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ARTICLES

Comments on Genre Composites in Digital Environments: Degrees of Dependence on Source Texts / *Comentários em compósitos de gêneros em ambiente digital: os graus de dependência de textos-fonte*

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ABSTRACT
This essay discusses comments in a digital environment, arguing that, although they hold power on the internet as spaces for dispute and interaction, they are, above all, an intrinsically human action and should not be considered as born from the World Wide Web. In this perspective, we aim to discuss the relationship between these comments and their first-texts, contributing to discussions about the relationships between texts, intertextualities, and genres in digitality. We base our work on Cavalcante *et al*. (2019) for the concept of text; on Miller (2009) for the conception of genre; and on Carvalho (2018) for discussions on intertextualities. Methodologically, we selected three comments from public posts made on Instagram. The results indicate that there are different genres circulating in the spaces designated for comments, whose textual materialization holds varying degrees of dependence on the first-text, ranging from the most dependent, with little autonomy, to the less dependent, whose discursive topic can be diverted, fulfilling diverse functions.
KEYWORDS: Comments; Intertextualities; Composites of Genres; Instagram

RESUMO
Este ensaio versa sobre os comentários em ambiência digital, sustentando a tese de que, embora tenham força na internet como espaços de disputa e interação, são, antes de tudo, uma ação intrinsecamente humana, não devendo ser considerados nascidos da web. *Nessa perspectiva, objetivamos discutir a relação entre esses comentários e seus textos-fonte, contribuindo com as discussões sobre as relações entre textos, intertextualidades e gêneros na digitalidade. Baseamo-nos em Cavalcante* et al. *(2019) para o conceito de texto; em Miller (2009) para a concepção de gênero; e em Carvalho (2018) para as discussões sobre intertextualidades. Metodologicamente, recortamos três comentários oriundos de postagens públicas feitas no Instagram. Os resultados apontam que há diferentes gêneros circulando nos espaços destinados aos comentários, cuja materialização textual guarda diferentes graus de dependência do texto-fonte, indo dos mais dependentes, com pouca autonomia, até os menos dependentes, cujo tópico discursivo pode ser desviado, cumprindo funções diversas.*
PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Comentários; Intertextualidades; Compósito de gêneros; Instagram

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Initial Considerations

The year is 1995, and the internet was beginning to spread in Brazil. At the time, access was still restricted to wealthier social classes who owned personal computers at home, devices that, for a long time, had been limited to the commercial sphere. On the other hand, it was not uncommon to enter a Brazilian household and find a bookshelf containing, among other items, family photo albums collected over the years. On such occasions, spending time looking through photographs and commenting on them was a common private social practice within families, often marked by nostalgia.

Over the course of thirty years, these practices have changed. With the development of cameras during the 2000s, followed by the emergence of Facebook and, later, the widespread popularization of Instagram in the 2010s, printing photographs no longer held the same meaning. The previously private acts of viewing and commenting on old photos were recategorized. Comments became public, facilitated and encouraged by internet platforms themselves; an attribute typical of a post-industrial mindset (Knobel; Lankshear, 2007), with public spaces designed for sharing within the digital environment.

This study addresses the following issue: the practice of commenting, which has always existed and operates across diverse genres and private genres, across diverse recurrent rhetorical situations, always functioning alongside different genres within groupings we define as *genre composites* (Cavalcante; Muniz-Lima, 2021; Lima-Neto; Carvalho, 2022). Our objective, therefore, is to discuss the degree of relationship between these comments and their source texts, seeking to contribute to discussions on textual relations, intertextuality, and genres in digital contexts, within the framework of Text Linguistics. We argue that comments may function as metatexts of a source post, albeit with varying degrees of dependence on that source text.

The paper is organized into two additional sections: in the theoretical framework, we present the concepts of metatextuality, comments in digital environments, and genre composites; and in the analysis, we discuss how comments may exhibit varying degrees of dependence within a genre composite enabled by Instagram's layout.

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1 On Metatextuality, Comments, and Genre Composites

1.1 Metatextuality

Defining what constitutes a text and reflecting on its properties has never been a simple task. However, this endeavor becomes even more complex within the context of digital environments, toward which studies attention has increasingly turned, given that most language practices in contemporary society take place online, many of which are still being analyzed and described by text linguists.

Following Cavalcante et al. (2022), we conceive of text as a unit of communication – with a beginning and an end – and as meaning in context. According to this definition, coherence is understood as being constructed through a process of negotiation among participants within enunciative frameworks, each time within a communicative event in which subjects jointly construct their discourse objects, through which they express points of view (Cavalcante; Brito; Martins, 2024).

Regarding intertextuality, we maintain, within the framework of Text Linguistics, that it refers to the process of signaled dialogue between specific texts, as well as between a text and a set of texts (Carvalho, 2018). This means that intertextual phenomena encompass cases ranging from more explicit citations to broader allusions and imitations of genres and styles. As we conceive intertextuality to be a punctual textual-discursive phenomenon, that is, neither essential nor constitutive of texts, but generally planned to fulfill a communicative intention aimed at producing specific meanings—we assume that it relies on the identification of traces of repetition of one or more texts within another.

Following Carvalho (2018), we argue that intertextuality, grounded in this mechanism of repetition, can be subdivided into: (i) strict intertextuality, which occurs when a given text incorporates parts of other identifiable texts, or constitutes a transformation or a commentary on them; and (ii) broad intertextuality, characterized by the retrieval not of a specific text, but of a set of texts. Strict intertextual relations include cases of co-presence, the insertion of parts of one text into another, as in citations, paraphrases, and allusions, as well as transformations of one text into another, as in parody and transposition. Metatextuality also falls within this category, as it refers to

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relations established through commentary on a specific source text. Within the scope of broad intertextualities, the following are included: (a) broad allusions, cases in which there is no reference to a specific set of texts, but rather to a diffuse reference to facts, contents, or situations that, although not drawing on specific text(s), still establish a tangible relationship between a given text and several others; and (b) the imitation of compositional, thematic, or stylistic parameters of a particular genre or authorial style, abstracted through reference to a non-specific set of texts. These broader occurrences, although more diffuse, may be indicated by textual elements such as the redundancy of (sub)topics, referential processes, and the repetition of formal or compositional features, among others. It is important to emphasize that these categorizations into qualitatively distinct types are not only non-mutually exclusive, but also often overlap and complement one another.

Our focus here is specifically on intertextual occurrences we refer to as metatextuality, that is, the strict intertextual relation established when a text emerges to comment on another text or texts. Examples include reviews, literary criticism, prefaces, and certain online comments. Despite their different generic labels, the defining condition of a metatext is that it functions as a "commentary" on a source text.

