

**TO SHUT UP TODAY IS TO BE AN ACCOMPLICE: MARIA LACERDA DE MOURA<sup>1</sup>**

***CALAR HOJE É SER CÚMPLICE: MARIA LACERDA DE MOURA***

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**ABSTRACT:** The aim of this article is to present some reflections that permeated a master's degree research in education, and which included the effort to carry out a Textual Configuration Analysis (MORTATTI, 2000) of Maria Lacerda de Moura's second book (1887-1945), *Renovação* (Renovation) (1919). We present the methodological instrument used as a procedure to historicize the author and her contributions to think about gender issues and conclude that patriarchal domination and gender inequalities pervade generations, encouraging us to confront them.

**KEYWORDS:** Maria Lacerda de Moura. Renovação. Analysis of textual configuration.

**RESUMO:** *O objetivo deste artigo é dar a conhecer algumas reflexões que permearam uma pesquisa de mestrado em educação e que compreendeu o esforço de fazer uma Análise de Configuração Textual (MORTATTI, 2000) do segundo livro de Maria Lacerda de Moura (1887-1945), Renovação (1919). Apresentamos o instrumento metodológico utilizado como procedimento para historicizar a autora e suas contribuições para pensar questões de gênero e concluímos que a dominação patriarcal e as desigualdades de gênero perpassam gerações, incitando-nos a seu enfrentamento.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Maria Lacerda de Moura. Renovação. Análise de configuração textual.*

**RESUMEN:** *El objetivo de este artículo es presentar algunas reflexiones que impregnaron una investigación de maestría en educación y que incluyeron el esfuerzo por realizar un Análisis de la Configuración Textual (MORTATTI, 2000) del segundo libro de Maria Lacerda de Moura (1887-1945), Renovação (1919). Presentamos el instrumento metodológico*

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<sup>1</sup> "To be shut up today is to be an accomplice. Let us practice the unspeakable crime of courage, amid the cowardice and cynicism of the present hour" (MOURA, 1934, p. 112).

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*utilizado como procedimento para historizar a la autora y sus aportes para reflexionar sobre cuestiones de género y concluir que la dominación patriarcal y las desigualdades de género impregnan generaciones, animándonos a enfrentarlas.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Maria Lacerda de Moura. Renovação. Análisis de configuración textual.*

## Introduction

The purpose of this article is to present theoretical and methodological contributions to discuss gender issues based on one of the works of Maria Lacerda de Moura (1887-1945), an author considered here as a historical personality who debates the feminist movement in Brazil. Textual Configuration Analysis (MORTATTI, 2000) stands out as a promising methodological procedure for this study. This theme and methodological path arise as a result of a master's research in education that focuses both on the methodological perspective in question, as in the writings of the book *Renovação* (Renovation) (MOURA, 1919).

The development of documentary and bibliographic research was possible by having access to the Collection of Miriam Lifchitz Moreira Leite<sup>5</sup> (1984), at the Unesp Documentation and Memory Center (Cedem), in São Paulo. In this collection, there are all the documents that Leite (1984) used for her doctoral research, published in the book *A outra face do feminismo: Maria Lacerda de Moura* (The other face of feminism: Maria Lacerda de Moura), in which the researcher gathered much of the work of Maria Lacerda de Moura, providing us with access to this knowledge. It is also important to highlight the relevance of a Documentation and Memory Center for documentary and historical research.

Maria Lacerda de Moura's literary production is vast; there are 14 books, several written in magazines, lectures and conferences, in addition to the edition of a magazine, which circulated for a year. The time of a master's degree would not allow us to study all of her writings, in addition to the fact that other researchers have already pored over some of them. However, one issue in particular caught our attention, and that has not been sufficiently addressed by us until then. The book *Renovação* of 1919 and its contribution to the discussion of gender, patriarchy and education.

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<sup>5</sup> “[...] Degree in Social Sciences from the University of São Paulo (1947), degree in Economic History from the University of São Paulo (1983) and post-doctorate from the Eastman Foundation (1990). [She was] advisor in historical photography at the Laboratory of Image and Sound in Anthropology and Professor Doctor - Research in Image at the Laboratory of Image and Sound in Anthropology”. Available: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/5181395079788133>. Access: 08 Aug. 2021.

