

Book Review

Laban, Michel. *Dicionário de particularidades lexicais e morfossintáticas da expressão literária em português: Moçambique*. Chandeigne, 2018.

The Portuguese literature of Mozambique is replete with neologisms, with variations of existing words, and with words from the forty-plus indigenous languages found in the country. Michel Laban labored for decades until his untimely death in 2008, collecting lexemes from written sources to include in his *Dicionário de particularidades lexicais e morfossintáticas da expressão literária em português: Moçambique*. What gives the dictionary its enormous and unique value are the definitions gathered, wherever possible, directly from the author of each source, in order to create an expansive and detailed lexicography that encompasses the wide linguistic variation of Mozambique's written Portuguese. It is printed in two volumes, 1,536 pages total, and contains thousands of entries from 239 authors, 359 pieces of literature, and 118 non-literary sources. While the dictionary covers four centuries of literature, with the oldest work from 1609 and the most recent pair from 2004, only six referenced works predate the twentieth century.

Laban's dictionary was published in 2018, ten years after his passing, due to the efforts of his wife, Maria José Laban, herself a graduate in Portuguese from Paris III, where her husband was later named a *professeur des universités*. After she began the process of organizing “uma imensidão de palavras, de ficheiros, de papéis” (8) that her husband had compiled over three decades, she was joined by Maria Helena Araújo Carreira, their colleague from Paris VIII. Carreira created the university's comparative Romance linguistics research group within the Département d'Études des Pays de Langue Portugaise. Together, M. J. Laban and Carreira followed the methodology that Michel Laban had set forth for choosing the authors and their works: “alargar a seleção de textos de carácter histórico ou sociológico que pudessem ilustrar bem certos termos ou conceitos” (10). Four organizational bibliographies appear at the beginning of the first volume to show which works were chosen:

an alphabetical list by author's name, a chronological order of works, a list of the abbreviations of literary works used in the dictionary's entries, and a list of non-literary works ordered by the author's last name.

The collection is an onomasiological lexicography, as opposed to a semasiological dictionary, which is what most people access when looking for a word's definition—"What does XX mean?" Onomasiology refers to an analysis that asks, "How do you express XX?", and is particularly connected to dialect dictionaries and linguistic atlases. As such, Laban's work is not a complete assemblage of all words used in Portuguese. He instead focuses on lexemes that are uniquely Mozambican and/or not found in another dictionary to give a wide coverage and understanding of the written Portuguese of Mozambique.

Laban is well known in the area of African Portuguese literature, having published large volumes of interviews with dozens of writers from Angola, Cape Verde, Mozambique and São Tomé and Príncipe, titled *Encontro com escritores*. These connections with authors facilitated what is perhaps the most interesting and valuable aspect of the dictionary: wherever possible, Laban gives the lexeme's definition provided him by the author of a given work. While the presentation of each entry adheres to certain norms that would be expected, such as listing the part of speech and gender (where applicable), what follows is what makes Laban's creation more than a mere dictionary. Every entry lists the author, the abbreviation of the written work, and the page number(s) where the lexeme is found, with an excerpt contextualizing the lexeme. After the excerpt, we find the definition. If a pencil icon precedes it, this indicates that it was provided by the excerpt's author.

The vast majority of the entries are what Laban calls a *criação*, or invention of the particular author. These are marked with an asterisk immediately after the lexeme, which appears in bold. That Laban focuses so heavily on these *criações* is perhaps a reason that the dictionary overall suffers from a recency bias—it is simply the nature of his onomasiological lexicography. This bias is not necessarily a weakness. The methodology he set forth and that M. J. Laban and Carreira followed in organizing the collection means that any lexeme that has entered into the vocabulary of the wider Lusophone world, however subtly, is no longer a *particularidade* to the literature of Mozambican Portuguese.

The initial value of the dictionary for the reader of Mozambican literature seems obvious: trustworthy definitions. Thanks to Laban's efforts at gathering

definitions from the authors, its worth for researchers of Mozambican literature will also be immense. Its contribution to linguistics reaches various subfields like lexicography, semantics, morphology, syntax, phonetics and phonology, sociolinguistics, and any combination of these. The dictionary will likely also be an invaluable tool for the study of Mozambique's sociology, history, culture, and diversity. Indeed, its usefulness in the humanities and social sciences may prove to be foundational for Portuguese and Mozambique as researchers and students plumb the wealth and quality of the carefully curated information found in the dictionary.

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