RETRIEVAL

Arrowsmith

By Sinclair Lewis
Original publication date: 1925
(Harcourt Brace & World, Inc.)

One summer evening in 1922, Sinclair Lewis had a conversation with a scientist-turned-writer named Paul de Kruif. Lewis had recently published his satire, *Babbit*, and wanted to write about a hero—someone who might inspire through morality and purpose—but was having trouble finding his character. By the end of the evening, Lewis realized the character he was searching for should be a research scientist.

Arrowsmith is the first major American novel about science. Partly based on researchers with whom de Kruif had worked, it is the story of Martin Arrowsmith, a small-town physician who longs to pursue deeper scientific truths for the benefit of humankind. Arrowsmith publishes a paper that catches the eye of a famous researcher, is offered a dream position at a large institute, and becomes a rising star in his field. But Lewis was too cunning an author (he would win the Nobel Prize for literature in 1930) for such a formulaic plot. Arrowsmith becomes appalled by the lurking commercialism and the push for rapid publication in his field. He is infused with a humanity atypical of scientists in literature, struggles with the pangs of celebrity, and leaves it all in his pursuit of truth.

Lewis wrote *Arrowsmith* when medical science was still young, when everyone from backwoods physicians to big city quacks could ply their trade. He traveled with de Kruif for a year to get his character and the science correct, achieving both authenticity and timelessness. Lewis became the only person to ever turn down the Pulitzer Prize, which he deservedly won for *Arrowsmith*, and, after reading this novel, one can almost understand why. —*Joshua Roebke*

IN-A-WORD

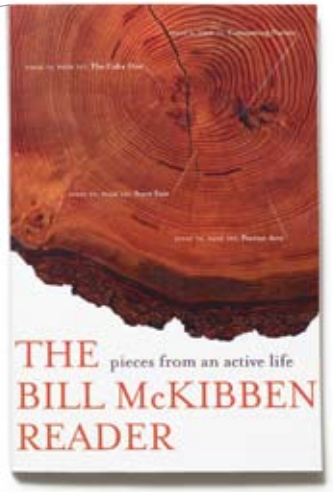
Freeman Dyson on *Life After People*, the History Channel's futuristic "documentary" about our planet in a postapocalyptic and human-free state.

"UNIMAGINATIVE"

Dyson is a renowned futurist and theoretical physicist at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton.

The Bill McKibben Reader

By Bill McKibben (Holt Paperbacks)

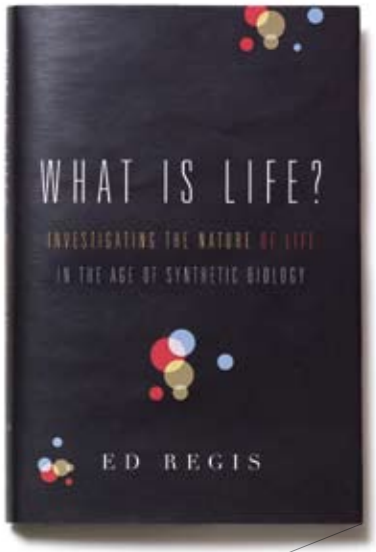


When he wrote *The End of Nature* in 1989, the young environmentalist Bill McKibben was one of the few people who understood the impending perils of global warming. His writings since—about genetic engineering, alternative energy, and local economies—have been no less prescient. This much-deserved anthology contains 44 short pieces, from reporting on homeless-shelter life in 1982, to organizing huge environmental demonstrations last year. Its subtitle, *Pieces from an Active Life*, couldn't be more fitting.

Heavy Mental

By The Amygdaloids (Joseph LeDoux, Tyler Volk, Nina Curley, and Daniela Schiller)

The amygdala is the part of the brain primarily responsible for our sense of fear. It's also one of the many scientific inspirations for The Amygdaloids, a rock n' roll quartet of New York University scientists, whose founding member, neuroscientist Joseph LeDoux, delves into the machinery of memory. *Heavy Mental*, the band's first CD, features all the songs from their live act, plus a few original recordings. It's a playfully cerebral chimera of rock and punk, a catchy soundtrack for activities both in and out of the lab.



What Is Life?

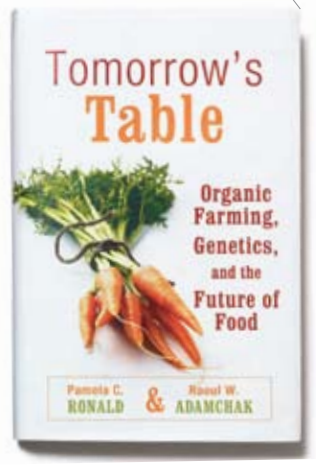
By Ed Regis (Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux)

This single slim volume rivals Erwin Schrödinger's identically titled 1944 classic in clarity, brevity, and breadth. Using that book as a starting point, Regis deftly surveys our progress toward a scientific understanding of life itself. Along the way, he describes the emerging field of synthetic biology and dissects the surprisingly conflicted definitions of life and death. Though he can't explain either life's origins or its fate (science can't either), Regis admirably summarizes what he believes life to be: "embodied metabolism."

Tomorrow's Table

By Pamela C. Ronald and Raoul W. Adamchak (Oxford University Press)

Genetically-engineered versus organically-grown. It's a choice often framed as being between science and nature, but it's a false one, says this wife-husband team. In a literal marriage of two entrenched camps, Ronald, a plant genomics researcher at UC Davis, and Adamchak, an organic gardener, shed light on the unfounded fears of gene modification and the merits a more-holistic approach to agriculture. Recipes include "Sticky Rice with GE Papaya" and "Isolation of DNA from Organically-Grown Strawberries."



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