

Historical Culture and Artificial Intelligence. Teachers and ChatGPT in the Mediation of Historical Memories¹

Cultura histórica e Inteligência Artificial.
Professores e ChatGPT na mediação de memórias históricas

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Abstract

The article analyzes the impacts of Artificial Intelligence on historical culture through narratives produced by ChatGPT about the exhibition of Dom Pedro I's heart during the Bicentennial of Brazil's Independence. The AI-generated responses are compared with narratives elaborated by History teachers from basic education in a study conducted by the History and History Teaching research group at the State University of Londrina (UEL). Based on Jörn Rüsen's reflections on historical culture and historical consciousness, as well as the contributions of Rodrigo Turin, Joël Candau, José Murilo de Carvalho, and Márcia Gonçalves, the study discusses the aesthetic, cognitive, and political dimensions of historical narratives produced in digital environments. The article concludes that Artificial Intelligence tends to reorganize and reinforce historically sedimented narratives, approaching what Turin defines as "history as a service."

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; Historical Culture; Teachers' Historical Narratives.

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Resumo

O artigo analisa os impactos da Inteligência Artificial na cultura histórica a partir de narrativas produzidas pelo ChatGPT sobre a exibição do coração de D. Pedro I durante o Bicentenário da Independência do Brasil. As respostas da IA são comparadas às narrativas elaboradas por professores de História da educação básica em pesquisa desenvolvida pelo grupo História e Ensino da Universidade Estadual de Londrina (UEL). Fundamentado nas reflexões de Jörn Rüsen acerca da cultura e da consciência histórica, bem como nas contribuições de Rodrigo Turin, Joël Candau, José Murilo de Carvalho e Márcia Gonçalves, o estudo discute as dimensões estética, cognitiva e política das narrativas históricas produzidas em ambientes digitais. Conclui-se que a Inteligência Artificial tende a reorganizar e potencializar narrativas históricas já sedimentadas socialmente, aproximando-se daquilo que Turin denomina “história como serviço”.

Palavras-chave: Inteligência Artificial; Cultura Histórica; Narrativas Históricas de Professores.

Resumen

El artículo analiza los impactos de la Inteligencia Artificial en la cultura histórica a partir de narrativas producidas por ChatGPT sobre la exhibición del corazón de D. Pedro I durante el Bicentenario de la Independencia de Brasil. Las respuestas generadas por la IA se comparan con las narrativas elaboradas por profesores de Historia de la educación básica en una investigación desarrollada por el grupo Historia y Enseñanza de la Historia de la Universidad Estatal de Londrina (UEL). Basado en las reflexiones de Jörn Rüsen sobre la cultura y la conciencia histórica, así como en las contribuciones de Rodrigo Turin, Joël Candau, José Murilo de Carvalho y Márcia Gonçalves, el estudio discute las dimensiones estética, cognitiva y política de las narrativas históricas producidas en entornos digitales. Se concluye que la Inteligencia Artificial tiende a reorganizar y potenciar narrativas históricas ya sedimentadas socialmente, aproximándose a lo que Turin denomina “historia como servicio”.

Palabras clave: Inteligencia Artificial; Cultura Histórica; Narrativas Históricas de los Profesores.

Introduction

The plane cut across the Atlantic skies, carrying an unusual cargo steeped in historical significance. Inside a glass vessel filled with a preservative solution rested the heart of Dom Pedro I, Brazil's first emperor. Two centuries after the famous cry on the banks of the Ipiranga, the organ that had once pulsed within the monarch's chest was returning to the land where he had proclaimed Independence.

Its arrival in Brazil was a solemn event. At the airport, officials, historians, and members of the Armed Forces waited in anticipation. Escorted with the honors due a head of state, the heart was removed from the plane and placed upon a podium draped in blue and white, the colors of the House of Braganza. The respectful silence was broken only by military bugles sounding the National Anthem as the relic was positioned inside the official vehicle.

The journey to Brasília was made under tight security escort. Along the route, groups of onlookers gathered by the roadside, waving flags and singing patriotic songs. It was as if time had folded back on itself, bringing the spirit of Dom Pedro I back to witness what the nation he had helped found had become.

At the Planalto Palace, the vessel was received with a solemn ceremony. Officials spoke of the emperor's legacy, recalling his bravery and the contradictions of his reign. Emotion swept through the crowd when the heart was put on public display, protected by a crystal dome, allowing everyone to observe this fragment of Brazilian history.

Over the following days, thousands of people visited the site, eager to see the relic up close. Amidst curious gazes and moving reflections, the heart of Dom Pedro I seemed to pulse once more—not within a human chest, but in the collective imagination of a people still seeking to understand their own identity and history.²

The text above was generated by ChatGPT when it was asked to describe the transport and display of Dom Pedro I's heart during the celebrations of Brazil's Independence Bicentennial³. When questioned about describing such a macabre event in such a pompous and elegant manner, the program replied:

Great observation! The solemn and elegant tone reflects how the event was officially treated, but I can adjust the text to emphasize the more macabre and bizarre aspects of the situation. We could highlight the oddity of celebrating independence with a preserved human organ, adopt a more ironic tone, or even explore the discomfort such a display might cause. Would you like me to make that change?⁴

² ChatGPT. Available at: <https://chatgpt.com/c/67c34b1c-3214-8013-ae86-bc3ed7ae8c35>. Accessed on: March 1st, 2025.

³ ChatGPT was used in incognito mode and without a user login to minimize potential interference arising from previous interactions, algorithmic personalization, or browsing history, thereby aiming for greater neutrality in the response generated by the tool.

⁴ ChatGPT. Available at: <https://chatgpt.com/c/67c34b1c-3214-8013-ae86-bc3ed7ae8c35>. Accessed on: March 1st, 2025.

