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The Role of Iconoclasm in Iconization Processes of Cultural Icons. A Case Study on the Images of Greta Thunberg in Children's Books and in Tweets

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Abstract

This master's thesis examines the iconization of Greta Thunberg, exploring how she transitioned from a climate activist to a global cultural icon. Through an analysis of her portrayal in children's literature and contrasting it with Twitter messages with negative sentiment, the study delves into the interplay between iconization and iconoclasm. Using figure analysis, the research dissects distinct images contributing to Greta Thunberg's iconic status. By scrutinizing images taken from a selection of children's books, it is shown how iconography shapes perceptions of Greta among young audiences. Moreover, by analysing negative tweets directed at Greta Thunberg, the study reveals iconoclastic tendencies challenging her iconic status and therefore confirming it. These findings aim to deepen our understanding of how cultural icons are constructed and contested, shedding light on the dynamics of iconization and iconoclasm in contemporary society.

Diese Masterarbeit untersucht, wie Greta Thunberg von einer Klimaaktivistin zu einer globalen kulturellen Ikone wurde. Ihre Darstellung in Kinderliteratur wird hierfür mit negativen Twitter-Nachrichten verglichen. Auf diese Weise untersucht die Arbeit das Wechselspiel zwischen Ikonisierung und Ikonoklasmus. Unter Verwendung von Bildanalyse werden spezifische Bilder, die zum Ikonen-Status von Greta Thunberg beitragen gefunden und definiert. Die Untersuchung dieser *Distinct Images*, die sich durch die Analyse einer Auswahl an Kinderbüchern ergeben, erläutert, wie Ikonografie die Wahrnehmung von Greta bei jungen Leser*innen prägt. Darüber hinaus zeigt die Studie, durch die Analyse negativer Tweets, die sich gegen Greta Thunberg richten, ikonoklastische Tendenzen, die Gretas ikonischen Status herausfordern und somit bestätigen. Diese Erkenntnisse sollen unser Verständnis dafür vertiefen, wie kulturelle Ikonen konstruiert werden, und werfen Licht auf die Dynamiken zwischen Ikonisierung und Ikonoklasmus im gesellschaftlichen Diskurs.

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Abbreviations

Greta and Greta Thunberg: The real-life person

GRETA: The fictional Greta Thunberg character in the children's books

@GretaThunberg, GretaThunberg: Twitter username of Greta Thunberg

LPBD: Little People Big Dreams

UH: Umwelt-Helden

OHIOF: Our House is on Fire

GATG: Greta and the Giants

1. Introduction

In 2018, Sweden experienced its hottest summer since records began, resulting in numerous wildfires throughout the country¹. Fifteen-year-old Greta Thunberg began protesting to draw attention on the climate crisis by sitting in front of the Swedish parliament. She refused to go to school until Sweden's general election day, the 9th of September 2018. This event sparked a world-wide movement called Fridays for Future², and climate change issues have become omnipresent in the media.

The now 21-year-old climate activist Greta Thunberg (born January 3, 2003) became a highly knowledgeable person in the field of climate change issues and was rated under the 20 most influential people in climate policy³. She influenced and inspired various artists in their work, from paintings and memorials to songs and movies. Along with her intention of climate protection, she was featured in numerous pieces of art (figs. 1 and 2). In children's and youth literature, Greta Thunberg left her mark as the main character in various texts. Children's books dealing with the "Fridays-for-Future-movement" and Greta Thunberg as its leader can be found in small bookstores, as well as in large chain stores or at online giants such as Amazon.com. The production of Greta Thunberg merchandise and other goods featuring depictions of her face was booming (figs. 3 and 4). Moreover, her name and image evolved towards iconic status⁴. My interest in this topic derived from figure analysis. To shift the focus from a storyline and plot to the characters or the main protagonists of a story. This meant to shift the focus to traits of a figure, that one can learn from the text. Collective memory⁵, and experiences from (cultural) environment added to the perception of said figure.

Analysing Greta Thunberg in this thesis meant analysing a so-called cultural icon that became a prominent character in literature, mostly for children and young adults. In the following, I provided an in-depth analysis of the process of an iconization. Furthermore, *Distinct Images* of the icon Greta Thunberg were found in four children's books and discussed. Based on the concepts introduced thus far, I elaborated on the use of an icon using

¹ Renate Anna Wilcke et al., "The Extremely Warm Summer of 2018 in Sweden – Set in a Historical Context," *Earth System Dynamics* 11, no. 4 (December 7, 2020): 1107–21, <https://doi.org/10.5194/esd-11-1107-2020>.

² "Fridays for Future Is an International Climate Movement Active in Most Countries and Our Website Offers Information on Who We Are and What You Can Do.," Fridays For Future, August 5, 2023, <https://fridaysforfuture.org/>.

³ "Apolitical 100 Most Influential People in Climate: 2022," Apolitical, accessed March 17, 2024, <https://apolitical.co/list/en/most-influential-climate-100-2022?share=copy>.

⁴ Charlotte Alter, Suyin Haynes, and Justin Worland, "Greta Thunberg: Time's Person of the Year 2019," Time, accessed March 17, 2024, <https://time.com/person-of-the-year-2019-greta-thunberg/>.

⁵ Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980).

the example of two books for children. Lastly, this thesis discussed Twitter (now X)⁶ messages with negative sentiment towards Greta Thunberg. With the help of a Natural language analysis tool, I was able to get the sentiment of Tweets directed to Greta Thunberg, which I had collected. The collection spanned over two weeks – a period during which Greta Thunberg held her famous “How dare you” speech. Here, I compared the images distinct for the Greta Thunberg icon, which I had found in the children’s books presentation of the Greta character, with images that were key elements in the negative Tweets. I showed iconoclastic tendencies in the Tweets with negative sentiment to support the idea of cultural icons being confirmed as icons by iconoclasm.

⁶ The Twitter messenger service was acquired by Elon Musk and renamed X in 2022. In the thesis I continued using Twitter and Tweets, as this was still the company’s name during my Sentiment Analysis. More on the shift from Twitter to X here: Ryan Mac and Tiffany Hsu, “From Twitter to X: Elon Musk Begins Erasing an Iconic Internet Brand,” The New York Times, July 24, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/24/technology/twitter-x-elon-musk.html>.

2. Terms and definitions

The aim of this master's thesis was to analyse the iconization process of cultural icons and the role of iconoclasm therein. Alongside the case study of Greta Thunberg, I examined several indicators for what made a cultural icon and deciphered building blocks an iconization process contained. Questions that were addressed included: What distinguishes a cultural icon from a mere celebrity? Is there a recurring pattern that can be seen in the creation of iconic figures? How does the attribution of character information work? What is iconoclasm? What is the involvement of iconoclasm in the creation of the cultural icon Greta Thunberg? To address these questions, I deciphered five *Distinct Images* of a Greta Thunberg icon in four children's books created by authors from Italy, Spain, and the US. In a qualitative close reading, I examined the creation of the Greta icon within two of the books in particular. This qualitative analysis and comparison of the books was focusing solely on Greta Thunberg's image and its representation in these texts and the function of the images found.

Furthermore, the icon Greta was assessed with tools from digital humanities for a comparison. The social media platform Twitter contained messages called Tweets that were producing and reproducing images. The messages I collected were addressed to and created by Greta Thunberg. I collected them in a quantitative way and analysed their sentiment by feeding my collection into a Natural Language Analysis tool (NLA) by expert.ai.⁷ Iconoclastic attempts, that I found in those Tweets, became the base of a fundamental comparison with positive images found in the children's books. The particular focus within these comparisons was the idea of iconoclasm in the Twitter statements and the role of the destruction of iconic representations within iconization processes. In the following paragraphs, I defined the terms icon, cultural icon, iconization process, and iconoclasm, as these were four major concepts that held a central role in this master's thesis.

2.1 Icon

Etymologically, icon derived from the Greek word for picture *eikon*, which meant a conventional religious image typically painted on a small wooden panel and used in the devotions of Eastern Christians (fig. 5).⁸ Over the centuries, the term transformed and

⁷ "Expert.Ai Natural Language Understanding," expert.ai, February 9, 2024, <https://www.expert.ai/>.

⁸ "Icon Definition & Meaning," Merriam-Webster, accessed March 18, 2024, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/icon#h1>.

contained several new meanings in addition to its original: It was used synonymously with idol or hero/heroine or in computer jargon, describing computer icons, which were symbols on a screen which represented programs or files⁹. Here, for instance, the image of the floppy disk came to mind. The floppy disk – a piece of hardware used to save documents on – was replaced by new, more efficient and comprehensive means to store information. Nevertheless, the image of the floppy disk on the top left corner of the screen remained the universal sign for “to save”. It was the “save-icon”¹⁰ and acted as a symbol for the action.

In a Ted Talk lecture on the “Re-creation of the Icon”, given by Lynette Hull in May 2012, iconography was described as follows:

*“In art history iconography and iconology is the study of symbols in the visual arts. Traditionally, in art history, we can study Byzantine icons, which is the graphic art of the ancient Christian Church – the Orthodox Church. Iconography is an 1800-year-old art form, with its antecedents in Egyptian grave painting.”*¹¹

This notion of the icon as a visual symbol was key to grasp the process of how an icon was created. I focused on the visual image of Greta Thunberg and the meaning of the images gathered. The field of semiotics intensively worked with the sign and its functions. In the introduction to “Cultural Icons”, Tomaselli and Scott wrote about semiotics that:

*“Semiotics/semiology is the study of how signs (visual, aural, linguistic) take on meaning where the sign stands for something else. For example a photograph of the Eiffel Tower stands for the real thing, the metal structure located in Paris.”*¹²

This semiotic idea of a sign *standing for something else* acted as the basis for my understanding of the icon, whereas I took the approach of cultural studies to look at the

⁹ Katie Terrell Hanna, “What Are Icons and What Are They Used For?,” WhatIs, June 10, 2022, <https://www.techtarget.com/whatis/definition/icon#:~:text=In%20today%27s%20modern%20context%2C%20a n,with%20meaning%20for%20the%20user.>

¹⁰ Scott Oliveri, “The Floppy Disk Save Icon: Visual Language of an Era Long-Gone,” Medium, August 19, 2020, <https://uxdesign.cc/the-floppy-disk-save-icon-visual-language-of-an-era-long-gone-93f74efc9f9>.

¹¹ “Re-Creation of the Icon: Lynette Hull at TEDxCapeMay 2012 - Recreation and Re-Creation,” YouTube, December 2, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JET4H9MhQRw&list=PLsRNoUx8w3rPazfYCMaq56EjhVE0vyDhx&index=3&t=105s>.

¹² Keyan G. Tomaselli and David Scott, “Introduction: Cultural Icons,” essay, in Cultural Icons, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2009), 8.

hermeneutics of it and considered that icons evolved from the interpretation of these signs and the meanings that were produced.¹³

As mentioned above there were several meanings of the word icon. Especially in pop culture, the word icon found its own field of usage and is circulating widely¹⁴. Jonathan Meades put out a critical article over a decade ago, where he described what he found to be an “overuse” of the term icon in newspapers and the media, which resulted in the term’s meaninglessness¹⁵. Meades saw it being used for anything, as long as this thing received enough media attention and hyperbole. The article also contained a somewhat humorous collection of the word “iconic” used as an adjective for various supposedly iconic items. His explanation for using the adjective for – in his opinion – too many people, landmarks, objects, and instances was:

*“Implicit in the modern use of “iconic” is the perhaps deliberate, perhaps unwitting aspiration to invest things and people with properties which render them miraculous and superhuman, magical and godlike.”*¹⁶

This was a highly interesting observation he made. Therefore, I wondered: “Is the core meaning of the word *icon* as a religious image for idolatry still alive through what people project on their momentary icon (mostly pop cultural)? Can everything/everyone be iconic, if someone else or even themselves wanted it enough?”¹⁷ This highlighted the importance of the iconization process in relation to the icon itself. This idea was especially interesting as I thought about Greta Thunberg, her position in climate activism and her representation in children’s books. An essential difference between mere celebrity and actual icon status was a question of time. Michael Parker observed in this regard:

¹³ Keyan G. Tomaselli and David Scott, “Introduction: Cultural Icons,” essay, in *Cultural Icons*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2009), 9.

¹⁴ Emily Truman, “Rethinking the Cultural Icon: Its Use and Function in Popular Culture,” *Canadian Journal of Communication* 42, no. 5 (December 16, 2017): 829–49, <https://doi.org/10.22230/cjc.2017v42n5a3223>.

¹⁵ Jonathan Meades. “Icon: The Adjective of the Age,” *More Intelligent Life*. Spring (2009): www.moreintelligentlife.com.

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ The section on Jonathan Meades is a partial rephrasing of something I have written in a seminar paper for the class “Autor*innen der Weltliteratur als Figuren. Strategien der Literarisierung, Fiktionalisierung, Mythisierung und Ikonisierung,” in the winter semester 2021. The paper had the title “Bruno Schulz is not my icon. Cultural icons and how they reach their status. Bruno Schulz as a case study.”

*“With regard to durability the proposal is that an iconic image should be able to transcend at least a generation in order for it to be considered differently from ‘of the moment’ celebrity phenomena.”*¹⁸

This ideas on fame and celebrity led me past the term “icon” itself and I approached the term cultural icon. The word “icon” had several meanings and was often used in combination with other terms, one particularly well-known was “culture”. *Cultural icons* were what I considered Greta Thunberg to be in this thesis. What are cultural icons?

2.2 Cultural Icon

In the literature, I found the terms *cultural icon* and *secular icon*¹⁹. Cultural icons were people, such as pop stars or politicians, but they can also be objects or landmarks, as for instance the Eiffel Tower – originally a symbol of clever engineering that had progressed with time to become the symbol of Paris²⁰, and therefore France in extension, somewhat like pars pro toto or as Tomaselli and Scott wrote in their introduction to cultural icons:

*“The Eiffel Tower once denoted the power of mechanization but now connotes meanings that have nothing to do with this original quality.”*²¹

The Eiffel Tower was a somewhat universal and world-wide acknowledged iconic landmark, but cultural icons can also be created and existent for communities or smaller groups only. The singers Cher²² and Madonna²³, as a more recent example acted as (pop) cultural icons for the LGBTQIA+ community, for example. Here iconic again described collective symbols which acquired meaning by groups and nations. This awareness which followed it is highly important: An icon was not necessarily universally iconic. An icon was often iconic for a certain group of people. The variations of cultural icons were described by Keyan Tomaselli and David Scott in their introduction to “Cultural Icons” as follows:

¹⁸ Michael Parker, “Cultural Icons: A Case Study Analysis of Their Formation and Reception” (thesis, 2012), 18.

¹⁹ Keyan G. Tomaselli and David Scott, “Introduction: Cultural Icons,” essay, in *Cultural Icons*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2009), 18.

²⁰ *ibid*, 19.

²¹ *ibid*, 18.

²² see Benedict Weskot and Oliver Schwesig, “Cher Wird 75 - Superstar Und Queere Ikone,” *Deutschlandfunk Kultur*, May 20, 2021, <https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/cher-wird-75-superstar-und-queere-ikone-100.html>.

²³ see “Madonna as a Gay Icon,” Wikipedia, last edited January 16, 2024, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madonna_as_a_gay_icon.

*“Broadly speaking, cultural icons may be seen to work in three different ways: first, as true icons invested with religious significance; second, as secular icons, objects, or persons in the real world that through time accrue to themselves a certain exemplary cultural status; and third, as constructed icons, which in particular are those that in the twentieth century have been manufactured to sell a product, service, or an idea.”*²⁴

The three functions of cultural icons described above, were the ones I worked with. I already discussed the historical meaning and religious purpose of the icon, which matched the most with the first function of icon that Tomaselli and Scott described. The next two functions – secular and constructed icons applied to Greta Thunberg – our case study. Greta Thunberg as constructed icon sold the idea of climate change prevention, activism, and climate justice. I looked at her representation in children’s books in chapter 4 and 5 and the Twitter analysis of her Tweets and people tweeting about her in chapter 7, which gave more information on Greta as constructed cultural icon.

The topic of defining cultural icons was discussed in several fields, including culture, media, and literature studies, and there were different ideas of how to define the term cultural icon. One such attempt was made by Page Laws, whose approach to the cultural icon aligned with the *secular icon* and *constructed icon* which Tomaselli and Scott laid out. She wrote in her contribution to the book “US Icons and Iconicity”:

*“[...]so and so becomes an ‘icon when he or she develops a persona strong and compelling, that it kicks free of its individual incarnations and becomes utterly self-referential’.”*²⁵

In addition to what was said about icons and cultural icons earlier, this claim again referred to widely circulating images in media that contribute to an iconic status of a person, object, or landmark. The images, the ones which were penetrating the media the most, were forming a persona similarly to a figure in a novel, for the audience. Since the individual had limited influence on what images he or she gets confronted with, it was likely that this persona was perceived similarly by a larger group of individuals.

