
 6 this paper we will use the *taxa* available online in certified sites, as stated (MBG, 2025,  
 7 UTAD, 2025).

8 This paper presents the image of the world by non-geographers, as there is the  
 9 concept of geographic alphabetization, meaning: "*the capacity of understanding and*  
 10 *utilizing geographic knowledge to understand our environment*" (Trigo and Ondoño,  
 11 2023, p. 121). The usage of Literature books in geographical learning has been done  
 12 in Spain, as was the case of "Jack and the Magic Beans" and "Thumbelina", in the  
 13 research of Cristina Isabel Gallego García, Lorena Castillero Ruiz and Rubén Antonio  
 14 Macías (2023). In their words: "We have started from a constructivist methodology,  
 15 with project-based learning." Using the above-mentioned tales, "*we have learned*  
 16 *geographical concepts, among them: relief, climate, soil, flora, fauna.*" As to  
 17 teaching, tales "*improved students (...) understanding the world around them and the*  
 18 *relationships between man and the environment*" (José Prada Trigo and Irene Sánchez  
 19 Ondoño, 2023, p. 242).

20 Cultural landscapes are, on the other hand, part of landscape research in  
 21 geography, traditionally divided into physical and human geography, as the  
 22 "*European Landscape Convention, of the Council of Europe, (...) underlines the*  
 23 *dual nature of landscape, both the physical reality as a result of the action and*  
 24 *interaction of human and natural factors, and the spatial representation we make*  
 25 *of the landscape itself*" (Kratochvíl, López and González, 2023, p. 610).  
 26 Previous research conducted by the author of this paper defined cultural  
 27 landscapes as: "*built-up by the observer, a construct more or less detailed, using*  
 28 *the written word, the photography or drawings*" (Madaleno, 2021, p. 250).  
 29 Depending on the quality of the observer, the formation and information of the  
 30 writer, cultural landscapes can be richer or poorer. Sophia de Mello Breyner  
 31 Andresen had remarkable observation power and thus her poems are quite good  
 32 sources of landscape research.

33 Literature landscapes are representations of natural or human landscapes,  
 34 idealised or not by the writer. Thus, "*the landscapes described (...), the real and*  
 35 *the symbolic ones, are cultural landscapes*" (Madaleno, 2021, p. 249). This  
 36 contribution emphasizes the places mentioned in Sophia's verses; some are  
 37 places she visited and immediately wrote about, (Greek landscapes); other places  
 38 where she travelled along her life (Brasilia) and that she remembers in her  
 39 rhymes. Flora is omnipresent and thus it is to flowers and fruits, trees and bushes  
 40 that we give utmost attention to, analyzing the context in which they are  
 41 mentioned, as they are integral parts of cultural landscapes.

42

43

44

## 1 Sophia's Biography

3 Sophia was born in the northern city of Porto (fig. 1), from an aristocratic  
4 family and was sent to study Classic Literature at the University of Lisbon (1936-  
5 1939). In an unedited beginning for her life memories, that she never finished,  
6 here is an excerpt of her childhood, as published by her daughter, Maria  
7 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 heard Maner before the time when Maner 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” (2016, p. 4) – Author’s translation

9 **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 idioms as Italian, French, English and Mandarin (UA, 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

1       *Listen now, gentlemen*  
2       *Its remarkable story*  
3

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

7  
8       Almeida Garrett (1851) “*Nau Catrineta*” from “*Romanceiro*” – Author’s  
9       translation

10      So, Sophia first learnt how to recite oral tradition related to the History of  
11      Portuguese navigations. She wrote that she thought poems weren’t written by  
12      people, but things that the world produced said by itself. That’s again a measure  
13      of the importance of geography in her young mind. Earth was a divine entity,  
14      placed above all things and people. “*I also thought that, if I could sit still and*  
15      *quiet in certain mythical places of the garden, I would be able to listen to those*  
16      *poems*” (Andresen, 1989, p. 76). The importance of gardens and of silence in  
17      literature was enforced with her attraction for travelling, around Greece (Fig. 2).  
18      “*One day at Epidaurus – making good profit of silence left by tourist’s lunch*  
19      *break – I placed myself in the centre of the theatre and recited loud the beginning*  
20      *of a poem*” ...:

