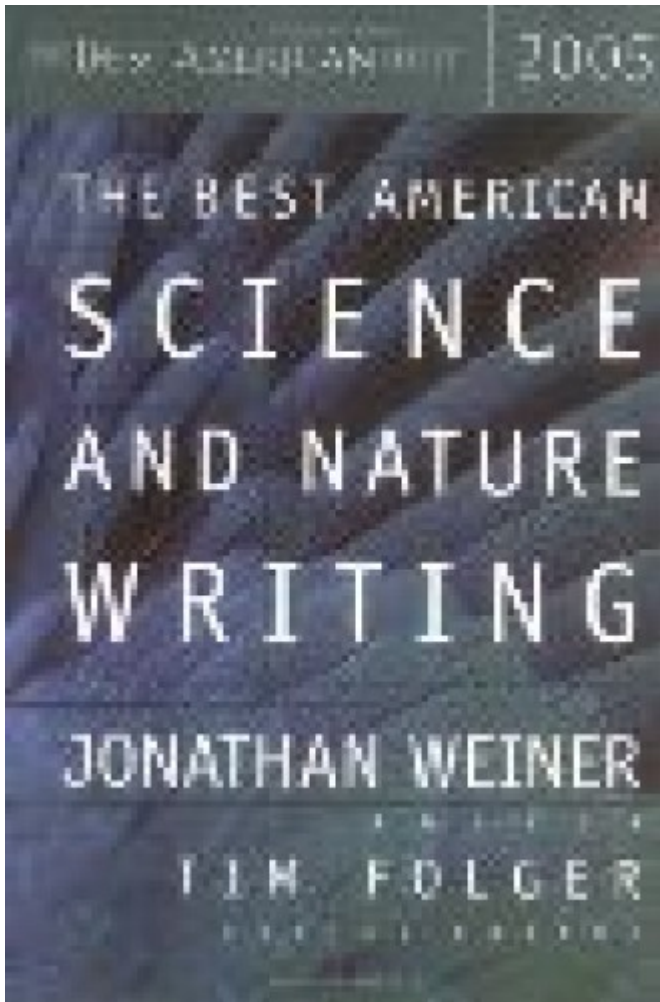


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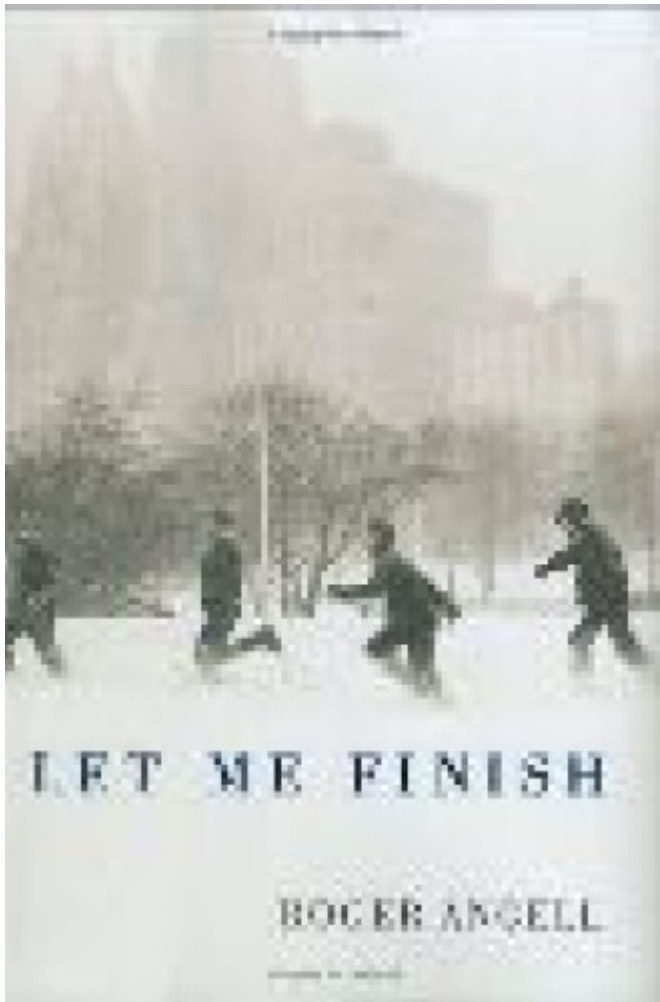
Books in the [June 27, 2006](#) issue

In Review



The Best American Science and Nature Writing

Jonathan Weiner, ed.
Houghton Mifflin



Let Me Finish

Roger Angell
Harcourt

The 2005 edition of this series is an especially fine collection of excellent writing for armchair scientists. Essays range from a narrative about a life-threatening adventure in seeking earth's deepest underwater caves to the story of the "mechanically elegant" Curta calculator. Some of the essays make powerful pairings: Sherwin B. Nuland summarizes Sheila and David Rothman's *The Pursuit of Perfection*, urging the public to slow the hysterical rush into medical and cosmetic "miracles," while Jenny Everett, in "My Little Brother on Drugs," shares her qualms about growth-hormone treatments. "Hollywood Science" tells the story of Proposition 71, California's initiative into private stem cell research, while James McManus imagines a cure for his diabetic daughter in "Please Stand By While the Age of Miracles Is Briefly Suspended."

Angell is thought by some to be the best baseball writer of his time, but the memoir-like essays in this book indicate that his range extends far beyond baseball. By his own admission, he has “had a life sheltered by privilege, and engrossing work, and shot through with good luck.” His father, Ernest, was a New York lawyer. His mother, Katherine, was a founding editor of the *New Yorker* who eventually divorced his father in order to marry the famous writer E. B. White. (Imagine having as your stepfather the author of *Charlotte’s Web* and the coauthor of *The Elements of Style*!) Although Angell probably doesn’t intend to do so at points he seems to engage in name-dropping. But the reader does get interesting glimpses into the lives of some of the literary elite of Angell’s time, especially writers connected with the *New Yorker*, for which he worked for 40 years. Good summer reading.