It is also worth noting that, although metatextuality involves an intertextual relation marked by the retrieval and repetition of a text within another, metatexts may display varying degrees of autonomy in circulation. In other words, while a metatext is constitutively dependent on a source text, since its very purpose is to comment on, evaluate, or critique that source, it may nonetheless circulate independently. Examples of this include academic or non-academic reviews, literary criticism, and even prefaces and afterwords. Conversely, there are situations in which dependence on the source text extends beyond the intertextual level and is also shaped by the conditions imposed by the communicative environment, as is the case with online comments, which we will now examine.

1.2 Comments in the Digital Environment

In this study, we aim to examine the relationships specifically on the relationships between an initial post and the comments associated from it. We consider this to be a

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relevant discussion. First, because the act of commenting (*lato sensu*) constitutes an inescapable practice in human interaction through language, occurring across a wide range of situations and serving diverse purposes; therefore, comments cannot, in themselves, be categorized as a single genre. When we turn to the digital sphere, we understand that this principle applies in the same way.

However, there is a tendency for academic studies that address online comments to treat them as a digital genre (Reagle Jr., 2015; Paveau, 2021; Pereira, 2018; Abreu & Santos, 2019; Biar & Paschoal, 2020; Santos & Almeida, 2021; Pereira & Santos, 2023), in light of different theoretical approaches, although they do not always aim to examine the characterization of this supposed genre, but rather assume that its generic status is already established.

Alves Filho and Santos (2013) are among the authors who conceive of the comment in this way, in light of a dialogic approach to discourse (Bakhtin, 1986).[1] By analyzing a corpus of comments circulated on two news portals, they argue that it assumes generic status because it...

> is marked by typification and innovation at the same time, since, although it presents recurring features, that is, common ones, it also undergoes innovation (updating) based on the social events commented on and the different enunciative situations (Alves Filho; Santos, 2013, p. 89).

The authors may indeed have been dealing with a single genre, insofar as their corpus pointed to both typification and innovation; however, it does not seem that the examples analyzed would be representative of all possible types of comments.

Paveau (2021), in turn, focuses on comments on posts, which have emerged as an important field of investigation for Text Linguistics, since they have implications for the analytical categories of the text and its properties. For the author, the comment is an ancient practice, having developed in Greece "since approximately the 6th century BC" (Paveau, 2021, p. 98). However, the online comment would be a genre renewed by the web, "a secondary technodiscourse, produced within a specific scriptural space and

[1] Bakhtin, M. M. (1986). *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. C. Emerson & M. Holquist (Eds.); V. W. McGee (Trans.). Austin: University of Texas Press.

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enunciatively constrained, within a connected digital ecosystem" (Paveau, 2021, p. 102).[2] Subsequently, the author identifies at least eight types: the link-comment, thank-you comment, discursive comment, metadiscursive comment, troll comment, displaced private comment, displaced public comment, and the pseudo-comment. Given the diversity of categories listed by the author herself, we understand, therefore, that we are dealing with a variety of genres, all labeled under the same nomenclature, that of "online comment." It is not possible, therefore, in our view, to identify the same rhetorical requirements and typifications in comments, framing them within a single genre.

In light of the interpretation of the Bakhtinian utterance (Bakhtin, 1986),[3] we understand that the online comment cannot be characterized as a genre, but rather as a sociotechnical resource that enables the circulation of different genres. As Bakhtin (1986, p. 106) states, "the life of the text, that is, its true essence, always develops on the *boundary between two consciousnesses, two subjects*."[4] It is understood that the concrete utterance is realized through two specific characteristics: the alternation of speaking subjects in discourse and finalization, the latter seen as "a kind of internal aspect of the alternation of speech subjects" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 71).[5] Thus, it is this characteristic that makes a response to the initial utterance possible. Subsequently, the responding subject ends up choosing a particular speech genre, once a discursive intention is established. This is why "each text (*as an utterance*) is something individual, unique, and unrepeatable, and in this lies its entire meaning (its intention for the sake of which it was created)" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 105, emphasis added).[6] As Sobral and Giacomelli (2017, pp. 459-460) have already argued regarding the post,

> at a superficial glance it is a post. But there are many posts. A post is a general form, and the various distinct posts are the genres. What defines the genre of the post is the interactional relationship it creates, establishes, proposes. Every genre is like this, an action of mobilizing various textual forms, not a form.[7]

[2] In Portuguese: "desde aproximadamente o século VI a.C;" "um tecnodiscurso segundo, produzido num espaço escritural específico e enunciativamente restrito, no seio de um ecossistema digital conectado."
[3] For reference, see footnote 1.
[4] For reference, see footnote 1.
[5] For reference, see footnote 1.
[6] For reference, see footnote 1.
[7] In Portuguese: [...] olhando superficialmente é um post. Mas post são vários. Post é uma forma geral, e os vários posts distintos são os gêneros. O que define o gênero do post é a relação interacional que ele cria, estabelece, propõe. Todo gênero é assim, uma ação de mobilização de variadas formas textuais, não uma forma.

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In this case, it is untenable, as we argue, to recognize all online comments as belonging to the same genre. In our view, what occurs is that the layout of web pages that host comments – such as news portals, video platforms, and social networking sites – provides a certain standardized structure for receiving them. However, comments – or posts – may encompass a wide range of genres, since genre is not a fixed and finished formula, but rather a way of organizing human interaction.

Paveau (2021) posits that the relationship established between a post and its comments may suggest a kind of extension – an expanded enunciation – promoted in relation to the initial text. The arguments are: in editorial enunciation, the comment space is extensive to the original publication, which contributes to it being part of the same text; furthermore, comments may prompt intervention from the author of the initial post; and finally, comments may have a semantic impact on the text. In the author's words,

> Comments, secondary texts, are extensive to the first, and the whole forms a single expanded discursive whole. […] Thus, the closure of the text is not a property of the text nor solely the will of the writer, but a result of the combined roles of internet users' programs (Paveau, 2021, p. 106).[8]

Later, Ciulla et al. (2024) also uphold the same thesis: for the authors, "comments are not understood either in isolation from the news text that originates them, nor separated from other comments within the same post" (Ciulla et al., 2024, p. 117). Based on the examples selected for analysis, they argue that there are networked anaphoric relations in comments, whose anchors are located both in the source text and in other comments, which demonstrates that "discourse objects are transformed and evolve, advancing the text" (Ciulla *et al*., 2024, p. 117). Moreover, they assume that topic shifts in comments are common, often moving away from the source text; however, "this does not break the texture, but establishes a relation of rupture on the one hand and continuity on the other, advancing the text, albeit in another direction" (Ciulla *et al*., 2024, p. 120). Finally, they argue that, unlike pre-digital texts, comments on online news – the locus of the authors' research – remain open-ended, allowing the discussion to be resumed at any

[8] In Portuguese: "os comentários, textos segundos, são extensivos ao primeiro, e o conjunto forma um todo discursivo único ampliado. [...] logo, o fechamento do texto não é uma propriedade do texto nem uma vontade somente do escritor, mas um resultado dos papéis combinados dos programas dos internautas."