21  
22      *“My voice climbs the last steps*  
23      *And I hear the impersonal word flying*  
24      *That I recognize being not my own, anymore”*  
25      (Andresen, 1989, “*Ilhas*” p. 76) – Author’s translation

26  
27      It must be emphasized that her youth garden is now the Botanical Garden of  
28      the University of Porto (Melo, 2014). According to Cortez (2013) the challenges  
29      of Sophia’s lifetime, marked by dictatorship (1926-1974) and wars (the 2<sup>nd</sup> world  
30      war and Portuguese colonial war) required not only an answer using the esthetic  
31      but also the ethics of social conscience. Having married a lawyer (1946) engaged  
32      in defending prisoners of conscience, her life had plenty of experience with  
33      people in need of both financial and human rights aid. She was from Danish  
34      descent, and she received several national and international prizes, including the  
35      prestigious Camões (1999). She was deputy to the Portuguese Parliament, during  
36      the period of 1975-76, one of the 19 ladies elected and the only one that presided  
37      a commission charged of writing the Constitution, following the Carnage  
38      Revolution (1974).

39  
40  
41      **Results**

42      Gusmão (2005) has analyzed the book of poems “Geography” (1967)  
43      where he found that her poems were written images of the world. The sky of  
44      such mediterranean seas and remarkable places as Greek beaches or monumental  
45      theatres (see Fig. 2), appears frequently in her lyrics, mingled with mythological

1 figures, in clear contrast with the Northern Europe cloudy skies. Among her  
2 poems are Epidaurus, a place in History and in Geography that repeats itself in  
3 the 1967 “Geography” and in her “Islands” book poems (1989), as said. As the  
4 researcher Rosa Maria Martelo (2005) signaled, to the chaos of the minotaur she  
5 contraposes the order of things in her written words. And order is freedom  
6 whereas disorder is anarchy. Her verses look for order and repel or reject all  
7 tendency for injustice, as to be fair to people is to abide with law. A law that is  
8 just, not oppressive to the living beings. That's why she was engaged politically  
9 during all her existence.

10

11 **Figure 2. Epidaurus theater located about 130 km of Athens, Greece**



12

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

14

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

17

18

“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  
Brasilia (...)  
Clear like Babylon  
Tall like the trunk of a palm tree ...  
“Geografia” (2004, p. 80) – author's translation

29

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

14      The spectacular architecture of the Catholic cathedral reminds us of another  
 15 book of poems written twenty years earlier and another plant, a biblical one,  
 16 *incense*:

17  
 18      “*The hand that places the flower in a jar*  
 19      *The hand that lightens incense*  
 20      *The hand that unrolls the tapestry*  
 21      *The hand that sings and makes music out of harp...* “  
 22      “*Ilhas* (2004, p. 14) – author's translation  
 23

24      About Brazil, Sophia was proud to make a trip from Brasilia to Rio de  
 25 Janeiro, I've had the opportunity to make too, driving along nasty roads, when  
 26 between 1992 and 1994 I've studied the third capital of Brazil for my Ph.D.  
 27 Thesis (Madaleno, 1996). Sophia de Mello also wrote about a good Brazilian  
 28 friend, Helena Lanari:

29  
 30      “*I like to hear Brazilian Portuguese Idiom*  
 31      *Where words recuperate their total substance*  
 32      (...) *When Helena Lanari said «the coconut tree»*  
 33      *The coconut tree became much more vegetable*”  
 34      “*Geografia*” (1989) – author's translation  
 35

36      Plants and gardens were recurrent in her verses, as said, and Sophia enjoyed  
 37 the peace and tranquility of green spaces to write her poetry, as stated. As  
 38 Oidinposha Imamkhodjaeva (2025) stressed, the “*philosophy of Epicureanism*,  
 39 *arguing that its emphasis on ataraxia (tranquility)*” are essential not only for  
 40 hedonism but also for sustainable venues, as gardens, where one can feel safe  
 41 and reliable for artistic production. Imamkhodjaeva (2025) wrote that “*Epicurus*  
 42 *himself cultivated a small, self-sufficient community*”. What we want to  
 43 emphasize is that several notable painters preferred flora, water and forests for  
 44 inspiration. It was the case with impressionists, like Monet, and poets like Sophia  
 45 de Mello Breyner Andresen, that often looked for the serenity of blue and green  
 46 spaces to feel the “angel”. The angel is perceived by many Catholics as the  
 47 inspiration of “divine voices”, for clarity and orientation necessary for creativity