The experiments with this tool in the present article conclude here. However, certain elements in the responses obtained via ChatGPT stand out. Beyond the linguistic devices employed—producing a cohesive and well-crafted narrative—the narrative's "solemn and elegant" tone is notable, treating Dom Pedro's heart as "unusual cargo steeped in historical significance." The relic wrinkled, darkened, and viscous in texture, surrounded by bubbles and debris sheds its sinister qualities to make way for a description of the spectators' supposedly anxious reactions. The text assigns symbolic value to Dom Pedro I's heart as an element of national history. Another noteworthy element appears in the description of "authorities delivering speeches about the emperor's legacy, recalling his bravery and the contradictions of his reign"—a detail pointing to the construction of a romanticized version of events, grounded in principles of nationalism and heroic personalism.

The program emulating a human being, narrates a historically constructed and socially transmitted memory, reinforcing elements of heroism linked to the figure of Dom Pedro. A visionary who helped "found a nation," marked by exceptionalism for building a "legacy" for future generations; a figure destined to fulfill a historic mission for Brazil, who like any Romantic hero, meets a dramatic end defined by heroic suffering, immortalized in a heart preserved in formalin that still beats "in the collective imagination of a people still seeking to understand their own identity and history." Regarding Brazilian identity, the text generated by the algorithm⁵ suggests that such an identity is constructed through connections between the past and the present. The heart may well be a symbol of this national identity, a construct linked to a Romantic, celebratory, and exalting historical memory.

The clearly laudatory tone establishes a deep connection with the historiography of Imperial Brazil and the early Republic. Yet, the nature of this connection remains unclear. The platform itself indicates that the response "reflects how the event was officially treated", this was the narrative mobilized by the ChatGPT algorithm. But what is the origin of this official version? Why does it portray Brazil's Independence, its events and historical figures, in this specific way? What is the impact of reproducing the historical biases selected by the algorithms? How does this affect the production of historical knowledge, collective memory, identity construction, and the teaching of History?

Part of these questions can be understood through the reflections of Rodrigo Turin (2020) regarding the transformations in the historiography of Brazil's Independence and the contemporary disputes surrounding the construction of the past. Turin identifies three decisive temporal milestones: emergence, crisis, and lines of flight in the present. The first phase, emergence, corresponds to the moment this official narrative was established, marked by the persistence of structures of colonization, domination, and segregation. The crisis phase, in turn, refers to a more recent period, specifically from the 1980s onwards, when the fragile boundaries between a "practical past" and a "historical past" became increasingly blurred, sparking debates and revisions of disciplinary protocols. During this stage, the historiography of Independence began to adopt a more critical stance toward the official narrative, challenging aspects of its legacy as well as its conceptual, epistemological, and ontological shortcomings (TURIN, 2020).

A crucial element of this process was the rapid democratization of the university, marked by demographic and geographic expansion as well as quota policies, which enabled a more heterogeneous composition of the student body and faculty. It is this diversity of actors—more than mere theoretical and methodological debates—that has driven movements to revise the narrative, conceptual, and temporal legacies of the historical discipline (TURIN, 2020, p. 11).

⁵ An algorithm is a set of well-defined instructions or rules that guide the execution of a task or the solution to a problem. It can be simple, like a cake recipe, or extremely complex, like the systems that power artificial intelligence. In ChatGPT, algorithms are fundamental because they guide how the model processes information and generates responses.

What was once described as a singular event, simultaneously marked by rupture and continuity, came to be questioned. With the expansion of universities and the democratization of graduate programs, a socially more diverse and relatively more autonomous body of specialists emerged; this led the historical discipline to link its analyses to concepts such as citizenship, sovereignty, and the people. Although this process occurred later than in other countries, the 1980s saw an intensification of historiographical production that began to include indigenous peoples, black people, women, and various other groups historically erased from the emerging historiography.

According to Turin, we are currently experiencing lines of flight from the present regarding Brazil's Independence. It is fair to say there is an explosion in the consumption of history, though not necessarily of "history as a scholarly discipline." Magazines, websites, films, series, games, and festivals make up a variety of products and performances that circulate and are consumed socially. The contemporary expansion of how the past circulates in digital environments has significantly transformed social experiences with history. As Rodrigo Turin (2020, p. 18) observes, "the variety of representations of the past across different media has never been so vast and intense." In this context, Artificial Intelligence tools are also acting as mediators of historical culture, reorganizing historical narratives that are already socially established.

Based on these reflections, the objective of this article is outlined: to reflect about the potential impacts of using artificial intelligence on historical culture. To this end, the article begins with a general understanding of the definition and functioning of these technological tools. It then analyzes the production of memory within the narratives generated by ChatGPT, presented here, comparing them with historical narratives from history teachers in Basic Education.⁶ It seeks to understand how such technologies can influence — by reinforcing or transforming — the construction, transmission, and appropriation of historical culture.

The analysis draws on the concept of historical culture formulated by Jörn Rüsen (2007; 2015), linking it to Rodrigo Turin's (2020) reflections about the tensions between disciplinary/school history and "history as a service," particularly within the contemporary context of expanding ways in which the past circulates and is consumed in digital environments.

Artificial Intelligence

There are many reasons for the resistance and reservations within the field of historical science regarding the use of generative artificial intelligence tools. In general, such concerns stem from questions concerning ethical principles, biases, potential errors, superficiality, and copyright infringement. These concerns affect various areas, levels, and institutions of research and education. But what is the reason for so much debate? What, in fact, is Artificial Intelligence, and how do chatbots based on this technology work? This section will provide an introductory overview of the concepts behind and the functioning of the tool used in the introduction to this text.

