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Holy site, place of memory or art object? : Some considerations on Mont Saint-Michel in the '(très) longue durée' (708?–2017)

Holy Site, Place of Memory or Art Object?

Some Considerations on Mont Saint-Michel in the '(très) longue durée' (708 [?]–2017)

Ivan Foletti – Sabina Rosenbergová

For more than one thousand years, Mont Saint-Michel has been a magnetic place: pilgrims and tourists travel for days in order to reach this place. The meaning of this tidal island has changed many times – from a holy place, to a sacred space, then becoming a monument of French national identity, and finally a Mecca of consumerist tourism. How can we understand this exceptional 'longue durée' success? One could think of it as a place of memory re-appropriated by each generation – but is that sufficient? Thanks to written records through the centuries, it is possible to confirm that the fascination with this place has always involved a combination of nature and culture. This harmonic interaction has always been the result of a true artistic conception of the place updated through the centuries. In this sense, our answer is unequivocal: Mont Saint-Michel is an art object that comprises natural, monumental, and performative elements within itself.

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In June 2017, a group of twelve art historians/pilgrims – including the authors of this article – reached the bay of Mont Saint-Michel, located between Brittany and Normandy. [*Fig. 1*] The goal of this project, Migrating Art Historians, was to study medieval artistic objects through the experience of walking bodies.[1] Therefore, it was neither a religious journey or a journey of self-discovery, but a scientific research. Despite this academic dimension, over these 1500 kilometres we discovered that it is not possible to completely dissociate the embodied experience from a 'spiritual one'. As demonstrated by D'Aquili, Laughlin and McManus, prolonged walking supports the synchronisation of perception, cognition, and action.[2] In the course of our experience, Mont Saint-Michel was transformed in our imagination. We, of course, knew that it is one of the most famous 'medieval icons' of our day, at least in the Northern Hemisphere. It is not only a centre of French tourism [*Fig. 2*] – the Mount was the second most-visited place after Paris in 2014[3] – but its *silhouette* also frequently appears in popular culture. The designers of Minas Tirith in Peter Jackson's movie trilogy *The Lord of the Rings*, based on the already classic book of the same name by J. R. R. Tolkien, openly admit to this source of inspiration [*Fig. 3*] – but Mont Saint-Michel probably even provided inspiration for the logo of world-renowned entertainment giant, Disney.[4] [*Fig. 4*] And finally, the Norman-Breton holy mountain is an icon of French nationalism. Not by chance, Marine Le Pen – the candidate of the extreme xenophobic and Eurosceptic right-wing – gave a speech for the launch of her presidential campaign with Mont Saint-Michel behind her, as a representation of an identity coulisse.[5] [*Fig. 5*]

We also knew that Mont Saint-Michel was the key monument of medieval Bretagne and Normandy – a crucial place for the local Michael pilgrimage to the relics of the Archangel, which were taken there, according to a record from the first half of the 9th century, directly from Monte Gargano.[6] Therefore, Mont Saint-Michel was a true

1 – A general view of Mont Saint-Michel

holy site.[7] In addition, because of its position, close to the Via Francigena, the holy mountain also had a global aspect, as a stopover on the path between the Continent and the British Isles.[8] Eventually, even pilgrims going from the British Isles to Compostela, Jerusalem, or Monte Gargano passed the mountain, whether they walked or travelled by ship.[9]

We were completely aware of all of these facts. However, the encounter with reality was a shock. Due to a French law to prevent terrorist attacks, we were not allowed to enter to the abbey upon our arrival. Moreover, in the crowd of tourists, we became suddenly anonymous – after the experience of a certain exclusivity during the four months of our pilgrimage, we were now part of the crowd. And while our first reflex was a sort of disappointment, we realised that medieval pilgrims reaching this holy place could have held a very similar position: they were lost in the masses of people (at least during big jubilees or important celebrations). However, while there was a certain unity of expectation in the medieval period, we felt a huge difference between us and the other visitors.[10] But we still reached the same place.

2 – Mass tourism at Mont Saint-Michel

3 – **Minas Tirith**, the movie rendition inspired by Mont Saint-Michel

With this article we would like therefore to understand the contemporary appeal of this medieval site in spite of apparently very different expectations. We argue that in order to understand the present situation it is necessary to examine (briefly) the monumental and cultural history of this place. We believe that Mont Saint-Michel should not be studied exclusively as a medieval, or modern, or contemporary object. Whether we like it or not, its comprehension will be difficult if we do not consider its medieval roots, its 19th-century transformations, or its uses (and abuses) in the last 150 years. For this reason we have decided to approach this sacred place starting with Braudel's notion of

4 – **Logo of the Walt Disney Company**

the 'longue durée'.[11] By means of this approach we intend not only to observe a long stretch of time between the foundation of the church and the present, but above all we try to answer a curiosity – why is Mont-Saint-Michel able to permanently maintain an aspect of gravity in the face of the constantly alternating contexts it has been in. Throughout the article we attempt to demonstrate that since the first centuries of the monument's existence until today, there are recurring motives – that a medieval pilgrim arriving in Mont-Saint-Michel was sensitive to similar features as the modern or even post-modern tourist.

We fully realise that it is impossible to put forward a complex reading of almost 1300 years of material history in a few pages. On the other hand, the macroscopic point of view can give us an instrument with which to better understand why, through the centuries, Mont Saint-Michel has maintained its attraction and sanctity in dialogue with its dialectic unity between the natural situation and the architectural structure. Crucial to this investigation will be not only the monument itself, but also the texts that have described the monument over the centuries. The present paper, therefore, will be primarily based on two seemingly disconnected situations: on the one hand, Mont Saint-Michel was an essential site of medieval religious piety; on the other, it has become a 'medieval icon' and a Mecca of modern consumerist tourism. Nevertheless, although they are two completely different situations, they are united in the materiality of one monument.

The paper will take a chronological approach, with three main points of focus. These three points demonstrate, in our opinion, different phases the monument went through in its history. Starting with the foundation of the monastery and the construction of the first churches and ending with the monumental Romanesque church, we will try to explain the basis of the sanctity and perception of this place from the 9th to 11th centuries.

Secondly, we will turn our attention to the radical transformation of Mont Saint-Michel after the French Revolution. Obviously, between the 11th-century con-

struction of the monumental Romanesque church and the French Revolution, there are seven centuries. During this period, Mont Saint-Michel underwent reconstruction several times. For example, the 11th-century choir collapsed in 1421, and the church obtained a new one shortly after. At the turn of the 15th century the tidal island was fortified.[12] Although the number of new elements added was not small, the crucial idea of Mont Saint-Michel remained unchanged from the 11th century: a monumental holy place, materialised in a multifaceted church on a tidal island.[13] It was only with the French Revolution, which took away all the church's furnishings and shut down its religious life, did the process of a change in its identity begin.

We will conclude with the present-day situation. The central point will be the dichotomy – indicated in the title, and discussed below – between the concept of a 'place of memory' and the notion of an 'art object'. Besides historical and historiographical considerations, we aim to enrich this reflection with a specific point of view – with the current, individual experience drawn from the experimental project called 'Migrating Art Historians'.