In a simple self-test, one can validate by oneself whether Page Law’s statement was true. Each individual person had their own pool of people, landmarks, and objects which they

²⁴ Keyan G. Tomaselli and David Scott, “Introduction: Cultural Icons,” essay, in *Cultural Icons*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2009), 18.

²⁵ Walter Hölbling, Klaus Rieser-Wohlfarter, and Susanne E. Rieser, introduction to *US Icons and Iconicity*, eds. Walter Hölbling, Klaus Rieser-Wohlfarter, and Susanne E. Rieser (Wien: LIT, 2006), 221.

considered iconic. This differed due to demographic facts such as age, birthplace, gender on the one hand and sexual orientation, or upbringing, and personal interests on the other hand. For example, if you narrow down a single person that you consider to be a music icon, what picture, representation, and further images come to your mind immediately? I was thinking of Elvis. Therefore, I got pictures of him on stage, in a unique pose, wearing one of his overalls. I was thinking of his hair “Elvis Pompadour” and his dance moves (fig. 6). I danced in a similar manner as him and people recognized that I was impersonating Elvis and they pointed it out to me. Especially with Elvis, this was widely known, as there exists an entire culture of Elvis-impersonators (fig. 7), with competitions, shows, and places where fans of the “real” Elvis can meet their idol. Pointing out that the impersonators were merely representing and acting within the frame of the images that they had about Elvis. The goal of these impersonators was to act according to those iconic images circulating the media.

Cultural icons had somehow become a caricature of themselves, identifiable by their most circulated or most emphasized image only. This imagery that defined the icons was so strong that the consumers can immediately point them out. This dissemination and the circulation of images and representations were both part of a process that rendered people, objects, and landmarks iconic.

2.3 Iconization Process

Cultural icons were not alike and did not necessarily have anything in common. They differed in their subject, field of interest or expertise, their audience community and might be classified in subcategories or genres. For instance, Grace Jones as a fashion icon²⁶, Michael Jackson as a music icon²⁷, and Mahatma Gandhi as a peace icon.²⁸

What they did have in common, though, was the underlying process to reach icon status: the *iconization process*. In this thesis, I looked at possible components of such an iconization process and elaborated on them with the help of the case study.

Michael Parker’s PhD thesis, “Cultural Icons: A Case Study Analysis of their Formation and Reception,”²⁹ explored the concept of cultural icons and their significance in society. His findings were the basis of this master’s thesis. Parker’s research examined several case

²⁶ see Steve Wide and Babeth Lafon, *Grace Jones A to Z* (Melbourne, Australia: Smith Street Books, 2018).

²⁷ see Luke Crampton, Dafydd Rees, *Music icon: Michael Jackson* (Cologne: Taschen, 2009).

²⁸ see “Peace Icon Mahatma Gandhi’s Message of ‘mutual Understanding, Equality’ Reverberates on Day of Non-Violence | UN News,” United Nations, October 1, 2019, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/10/1048362>.

²⁹ Michael Parker, “Cultural Icons: A Case Study Analysis of Their Formation and Reception” (thesis, 2012).

studies, including Elvis Presley, Che Guevara, and the Coca-Cola brand, where he extracted the key elements of cultural icons and answered how they were formed and received.

The thesis identified five key elements which all together contributed to the formation and reception of cultural icons. The five key elements were symbolism, shared meaning, historical context, repetition and reinforcement, and consumer culture. He furthermore deciphered several components of iconization processes. Parker proposed a 4-point model, presented in his PhD thesis, which I worked with and applied to the cultural icon or more precise climate icon Greta Thunberg. The four aspects to recognize icons he laid out were:

- “1) Cultural icons are always images.*
- 2) These images are distinct, durable, and reproducible.*
- 3) They reside in the collective memory of large groups of people.*
- 4) Cultural icons reveal discernible tragic-dramatic narratives that are formed and received by communities particularly receptive to the development of iconic meaning.”³⁰*

Michael Parker’s points 2 and 3 discussed the role of mediatization and how heavily circulated images and dissemination of images were contributing factors to a person, object, or landmark becoming iconic. These circulating images made their way into collective memory and were given even more layers of meaning over time. Tomaselli and Scott similarly wrote about the role that time played in assembling several meanings and connotations for images and icons:

“Cultural icons are iconic signs to which a transparent but often complex overlaying of connotations has accrued, usually after a certain period of time. Where celebrities are concerned, the connotations are deliberate, manufactured, relentless, and take on their significance via intensive marketing and public relations. They eventually come to work at the level of myth where these carefully manufactured connotations become discursively hegemonic [...] The longer the history of the icon, the richer the layering of indexical and symbolic significances organically attached to it, though some more recent or contemporary icons (such as Marilyn Monroe or Nelson Mandela) also manage in a relatively short period of time to achieve this status.”³¹

³⁰ Michael Parker, “Cultural Icons: A Case Study Analysis of Their Formation and Reception” (thesis, 2012), 12, 13.

³¹ Keyan G. Tomaselli and David Scott, “Introduction: Cultural Icons,” essay, in *Cultural Icons*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2009), 19.

This observation was relevant as I discussed Greta Thunberg, a person who was still living. I considered her a cultural icon, that reached that status rather quickly and within her lifetime. Of course, the machinery of media, marketing, image creation, and dissemination that Tomaselli and Scott also mentioned, now ran quicker than ever, probably laying down the foundation for the possibility of a living person to be iconic. I therefore looked at images, image-making, and the circulation of images contributing to an iconic status. I first observed Greta Thunberg in children's books, that were – compared to social media – belonging to longer-lasting media of slower production and circulation. Then I turned to social media, as it was the fastest media in image dissemination thus far.

Back to Jonathan Meades' quote earlier, and the description of the constructed icon, the idea of an iconization process became rather real. Was fame and iconicity something man-made and to a certain extent controllable or manoeuvrable? The presumption of iconization as a process icons underwent supported this idea. Interestingly, Tomaselli and Scott also talked about a speeding up of the iconization process by intense mediatization and they called it *"branding" by intense iconization/mediatization*³². This was done for instance, by cinema and television, which were the first and foremost visual media, working with images and narration and were able to reach a large group of people. Tomaselli and Scott continued:

*"mass audience and instantaneous dissemination can rapidly propel an image or object to iconic status. This status retains the appearance of the object and simultaneously encodes qualities not necessarily intrinsic to it. Hence the invention of the term iconization."*³³

2.3.1 Visual Culture in Cultural Icons

The textual corpus, I examined consisted of four different picturebooks. Because of their visual and image-heavy content, children's literature was a very fruitful source for icons. The "original" meaning of the icon as a painting of a sacred or religious figure in mind, the visual culture was also found in the cultural icon. On the website of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Professor of Art History and Museum Studies Sarah Brooks stated:

³² Keyan G. Tomaselli and David Scott, "Introduction: Cultural Icons," essay, in *Cultural Icons*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2009), 19, 20.

³³ *ibid.*

*“In Byzantine theology, the contemplation of icons allowed the viewer direct communication with the sacred figure(s) represented, and through icons an individual's prayers were addressed directly to the petitioned saint or holy figure.”*³⁴

The act of observing and looking at, maybe even admiring an icon, was essentially a way of communicating with it. According to Jonathan Meades and Tomaselli and Scott, cultural icons were fulfilling similar roles as religious icons and the handling of and the behaviour around the cultural icon and the religious icon shared similarities. Similarly to Sarah Brooks' statement on Byzantine icons, the pictures of Greta Thunberg in the children's books – an example for visual icons – were a potential screen for child readers and their parents to address their questions, hopes, or fears regarding the climate crisis. In the introduction to “Cultural Icons”, I gathered how a visual icon transformed into a cultural icon. Visual icons took on additional functions. For instance, *by accreting layers of meaning or connotation, by attaining an exemplary status, and by attracting intense mediatization, which transcend the immediate or intended role or purpose of the object or sign on which they are based.*³⁵ This was strongly linked with Michael Parker's 4-point model.

In chapter 4, I made the iconization process more concrete. Before I turned to that, I introduced one potential aspect of the iconization process in detail, that had not yet been considered by Michael Parker or Tomaselli and Scott, valid for the cultural icon. It was known from the religious icon: *iconoclasm*.

2.4 Iconoclasm

*“Iconoclasm literally means 'image breaking' and refers to a recurring historical impulse to break or destroy images for religious or political reasons. For example, in ancient Egypt, the carved visages of some pharaohs were obliterated by their successors; during the French Revolution, images of kings were defaced.”*³⁶

This description by Sarah Brooks showed that iconoclasm meant the destruction of icons which are holy images. It was an expression of distrust and disbelief in imagery and pictures.

³⁴ Sarah Brooks, “Icons and Iconoclasm in Byzantium: Essay: The Metropolitan Museum of Art: Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History,” The Met's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, October 2001; last revised August 2009, last accessed March 18, 2024, https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/icon/hd_icon.htm.

³⁵ Keyan G. Tomaselli and David Scott, “Introduction: Cultural Icons,” essay, in *Cultural Icons*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2009), 21.

³⁶ Sarah Brooks, “Icons and Iconoclasm in Byzantium: Essay: The Metropolitan Museum of Art: Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History,” The Met's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, October 2001; last revised August 2009, last accessed March 18, 2024, https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/icon/hd_icon.htm.

Iconoclasm was a recurrent phenomenon throughout human history and had taken various forms, ranging from the destruction of statues and paintings to the removal of religious symbols and the prohibition of their use. Iconoclasm was motivated by various religious, political, and cultural factors, including a desire to purge idolatry, a rejection of traditional values and practices, or a desire to assert political power or control.

Iconoclasm referred to the time during the Byzantine Empire, when Orthodox Christians and Idolaters and Iconoclasts fought over the ability to create and worship images of God. Iconoclasts therefore stormed to the images used by the idolaters and destroyed them violently (fig. 8)³⁷. Similar acts were observed in other parts of history – most commonly when there was a shift in power, a shift in image of worship: A newly crowned king who erased the portraits of his predecessor or withdrew some of his laws could be such an example. Here, the actual icon – the portrait or picture of the “old” king – was destroyed and, in this analogy, the laws, values, and images that the predecessor symbolized fell victim to iconoclasm – to destruction. Sarah Brooks wrote about the iconoclastic period of the Byzantine Empire as follows:

*“The Iconoclastic debate centered on the appropriate use of icons in religious veneration, and the precise relationship between the sacred personage and his/her image. Fear that the viewer misdirected his/her veneration toward the image rather than to the holy person represented in the image lay at the heart of this controversy.”*³⁸

Did the people that admire Greta Thunberg, admire her instead of the climate activism she was actually concerned with? Instead of being involved with the ideology, the viewer was consumed by the icon?

For the analysis, I considered iconoclastic behaviour towards modern-day cultural icons. I used acts of iconoclasm regarding Greta Thunberg. The defamation, verbal or violent destruction of the image of the cultural icon Greta Thunberg was a token of this cultural icon having reached iconic status. Just like in the Byzantine Empire, opponents of the icon would go to matters of destruction of it, which confirmed the representational value and the knowledge and iconic status of that icon. This led me to Bruno Latour, who said that:

³⁷ Fig. 8 shows a theatre performance of iconoclasm. Actors throw stones against the image of christ’s face.

³⁸ Sarah Brooks, “Icons and Iconoclasm in Byzantium: Essay: The Metropolitan Museum of Art: Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History,” The Met’s Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, October 2001; last revised August 2009, last accessed March 18, 2024, https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/icon/hd_icon.htm.

“Iconoclasm confirms the icon’s cultural value”.³⁹ For that reason, I added Iconoclasm as part of the definition of cultural icons and contributed another point to Parker’s model. I proposed to add:

5) *Iconoclasm is part of cultural icons as iconoclasm recognizes the iconic status. Icons evoke worshippers and opponents alike.*

I established the definitions for icon, cultural icon, iconization process, and iconoclasm, which I referred to throughout this thesis. The role of the visual image was prominent in icons, and cultural icons were no exception to this. As already pointed out earlier, iconicity routed in pictorial representations of gods. Our modern-day “heroes and heroines” were also bound to carry and gather meaning through picture circulation and image idolatry.

3. Greta Thunberg

In this chapter, I used Greta Thunberg as a case study to analyse the process of cultural iconicity and the iconization processes associated with it. Greta Thunberg was a particularly interesting case because, unlike other cultural icons who received this status posthumously, Greta was already treated as an icon in her early life. Another contributing factor for choosing Greta Thunberg and her representations was the undeniable ambiguity of her divisive figure, as she was both loved and hated. Her cause and persona gave comfort and motivation to some, while being a threat and source of discomfort to others. In the following, I discussed how this controversy surrounding her image might have been fertile ground for the creation of her iconic status through image circulation and iconoclasm. The following two examples helped to illustrate the relation between iconic image and intertextual reference. These two intertextual references of Greta Thunberg were found repeatedly and guided me to the *Distinct Images* found in the children’s books.

3.1 David vs. Goliath

The peak of the aforementioned struggle in society and media regarding Greta’s popularity as a public figure culminated in the Greta vs. Trump narrative surrounding the World Economic Forum in 2020. In the visual culture surrounding Greta Thunberg, the David vs. Goliath image was omnipresent. Already in the first photos taken of her, which

³⁹ Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, *Iconoclasm: Beyond the Image Wars in Science, Religion and Art* (Cambridge: ZKM/Center for Art and Media, 2002).

were distributed in social media and traditional media, I saw this narrative pinned on her persona:

*“The frail, innocent child Greta Thunberg with her Braided Hair, Yellow Raincoat and homemade sign, sitting beneath the massive stone walls of the Swedish Parliament, became a symbol of the child versus the large-scale system.”*⁴⁰

Thomas Olesen made this observation of the small versus the big (supposedly omnipotent opponent), as I continued to follow Greta’s representation in media or other art forms, I encountered this image again. The media coverage surrounding the World Economic Forum, for example (figs. 9 and 10), played with the biblical and widely known story of David and Goliath. A reference which was commonly used to “*describe a situation in which a small or weak person or organization tries to defeat another much larger or stronger opponent.*”⁴¹ This was an image within an image, as the observer can, if they possessed the necessary cultural knowledge, link Greta versus Trump to David versus Goliath. This intertextual reference added another layer of meaning to Greta Thunberg, that contributed to her iconic status, as the image of David versus Goliath was one that was around in *collective memory*.

The David and Goliath theme catapulted me and the cultural icon back into the realm of religious idolatry. Images, depictions, and art pieces of Greta Thunberg were also playing with her “sacred-like” and iconic status in society. The slide put together by Jakob Rosendal⁴² showed Greta’s face on typical religious products, such as prayer candles (figs. 11 and 12). These representations worked with pastiche to link Greta to holy images. Jonathan Meades’ idea mentioned earlier, of cultural icons being the contemporary answer to religious symbols and the “original” icon known from the Byzantine Empire, received support through the fact that her persona was placed in the company of religious saints.

Analysing figs. 9 and 10 showed that Greta was depicted significantly smaller than Donald Trump. The pictures were also accentuating her youth, child-like appearance, and innocent features. Interestingly, her body was drawn seemingly weaker: small, childlike, and thin, but her “weapons,” the snowballs and the boxing gloves (symbolizing her real-life

⁴⁰ Thomas Olesen in Ingrid Marie Fossum, “How to Become a Political Icon: The Greta Thunberg Method,” School of Business and Economics, Aarhus University, June 10, 2021, <https://bss.au.dk/en/insights/samfund-1/2021/how-to-become-a-political-icon-the-greta-thunberg-method>.

⁴¹ David-and-goliath adjective - definition, pictures, pronunciation ..., accessed March 18, 2024, https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/american_english/david-and-goliath.

⁴² Jakob Rosendal, “Picturing Greta Thunberg : On the Intericonicity of an Icon,” *Journal of Visual Culture*, ISSN 1470–4129 (submitted for publication 2023).

arguments) were overpowering those that Trump was fighting with. This highly exaggerated pose was, of course, part of the comedy that caricatures were popular for. In this context Thomas Olesen stated about Greta Thunberg:

*“Her visual representation backs this analysis of strength-weakness. The various photographs documenting the early days of the school strike where Thunberg sits alone at the Swedish parliament have become staples in her creation myth and in the visual vocabulary of memes, cartoons, graffiti, murals, and other artwork that have emerged around her.”*⁴³

The creation myth being a religious term, caught my attention in this quote, as I repeatedly came across religious imagery and idolatry working with icons. So far, I deciphered the David versus Goliath theme in figures 9 and 10. The figures contained further information of high interest.