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time and destabilizing the boundaries of the text. Thus, "multiple enunciators operate, reinterpreting and (re)constructing the source text, which provides it with unity" (Ciulla *et al*., 2024, p. 126).[9]

What we observe in both studies, from our perspective, is that the researchers assume the premise that online comments, together with the original post, constitute a textual unit and therefore a single text, with potential for expansion. For us, this premise is controversial: first, we do not deny that comments are directly or indirectly related to the original post; however, to assume that they can be expanded is to assume the premise that some texts may, in fact, have no limits. Now, in order to establish relationships between texts, Cavalcante et al. (2019, p. 33) argue that it is necessary to impose limits on them. This line of thought, adopted by Text Linguistics, is grounded above all in Bakhtin (1986, p. 71),[10] who posits that the utterance is delimited, since "the boundaries of each concrete utterance as a unit of speech communication are determined by a change of speaking subjects."

In any comment, therefore, we assume the presence of a text as a concrete utterance, with a beginning, middle, and end, produced by a conscious subject, embedded within a given socio-historical-cultural context, who had a particular communicative intent and, accordingly, made linguistic and semiotic choices to fulfill that purpose. Thus, we are dealing with a text that participates in a given genre.

Second, one of the characteristics of the finalization of the utterance is precisely the possibility of responding to it (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 35).[11] Once again, when someone produces an utterance, the dialogic relation is at play, and the possibility of responding to this utterance is immediately opened – this is the active responsive attitude. Comments may at times establish direct relations with the post, in which case what we have argued is configured as a metatextual relation; at other times, they may display active responsive attitudes toward other comments on the original post – these would be comments on comments – reaching the point where they make use of the space to pursue other purposes,

[9] In Portuguese: "os comentários não são compreendidos nem isoladamente do texto da notícia que os origina, nem apartados dos outros comentários na mesma postagem"; "os objetos de discurso se transformam e evoluem, fazendo progredir o texto"; "isso não quebra a tessitura, mas estabelece uma relação de ruptura de um lado e de continuidade de outro, fazendo progredir o texto, ainda que em outra direção"; "vários enunciadores atuam, reinterpretando e (re)compondo o texto-primeiro, que lhe dá unidade."

[10] For reference, see footnote 1.

[11] For reference, see footnote 1.

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such as asking for help for a family in need, for example. There are not, therefore, portions of text that belong to the original post or elements that merely refer back to it, but rather complete texts that relate, at different levels, to the original post.

In summary, our view regarding this issue is that what occurs is not an extension, but the constitution of a composite of genres. It should be noted, in this respect, that the very appearance of dialogue that arises from the configuration of the environment, which provides the space itself labeled as "comment," formally that is, visually contributes to the paratextual perspective that comments assume within the composite of which they are part. With regard to this, what we argue here is that, in the composite constituted by a post and its comments, there will be an intertextual relation, more specifically a metatextual one, when a direct relation between the comment and the post is observed. Put more precisely, in comments on posts, there are those that dialogue with the text of the post itself, which configures a strict intertextual relation, namely, metatextuality. In the same way, we also understand as such the comments that respond not to the initial text, but to other comments.

Those that do not in any way refer to the post or to other comments, but merely occupy that space, corroborate, in our view, our claim that this is not a "comment" genre, but rather a space whose designation leads to the understanding that everything placed there derives from a specific genre. What exists, as we understand it, is the possibility that diverse genres, whether already established or not, may occupy that space and, through this occupation, take part in the constitution of a composite of genres, which will be further explained in the next subsection. It is worth emphasizing that, if a given comment refers to the original post (or source text, as we term it), the relation established between them is intertextual. The other texts that occupy the comment space, but do not refer to the post, maintain with it a relational character of another order. Some, for example, make appeals, ask for help, announce a possible suicide, etc. There are also those who take advantage of the visibility and engagement of profiles with millions of followers for self-promotion. These cases, as we argue, do not constitute an intertextual relation, but rather another type of relationality, which will vary according to each case, as we will demonstrate in the analysis.

Returning to what we said earlier about the autonomy of circulation and the relation of dependence in relation to a source text, it is noted, in comments on posts, that

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it is not possible for such detachment to occur. If someone wishes to promote a "comment" or a statement regarding a given post and to give this comment autonomy of circulation, so to speak, we would be dealing with a metatext participating in a genre that could or could not be named, but would have epitextual status (Genette, 1980), that is, it is external to the work, but about it. In other words, it would no longer be an "online comment." We reiterate that we do not conceive the online comment as a genre, but as a space conceived by the digital environment for the inscription of metatexts or any texts related or not to the initial post.

1.3 Composite Genres

Although the idea of genre composites had already been circulating in Professor Mônica Magalhães's classes at least since 2015, a first definition was only published in 2020, as "the set of genres that share the same digital environment within the same medium, with the same supports." In the same vein, Cavalcante (2020, p. 8) also states, in an interview, the following:

> Many times, interaction begins and ends within the same text, but it can sometimes be constructed within a composite of genres, more or less predictable as typical groupings, such as the expected set of genres in a news blog, in the TikTok media environment, or in the internal media of Facebook, Twitter, etc. There is a certain expectation regarding the types of genres that may appear in each of these digital environments, although (increasingly nowadays) these genres are reconfigured, or new ones are created, in order to meet the demands of society.[12]

The concept, therefore, was still under development at the time, as the author recognized that genres could be grouped within the same communicative space, in ways distinct from other types of genre groupings, such as genre networks, colonies, chains, systems, or constellations, taking as an example what occurs in digital media.

[12] In Portuguese: "o conjunto de gêneros que dividem o mesmo ambiente digital em uma mesma mídia, com os mesmos suportes"; "Muitas vezes, a interação começa e acaba em um mesmo texto, mas pode se construir, às vezes, dentro de um compósito de gêneros, mais ou menos previstos como agrupamentos típicos, como o conjunto esperável de gêneros de um blog de notícias, da mídia Tik Tok, das mídias internas ao Facebook, ao Twitter etc. Existe uma certa expectativa dos tipos de gênero que podem figurar em cada um desses ambientes digitais, ainda que (cada vez mais, nos dias de hoje) esses gêneros se reconfigurem, ou se criem novos, para atender às demandas da sociedade."

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In the following year, a new redefinition emerges, now establishing a direct link with Bonini's (2003)[13] notion of hypergenre: "[the composite of genres displays] diverse possibilities for bringing together genres within the same physical space of textual actualization" (Cavalcante; Muniz-Lima, 2021, p. 434). Although, in the text, the definition is not necessarily restricted to digital media, the example provided in the study concerns a composite on Facebook, in which a post from a widely circulated newspaper, along with reactions, shares, the number of likes, and comments, are considered "other genres, as they entail a different interaction and even more than one" (Cavalcante; Muniz-Lima, 2021, p. 43).[14]

In a previous work (Lima-Neto; Carvalho, 2022), we defended the existence of composites, in the plural, since we assume that it is a type of genre grouping older than those that occur in digital media. We understand, with Bhatia (2004), that, in the real world of discourse, genres function harmoniously together, as is social life, although the hegemonic discourses that determine genre analyses in general focus on them in isolation.