The Church on the Edge of the Ocean

Very little is known about the first Christian architectural structure on Mont Tumba, the hill on which today's Mont Saint Michel is constructed. Archaeological excavations[14] supported by a hagiographical source composed around 820,[15] *Revelatio ecclesiae sancti Michaelis archangeli*, indicate that the first sanctuary, probably constructed around the beginning of the 8th century, was large enough for one hundred occupants, was partly subterranean, and had a rounded shape designed to recall the church of Monte Gargano,[16] the most important sanctuary of Michael, from where the first relic associated with the saint was transported: this was a piece of marble on which Archangel Michael had stood and a piece of red mantle that the Archangel himself had placed over the altar.[17] Mont Saint-Michel was therefore considered an exceptionally holy site that attracted pilgrims and evoked piety.

However, the same source, *Revelatio ecclesiae sancti Michaelis archangeli*, contains the earliest description of the geographical situation of the mountain, while providing astonishingly precise details about the architectural structure: '*And when one looks from a distance, one sees nothing else than a tower of a nice dimension, or rather of nice appearance.*'[18] [*Fig. 6*] These lines indicate that the sight of Mont Tumba from a distance was remarkably important. The source continues in the next line: '*But the sea, surging back, offers twice*

6 – Mont Saint-Michel from a distance

a day to the pious persons going to the sanctuary of blessed archangel St Michael the path that they wish upon.'[19] A medieval pilgrim, naturally, did not have the possibility to walk across a bridge, as is possible now, to reach the tidal island. He or she had to wait until natural conditions permitted them to cross, which usually occurred twice a day. A pilgrim arriving at high tide had to wait several hours on the shore, looking at a *tower of a nice dimension.*

Evidence of pilgrims coming to Mont Saint-Michel is provided by sources starting in the middle of the 9th century.[20] These testimonies indicate that, in the 9th and 10th centuries, Mont Saint-Michel was a place where pilgrims stopped over on their way to the greatest sanctuaries: Jerusalem, Rome, and Monte Gargano. This trend developed further in the 11th century, but apparently precedes the greatest pilgrimage boom, that of the Pilgrimage to Santiago.[21] On his way back, Bernard, one of the three pilgrims who undertook a journey to Jerusalem via Rome and Monte Gargano, arrived at Mont Saint-Michel '*ad sanctum Michaelem ad duas Tumbas*'.[22] This indication *ad duas Tumbas,* on two *tumbas*, is repeated in other sources in the tenth century and implies the two tidal islands in the bay: Mont Tumba and Tombelaine.

There was a Carolingian sanctuary on Mont Tumba until 992, when it was destroyed by a fire. This event was so notable that it was recorded by the monk and chronicler Raoul Glaber (985–1047) in his *Historiam libri quinque* (written around 1030).[23] Glauber uses this event to open a space in which to characterise Mont Saint-Michel: '*This church is built on a headland at the edge of the ocean* […] *In that place there is most certainly something to see, for as the moon waxes and wanes the tides of the Ocean ebb and flow with strange motion about the headland. When the tides are full flow they call them* malinae*, but when they are ebbing,* ledones*. Because of this spectacle the place is much visited by people from all over the world. Not far away is the little river Ardre, which after the fire flooded somewhat, making it impossible to cross. Those wishing to visit the church found their way barred, and so for a while this route was closed. Afterwards the river returned to its bed, leaving the bank deeply scored by its passage.'*[24] This source is crucial. Apart from the relics and miracles often mentioned in other testimony, Glauber emphasised another reason to visit Mont Saint-Michel: it is the *spectacle of the place* that draws people there.

Shortly after the fire, the shrine at the top of the mountain was reconstructed into a monumental Romanesque form.

7 – **Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry**, 1412–1416. Chantilly, Musée Condé, Ms. 65, f. 195r

8 – **Livre d'Heures Sobieski**, 1420. Royal Collection, Windsor Castle, Ms. 1338, f. 204v

9 – Édouard Corroyer, **Drawing of Mont Saint-Michel before the construction of the central tower**, pen, ink and watercolour, 1873

The contractor of this new edifice was William of Volpiano, one of the leading figures in the monastic reform of the 11th century, who also worked in Normandy for a period.[25] He used the old structure, Autbert's original shrine, and over that he constructed a monumental church[26] – a three-nave basilica with a transept and ambulatory.

A collection of three hagiographical narrations compiled on the mountain from about 1080–1095 provide

10 – **The Romanesque church of Mont Saint-Michel**, an illustration of *Roman du Mont-Saint-Pair* written by Guillaume de Saint-Pair. London, British Library, Ms 10289

us with some idea about how the holy mountain as a whole was perceived as a unique sacral object. In lecture V (*De muliere quae in monasterium sancti Michaelis nequibat ascendere*) of *De miraculis in Monte Sancti Michaelis patratis,* there is a story about a man who arrived at Mont Saint-Michel and asked the monks for a small stone (*minimum lapidem*) from the mountain. Returning home, he placed the stone in an altar and dedicated the church it was in to St Michael (*lapidem ponens in altare pro reliquiis eandem basilicam in honore sancti Michaelis solemniter dedicari fecit).* When he died, his wife and children neglected this church. Later, his wife wanted to make a pilgrimage to Mont Saint-Michel, but she was stopped from doing this by a great pain. She understood her crime and went back to taking care of the church, where the stone from Mont Saint-Michel had been placed in the altar.[27]

Immediately after, there is another story (lecture VI, *De peregrine qui injussus lapidem de eodem loco detulit*) concerning the miraculous power of stones taken from the mountain. A man seeking healing went to Mont Saint-Michel and took a stone as a relic without permission (*alterum lapidem absque cujusque licentia secum detulit pro benedictione*[28]) and placed it on an altar (*in quodam altari* [...] *recondidit*). As a consequence, he got even sicker.[29] To regain his health, he had to bring the stone back to Mont Saint-Michel. When he did so, he recovered and was given the stone by the monks to take back and to put it into the altar of a church that he had to consecrate in honour of the Archangel.[30]

In the official discourse of the monk community at Mont Saint-Michel, the terrain of Mont Saint-Michel was seen as sacred[31] – and the sanctity of the mountain itself emerged from the fact that the church was claimed in *Revelatio* to have been gripped by the miraculous power of the Archangel himself and his relics there.

This can be developed further by exploring another hagiographical source from the same period – *Introductio Monachorum*, which tells the story of the arrival and the history of the Benedictine monks at Mont Saint-Michel.[32] The narrative begins with the so-called *laudatio Normanniae*, where the author recounts that the whole region of Normandy is a blessed one, rich in all possible ways, and better than other regions. Then he continues to say that all this splendour, which illuminates the entire West, is due to the presence of Michael's relics on Mont Tumba. That means the presence of Michael's relics on the mountain is a blessing to the whole region.

This concept is easy to understand when one views Mont Saint-Michel from a distance – the mountain can be seen from at least as far as 25km away. [*Fig. 7*] This natural condition – that the mountain is visible from afar – combined with the belief that the mountain was chosen by Michael, created this holy landscape all around the mountain. In this light it is easy to understand why even the very stones from the mountain were treated as relics.