⁶ The empirical material analyzed in this article is part of the research project "*Independência do Brasil e seu Bicentenário*", affiliated with the History and History Teaching research group at the State University of Londrina (UEL). As an initial stage of the investigation, an online questionnaire was administered via Google Forms, comprising 10 open-ended and multiple-choice questions aimed at understanding the pedagogical perspectives and historical narratives employed by History teachers when addressing Brazil's Independence in the classroom. In total, 46 responses were collected from History teachers and undergraduates, aged 20 to 58 and evenly split between men and women, primarily from the states of Paraná, Bahia, and Mato Grosso do Sul. This article specifically analyzes the responses to the question asking for reflections on the historical figure of Dom Pedro I within the process of Brazil's Independence.

According to André da Silva (2024), studies on computational intelligence date back to 1956, when, during the Conference at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, USA, the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) was systematized. The researcher points out that there were previous observations, however, it was at this event that a group of computer scientists addressed the topic for two months and brought significant innovations to the area. For Silva,

Artificial Intelligence systems can be understood as systems that think like humans; the study of these systems encompasses the effort to develop machines with minds, the art of creating machines capable of performing actions that require human intelligence, and the field of computer science dedicated to understanding human intelligence replicated as technology (SILVA, 2024, p. 1308).

Artificial Intelligence systems can be understood as systems capable of reacting to specific stimuli in a manner similar to human thought. Studies about AI address both the nature of human intelligence and the development of technologies capable of replicating it. In everyday life, these technologies appear in various forms, such as virtual assistants, streaming platform recommendations, email filters, personalized ads, GPS systems and traffic apps, autocorrect features, search engine algorithms, and social media.

The subject of this study emerged from a brief interaction with a chatbot. Chatbots are computer programs that use artificial intelligence to simulate conversations with humans. They are commonly found on the websites of stores, banks, and service providers, where they answer basic inquiries without the need for a human representative. There are two main types of chatbots: simpler ones operate based on fixed rules and scripts with predefined questions and answers—such as the example: "Press 1 to sign up, 2 if you are already a customer..." In contrast, ChatGPT—the tool used in this analysis—represents a more advanced model, as it employs Natural Language Processing (NLP) to better understand questions and provide more flexible, context-aware responses.

OpenAI, an artificial intelligence research organization founded in the United States in 2015, is the creator of ChatGPT. On November 30, 2022, the company released the first public version of the tool. GPT stands for "Generative Pre-trained Transformer." According to the developers, the model is capable of generating long responses by articulating diverse information in a contextualized manner. In other words, it does not operate through simple reproduction or the direct cutting and pasting of texts; rather, it functions through the probabilistic identification of linguistic patterns within a vast dataset of publicly available or licensed texts, producing coherent textual responses based on the prompts received. It is not, therefore, a direct copy, although it does not strictly constitute a new creation or analysis either.

It is worth noting that the dataset used by the model is not updated in real time. The training databases were updated in September 2021 (GPT-3.5), April 2023 (GPT-4-turbo), and December 2023 (GPT-4o). Consequently, when asked about events occurring after these dates, the chatbot tends to exhibit limitations in accuracy, unless it is authorized to use web search tools.

In addition to ChatGPT (OpenAI), there are several other widely used chatbots globally. Notable examples include Gemini (Google/Alphabet), Copilot (Microsoft), Meta AI (Meta—Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp), and DeepSeek.

Romanticism in the “creation of Brazil”: tracing the narrative generated via Artificial Intelligence

Culture can be understood as everything in the human world that is not nature. A curious anthropological fact—fundamental and universal—is that human beings must interpret their world and themselves in order to live. Culture is, therefore, essential; without it, human praxis cannot even take place (RÜSEN, 2014). Historical culture, in turn, is linked to the origins of historical thought within practical life. It is within this realm that one finds the cultural practices that guide human suffering and action (RÜSEN, 2014; 2015). These practices manifest in artistic and cultural productions, formal education, commemorations, holidays, museums, exhibitions, monuments, street names, social movements, family traditions... in short, in every interpretive act that gives meaning and direction to suffering and acting within time.

Historical culture represents the highest level of activities and institutions dealing with history. It guides both suffering and action in a constantly transforming world, triggering the process by which experiences of the past are transformed into interpretations that allow for understanding the present and projecting the future (Rüsen, 2007; 2014). In other words, it is through experiences of suffering lived within the realm of historical culture that the formation of historical consciousness begins.

In this process, historical memory can be understood not merely as the preservation of the past, but as a way of assigning meaning to temporally situated experiences lived collectively. For Rüsen, this becomes clear when considering the fundamental role to human consciousness when dealing with time. “Human consciousness of time is a complex intertwining of memory and expectation” (RÜSEN, 2015, p. 219). In other words, the temporal horizon of human existence simultaneously involves past experiences and future expectations. It is historical memory that narratively organizes specific past experiences, articulating identities, cultural orientations, and expectations for the future.

Along these same analytical lines, it is worth including Candau’s (2012) reflections on the selectivity of memory. For the author,

memory is, above all, a continuously updated reconstruction of the past, rather than a faithful reconstitution of it: “memory is in fact more of a framing than a content, an ever-attainable goal, a set of strategies, a ‘being here’ that matters less for what it is than for what we make of it.” The idea that past experiences are memorized, preserved, and retrieved in their entirety seems “untenable.” (CANDAU, 2012, p. 9)

Thus, as they are continuously reconstructed based on the needs for orientation and the demands and sensibilities of the present, the historical narratives produced within historical culture do not merely recall events but also generate socially shared interpretations of the past (RÜSEN, 2014; 2015). Moreover, historical memory does more than recall the past; it also shapes identity, with the two being inextricably linked (CANDAU, 2012). Rüsen (2015) further distinguishes between two fundamental modes of how historical consciousness relates to memory. On one hand, there is a more *receptive* and *involuntary* memory, marked by affective continuities, accumulated experiences, and recollections that pass through individuals without necessarily undergoing systematic rational elaboration. On the other, there is an *intentional* and *constructive* memory, consciously mobilized to produce narratives capable of guiding human temporal experience. It is within this constructive dimension that historical memory organizes, selects, and interprets past experiences in accordance with specific needs for orientation in the present, projecting meanings and expectations into the future.