We thus refer to genre composites as a type of generic grouping characterized by the harmonious relationship of genres co-occurring within the same enunciative space, which do not necessarily need to adhere to disciplinary boundaries. Depending on the layout through which information is organized, the reader's attention may be divided, at times focusing on one genre within the composite, at times on another. A newspaper, a textbook, an academic livestream, a television program, a website, a digital news portal, and social media platforms are examples of spaces in which such composites may be realized.

As we have also previously stated (Lima-Neto & Carvalho, 2022), we are not certain that the relations are intertextual in all types of composites, but there are specific cases in which it is possible to point out metatextual relations that deserve to be investigated, such as a type of composite organized on the Instagram timeline, which brings together the post itself, the caption, likes, shares, and the comments themselves – something already noted by Cavalcante and Muniz-Lima (2021).

[13] Bonini, Adair. Enunciative Plans in the Organization of Text Genres. *Linguistics*, 41(3), pp. 465–494, 2003.

[14] In Portuguese: "[o compósito de gêneros mostra] diversificadas possibilidades de reunião de gêneros e um mesmo espaço físico de atualização de textos"; "outros gêneros, porque preveem uma outra interação e até mais de uma."

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2 On the Relationship between Source Text and Comments in a Digital Environment

We compiled a sample of eight comments drawn from three public Instagram posts. The first refers to a post by Hugo Gloss, published on September 16, 2024, whose topic concerned the events following the chair-throwing incident in which São Paulo mayoral candidate Pablo Marçal was struck by fellow candidate Datena on that day. From this post, which received nearly two thousand comments, we selected six. The second is a post by CNN on Instagram, dated September 28, 2024, reporting the passing of actress Maggie Smith; although it generated more than one thousand comments, we selected one of them. Finally, we also analyze a comment on a post from the official *Folha de S. Paulo* Instagram account, also dated September 28, 2024, which reported the return of the British band Oasis to Brazil in 2025. Let us now consider the first case:

Figure 1: Hugo Gloss post



Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/C__C54ov4xE/. [15]Last access: Sept. 26, 2026.

[15] In English: "Hospital explains what happened to Pable Marçal after his being hit by a chair and released him; see the medical report. On Monday (16), the Syrian-Lebanese Hospital issued a medical bulletin regarding Pablo Marçal, clarifying what happened to the coach after he was hit by Datena. The hospital indicated that there are no complications and discharged the influencer. Pablo, for his part, spoke out about his own health condition. Read the full article by clicking the link in the bio or in the "News" highlight on Stories. (Reproduction/Social Media/TV Cultura)."

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Figure 1 is a screenshot of the @hugogloss profile and reports the events that followed the assault incident in which candidate José Luís Datena attacked his opponent Pablo Marçal. The post, dated September 16, 2024, had already accumulated more than 1,900 comments as of September 26. After being struck with a chair, candidate Marçal was taken to a hospital by ambulance, accompanied by healthcare professionals during transport. The scene was highly dramatic and suggested that Pablo's condition might be relatively serious, given the images of his treatment. However, according to an official statement issued by the hospital, no serious harm to the assaulted candidate's health was identified. The full text of the medical report was made available via the link provided on Hugo Gloss's profile:

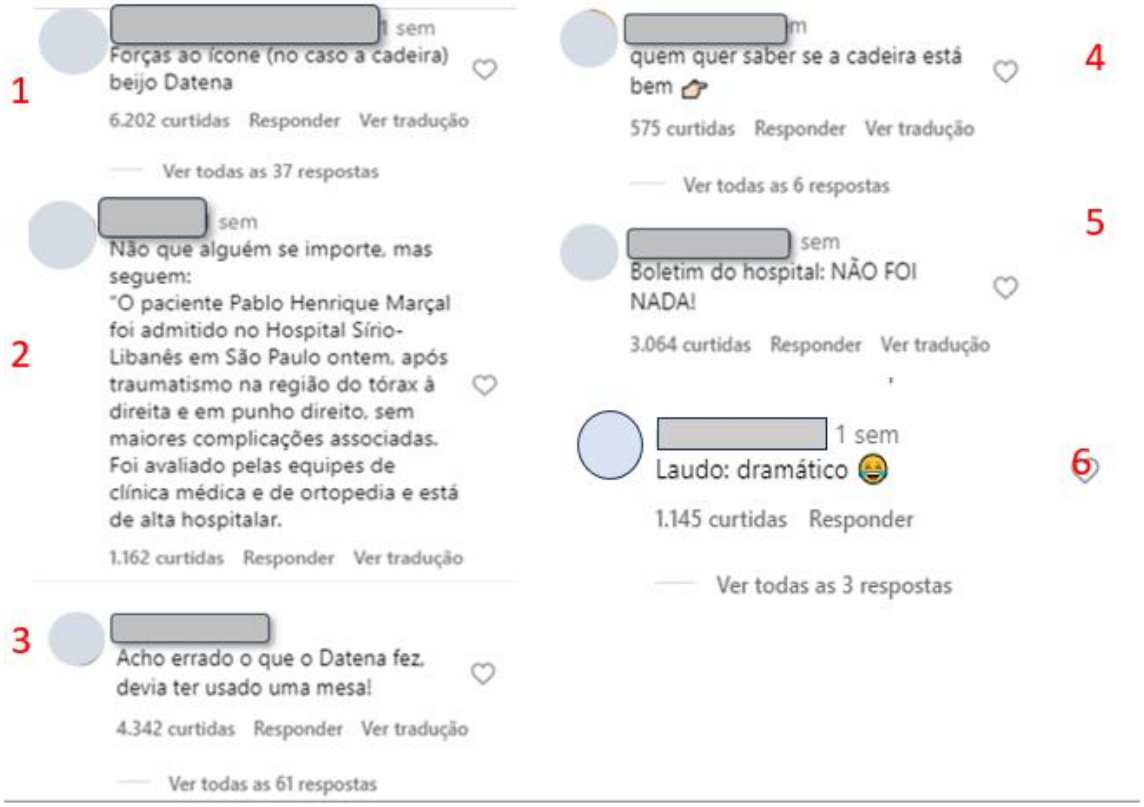
> The institution states that Marçal had a traumatism in the right portion of his chest and in his right fist after being struck, and there are no complications in his health diagnostic.
> 'The patient Pablo Henrique Marçal entered Syrian-Lebanese Hospital in São Paulo yesterday, after a traumatism in the right portion of his chest and in his right fist after being struck, and there are no complications in his health diagnostic.[16]

Below is a screenshot displaying the comments on the post:

[16] In Portuguese: "Em nota, a instituição afirmou que Marçal teve traumatismo na região do tórax à direita e no punho direito após o golpe, mas não há complicações em seu quadro de saúde. Leia a nota na íntegra: *'O paciente Pablo Henrique Marçal foi admitido no Hospital Sírio-Libanês em São Paulo ontem, após traumatismo na região do tórax à direita e em punho direito, sem maiores complicações associadas. Foi avaliado pelas equipes de clínica médica e de ortopedia e está em alta hospitalar'*." Available on: https://hugogloss.uol.com.br/brasil/hospital-diz-o-que-houve-com-pablo-marcal-apos-cadeirada-e-da-alta-veja-boletim-medico/. Accessed on: September 26, 2024.