1 in general, and writing poems, in particular (Lourenço, 2004). This drives us to  
2 the next discussion of flora in Sophia's verses.  
3  
4 **Figure 3. Cathedral of Brasília, located on the Central axis of the Capital of Brazil**



5  
6 Source: Author's photo (2008)

7  
8  
9 **Discussion: Flora Location in Sophia de Mello's Poems**

10  
11 Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen has travelled throughout the world and  
12 wrote poems about remote places like the "Prince" island, that before 1975 still  
13 belonged to Portuguese African colonies or overseas territories.

14  
15 "I've arrived later amid the noise of the airplane  
16 On a brusque speed  
17 But I also had the opportunity to bathe on the waves  
18 Of the beautiful beaches of the genesis  
19 And crossed the greenery of the forest  
20 And I've smelled the scent of recently cut ocá  
21 "Ilhas" (2004, p. 73) – Author's translation

22  
23 Ocá is *Ceiba pentandra*, a known tropical forest tree, that Sophia enjoyed  
24 as much as the paradisiac beaches of the Prince Island (see Fig. 4). Regarding  
25 the flowers, the vernaculars vary from Japanese *camellias* (*Kimono of camellias*)  
26 to Portuguese *lilies* (*on a plane where lilies grow*), *magnolias* (*beauty as carnal*  
27 as *magnolia*), *narcissus* (*narcissus undulate*), the childhood *Linden* trees (see  
28 Fig. 5) and Greek *roses* (*venom from the most ancient June rose*).  
29

1 **Figure 4.** *Ceiba pentandra*, the *Ocá*



2  
3 Source: Madaleno (2013)

4  
5 As to fruits the array of vernaculars are: apples (*There is a wooden and apple*  
6 *like flavour*); blackberries (*light like blackberry spreads westwards*); cherries (*I*  
7 *left a scissor forgotten within the cherry tree branches*); coconuts, the tree  
8 already cited about Brasilia; coffee beans (*coffee has the powder of the*  
9 *Turkish*); figs (city with some fig trees); and grapes (*I touch the shadow of a*  
10 *fresh vineyard*). Let's contextualize better her verses in Table 1:

11  
12 **Figure 5.** Linden tree from Sophia's childhood



13  
14 Source: Madaleno (2013)

15

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

Common Names (Portuguese)	Botanical Names	Text	Places	Pages
1.Apple (Maçã)	<i>Pyrus malus</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 (cactos)	CACTACEAE	III. Twisted Cactus a thousand ways	Portugal	10
6.Camellias (Camélias)	<i>Camellia</i> sp. APIACEAE	I. Kimono of camellias	Japan	60
7.Cedar of Lebanon (Cedro do Libano)	<i>Cedrus libani</i> Subspecie <i>Libani</i> A. Rich. PINACEAE	II. Swallens 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 Turquish"	Greece	47

13.Fig tree ( <i>Figueira</i> )	<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 ( <i>Ocá</i> )	<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 ( <i>Loureiro</i> )	<i>Laurus nobilis</i> L. LAURACEAE	II.Phebo no longer possesses the shack nor the prophetic laurel	Greece	71
16.Lilies ( <i>lírios</i> )	<i>Lilium longiflorum</i> Thunb. LILIACEAE	II.So I brought lilies with me III.On a plane where lilies grow	Portugal: Igrina (Algarve) Portugal	9  95
17.Linden tree ( <i>Tílias</i> )	<i>Tilia tomentosa</i> Moench MALVACEAE	I.The wisper of Linden trees close to the house of childwood II.Perfume of linden and oregano	Portugal  Algarve: Lagos	37  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 ou</i> <i>espíquenardo</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	Portugal  Algarve  Lagos	9  10  94

