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Erratum
Cover Legend: “Biologie des Bratenduftes” (Biology of Cooking Aromas), Fritz Kahn (1888–1968), relief halftone, Stuttgart, 1926. Fritz Kahn, a Berlin gynecologist, was widely recognized for his popular books on a diverse range of subjects: The Milky Way (1914), The Cell (1919), and Jews as a Race and Culture (1920). His most famous publication was the five-volume, Das Leben des Menschen (The Life of Man) 1922–1932. The illustration on the cover is Plate XV from Volume III of the work. When Hitler came to power in 1933, Kahn was forced to flee Germany. His circuitous escape route led him to Jerusalem (where he became a citizen of Palestine), through France and Portugal in 1939, and finally to America with the help of Varian Fry and Albert Einstein. Kahn settled in New York City in 1941 and became one of the world’s foremost popularizers of medical and scientific topics via his writings, lectures and radio broadcasts. The cover image was created during the post-World War I period when the Machine Age was born. This was an era of upbeat optimism in the power of science and industry to unravel the secrets of nature and to create an ideal world. Jacques Loeb’s “mechanistic theory of biology” as well as Kahn’s art sprang from this zeitgeist. Kahn depicts the biology of smell as a factory in which a series of Rube Goldberg-like relay stations transmit the aroma of a roasted chicken to various locations in the brain, each with a specific function and pathway. The culmination is at Grand Central, from which the final signals are sent to the salivary glands. This hypothetical model of 1926 is not too far a cry from current studies on the neurobiology of smell as influenced by inflammatory cytokines. Redness and swelling with heat and pain (inflammation) seem to influence the way we consolidate memory while we are sleeping. Text by Ann Weissmann, Exhibitions Curator, MBL/WHOI Library, Woods Hole Massachusetts; image courtesy National Library of Medicine.