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## **“In Nature There is Nothing Melancholy”: Romantic Poetry and Selfish Constructions of Nature and Sadness**

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### **Abstract**

Renowned Romantic poets like William Wordsworth, Charlotte Turner Smith, and John Clare were obsessed with love, human emotions, and how the natural world works to influence and inspire these sensations of the human experience. Common muses featured in these authors' works often include bodies of water—such as the River Wye, which inspired William Wordsworth—or animals—like the nightingale, a creature which inspired many poets including Charlotte Smith and Samuel Coleridge to write such poems as Smith's "To a Nightingale." In using these muses to construct nature, most Romantic poets played with the idea that the natural world could positively or negatively influence a person's psyche. In short, through their work, Romantic poets tended to make a point of explaining how scenes like the River Wye or the nightingale or a sunny Spring day affected their own perceptions of the human experience; however, some other poets, opposing this entwinement between human and nature, offered another view. Pieces like John Clare's "The Nightingale's Nest" and Samuel Coleridge's "The Nightingale" sought to paint nature and the human experience as separate entities, thus exposing the practice of linking the two as a selfish one, particularly in the case of Wordsworth and Smith, who Clare and Coleridge's pieces suggested had a habit of selfishly constructing nature as a serene, peaceful and unassuming presence merely as a means to highlight their own unhappiness.

**Keywords:** Romanticism, Sorrow, Poetry, Selfishness, Interplay.