Countless readings and re-readings of the text *Renovação* made possible advances in understanding the author's life story and what she has to tell us, the historical context in which she was inserted, in addition to the history of education and anarchism in Brazil. Therefore, a patchwork of quotes from her writings permeated the entire work, in an attempt to understand the author and her writings, looking at yesterday and today, apprehending in the comings and goings how much domination is historical, surprising us with how much it is in the structure of an entire social system (MAURANO, 2020a, p. 200-201, our translation).

Maria Lacerda de Moura makes a historical debate of the feminist movement in Brazil and in other parts of the world, questions the subjugation of women and highlights the importance of women being educated and freeing themselves from the oppression imposed by patriarchal society.

Both to study the book *Renovação* (1919) and to elaborate the intended contributions in this text, that is, to highlight the relevance of the method to historicize and rescue the ideas of a writer, we used the Textual Configuration Analysis (MORTATTI, 2000), as a methodological procedure that allows questioning and making the due historical depth *of* and *about* the author and her social context, seeking to understand her motivations.

With the documental text gathered and based on this methodological tool, it was possible to problematize the writings of Maria Lacerda de Moura, in an attempt to dialogue with her work, bringing us closer to the theme of female subjugation evidenced by her.

In a historical approach, it is central to position the author's discourse and perceive her choices when approaching the contents, the way she presents them, how she positions herself in the face of the facts presented, her point of view, where it is within the historical context lived and for whom she writes her texts, what are her needs. Aspects that Textual Configuration Analysis works closely.

We highlight the methodological instrument of Textual Configuration Analysis (MORTATTI, 2000), pointing out that it contributed to a structuring way both for the realization of the master's research (MAURANO, 2020a), and for the writing of this article. However, before bringing it as a perspective of historical understanding of a writer who still tells us about the present, it is necessary to talk about her, which we will do next.

### **The writings of Maria Lacerda de Moura**

About the author, the researchers who published the 2nd edition of the book *Renovação* report:

Born on 16 May 1887, in Manhuaçu/MG, on the Monte Alverne farm, Maria Lacerda de Moura is the daughter of Modesto de Araújo Lacerda and Amélia Araújo Lacerda, sympathizers of anticlerical ideas and her first influences of contestation. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Maria Lacerda had a prominent voice in social struggles when, along with other libertarian activists, through the pages of newspapers, she spread her word and denounced capitalist exploitation, contradicting the foundations of bourgeois morality, male oppression, the institution of marriage, affirming, in addition to the right to the body and to pleasure, the horizon of the struggle for the social emancipation of men and women (GONÇALVES; BRUNO; QUEIROZ *apud* MOURA, 2015, p. 6, our translation).

Still in Barbacena, in 1912 she begins to write chronicles for local newspapers, but it is in 1918 that she publishes *Em torno da Educação* (Around Education), where she writes referring to this theme:

in the book *Em torno da Educação*, she analyzes educational issues, especially illiteracy, since at the time of publication of this work, about 80% of Brazilians were illiterate; and shows how education was fundamental for female emancipation (MARTINS; COSTA, 2016, p. 219, our translation).

From this first book, she began to approach anarchist studies, in contact with José Oiticica and Galeão Coitinho. Still on education, she wrote, in 1925, *Lições de Pedagogia* (Lessons of Pedagogy) and, in 1934, *Ferrer, o clero romano e a educação laica* (Ferrer, the Roman clergy and secular education).

In 1919, she wrote the book *Renovação*, a landmark in her bibliography, debating issues related to subjugation and the female condition. In 1924, she wrote her best-known book, which was also translated into Spanish: *A mulher é uma degenerada* (The woman is a degenerate), when she does the exercise of demystifying prejudiced medical theories in relation to the degeneration of women. In her words:

Bombarda<sup>6</sup> talks so much about degeneration, but who degenerates themselves or who else degenerates offspring [...] Feminism was born yesterday, created by the needs of defense within capitalist society and, is it of today that societies have been degenerating? (MOURA, 1982, p. 22, our translation).