		The perfume of oregano		
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 Portugal Brazil: Brasília	72 53 54 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 contained ... the explanation for all heroes	Ancient world and lack of humanity (Hiroshima) Teixeira de Pascoais revisited (Portugal) Greece Portugal	16 25 68 10 48 57 75
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 (Rosas)	<i>Rosa</i> sp. L. ROSACEAE	I.Secret flavour of rose and nard II.the rose bushes' leaves II. venom from the most ancient june rose  III.Roses flowering in Persian gardens	City smell Portugal Greece Persia	46 39 57 74 16
27.Sandalwood (Sândalo)	<i>Santalum album</i> L. SANTALACEAE	I.The bed made of sandal	Orient	13
28.Thistle (cardo)	<i>Silybum marianum</i> (L.) Gaertn. ASTERACEAE	II.The thistle flourishes over day clarity	Greece Crete	65
29.Vineyards (Vinho e Uvas)	<i>Vitis vinifera</i> L. VITACEAE	I.Resin wine from fresh vines. II.Perfume of wine and roses II.I touch the shadow of a fresh vineyard	Greece Portugal: (Cesário Verde) Italy: Pompey	47 57 66 69
30.Wheat (Trigo)	<i>Triticum</i> sp. POACEAE	I.It has the sweetness of the wheat I.The clarity of the wheat on her face  II.The silence of grapes and of wheat	Spain: Santiago of Compostela Cyprus Greece	24 28 57

1 Sources: I.Ilhas (1989); II.Geografia (1967); III.Dia do Mar (1947)

2

3 Concerning food, Sophia names several staples like wheat (*The clarity of*  
4 *the wheat on her face*) or rice (*Teeth shine as rice grains*). Wooden trees as pines  
5 (*Do not forget Thasos nor Egina, the pinewood...*), poplar (*The face like poplar*  
6 *at moon light*), and sandalwood (*The bed made of sandal*). As to spices Sophia  
7 recurrently names oreganos (Fig. 6), recalling her of Southern Portuguese  
8 Algarve, where she and her family spent summer in a house located in Lagos.  
9 Vineyards and wine are named over and again in Mediterranean places (*Resin*  
10 *wine from fresh vines*).

11

12

1 **Figure 6. Oregano (*Origanum vulgare*) from Sophia's poems**

2 Source: Botanical Garden of Montevideo, Uruguay (Author's photo, 2011)

3  
4 All these vernaculars drive us to locations, meaning the geographies of her  
5 life, where Portugal and Portuguese gardens are detached as locations of  
6 tranquility, where she liked to stroll and sit, having written her poems there.  
7 Northern Portugal is also named, Amarante (apples and apple trees), Porto and  
8 her youth garden (*boxwood, roses and linden trees*). Mediterranean countries,  
9 such as Italy (*I touch the shadow of a fresh vineyard*), Greece (*The silence of*  
10 *grapes and of wheat*) and Cyprus (*the clarity of the wheat on her face*) are  
11 recurrent in Sophia's poetry. Spain appears in a poem to Santiago of Compostela  
12 (*It has the sweetness of the wheat*).

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

20  
21  
22 “*Nambam screens tell us*  
23 *The merry story of navigation*  
24 *Stunned people suddenly*  
25 *Encountered face to face*”  
26 “*Ilhas*” (1989, p.60) - Author's translation

27  
28 In fact, history books show that the Portuguese Jesuits were the first to reach  
29 Japan, having the aim of converting extreme-orient peoples. As written in  
30 Portuguese Chronicles, by earlier colonization authors, such as Diogo de Couto:  
31 “*From the Islands of Sunda*” and from Ceylon the Portuguese brought cinnamon.  
32 Regarding the *spices islands*: “*at the door of Ternate fortress is a beautiful tree*  
33 *named catopa (...) that looks like the European chestnut* (1778, volumes 4, 5 and  
34 8). So, Portuguese navigators not only discovered the maritime route to India,  
35 looking for oriental spices in need to preserve food, but they went Eastwards

1 towards the Chinese seas, because the caravan's route was distraught by the  
2 Ottoman Empire expansion (1299-1922). The discovery of Japan by Europeans  
3 is dated to 1543 when three Portuguese landed on the island of *Tanegashima*  
4 “During approximately one century (and until the “Edict of Exclusion” of  
5 foreigners) the two countries maintained intense commercial relations” (MNE,  
6 2025, p.1).

