

# ANGELL FLIES

BY [LAUREN KIRSCHNER](#)  
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**LET ME FINISH** by Roger Angell (Harcourt), 304 pages, \$18.95 paper. Rating: **NNN**

Though Roger Angell edited fiction at the New Yorker for over 40 years, wrote about baseball and encountered some of the most indomitable personalities in the arts, the most poignant passages in *Let Me Finish* are the romantic recollections of his New York City childhood.

In a genre that's recently seen childhood-gone-bad memoirs find high-voltage success (think Sean Wilentz's *The Glory Of It All* and Augusten Burroughs's *Running With Scissors*), *Let Me Finish* is unusual. It lacks a mother character who manically recites Sextonesque poetry or a poor-little-rich-boy quotient. This is a book about – insert drum roll – a relatively happy childhood.

Divided into sections that work as thematic vignettes, Angell's memoir is tender, graceful and honest. His old-fashioned, breezy style makes you think of a suited-up man at his desk dipping into the inkwell, but he's never mannered or stuffy.

The sepia-stained scenes unfold with quiet majesty – watching baseball games in the age of Babe Ruth and taking long car rides in the country with his stepfather, *Charlotte's Web* author E.B. White.

Angell's insights into White are fascinating. He was a formidable artist whose directness and mastery of form made him one of the 20th century's best-loved writers. His morbid timidity, however, kept him from attending parties, launches, awards dinners and weddings.

Resting on the strength of style rather than story, *Let Me Finish* is like a bag of brightly coloured marbles, each dedicated to a year in time or an experience that represents it. In someone else's hands, an entire chapter describing a trip to the cinema as a quasi-holy experience might have readers heading for the exit, but here the words unfold like pictures fit for framing.

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