Other themes were discussed in some books by Maria Lacerda de Moura, such as the possibility of women choosing to have children or not. In *Amai...e não vos multipliqueis* (Love ... and do not multiply) (1924), she discusses the freedom to love; in *Religião do amor*

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<sup>6</sup> Miguel Bombarda, the well-known psychiatrist, in his book *A Epilepsia e as pseudo-epilepsias* (The Epilepsy and pseudo-epilepsies), launched this anathema on women: "Women are degenerate". [...] (MOURA, 1982, p. 19, our translation).

*e da beleza* (Religion of Love and Beauty) (1926) and *Han Ryner e o amor plural* (Han Ryner and Plural Love) (1933), the scathing critique of the religious institution of church, state and fascism; in *Clero e o Estado* (Clergy and State) (1931), in *Clero e Fascismo: horda de embrutecedores* (Clergy and Fascism: horde of brutalizers) (1934) and in *Fascismo, filho dileto da igreja e do capital* (Fascism, beloved son of the church and capital) (1934), addresses issues related to the integralist movement and the church – at that time, the Catholic Church, affecting all Brazilian areas and institutions.

In the book *Renovação*, the author has a conversation with the women, so that those who read it have a clear impression of the author's care in passing on all the information to which she had access, so that all other women could also acquire it.

Assertively she warns the other women not to be deceived, that they were, yes, educated for subservience [...]. This is the education reserved for women in the early 20th century. They should develop acceptance, preferably smiling, of physical beauty and only aim for a good marriage and motherhood. They should develop an exclusive dedication to humanity, which, according to society, is innate to us. That's what they have in store for us. But in our capitalist society, with the growth of industrialism, man can no longer be the sole provider. Even so, he wants the woman's salary or dowry, leaving her in a situation of subjection. (MAURANO, 2020a, p. 103, our translation).

A generous and rich sharing of Maria Lacerda de Moura, which goes from transcribing the emotion and pleasure she felt when absorbing all that knowledge, as well as the desire, the need to share it with all the women she knew did not have access to information.

The reason for this book is simple: I studied alone. I myself indicated the authors I should read. I got to know them, one through the other. And I read everything: books on philosophy, logic, pedagogy, morals, etc., etc. – trying to interpret. What a sum of intense pleasures! Pages and pages I devoured avidly. And my soul was ecstatic before so many wonders and felt turmoil, indescribable ecstasy (MOURA, 2015, p. 47, our translation).

The author, in her book, gave great importance to education, especially of women, who were the most oppressed group, as well as to feminism in Brazil and in other countries; she was concerned about the exploitation of women for domestic work and the seductions inflicted on them. She highlighted society's prejudice against those women who, for numerous reasons, did not have a family and were relegated to prostitution.

Society sees it the other way around: the impurity is in it, in its idiotic laws made for the benefit of the stronger sex, in its prejudices, in the hearts of these men without dignity, cowards, in these customs, in this morality that will disappear. The woman is not a thing, an object of possession that is

bought, sold, possessed and despised (MOURA, 2015, p. 191, our translation).

The author questions this maintenance of domination when she argues: “they forget that laws are impotent if customs are not reformed” (MOURA, 2015, p. 263, our translation). She denounces, at the same time she calls on everyone, especially women, to educate themselves and take a stand in the face of the reality imposed on us. For this, she uses the book *Renovação* (1919), where she writes about the highlighted issues, but also discusses other themes that can and should be of concern and discussion of women as people who are part of a society and need to have an opinion on the more varied subjects.

What order is this that, in order to be established, has not tried to pull women out of the oppression, the prejudices of foolish society and the tyranny of compulsory domestic service for our sex?  
What kind of progress is this that wants to make women always dependent on men and cannot restore to them the role of equal and companion, but rather distributes to them the role of subaltern? (MOURA, 2015, p. 65, our translation).

She is an author who, with her questions, helps us in the challenge of understanding the oppression that certain populations suffered and still suffer. The oppression of a specific group over another, its motives, its causes and its historical construction.

### Textual Configuration Analysis

The use of the methodological procedure of Textual Configuration Analysis proved to be fruitful for the master's research.