Her fashion style, for instance, was one of regular teenagers, or rather a teenager who did not take a lot of interest in fashion styles and trends. Since she was wearing reused clothes, these were even more of an understatement. She looked cute and unthreatening compared to Trump in the drawing. In contrast, he was depicted wearing the stereotypical suit of a politician or person in power. Her innocent and unfashionable clothing style was doing, or rather not doing one more thing though: it did not play along with the social norm or idea of “dress to impress”. Society created and developed cultural norms, habits, and rituals on how to dress and behave in official or public situations. Children learned those from parents, in school, or adapted them from our cultural environment, TV, and other media. When a person, like Greta Thunberg, did not play by these rules, it might evoke feelings of fear or even anger.

The child and person Greta Thunberg was raised in the same or similar cultural environment as her followers and her opponents. She must have known about these social norms and actively went against them or did not agree with them. This rendered her both loved and hated in the public.

This led me to another referential image, like the story of David vs. Goliath. Her disobedience (amongst others shown by her clothing style) created a Pippi Longstocking reference. Artists started to see the similarities between the fictional character Pippi and the real-life Greta a while ago, and created art with the two figures blending (figs. 13 and 14).

⁴³ Thomas Olesen, “Greta Thunberg’s Iconicity: Performance and Co-Performance in the Social Media Ecology,” *New Media & Society* 24, no. 6 (November 25, 2020). 15.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820975416>.

3.2 Pippi Longstocking⁴⁴

Which parallels were there between the image of Greta Thunberg and the fictional character Pippi Longstocking? I continued with the idea of norms and rules of a society, I observed the following: Pippi lived very happily, being somewhat free from social conventions, contrasting other characters in the Pippi Longstocking books, like Tommy and Annika, for example, who were raised in a traditional and compliant way. Her behaviour challenged existing and pre-set social norms with her actions and questioned their usefulness.

Greta Thunberg did something similar, questioning and defying our existing capitalistic and patriarchal system. She openly skipped school because of her own convictions. Pippi and Greta are both young women, who were acting on their own without much of a parental figure present. The interesting thing about both being young women was that this objectively “weaker” or “powerless” position was repeatedly shown as one of their strongest advantages against their antagonists. Both went by their first name, Greta and Pippi, but are equally well-known by their full name, Greta Thunberg and Pippi Longstocking, and both were Swedish. The cultural environment being Scandinavian was relevant as I analysed Greta’s iconic images separate from each other. Another similarity addressed in greater detail later and which I already mentioned was that they both had a special style of clothing and, additionally, in the field of visual image and appearance, they shared the feature of *Braided Hair*: two braids to both sides of the face, so-called pigtails.

With that, I started to enter a visual analysis of the Greta icon. Icon in the sense of the hardware disc symbolizing the action of “saving” and the Greta icon symbolizing climate activist, strong and independent young girl and climate icon Greta. Children’s books contained visuals and had the tendency to focus on the most important or emphasized features in their characters, which offered a lot of material to piece together the Greta icon. Therefore, after an overview of different circulating images of Greta Thunberg in diverse visual-based media, I examined the field of children’s books, where Greta was represented.

4. Greta Thunberg in children’s books

In this section of the thesis, I performed close readings on a selection of two children’s books that had GRETA as a main character and her fight for the climate as the topic. The aim of this analysis was to decipher an iconization process alongside the four-point model by

⁴⁴ Astrid Lindgren, *Pippi Longstocking* (New York: Puffin Books, 1997).

Michael Parker. The *Distinct Images* that helped create the Greta Thunberg icon were shown. By analysing the books and the representation of Greta Thunberg in them, I was able to extract several aspects which served a specific function. I honed into the genre of picturebooks, as it helped me understand the importance of imagery in the creation of an icon.

4.1 The genre – picturebooks

*“The unique character of picturebooks as an art form is based on the combination of two levels of communication, the visual and the verbal. Making use of semiotic terminology we can say that picturebooks communicate by means of two separate sets of signs, the iconic and the conventional.”*⁴⁵

In this quote, “iconic” meant the visual depictions of things, like the paper basket icon on laptop screens. In my analysis of picturebooks, I focused on extracting these iconic signs that represented the Greta Thunberg icon from a pool of illustrations and asked the questions: What is the Greta Thunberg icon? What is it representing in children's literature? I examined the visual representations together with the text in order to find an iconic narrative encompassing Greta Thunberg.

Before I analysed the books, I needed to define children's books. I later sorted them in different categories. There were many definitions found on the term “children's book” and the different variants of children's books, depending on the ratio and interplay between illustrations and narrating text. The Dane, Torben Gregersen, created categories, and made the following distinctions:

*“the exhibit book: picture dictionary (no narrative)
the picture narrative: wordless or with very few words
the picturebook, or picture storybook: text and picture equally important
the illustrated book: the text can exist independently.”*⁴⁶

The four books chosen for this thesis could all be placed in the fourth category *illustrated book*, since technically the texts could also exist on their own and the books would still be read and understood on their own. Nevertheless, I argued that in stories where the main character was based on a real living person, the visual depiction of the protagonist and the

⁴⁵ Carole Scott, Maria Nikolajeva, and Elizabeth Levine, *How Picturebooks Work* (Routledge, 2006), 1.

⁴⁶ *ibid*, 6.

illustrations in general were key to conveying knowledge about the character and transporting meaning and emotions. The drawings of GRETA contained information on her persona that created additional information and meaning to the written story. In that sense, the story would not be fully understood by reading the text alone, as all the connotations and information from the images would remain unobserved. In the book “How Picturebooks Work,” the authors wrote about the importance of the interplay between text and illustrations.

*“If words and images fill each other’s gaps wholly, there is nothing left for the reader’s imagination, and the reader remains somewhat passive. The same is true if the gaps are identical in words and images (or if there are no gaps at all). In the first case, we are dealing with the category we have named “complementary,” in the second, “symmetrical.” However, as soon as words and images provide alternative information or contradict each other in some way, we have a variety of readings and interpretations.”*⁴⁷

This was interesting for my examination as I was able to fill in these gaps with the images I had already stored in our memories. The entire reading of the children’s books provided me with an iconophile representation of the Greta Thunberg icon, disregarding all controversy of her persona. The illustrations provided key additional information, doing what was explained in the quote from *How Picturebooks Work*. The character information that I gathered from the drawings played a vital role for the iconization of Greta Thunberg. The children’s books were hagiographic, idealized biographies of Greta Thunberg, feeding the Greta Thunberg icon. Hagiographies were typically written by religious devotees or scholars, and were intended to promote and celebrate the virtues, miracles, and significance of the individuals they depicted. Hagiographies portrayed the subject in an idealized and sanctified manner, emphasizing their piety, heroic deeds, and spiritual journey. These writings included remarkable acts of selflessness and devotion.

The children’s books on Greta Thunberg were generally conveying a saint-like image of the climate activist and installed her as an icon embodying the good, the selfless, and a moral instance. Some did it more, some less. In the next part of the thesis, I talked about figure analysis, and tried to systematically gather information about the protagonist of a book. I arrived at knowing a character and analysed the images presented.

⁴⁷ Carole Scott, Maria Nikolajeva, and Elizabeth Levine, *How Picturebooks Work* (Routledge, 2006), 17.

4.2 Four books with one figure in common

There were many books available that had either Greta Thunberg or a Greta Thunberg inspired character in them. My aim with the analysis of the images in these four books was to find common images of Greta. In my choices, I therefore tried to be diverse. I chose the following four, as they sold many copies, they were made by people from different nationalities, and they all worked with illustration and text.

4.2.1 Little people, BIG DREAMS: Greta Thunberg (fig. 15)⁴⁸

Little people, BIG Dreams⁴⁹ was a popular book series which started out in 2014 by the Spanish illustrator Maria Isabel Sánchez Vegara. The book series featured famous people from science, sports, arts, politics and other fields who realized major achievements. The book devoted to Greta Thunberg was published in 2020 and retold her life and the story of her fight for climate change protection.

4.2.2 Our House is on Fire (fig. 16)⁵⁰

This book by an author from the USA focused solely on Greta Thunberg and her development. It contained full-page illustrations showing Greta, sometimes with one other person or her dog, or in a large crowd of protestors. The book's title was a quote from one of Greta Thunberg's speeches. Taking content from her speeches became a repetitive pattern within the book. The book was published in 2019.

4.2.3 Greta and the Giants (fig. 17)⁵¹

This book by Zoë Tucker had the story of the real Greta Thunberg at its basis. It retold it in a more magical setting, filled with friendly creatures. The main character, Greta, was protesting, first alone, later with other children joining, against the Giant's destruction of their home, the forest. The book was published in 2019.

4.2.4 Umwelt-Helden: Leben für den Planeten (Environmental Heroes: A life for the planet, fig. 18)⁵²

⁴⁸ Vegara Maria Isabel Sanchez and Anke Weckmann, *Greta Thunberg Little People Big Dreams* (London: Frances Lincoln Publishers Ltd, 2020).

⁴⁹ see "About," Little People, BIG DREAMS, November 1, 2023, <https://littlepeoplebigdreams.com/about>.

⁵⁰ Jeanette Winter, *Our House Is on Fire: Greta Thunberg's Call to Save the Planet* (New York: Beach Lane Books, 2019).

⁵¹ Zoë Tucker and Zoe Persico, *Greta and the Giants: Inspired by Greta Thunberg's Stand to Save the World* (London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books, 2019).

This book was written by Federica Magrin and illustrated by Isabella Grott and showed portraits and descriptions of some well-known and some fameless people who worked for or achieved significant change in the area of climate change protection or sustainability. Greta Thunberg was featured on the cover and also held a prominent position within the book which was published in 2019.

4.3 Characterization of Figures

How we perceived a figure or character in a book was caused by a plethora of information we gather. The authors of *How Picturebooks Work* dedicated a chapter to the characterization of figures.

Paraphrasing their general remarks on characterization, they stated that in a verbal narrative, the options, and methods to portray a character were very diverse. From basic description, the reader learned about external appearances such as looks or style, as well as internal, emotional, and psychological characteristics. These observations and descriptions changed and evolved over the course of the story. The reader met the character in different situations and gathered information through their actions, reactions, and behaviour in those situations. There was also the tool of direct or indirect speech, which added a layer of immediacy to the forming figure that a mere description did not provide. Dialogue between the characters in the story or inner monologue were two more ways to learn about a figure.⁵³

“Readers construct a somewhat complete picture of a character by extracting relevant information about the character from the text, by making inferences from the character’s behaviour, by synthesizing snippets of information included in the text, and by amplifying these from their own imagination.”⁵⁴

This quote described in a brief way what tasks readers were performing when they were gathering information on the character. With the Greta Thunberg icon, media provided us with a plethora of images to captivate our imagination. The authors of *How Picturebooks Work* offered one more way how figure-specific characteristics got conveyed to the reader and that was by comparison to other literary characters, through contrasting different features such as “good” and “evil” or implicitly, when readers got to draw conclusions themselves.

⁵² Federica Magrin and Isabella Grott, *Umwelt-Helden Leben Für Den Planeten* (Novara: Edizioni White Star SrL, 2021).

⁵³ This section is paraphrasing “Some General Remark on Characterization” in chapter 3 *Characterization*, in Carole Scott, Maria Nikolajeva, and Elizabeth Levine, *How Picturebooks Work* (Routledge, 2006), 81.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

4.4 Characterization of figures in picturebooks

The genre picturebook offers even more possibilities for characterization in addition to the techniques presented earlier. The interplay of text and illustration received a lot of attention, as the authors of picturebooks had a multitude of possibilities for dealing with pictures that contained additional, concurrent, or even contradictory information to the narrative text. In contrast to the characterization that occurred in mostly text-based literary genres, the picturebook had its limits, as it was very plot-oriented and did not allow much character development. Nevertheless, the artistic approaches to visual depictions and illustrations in picturebooks offered a variety of other possibilities for characterizing a figure. In the next chapter, I looked at the ways GRETA was characterized in the four children's books: Greta and the Giants (GATG), Umwelt-Helden (UH), Our House is on Fire (OHIOF), and Little people BIG DREAMS Greta Thunberg (LPBD).

5. The images of Greta Thunberg

There are *Distinct Images*⁵⁵ of Greta Thunberg circulating in the media. Since late summer 2018, there had been a multitude of pictures and video footage, most frequently showing her sitting in front of the Swedish parliament (fig. 19), protesting, holding a speech, or travelling in an eco-friendly way. This actual footage marked the beginning of the iconization process of Greta Thunberg. From these early images onwards, a selection of *Distinct Images* of Greta Thunberg has remained recognizable. She became the face of climate change activism through an active participation of the audience community, who was reposting, sharing, and connecting these *Distinct Images*.

These images were then picked up by media outlets, social media platforms, influencers, newspapers, organizations, companies, producers of merchandise, celebrities, and students, and were being *reproduced*⁵⁶. This showed that cultural icons are first and foremost always images, and the role traditional media as well as social media played in Greta Thunberg's iconization process. Thomas Olesen pointed out that social media was especially important for the iconization of Greta Thunberg. This was, according to Thomas Olesen because:

⁵⁵ Michael Parker, "Cultural Icons: A Case Study Analysis of Their Formation and Reception" (thesis, 2012), 12, 13.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*

“They reduce the cost of communication, emphasize visual representation, sustain intimacy between icon and audience, include a new and younger audience, and distribute communication across different media platforms.”⁵⁷

Through the reproduction of the images, they received extra meaning, for instance through visibility to a larger community, or public discussion, by slight change or alteration of the image, by duplication, pastiche, parody, and so on (figs. 20, 21 and 22). Some images went viral; they got shared, made available, judged, and discussed. Therefore, they created public awareness and became part of cultural memory for large groups of people and entire communities. In Greta Thunberg’s case, the role which social media played in her iconization process was significant. This process of an image becoming so well-known that one person referred to it, made fun of it or played with it and be understood, resulted in *collective memory*⁵⁸ of a group or community. This community shaped the iconic image by transforming it, which manifested the image in collective memory. This was what Michael Parker laid out in the first three points of his four-point model. His last point considered the properties of the image and/or the cultural icon itself. He wrote that a *tragic-dramatic narrative* was necessary for an image to become iconic and referred to the community of such tragic-dramatic narrative as especially receptive for creating iconic meaning, which reminded me of the hagiographic telling of the Greta Thunberg icon. Thomas Olesen said the following about Greta Thunberg, even though he did not explicitly mention the term tragic-dramatic narrative, it was cutting into the same curb of what I called Greta Thunberg’s tragic-dramatic narrative. He said the audience felt the involvement with Greta’s struggles, struggles being the predominant word.

“The systematic use of binarily coded terms such as “dear,” “sweet,” “good,” and “hero” in the commentary tracks of Thunberg’s Facebook and Twitter posts demonstrates the ongoing emotional involvement of lay audiences in the creation of Thunberg’s iconicity. Thunberg herself has also invited such intimacy, perhaps most notably in her performative

⁵⁷ Thomas Olesen, “Greta Thunberg’s Iconicity: Performance and Co-Performance in the Social Media Ecology,” *New Media & Society* 24, no. 6 (November 25, 2020), 15.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820975416>.

⁵⁸ Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1980).

openness on Facebook and Twitter about her Asperger's diagnosis, eating disorders, and experiences with bullying."⁵⁹

This identification of the binarily coded terms as Olesen found in the commentary section of social media was also what I was looking for in the sentiment analysis at the end of this thesis. What I took from this was a sense of identification between the receptive community and the cultural icon. This identification took place through an emotional connection and the sharing of similar experiences. The element of the tragic-dramatic narrative linked the community through the appeal of emotions such as empathy, self-identification, a sense of justice/injustice, and anger to the cultural icon. Thomas Olesen talked about the iconic being a performance; he further said that:

*"Protagonists who acquire iconic status must display a willingness to take on considerable personal risks and to sacrifice narrow self-interest in the pursuit of goals that concern societies and their values and aspirations. The demonstration of moral purity is a key element in this process. The awarding of iconic status can only proceed when no doubts can be raised concerning the protagonist's pro-social motivations. Any suspicion of ulterior motives such as pecuniary rewards, power advantages, and other self-interested behavior contains a risk of derailing the iconic process."*⁶⁰

This was true in our icon case study with this example: Greta put her own school education on hold for the climate, which showed great potential for her iconicity. In her powerful speech "How dare you", she explained that it was wrong that she was not sitting in school with her peers, but had to travel, talk to the adults in charge about how it was time to act on the climate crisis.⁶¹ This was an example of the self-sacrificing aspect given by Thomas Olesen. From the beginning, Greta Thunberg displayed the aforementioned traits of an icon. Interestingly, the second half of the quote referred to aspects that iconoclasts used to derail Greta Thunberg's iconic image. Iconoclastic reactions questioned her motivations and showed suspicion of her ulterior motives. I examined the iconoclastic reactions in Twitter in a social media chapter.

