

PRADES

A Photo Essay

by **Kenneth M. Voiles**

Only a tourist only a shy American
 Flung into public sky by an ingenious weapon
 Prepared for every legend . . .
 -- “Why Some Look Up to Planets and Heros”

The “sacred journey” has origins in prehistoric religious cultures and myths. Man instinctively regards himself as a wanderer and a wayfarer, and it is second nature for him to go on pilgrimage in search of a privileged and holy place, a center and source of indefectible life.
 -- *Mystics and Zen Masters*



1. THE PYRENEES (From the South Edge of Prades)

The silence of the woods forces you to make a decision which the tensions and artificialities of society may help you evade forever. Do you want to be yourself or don't you? . . . Are you going to take a stand on your own feet before God and the world and take full responsibility for your own life?

-- *Contemplation in a World of Action*

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2. PRADES TRAIN STATION

A lone train alarms the summer silence with a contralto trident. The old man has won several nights in formaldehyde. He has become a fixture. Go collect the lame teardrops of the Dog Star. Who will tell this fine gentleman his fortunes are wintering? Well, he sings for it.

-- *Cables to the Ace* (# 49)



3. TOWER OF PRADES CATHEDRAL (St. Pierre)

Didn't Saint John of the Cross hide himself in a room up in a church tower, where there was one small window through which he could look out at the country?

-- *The Sign of Jonas*



4. THE MERTON HOUSE (rue de Palais de Justice & rue de 4 Septembre)

France blooms along the windows
 Of my sleepy bathysphere,
 And runs to seed in a luxuriance of curious lights.
 -- "The Night Train"



5. THE MERTON HOUSE

Father and Mother had many friends at Prades, and when they had moved there, and had their furniture in their flat, and the canvases piled up in the corner, and the whole place smelling of fresh oil paints and water color and cheap pipe tobacco and cooking, more friends came down from Paris And the friends would drink red wine and gaze out over the valley at Canigou, and at the monastery on the slopes of the mountain. -- *The Seven Storey Mountain*



6. CATHEDRAL OF ST. PIERRE (On the rue de Palais de Justice)

City churches are sometimes quiet and peaceful solitudes, caves of silence, where a man can seek refuge from the intolerable arrogance of the business world. One can be more alone, sometimes, in church than in a room in one's own house.

-- *New Seeds of Contemplation*



7. RUE DE PALAIS DE JUSTICE

We live in a time of no room, which is the time of the end. The time when everyone is obsessed with lack of time, lack of space, with saving time, conquering space, projecting into time and space the anguish produced within them by the technological furies of size, volume, quantity, speed, number, price, power and acceleration As the end approaches, there is no room for nature. The cities crowd it off the face of the earth.

-- *Raids on the Unspeakable*



8. MT. CANIGOU (from the rue de San Juan de Porto Rico)

The full beauty of the mountain is not seen until you too consent to the impossible paradox: it is and is not. When nothing more needs to be said, the smoke of ideas clears, the mountain is SEEN. -- *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton*



9. THE MERTON HOUSE (door on the rue de 4 Septembre)

Do not be deceived into thinking this door is merely hard to find and difficult to open. When sought it fades. Recedes. Diminishes. Is nothing. There is no threshold. No footing. It is not empty space. It is neither this world nor another. It is not based on anything. Because it has no foundation it is the end of sorrow.

-- *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton*

A sweet summer afternoon. Cool breezes and a clear sky. This day will not come again. I for one mean to preserve all the Europe that is in me as long as I live, and above all I will keep laughing until they close my mouth with fallout.

-- *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*