At this point, a first conclusion must be noted: in medieval sources describing Mont Saint-Michel two essentials elements are united: its monumental architectonical structure expressing the sanctity derived from the presence of relics formed a solid devotional (and cultural) background. Accordingly, its visibility from afar and the phenomenon of the tides created natural conditions around the site that were unique. The specific combination of those elements was what created the appeal of Mont Saint-Michel [*Fig. 8, 9*]

Becoming an Icon

After the French Revolution, this spiritual place lost its sacral function and the monks were expelled. Because of its naturally isolated location, it came to be used as a prison and experienced its worst period of decline.[33] Soon after, in the middle of the 19th century, the conservators of French national heritage, and most notably Prosper Mérimée (1803–1870) and Victor Hugo (1802–1885), started to emphasise the importance of this monument for the country's cultural identity.[34]

Victor Hugo, when visiting Mont Saint-Michel on 27 June 1836,[35] articulated his feelings about this place in his letters. What can still be read from those writings is Hugo's strong fascination with the particular surroundings of *the most beautiful place in the world.*[36] The experience of Mont Saint-Michel left a powerful imprint in Hugo's imagination.
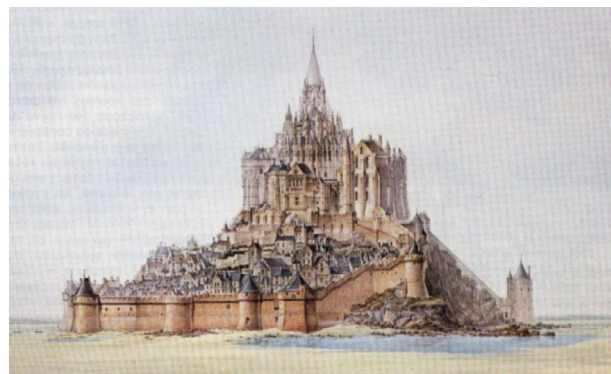
It is clearly evident in his novels, where references to Mont Saint-Michel are used several times.[37] He wrote to Adèle on 28 June: '*Outside, the Mount Saint Michel appears, eight leagues from the land and fifteen from the sea, as a sublime thing, a magnificent pyramid of which every base is an enormous rock shaped by the Ocean or a high building sculpted by the Middle Ages...*'[38]

This fascination led Victor Hugo to be very active and influential in efforts to incorporate Mont Saint-Michel on the list of National Monuments.[39] Reacting to the slow degradation of the place Hugo wrote in 1884: '*The Mount Saint Michel is for France what the great pyramid is for Egypt. It must be protected from every mutilation. The Mount Saint Michel must remain an island. This double work of nature and art must be preserved at all costs.*'[40]

Thanks to the efforts of the French Romantics, the prison was abolished in the last years of Napoleon III's reign, in 1863, and in 1874 was listed as a historical monument. Important restoration works began shortly afterwards: Édouard Corroyer (1835–1904) and Paul Gout (1852–1923), two pupils of the famous Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc (1814–1879), were in charge of this work. Following in the footsteps of their master, they decided to give Mont Saint-Michel an 'authentic medieval' face – specifically, raising up the central tower to the height of several dozen metres. [*Fig. 10–12*] Above all, it was in those years that the characteristic, iconic *silhouette* of the Mont was constructed. Such an edifice, with its high and splendid towers, fully corresponds to the Romantic vision of the medieval past – resembling the descriptions of Walter Scott and other neo-gothic reconstruction work done in those years.

In our opinion, those 19th-century restoration works opened a new chapter in the history of the mountain, a chapter that would elevate Mont Saint-Michel to become an icon of contemporary France.

As early as the first years of the 20th century, Mont Saint-Michel became a site visited by numerous tourists as well as pilgrims. A railway, built in 1901, allowed visitors to be transported directly to the mountain. The number

11 – Édouard Corroyer, **Plan for the reconstruction of Mont Saint-Michel** with the central tower in a „Byzantine style", unrealized, 1873
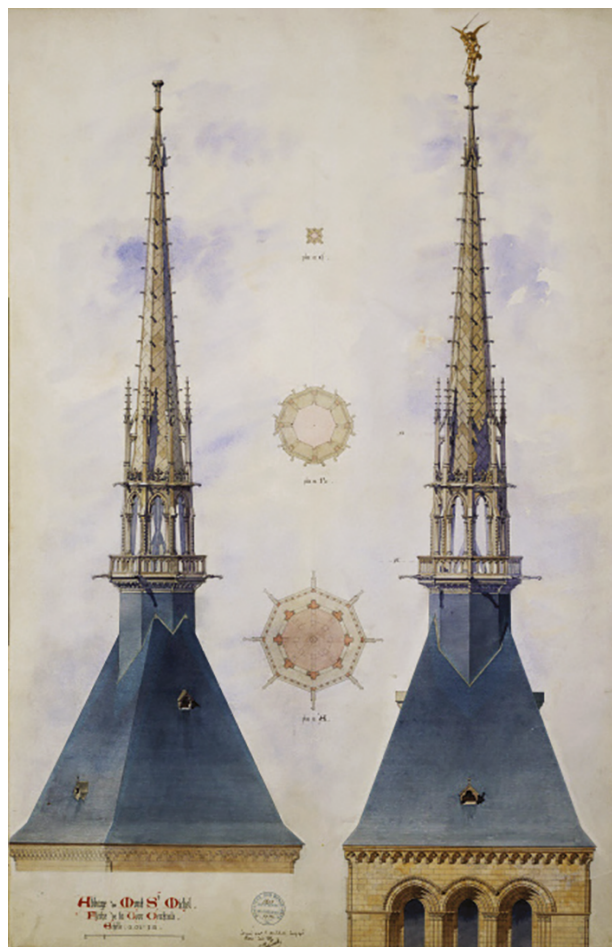
of visitors increased from 10,000 (in 1860) to 100,000 (in 1910).[41]

The medium of photography played a significant role in the process of turning Mont Saint-Michel into an icon. By the end of the 19th century, photography had already become a profitable business with the onset of mass tourism/pilgrimages.[42] One of the leading commercial photography companies of the late 19th century, Neurdein Frères,[43] developed forms of visual images that were tailored to the specific needs of the tourist trade. The majority of photographs were sold as postcards, such as probably the best known photograph of fishermen that shows Mont Saint-Michel from the shore. [*Fig. 13*] The thousands of postcards that were either sent throughout Europe or kept as souvenirs served to standardise the photographic views of the Mont, which resulted in the stereotypical image.[44] [*Fig. 14, 15*]

The Mount was transformed from a monastery and sacred site mainly into an *image*. Certainly, some pilgrims continue to visit the Mount for religious purposes (the sculpture of Saint Michael was moved to the Church of Saint-Pierre in the village below the abbey). However, this new perspective has become the dominant one. For 19th-century visitors, the sublime character of the Mount, which is visible in the period representations of it, associated the mountain with a set of Romantic icons.[45] Therefore, it is not by chance that Mont Saint-Michel started to be perceived more as a castle than as a sacral building.[46] The raising of the tower was, in our opinion, a crucial part of this process. The confusion about the identity of the 'mountain' that already existed – from a distance it is not easy to recognise it as a church building – developed further. Thanks to the new tower, it looks like a medieval stronghold rather than a sacral space. In the context of the 19th century, when one of the most popular aspects of the fascination with the medieval period were castles and troubadours, the new *silhouette* made the mountain even more attractive – through visual input, the monastery gave space to an entirely idealised vision of the Romantic Middle Ages.

This 'laicisation' of the mountain in all probability contributed to its positive reception in the very anticlerical context of France after the Third Republic.[47] In our opinion, however, this should be developed further, together with a second aspect: the modification of the panorama of Mont Saint-Michel assumes the existence of a dual and in some ways contrasting identity. From a distance, its appearance corresponds to the lay vision of a military Middle Ages; in contrast to this, from up close, the very core of the mountain remains the old Benedictine abbey. It is therefore questionable whether this could be the reason for the

mountain's 'reduction' to a *silhouette*, as mentioned above. The panorama is very attractive, but in the social climate of the French Republic, it is difficult to imagine a monastic edifice being transformed into an *icon*.[48] Thanks to this new stage, the sanctity of the place was profoundly altered–: by somehow erasing its religious identity, Mont Saint-Michel was remade as a place for laypeople, republicans, and nationalistic pilgrimages.

