

Oleg Sobchuk

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Nationality: Ukrainian

Age: 33

Languages spoken: Ukrainian (native), English (fluent), Russian (fluent), Polish (intermediate), German (intermediate)

Research interests: art history; cultural evolution, literary theory and narratology, network science, human behavioral ecology, cognitive science

Skills: text mining, big data analysis, topic modeling, embeddings, zero-shot learning, stylometry

Programming: R, Python, bash, cluster computing with Slurm

Professional & educational history

2022–today: **Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology** (Germany) – postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Human Behavior, Ecology and Culture

2018–2022: **Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History** (Germany) – postdoctoral researcher at the Minds and Traditions research group

2015, spring: **Stanford University** (U.S.A.) – internship at the Stanford Literary Lab

2013–2018: **University of Tartu** (Estonia) – Ph.D. in Comparative Literature (2013–2018). Thesis: *Charting Artistic Evolution: An Essay in Theory*. Advisors: Prof. Franco Moretti (Stanford University), Prof. Arne Merilai (University of Tartu)

2011–2013: **University of Tartu** (Estonia) – M.A. in Semiotics

2007–2011: **Kyiv-Mohyla Academy** (Ukraine) – B.A. in Philology

Publications

Book

- 1) Sobchuk O (forthcoming), *Stories Evolve: A Theory of Historical Change for Computational Humanities*. Oxford University Press.

Research papers & book chapters

- 2) Sobchuk O, Youngblood M, Morin O (forthcoming) First-mover advantage in music (under review in *EPJ Data Science*).
- 3) Dubourg E, Thouzeau V, et al. (forthcoming) The cognitive foundations of fictional stories (under review in *Psychology Review*). Preprint: <https://osf.io/preprints/osf/me6bz>

- 4) Sobchuk O, Šela A (accepted) Computational thematic: Comparing algorithms for clustering the genres of literary fiction. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*. Preprint: <https://arxiv.org/abs/2305.11251>
- 5) Sobchuk O (accepted), Evolution of modern literature and film. In: *Oxford Handbook of Cultural Evolution*, edited by R. Kendal, J. Tehrani, and J. Kendal.
- 6) Morin O, Sobchuk O (2023) Why monsters are dangerous. *Poetics Today* 44(4): 647–664.
- 7) Sobchuk O (2022) How granular should our explanations of fantastic fiction be? *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 45: e300.
- 8) Morin O, Sobchuk O (2021) The shortlist effect: Nestedness contributions as a tool to explain cultural success, *Evolutionary Human Sciences* 3: e51.
- 9) Tinitis P, Sobchuk O (2020) Open-ended cumulative cultural evolution of Hollywood film crews, *Evolutionary Human Sciences* 2: e26.
- 10) Sobchuk O, Tinitis P (2020) Cultural attraction in film evolution: The case of anachronies, *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 20(3-4): 218–237.
- 11) Morin O, Acerbi A, Sobchuk O (2019) Why people die in novels: Testing the Ordeal Simulation Hypothesis, *Palgrave Communications* 5: 62.
 - (a) Italian translation, 2022: Perché si muore nei romanzi: l'ipotesi della simulazione dell'ordalia, in *La narrazione come incontro* (eds. F. Ciotti & C. Morabito). Firenze University Press.
- 12) Moretti F, Sobchuk O (2019) Hidden in plain sight: Data visualization in the humanities, *New Left Review* 118: 86–115.
 - (a) Italian translation, 2020: Vedere e non vedere. Sulla visualizzazione dei dati nelle discipline umanistiche. *Acoma* 18.
 - (b) German translation, 2022: Moretti F. *Falsche Bewegung: Die digitale Wende in den Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaften*. Konstanz University Press.
- 13) Sobchuk O, Shelya A (2018) [in Russian] (Distant) reading and (cultural) evolution, *New Literary Observer* 150: 88–93.
- 14) Shelya A, Sobchuk O (2017) The shortest species: How the length of Russian poetry changed (1750–1921), *Studia Metrica et Poetica* 4: 66–84.
- 15) Kanatova M, Milyakina A, Pilipovec T, Shelya A, Sobchuk O*, Tinitis P (2017) Broken time, continued evolution: Anachronies in contemporary films, *Stanford Literary Lab*, Pamphlet 14 (*primary author, order alphabetical). <https://litlab.stanford.edu/LiteraryLabPamphlet14.pdf>
 - (a) Italian translation, 2019: Il tempo a pezzi. Anacronie nel cinema contemporaneo, in *La letteratura in laboratorio* (ed. G. Episcopo), Napoli: FedOAPress.
- 16) Sobchuk O (2016) The evolution of dialogues: A quantitative study of Russian novels (1830–1900), *Poetics Today* 37: 137–154.
- 17) Sobchuk O (2015) [in Russian] Nomothetic literary studies: A dotted outline, *New Literary Observer* 132: 102–114.
- 18) Sobchuk O (2014) Multilevel accentuation and its role in the memorization of narrative, in *Proceedings of the 5th Workshop on Computational Models of Narrative* (eds. M.A. Finlayson et al.), pp. 192–208.