⁵⁹ Thomas Olesen, "Greta Thunberg's Iconicity: Performance and Co-Performance in the Social Media Ecology," *New Media & Society* 24, no. 6 (November 25, 2020), 15.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820975416>.

⁶⁰ *ibid*, 3.

⁶¹ see NPR Staff, "Transcript: Greta Thunberg's Speech at the U.N. Climate Action Summit," NPR, September 23, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/09/23/763452863/transcript-greta-thunbergs-speech-at-the-u-n-climate-action-summit>.

The reproduction of the images of the icon in social media was key to boost Greta Thunberg's level of recognition. According to Thomas Olesen, that was not enough to secure the status of an icon, but the iconic images had to also reach traditional media.⁶² Traditional media included radio, broadcast television, and print, such as newspapers and books.

The literary subgenre children's book was part of traditional media, and notably, the main images of Greta Thunberg were also found in my selection of four children's books. The main five images identified were the *Braided Hair* (fig. 23), the *Yellow Raincoat* (fig. 19), *her holding up a Poster or Placard* (fig. 19), the *Direct Gaze* (fig. 24), and *Greta in the midst or in front of a movement/other young adults/a crowd* (fig. 25).

I defined these five *Distinct Images* by collecting material, viewing pictures, and watching video footage of Greta Thunberg which was circulating in the media. Throughout this process, these several repetitive images became possible features that could render Greta Thunberg a cultural icon. Thomas Olesen defined key images in his analysis as well and connected them to an interplay between her, the icon, and the audience:

*"The early school strike photograph and other Greta Thunberg characteristics such as her braided hair and yellow raincoat are all elements in a highly creative, co-performing amplification of her iconicity that takes place on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube."*⁶³

In his analysis, he defined the *Raincoat*, the *Braided Hair*, and the *Protest Sign* as iconic images. My list added two more. Researcher Jakob Rosendal, who holds a post-doc position at Aarhus University and researched the visual representation of girls, with a special interest in Greta Thunberg's iconicity and inter-iconicity, defined the iconic images of Greta as follows:

"I am fairly sure that all of us will have a similar image of Greta Thunberg in mind if asked to visualise her mentally. It would be an image of the Greta icon containing at least some of these five predominant iconic images: yellow raincoat, long braids, white sign with black letters, white knitted beanie, a direct – more or less confrontational – gaze".⁶⁴

⁶² Ingrid Marie Fossum, "How to become a political icon: The Greta Thunberg method," last modified June 10, 2021. <https://bss.au.dk/en/insights/samfund-1/2021/how-to-become-a-political-icon-the-greta-thunberg-method>

⁶³ Thomas Olesen, "Greta Thunberg's Iconicity: Performance and Co-Performance in the Social Media Ecology," *New Media & Society* 24, no. 6 (November 25, 2020), 15. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820975416>.

⁶⁴ Jakob Rosendal, "Picturing Greta Thunberg : On the Intericonicity of an Icon," *Journal of Visual Culture*, ISSN 1470–4129 (submitted for publication 2023).

Olesen and Rosendal defined similar images to mine in their collection and analysis of material. I accepted Rosendal's choice of the white knitted beanie (fig. 26), as it appeared frequently in depictions of Greta Thunberg. My reason for not adding it to my list was, that the beanie was dependent on the winter season and therefore was limited in its reproduction, and it did not carry the same potential for cultural identification as the *Yellow Raincoat* did. The raincoat, like the beanie, was dependent on the weather, but unlike the beanie, the raincoat itself was already a well-known piece of Swedish or Scandinavian clothing.

5.1 Picturebook analysis – Picture count

After deciphering my five most important images (based on amount and intensity of display, reproduction, and media discussion), I began to get familiar with the illustrations in the books. In a first step, I simply counted all the illustrations in each book in a quantitative manner. Then I counted all the illustrations that contained or showed GRETA within the total number of illustrations. In the next step, I analysed the illustrations regarding the features or *Distinct Images* previously defined. In the illustrations displaying GRETA within all the illustrations found in the books, I counted the number of appearances of each *Distinct Images*. After gathering these data, I started to analyse the images from a qualitative perspective. Here, I considered from my work as editor, that illustrations in children's books were not random but created by illustrators and/or a team of publishing professionals. Each individual illustration had a reason for being created, being positioned at that specific place, and therefore had a different priority within the story. Paratexts, such as the front and back cover, for example, were of high importance and had priority regarding sales, reaching customers, and conveying the meaning of the story. The cover got a lot of attention in the production phase of a book and should be analysed as such. A book produced for sales had to catch attention and, therefore, had to be clear in speaking to the audience/the potential buyer.

Ranked second in priority to the cover illustration, I defined the illustrations that showed the turning point or peak within the narrative story of the children's book. Other important images were shown with the introduction of the characters or in moments of struggle or happiness and relief.

I summarized the approach to the analysis of the images in the children's books that marked and contributed to Greta Thunberg as a cultural icon, as follows: I established that especially interesting indicators for *reproducible*, *distinct*, and *durable images* were the cover illustrations and the illustrations found in the books at the turning point or peak within the

story. In the description and analysis of the books, I examined exactly those images. Here the picture count and the five *Distinct Images*:

Greta Thunberg Picturecount								
	Complete number of illustrations in the book	Illustrations showing Greta	Braided Hair	Yellow Raincoat	Poster	Direct Gaze	Movement	
Umwelthelden	C + 2	C + 2	2	1	1	2	0	
Little People Big Dreams	C + 13	C + 12	11	2	4	1	2	
Our House is on Fire	C + 30	C + 27	26	1	7	7	2	
Greta and the Giants	C + 29	C + 29	17	17	8	0	10	
Cover	Braided Hair	Yellow Raincoat	Poster	Direct Gaze	Movement			
Umwelthelden	Umwelthelden			Umwelthelden				
Little People Big Dreams	Little People Big Dreams	Little People Big Dreams	Little People Big Dreams	Little People Big Dreams				
Our House is on Fire	Our House is on Fire		Our House is on Fire	Our House is on Fire	Our House is on Fire			
Greta and the Giants	Greta and the Giants	Greta and the Giants	Greta and the Giants	Greta and the Giants	Greta and the Giants			

fig. 27: *Greta Thunberg Picturecount*

Screenshot, May 2022

The main five images identified were the *Braided Hair*, the *Yellow Raincoat*, *Greta and her Poster*, the *Direct Gaze*, and *Greta in a Crowd*.

As can be seen in this image count, some distinct images were shown more often than others and some were shown more prominently. Here, an explanation on how the illustrations of our five distinct images were used in the books:

5.1.1 Braided Hair in Pigtailed

The *Braided Hair* was featured on all four covers, which made it the most dominant iconic trademark of the Greta Thunberg icon. The numbers in the excel-sheet above showed that the illustrations in the children's books also featured GRETA with *Braided Hair* as a regular choice of representation. The *Braided Hair* was featured on 2 out of 2 illustrations that showed GRETA in UH, 11 out of 12 illustrations in LPBD, 26 out of 27 GRETA illustrations in OHIOF and on all 17 illustrations showing GRETA in GATG (added that GATG contained 12 illustrations without showing GRETA entirely).

Hairstyles were known to be a unique trademark for many cultural icons and offered great potential for identification and reproduction within fan groups. Examples included the Beatles and their "mushroom haircuts", Elvis and his "pompadour", and Jennifer Aniston's iconic "Rachel haircut" from the popular TV series "Friends". Similarly, Greta Thunberg's hairstyle was of significant recognition value. The image I discussed was long, medium brown hair, braided in long braids or pigtails on both sides of Greta's face. The first pictures of her in the media showed her with this hairstyle only. Later pictures, as she became an

adult, showed her with a different hairstyle also, but it was the image of the girl with the hair in two braids that was remembered.

Analysing the four children's books from our collection, this trademark was not only how GRETA was shown in all the books, but the *Braided Hair* was also featured on all four covers, putting this distinct image at the top of the list of *Distinct Images* of Greta Thunberg. The *Braided Hair* was another potential intertextual reference to the Pippi Longstocking figure, that linked GRETA to Pippi as fellow children's book character. Thomas Olesen talked in his paper about Greta's visual images being blended with other personas, art pieces, or cultural references, and he also outlined the Pippi Longstocking resemblance herein.

*"Many of these are circulated on Twitter and Instagram and take the form of memes that employ photographs of Thunberg in new, often humorous contexts. With her braided hair and Swedish origin, the comparison with Astrid Lindgren's Pippi Longstocking, a children's literature favorite with superpowers and a distaste for authority, is an obvious one to make, for example."*⁶⁵

To sum up the *Distinct Image* of *Braided Hair*: I found it in all four books, it was featured on the cover of all four books, and appeared most prominently within the books, having the highest count of appearances. It bore some resemblance to the visual identification of another very popular children's book character – Pippi Longstocking – and thus had high potential to contribute to the iconization process, as there was already a large pool of images that readers drew from – images of the Pippi Longstocking character.

5.1.2 Yellow Raincoat

I ranked the *Distinct Image* of the *Yellow Raincoat* second in importance for Greta Thunberg's iconization. The *Yellow Raincoat* was featured on the cover of 2 of the 4 books that I analysed, supporting its importance as an identification element for GRETA as Greta Thunberg. The *Yellow Raincoat* was not a creation of the illustrators of the books, but it was picked up from the widespread images that circulated in the media, showing Greta Thunberg wearing a *Yellow Raincoat* early on.

"The yellow raincoat is a visually poignant symbol. It has a strong colour, might evoke Nordic connotations and is mostly something you associate with children. Her iconicity is an

⁶⁵ Thomas Olesen, "Greta Thunberg's Iconicity: Performance and Co-Performance in the Social Media Ecology," *New Media & Society* 24, no. 6 (November 25, 2020). 13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820975416>.

interplay between what she does and how her audience reacts to it. The raincoat becomes a part of the iconic personality because the audience makes it so, embracing the raincoat and superposing it on Greta as an icon.”⁶⁶

Why was this image so significant and more dominant compared to multiple other outfits Greta Thunberg had been wearing during her speeches and campaigns? The Swedish flag was blue and yellow, which was exactly the combination of the *Yellow Raincoat* with a blue sweater or other blue elements that can be found with the figure GRETA in the children’s books. As Thomas Olesen said, the raincoat became part of the iconic personality, because amongst many others, the creators of the children’s books reacted to it and played the image forward. Greta Thunberg’s protest started in front of the Swedish parliament and before her climate activism became a world-wide movement, it was a Sweden-based idea, as it was Greta’s reaction to forest fires in Sweden caused by climate change. The connectedness of GRETA with the Swedish colours was omnipresent in several depictions of her, in some instances to such an extent that blue and yellow were functioning as a colour code for GRETA. Especially in the LPBD-series: within the series, each individual book had its own set of colours that were picked for each individual person featured in the book series. The colours blue and yellow were dominant throughout the GRETA book. In GATG, the combination of the *Yellow Raincoat* and blue sweater functioned as the outfit for the whole book, showing GRETA wearing these colours only. In other books, her outfits were changing from page to page or scene to scene, of course including the *Yellow Raincoat* as one of the outfit variants. However, she never changed out of her *Yellow Raincoat* in combination with a blue sweater in GATG.

Although the number of images dropped significantly between the most dominant image, *Braided Hair*, and the distinct image of the *Yellow Raincoat*, it was, compared to the *Braided Hair* image, significantly less used (2 times instead of 4 times on the cover, and especially in OHIOF the *Yellow Raincoat* was only featured one time). However, it was an image that was used in moments of importance, such as turning points, in the books. It was used like a uniform or resembled the role of a cape in superhero depictions. I took one scene from the LPBD-series and one scene from OHIOF (where the *Yellow Raincoat* was used the fewest), as examples.

⁶⁶ Thomas Olesen in Ingrid Marie Fossum, “How to Become a Political Icon: The Greta Thunberg Method,” School of Business and Economics, Aarhus University, June 10, 2021, <https://bss.au.dk/en/insights/samfund-1/2021/how-to-become-a-political-icon-the-greta-thunberg-method>.

5.1.2.1 Greta Thunberg (LPBD)

The overall colour scheme of the book was blue and yellow, fitting perfectly with the Greta icon, linking it to Sweden and making the *Yellow Raincoat* and blue sweater omnipresent throughout the book.

The actual image of GRETA wearing the raincoat only appeared twice in the book, in addition to being displayed on the cover. In the transformation of GRETA, from being a sick and depressed child to an active, inspiring action-taker, the raincoat transformed into a yellow superhero uniform much like Superman's cape. On GRETA's chest, was the G-emblem, which completed the reference to Superman. GRETA wore different outfits and colours during her struggles and the period in her life, when she realized that there was climate change. However, in the exact moment where she moved away from depression and jumped into action, she also jumped into her superhero outfit: the *Yellow Raincoat*.

Furthermore, there was another illustration of GRETA in her raincoat. It showed her celebrating the "victory" or her success in drawing attention to the climate crisis. This illustration had her wearing the *Yellow Raincoat* as well and it showed her surrounded by other fighters in the movement that she highly impacted. I summed this up: The *Yellow Raincoat* was the cover image, it stressed the turning point of the story, and GRETA also wore it in the closing image where she was amongst other children.

5.1.2.2 Our House is on Fire

In OHIOF, the trademark raincoat was only featured once, in that regard it took a somewhat counter position to the other books and the importance of the raincoat as a feature of recognition therein. In the entire OHIOF book GRETA always wore the same outfit. However, the one time, she changed – she changed into the *Yellow Raincoat*, which again underlined the importance.

I zoomed in on that one single illustration, it showed GRETA sitting in front of the Swedish Parliament. Linking GRETA and her colours to politics and the Swedish nation, she represented Swedish identity in these colours and this image, as she became an embodiment of the Swedish flag and her cause of nation-wide importance, being a member of the country and its culture. The illustrated image in this scene was the one that caught public attention and started Greta Thunberg's journey to world-wide recognition. Illustrating that scene by sticking to the original colours and outfit of the photographs elevated the importance of her dress code and the cultural connotations hidden within them. Although the picture count in

OHIOF indicated that the *Yellow Raincoat* was not that important, I found the *Yellow Raincoat* a prominent image in what cultural value it represented. I also found the change of outfit at a turning point in the story an important placement for an important *Distinct Image*.

5.1.3 Direct Gaze

I proceeded to the third image in the ranking. On all four covers GRETA was drawn with her gaze directed straight at the reader. It was a confrontational stare and was very powerful and expressive. The *Distinct Image* of this *Direct Gaze* had symbolic value and therefore contributed to the iconization process. The *Direct Gaze* was a symbol of fearlessness in her confrontations and that it was time to “face the climate crisis” or “stop looking away”. It was mostly featured on the covers of the books as it was a unique trademark of Greta Thunberg transferred onto the GRETA characters. Another idea, why to put the *Direct Gaze* on the cover was marketing and the idea that a person or direct look on the cover created a stronger pull for a potential buyer. The fascination with Greta Thunberg’s confrontational stare might also be rooted in her Asperger’s. People with Asperger’s Syndrome sometimes have difficulty looking someone directly in the eyes.⁶⁷ This led me to Michael Parker’s point that a tragic-dramatic narrative was necessary for the formation of a cultural icon. Greta Thunberg had been very vocal about her diagnosis with Asperger’s.

*“The philosophical influence applies the idea that human perception is strongly drawn towards tragic-dramatic forms - the tragic-dramatic narrative of cultural icons being an essential component of the definition - while new research into how images impact on common memory supports this application.”*⁶⁸

The *Distinct Image* of the *Direct Gaze*, albeit not as often represented in the illustrations within the books, gained importance as a contributor to the iconization process of Greta Thunberg. In this image, a lot of what the point of a tragic-dramatic narrative contributed to an iconization was found. She was presented with a strong, fearless, direct stare, in this way the image referred to her struggles with Asperger’s and when she suffered during the discovery of the ongoing climate issues. She then emancipated from that in order to help the environment. Within this stare, there is her personal fight. In GRETA, these images of Greta Thunberg’s fight with the diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome and an eating disorder were

⁶⁷ Nouchine Hadjikhani et al., “Look Me in the Eyes: Constraining Gaze in the Eye-Region Provokes Abnormally High Subcortical Activation in Autism,” *Scientific Reports* 7, no. 1 (June 9, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-017-03378-5>.