Global Pilgrimage and France Today

From a medieval and modern place of worship, thanks to its function as a stronghold and its unique form, the Mountain of the Archangel has acquired a brand new sanctity – one of secular France. During the 20th century, as the number of inhabitants decreased from just over a thousand in the mid-19th century to only a few dozen today its popularity among tourists increased.[49] The Mount was progressively transformed from an inhabited and residential space into an array of 'medieval' coulisses. In order to correspond better to tourists' expectations, in search of the Middle Ages à la Disney, medieval museums and fake places of chivalric memory were created. Like many

other places invaded by mass tourism – for instance, Prague Castle, Montmartre in Paris, or the square of the Fontana di Trevi in Rome – the mountain has become a huge instrument for consumer tourism.[50] The interesting point is that, besides the ugliness of the souvenirs, the consumerist identity of the mountain was constructed around a vaguely Romantic picture of the Middle Ages that is not very religious. In this way, the gap that started with the Revolution and peaked with the widening restoration work of the 19th century – the holy place became strongly dissociated from its religious past. Despite the crowds of people travelling, often thousands of kilometres, just to see (more than to touch) the mountain, there is apparently no connection with its historical past. In the eyes of incoming tourists, like a celebrity among monuments, the Mount deserves to be visited and photographed obsessively (a fetishism that has developed in the last few years) – thus making it into a mere image.[51]

In this sense, the gesture of Marine Le Pen, [*Fig. 5*] mentioned at the beginning of this text, is extremely evocative: she launched her presidential campaign in front of the mountain, which played no other role than that of a simple backdrop. In her speech, Le Pen reminisced, in a very emphatic manner, about France and its origins, but without any remarks about Christianity itself. Even the image of Saint Michael at the top of the building was cut out by photographers.[52] The French presidential candidate evoked Victor Hugo, cited the couple of lines above, and also a famous quotation of Dostoyevsky: '*Beauty will save the world*'. In her speech, she presented the Mount as a site of culture, progress, and French identity:

'*In this magnificent bay of Mount Saint Michael, in this high place where the soul fully breathes, we stand in front of one of the wonders of the West. The high stone silhouette with its rocks, its battlements and its spire culminating at 150m, this serene image of strength and eternity, disposes us to humbleness [...] This meeting point between earth, sea and sky, unique in the world, was during centuries the long-awaited goal of the lengthy walk of pilgrims. It is today the symbol of the French spirit.*'[53]
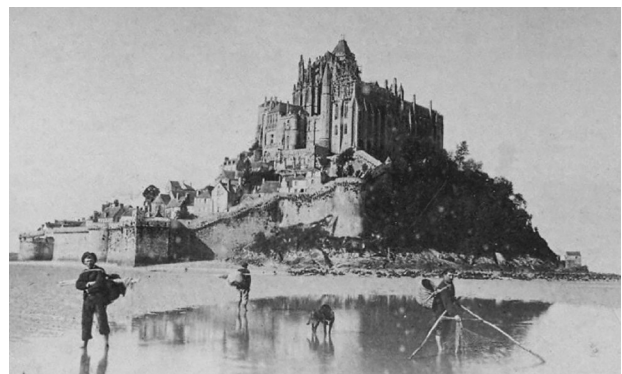
By using moving, deliberately archaic language, Le Pen sought to return to the 19th-century origins of France. In her rhetoric, Mont Saint-Michel became an image of the mythical, Romantic past.

At this point it would be possible to assume that in recent decades we have witnessed a radical transformation of Mont Saint-Michel. However, the situation seems to be more complex when we take into consideration the numerous anthropological studies and analysis concerning the relationship between pilgrimages and tourism.[54] According to one group of scholars, pilgrimages and tourism are overlapping and merging.[55]

A second group, on the contrary, claims there is a radical difference between those two forms of traveling.[56] Tatjana Schnell and Sarah Pali recently offered a third possibility: '*The sacred and the secular should thus not be viewed as exclusive categories; they rather represent a continuum, covering a vast range of sacred-secular combinations between which dynamic shifts are possible.*'[57] Their point of reference is a work by Beckstead, who described this paradox as follows: '*While pilgrimages are generally associated with pious devotion and tourism with hedonistic social behaviour, pilgrims often become tourists, and tourists may experience moments that they (often much to their surprise) describe as spiritual.*'[58]

This fluid reality, in some respects ambiguous, seems to be a convincing solution. But it is not, on its own, enough to explain the '*longue durée*' phenomena presented here. The fact that pilgrimages and tourism alternate with each other must seem a very commonplace notion to anyone who, even for a few days, has walked on the *cammino francese* to Santiago (from Le-Puy-en-Velay to the Spanish border). What the anthropologist does not take into account is the place itself: the subject is of course the centre of the anthropologist's reflections, but what is mostly omitted is the attractiveness of the monument itself, its force and its role as a leading actor. Our intention here is not to embrace the thesis of Eade and Sallnow[59] – criticised by Elsner[60] – a thesis based on there being a certain magnetism to the places that attract the attention of human beings across cultures.

The stratification of religious, and thus cultural, activity on the holy mountain, however, has apparently created a series of references that have spoken across generations to the entire cultural horizon of the 'West'. Following both the rhetoric of the 19th-century writers and the very recent rhetoric of Marine Le Pen, an important concept evoked in recent decades is that of '*lieu de mémoire*'.[61] This was defined between 1984 and 1992 by Pierre Nora: '*An object becomes a place of memory when it escapes from oblivion [...] and when a community reinvests it with its affect and its emotions.*'[62] This approach, while very important, omits the visual dimension

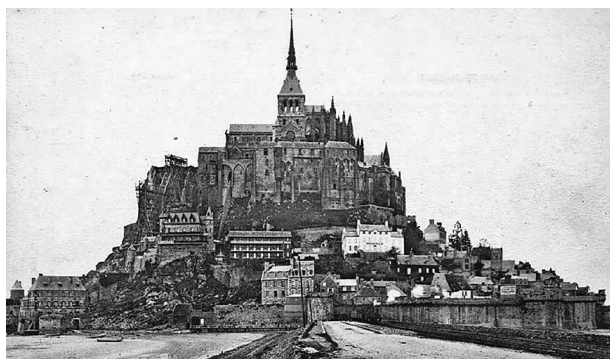**13** – Neurdein Frères, **A photograph of fishermen**, 1882–1891

of the monuments. As indicated by the words of Marine Le Pen, as well as by the countless reproductions of the silhouette of the holy mountain, the strength of this architectonical palimpsest lies in its visuality.

