



# **INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC AND PRACTICAL CONFERENCE**

## **INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL CHALLENGES: FROM SCIENCE TO PRACTICE**

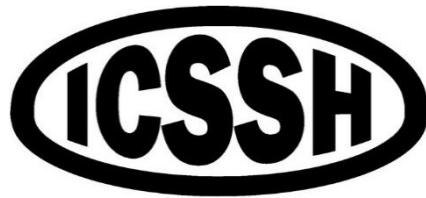
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**May 19, 2026**

**Seattle,  
USA**





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**International Scientific and Practical Conference  
“Interdisciplinary Research in the Context of  
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**SECTION 5**

**PHILOLOGICAL SCIENCES**

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**‘THE EXISTENTIAL VIYON’ AND ‘THE  
CULTURAL VIYON’: MODELS OF THE  
RECEPTION OF THE POET’S IMAGE**

The figure of the French poet François Villon – whose life is marked simultaneously by a lack of documentary evidence and by the autobiographical motifs of works whose frankness borders on provocation – opens a wide space for authorial interpretations. Villon’s literary reception demonstrates that the interpretation of the poet’s image depends not only on the individuality of the author but also on the type of historical consciousness within which a particular text is formed. Particularly revealing in this regard are Robert Louis Stevenson’s *A Lodging for the Night: A Story of François Villon* and Viktor Domontovich’s novella *François Villon*. Despite turning to the same historical figure, the writers represent different models of artistic thinking. In Stevenson’s work, Villon appears primarily as an existentially unstable subject of a boundary situation, internally split between creativity, crime, fear, and moral choice. In contrast, in Domontovich’s interpretation, this image acquires a historiosophical and cultural dimension: Villon becomes a sign of a transitional epoch and a means of reflecting upon the anthropological crisis of the modern world.

We propose considering Stevenson’s *A Lodging for the Night: A Story of François Villon* and Viktor Domontovich’s *François Villon* not merely as different versions of Villon’s artistic biography, but as two models of historical consciousness. The first – historical-psychological and existential – focuses on the inner contradictions of the individual and on human behaviour in a boundary situation. The second – intellectual and historiosophical – interprets the poet’s figure as a cultural code of an epochal rupture and as an instrument for reflecting on cultural history.

The aim of this study is to identify the characteristic features of two interpretative models of Villon’s image. The first is understood as Stevenson’s neo-Romantic model; the second as Viktor Domontovich’s intellectual-neoclassical one.

The object of the study is Robert Louis Stevenson’s short story *A Lodging for the Night: A Story of François Villon* and Viktor Domontovich’s novella *François Villon*. The comparative-typological method serves as the principal methodological approach. The study also employs the approaches of reception aesthetics, narratology, and psychoanalytic criticism, together with elements of the biographical and cultural-historical methods.

*Results and Discussion.* The English neo-Romantic writer Stevenson incorporates the figure of the medieval poet into the problematic field of his own art, raising questions concerning the duality of human nature, chance, and existential choice. In *A Lodging for the Night: A Story of François Villon*, the author portrays the artist not as a romantic hero, but as a man of “low” culture who combines genius with vulgarity, cowardice, and criminal behavior. Several psychological and existential chronotopes structure the text: ‘death’ and ‘night’.

The first manifests itself through the images of the cemetery where the hut serving as Villon’s temporary refuge and that of his gang is located; through the mention of the road to Saint-Denis leading to the gallows; through the murder of Thévenin, one of the dubious companions of the poet; and through the corpse of a woman discovered by Villon in an abandoned house. Thus, the topos of death becomes materialised, while

its “theoretical” articulation emerges in the poet’s philosophical conversation with the knight. The second topos – night – is a space of temporality, instability, and danger: the time when the homeless Villon most acutely experiences his alienation and vulnerability, his constant transition from one non-belonging space to another (the hut in the cemetery – the streets of Paris – the abandoned house – a stranger’s dwelling); the time of crime (the murder of Thévenin, the robbery of Villon himself, his own looting, and the planning of a theft in the house of a wealthy nobleman). Yet this is also the time of Villon’s uncertainty regarding his own identity.