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Figure 2: Six comments on Hugo Gloss's source post



Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/C__C54ov4xE/. Accessed on: September 26, 2024.

As can be observed, there are no comments that do not refer to the event reported in the post; that is, all comments are metatextual, insofar as they revisit the incident and express positions about it. Comment 2 deserves particular attention, as it presents a verbatim transcription of the medical report, though not without first signaling the author's stance: "Not that anyone cares, let it be…"[17] Reiterating the definition we adopt for the notion of metatextuality, this example demonstrates an intertextual relationship between the comment and the post, insofar as the source text is taken up for the purpose of commenting on it. Formally, the metatext – established through derivation—draws, in its construction, on a quotation from the medical report. This instance corroborates our earlier claim that intertextual categories often overlap.

Comments 5 and 6 also merit attention: "Hospital report: NOTHING HAPPENED!"[18] and "Medical report: dramatic."[19] As observed, there is a direct

[17] In Portuguese: "Não que alguém se importe, mas segue..."
[18] In Portuguese: "Boletim do hospital: NÃO FOI NADA!"
[19] In Portuguese: "Laudo: dramático."

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relationship with the source text, which characterizes the intertextual status of these instances. Formally, both comments are structured through paraphrase, that is, through the rewriting of a given textual segment in such a way that, although its form is altered, its content is preserved as much as possible. It is worth noting that, even though the report is written in a formal register, it does indeed state that the candidate's health condition is not a cause for concern and that, in fact, no serious harm was inflicted, contrary to what the circumstances of the emergency response may have suggested. The metatexts under analysis, however, reframe this information in a jocular tone, thereby expressing an evaluative stance toward the situation, namely, that the assaulted candidate was exaggerating the events in order to take advantage of them.

The remaining comments shown in the screenshot are also metatextual, but are primarily constructed through allusion. This can be observed, for instance, in comment 3: "I think what Datena did was wrong, he should have used a table instead!"[20] We note that the comment does not refer directly to the candidate's health condition, as reported in the post, but rather to the cause of his hospitalization, namely the assault carried out by his opponent. The commenter takes a stance against candidate Pablo Marçal, making it clear that they would have preferred the incident to have been more serious and the aggression to have involved a more impactful object. In this case, we are dealing with a metatext constituted by a strict allusion to the post's headline and a broader allusion to the event as widely reported across multiple texts.

In light of these considerations, we reiterate that such online metatextual comments operate with a high degree of dependence on the source text, forming with it a composite of intertextual linkage. We now turn to two additional cases:

Figure 3: *Folha de S. Paulo* post about Oasis

[20] In Portuguese: "Acho errado o que o Datena fez, devia ter usado uma mesa!"

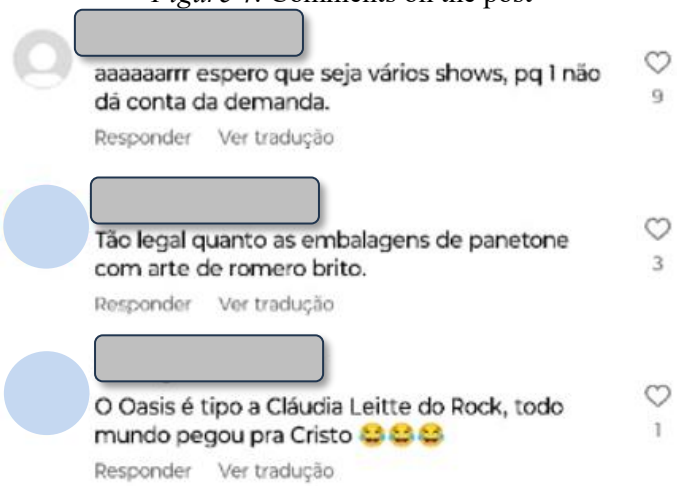
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Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/DAbAOnrRvAS/?igsh=aDIwODhvYmpoam1p. Accessed on: September 28, 2024.[21]

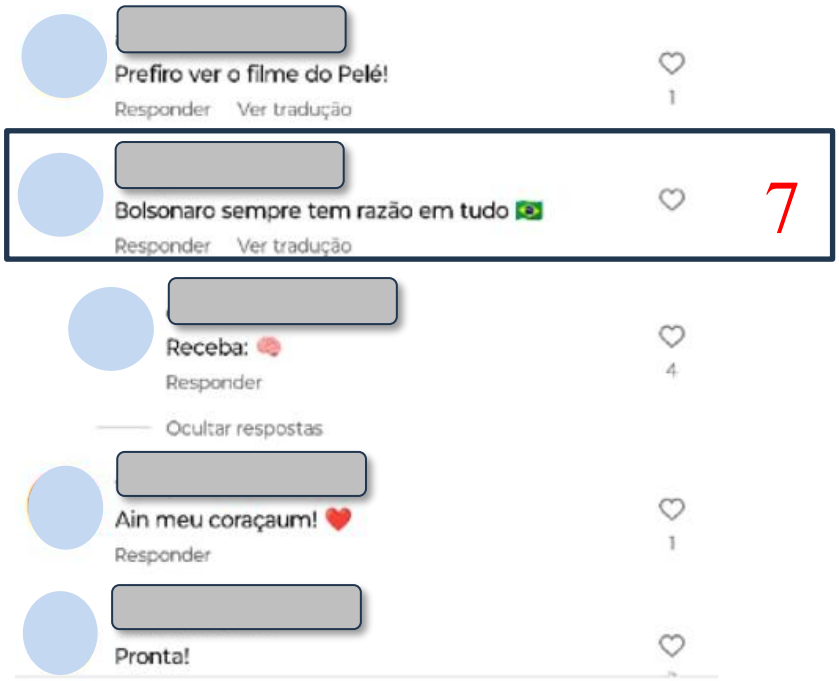
On September 27, 2024, *Folha de S. Paulo* published on its official Instagram account the news that the band Oasis would be coming to Brazil in 2025, which generated more than one hundred comments. The screenshot below captures a portion of them, with particular attention to the highlighted comment:

Figure 4: Comments on the post



[21] In English: "According to the British magazine NME, the band Oasis will perform in Brazil, in São Paulo, during their concert tour scheduled for 2025. Last month, the series of shows had been announced with dates only in the United Kingdom and Ireland, but the list seems to have expanded, and now also includes the United States, other South American countries, Australia, and Asia. The show dates should be announced soon."