In other words, this case, as an exceptional place, a tidal island, has developed into an image of a nation, as a 'lieu de mémoire', thanks to the incredible efficacy of its architecture and its integration into the landscape. Therefore, it is plausible to append an additional element to the anthropological and historical studies mentioned above: the power of image, which is in our case applied on a work of architecture.[63] Re-created by generations, from the medieval period to the present day, Mont Saint-Michel has become, in our opinion, an icon and a 'lieu de mémoire', mainly thanks to its architecture, which in a series of cases has embraced a transcultural and timeless aesthetic efficacy.
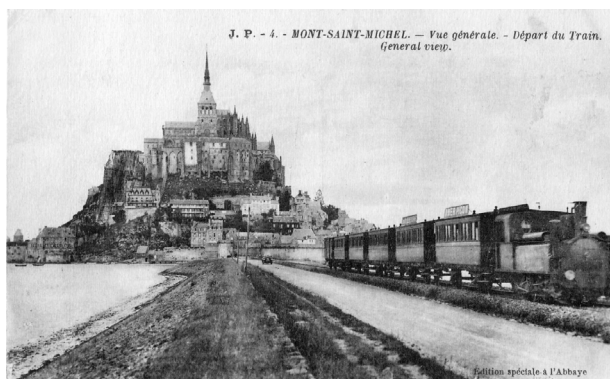
Conclusions and Migrating Art Historians

From this brief overview, one aspect emerges strongly: through the centuries Mont Saint-Michel has been and still is an object of fascination and projection. Re-appropriated by each important phase of French and European culture, its presence seems thoroughly timeless. Beginning with the first sources, we know that part of this fascination is due to its very specific natural situation. On the other hand, comparing Mont Saint-Michel's situation with its sister tide island Tombelaine, we can also assume that the cultural dimension is becoming the decisive one. In the same bay and in the same natural situation, the empty tide island of Tombelaine is almost unknown. [*Fig. 16*] It is therefore the culture materialised in a stratified art object – the actual building of the abbey – that seems to be the very reason for the exceptional success of this place. Or maybe there is an even more complex explanation: it is culture that has made the natural site something exceptional. The immense attraction of this holy site can therefore be explained by this dialogue between nature and art that has been going on for more than a thousand years. These two elements are universal enough to be understood as powerful even in different historical situations. Moreover, the importance of this interaction is so high that, even though this place lost its original function, a new one has been invented in order to keep the space alive. Therefore, Mont Saint-Michel is certainly a place of memory. But, it is a place of memory because of its exceptional aesthetic value.

This observation seems natural to us, the authors, today thanks to the intense pilgrimage experience we had for 123 days. Being constantly immersed in the landscape, contrary to our current experience – as citizens living, traveling, and working in closed spaces – we lived the absolute majority of the time outside. The harmony between landscape and monuments, nature and culture became a crucial

14 – Postcard from the 1920s

15 – Postcard from the 1920s

element for our perception of the space. Moreover, being surrounded by this constant dialogue we started to perceive the iconography of this synergy, surely 'designed' by medieval conceptors. Our reflection of Mont-Saint-Michel is, therefore, a direct consequence of the gaze of pilgrims always directed towards at the horizon searching for the goal of their journey.

Our arrival in Mont-Saint-Michel crowned this regular experience: twenty-four hours before we reached the mountain we had our first glimpse of the height of the tower, so different in its present materiality, but still so close to the vision described in medieval sources. Nobody approaching Mont-Saint-Michel by car would never see it in this way. There is, however, another phenomenon that is impossible to share with those who do not arrive on foot: the incredible sense of expectation that a person who has been walking to the site experiences upon reaching the goal of his or her journey after months filled by dreams and the imagination.

Afterwards, we reached the place as pilgrims, and we can confirm the exceptional power of the site: the decision to choose this as the final destination of our walk was determined by the mental presence of Mont Saint-Michel in our culture. Encountering the crowd of consumerist tourists was certainly a shock, and the numerous village shops were, from

16 – View at Tombelaine, the sister tidal island of Mont Saint-Michel

our point of view, unpleasant, but in a certain sense it did not affect the object's power– natural as well as cultural – in itself. Our reactions to its silhouette, the sea, and the elegant buildings were almost the same as those that have been recorded over the centuries - not only to that of Hugo the Romantic, which is what we would expect, but also to that of Glauber and many others. Mont Saint-Michel therefore appears to be a transcultural element capable of being updated constantly.

Photographic credits: 1, 7: Migrating Art Historians; 2: Prolineserver; 3: reproduction produced from: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/film/lord-of-the-rings/minas-tirit-crowdfund/; https://www.flickr.com/photos/131462150@N08/16959619122; reproduction produced from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-74wcAiOK9Y; Marc Décenneux, Notes sur une representation médiévale inédite de l'église abbatiale du Mont-Saint-Michel, *Les amis du Mont-Saint-Michel*, n. 99, 1994, pp. 43–45; 8: Musée Condé, *Les très riches heures du Duc de Berry*, Luzern 1984; 9: Sofie Bourdon, Quelques représentations médiévales inédites du Mont-Saint-Michel, *Annales de Bretagne et des pays de l'Ouest*, 106/2, 1999, p. 38; 10, 11, 12: Gérard Dalmaz, *Mont Saint Michel*, Paris 2008, p. 15, 16, 18; 13, 14: Personal archive; 16: Wikimedia Commons

Endnotes

[1] Cfr. Experimental International Project 'Migrating Art Historians', at http://www.migratingarthistorians.com/, on-line 2016 [12. 5. 2017]. For the more general scientific outcomes of this project, see *Migrating Art Historians on the Sacred Way*. Medieval Art as a Living Experience, Ivan Foletti – Katarína Kravčíková – Sabina Rosenbergová (edd.), Rome-Brno 2018 (in press). For an outcome intended for a large audience, see the twelve short movies published on our youtube channel https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLRfeyjVJZQnonH5TsdgNHmyY9FbXQW69W

[2] Eugene D'Aquili – Charles Laughlin – John McManus *The Spectrum of Ritual*, New York 1979.

[3] This information was shared by the Agence France-Presse, cf. Solène Bertrand, Normandie. Le Mont-Saint-Michel, deuxième monument de France le plus visité, *Normandie*, published 26 January 2015, https://actu.fr/normandie/mont-saint-michel_50353/normandie-le-mont-saint-michel-deuxieme-monument-de-france-le-plus-visite_477648.html [12. 5. 2017].

[4] Cf. for example Geoffrey Morrison, Mont Saint-Michel rising from the sea like a location from a fantasy film. CInet, published 27 June 2014, https://www.cnet.com/news/take-a-tour-of-mont-saint-michel/ [12.05.2017].

[5] Olivier Faye, Au Mont-Saint-Michel, Marine Le Pen prononce un discours aux accents identitaires, *Le monde*, published 27 February 2017, http://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2017/02/27/au-mont-saint-michel-marine-le-pen-prononce-un-discours-aux-accents-identitaires_5086349_823448.html [20. 5. 2017].

[6] Renato Stopani, Il pellegrinaggio degli aangeli a Roma nei secoli VII e VIII e la nascita della via Francigena, *De strata francigena*, 15/2 (2007), pp. 7–12.

– Giovanni Verfasser Magistretti, Ipotesi sulla via degli Abati quale tratto dell'itinerario micaelico da Mont-Saint Michel a Monte Sant'Angelo, *Archivio storico per le province Parmensi*, 60 (2008[2009]), pp. 123–156. See also Gabriele Tardio, *La Via dell'Angelo Michele ovvero la Via Sacra Langobardarum o la Via Francigena*, Foggia 2011.

[7] We insist on using the term 'site' in order to underline the concrete material dimension of this holy place. Andrew Spicer, Defining the Holy. The delineation of sacred space, in: Sarah Hamilton – Andrew Spicer (edd.), *Defining the Holy: Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Burlington 2005, pp. 1–23, sp. pp. 3–5.

[8] Cf. among many publications the summary by Renato Stopani, *La via Francigena: storia di una strada medievale*, Firenze 1998.

[9] Vincent Juhel, Les Chemins de Saint-Michael au Moyen Age en France, in: Giampietro Casiraghi – Giuseppe Sergi (edd.), *Pellegrinaggi e santuari di San Michele nell'Occidente medievale*, Bari 2009, pp. 381–402.