Even among the social “bottom” represented by his surroundings, Villon remains ‘other’: while the company plays cards, he writes *The Ballad of Fried Fish*, searching for a successful rhyme. At the same time, he does not refuse the money taken from the murdered man, which the ‘company’ divides among themselves. True, Villon alternates between hysterical laughter intended to conceal his fear and sudden fits of sobbing. While he experiences these emotional oscillations, his ‘companions’ manage to rob him. The sharp alternation of psychological states intensifies the inner tension of the text and suggests that poetic consciousness does not save a human being from moral disintegration.

This becomes particularly evident in the episode that constitutes the philosophical core of the story – Villon in the house of the wealthy knight, where two fundamentally different modes of existence and two opposing attitudes toward life and death collide. Thus, “night” also becomes a boundary chronotope in which the poet undergoes moral testing. Stevenson portrays Villon and Enguerrand de la Feuillée as antagonists by origin, life circumstances, appearance, understanding of moral principles, dignity, and the notions of ‘good’ and ‘evil’. Villon appears as a person deprived of inner support. Gratitude is foreign to him. This is even indicated by the story’s open ending, in which Villon may eventually dare to rob the man who offered him shelter.

Thus, Stevenson’s Villon is talented, educated, sensitive, and capable of aesthetic experience, while at the same time cowardly, cynical, criminal, and inwardly disoriented. By emphasising Villon’s existential instability and

his experience of a crisis of identity, Stevenson, on the one hand, interprets the poet not merely as a character but as a model of a transitional human being situated between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, between corporeality and spirituality, art and crime, identity and its collapse. On the other hand, Stevenson portrays Villon not simply as an artist of a distant epoch but rather creates a mask of the modernist subject characteristic of the fin de siècle.

In contrast, the Ukrainian writer Viktor Domontovich offers an intellectualisation of Villon’s image, transforming him into a cultural code. Interpreting Domontovich’s Villon as “cultural” allows one to include within the problematic field of the text questions of culture, history, intellectual play, and the conceptualisation of the artist.

In the five chapters of the novella *François Villon (Angels and Poets, Apples and Purple, Paths of Falls and Ascents, Rebellion, and Roads and Crossroads)*, Domontovich focuses not on economic or socio-political circumstances, but on questions of faith, human relationships, and philosophical ideas. In this way, the writer seeks to outline the chronotope of the poet’s existence as a boundary cultural situation of the late Middle Ages, in which Renaissance world-view tendencies begin to emerge. Here the chronotope appears not merely as a category of spatio-temporal organisation, but as a means of modelling a worldview and an anthropological concept of the human being. If in Stevenson’s story the chronotope is organised according to the principle of a localised event reproducing a single episode from Villon’s life, then in Domontovich it acquires a historiosophical dimension. Spatial and temporal coordinates expand from a concrete day and place to the category of an ‘epoch’, which functions not merely as historical background but as a means of comprehending a worldview rupture.

The recurring image of angels performs not only a symbolic but also a chronotopic structural function. It becomes a marker of changing worldview paradigms and allows the gradual transition from the medieval picture of the world to the anthropocentric model of the modern era to be traced. Therefore, the parallel Domontovich draws with the twentieth century does

not seem artificial. On the contrary, through the resonance between epochs, the ‘age of Villon’ becomes a symbol of a crisis-ridden era producing contradictory artists who have ‘replaced the angels’ through their new vision of the world and humanity. Thus, in Domontovich’s interpretation, ‘angel’ are not merely a religious symbol but a model of the lost vertical of being. Twentieth-century poets ‘replace’ angels precisely because the sacred worldview collapses and art assumes the function of mediator between the human and the transcendent.

Consequently, in Viktor Domontovich’s novella Villon ceases to be merely a historical person or a biographical character. He becomes a cultural sign of a transitional epoch in which the contradictions of a historical rupture are concentrated: between faith and rationality, the spiritual and the earthly, collective hierarchy and a new awareness of human individuality. This is why the ‘age of Villon’ acquires symbolic resonance and transcends the limits of the fifteenth century, becoming a model of any crisis epoch. If Stevenson seeks, through Villon’s image, to depict the human being within history, then Domontovich’s appeal to the French poet becomes a means of comprehending history within the human being. Thus, the English writer presents a hero immersed in a concrete event, whereas the Ukrainian author represents him as a point of intersection of epochal processes and worldview shifts.