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Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/DAbAOnrRvAS/?igsh=aDIwODhvYmpoam1p.
Accessed on: September 28, 2024.

What can be observed is that, while all other commenters produced texts whose topic aligns with that of the Folha post, the author of comment 7 instead develops a piece of political propaganda, citing former President Jair Bolsonaro. This is further reinforced by the multisemiotic use of the Brazilian flag, which has become one of the identity markers of the political group in question and its supporters. Thus, this is a comment whose text participates in a genre with rhetorical requirements (Miller, 1984)[22] different from those observed thus far – namely, the promotion of a political figure – and may therefore be classified within the genre of political propaganda.

In comparison with the other comments, it is evident that there is a departure from the topic of the news report. Based on the cues provided by the author, there is no discernible relationship between the produced text and the post; it is therefore not a metatext. Rather, it constitutes an appropriation of a public space – one that, notably, offers high visibility and engagement – for the purpose of generating political engagement. In this case, unlike the others, it is a text with little – or virtually no –

[22] Miller, Carolyn R. Genre as Social Action. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 70(2), pp. 151–167, 1984.

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dependence on the FSP post, since the same content could have been posted on any other publication. Let us now consider another case.

Figure 5: CNN post on the passing of actress Maggie Smith



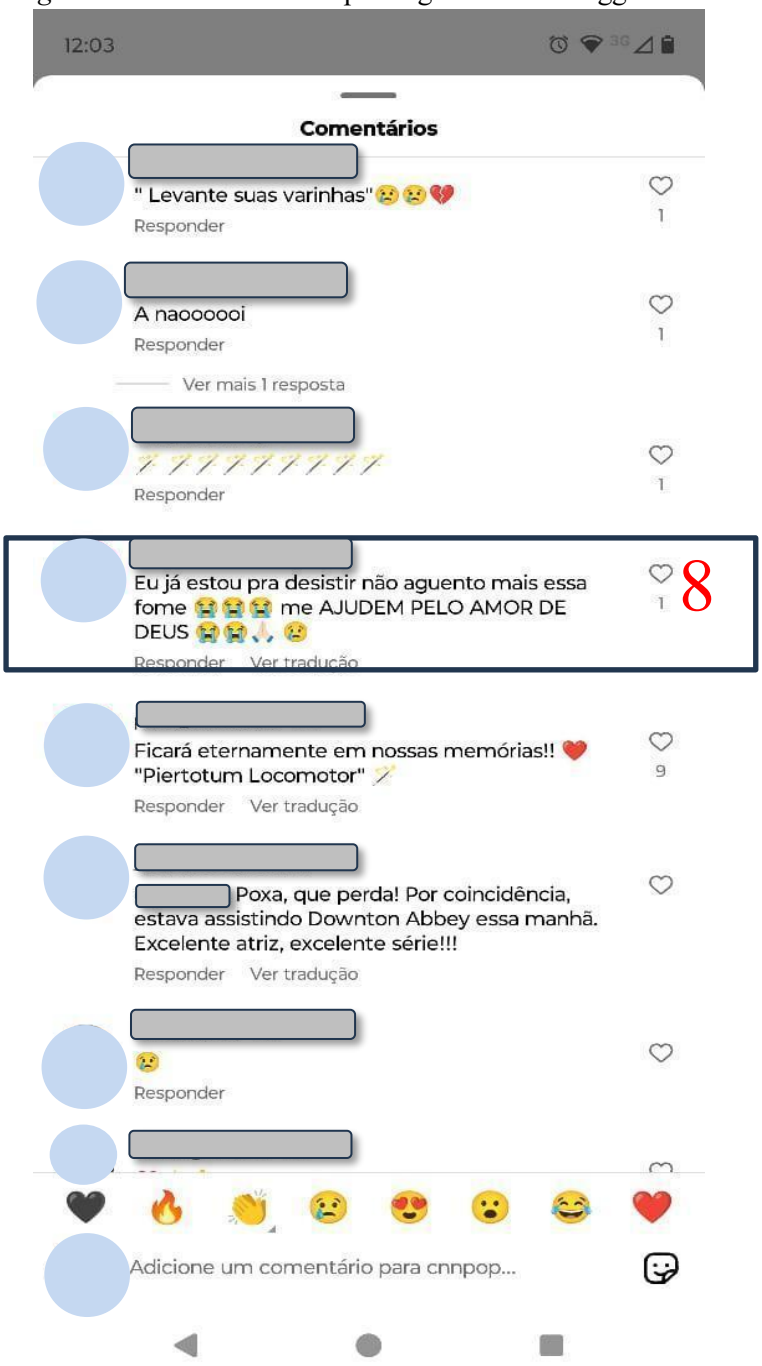
Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/DAbEEhNJrNQ/?igsh=MzZhM3p3cG9wMnRy. Accessed on: September 28, 2024.[23]

Both the CNN Brasil and CNN Pop Instagram accounts reported the passing of actress Maggie Smith on September 27, 2024, generating an outpouring of emotion not only in Brazil but worldwide, particularly due to the significant roles she portrayed throughout her career. One of these was Professor McGonagall from the Harry Potter series, who frequently used the catchphrase "Raise your wands,"[24] a line that was echoed in several comments mourning her death. Let us now consider other examples:

[23] In Portuguese: "The multi-award-winning British actress Maggie Smith — world-renowned for her roles in 'Harry Potter' and 'Downton Abbey' — passed away this Friday (27th) at the age of 89. The information was confirmed by the artist's sons. Throughout her career, which began in the 1950s, the actress was one of the few to win the Triple Crown of Acting: Oscar (2), Emmy (4), and Tony (1). In 1990, Smith had also been named 'Dame' by Queen Elizabeth II."
[24] In Portuguese: "Levantem suas varinhas."

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Figure 6: Comments on the passing of actress Maggie Smith



Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/DAbEEhNJrNQ/?igsh=MzZhM3p3cG9wMnRy. Accessed on: September 28, 2024.

We draw attention here to comment 8, in which there is a clear plea for help: "I'm about to give up I can't take this hunger anymore 😭😭😭Please HELP ME FOR THE LOVE OF GOD 😭😭😢🙏.."[25]

[25] In Portuguese: "Eu já estou para desistir não aguento mais essa fome me AJUDEM PELO AMOR DE DEUS."