[10] Of course, the pilgrims' expectations were not only religious or unequivocal. Cf. Diana Webb, *Medieval European Pilgrimage, c. 700–c. 1500*, Basingstoke 2002, pp. 44–77.

[11] Fernand Braudel, Histoire et sciences sociales: La longue durée, *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 13/4, 1958, pp. 725–753.

[12] For the situation of the choir and the building development of the fortification, see: Anne-Marie Flambard Héricher: *L'apport de l'archéologie à la connaissance du Mont-Saint-Michel,* in: Pierre Bouet – Giorgio Otranto – André Vauchez, *Culte et Pèlerinages à Saint Michel en Occident. Les Trois Monts Dédiés à l'Archange*, Rome 2003, pp. 468–479.

[13] Sophie Bourdon, Quelques représentations médiévales inédites du Mont-Saint-Michel, in: *Annales de Bretagne et des pays de l'Ouest.* Tome 106, numéro 2, 1999, pp. 9–32.

[14] Margo Florence, Les cryptes romanes du Mont Saint-Michel: ordonnance des espaces, in: *Espace ecclésial et liturgique au Moyen Âge*. Actes du colloque international *Morphogenèse de l'espace ecclésial au Moyen âge*, réuni en novembre 2006, Lyon 2010, pp. 369–378.

[15] The earliest version of this narrative is preserved in manuscript 211 (Avranches, Bibliothéque municipale), f. 180v–188v, written at the end of the 10th century, probably under the leadership of abbot Mainard II (991–1009). More on the question of dating in: J. J. G. Alexander, *Norman illumination at Mont Saint-Michel*, Oxford, 1970, Appendix.) According to linguistic expertise supported by historical context, the text of *Revelatio* was composed around the year 820 (Pierre Bouet, La *Reuelatio* et les Origines du Culte à Saint Michel sur le Mont Tombe, in: Pierre Bouet – Giorgio Otranto – Andre Vauchez (edd.), *Culte et Pèlerinages à Saint Michel en Occident*, Rome 2003). An alternative opinion dates the creation of the text to about 851–867 (Nicolas Simonnet, La fondation du Mont Saint-Michel d'après la Revelatio ecclesiae sancti Michaelis, *Annales de Bretagne et des Pays de l'Ouest*, 106, 4, 1999, pp. 7–23, sp. pp. 18–19). However, both opinions agree that the 9th-century author of *Revelatio* used an older oral tradition in order to compose his narrative.

[16] '*Extruxit itaque fabricam non culmine subtilitatis celsam, sed in modum cryptae rotundam, centum, ut aestimatur, hominum capacem, illius in monte Gargani volens exaequare formam, in monte praerupti silicis angelico apparatu facta terrigenis ad laudem et gloriam Dei habitatione [...]*' (*Chroniques latines du Mont Saint-Michel, IXe–XIIe siècle*, Pierre Bouet – Olivier Desbordes (edd.), Caen 2009, p. 99).

[17] Chapter VI (*Qualiter a Gargano sacra sint pignora deportata*): *Rubei palliolo quod ipse memoratus archangelus in monte Gargano supra altare quod ipse manu sua construxerat posuit [...]. marmoris supra quod stetit [...]*. In: *Chroniques latines* (note 15), p. 99.

[18] *Revelatio ecclesiae sancti Michaelis archangeli*, III.1. '*Procul vero cernentibus nil fore aliud quam spatiosa quaedam, immo speciosa, turris videtur.*' In: *Chroniques latines* (note 15), p. 94.

[19] *Revelatio ecclesiae sancti Michaelis archangeli*, III.1. '*Sed et mare recess suo devotis populis bis in die desideratum iter praebet beati petentibus limina archangeli Michaelis.*' In: *Chroniques latines* (note 15), p. 94.

[20] For an extensive bibliography on the problems of the pilgrimage to Mont Saint Michel in the Early Middle Ages, see: Lucien Musset, *Recherches sur les pèlerins et les pèlerinages en Normandie jusqu'à la Première Croisade*, Annales de

Normandie, 12ᵉ année, n°3, 1962, pp. 127–150. – Marcel Baudot (ed.), *Millénaire monastique du Mont-Saint-Michel*, vol. III, Culte de saint Michel et pèlerinages au Mont, Paris 1971. – Pierre Bouet et al., *Culte et pèlerinages à saint Michel* (no. 14). – Vincent Juhel (ed.), *Les Pèlerinages au Mont-Saint-Michel dans la littérature et dans les textes* (actes des 2e rencontres historiques d'Ardevon 2004), Vire, Association « Les chemins du Mont Saint-Michel », 2005.

[21] Lucien Musset, Recherches sur les pèlerins et les pèlerinages en Normandie (note 19), pp. 129–131.

[22] *Bernardus manachus itinerarium*, PL 121, cols. 569–74 (exp. col. 574); cf. *Itinerarium Bernardi et sociorum*, Titus Tobler (ed.), Descriptiones Terrae Sanctae, Leipzig, 1874. pp. 85–99, and a part relevant to Mont Saint-Michel in the French-Latin translation *Itinerarium Bernardi monachi Franci*, in: *Chroniques latines* (note 15), pp. 373–374.

[23] John France – Neithard Bulst – Paul Reynolds (edd.), *Rodulfus Glaber Opera*, Oxford 1989, pp. 111–113. Glaber does not mention the exact date. For this, more in: Jean Laporte, L'abbaye du Mont Saint-Michel aux Xe et XIe siècles, in: *Millénaire Monastique Millénaire monastique du Mont Saint-Michel*, vol. I, Histoire et vie monastiques, dom Jean Laporte (ed.), Paris 1967, pp. 53–80, sp. p. 64.

[24] '*Denique contigit in proximum ecclesiam beati Michahelis archangeli cremari incendio, que scilicet, constituta in quodam promuntorio litoris oceani maris, toto orbe nunc usque habetur uenerabilis. Nam et inibi certissimum conspicitur, uidelicet ex incremento atque decremento lunari, eundo ac redeundo processu mirabili in giro eis promuntorii reuma scilicet Oceani. Cuius etiam maris excrementum malinas uocant, decrementum quoque ledones numcupant; atque ob hoc maxime predictus locus a plurimis terrarum populis sepius frequentatur. Est etiam non longe a predicto promuntorio fluuiolus cognomento Arduus, qui post haec paululum excrescens, per aliquod temporis spacium intransmeabilis effectus, atque ad predictam ecclesiam ire uolentibus uiam plusimum impediens, aliquantisper eiusdem itineris obstaculum fuit. Postmodum uero in sese rediens profundissime litus suo cursu sulcatum reliquit.*' *Rodulfus Glaber Opera* (note 22), pp. 111–113.

[25] Véronique Gazeau, Guillaume de Volpiano en Normandie: état des questions, in: *Guillaume de Volpiano. Fécamp et l'histoire normande*. Tabularie, 'Études' n. 2, 2002, pp. 35–46.

[26] Katherine Allen Smith, Architectural mimesis and historical memory at the Abbey of Mont-Saint-Michel, in: Katherine Allen Smith – Scott Wells (edd.), *Negotiating community and difference in medieval Europe*, Leiden 2009, pp. 65–82.

[27] *De miraculis in Monte Sancti Michaelis patratis. Miracula sancti Michaelis*. Lecture V: *De muliere quae in monasterium sancti Michaelis nequibat ascendere*. In: *Chroniques latines* (note 15), pp. 314–320.