Professor at the College of Philosophy and Sciences of the São Paulo State University – Unesp, campus Marília/SP, leader of the Research Group on the History of Education and Language and Literature Teaching in Brazil, Maria do Rosario Longo Mortatti (2000), in her Free teaching thesis, later published in a book, entitled *Os sentidos da alfabetização: São Paulo – 1876/1994* (The senses of literacy: São Paulo – 1876/1994), proposes a methodological procedure as part of the research with a historical approach, the Analysis of Textual Configuration. According to the writings of Mortatti (2000):

[...] what gives uniqueness to a text is the set of constitutive aspects of its textual configuration, namely: the thematic-content (what?) and structural-formal (how?) options, designed by a given subject (who?), who presents himself as the author of a discourse produced from a certain point of view and social place (from where?) and historical moment (when?), moved by

certain needs (why?) and purposes (for what?), aiming at a certain effect on a certain type of reader (for whom?) [...] (MORTATTI, 2000, p. 31, our translation).

The exercise started with document localization. First, we searched the university library, by the name of Maria Lacerda de Moura, and that's when we found Leite's book (1984), *Maria Lacerda de Moura: a outra face do feminismo* (Maria Lacerda de Moura: the other face of feminism). In reading this book, we found that the book was referring to her doctoral thesis, which had as research object the work of the writer we were researching.

Leite's book (1984) is a detailed collection of the themes discussed by Maria Lacerda de Moura and all her written work. In this thesis, now a book, she presents in an exemplary way the breadth of the author's work and discusses why to study it. At that moment, we realized that reading more about Leite (1984), or, perhaps, getting in touch with this researcher would be very useful for our research.

Through your Lattes curriculum, we had access to her email. We learned that she died in 2013 and that he was concerned to donate all the documents of her research to the Documentation and Memory Center – Cedem, at Unesp. We got in touch with Cedem, we were very well advised by its team, specifically by the historian Renata Cotrim, who, in addition to allowing access to all the documentation, put us in contact with the Terra Livre Library, which donated me a copy of the book *Renovação*, in its second facsimile edition, edited by the Federal University of Ceará.

The exercise of locating, retrieving, selecting, gathering and ordering the research corpus to be analyzed is the basis for a research with a historical approach and the first action for a Textual Configuration Analysis.

With our research corpus selected, we started to ask the appropriate questions and the respective search for their answers for this analytical composition. We begin by reporting the motivations of this research proposal and the ways in which the author to be studied was reached.

The analytical study was divided into five parts. First, a detailed study of who Maria Lacerda de Moura was, her life, her constitution as a woman and her writings; then, the historical context lived by the author, focusing on the historical events that took place in Brazil, from the year of her birth (1887) to the date of publication of the book studied (1919). She attended Normal School, was an educator and in the book she talks about education. We dedicate a subsection to the history of education in Brazil and to anarchism, by approaching her ideas and the anarchist movement itself.

In the second part, we discuss the categories of analysis we use (gender, patriarchy and education), conceptualize and, based on the authors studied, make possible connections with the terms used in the book (feminine condition and subjugation of women).

In the third part, we describe the book *Renovação*, edition of 2015, from the number of pages, cover, the motivation of the organizers to make a reprint of the book, so that we can get to the author's writings.

Maria Lacerda de Moura dedicates the book to all women, reports the feminist movement historically in America and Europe, debates on women's suffrage, politics, religion, solidarity, childhood, motherhood, social issues and education. Matters that all women, according to her, should read and on which they should have their own opinion.

The fourth part was the moment to articulate the author's writings with feminist political theories, debating on the advances and setbacks in relation to the female condition and the possibilities of overcoming it.

Source documents “only speak when you know how to question them” (MORTATTI, 2000, p.31 *apud* BLOCH, 1987, p. 60, our translation). Who was Maria Lacerda de Moura? What is the historical context in which she lived? What were your choices of themes and content? Why, what discourse was this, from what social place? What are her motivations for writing? Who did she write to? These were some of the questions that made up the exercise of a Textual Configuration Analysis.

### Some considerations

Our considerations refer us to those that were carried out at the time of the master's degree. It was the beginning of the government of Jair Messias Bolsonaro and we were able to reaffirm issues debated in the research, referring to discussions of gender, patriarchy and education. As we developed the debate to conclude the research, with facts that happened in Brazil, the writings of Maria Lacerda de Moura echoed in our minds: “they forget that laws are impotent if they do not reform customs” (MOURA, 2015, p. 263, our translation).