⁶⁸ Michael Parker, “Cultural Icons: A Case Study Analysis of Their Formation and Reception” (thesis, 2012), 2.

present, just like the topic of her being a child. That she was a girl and a child was generally speaking not tragic-dramatic; In the matter of wanting to save the climate whilst being a young girl, it might actually have been tragic-dramatic, as we found ourselves in a world governed mostly by older men. The issue of her being a child was emphasized repeatedly throughout the books and was being transformed from a disadvantage into an advantage and a big strength. The images that showed her with the *Direct Gaze* were also images where she was placed in the centre of the page. In figure analysis, the placement in the middle of a page contained certain power:

*“We assume that a character depicted as large has more significance (and maybe more power) than the character who is small and crammed in the corner of a page. The central position in a page emphasizes the character’s central role in the story.”*⁶⁹

The *Direct Gaze* and the placement of GRETA in the centre of the page both conveyed the impression of a strong, independent, and confrontational character as the protagonist of the children’s books.

5.1.4 White Poster with Black Letters

This image is number 4 in our ranking. It was shown in each book and also repeatedly, although not as often as the *Yellow Raincoat*. Additionally, “GRETA holding up a sign” was shown on 3 out of 4 covers. This gave it more importance in the recognition of the living Greta Thunberg in the GRETA character, but it acted also as another prop belonging to the GRETA universe.

The importance of the *Poster* and its reference to Greta Thunberg became especially obvious when I examined the cover of GATG. On the cover, the GRETA character was holding up a sign saying: “STRIKE FOR CLIMATE”. Greta Thunberg’s sign during her protests said, translated from Swedish to English: “Schoolstrike for the climate”. The wording on the *Poster* on the cover of GATG was very similar to the real sign by Greta Thunberg.

The story in the children’s book was inspired by Greta Thunberg’s fight for the climate, and Greta Thunberg’s story was basically retold in the book. But the story was set in a fictitious world, where Giants were destroying the forest. The Giants were shown from a child’s perspective. They made decisions that weren’t in line with what the children and the

⁶⁹ Carole Scott, Maria Nikolajeva, and Elizabeth Levine, *How Picturebooks Work* (Routledge, 2006), 83.

animals in the forest wanted and believed in. In the story, the climate was not mentioned, as the story of the book did not contain the general topic of climate change. It rather dealt with the destruction and protection of the forest and living area of animals. Another aspect in the book was the fast-paced lifestyle of the Giants. There were also several illustrations that showed GRETA or other children and animals holding up placards for protest. “Stop! Listen! We need change! Our home is on fire” was written on them.

The last example and the call to listen were references to Greta Thunberg’s speeches and her activism. That the cover illustration showed very similar wording to Greta Thunberg’s original sign from her protest in front of the Swedish parliament, even though the topic of climate change was not explicitly named or mentioned in the fictitious story world of GATG, showed again how the *Poster* functioned as a prop for the cultural icon Greta Thunberg. A prop which helped to convey what GRETA/Greta Thunberg was fighting for, being the link between person and moral goal, ideological message, and belief.

5.1.5 Greta Thunberg as Leader of a Group

The last *Distinct Image* that formed Greta Thunberg’s iconic status in my analysis, was *her standing in front of a group, leading a protest*. The image of Greta surrounded by like-minded people. In my view, *Greta leading a protest* was an important feature that helped her in gaining an iconic status. It represented her standing in society. It showed her connection with people and her followers and her popularity. Thomas Olesen gave his definition of a political icon in his paper:

*“I define a political icon as an individual with high public visibility who has come to embody a political cause or movement for a large group of people, and who commands significant emotional and moral attachment from their audiences.”*⁷⁰

In his quote, Olesen connected the icon to a significant amount to an audience and a group movement. Many images of Greta were telling the narrative of her as this “one person”, the “superhero”, or “one against the establishment”. By moving away from the “loner-image” in the illustration composition and instead displaying the movement that she founded and was part of, she was more approachable and real. An icon represented someone to whom one told their worries or prayed to, as it was the function of the original religious depictions. This image played into the idea of the tragic-dramatic narrative surrounding Greta

⁷⁰ Thomas Olesen, “Greta Thunberg’s Iconicity: Performance and Co-Performance in the Social Media Ecology,” *New Media & Society* 24, no. 6 (November 25, 2020), 3. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820975416>.

Thunberg. The illustrations of *Greta in Crowds* meant she took on these struggles, was inspiring to others in her position and others that were struggling with whatever it was they were struggling with, which made that image a powerful one. The image was on two covers and found as illustrations of the story in 3 of the 4 books. The one book that did not show Greta with the movement was UH. It had only three pages dedicated to illustration and was displaying the other four *Distinct Images* listed above. Based on these observations, I concluded that the image of Greta as a leader was slightly less important than the others mentioned above, however still relevant enough to be one of the five *Distinct Images* that created the Greta Thunberg icon.

6. Picturebook analysis – close readings

The following chapter honed into the stories conveyed in two books in particular. For this close readings, I chose “Greta and the Giants”, by Zoë Tucker and “Little people, big dreams. Greta Thunberg”, by Maria Isabel Sánchez Vegara. As established above, in picturebook analysis multiple aspects came into play. My analysis was based on the procedure established by Michael Staiger.

Michael Staiger defined in his book on picturebook analysis, that he primarily focused on these six elements when he analyzed a picturebook:

First, the paratextual and material dimension: here I focused on the paratext of the picturebook, which includes everything surrounding the actual text, as well as the material characteristics of the book as a medium. Second, the visual dimension encompassed all aspects of visual design. Third, the verbal dimension addressed the parameters of the language used. Fourth, the intermodal dimensions, which captured the interplay between images and textual content, as well as the design elements. Fifth, the narrative dimension: that treated the *histoire* (what was told?) and the *discourse* (how was it told?), realized in picturebooks through visual and verbal codes and their interaction. And finally, the contextual dimension explored intertextual and extratextual references that were necessary for understanding and interpreting a picturebook.⁷¹

⁷¹ Michael Staiger, “Kategorien Der Bilderbuchanalyse – Ein Sechsdimensionales Modell,” essay, in *Das Bilderbuch*, ed. Michael Staiger, Ben Dammers, and Anne Krichel (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2022), https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-476-05824-9_1.

In my description of the books, I used Michael Staiger's points for orientation and as a general guideline. In the following, I gave specifics on how the books contributed to the iconization of Greta Thunberg.

6.1 Cuteness matters

"Greta and the Giants" was a children's book written by Zoë Tucker and illustrated by Zoe Persico. The subtitle of the book said that Greta and the Giants was inspired by Greta Thunberg's stand to save the world. There was a yellow printed button on the cover, that said that the book itself was printed on recycled paper only. The paper was uncoated, and it was recycled paper. The text on the back cover explicitly noted that: *"this inspiring picture book retells the story of Nobel peace prize nominee Greta Thunberg for very young children."* In addition to the yellow button on the front cover, also the back cover mentioned the climate friendly production method (FSC certified paper) and that *"By buying a copy of this book, you are making a donation of 3 % of the cover price to 350.org."* 350.org was an organization that wanted to limit the use of fossil fuels. These were examples for the mentioning of references to Greta Thunberg in paratext.

On the first couple of pages, the writer used fairytale like language and told that the book's protagonist was called Greta and that she lived in the heart of a beautiful forest. The book was illustrated using digital illustration. GRETA was portrayed in a very friendly way, surrounded by many kind looking animals. The illustration used the Kindchenschema (baby schema) in the looks of the protagonist and the animals. Baby schema is a set of infantile physical features, such as round face and big eyes⁷² and a small pointy nose. The baby schema, first introduced by Konrad Lorenz presented a set of facial and body features that made a creature appear "cute" and activated a motivation to care for it in other humans.⁷³

The setting: Everything was calm, peaceful, and quiet until one morning GRETA stepped out of her house and all the animals of the forest were gathered, asking her to help them. Together with Greta, sequences were shown to the reader – the narration was constructed in a way that made it seem as if the animals were presenting what was happening – of what the

⁷² Melanie L. Glocker et al., "Baby Schema Modulates the Brain Reward System in Nulliparous Women," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 106, no. 22 (June 2, 2009): 9115–19, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0811620106>.

⁷³ Sabine Doebel, Nicole J. Stucke, and Songhan Pang, "Kindchenschema and Cuteness Elicit Interest in Caring for and Playing with Young Children, but Less so When Children Are Masked," *Scientific Reports* 12, no. 1 (July 13, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-022-15922-z>.

Giants were doing. The giants were cutting down the trees and harming the wildlife. The giants were drawn with stern facial expressions, slightly distorted bodies, most of them were bold and had a serious and determined expression on their faces. It showed that these creatures are indeed giant – their bodies were drawn superhumanly large while the animals were depicted small and harmless in their expression and physical representation. This image carried the same “David vs Goliath” connotation as the media-shaped image of Greta Thunberg vs Donald Trump for the World Economic Forum in Davos, in 2020.

The picturebook taught the message of the friendly underdog: GRETA in the company of a suppressed community. This was part of the hagiographic depiction of the GRETA character, as explained earlier in this thesis. An interesting sequence, which raised GRETA’s power and showed that she was stronger than the other animals or children in the forest, was the following sequence: The children and animals feared the Giants too much, they turned to GRETA again for help as she was the only one who didn’t fear them. This attributed GRETA with leadership qualities and made her “special” in comparison to others.

The picturebook continued and GRETA had an idea, she took an action of verbalizing a border. She said “STOP” and with that strong statement, she gathered a group of people around her. They formed a protest and marched against the Giants, confronted them with their doing and told them to stop as a group, with GRETA as the leader. Together, they demonstrated the power of collective action and showed that even small voices created significant change.

The book ended with the Giants learning environmentally friendly behaviour and the forest changing for the better, following GRETA’s suggestions.

6.2 How was Greta and the Giants feeding into an iconization of Greta Thunberg?

As mentioned above, the dissemination and reproduction of the images of an icon were key elements in the icon’s creation. Both points were met in this book. The media shift was part of reproducing the image and the dissemination of a Greta icon. The images were then altered, changed to fit the new medium (children’s book), with its own specific demands. The images specific for the Greta icon were transferred into the fantastical world of GATG.

There were multiple parallels between the fictitious character GRETA and the real-life activist Greta Thunberg in regard to activism, their courage and determination, their attempt to amplify the voices of minorities. They both started off a global movement (in the picturebook the forest represented the whole world the characters live in), whether it was Greta Thunberg addressing world leaders or the character GRETA standing up against the

giants destroying the forest in the “world” that was the book. It was important to note that while the character GRETA in the book was inspired by Greta Thunberg, the book was a work of fiction and presented a more fanciful representation of Greta’s activism.

Nonetheless, the parallels in their passion, activism, and determination, as well as the physical resemblance made for a meaningful connection between the real-life activist and the character in the book. The plot of the book told the Greta Thunberg story in a fairytale-like manner. Extratextual reference let the reader decipher that Giants represented adults and oil companies and GRETA, the children and the animals represented the Fridays for Future movement.

The hagiographic character description as well as the David vs Goliath image were ways of how GRETA from GATG contributed to Greta Thunberg’s iconization.

6.3 Superpowers in action

The Little people, BIG DREAMS series followed the same strategy with all editions in the series: A children appropriately narrated biography of the person presented in each edition. Unlike “Greta and the Giants,” the story of this book was not transferred into a fairytale setting, but it told the biography of Greta Thunberg set in real life but with colourful and imaginative illustrations and written to entertain and educate children about Greta Thunberg and her impact on the world. The main character in the book was still a character, as the GRETA figure was constructed from the writer and the illustrator within their realm of knowledge and the idea of Greta Thunberg. This became evident when analysing the illustrations in the book, as they presented a creative interpretation of the person Greta Thunberg and derived from an interpretation and guided perception of Greta Thunberg and the Thunberg images in the media.

In the paratext of the book, I found the authors name and the name of Greta Thunberg prominently on the cover. The cover as already mentioned before, carried the *Distinct Images: Yellow Raincoat, Braided Hair, the White Poster with Black Letters*, and the *Direct Gaze*. Additionally, the cover of the hard cover book was a strong blue, complementing the yellow of the raincoat and accentuating GRETA’s blue eyes. The two colours yellow and blue were representative of the Swedish flag, which I found an extratextual reference or interpretation. On the cover, there was no mention of an especially environmentally friendly production of the book. This was interesting in comparison to GATG, where this was specifically mentioned. On the back cover, a short summary of the book’s content, the pricing and the publisher logo was set. I completed the description of the design of the hard cover, by

pointing out the black-coloured half-linen binding with a rougher texture. This indicated a high-quality book production with attention to detail and raised the value of the book's appearance.

The book was designed with comprehensive, full-page illustrations, the text was set mostly in the corners of the pages and the colours of the digital illustration, were slightly matted. The book paper was coated, had an open structure and a natural feel.

The book was written in simple and clear English. It manages to explain the climate issues GRETA was up against and used a calming style in narration at the same time.

The design of the front-end paper had yellow paper for the base and illustrations of multiple *White Posters with Black Letters* (the writing is in different languages), were printed on it. Again, the colour yellow was dominant and important. The front-end paper as design element was used to react to the cover design. In this case this meant blue cover and yellow front end paper. The Swedish flag's colours were predominantly used throughout this book. It can be assumed that this was purposely chosen to connect GRETA with Swedish history, Swedish culture and to locate her approach and persona within a cultural tradition of young, active, and controversial Swedish girls (like Pippi Longstocking).

The narrative dimension of LPBD was simple. It retold Greta Thunberg's life path. Special about the presentation of the character in this version compared to the GATG depiction of Greta Thunberg, was the focus on her Asperger's syndrome. In GATG the disorder was not mentioned and not part of the character. Therefore, also not part of the character's superpowers. This was very different in LPBD. GRETA's Asperger's held a prominent role in the book. GRETA's involvement in the climate crisis was linked to her Asperger's and evolved to be somewhat of a superpower. This was especially interesting regarding Michael Parker's idea of the tragic-dramatic narrative surrounding a cultural icon. The book acknowledged the disorder, used the struggle to transform it from a weakness to a strength. This was part of creating a tragic-dramatic narrative for Greta Thunberg.

6.3.1 How was LPBD feeding into an iconization of Greta Thunberg?

LPBD took part in the creation of a tragic-dramatic narrative and was additionally to all the visual impressions of a Greta Thunberg icon also involved in the myth, cultural icon needed. The interaction of the colours yellow and blue, referred to Swedish nationality, was another aspect that was feeding into the iconization, as it was a reproducible image that evoked connotations to the nation that Greta Thunberg came from, and I inferred that it also meant the Pippi Longstocking figure. These were extratextual references that worked through

cultural memory and an informed audience community. The language of the book created a full picture of GRETA and the story gave her character depth (the reader learned, that her great-grand-uncle Svante was a scientist). The reader was informed about how Asperger's was diagnosed and how GRETA felt in the classroom learning about the climate crisis.

LPBD'S GRETA character was closely tied to Greta Thunberg (as it was a biography), therefore the images presented were linked directly with Greta Thunberg. One picture stands out in particular, it showed GRETA in her *Yellow Raincoat*, only that the Raincoat acted as the cape of a superhero and she even wore the "G" like Superman's "S" on her chest. This intensified the meaning of the *Yellow Raincoat* and the role the book played in creating an iconic image of Greta Thunberg in the minds of the children reading the book. The reader gained understanding for Greta Thunberg and was likely to empathize with her and her cause, because of an emotional connection with GRETA – the authors conveyed her struggles and issues with the climate crisis and that it affected her.

Chapter 6 of this thesis was dedicated to the creation of the Greta Thunberg icon and the involvement of images in children's literature in the formation of an icon. I deciphered *Distinct Images* which were the images an iconization process needed to create an icon. The *Distinct Images* appeared in four books examined for this thesis and I also discussed how these images got reproduced, altered and changed and finally made *durable* to allow an iconization process to happen.