In Domontovich’s novella, the essayistic discourse gradually becomes personalised through the biographical plot. The writer carefully reconstructs his own version of François de Montcorbier’s life from birth to his transformation into François Villon, emphasising the decisive circumstances that shaped the future poet. The climactic moment in the relationship with the chaplain Guillaume, when Villon confesses that he knows about his paternity, is defined by the writer as more than a conflict between two generations – it is *two times, two eras*. Thus, what begins as a family conflict develops into a worldview conflict. François appears as a man experiencing the destruction of the familiar medieval system of coordinates in which, according to the chaplain’s intention, his own sin was to be redeemed through the upbringing of an obedient young man. Yet the

imposition of an ‘alien’ identity fails. Although François’s own identity has not yet been fully formed, his refusal to become a project of another’s will drives him toward self-construction through rebellion.

Domontovich describes François de Montcorbier’s existential movement toward becoming François Villon as the ‘paths of falls and ascents’. The author offers a profound psychoanalytic interpretation of both the human and artistic dimensions of Villon, taking into account historical and social circumstances as well as inner emotional impulses. In this way, the writer demonstrates how the destruction of external moral structures exposes the primordial impulses of human nature.

The story of Villon’s platonic love for Catherine, the wife of a wealthy burgher, may be interpreted as an attempt to oppose this chaos with another identity – that of ‘poet and knight’. This episode becomes central to the novella and one of the most powerful factors in the formation of Villon as an ironic-philosophical poet. This feeling represents an attempt to aestheticise and organise the chaos of his own existence. Thus, the author emphasises Villon’s inner duality, his painful search for identity through the constant negation of previous roles; poetic creativity becomes the only form capable of holding together the fragmented self. Yet rejected by the beloved woman, Villon rapidly moves toward the boundary beyond which his subsequent existence unfolds: he commits murder in order to avenge humiliation. Domontovich leaves the ending open, but the reader understands that this is the beginning of the path that would turn François into a medieval legend.

Therefore, whereas in Stevenson’s interpretation Villon’s identity is unstable and masked, and the narrative unfolds not as the loss of identity but as a play of roles, Domontovich presents an identity fragmented by historical circumstances. As an experience of worldview rupture, the poet’s “split” figure in *François Villon* transcends its historical chronotope, rising to the level of a symbolic subject experiencing an anthropological crisis. Domontovich’s Villon is much more an intellectual construct, a cultural sign, an object of stylisation, an instrument for reflecting on cultural history, and perhaps even a mask of the intellectual author himself living in a crisis

epoch. Domontovich is interested not in reconstructing the Middle Ages as a historical past, but in discovering within the ‘age of Villon’ a model of cultural catastrophe and transition resonant with the twentieth century. If in Stevenson the hero forms his identity within the event, then in Domontovich the epoch itself begins to shape the hero’s identity.

*Conclusions.* In the works of Stevenson and Viktor Domontovich, two principal interpretative models of Villon’s image emerge as representations of the poet situated at the boundary between medieval and modern artistic consciousness. The first model – Stevenson’s historical-psychological and existential one – conditioned by historical realities and deprived of ethical pathos, emphasises the contradictions, social rootedness, and moral ambivalence of Villon’s figure. The second model – Viktor Domontovich’s intellectual-historiosophical one – tends toward the mythologisation of the poet’s image: Villon here is detached from a concrete historical context and appears as the archetype of a rebellious artist with an ironic perception of the world.

Domontovich’s Villon is far more an intellectual construct than a historical figure. The writer uses Villon’s image not merely as a character, but as a means of reflecting on such issues as the nature of the artist, freedom, irony, and the play of culture with history. Thus, unlike Stevenson’s ‘existential Villon’, Domontovich’s Villon is ‘cultural’ and ‘intellectual’. In his novella, biography is transformed into historiosophy, psychology into anthropology, and the poet into a symbol of cultural crisis.

The evolution of Villon’s image from an existential-psychological to an intellectual-historiosophical model testifies to a transformation in the very modes of understanding the artist in European culture: from the human being in a boundary situation to the human being as a symptom of a crisis epoch.