In a society organized in such a way as to leave the woman subject to the tyranny of exhausting domestic work, busy all day with the house and children's arrangements, with no time to read the newspaper, to know the books, as happens to the bourgeoisie of the interior of Brazil, in a society where half of the weaker sex (but strong for work) are given domestic services that they do not value and occupy their entire lives, in this society no one has the right to fill their codes with the beautiful and resounding



words: - Freedom, Equality, Fraternity! (MOURA, 2015, p. 65, our translation).

The author's denunciation of historical gender inequalities emerges in the title we chose for this article: “To be silent today is to be an accomplice. Let us practice the unspeakable crime of courage, in the midst of the cowardice and cynicism of the present time” (MOURA, 1934, p. 112, our translation).

At the end of the research, we proposed a debate on how much the structures of power, or rather, the patriarchal and gender structures continue to fall on the condition of women. From its creation, in ancient Rome, to the present day, violence, denial of rights, discriminatory laws.

This alerts us to the strength of the ideological issues that normalize and naturalize inequalities and to how much they are internalized by women, causing guilt, little understanding of their rights and even a lack of questioning about why these same rights are denied to them (MAURANO, 2020a, p. 199, our translation).

However, many women and some men, both in political life, in militancy, and in academia, through scientific studies on gender relations and patriarchal domination, have indeed questioned the denial of these rights. But there is still a lack of understanding by many about the ideological constraints imposed by the patriarchal society and, we cannot fail to say, the Brazilian slaver society.

The author studied already denounced the naturalization of these impositions for women in her writings in 1919:

Prejudices, traditions, education handed down by successive generations – blind us. Man is not an emancipated being and his egoism does not suit female emancipation. It is essential that women work for women (MOURA, 2015, p. 52, our translation).

The exercise of analyzing this author's writings, looking at her lived historical moment; nod to the historic moment in which we are living; read other thinkers, who lived in other spaces in history; reviewing questions, complaints and criticisms that are maintained with a view to overcoming a gender domination was provided by the definitively correct choice of the methodological procedure of the Textual Configuration Analysis..

[...] overcoming and transforming social ties, by unraveling the residues of the past based on their understanding. This is the great contribution made by revisiting Lacerda's work. It allows capturing the differences and similarities, the continuity and discontinuity between the past and the present (the ruptures between the hegemonic and the counter-hegemonic), “allowing the

apprehension of a pregnant unit with a particular meaning” (p. 27). It is possible to recognize and question the work *Renovação*, “saturated with now” (MORTATTI, 2000, p. 31). It is possible to “produce a possible and authorized reading, based on one's own goals, needs and interests” (MORTATTI, 2000, p. 31) (MAURANO, 2020a, p. 90, our translation).

An overcoming beyond the right to vote, the right to paid work, access to health, education and housing. We are talking about human dignity, the right to think, to be free and respected for development in all its fullness. According to Maurano (2020b, p. 5, our translation):

historical notes on the condition of women in humanity, women's struggles for social, cultural and intellectual rights, as well as contextualizing Maria Lacerda de Moura's life story, her literary production and analysis of her book, become contributions to the unveiling and attempt to overcome this patriarchal and patrimonial society that oppresses everyone, thus effectively contributing to the construction of a fairer society for men and women.

The development of a critical conscience, which does not simply accept things as they are. That questions unfair political positions, whether they come from men or women.

This takes us, unfortunately, to the present day, in 2019, almost a hundred years later, when a president considered to be of the extreme right wins the Brazilian elections, strives to liberate the possession of weapons in Brazil and believes that the 1964 dictatorship it was, in fact, a revolution, honoring a torturer, even opposing the reparation of a historic debt to the black population [...] This same president summons an evangelical pastor to take care of the portfolio of the Ministry of Human Rights, Racial Equality and Women, taking care of the issues of women, blacks and indigenous people. This lady has been saying that: a woman's place is at home; that the evangelical church lost ground to science; the big problem was letting the theory of evolution into schools; that the indians must be evangelized; that abortion is an aberration and even proposes a 'rape financial aid' for victims of sexual violence; among other barbarities (MAURANO, 2020a, p. 202-203, our translation).