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We also note that the author makes use of other multisemiotic resources, such as crying emojis, in addition to capitalization, which emphasizes a sense of desperation, concluding the text with a praying hands emoji, suggesting the hope that she will somehow be seen. This is an example of what Paveau (2021) would refer to as a public displaced comment, due to its lack of connection to the topic of the post. Therefore, given that different rhetorical requirements and textual typifications are at play (Miller, 1984),[26] it can be argued that the text participates in a genre distinct from that employed by the other commenters, who expressed grief and/or paid tribute to the deceased actress. Furthermore, with regard to its dependence on the source text, the relationality cannot be considered intertextual, since it does not engage with the topic of the CNN post.

We argue that the last two cases under discussion do not refer to the post nor respond to comments that engage with the source text; rather, they take advantage of a space of privileged visibility and, therefore, become part of the composite of genres that constitutes Instagram. We further suggest that the relationality at stake operates on a different level, one that is not intertextual, but instead derives from the nature of the digital environment, which amplifies this composite. In this sense, such instances represent opportunities for a plea for help or for political propaganda – texts with markedly different purposes and thus belonging to different genres – to gain visibility in a highly interactive space. The relationship between these examples and the other comments lies solely in the enunciative and interactive potential afforded by Instagram's layout. Examples such as these demonstrate the difficulty of sustaining the notion of the online comment as a genre, as proposed by authors such as Alves Filho and Santos (2013), Bertucci and Nunes (2017), Paveau (2021), and Santos (2018), among others.

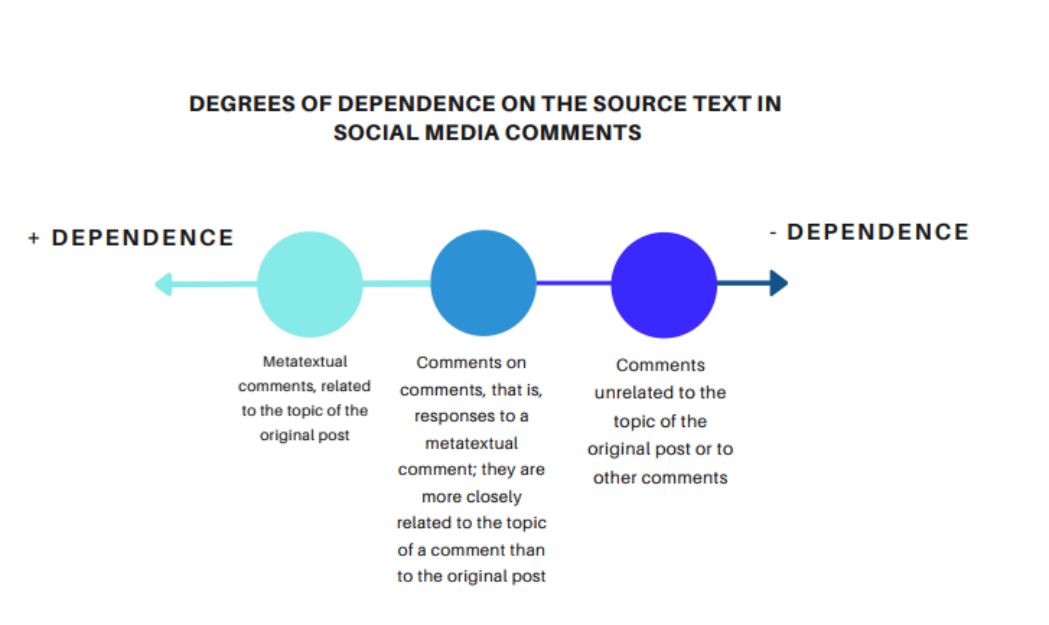
In summary, this analytical exercise has led us to conclude that there is between a source text and its possible metatexts, a relationship of dependence that can be understood in terms of degrees. These range from maximum dependence – when the metatext lacks autonomy of circulation, as in the case of texts situated in online paratextual spaces such as comment sections or revision boxes available in word-processing programs (and, if detached, they would shift their generic affiliation and thus undergo reconfiguration), to cases in which the metatext can circulate autonomously, as occurs, for example, with reviews – academic or otherwise – or with literary criticism. In

[26] For reference, see footnote 22.

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between, we may consider cases such as prefaces, which, although originally published as paratexts (in formal terms), may present themselves as epitexts and eventually circulate in other enunciative spaces beyond those to which they were initially linked. Visually, the degree of dependence between a metatext and its source text could be outlined as follows:

Figure 8: Relationship of dependence between comments and the source text.



Source: Author's own elaboration.

We identify here three groups – though not necessarily the only ones – which we seek to demonstrate: all are texts (Cavalcante et al., 2019), understood as concrete utterances (Bakhtin, 1986),[27] participating in different genres, yet ultimately labeled under a single designation – namely, online comments. Our aim has been to show that these texts, in fact, exhibit some degree of dependence on the initial post, albeit to varying extents. The most dependent type consists of those that respond directly to the original post, following the same discursive topic and often being constructed through intertextual resources (such as quotation, paraphrase, or allusion, as occurs in other metatexts beyond those found in online comment sections), in accordance with the criterion of repetition that characterizes intertextuality – for instance, comment 5 in example 1, in which the

[27] For reference, see footnote 1.

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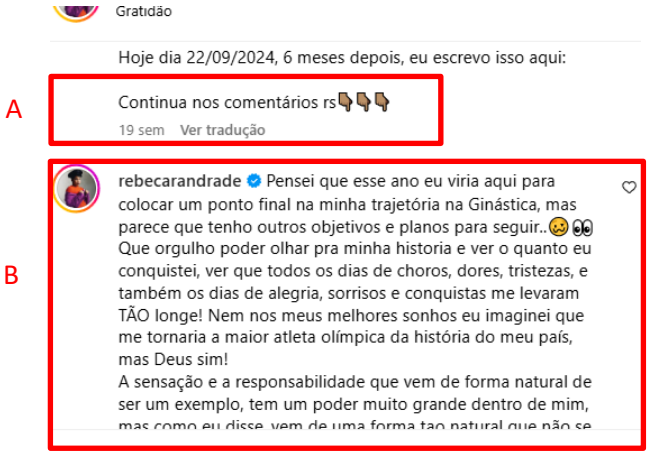
user produces a paraphrase. A second group comprises comments that display a lower degree of dependence on the original post, as they are comments on other comments; therefore, they do not necessarily follow the original topic of the post, but remain connected to it insofar as they elicit an active responsive stance toward that metatextual comment. Finally, there are those that respond neither to the original topic nor to other comments – such as example 8 – which may initially give the impression of being displaced. In fact, a possible explanation for this lies in the speaker's intention to produce meaning: by choosing the comment space, they are most likely motivated by the high potential for visibility it offers, thereby fulfilling their communicative intent.