[28] The Latin term *benedictione* here is a synonym for *pignora* or *reliquiae*. In: *Chroniques latines* (note 15), p. 320, note 45.

[29] This expression can also signify placement in an altar, but when compared with the expression the author used for putting into an altar (*reposuisse in altare*), here it probably means that the stone was simply placed on the altar as a visible relic. In: *Chroniques latines* (note 15), p. 320, note 46.

[30] *Miracula sancti Michaelis*. Lecture VI. *De peregrine qui injussus lapidem de eodem loco detulit*. In: *Chroniques latines* (note 15), pp. 320–323.

[31] On the question of the miraculous stones on the West, see: Lucy Donkin, Stones of St Michel. Venerating Fragments of Holy Ground in Medieval France and Italy, in: James Robinson – Lloyd de Beer – Anna Harndenpp, *Matter of Faith: An Interdisciplinary Study of Relics and Relic Veneration in the Medieval Period*, London 2014, pp. 23–31.

[32] Introductio monachorum, 1.2: '*Et cum omnibus, ut dictum est, vitae emolumentis ceteras praecellat, universo tamen occidenti in hoc longe supermicat, quod infra se, in monte qui dicitur Tumba, beati Michalis continet patrocinia.*' In: *Chroniques latines* (note 15), p. 203.

[33] Paul Gout, *Le Mont Saint Michel Le Mont-Saint-Michel. Histoire de l'abbaye et de la ville. Etude archéologique et architecturale des monuments*, Paris 1910, pp. 625–650 and pp. 634–636.

[34] About Mérimée as archaeologist and historian cf. *Prosper Mérimée au temps de Napoléon III* [actes du colloque organisé au Musée National du Château de Compiègne le 18 octobre 2003], Françoise Maison (ed.), Paris 2008. For more in general on the beginnings of national heritage protection, cf. Roland Recht, *Penser le patrimoine 2*, Paris 2016.

[35] Victor Hugo, *Voyage en Normandie* (1836). Étapes manchoises, ed. Pierre Aguiton, Caen 1991, p. 24.

[36] A letter to Louise Bertin, Mont-Saint-Michel, 27 June 1836, in: Victor Hugo, *Correspondance*, Paris 1947, vol. I, pp. 548–549.

[37] More on the usage of the image of Mont Saint Michel as inspiration in Hugo's writing in Jacques Vier, Victor Hugo et le Mont-Saint-Michel, in: *Millénaire monastique du Mont-Saint-Michel*, vol. II, 1967, pp. 451–454.

[38] Letter to Adèle at 28 June 1836. '*A l'extérieur, le Mont-Saint-Michel apparaît, de huit lieues en terre et de quinze en mer, comme une chose sublime, une pyra-mide merveilleuse dont chaque assise est un rocher énorme façonné par l'océan ou un haut habitacle sculpté par le Moyen Age* [...]'; in: Victor Hugo, *Récits et dessins de voyage*, ed. Hélène Braeuner, Tournai 2001, pp. 35–36.

[39] Victor Hugo was certainly not alone in his fascination in the 19th century, when dozens of intellectuals felt compelled to express their admiration for this place. For example, Bernard Beck, Le Mont Saint-Michel vu par les antiquaires et les voyageurs anglais au XIXe siècle, in: Pierre Bouet – Giorgio Otranto (edd.), *Rappresentazioni del Monte e dell'arcangelo San Michele nella letteratura e nelle arti*, Bari 2011, pp. 357–371.

[40] Victor Hugo, *Actes et paroles*, volume 8, Paris 1885, p. 84: '*Le mont Saint-Michel est pour la France ce que la grande pyramide est pour l'Égypte. Il faut le préserver de toute mutilation. Il faut que le mont Saint-Michel reste une île. Il faut conserver à tout prix cette double œuvre de la nature et de l'art.*'

[41] Henry Decaëns, *Le Mont Saint-Michel à la Belle Époque*, Rennes 1985, p. 46.

[42] As one example among many, the case of Lourdes: Suzanne K. Kauf-man, Selling Lourdes. Pilgrimage, Tourism, and the Mass-Marketing of the Sacred in Nineteenth-Century France, in: Shelley Baranowski (edd.), *Being Elsewhere: Tourism, Consumer Culture, and Identity in Modern Europe and North America*, Michigan 2001. For the interaction between pilgrimages and tourism, see below in this article (in particular note 53).

[43] Donald Rosenthal, Neurdein Frères, French company, in: John Hannavy (edd.), *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography*, New York 2008, pp. 991–992.

[44] Marie-Ève Bouillon, The Market of Tourism Images, *Études pho-tographiques* 30, 2012, pp. 175–185.

[45] Bernard Beck, Le Mont Saint-Michel vu par les Antiquaires et les Voya-geurs Anglais au XIXᵉ siècle, in: Bouet – Otranto (note 44), pp. 357–371.

[46] '*Jamais le génie du poëte ou de l'artiste n'a imaginé une entrée plus imposante et plus poétiquement mystérieuse que celle de l'ancienne abbaye-château du Mont Saint-Michel* [...] *Voilà ce qu'écrivait, il y a déjà longtemps, dans le temps de la maison centrale de détention, le plus coloré, le plus poëte des descripteurs de ces monuments, cului aussi que nous devons appeler notre ancêtre, à nous historiens du Mont Saint-Michel, Maximilien Raoul.*' Édouard Le Héricher, *Itinéraire des-criptif et historique du voyageur dans le Mont Saint-Michel*, Paris 1870.

[47] Émile Faguet, *L'anticléricalisme*, Paris 2013 (1906), pp. 191–246. Online: http://obvil.paris-sorbonne.fr/corpus/critique/faguet_anticlericalisme/ [27. 6. 2017].

[48] Paul Baquiast, *La troisième République, 1870–1940*, Paris 2002.

[49] For the situation of the population on the Mont cfr. Cassini, Notice com-munal, Le Mont-Saint-Michel, in Web pages of the *École des hautes études en sciences sociale*, http://cassini.ehess.fr/cassini/fr/html/fiche.php?select_re-sultat=23871 [11. 5. 2017], in 1793 there were 234 inhabitants, there were 1153 in 1861, 268 in 1954, and 41 in 2006. The main decline of the population can be explained by the fact that the prison on the Mount was closed in 1863 and the village lost its function: in 1866 there were only 203 inhabitants.

[50] For the general phenomenon see Gregory J. Ashworth, John E. Tunbridge, *The Tourist-Historic City*, New York 2011 [2001].

[51] Bertrand Naivin, *Selfie: un nouveau regard photographique*, Paris 2016.

[52] The absence of the Christian dimension is emphasized by Olivier Faye, cf. note 3.

[53] '*Dans cette somptueuse baie du Mont Saint Michel, ce haut lieu où l'âme res-pire amplement, nous voilà devant l'une des merveilles de l'Occident. La haute Silhouette de pierre avec ses rochers, ses remparts et sa flèche culminant à 150 mètres, cette image sereine de la force et de l'éternité, nous incline à l'humilité* [...] *Ce point de rencontre entre la terre, la mer et le ciel, unique au monde, fut pendant des siècles l'aboutissement tant attendu de la longue marche*

des pèlerins. Il est aujourd'hui le symbole de l'esprit français.' Marine Le Pen, 'Discours d'ouverture de la champagne présidentielle 2017', in: *http://www. frontnational.com. Site officiel du Front National*, published 27 February 2017, http://www.frontnational.com/videos/au-mont-saint-michel-marine-le-pen-appelle-a-lunite-des-francais/, [21. 5. 2017].

