for him to have heard the sound of water. They say he has now lost these faculties.

In Synge essay explain melancholy – morbidity – of genius by the fact that a man of genius sees the world as Adam did, as it were for the first time. He's face to face with death and change, breaks away use and routines that hide them. The fact that he reflects the world in a strange mirror – not strange to him, perhaps – makes us also see them for a moment as if we were Adam. He has therefore his double effect; his sincerity that makes us share his feeling, his strangeness that makes us share his vision. He shows us a picture, as a painter might, reversed in a looking-glass, that we may see it as it is. But this strangeness wears off and leaves only his sincerity. Strangeness is, however, more often than not the cause of the first successes of writers as well as of their first failures. Every writer has, however, his mirror, which is the creation of his sincerity. He is different.

Yet at Mont-Saint-Michel I have been seeing a different art, a marvellous powerful living thing created by a community working for hundreds of years and allowing only a very little place for the individual. Are there not groups which obtain, through powerful emotion, organic vitality? How do they differ from the mob of casual men who are the enemies of all that has fineness? Why is it that the general thought is our enemy in the towns of Ireland, and would be our friend in the country places if we had the same symbols? I cannot see clearly, but think the difference is like that between a monastery and a modern town. I would have said there must be a discipline of thought and body, but the country people have only this in a very vague sense in their folklore. One thing I do see. The unifying principle must come from and perpetually appeal to what is deepest, and it must enclose the entire lives of all within its circle. Without that, it will be a convention in the colloquial sense of the word, a mere formalism or a mob tyranny; the soul will be in perpetual revolt. Young Irelandism, because a condescension, a conscious simplification, could only perish or create a tyranny. No sacrifice for a cause necessarily ennobles the soul unless the soul is a part of the cause. One cannot have a national art in the Young Ireland sense, that is to say an art recognized at once by all as national because obviously an expression of what all believe and feel, though one can have an imitation, because no modern nation is an organism like a monastery by rule and discipline, by a definite table of values understood by all, or even, as the Western peasants are, by habit of feeling and thought. Am I not right; is there not an organism of habit – a race held together by folk tradition, let us say? And this is now impossible because thought old enough to be a habit cannot face modern life and shape educated men, and an organism of discipline has hitherto proved impossible in the modern world because no nation can seclude itself. When I try to create a national literature, for all that, do I not really mean an attempt to create this impossible thing after all, for the very reason that I always rouse myself to work by imagining an Ireland as much a unity in thought and feeling as ancient Greece and Rome and Egypt; and hate the mob of casual men who are only one in moments of [of] hysterical feeling, in its service, not in the service of the individual? Am I not therefore un-national in any sense the common man can understand? He means by national a mob held together not by what is interior, delicate and haughty, but by law and force which they obey because they must. I must therefore be content to be but artist, one of a group, Synge, Lady Gregory – no, there is no other than these1 who express something which has no direct relation to action. We three have conceived an Ireland that will remain imaginary more powerfully than we have conceived ourselves. The individual victory was but a separation from casual men as a necessary thing before we could become naturalized in that imaginary land which is, as it were, the tradition-bound people of the West made independent from America or from London, and living under its own princes.

1 'We three alone in modern times had brought Everything down to that sole test again, Dream of the noble and the beggar-man,' 'The Municipal Gallery Revisited,' Collected Poems, p. 359.
August [1910].

My dear Robert: I want you to understand that I have no instincts in personal life. I have reasoned them all away, and reason acts very slowly and with difficulty and has to exhaust every side of the subject. Above all, I have destroyed myself, by analysis, instinctive indignation. When I was twenty or a little more, I was shocked by the conversation at Henley’s. One day I resolved if the conversation was as bad again, I would walk out. I did not do so, and next day I reasoned over the thing and persuaded myself that I had thought of walking out from vanity and did not do so from fear. As I look back, I see occasion after occasion on which I have been prevented from doing what was a natural and sometimes the right thing either because analysis of the emotion or action of another, or self-distrustful analysis of my own emotion destroyed impulse. I cannot conceive the impulse, unless it was so sudden that I had to act at once, that could urge me into action at all if it affected personal life. All last week the moment that my impulse told me I should demand with indignation an apology from Gosse, my analysis said, ‘You think that from vanity. You want to do a passionate thing because it stirs your pride.’

I was once told by a relation that my father had done some disgraceful thing – of course it was absurd and untrue – and I found with amused horror that I was coldly arguing over the probabilities and explaining (to myself, I am glad to say) why it could not be true. In impersonal and public things, because there this distrust of myself does not come in, I have impulse. I would have explained it by saying that it is the world I have been brought up in – you have always lived among defined social relations and I only among defined ideas – but then my family seemed to me to have more than enough of the usual impulses. I even do my writing by self-distrusting reasons. I thought to write this note in the same way as I write the

1 Several of the following entries arise from an occasion on which Sir Edmund Gosse sent Lady Gregory an insulting letter. The question was the proposed Civil List pension for Yeats. Lady Gregory and her son Robert felt that Yeats should have demanded a full apology from Gosse. Some details of the episode are given in Appendix E, pp. 289–91.
2 Robert Gregory (1881–1918).
3 ‘practical’ deleted.