7. Quantitative Analysis – Signs of Iconoclasm

Thus far, I established *Distinct Images* and processes that contributed to Greta becoming an icon. The points introduced by Michael Parker, in his 4-point-model of iconization, were met by the Greta Thunberg icon. While working with the model and performing my analysis, I found one further point that in my view should be added to this model. I wanted to highlight the importance of iconoclasm or iconoclastic attacks on a potential icon. As explained earlier, iconoclasm contributed to the iconization of an icon.

I talked about the cultural icon Greta Thunberg as being a controversial figure, which can be noted as a new key attribution of an icon. In the children's books, the controversy regarding Greta Thunberg wasn't reflected in her representation. The visual depictions of GRETA did not indicate any controversy surrounding her and her movement. They rather created a positive picture and carry hagiographic elements. Therefore, the feature of iconoclasm in an iconization process was not met in the illustrated books. To get to the

bottom of iconoclasm as part of an iconization process, I needed to widen my view. Here, I made the point, that iconoclasm was part of an iconic process. Using Twitter, I wanted to investigate our case study whether iconoclastic attacks happened to the Greta Thunberg icon.

An article in the Austrian newspaper *Der Standard* presented several attacks by Austrian right-wing politicians on Greta, aiming mainly at the *Distinct Images* defined as part of the Greta Thunberg icon.⁷⁴

The author of the article, Judith Goetz⁷⁵ summarized the attacks on Greta Thunberg as anti-disabled, sexist, ageist, and hate-speech. She listed examples deriving from the right-wing newspaper *Zur Zeit*, which wrote for instance: “*schwedische Göre mit dem sauertöpfischen Gesicht*” which is translated to “Swedish brat with a sourpuss like face.” This was an insult aiming at Greta Thunberg’s youth and lack of experience. It also attacked her visual appearance. The Austrian FPÖ-party called the Fridays-for-Future-movement “Zöpferl-Diktatur,” “pigtail dictatorship”. They used the *Braided Hair* of Greta Thunberg and combined it with *her leadership of the movement* and called it a dictatorship. This created term diminished her achievement with the movement, as removed the seriousness and respectability of the leadership and the movement. The suffix “erl” in Austrian language, was used, which was a way of making something sound smaller and cuter. In “Zöpferl,” I found the *Distinct Image* of the *Braided Hair* and at the same time a verbal clue that diminished this image. In “dictatorship”, I found the *Distinct Image* of *her leading a group*, and at the same time the information, that this group she led, wasn’t doing that deliberately, but that she was a dictator. Both verbal attacks showed iconoclasm of the opponents of Greta Thunberg. Judith Goetz called this “narratives of delegitimization.”

I aimed at gathering a larger number of iconoclastic behaviours, such as the examples I took from the article by Judith Goetz in *Der Standard*. To do so, I looked at Twitter reactions towards Greta Thunberg’s Tweets. The Tweets with negative sentiment, caught my attention. I hoped that this gave a larger overview of the situation, rather than relying on individual examples, I took from media coverage, political party members or social media.

For the analysis of the iconoclastic issue with Greta, I decided to use a more dynamic and participatory media. I picked the microblog X former called Twitter to do so. I continued to call the company Twitter in this thesis, as the name changed after my collection and

⁷⁴ Judith Götz, “Zwei Jahre ‘Fridays for Future’: Von Der ‘Klima-Hysterie’ Zur ‘Zöpferl-Diktatur’. Angriffe Österreichischer Rechtsextremer Auf Greta Thunberg,” *Der Standard*, August 20, 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000119418238/ein-jahr-fridays-for-future-von-der-klima-hysterie-zur>.

⁷⁵ “Judith Goetz,” Wikipedia, February 21, 2024, https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judith_Goetz.

analysis of the Twitter data and all the Tweets were made, while the company was still called Twitter. The Collins Dictionary defined a microblog as follows: “A *microblog* is a *blog* which is often intended for a particular group of people and consists of very short messages.”⁷⁶

One of the most prominently used microblogs in the US and Europe at a time, was the US microblog Twitter. Twitter was used by private people, companies, politicians, and celebrities alike and was also known to be an informant for police or other officials in times of real-life catastrophes such as terror attacks. Twitter was considered a relevant journalistic tool. This reactive quality of Twitter and Twitter users made it a great contribution to my analysis as I targeted the sentiment of Twitter users regarding Greta Thunberg. I wanted to find positive and negative feedback to the Greta Thunberg icon in Tweets. Within these reactions and feedback, I searched for the images people either supported or attacked in the social media and saw their alignment with the five *Distinct Images*, which were defined earlier as significant indicators of the specific Greta Thunberg icon.

7.1 Participatory media – Twitter

The microblog Twitter was a participatory media, as it allowed its users to generate content themselves, to follow users, react to messages of other users and multiple other ways of participation: active creation and passive consumption, both was possible. Videos went viral on the platform. It also happened that footage put on Twitter helped police catch a criminal.⁷⁷ This participation of audience was now the common interaction with news and media. Social media users were creating, judging, or validating and spreading images. The iconization process that I was interested in involved active participation of the audience and media. It helped create, reproduce, and spread the images of the possible icon. Michael Parker spoke about the reproducibility of icons in his second point of his 4-point-model. He defined, that an iconic image needed to be reproducible for it to become iconic. Twitter offered great possibilities to reproduce and spread content. Images were conveyed by using the 280 characters available per message. Memes and videos played an important role on Twitter too, which offered another variant of image production, reproduction and spreading.

⁷⁶ “Microblog Definition and Meaning | Collins English Dictionary,” Collins, accessed March 18, 2024, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/microblog>.

⁷⁷ Nicole Coomber, “Police Use of Twitter: 21st Century Community Policing” (master’s thesis, Wilfrid Laurier University, 2018), 15.

*“The concept of “spreadability” preserves [...] the idea that the movement of messages from person to person, and from community to community, over time increases their effectiveness and expands their impact. [...] In this emerging model, audiences play an active role in “spreading” content: their choices, their investments, and their actions determine what gets valued.”*⁷⁸

This transfer of information, which Jenkins and Green described, was of special interest to my analysis. In the next chapter, I honed into a big data collection of Twitter messages. The messages were written and sent out, retweeted, quoted or replied to and therefore were spreading the information to large amounts of people and communities. Paraphrasing from Jenkins, I considered that due to this, content reached niche communities. Material originally got produced to fit a large audience. Then, as the content spread, it changed and got remade and more niche in content *“either literally through various forms of sampling and remixing, or figuratively via its insertion into ongoing conversations and interactions.”*⁷⁹ This allowed the content to reach new audiences and to achieve higher visibility. Visibility was not equalled with praise or positive feedback. That fact that content spread through communities, did not necessarily mean, that the reproductions that were created were positive in sentiment. People reproduced the original content also with a critical point of view and used it for their individual purpose, e.g. political standpoint. The consumers were *“no longer ‘hosts’ or ‘carriers,’ consumers become grassroots curators and advocates for personally and socially meaningful materials. Under these conditions, media content which remains fixed in location and static in form doesn’t generate public interest and thus drops out of these ongoing conversations. In short, if it doesn’t spread, it’s dead!”*⁸⁰

This statement by Jenkins and Green highlighted the importance of spreading and reproducing. The reaction towards the Tweets was important for the iconization process, regardless if it was positive or negative. The analysis of positive and negative sentiment towards the reproduction of images of Greta Thunberg was one of my key tasks in the Twitter analysis. To be able to understand the balance of negative and positive reactions to Greta Thunberg, I collected Tweets directed **to** Greta Thunberg (marked by @GretaThunberg) since August 20, 2018, the moment in time, when Greta Thunberg posted

⁷⁸ Joshua Green, Henry Jenkins, and Virginia Nightingale, “Spreadable Media: How Audiences Create Value and Meaning in a Networked Economy,” essay, in *The Handbook of Media Audiences* (New Jersey: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2011), 116. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781444340525.ch5>.

⁷⁹ *ibid.*

⁸⁰ *ibid.*

her first Tweet on her own Twitter account, marking the beginning of her climate strike. I stopped the data collection on May 31, 2022. This was the last day I accessed the Twitter archive for extracting Tweets to analyse the sentiment with the NLA-tool offered by expert.ai.⁸¹

7.2 Twitter archive

A great advantage of using Twitter data compared to other social media was its open network structure with public profiles and a wide range of information that was contained in each Tweet. Further, Twitter provided various API endpoints (application programming interface) for reading and collecting Twitter data, which made data handling easier. There were different levels to access Twitter data.⁸² Researchers could use the Academic Research access⁸³ to collect their data. To be able to analyse Tweets that date further back in history than two weeks, which was the cut off in the regular access model, it was necessary to apply for an Academic Research access to Twitter which allowed the user a full archive search. With that the researcher was able to retrieve up to 10 million Tweets per month. My research question followed the iconization process of the Greta Thunberg icon over several years and I wanted to observe the iconophilic and iconoclastic reactions from the first appearance of Greta Thunberg until May 2022. Therefore, in order to trace back Tweets in the archive dating back several years, I applied for Academic Research access. It was necessary to be part of a research group or connected to a professor to receive authorization from Twitter. In my case, I presented my project to Twitter and my supervisor Associate Prof. Dr. Paula Wojcik, made it possible that I gained access to the full archive.

The web-based API platform postman offered an interface which allowed everyone to make requests to the Twitter archive and showed responses in JSON, a data format that was fairly easy to understand. The Twitter access allowed several different queries to be made to the data pool. In the beginning, as I tried to get acquainted with these tools and as I collected data in the testing phase, I used postman to send out queries via the platform, which I first

⁸¹ see “Expert.Ai Natural Language Understanding,” expert.ai, February 9, 2024, <https://www.expert.ai>.

⁸² Since my data collection, Twitter (now X) has changed the access to the archive. Find the relevant information here: “Getting Historical Tweets Using the Full-Archive Search Endpoint | Docs | Twitter Developer Platform,” Twitter, accessed March 18, 2024, <https://developer.twitter.com/en/docs/tutorials/getting-historical-tweets-using-the-full-archive-search-endpoint>.

⁸³ Twitter API for academic research | products | twitter developer ..., accessed March 18, 2024, <https://developer.twitter.com/en/products/twitter-api/academic-research>.

connected to my Twitter Academic Research access account, so that postman knew where to search in.

7.3 NLA sentiment analysis tool

One thing I wanted to emphasize was that a sentiment analysis was looking at the sentiment of words in the text. So, in our case it was the sentiment of the Tweets. That a text was negative in sentiment, did not necessarily mean that this text was negative towards Greta Thunberg, therefore this needed extra attention, when working with these data.⁸⁴

One way to limit the collection of a “false negative sentiment”, was for example by only analysing Tweets that were directed “TO” Greta (example see Appendix B/1) instead of containing her as an @GretaThunberg amongst others. I also tried to receive a more precise view of Greta Thunberg by looking at the *Distinct Images* that I deciphered from the presentation in the children’s books, adding the images directly into the queries. I wanted more precise results, and I implemented a cutoff value. Some analysed Tweets showed higher inaccuracy in the sentiment analysis, as I looked at the test run of 1000 Tweets qualitatively.

I realized that especially Tweets, that were categorized slightly negative, slightly positive, or neutral, differed in a qualitative analysis in the resulting sentiment. This meant that Tweets that contained words with strong, clear sentiment (positive or negative), were easier to detect for the NLA analysis tool. The more subtle the language got, the more inaccurate the analysis got.

I made it easier for the Natural Language Analysis-Tool to know which Tweets were positive and which were negative, I set the cutoff value to +2, -2 (the sentiment analysis worked like that: it rated different words on how negative or how positive they individually were) to clean away those who were harder to interpret, meaning the Tweets that weren’t as clearly readable as positive or negative for the machine. This way only Tweets that were strongly negative and strongly positive in sentiment got sent further for the analysis.

The sentiment analysis tool was never 100 percent correct in detecting the sentiment of a text as there were obstacles like sarcasm, irony, or intertextual references which a program was not yet able to catch, when I did the analysis. The same was true for human beings, though. It was likely that when a person read a Tweet from a user from another cultural or educational background, some meaning got lost, because upbringing played an important role

⁸⁴ see an example of a Tweet with negative sentiment but actually positive sentiment towards Greta Thunberg in Appendix B/2.

in social interactions. Nevertheless, in being aware of this I tried to keep the misunderstandings as limited as possible.

In a qualitative analysis that might have meant to first get acquainted with a cultural background. In this quantitative analysis it meant: In order to optimize the result of the sentiment analysis with the sentiment analysis tool, I needed to preprocess the text before the sentiment analysis was performed. Any additional coding, I needed for the cleaning and searching in my Twitter data, was done with the help of Ann Julie Utne Holt, former scientist and now software programmer.

7.3.1 Preprocessing the text – cleaning up

The preprocessing-procedure included cleaning the text from any URLs, as the text analysis tool was not designed to recognize links but decomposed the links into unrecognizable nouns and punctuation. The links got removed to not interfere with the sentiment analysis of the rest of the Tweet text. The content of these links were mostly memes and videos and therefore not relevant for my particular analysis which in this section of the thesis was strictly focussing on images found in the text itself. In a different analysis it would definitely be interesting to analyse the Greta Thunberg videos and memes separately.

The next step in preparing the Tweets for the analysis was to remove the @username. Twitter users included other Twitter users into their Tweets or directed Tweets by utilizing the @ and the username at the beginning or within the Tweet text. Since the sentiment analysis tool was detecting main lemmas and lemmas for the sentiment recognition, this was clouded up by the many @username found in the text. I was aware that in a qualitative analysis, the @username might be of interest in regard to meaning or sentiment of the text, but in order to have a quantitative analysis of such a large number of Tweets, I decided to disregard the @username element. This way, I was able to get a stricter focus from the sentiment analysis tool to the content of what was said rather than who it was said to (apart from Greta Thunberg of course). In the same process it appeared to be beneficial to only collect the Tweets that were directed to “GretaThunberg” instead of also including the @GretaThunberg Tweets to get Tweets that had a stronger personal reaction in them.

This was a crucial step in the data collection. Just to be clear on which Tweets got collected, here the explanation on what included the “to GretaThunberg” Tweets. To Greta Thunberg Tweets were Tweets where GretaThunberg was the primary target, this included the following: Original Tweets from any user directed to her, “@GretaThunberg” where she was the first referenced user, replies to any Tweet originated by the user GretaThunberg and

replies to Tweets or Retweets originated by the user GretaThunberg. A Tweet that was directed to GretaThunberg showed, in my opinion, stronger sentiment and was therefore more interesting regarding our question of iconophilia and iconoclasm than Tweets that included the @GretaThunberg next to several other Twitter users.

A large part of online communication used emojis and emoticons. In a study on the use of emojis, it showed that:

*“Test results suggest that expressing sentiment, strengthening expression, and adjusting tone are the top three most popular intentions of using emojis. Moreover, different from emoticons, people do not intend to use emojis for expressing humor. Interesting differences between different types of emojis are also discovered, for example, negative emojis are more intended to be used than positive emojis to express sentiment, and neutral emojis are the most proper for expressing irony.”*⁸⁵

For the sentiment of a text, the “smiley” was rather relevant. In a test run it became apparent, that the NLA tool by expert.ai did not recognise the emoji’s sentiment. In the future, the Analysis Tool might be able to take the emojis into account, as they showed relevance for the expression of sentiment. Especially interesting was the fact that neutral emojis were used to express irony, this could help the NLA tool in detecting irony in the sentiment analysis. I mentioned above, that this was a big disadvantage of a quantitative analysis of text. Albeit, in this analysis, the emojis therefore had to be removed from the Tweets in the clean-up process.

The final step in the clean-up process was to check the Tweets for abbreviations and acronyms. The microblog Twitter offers up to 280 characters or Unicode glyphs for each Tweet. This made the usage of emojis and abbreviations and acronyms all the more important. To get to know some of the most commonly used abbreviations and acronyms, I did a random trial run, where I extracted 1000 Tweets from the last days and extracted the ones I found in a qualitative reading. I further added them to a preset list found online⁸⁶ and replaced the abbreviated words with their long version, prior to the sentiment analysis (see Appendix B/3). It was impossible to make sure all abbreviations and acronyms as well as

⁸⁵ Tianran Hu et al., “Spice up Your Chat: The Intentions and Sentiment Effects of Using Emojis,” *Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media* 11, no. 1 (May 3, 2017): 102–11, <https://doi.org/10.1609/icwsm.v11i1.14869>, 102.

⁸⁶ Carlson, Nicholas. “Twitter Acronyms You Need to Know.” *Business Insider*, April 23, 2012. <https://www.businessinsider.com/twitter-acronyms-2012-4>.

common typos were getting caught by the machine, but this way I made sure, the clean-up at least contained the most important abbreviations.