[54] Cf. the summary by Tatjana Schnell – Sarah Pali, Pilgrimage today: the meaning-making potential of ritual, *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 16/9 (2013), pp. 887–902. – Xosé M. Santos, Pilgrimage and Tourism at Santiago de Compostel", *Tourism Recreation Research*, 27/2 (2002), pp. 41–50. – Ellen Badone – Sharon R. Roseman, Approaches to the Anthropology of Pilgrim-age and Tourism, in: Ellen Badone – Sharon R. Roseman (edd.), *Intersecting Journeys. The Anthropology of Pilgrimage and Tourism*, 2004, pp. 1–23.

[55] The fading boundaries between pilgrims and other travellers have been examined since the early 1970s when MacCannell argued for the first time that '*tourism is the pilgrimage of the modern man*' (Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: a New Theory of Leisure Class*, New York 1976, p. 593). This was later supported by Victor Turner and Edith Turner in *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, New York 1987, who suggested that '*A tourist is half a pilgrim, if a pilgrim is a half of tourist. Even when people bury themselves in anonymous crowds on beaches, they are seeking an almost sacred, often, symbolic, mode of communitas, generally unavailable to them in the structured life of the office, the shop floor or the mine.*' (p. 20). In line with this statement many scholars claim that a pilgrimage can be recognized as tourism and vice versa, for example: Ian Reader – Ton Walter (edd.), *Pilgrimage in Popular Culture*, Basingstoke 1993. – Victor Ambrósio, Sacred pilgrimage and tourism as secular pilgrimage, in: Razaq Raj – Nigel D. Morpeth (edd.), *Religious tourism and pilgrimage festivals management: an international perspective*, Wallingford 2007, pp. 78–87.

[56] Claudia Yoel Damari, Reflections on pilgrim identity, role and interplay with the pilgrimage environment, *Current Issues in Tourism*, 2016, vol. 19, no. 3, pp. 199–222 (with other bibliography).

[57] Schnell – Pali (note 51), p. 891.

[58] Zachary Beckstead, Liminality in acculturation and pilgrimage: when movement becomes meaningful. *Culture & Psychology* 16 (3), 2010, pp. 383–393, sp. p. 386.

[59] John Eade – Michael Sallnow (edd.), *Contesting the Sacred. The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage*, London 1991. In a collection of essays, they wanted to argue against a global approach focusing on the universal characteristics of pilgrimage places, which was the dominant approach in the anthropology of the time. They advocated analysing special cases, in their historical and cul-tural context (pp. 3, 5). They see the power of the pilgrimage shrine as coming from its capacity to function as a '*religious void, a ritual space capable of ac-commodating diverse meaning and practices*' and its ability to '*offer a variety of clients what each of them desires*'. They also claim that in the eyes of pilgrims, the power of a shrine results from several features: an association with a holy person, from its location in a place where a revelation occurred, or from its character as an illustration of a sacred text (pp. 6–9).

[60] Eade and Sallnow direct attention at three coordinates: person, place, and text to determine the particular character of pilgrimage sites (*Contesting the Sacred*, p. 9). Anthropologist Simon Coleman and art historian John Elsner maintain these three elements of person, place, and text work together to determine the particular character of pilgrimage sites. However, in their broadly comparative study ('Pilgrimage Past and Present in World Religion', Cambridge 1995), they stressed the importance of a fourth element – movement – which they see as central to the pilgrimage process. '*It is the experience of travel and the constant possibility of encountering the new which makes pilgrimage distinct from other forms of ritual in the religions we have examined.*' (p. 206).

[61] Pierre Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire*, 2t, Paris 1981–1989. – Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*, München 1999.

[62] '*Un objet devient lieu de mémoire quand il échappe à l'oubli* [...] *et quand une collectivité le réinvestit de son affect et de ses émotions.*' Pierre Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire, 2: La nation*, Paris 1989, p. 7.

[63] Cf. David Freedberg, *The power of images: studies in the history and theory of response*, Chicago 1989.

RESUMÉ

Posvátné místo, místo paměti nebo umělecký předmět?
Několik úvah o Mont Saint-Michel v „(très) longue durée" (708 [?]–2017)

Ivan Foletti – Sabina Rosenbergová

Článek si klade otázku, co stojí za nevídaným dlouhotrvajícím úspěchem francouzského Mont Saint-Michel – místa, které budí pozornost a zájem lidí již více než tisíc let. Abychom dokázali pochopit tento nekončící fenomén, kdy poutníci a později turisté cestují na velké vzdálenosti, aby se s místem setkali, rozhodli jsme se sledovat Mont Saint-Michel v dlouhém časovém horizontu od osmého století po současnost. V tomto období se vzhled, vnitřní význam a charakter budov na přílivovém ostrově mnohokrát změnil – z posvátného místa na sakrální prostor, na vojenskou pevnost, na vězení, na profánní památku reprezentující francouzskou národní identitu, až nakonec na Mekku konzumního turismu. Článek postupně sleduje každý z těchto hlavních kroků ve vývoji identity Mont Saint-Michel: začíná v období vrcholného středověku, pokračuje skrze rychlé změny vyprovokované Francouzskou revolucí a končí rokem 2017. V každém z těchto období pozorujeme neutichající zájem lidí, přestože kontext se někdy velmi rychle proměňoval. Naše otázka by částečně mohla zodpovězena tím, že Mont Saint-Michel je místem paměti, které bylo přebíráno z generace na generaci. Nicméně toto vysvětlení není dostačující. Písemné prameny napříč stoletími, které jsou v textu prezentovány, svědčí o tom, že fascinace místem byla vždy výsledkem kombinace kulturních a přírodních prvků. Výsledná harmonická interakce mezi nimi se jeví jako výsledek vědomé a po staletí upravované umělecké koncepce. V tomto smyslu je naše odpověď jednoznačná: síla Mont Saint-Michel spočívá v tom, že je uměleckým předmětem snoubícím v sobě přírodní, architektonické a performativní prvky mající (skoro) univerzální platnost.

Snímky: **1** – **Pohled na Mont Saint-Michel**; **2** – **Masová turistika na Mont Saint-Michel**; **3** – **Minas Tirith**, filmové ztvárnění inspirované Mont Saint-Michel; **4** – **Logo Walt Disney Company**; **5** – **Marine Le Pen hovoří při zahájení prezidentské kampaně** poblíž Mont Saint-Michel; **6** – **Pohled na Mont Saint-Michel**; **7** – **Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry**, 1412–1416. Chantilly, Musée Condé, Ms. 65, f. 195r; **8** – **Livre d'Heures Sobieski**, 1420. Royal Collection, Windsor Castle, Ms. 1338, f. 204v; **9** – Édouard Corroyer, **kresba Mont Saint-Michel před vybudováním hlavní věže**, pero, inkoust, akvarel, 1873; **10** – **Románský kostel Mont Saint-Michel**, ilustrace z *Roman du Mont-Saint-Michel* od Guillauma de Saint-Pair. Londýn, British Library, Ms 10289; **11** – **Plán rekonstrukce Mont Saint-Michel** s hlavní věží v „byzantském stylu", nerealizováno; **12** – **Kresby zvonice věže**; **13** – Neurdein Frères, **fotografie rybářů; 14, 15** – **Pohlednice**, dvacátá léta 20. století; **16** – **Pohled na Tombelaine**, přílivový ostrov sousedící s Mont Saint-Michel