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Sommario/riassunto	All organisms and species are transitory, yet life endures. The origin, extinction, and evolution of species-interconnected in the web of life as "eternal ephemera"-are the concern of evolutionary biology. In this riveting work, renowned paleontologist Niles Eldredge follows leading thinkers as they have wrestled for more than two hundred years with the eternal skein of life composed of ephemeral beings, revitalizing evolutionary science with their own, more resilient findings. Eldredge begins in France with the naturalist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, who in 1801 first framed the overarching question about the emergence of new species. The Italian geologist Giambattista Brocchi followed,

bringing in geology and paleontology to expand the question. In 1825, at the University of Edinburgh, Robert Grant and Robert Jameson introduced the astounding ideas formulated by Lamarck and Brocchi to a young medical student named Charles Darwin. Who can doubt that Darwin left for his voyage on the Beagle in 1831 filled with thoughts about these daring new explanations for the "transmutation" of species. Eldredge revisits Darwin's early insights into evolution in South America and his later synthesis of knowledge into a theory of the origin of species. He then considers the ideas of more recent evolutionary thinkers, such as George Gaylord Simpson, Ernst Mayr, and Theodosius Dobzhansky, as well as the young and brash Niles Eldredge and Steven Jay Gould, who set science afire with their concept of punctuated equilibria. Filled with insights into evolutionary biology and told with a rich affection for the scientific arena, this book celebrates the organic, vital relationship between scientific thinking and its subjects.

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