The various dimensions of historical culture operate within these contests over assigning meaning to the past contests in which memory, identity, and historical experience are continuously intertwined. Drawing on the reflections and conceptualizations of Jörn Rüsen (2014; 2015), historical culture can be differentiated into three dimensions: aesthetic, cognitive, and political. The aesthetic dimension concerns the coherence among form, performance, and persuasion. Imaginative resources ranging from literature to the visual arts are mobilized to construct a persuasive discourse regarding a particular historical meaning. Due to its performative and persuasive power, this dimension achieves broad and lasting effects. The cognitive dimension, in turn, seeks argumentative validity; here, historical scholarship and formal education play a decisive role in projecting a historical culture through arguments that are transmitted to future generations. The political dimension, meanwhile, is directly linked to legitimation as an element of the struggle for power. As Rüsen (2014, p. 102) states, “no system of domination can dispense with historical culture as a source of legitimation, and the critique of legitimation always relies on historical argumentation as well.”

When considering the aesthetic dimension of historical culture, it is essential to recognize Romanticism as a fundamental element in the formation of a historical culture regarding Brazil. Romanticism⁷ was a cultural, artistic, and literary movement of the 18th and 19th centuries that incorporated the historicist, mystical, sentimental, and revolutionary elements of Pre-Romanticism. In contrast to the rationalist objectivity of the bourgeoisie, it emphasized emotional subjectivism as a source of inspiration (GUIMARÃES & PRÓCHNO, 2016). Defining characteristics of this movement include the valuing of sentiment and emotion, the exaltation of the individual and the "Self," nationalism, and the appreciation of a past shaped by traditions and myths, among others.

This late-18th-century cultural movement was influenced by English literature and German philosophy. Within it, Romantic subjectivism was linked to classical liberalism in the shaping of the concept of the nation, particularly in Europe's intellectual centers. However, while European countries sought their historical roots to consolidate national identities, the challenge in Latin America—and particularly in Brazil—was to build a new culture and national identity free from colonial ties, recreating the past to unify the newly independent country and project a proud, modern nation (SANTOS, 2018).

José Murilo de Carvalho (1990) points out that the construction of a social imaginary is fundamental to the legitimation of any political regime. It is through the realm of the imaginary that one reaches not only “the head” but also “the heart” (CARVALHO, 1990, p. 10). The imaginary is not tied exclusively to the rationality of a phenomenon; rather, it involves the construction of a people's aspirations, fears, and hopes. It is through the imaginary that societies define their identities, goals, and enemies, and organize their past, present, and future. Thus,

The social imaginary is constituted and expressed through ideologies and utopias, certainly, but also—and this is what interests me here—through symbols, allegories, rituals, and myths. Due to their diffuse nature and less codified readings, symbols and myths can become powerful elements for projecting collective interests, aspirations, and fears. To the extent that they succeed in reaching the imaginary, they can also shape worldviews and mold behaviors. (CARVALHO, 1990, pp. 10–11)

⁷ Scholars observe a variety of romantic types, with many preferring to speak of “romanticisms” in the plural rather than “Romanticism” (GONÇALVES, 2009, p. 431). However, since this text will address Romanticism generally as a cultural movement, without dwelling on the specificities of each sub-movement—we will use the singular term to reflect this choice.

Consequently, in the context of the formation of independent Brazil, Romantic aesthetics served the interests of manipulating the social imaginary, a crucial factor during that period of political and social change. The challenges posed by the context of Brazil's independence and the need to redefine collective identities could be overcome, for instance, through the creation of Romantic heroes. Such historical figures, constructed through a Romantic lens, possessed virtues that allowed them to embody ideas and aspirations, serving as reference points and foundations for collective identification. This fostered a historical culture with an aesthetic that appealed to both the minds and hearts of citizens, thereby aiding in the legitimation of political regimes.

It is also worth noting that Romanticism was Brazil's first literary movement, and its emergence and growth coincided with the country's process of political independence. At that time, a series of transformations fostered the development of a vibrant intellectual life, and literary expressions contributed to the construction of a recognizable cultural universe shared by Brazilians. However, Brazil's political emancipation harbored a profound contradiction: on one hand, the representation of the highest civilized royalty—of Braganza, Bourbon, and Habsburg lineage—and, on the other, the economic significance of the slave trade. According to Lilia Schwarcz (2000), the Empire sought to create discourses that prioritized memories masking enslaved labor while simultaneously naturalizing politics as a sphere for the most gifted individuals—actions that can be associated with the cognitive dimension of historical culture.

Within this cognitive dimension of historical culture, the role of the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute (IHGB) was fundamental to consolidating specific interpretations regarding the formation of the Brazilian nation. Established in 1838 and modeled after the Royal Academy of History in Portugal, the IHGB brought together an intellectual elite from Rio de Janeiro to construct a narrative that legitimized the Brazilian monarchy. The Institute portrayed the past in an exalted light, emphasizing a majestic natural landscape and Indigenous peoples depicted in romanticized settings. The monarchy was presented as a government standing above all other institutions, while slavery was literally erased from the narrative (Schwarcz, 2000). Romanticism served as one of the key symbolic foundations for the process of forging a Brazilian cultural identity.

Turin (2009) highlights that the guiding focus of IHGB members was the organization of a national history centered on territorial and political unity. The Institute assigned historians the task of delineating a profile of the "Brazilian nation" capable of securing a distinct identity within the broader community of nations. Under the watchful eye of its principal patron and founder, Emperor Dom Pedro II, "the task of writing history was viewed as an official duty, and the resulting work as a national asset" (TURIN, 2009, p. 15).