7.4 The data collection

For the final collection of the data, I narrowed down important events in the life of Greta Thunberg. Several of her speeches had been covered by media and evoked strong reactions on Twitter. After considering different options in what to include in the analysis, I landed on collecting Tweets in a representative time span. I collected data surrounding Greta Thunberg's "How dare you" speech. This speech was held in September 2019, at 2019 UN Climate Action Summit⁸⁷, at a point in time where the person Greta was already known by a wide range of people and the speech was held at the height of controversy surrounding her. The purpose of this analysis was to extract words that appeared in Twitter comments directed to Greta who showed iconophilic and iconoclastic potential. I wanted to check my claim that iconoclasm was part of the ionization process, which I aimed to add to Michael Parker's 4-point-model.

I examined the methods Twitter users applied, to destroy the Greta icon: I started to collect data from September 15, 2019 until September 30, 2019.

The observational time included the week leading up to the Summit, the duration of the Summit and her speech on September 23, as well as one week after the Summit had ended. This was necessary to decipher a potential change in the reactions and sentiment towards the icon and to observe the immediate wording and iconoclastic behaviours once they were provoked. In this time span, I wanted to be able to extract all the information I needed, to see how iconoclasts reacted, when the icon was present and the iconophiles expressed their admiration. In the Tweets, I saw both sides – the adored and the hated images or ideas on Greta Thunberg.

After the Tweets were collected and their sentiment was analysed, I created 4 different shortlists with the lemmas that were extracted for sentiment analysis purposes.

The four lists sorted the key words and phrases that were used in the Tweets by their strongest negative or strongest positive in sentiment and the ones that were used the most in the negative Tweets. The other list showed the highest count of lemmas used in the positive Tweets.

⁸⁷ The UN Climate Action Summit took place from 21. September 2019 – 23. September 2019 in New York City.

7.5 Data results and words with strong sentiment

The pool of data allowed several queries. With this type of computer-based analysis, I generated a list of the lemmas or words being the highest in positive sentiment as well as lemmas with the highest negative sentiment.

I took “thank”, “love”, “hero”, “courage”, “good”, “support”, “strong”, “people”, “right”, “inspire”, “leader”, “planet”, “girl”, “child”, “young lady”, “god”, “bless”, “believe” from the list with the words of highest positive sentiment.

From the list that showed the highest negative sentiment, I took these: “hate”, “fight”, “ignore”, “child”, “protest”, “lie”, “scare”, “attack”, “idiot”, “brainwash”, “fake”, “kid”, “fear”, “shit”, “die”, “bully”, “stupid”.

Thomas Olesen, already mentioned “binarily coded terms” as terms relevant in iconization. Binarily coded terms were terms of clear definition, they were classified as either good or bad, positive or negative, ionophilic or iconoclastic. He said that these terms were an expression of the emotional involvement of the audiences in the creation of the iconicity of Greta Thunberg. Therefore, not only the positive sentiment expressed in the Tweets but also the negative sentiment was part of the creation of an icon, shouldering my additional point of “iconoclasm being necessary for the creation and/or identification of an icon”. Therefore, I looked at the generated list of positive and negative sentiment.

7.6 Positive words detected in the Tweets

Sorting the words in groups seemed helpful and gave the results structure and clarified the impact. They were sorted in these groups, which gave them a shared meaning or direction.

7.6.1 “good”, “right”, “inspire”, “courage”, “strong”

This group of positive words was categorized as “words of inspiration and determination”. The words described positive personality traits of the activist Greta Thunberg. She was seen as “strong” and “courageous”. Within the *Distinct Images* of the Greta Thunberg icon, I found this similar to the *Direct Gaze* image. It fit with the “David vs. Goliath-Metaphor.”

“Good” and “right” were part of the hagiographic descriptions that followed icons. These words described Greta Thunberg’s set of values and the judgement of her character and moral orientation.

7.6.2 “hero”, “leader”, “planet”

These terms were categorized as words of “leadership.” Here the positive sentiment was directed at Greta’s abilities to guide and lead large groups of people. The *Distinct Image* of her *holding up the Poster* carried the same message. In the LPBD picturebook, GRETA was wearing her *Yellow Raincoat* as a cape and had an emblem on her chest, which referred to the “ultimate” superhero in pop culture: superman. The words “hero” and also “planet” were creating a similar image as the “*Yellow Raincoat* worn as a cape” did. Greta led a world-wide network of people, her topics were relevant to the whole planet and she did this like a hero, as portrayed in the books.

7.6.3 “god”, “bless”, “believe”

The term “icon” and its roots in religion were undoubtedly intertwined with the idealization and praise of Greta Thunberg. In the positive Tweets religious terms were found that described her. Twitter users wished her the support from spiritual leaders and God in particular: this carried the idea that Greta was fighting alongside God, or that God was fighting alongside her. The concept of “believe” was also observed here. Icons strongly relied on a believe-like following from their supporters. A collection of religious representations of Greta were shown in the appendices (see figs. 28, 29 and 30).

The *Distinct Image* of her *holding up a Poster* from the list of *Distinct Images* was the one that fit the words of this category well. The words taken from Tweets with positive sentiment were mostly directed at her iconic status and were part of the hagiographic description and perception.

7.6.4 “girl”, “child”, “young lady”

This was a particular important group of lemmas, as the aspect of her being a child-leader was very specific for the Greta-icon and was also featured in the expressions of negative sentiment. This was represented in the *Distinct Images* of the Greta icon defined earlier. In the specific iconization process of Greta Thunberg, this was a particularly unique *Distinct Image*, as she was put in the realm of “wunderkind”. The *Distinct Image* of her *Braided Hair* was contained in these words of positive sentiment. The *Braided Hair* was a childish hair

style. Other children or childlike figures, like Pippi Longstocking, were also wearing this hairstyle. I saw any negative words directed towards the hairstyle as an attack on the fact that she was a child. With her fame gained at a young age, she reminded me of other children, who gained fame through their abilities and seemed to be, due to their young age, of special powers, in the perception of the readers or users of Twitter.

7.6.5 “thank”, “love”, “support”

These are emotional expressions of positive sentiment, admiration and community. The *Distinct Image* of the community and *Greta in a large group of people* comes to mind.

7.7 Negative words detected in the Tweets

The negative words were forming an image as well, but even more so, they destroyed the existing positive image of Greta Thunberg as an iconic figure in climate change activism. The words were attacking certain traits or images. Images that were found in the children’s books and the positive reproductions of Greta Thunberg.

7.7.1 “child”, “idiot”, “kid”, “stupid”

The term “child” and its variation “kid” were used in the negative comments as well as in the positive. In the negative Tweets, Greta Thunberg’s young age was under attack and seen and described as negative. The terms implied that she was poorly informed and not mature enough to speak in public. This was an example for how the Tweets with positive sentiment and the Tweets with negative sentiment contained the same iconic trademarks or images that were defined for the Greta Thunberg icon. Iconization and Iconoclasm aimed at the same image of an icon. To sort the negative sentiment for our analysis, I defined that the iconophile *Distinct Image* of her childlike hairstyle *Braided Hair* was being destroyed with these terms. The advertisement of the energy company in Canada (fig. 31), did the same. As already mentioned above, the childlike hairstyle was representative of immaturity and innocence. In the Tweets with negative sentiment, the words child, idiot and kid were used to belittle Greta Thunberg and her abilities.

7.7.2 “lie”, “brainwash”, “fake”

These words were negative towards the message that Greta Thunberg carried. The Twitter users did not like what she was saying in her speeches, and they claimed the content to be fake, fake news, lies and that Greta Thunberg was brainwashing people. This was in

direct contrast to how her leadership qualities were portrayed in the books. In the books, she was presented as knowledgeable and smart and truthful. The words “lie” and “fake” stated the contrary. I therefore understood the negative sentiment in the Tweets therefore be as iconoclastic. The image that was attacked here was the image of Greta Thunberg as a proper leader *in a group* and *her holding up a Poster* as the poster contained her ideas for the world.

7.7.3 “hate”, “attack”, “shit”, “die”, “bully”

Tweets were a very emotional form of text, to examine. They contained either praise and a lot of positive admiration or hateful language, curse words or verbal violence. The words “hate”, “shit” and “die” were very strong words that showed a strong urge to hurt the icon. They were of destructive energy and aimed to hurt. Iconoclasm, which derived from the violent act of destroying actual images on walls, reached the 21st century in the shape of threats, verbal violence and verbal attacks on a mostly digital or media based image of Greta Thunberg.

The images that were found in the children’s books were also found in the Tweets. Iconoclastic tendencies in the treatment of the Greta Thunberg icon were found in how the Twitter users expressed their negative sentiment and how Greta Thunberg was polarising as a public figure. There was a strong pull in both directions: One side created a saviour like image of Greta Thunberg and the other side strongly withstood this by attacking the image of Greta Thunberg.

8. Conclusion

This master's thesis examined the iconization process of Greta Thunberg. I tried to explore how she transitioned from a climate activist to a global cultural icon. Through an analysis of her portrayal in children's literature and contrasting it with Twitter messages with negative sentiment, I wanted to clarify that there was indeed an interplay between iconization and iconoclasm. The *Distinct Images* I found in my children's book analysis contributed to Greta Thunberg's iconic status. The thesis revealed iconoclastic tendencies in the Twitter analysis, which challenged Greta's iconic status and therefore, as I argue confirmed it. These findings aimed to deepen our understanding of how cultural icons are constructed and contested, and I tried to shed light on the dynamics between iconization and iconoclasm in contemporary society. I think, my claim to add iconoclasm as another major contributor in an iconization process got promising support from my study.

Unfortunately, the sentiment analysis tools were not yet able to give completely satisfying results. Too many Tweets could potentially be positive towards Greta Thunberg but written in a way that they are categorized as negative by the sentiment analysis tool (as shown in the example in Appendix B/2). With my method, I was still able to use the collection of Tweets to give me some sort of idea on how the sentiment was divided and I did generate interesting results showing important words or lemmas that were undeniably tied to the Greta Thunberg person/icon.

Looking at specific Tweets, in which the negative sentiment towards the person Greta Thunberg was clear, promising results could be found in the detection of iconoclastic elements or even iconoclastic attacks.

In addition to the Tweets, the picturebooks were a great source to answer the question of how character information got conveyed to children. Firstly, the visual depictions such as pictures and illustrations in children's books contained the images of a cultural icon and they were part of the dissemination and alteration of these images. Examining the picturebooks helped to gather and decipher relevant *Distinct Images* of the Greta Thunberg icon. Therefore, it was possible to prioritize some images and create a ranking of what images of Greta Thunberg were most relevant to generate or feed into a Greta Thunberg icon.

In the next step, this thesis worked with these images, having deemed them as relevant with all four books and looked at them more closely in LPBD and GATG. Once, the

images were defined, I compared them with the images of Greta Thunberg in other media – Twitter in this case.

The Twitter analysis got much clearer once I defined what images I was looking for. I wanted to see if these *Distinct Images* were part of the things or traits, Twitter users attacked. This way the iconoclastic behaviour towards the *Distinct Images* would proof them to be in fact relevant images for the Greta Thunberg icon and in return, looking for *Distinct Images* in the Tweets made it easier to find a path in the sheer mass of data.

I think that the method I used to observe an iconization process with the person Greta Thunberg was useful and showed promising results. Greta Thunberg was still alive, unlike most of the icons that we know. This means some of the *Distinct Images* might change or I would need to add new ones over the course of time to my list.

I gathered Twitter data for the time period of the World Economic Forum in Davos, as this seemed most relevant to me. New time periods could become more interesting in the future, and one could intensify and change the prompts in order to get the Tweets for the sentiment analysis. Also, I figure that the sentiment analysis tools are going to improve in time, maybe being able to also read the sentiment of Emoticons, which would make a significant change in getting the right sentiment with sarcastic or ironic Tweets.

In my opinion, Greta Thunberg has already been through an iconization process. She is a cultural icon. Her image might still change in the future, but the impact she had so far and the *Distinct Images* she created in society have been disseminated and highly distributed, altered and sent all over the world, making it a hard, nearly impossible job to forget about her – and not to forget that the iconoclasts might help by being angry about her for many more years to come.

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Appendix A



Figure 1

Mural in Bristol, England, 2019

by artist Jody Thomas

photo: Jody Thomas

<https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/greta-thunberg-wall-mural>



Figure 2

by Arie Van der Wyst, 2019

<https://www.pinterest.at/pin/650559108658658999>



Figure 3

Greta Thunberg duvet cover
by Nicole Wilson

<https://fineartamerica.com/featured/greta-thunberg-nicole-wilson.html?product=duvet-cover>



Figure 4

Greta Thunberg T-Shirt
Created by MH Bijoy

<https://teespring.com/de/shop/get-greta-thunberg-t-shirt?pid=389&cid=100029>

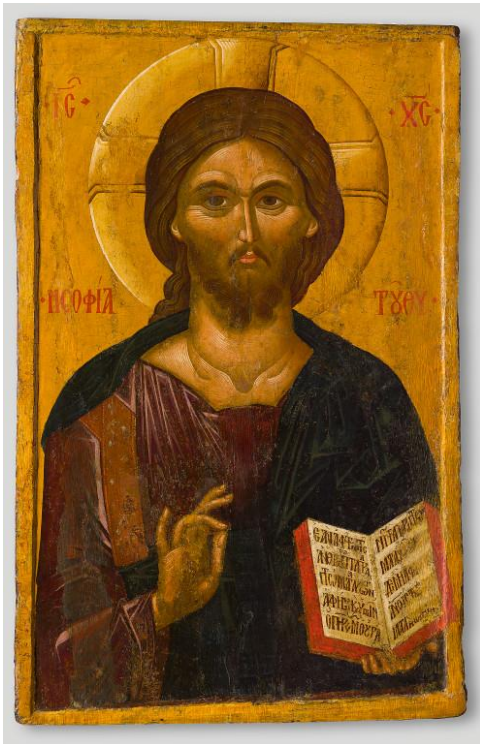


Figure 5

Icon of Christ Pantokrator, the Wisdom of God, Thessaloniki, late 14th century, tempera and gold on wood, Thessaloniki, Museum of Byzantine Culture
<https://www.nga.gov/features/byzantine/icons.html>



Figure 6

Elvis Presley in 1973
photo: RCA Records
Wikimedia commons



Figure 7

Elvis Presley impersonator, Las Vegas, July 2012
photo: Clément Bardot
Wikimedia commons



Romeo Castellucci -- Societas Raffaello Sanzio



Athens Epidaurus Festival
9770 Abonnenten

Abonnieren

👍 173



➦ Teilen



54.779 Aufrufe vor 12 Jahren

On the Concept of the Face, regarding the Son of God

Figure 8

Filmstill, 02:17 min, 2024

Societas Raffaello Sanzio

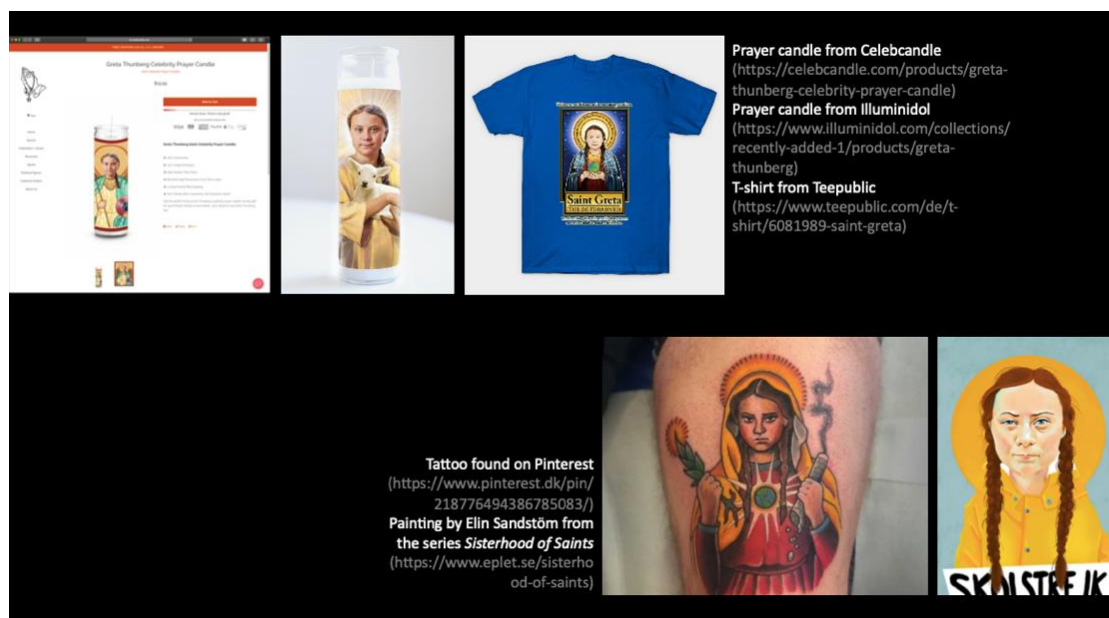
Romeo Castellucci at the Athens Epidaurus Festival, 2012