Review papers (selected)

- 19) Sobchuk O (2021) Cultural theory, *Evolutionary Studies in Imaginative Culture* 5(2): 139–142.
- 20) Sobchuk O (2021) Cultural theory, *Evolutionary Studies in Imaginative Culture* 5(1): 117–120.
- 21) Sobchuk O (2021) Review of: Acerbi A. *Cultural Evolution in the Digital Age*. Oxford University Press, *Journal of Communication*: jqaa038.

- 22) Sobchuk O (2016) Theoretical schools in the humanities: Different perspectives, *Poetics Today* 37: 687–690.
- 23) Sobchuk O (2014) Interweaving narratology and experimental psychology, *Cognitive Semiotics* 7: 138–143.
- 24) Sobchuk O (2013) Yuri Lotman's semiotic theory for beginners, *Poetics Today* 34: 611–613.
- 25) Sobchuk O (2013), [in Ukrainian] In the shade of phylogenetic trees, *Ukrainian Humanities Review* 18: 51–61.

Grants as principal investigator

Phylogenies of Literature (£17,774) – a project funded by the Cultural Evolution Society's Transformation Fund in 2023. Project team: Angela Chira, Artjoms Šeļa, Mason Youngblood, Olivier Morin, Ted Underwood. See <https://ces-transformationfund.org/our-projects/phylogenies-of-literature/>

Invited talks

- 2024: *Generational turnover and literary history* (Digital Humanities Network, University of Potsdam).
- 2024: *Evolution of literature and film* (Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland).
- 2024: *Cultural analytics and the arts* (Department of Sociology and Social Research, University of Trento, Italy).
- 2023: *From text mining to phylogeny* ("From Evolution to Cognition to Fiction" workshop, École normale supérieure, Paris, France).
- 2023: *Computational thematics: Towards a map of literary evolution* ("Big Data, Small Literatures" conference, Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Ljubljana, Slovenia).
- 2023: *Evolution of fiction* (Department of Sociology and Social Research, University of Trento, Italy).
- 2023: *Studying cultural evolution with large data* (Centre for Digital Humanities and the Information Society, University of Tartu, Estonia).
- 2022 (**keynote**): *Cultural evolution and computational literary studies* ("Distant Reading" conference, Kraków, Poland).
- 2022: *Cultural evolution of narratives* (École normale supérieure, Paris, France).
- 2022: *From stylometry to phylogeny: Towards a large-scale model of book evolution* (Department of Human Behavior, Ecology and Culture, Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, Leipzig, Germany).
- 2022: *First-mover advantage in music* (Max Planck Institute for Empirical Aesthetics, Frankfurt, Germany).
- 2021: *From stylometry to phylogeny: Towards a large-scale history of genres* (Computational Stylistics Lab, Polish Academy of Sciences, Karków, Poland).
- 2021: *On literary evolution* (Department of European, American and Intercultural Studies, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy).