Many works produced by historians affiliated with the IHGB reflect a historiography committed to the centrality of the imperial figure. Turin identifies three fundamental aspects of this centralizing project of the imperial State, deeply intertwined with historiographical practice: affective writing, scientificity, and governability. These elements played a decisive role in consolidating a romanticized historical culture, characterized by the idealization of the nation, the heroization of specific historical figures, and the symbolic legitimation of the Brazilian monarchy.

Affective writing manifested itself through the mobilization of emotions, symbols, and patriotic sensibilities capable of fostering a sense of identification between individuals and the national narrative. Scientificity, in turn, lent intellectual legitimacy to these interpretations of the past, presenting them as authoritative and socially valid knowledge. Governability, meanwhile, linked the writing of history to the political interests of the Empire, employing historical narrative as an instrument of social cohesion, the legitimation of monarchical power, and the construction of a shared national memory. In this process, Romanticism functioned not merely as a literary style or aesthetic sensibility, but as a means of historically and politically orienting the national experience.

The consolidation of this romanticized historical culture was not confined to the IHGB or the intellectual disputes of the Imperial Court. As Márcia de Almeida Gonçalves (2009) observes, many intellectuals of the period sought to define what, in the parlance of the time, constituted Brazil's "local color," striving to envision and give substance to the unique character of the "lands and peoples" of the young, emerging nation. It involved the formulation, "across a wide range of fields, of manifestos expressing a desire for cultural autonomy" (GONÇALVES, 2009, p. 429). In this process, the creation of national heroes, the idealization of tropical nature, and the crafting of narratives regarding the origins of the Brazilian people were all part of a unified movement to generate historical meaning aimed at the symbolic legitimation of both the nation and the Empire.

Despite a certain eclectic quality, the Brazilian brand of Romanticism did not readily accept the imitation of earlier Portuguese models. While models for works certainly existed, there was also "originality in the copying" (SCHWARCZ, 2000, p. 113). The individuality and historicism characteristic of Romantic thought fostered a nationalist aesthetic that celebrated the exuberant nature of the Americas. A case in point is Indianism, one of the currents within Romanticism. Although the figure of the "Indian"⁸ was not a Romantic invention, it served as a national symbol at patriotic festivals and events, becoming a repository for national mythology. However, this did not entail an in-depth study of Indigenous lives or history; rather, the figure of the Indian was employed in Brazil's foundational myth to secure a glorious past and a national identity for the Brazilian people.

Thus, Romantic literature became part of the Empire's official discourse, transforming the Indigenous person into a noble model for the genesis of a nation centered on the figure of the monarch. Schwarcz believes that Dom Pedro II's role in literature became prominent through his commissioning of epic narratives centered on Indigenous heroes, blending Romantic eccentricity with historical research (SCHWARCZ, 2000, p. 116). During the 1850s and 1860s, this Romantic literary discourse expanded into music, the visual arts, and official historiography. It fell to this historiography, particularly that associated with the IHGB, to establish a new pantheon of national heroes in order to gain argumentative validity.

It is within this context that History was constructed as a school subject in Brazil. Maria Auxiliadora Schmidt (2011) identifies the 1838 Regulations of the *Colégio Dom Pedro II* as the institutional milestone for the creation of this school subject (SCHMIDT, 2011, p. 78). Schmidt highlights the strong influence of European conceptions of History; however, the teaching of History under these regulations focused predominantly about a "History of Civilization" based primarily on the history of Western Europe. National History (that of Brazil) appeared merely as an appendix, playing a secondary role; it was assigned to the final years of secondary school, allocated few class hours, and organized as a repository of biographies of illustrious men, dates, and battles (SCHMIDT, 2012).

Although Schmidt identifies a secondary role for the teaching of national history, this conception led school History, for much of the 19th and 20th centuries, to focus on moral and civic education, integrating notions of morality and patriotism. The romantic elements that formed the basis of the history taught in schools were part of the movement to construct the Brazilian nation-state, a national memory, and a conception of the citizen and citizenship.

⁸ In the context of Brazilian Romantic literature—specifically the *Indianismo* movement—the term "*índio*" (Indian) is the most appropriate choice because it reflects the idealized and stereotypical view that 19th-century writers held regarding Indigenous peoples. This term is historically linked to the construction of a national identity during the Romantic era, when authors such as José de Alencar (in works like *O Guarani* and *Iracema*) created the figure of the "noble savage", a romanticized Indigenous person who was often fearless, pure, and heroic, yet far removed from the reality of actual Indigenous peoples.

Using terms such as "Indigenous peoples," "natives," or "original peoples" when discussing this literature can result in anachronism, as these expressions carry a contemporary perspective that seeks to respect the diversity and identity of distinct Indigenous groups, whereas *Indianismo* treated "Indians" in a generic and fanciful manner.

Rodrigo Turin's (2020) reflections help us understand that these modes of producing and transmitting the past were linked to what the author terms "disciplinary/school history", that is, a form of historical representation underpinned by institutional protocols, validation criteria, and specific teaching and research practices. The history taught in schools, much like that produced by institutions such as the IHGB, was organized around specific historiographical operations aimed at shaping the nation, citizenship, and a shared national memory.

However, ChatGPT, the central subject of this article's analysis, does not fully fit into this disciplinary tradition. Nor does it operate according to the epistemological commitments of historical science. Its logic aligns much more closely with what Turin calls "history as a service," characterized by "distinct forms of historiographical operations" (TURIN, 2020, p. 32), operations organized primarily around circulation, rapid consumption, and the ability to meet users' immediate expectations.

This does not mean that disciplinary or school-based history is detached from the political dimension of historical culture. It is clearly marked by political disputes, power agendas, or interests of legitimation, as demonstrated, for instance, by the activities of the IHGB and the construction of a romanticized national memory throughout the 19th century. The difference lies primarily in the modes of mediation, circulation, and validation of these narratives. While disciplinary or school-based history is structured around specific institutions, methods, and practices of historical knowledge production, the narrative produced by Artificial Intelligence is guided chiefly by maintaining user interaction, offering fluid and socially recognizable responses designed to encourage continued consumption of the platform itself.