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JzldOzVho6w>



Figures 9 and 10

Screenshot taken from Jakob Rosendal slides for
Picturing Greta Thunberg. On the Intericonicity of an Icon
Heinan, 13th of August, 2021
Jakob Rosendal



Figures 11 and 12

Screenshot taken from Jakob Rosendal slides for
Picturing Greta Thunberg. On the Intericonicity of an Icon
Heinan, 13th of August, 2021
Jakob Rosendal



Figure 13

Snösättra communication area, Greta Thunberg as Pippi Långstrump, 2019
by artist Hop Louie
photo: Holger Ellgaard
Wikimedia commons



Figure 14

by artist @artbyneva on Instagram
<https://bergensia.com/greta-thunberg-16-pippi-the-strongest-girls-in-the-world-are-from-sweden/>
last visited May 6, 2022



Figure 15

Book Cover

Little People, Big Dreams: Greta Thunberg, 2020

Published by Quarto, illustrated by Anke Weckmann

https://www.thalia.de/shop/home/artikeldetails/A1057275223?ProvID=11000533&gad_source=1&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIue2O4ZX5hAMV_59oCR12-A2hEAQYAiABEGltFPD_BwE

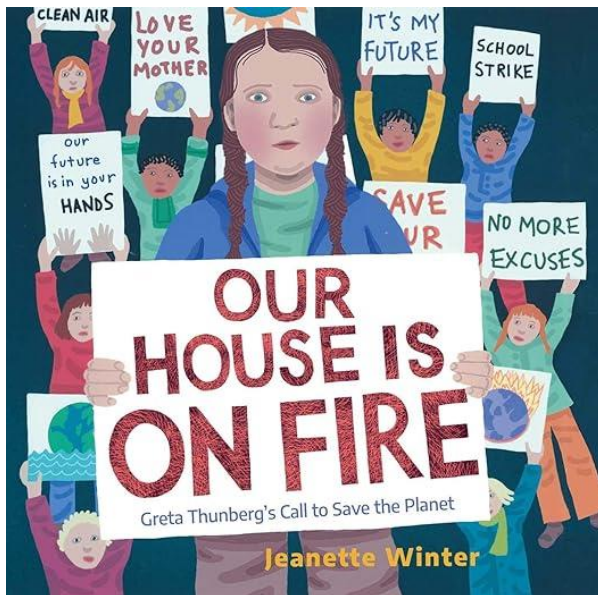


Figure 16

Book Cover

Our House is on Fire, 2019

Published by Beach Lane Books, illustrated by Jeanette Winter

<https://store.vinsweb.org/product/our-house-is-on-fire>



Figure 17

Book Cover

Greta and the Giants, 2019

Published by Frances Lincoln Ltd, illustrated by Zoe Persico

https://www.hugendubel.de/de/buch_gebunden/zo_tucker-greta_and_the_giants-37804201-produkt-details.html

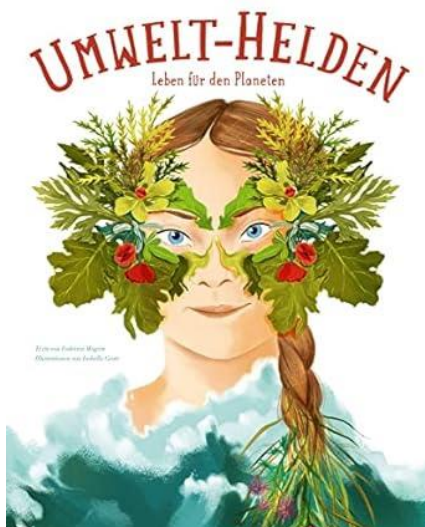


Figure 18

Book Cover

Umwelt-Helden, 2021

Published by Edizioni White Star SrL, illustrated by Isabella Grott

<https://www.amazon.de/Umwelt-Helden-Leben-f%C3%BCr-den-Planeten/dp/8863125066>



Figure 19

Greta Thunberg portrait, August 2018
photo: Michael Campanella / Getty Images

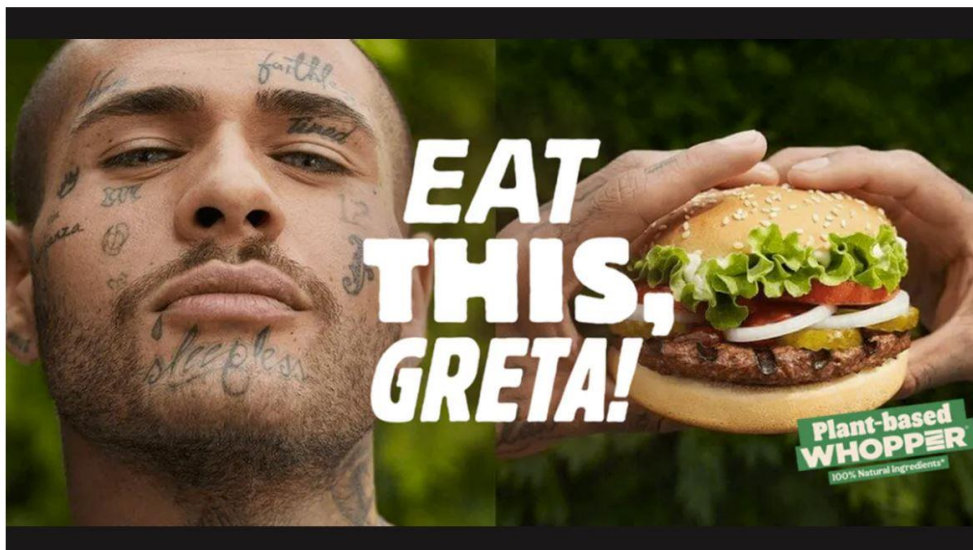


Figure 20

Burger King advertisement for Plant-based Whopper, 2020
photo: private



Figure 21

Hell Pizza advertisement for climate-friendly delivery

Agency: Yarn, New Zealand, 2019

<https://www.bestadsonline.com/ad/130331/Hell-Pizza-Go-to-Hell>



Figure 22

Filmstill 0:03 min, The best of Greta Thunberg

By spitting image, 2021

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K18yV5NlKKE&list=RDUj1gKvPhr1U&start_radio=1&rv=Uj1gKvPhr1U



Figure 23

Greta Thunberg bei einer EU-Debatte, 2019

photo: AFP/FREDERICK FLORIN

https://rp-online.de/politik/eu/europawahl/europawahl-2019-greta-thunberg-fordert-zur-wahlbeteiligung-auf_aid-38169675



Figure 24

Greta Thunberg in August 2018, outside the Swedish parliament building, 2018

photo: Anders Hellberg

Wikimedia Commons



Figure 25

Greta Thunberg at the front banner of the FridaysForFuture demonstration
 Berlin, 2019
 photo: Leonhard Lenz
 Wikimedia Commons



Figure 26

Greta Thunberg in 2020, 2020
 photo: Frankie Fouganthin
 Wikimedia Commons



Figure 28

Jugend und Religion, 2019

by Karsten Schley

https://de.toonpool.com/cartoons/Jugend%20und%20Religion_349526



Figures 29 and 30

Tattoo by Johan Ankarfyr

person with Tattoo: Joakim Lahti Kliman

photo left: Martina Ankarfyr

photo right: privat



Figure 31

Advertisement sticker for X-Site Energy Services of Alberta, Canada, February 2020
https://www.reddit.com/r/Albertapolitics/comments/fa77pr/doug_sparrow_gm_of_xsitec_a_energy_services/

Appendix B

1. Example of unformatted data. Sentiment analysis of two Tweets.

created_at: time and date when the Tweet was tweeted

id: Twitter id of the Twitter user, who sent the Tweet

text: text of the Tweet

retweet_count: how often the Tweet was retweeted

reply_count: how often the Tweet was replied to

like_count: how often the Tweet was liked

quote_count: how often the Tweet was quoted

clean_text_incl_ats: text after clean up

mainLemmas: list of identified lemmas

value: the word from the Tweet

score: rated the importance of the word in the Tweet

sentiment: is divided in overall sentiment of the Tweet, negativity and positivity of the entire Tweet. Then each individual identified lemma in the Tweet.

```
[{"created_at": "2020-01-22T23:57:45.000Z", "id": "1220133479263997952", "text":
"@GretaThunberg is one of many youth climate activists. In this @TeachRock lesson,
students discover the impact she, @israhirsi, @xiyebastida, @imkevinjpatel,
@AlexandriaV2005, and @ThisIsZeroHour are having on the #ClimateCrisis.
@StevieVanZandt \nhttps://t.co/MmJsLAdwqS", "public_metrics": {"retweet_count": 1,
"reply_count": 0, "like_count": 2, "quote_count": 0}, "clean_text_incl_ats":
"@GretaThunberg is one of many youth climate activists. In this @TeachRock lesson,
students discover the impact she, @israhirsi, @xiyebastida, @imkevinjpatel,
@AlexandriaV2005, and @ThisIsZeroHour are having on the #ClimateCrisis.
@StevieVanZandt ", "clean_text": "is one of many youth climate activists. In this lesson,
students discover the impact she, and are having on the #ClimateCrisis. ", "emojies": {},
"@": ["@GretaThunberg", "@TeachRock", "@israhirsi,", "@xiyebastida,",
"@imkevinjpatel,", "@AlexandriaV2005,", "@ThisIsZeroHour", "@StevieVanZandt"],
"mainLemmas": [{"value": "activist", "score": 18.1}, {"value": "climate", "score": 17.79},
{"value": "student", "score": 17.0}, {"value": "lesson", "score": 14.0}, {"value": "youth",
```

"score": 13.1}, {"value": "impact", "score": 10.69}, {"value": "ClimateCrisis", "score": 8.5}],
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 5.5}]}], {"lemma": "student", "syncon": 45127, "sentiment": 3.5, "items": [{"lemma": "have",
 "syncon": 69376, "sentiment": 3.5}]}]}, {"label": "politics", "id": 285, "score": 1.7,
 "winner": false}, {"label": "education", "id": 204, "score": 1.1, "winner": false}, {"label":
 "meteorology", "id": 230, "score": 0.89, "winner": false}, {"label": "teaching methodology",
 "id": 98, "score": 0.4, "winner": false}]], {"created_at": "2020-01-22T23:55:49.000Z", "id":
 "1220132992976216064", "text": "@GretaThunberg Sorry to correct you but didn\u2019t
 mean to say recite 2 of Daddy\u2019s speeches?", "public_metrics": {"retweet_count": 0,
 "reply_count": 0, "like_count": 0, "quote_count": 0}, "clean_text_incl_ats":
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 Daddy\u2019s speeches?", "clean_text": "Sorry to correct you but didn\u2019t mean to say
 recite 2 of Daddy\u2019s speeches?", "emojies": {}, "@": ["@GretaThunberg"],
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 "sorry", "syncon": 81300, "sentiment": -4.59}]}], {"lemma": "daddy", "syncon": 42258,
 "sentiment": -9.19, "items": [{"lemma": "speech", "syncon": 29535, "sentiment": -9.19}]}]},
 "topics": [{"label": "psychology", "id": 296, "score": 0.2, "winner": false}, {"label": "ethics",
 "id": 127, "score": 0.2, "winner": false}]].

2. Example of Tweet that was positive in sentiment towards Greta Tunberg but was rated negative in sentiment.

"text": "@GretaThunberg We CAN'T let the same thing happen as 10 years ago at the Copenhagen Climate Conference. 2009 Whilst young people marched outside they were being betrayed by the politicians they had voted

for.<https://t.co/B6TzSWzaFJ><https://t.co/vm9CwMkxSz>",

"created_at": "2020-01-21T23:59:26.000Z",

"id": "1219771515195076609",

"public_metrics":

"retweet_count": 0,

"reply_count": 0,

"like_count": 0,

"quote_count": 0

"clean_text_incl_ats": "@GretaThunberg We CAN'T let the same thing happen as 10 years ago at the Copenhagen Climate Conference. 2009 Whilst young people marched outside they were being betrayed by the politicians they had voted

for.<https://t.co/B6TzSWzaFJ>",

"clean_text": "We CAN'T let the same thing happen as 10 years ago at the Copenhagen Climate Conference. 2009 Whilst young people marched outside they were being betrayed by the politicians they had voted for.<https://t.co/B6TzSWzaFJ>",

"emojies":

"@":

"@GretaThunberg"

"mainLemmas":

"value": "politician",

"score": 41.59

"value": "Copenhagen Climate Conference",

"score": 36.2

"value": "people",

"score": 20.2

```
"sentiment":  
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  "negativity": -3.79,  
  "positivity": 0.0,  
  "items":  
    "lemma": "politician",  
    "syncon": 44241,  
    "sentiment": -8.5,  
    "items":  
      "lemma": "betray",  
      "syncon": 65892,  
      "sentiment": -8.5
```

3. List of abbreviations

"wef": "World Economic Forum",
"ppl": "people",
"imho": "in my humble opinion",
"ayfkmwts": "are you fucking kidding me with this shit?",
"gtfooh": "get the fuck out of here",
"rlrt": "real-life re-tweet",
"gmafb": "give me a fucking break",
"nbd" : "no big deal",
"smh": "shaking my head",
"idk": "I don't know",
"stfu": "shut the fuck up",
"nfw": "no fucking way",
"irl": "in real life",
"nsfw": "not safe for work",
"sfw": "safe for work",
"fml": "fuck my life",
"fwiw": "for what it's worth",
"qotd": "quote of the day",
"lmao": "laughing my ass off",
"hotd": "headline of the day",
"ftw": "for the win",
"btw": "by the way",
"bfn": "bye for now",
"afaik": "as far as I know",
"lol": "laugh out loud",
"ty": "thank you",
"yw": "you're welcome",
"fb": "facebook",
"li": "linkedIn",
"omg": "oh my God",
"tbh": "to be honest",
"yolo": "you only live once",

"tba": "to be announced",
"tbc": "to be continued",
"wtf": "what the fuck",
"icymi": "in case you missed it",
"ofc": "of course",
"asap": "as soon as possible",
"atm": "at the moment",
"awol": "absent",
"ayw": "as you want",
"b-day": "birthday",
"bafo": "best and final offer",
"bao": "be aware of",
"bday": "birthday",
"bf": "boyfriend",
"bol": "best of luck",
"bplm": "big person little mind",
"cfy": "calling for you",
"cmon": "come on",
"cos": "because",
"crz": "crazy",
"derp": "stupid",
"diy": "do it yourself",
"dlbbb": "don't let the beg bugs bite",
"dwbh": "don't worry be happy",
"dyjhiw": "don't you just hate it when",
"eli5": "explain like I am five",
"ev": "environmentalist",
"evs": "environmentalists",
"evo": "evolution",
"faq": "frequently asked questions",
"fimh": "forever in my heart",
"foaf": "friend of a friend",
"fwp": "first world problem",
"grl": "girl",

"hfac": "holy flipping animal crackers",
"hw": "homework",
"icam": "I couldn't agree more",
"icymi": "in case you missed it",
"kk": "okay, okay",
"kutgw": "keep up the good work",
"ipcc": "Intergovernmental panel on climate change",
"n1": "nice one",
"otb": "off to bed",
"peebs": "people",
"pic": "picture",
"pls": "please",
"prt": "please retweet",
"q4u": "question for you",
"qotd": "quote of the day",
"rly": "really",
"rsn": "real soon now",
"ryb": "read your bible",
"s2s": "sorry to say",
"smm": "social media marketing",
"snert": "snot nosed egoistical rude teenager",
"sol": "sooner or later",
"soml": "story of my life",
"sry": "sorry",
"sux": "sucks",
"suyf": "shut up you fool",
"t+": "think positive",
"t4bu": "thanks for being you",
"tba": "to be announced",
"tbh": "to be honest",
"tgif": "thank god it's friday",
"wombat": "waste of money, brain and time",
"wwjd": "what would jesus do",
"xme": "excuse me",

"zzzz": "sleeping",
"sis": "sister",
"msm": "mainstream media",
"fff": "Fridays for future"