7

8

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

10

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

13

14     *Dear Maria – suddenly the thinness*  
15     *Of this first cold mixed*  
16     *with the flavour of wood and apples*  
17     *(...) I come inside your house, and you are my shelter*  
18     *Written in Lisbon, 1986, and published in “Ilhas, 1989, p. 58”*

19

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

24

25     *“From human chaos, confuse and hostile,*  
26     *Miraculously appears your profile”*  
27     *“Dia do Mar”, 1947, p. 30 - Author’s translation*

28

29     This excerpt shows how she deprecated anarchy or chaos, preferring  
30 instead of the contemporaneous ideology, the beauty, harmony and order of her  
31 aligned verses. Sophia wrote about the Portuguese poet Camões, another Classic  
32 culture admirer, even though in the 16<sup>th</sup> century poet that is part of the canons of  
33 Renaissance (Madaleno, 2025a), whilst in Sophia it is owed to her Classic  
34 literature education. Several poems are about Lagos, during her trips to Algarve,  
35 in southern Portugal as much as, again, about Greeks Kassandra, Medeia,  
36 Eurydice and even Roman Catilina, in this beautiful sonnet:

37

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

43

44     Thus, any mythological or historical figure that could remind her about the  
45 sea (Tristan and Isolde) was edited in this after the second world war volume:

46

47     *“The waves broke one by one*  
48     *I was alone with the sand and the foam*

1       *Of the sea that sang only for me”*

2       “*Dia do Mar*”, 1947, p. 9 - Author’s translation

3

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

8

9       “One day dead, wasted, we will return

10      To live freely like animals

11      And even if we are tired, we will flourish

12      Brothers living from sea and pine trees

13      “*Dia do Mar*”, 1947, p. 57 - Author’s translation

14

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

17

18       “*Among countries and landscapes*

19       *They walk towards images*

20       *And the earth hugs them warmly*

21       *Members made of flesh and leaves”*

22      “*Dia do Mar*”, 1947, p. 32 - Author’s translation

23

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

29

30       “*There, then, in the ancient world*

31       *Shadowed by the cypress and the vineyards*

32       *Looking at the long wavy seas*

33       *In a silence of moons and of wheat”*

34

35       (...) *In a perfume of wine and roses*

36       (...) *Everything is so close to the seas*

37       *As it was in the first day of creation”*

38      “*Geografia*” (1967, p. 57) – Author’s translation

39

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

46

47

1        “Inside this room or in another one  
2        Like a Carpaccio on the streets of Venice  
3        Second image is a surprise whisper  
4        As are the streets of Venice”  
5        “*Ilhas*”, 1989, p. 23 – Authors translation  
6

7        “They went together to Olympia, the place of athletes  
8        To where they belonged  
9        Their large shoulders and narrow hips  
10       Their slender, thick strength swinging  
11       And the narrow forefront like veal” ~  
12       “*Ilhas*”, 1989, p. 38 – Authors translation  
13

14       In fact, the light of the southern European historical sites was among  
15       Sophia’s preferences and thus all poetry books refer to these Italian or Greek  
16       locations she admired. Regarding plants, let’s appreciate the roses and nards, the  
17       biblical perfume with which Maria Madalena anointed Jesus Christ:  
18

19       “*Large long, sweet horizons*  
20       *The unfolded light of sunset*  
21       *A scent of beach on the city streets*  
22       *Secret flavour of rose and nard burns*”  
23       “*Ilhas*”, 1989, p. 46 – Authors translation  
24

25       That reminds us of another biblical species, the *lilies* and another Poetry  
26       book Sophia published earlier:  
27

28       “*My hope inhabits*  
29       *On the wind and mermaids –*  
30       *It is the fantastic blue of dawn*  
31       *And the lily of the sands*”  
32       “*Dia do Mar*”, 1947, p. 95  
33

## 34       **Conclusion** 35

36       The research question was: Can poetry books also become objects of  
37       research in Geography? The answer is affirmative. Sophia de Mello Breyner  
38       Andresen has travelled throughout the world and wrote poems about remote places  
39       from Africa, landscapes from Brazil and mostly about Southern European gardens,  
40       beaches, theaters, both cities, and rural areas. The geographies of her life are in  
41       these three books of poetry, and one can recognize modern landscapes and flora  
42       species in her rhymes. Gardens were the places of the angel, where tranquility and  
43       Greek mythology met her. Inspiration also came from looking at the sea, both the  
44       Mediterranean and the Atlantic Ocean, in her country, Portugal or in southern  
45       Europe and tropical Prince Island. Sophia was like the Copenhagen mermaid  
46       enchanted by the flowers and trees of the gardens of her life.  
47

48

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