Under these conditions, the myth of the heroic figure of Dom Pedro I—introduced at the beginning of this text, is both created and revived. Rooted in the personalism typical of Romantic thought, a memory, and consequently a political-historical identity is established in Brazil wherein political leadership - in this case, the Emperor serves as the icon, the hero, and the genius who leads and saves an entire nation. Through the sentimentality typical of mythic narratives, the realities of clientelism, power struggles, the violence of historical events, and the interests of the various social groups involved are all overlooked. The role of the common man, the subject, is merely to watch passively and root for a favorable outcome. This conception permeates interpretations of the present and projections for the future, implying that it is up to destiny alone to ensure the emergence of heroes. These heroes, entities embodying sheer genius, are the ones who, through their courage, would ensure the nation's progress and freedom. Given the historical identity shaped by Romantic influence, this was only natural.

The political dimension of historical culture constantly manifests itself within this process. Indeed, all three dimensions are equally fundamental, existing in a complex, conditional relation involving claims, validity, and functions (Rüsen, 2015). Regarding the political dimension, a crucial element worth highlighting is the shaping of a pacifist identity among Brazilians. The Indianism found in Romantic literature, the studies of the IHGB, and history education was not overtly hostile toward the colonizer. The Romanticized Indigenous figure embodied a moral ideal rooted in Christian ethics. The Indigenous hero symbolized good character rather than purity. When such a hero fought a white character, that white figure was not villainized simply for being a colonizer, but rather for being an ambitious and inhumane one.

The Indigenous figure, as a national myth, perfectly served the aim of forging a docile, pacifist Brazilian identity. The Indigenous person portrayed posed no threat or problem; geographically removed from urban centers, they were viewed as a declining race whose heroic deeds belonged to a distant past. Black and mixed-race people, comprising roughly three-quarters of Brazil's total population in the mid-19th century, lived in conditions of slavery or servitude and were not cast as heroes in Romantic historiography. In short, a notion of identity was deliberately crafted by a slave-owning elite that defined values and concepts of nationhood and politics for itself and for all Brazilians. Consequently, partisan politics remained

concentrated in the hands of a few. The exercise of power was a performance in which the king served as a national icon, masking the evident ties of clientelism and personalism. Even amidst the transformations brought about by the creation of the Republic, also orchestrated by an economic and political elite, such practices persisted within this new system of power.

From soccer to politics, a romanticized historical culture fosters the expectation of a national savior, whether a prince, a presidential candidate, or a *daring and joyful young star*, who will pull us out of the mess we are in. Schwarcz (2000) identifies further historical events and discourses that reinforce elements of passivity and conformity within the Brazilian historical identity, such as Princess Isabel's Abolition of Slavery, Deodoro da Fonseca's Proclamation of the Republic, and Getúlio Vargas's Revolution of 1930. It falls to the hero to deliver the resounding, heroic cry, while the common people are left to achieve things through the strength of their own arms. If we continue on this path, we will remain "reclining in a splendid cradle."

Narratives in Dialogue: Artificial Intelligence and History Teachers

As we gain a deeper understanding by delving into the aesthetic, cognitive, and political manifestations of historical culture, the premises, meanings, and intentional actions associated with the Romantic perspective on Brazilian history, which guided the narrative generated by ChatGPT at the beginning of this article, become evident. Fundamental elements in the construction of the heroic myth of Dom Pedro I reveal the strong influence of the personalism characteristic of Romantic thought. Thus, a collective memory is consolidated that shapes a historical and political identity, in which the figure of the leader—in this case, the emperor—is exalted as an icon, a hero, and a genius destined to guide and redeem the nation. Such a conception not only shapes the interpretation of the past but also projects a vision of the future, upholding the belief that only destiny could reveal new heroes.

However, the Romantic memory of Brazil proves to be alive not only in the narrative created via ChatGPT but also in the practical lives of many Brazilians. This is observed in the *involuntary and receptive use of memory* by history teachers of Basic Education in a study cited in the introduction to this article. According to this analysis, when prompted to write about Dom Pedro⁹, 5 of the 46 participating teachers attributed intentionally heroic characteristics to Dom Pedro's¹⁰ leadership. This is evidenced by the festive and celebratory tone of Participant 7 in the study, who describes Dom Pedro as:

A Portuguese man with a tropical heart. Like any heir, he was prepared to be a monarch. A man versed in music, possessing wonderful charisma and a reputation as a womanizer. He turned his bravery into one of the defining elements of the independence of what would become BRAZIL (Participant 7 – his emphasis).

⁹ The questionnaire consisted of 10 questions regarding the substantive content of the "Independence of Brazil" and the way the teacher taught the topic to their students. In question number 5, the participating teacher was asked to respond to the following prompt: "Among the figures who stand out in the historical narrative of Brazil's independence is Dom Pedro, who would go on to become Dom Pedro I. Discuss him."

¹⁰ Of the 46 responses collected, 6 teachers did not answer, and 33 referred to Dom Pedro as the leader of a movement that, within a specific historical context, culminated in the independence process. Based on the arguments and examples used by the teachers in their responses, the researchers established five categories regarding the monarch's leadership. Dom Pedro was portrayed as: (1) an opportunistic leader; (2) passive; (3) conscious and non-heroic; (4) conscious and heroic; and (5) a manufactured figure.

It is possible that the mention of the Portuguese man's "tropical heart" is directly influenced by the Romantic memory historically constructed by the Brazilian elite since independence. The cult of the monarch exalts not only the hero but also the Nation written in capital letters, the tropical nature, tradition, music, festivity, and celebration. There is no controversy surrounding this leader's persona; he is charismatic and a womanizer. This is part of the very construction of his heroic and magnificent nature. The same study revealed that some participants described Dom Pedro as "(...) Cultured, a humanist, and a liberal" (Participant 14).

