

The New Criterion

Features

March 2008

Man is wolf to wolf

by [John Derbyshire](#)

On *American Earth: Environmental Writing Since Thoreau*, edited by Bill McKibben with a foreword by Al Gore.

“In Nature,” said Coleridge, “there is nothing melancholy.” I don’t know about that. I suppose there are lots of people who will greet *American Earth: Environmental Writing Since Thoreau* with joy, but both politics and temperament predisposed me against the book. [1] I had agreed to review it in a moment of weakness, but when it thumped down onto my desk—115 extracts from 101 authors in close to a thousand galley pages of almost nothing but text (“80 pages of color inserts” will be included in the finished product, the publisher assures me), melancholy is what ensued.

Politics. The presence of that foreword by Al Gore and the inclusion of his 1997 speech at the Kyoto conference on climate change alert us to the fact that writing about nature has nowadays largely been taken over by leftist scolds and prophets of doom, urging us to ...

John Derbyshire is a freelance writer living on Long Island.

[more from this author](#)

This article originally appeared in The New Criterion, Volume 26 March 2008, on page 4

Copyright © 2009 The New Criterion | www.newcriterion.com

<http://www.newcriterion.com/articles.cfm/man-is-wolf-to-wolf-3778>