In March 2020, Brazil and the world begin to face a Covid 19 pandemic. A virus with high airborne transmission, causing respiratory disease, and, in the most serious cases, leading to death. The rates for May 2021 are alarming:

Brazil hit the mark of 430,000 lives lost to the new coronavirus pandemic. In the last 24 hours, 2,383 new deaths were recorded. With this, the total number of victims who could not resist Covid-19 reached 430,417. (VALENTE, 2021, p. 1, our translation).

It is the responsibility of a government official, at any time, even more so in a moment like this we are living, that there is a policy at the federal level to reduce the amount of

contagion and promote greater speed in the vaccination of its entire population. But what we see is:

One day after the record of a new daily record of deaths by covid-19 in the country, President Jair Bolsonaro gave a series of statements implying that crying for victims is "softness" and "mimimi" and classifying as "idiots" those that charge in the press and on social networks the purchase of vaccines by the government (SANTOS, 2021, p.1, our translation).

The population contaminating itself, starving; we return to the map of world misery, with a significant increase in violence against women, the extermination of the black population. Something we never thought we were experiencing, ends up happening. People who can work from home are doing so, or should be. And so, countless social problems that historically affect women appear in greater numbers and force. With the increase with the time living with the family, violence against women increased.

In this fragile scenario, the effects of COVID-19 materialize, for example, when we opt for social isolation at home. An option that has revealed challenges, especially for women, and that has put pressure on public policies involved in fighting violence against women. In addition to the violence that increases with quarantine, the fact that people are at home opens up the unequal economy of care, in which women are responsible and overload of housework and care for the sick, children and the elderly. (BEVILACQUA, 2020, p. 1, our translation).

In addition to other issues that directly affect women, specifically related to gender issues, something that was already denounced by Maria Lacerda de Moura in 1919, and remains on the agenda in the debate on gender inequalities:

In general, women are overloaded with the tasks of reproduction (unpaid work), while men are more available for production activities (paid work). The question that arises, in terms of public policies, is how to free women to exercise their right to paid employment, how to commit men to the care economy, and how the State can implement policies that favor the conciliation between work and family (ALVES, 2016, p. 634, our translation).

There are data on the considerable decrease in research publications by women, according to a survey recently released by the USP Agency for Information Management (2021, n/p, our translation):

With lockdowns closing schools across the world and forcing academics to care for children at home, it is feared that female academics have borne a greater burden in childcare and housework than their male counterparts, which has given rise to questions about how universities and funding bodies should respond.

Because the burden of housework falls on women, perhaps our author can answer:

In a society organized in such a way as to leave the woman subject to the tyranny of exhausting domestic work, busy all day with the house and children's arrangements, with no time to read the newspaper, to know the books, as happens to the bourgeoisie of the interior of Brazil, in a society where half of the weaker sex (but strong for work) are given domestic services that they do not value and occupy their entire lives, in this society no one has the right to fill their codes with the beautiful and resounding words: - Freedom, Equality, Fraternity! (MOURA, 2015, p. 65, our translation).

Or maybe we need data closer to the present day:

[data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) show that women spend almost twice as much time on household chores as men, a predominance that does not change even when gender profiles in similar occupations are compared. This scenario is not unique to the country and, despite all the recent changes in the world of work, gender inequalities continue to be a global reality. Despite this, many scientific evaluation systems continue to ignore these inequalities between the conditions of men and women. To give just one example, competitions for professors at public universities in Brazil do not adopt formal criteria to counterbalance differences in the curriculum of competitors according to aspects such as maternity leave. The insertion and career progression of women in the academy requires overcoming a series of barriers, among which the strenuous working hours inside and outside their homes are a central element (CANDIDO; CAMPOS, 2021, p. 1, our translation).

The final reflections return to the questions at the beginning of this article. The injustices inflicted by one social group on the other. Patriarchal domination and gender inequalities that span generations. "To be silent today is to be an accomplice. Let us practice the unspeakable crime of courage, in the midst of the cowardice and cynicism of the present time" (MOURA, 1934, p. 112, our translation).

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