- 2021: *Quantitative studies of literature and film* (Department of Stylistics and Language Communication, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine).
- 2021: *Cultural evolution of the arts: The case of films* (Institut Jean Nicod, École normale supérieure, Paris, France).
- 2021: *Computational thematics: Towards a phylogeny of literature* (Department of Linguistic and Cultural Evolution, Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, Leipzig, Germany).
- 2019: *Digital humanities and humanities* (University of Bergamo, Italy).
- 2018: *Cultural evolution of literature* (École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne, Switzerland).

Teaching

- The Neverending Story: Cultural Evolution and Narratives** (2019, online). Co-developed with Dr. Joseph Stubbersfield and Prof. Jamie Tehrani. A series of online lectures and assignments on the theory of cultural evolution applied to narratives: folktales, urban legends, novels, and films. See https://learn.culturevolutionsociety.org/narratives_module/
- Introduction to Digital Humanities** (2017, University of Tartu). Co-developed with Artjoms Šela. Upper-level course from Digital Humanities module, covering digital archives and editions, data preservation, distant reading, corpora. Included workshops on Transkribus, stylo, and Gephi.
- Cultural Evolution Seminar** (2017, University of Tartu). Co-developed with Peeter Tinitis and Artjoms Šela. Upper-level elective seminar for graduate and postgraduate students. Introduced main concepts in cultural evolution, evolution in various domains (art, technology, folklore).
- Frontiers of Europe: Ukraine** (2015, University of Tartu). Co-developed with Taras Boyko. Elective course for graduate and undergraduate students, introducing them to Ukrainian culture and history. Prepared lectures, readings, and test assignments for each lecture.
- Introduction to Narrative Studies** (2014, University of Tartu). Developed by self. Elective course for graduate and undergraduate students, presenting a wide spectrum of approaches: from structuralism to cognitive narratology. Additionally, used and supervised web-platform NarrNetz.

Service

- Guest editor of the special issue **Cultural Evolution of the Arts** for the journal *Evolutionary Human Sciences* (Cambridge University Press) [forthcoming].
- Head organizer of the workshop **Cultural Evolution of the Arts** (November 14–16, 2023) at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology (Leipzig, Germany).
- Head organizer of the workshop **Cultural Evolution and Computational Humanities: Building a Bridge** (forthcoming on June 29 – July 1, 2022) at the Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History (Jena, Germany).
- Head organizer of the conference **Applications in Cultural Evolution: Arts, Languages, Technologies** (June 6–8, 2018) at the University of Tartu. See <https://cultevol.ut.ee/>

Head organizer of the **Cultural Evolution Seminar** at the University of Tartu (see <https://evocultures.wordpress.com/>): a series of informal seminars on cultural evolution and digital humanities (autumn 2015 – spring 2017), which later became a university course.

Reviewer for

- European Research Council
- *Science, Science Advances, Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, Journal of Language Evolution, Empirical Studies of the Arts, Proceedings of Computational Humanities Research*

PUBLISHING AGREEMENT

AGREEMENT, dated as of 20 Dec 2022 between **OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS USA** of 198 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016 ("the Publisher"); and

Oleg Sobchuk
Perthesstraße 1E, 04317 Leipzig, Germany


("the Author").

WHEREAS the Author has prepared or is preparing material for publication as described in Schedule I, which is provisionally titled **Stories Evolve** ("the Work"), **which is part of a series entitled Foundations of Human Interaction (the "Series")**; and

WHEREAS the Author has agreed to complete and deliver the Work to the Publisher and the Publisher has agreed to publish the Work on the terms of this Agreement.

NOW IT IS HEREBY AGREED that the Publisher and the Author hereby accept and agree to the terms of this Agreement, which incorporates the following Schedules, which are attached:

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SIGNED by:  Citizen of: Ukraine
Oleg Sobchuk

SIGNED by: 
Abby Gross, Head of Acquisition, Social and Behavioural Sciences, Trade and Academic
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