However, the response from Participant 23 is particularly striking. For him, "as history teachers, we must speak of the 'virtuous' aspects of this figure, but to hold teenagers' attention, we also talk about how he was a cuckold, a womanizer, a heavy drinker, a scoundrel, and much more." This excerpt reveals how the teacher perceives the educator's role in the school teaching process. For this teacher, history as taught institutionally should prioritize the biographies of illustrious figures, highlighted for their virtuous behavior, rectitude, and role as good examples, to shape individuals with similar conduct and morality, much like in the 19th century when history was first established as a school subject in Brazil.

At the same time, however, the teacher also employs sensationalist elements, linked to the aesthetic dimension of a spectacularized historical culture, to spark student interest. This strategy partially shifts the narrative from the realm of historical interpretation to that of dramatization and entertainment, creating a tension between different functions of school history: on one hand, the preservation of an official, romanticized memory; on the other, the contemporary need to generate immediate engagement. In this regard, the approach aligns with what Turin (2020) calls "history as a service," characterized by adapting narratives to audience expectations and the constant pursuit of maintaining attention and consumption. This dilemma illustrates how the teacher's historical consciousness navigates different dimensions of historical culture—at times reinforcing the legitimacy of a traditional, normative narrative, and at others mobilizing spectacularized elements to gain recognition, emotional impact, and student buy-in.

At this point, a parallel can be drawn with narratives produced by Artificial Intelligence. Much like the teacher, the AI alternated between a seemingly objective, moralizing approach and one characterized by anecdotal or dramatic elements. In both instances, the narrative construction serves both to legitimize the romanticized narrative and to capture the audience's attention, mirroring contemporary dynamics regarding the circulation and consumption of the past. However, the anecdotal and dramatized nature of the AI-generated narrative proved more effective at sustaining the cult of the illustrious and heroic Dom Pedro I. The linguistic devices employed reinforce the image of a charismatic, astute, and intelligent born leader, while omitting moral failings. Thus, one observes the mobilization of historical ideas to assert the birth of a tradition or the exemplary regularity of a historical figure destined to rule. The narrative of the AI does not present a Dom Pedro open to critical analysis; the past imposes itself upon the present, shaping and reinterpreting it according to traditional dictates. Lost in this narrative is the reflective role of historical consciousness—so essential for critically confronting the contradictions and conflicts of the past.

Considering the cognitive dimension of historical culture, we can infer that the production of historical knowledge about the past is also undergoing change. Although the use of AI enables the acceleration and expansion of access to historical knowledge—by accessing vast amounts of historical data and systematizing and synthesizing information—and fosters new forms of learning—creating novel cognitive experiences with the past through simulations, games, and interactions¹¹—there is a risk of superficial learning, a decline in theoretical-methodological rigor in the production of historical narratives, and the reinforcement of traditional, simplified narratives, as observed in the text generated by ChatGPT. While AI can expand and democratize access to historical knowledge, it can also contribute to a superficial engagement with the past, devaluing historiographical critique and undermining the development of critical and genetic historical consciousness.

This dynamic is evident in the very response provided by ChatGPT at the beginning of this text. When questioned about the solemn, elegant tone used to describe a potentially macabre event, rather than upholding a specific historical interpretation or problematizing the meanings inherent in the Bicentennial celebration, the tool immediately offered to reframe the narrative to suit the user's expectations: "we could highlight the strangeness [...], adopt a more ironic tone, or even explore the discomfort this display might cause." This response reveals a mode of operation driven less by the critical grounding of historical knowledge and more by narrative adaptation, communicative fluidity, and the maintenance of interaction. In this respect, Artificial Intelligence aligns with what Turin (2020) characterizes as "history as a service," wherein the construction of the past tends to continuously adjust to the public's demands for consumption, recognition, and engagement.

Reflecting about how people interact with AI-generated narratives, we can deduce that a lack of knowledge regarding historical science leads individuals to merely reproduce narratives, such as the romanticized version presented at the start of this article. Confusing history with memory leads to substituting the scientific method with nostalgic inquiry. While memory constructs identities, it is the science of history that reveals contexts. In contrast to the uncritical stance often found in AI-generated content, the participating teachers demonstrated a significant appreciation for historical science in the learning process. Moving beyond such uncritical views, five teachers characterized Dom Pedro as a hero constructed by a specific historiography.

Participant 27, for instance, describes Dom Pedro as a "controversial figure, exalted as a hero by 'Official History' yet viewed with a degree of scepticism by historiography." In his view, the Independence process only truly materialized with Dom Pedro's abdication in 1831. By formulating this interpretation, the participant challenges and denaturalizes the narrative sanctified by Romantic historical culture, a narrative that credits the monarch with sole leadership over Brazil's political emancipation.

Although she mistakenly attributes the origin of the Dom Pedro myth to positivism, Participant 3 draws a connection to the present, stating that "the exaltation of Dom Pedro is part of the positivist worldview that influenced, and still permeates, historical narratives, casting wealthy white men of European descent as the protagonists of history." Beyond merely pointing out the construction of this heroic figure, the participant identifies the persistence of historical influences that privilege certain social groups over others, thereby naturalizing the privileges enjoyed by wealthy white men.

¹¹ Regarding such experiences, consult interview simulations with historical figures or on historical topics using chatbots: MELLO, Janaína Cardoso de; CERQUEIRA, Rafael Santa Rosa. A IA como agente interativo no Ensino de História da ditadura militar no Brasil. *Revista História em Curso*, v. 6, n.10, Dez. 2024. Available at: <https://periodicos.pucminas.br/historiaemcurso/article/view/35037/23091>. Accessed on: 11 jul. 2025. BENTIVOGLIO, J. Conversa sobre Teoria da História com o ChatGPT. *Revista de Teoria da História*, Goiânia, v. 26, n. 1, p. 316–335, 2023. Available at: <https://revistas.ufg.br/teoria/article/view/75344>. Accessed on: 11 jul. 2025.