It is also worth mentioning particular cases in which a post, due to its length, is not fully displayed in the space designated by the platform for captions. In such instances, as we will illustrate below, the account indicates that the text continues in the comment section. Let us consider the following example:

Figure 9: Rebeca Andrade post



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Source: Instagram. Available at: Bate-papos • Instagram. Accessed on: October 5, 2024.[28]

The post was published by Brazilian gymnast Rebeca Andrade on September 22, 2024. The athlete offers an emotional account of her trajectory and future plans. As it is a lengthy text, the space allocated by Instagram for captions was insufficient to accommodate everything she intended to say. Consequently, there is an indication in A – "Continues in the comments lol,"[29] accompanied by the emojis 👇👇👇, signaling where readers should go if they wish to continue reading. It is important to note that this does not constitute an expansion of the initial text, nor a metatextual or any other type of comment. Rather, it is the continuation of the post itself, which, due to constraints imposed by the platform, could not be completed in the appropriate space. This, however, does not affect the propositions we have put forward thus far and is mentioned here only to ensure that we do not overlook an instance that might, in some way, raise doubts

[28] In Portuguese: "rebecarandrade ○ Gratitude
rebecarandrade ○ And another cycle has come to an end. On 03/16/2024, in a moment of sadness and hurt, I wrote a farewell letter to gymnastics in my phone's notes. I was certain that this would be my last Olympic cycle, everything would end after Paris, and in that letter, I was talking to myself, letting out things people said to me that hurt me, even though I knew who I was. And the letter went like this:
"Because of one phrase, they said success went to my head. Because of one proposal, I was called ungrateful and selfish. Because of one word taken out of context in an interview, they mocked me and said I was in the wrong country; and these things hurt me, especially knowing that I am not like that—it was people looking at me from the wrong angle. But it's okay, the world is like that; I do a lot for..."; "Continued in the comments lol 👇👇👇 *19 w* •
rebecarandrade ○ I thought that this year I would come here to put a final stop to my journey in Gymnastics, but it seems I have other goals and plans to follow.. 🥹 👀 How proud I am to be able to look at my history and see how much I've achieved, to see that all the days of crying, pain, sadness, and also the days of joy, smiles, and achievements took me SO far! Not even in my best dreams did I imagine I would become the greatest Olympic athlete in my country's history, but God did! The feeling and the responsibility that comes naturally with being an example has a very great power inside of me, but as I said, it comes in such a natural way that…"

[29] In Portuguese: "Continua nos comentários rs."

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regarding the completeness of the text or its possible extension, as proposed by Paveau (2021). Indeed, we reiterate: within the space designated for comments, one may find texts that participate in a variety of genres, which may or may not be related to the post (which we refer to as the source text), or, in specific cases, may serve as the continuation of a post interrupted due to space limitations.

(Semi)Final Considerations

Our objective was to discuss the degree of relationship between comments in digital environments and their source texts. Methodologically, we analyzed a sample of eight comments, six of which were posted in the comment section of a political post, and two from a post related to the arts. We arrived at several conclusions. First, comments are not necessarily digital, nor do they depend exclusively on the internet to exist. In fact, they have always existed, as commenting is part of human nature. What is new, rather, is the expansion of the enunciative potential of the platforms and media that underpin the web. Second, there are different types of comments, so varied that it seems unfeasible to sustain the claim that online commenting constitutes a single genre.

We argue that, in fact, the online comment functions as a space for the publication of texts that participate in a variety of genres, whether already established or not, and that, through this occupation, come to form a composite of genres within that space. Such genres are not necessarily properly named for a number of reasons: at times due to linguistic economy, and at others due to the lack of need to label distinct practices.

Finally, comments, as metatexts, may display different degrees of dependence on a source text for their circulation. However, drawing on Bhatia (2004), we understand that, in real-life contexts, genres function in harmony and in conjunction with one another, and the relationships among them may vary considerably depending on the predictability of the rhetorical situations in which they occur. Those whose content diverges from the source text can be situated along varying degrees of relationship, ranging from metatextuality to the absence of any intertextual relationship.

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Author Contribution Statement

Both authors are equally responsible for the conception and design of the study; the analysis and interpretation of the data; the drafting of the article and the critical revision of its intellectual content; the final approval of the version to be published; and accountability for all aspects of the work in ensuring the accuracy and integrity of any part of the manuscript.

Research Data and Other Materials Availability

The contents underlying the research text are included in the manuscript.

Reviews

Due to the commitment assumed by *Bakhtiniana.* Revista de Estudos do Discurso [*Bakhtiniana.* Journal of Discourse Studies] to Open Science, this journal only publishes reviews that have been authorized by all involved.

Review I

The article is well aligned with the proposed theme, presenting a clear statement of objectives and maintaining theoretical and methodological coherence throughout its development. The study is innovative in shedding light on the possible manifestations of texts circulating within online comment spaces and, moreover, in proposing a framework for the types of intertextual relationships between comments and the source text. In theoretical alignment with the principles of Brazilian Text Linguistics, the work offers an organized and coherent reflection on relevant intertextual relations in the context analyzed, thereby contributing to ongoing discussions in this field of knowledge. The language is accurate and appropriate for publication in this journal. Therefore, the final evaluation is one of acceptance. ACCEPTED.

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Review II

The article “Comments in genre complexes in digital environments: degrees of dependence on source texts” presents a clear title that is consistent with the objectives and the development of the research. The proposal is well defined: to discuss, in light of Text Linguistics, the different degrees of dependence between comments in digital environments and their source texts, especially within genre complexes such as those formed on Instagram. The development of the study is robust, consistently articulating the theoretical framework with the selected analytical examples. The theoretical basis, grounded in authors such as Cavalcante, Bakhtin, Miller, and Paveau, is effectively mobilized and demonstrates both conceptual mastery and up-to-date engagement with the

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literature. The analyses are relevant, well conducted, and reveal sensitivity to the discursive phenomena under investigation, particularly in distinguishing metatextual, intertextual, and other forms of textual relationality. The scientific contribution of the article is significant, particularly in that it presents an alternative approach to understanding online comments by rejecting them as a discursive genre — a position that diverges from well-established perspectives in the field, such as those cited by the author(s) of the article Reagle Jr., 2015; Paveau, 2021; Pereira, 2018; Abreu & Santos, 2019; Biar & Paschoal, 2020; Santos & Almeida, 2021; Pereira & Santos, 2023, which conceptualize digital comments as a genre grounded in typifications and enunciative regularities. Furthermore, the study does not adopt the notion of hypergenre, as proposed by Bonini (2003), which remains widely referenced in studies of genre groupings in digital environments. Instead, the article advances an alternative reading centered on the idea of a composite of genres, articulating levels of dependence between source texts and comments through an intertextual and metatextual framework. Although this proposal departs from more recent theoretical consensuses, it offers a stimulating perspective on the relational and plural nature of digital comments. It is a contribution that can enrich debate within the linguistic community precisely because it proposes a shift in analytical focus. Finally, the text stands out for the quality of its writing, demonstrating excellent command of standard language, argumentative fluency, and conceptual clarity. I recommend the publication of the article. Any necessary formatting adjustments may be made during the copyediting stage. ACCEPTED.

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Editor in Charge

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