Participant 5 acknowledges the political debates surrounding differing interpretations of Dom Pedro's historical significance: "... a figure who allows us to reflect about certain issues; while official historiography sought to craft the image of a strong emperor, modeled after Old Regime monarchs, he also appears as a ruler who lacked real power and failed to secure the elite's support for his continued reign." Expanding on this analysis, the teacher proposes (re)thinking the context of Independence and its subsequent repercussions.

Participants 11 and 22 point out that the heroic image of Dom Pedro continues to be reinforced by contemporary strategies for preserving official memory. For Participant 11, the mere fact that "Dom Pedro the hero" is a recurring topic in university entrance exams indicates the persistence of narratives built around heroes. Participant 22 adds that "the image constructed by monarchists and disseminated through textbooks" maintains a vision of Brazil aligned with Portugal. Thus, beyond the role played by the IHGB in the 19th century, entrance exams and educational materials continue to fuel the figure of the Independence hero.

Teachers who identify Dom Pedro as a leader forged by Romantic historical culture also recognize the groups responsible for this construction. From the wealthy white elite to monarchists, various actors have utilized tools such as official historiography, university entrance exams, and textbooks to consolidate the image of the emancipatory hero. The valorization of Romantic historical traditions and myths influences the construction of historical identities and the very concept of citizenship. As previously noted, when faced with a heroic, savior-like icon, the ordinary citizen tends to adopt a passive stance, simply "rooting for a good outcome." These teachers, however, acknowledge this memory and intentionally act against such a narrative. While they identify the persistence of a passive, uncritical historical memory embedded in Brazilian historical culture, they simultaneously and consciously mobilize interpretations capable of challenging this tradition and reshaping the meanings attributed to the past. For them, identifying privileged groups is a way to critically reinterpret historical tradition and align it with the demands and experiences of the present.

Consciously and reflectively, these educators reject the romanticized Dom Pedro, deeming him of no practical use in real life. This *intentional reflective* use of memory signifies a critical rejection of tradition and a desire to transform the present. By highlighting the clashes between competing versions of the Independence narrative, they address the need for temporal orientation, seeking out multiple interpretive perspectives, as well as the theories, categories, and methods, that shape historiography about the subject. In doing so, they mobilize historical consciousness to find references in the past for action in the present, thereby fostering a historical culture capable of meeting the temporal needs of practical life.

These more sophisticated forms of historical interpretation become more feasible when linked to an understanding of the critical and methodological procedures inherent to historical science. Without this perspective, the reproduction of romanticized models of memory tends to prevail, as was observed in the narrative output of the AI. Thus, the most challenging potential consequences may well lie within the political dimension of historical culture. This dimension concerns the public and social uses of history to legitimize collective identities, justify present-day political actions, construct visions of the future, and/or silence and exclude certain memories. It is deeply linked to the orienting function of historical consciousness, which provides the individual with a sense of direction through time. Interactions with ChatGPT reveal a reinforcement of forms of domination historically constructed by the Romantic historical culture surrounding Brazil's history. Indeed, this culture was not merely reinforced but also amplified by the chat interface's modern, depersonalized guise.

Final considerations

No matter how extensive their linguistic repertoire and ability to emulate human behaviors, Artificial Intelligence tools lack historical consciousness. Historical consciousness arises from human experiences over time, from the need for orientation in practical life, and from the necessity of interpreting the past in order to act in the present and project the future. AIs do not suffer, do not experience time historically, nor do they intentionally construct meaning for their own existence. Yet, they participate increasingly actively in the public circulation of historical culture by reorganizing, selecting, and reproducing socially entrenched narratives.

The analysis conducted throughout this article demonstrated that ChatGPT does not produce autonomous historical interpretations; rather, it operates by mobilizing narrative repertoires already established within Brazilian historical culture. In the specific case of Brazil's Independence, a romanticized historical memory was reinforced, one marked by heroic individualism, the exaltation of the imperial figure, and the idealization of the nation. Elements historically associated with the work of the IHGB, the construction of school history in the 19th century, and the crafting of a "local color" for national identity continue to circulate today, now reorganized within digital environments mediated by Artificial Intelligence.

In this process, it becomes evident that historical memory is not merely the preservation of the past, but the continuous production of socially shared meanings. As demonstrated throughout the text, narratives produced by both teachers and Artificial Intelligence articulate memories, identities, expectations, and visions of the future. However, while some educators consciously employ historiographical critique to problematize entrenched traditions, AI tends to operate based on logics of narrative adaptation, immediate recognition, and the maintenance of user engagement. It thus aligns with what Turin (2020) terms "history as a service", a mode of relating to the past characterized by rapid circulation, consumption, and a constant quest for engagement.

The consequences of this process become even more significant within the political dimension of historical culture. While political and intellectual elites once vied for the legitimation of the past primarily through schools, museums, books, monuments, and historiographical institutions, today such contests also play out across social media, digital platforms, and artificial intelligence tools. The apparent technical neutrality of these technologies tends to lend new levels of legitimacy and reach to historically established narratives. Far from merely reproducing traditional interpretations, AI can amplify historical forms of domination, exclusion, and silencing by recasting them in fluid, persuasive, and technologically legitimized language.

In this sense, the central issue may lie not so much in the existence of artificial intelligence itself, but in how individuals engage with it. Treating algorithmic responses as historically valid and neutral interpretations risks naturalizing selective historical memories, reinforcing exclusionary identities, and undermining the development of critical, reflective historical consciousness. Rather than replacing history as a discipline, artificial intelligence appears to heighten the need for critical historical education, one capable of grasping not only the narratives regarding the past but also the contemporary modes of their production, circulation, and consumption.

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