

librium. Hence the colicky, cranky tendencies so commonly displayed among infants subjected to the more detached nurturing favored in urban-industrial societies, where babies sleep alone, breast-feed on a schedule, if at all, and can't expect their cries to elicit prompt human contact.

Ethnopediatricians are not preaching a return to hunter-gatherer habits, though they believe such a style is better for babies. They appreciate the cultural pressures that have given rise to a great variety of "caretaking packages," which represent "trade-offs in which parents weigh the needs of infants against the constraints of daily life." But it would help, this new breed of scientist wisely feels, if we scrutinized those trade-offs more carefully. Instead, we tend to blur them in "parenting ethnotheories" that generally purport to prove that whatever methods suit adults in a particular social context are also best for molding children to fit the culture.

Small believes Americans would do well to give babies at least a little more say. Then we might appreciate the wisdom of fostering attachment, rather than fixating on independence—"the chief, overriding goal of American culture, whether stated overtly or not," she believes. In fact, we and our experts are already obsessed with bonding, as well as with autonomy. The truly novel service ethnopediatrics may provide is to expose how contradictory, or complementary, our socializing goals often are—and how difficult it can be to judge whether specific child-rearing styles, especially those used with babies, help or hinder us in achieving them. As parents and babies fuss in confusion, these scientists at their unreductive best suggest where some of our child-rearing conflicts come from. The tensions can be eased, ethnopediatricians propose, but they avoid the foolish promise that they will ever disappear.

—Ann Hulbert

**REMAKING THE WORLD:
*Adventures in Engineering.***

By Henry Petroski. Knopf. 239 pp. \$24

Just after World War I, the irascible sociologist Thorstein Veblen proposed a way to bring about a fair distribution of wealth and well-being: let engineers run society. Veblen's suggestion would appeal to few people today. Those who have remade our material world are rarely consulted on social

reform or economic development policy, or accorded the kind of recognition lavished on leading scientists.

In these essays, Petroski, a professor of history and engineering at Duke University, renews our esteem for the social and cultural accomplishments of engineers. In one piece, he overturns the perverse symbolism of a famous photograph showing Albert Einstein towering over the hunchbacked electrical engineer Charles Steinmetz. In another, he recounts the history of how the prizes endowed by mechanical engineer Alfred Nobel came to be awarded to scientists but only rarely to engineers.

As a counterpoint to such hints of professional defensiveness, the author's essay on Kuala Lumpur's Petronas Towers—the tallest buildings in the world—lauds the genius of the engineers who solved the extremely difficult and dramatic problems presented by so vast an undertaking. In one sense, these towers are the latest in a long line of ambitious projects that Petroski examines in other essays—the Eiffel Tower, Ferris's Wheel, the Panama Canal, Hoover Dam—all of which required skill and imagination to solve a multitude of structural and construction challenges. But he also points out the political impacts of such projects. Gigantic business towers especially function as status symbols, announcing the arrival of a nation into the powerful club of industrializing societies. He ends the essay by recounting how the towers' engineers transferred knowledge and know-how from their own societies to other regions. By establishing networks of businesses, suppliers, technical schools, workers, and communications media, they helped invent the organizational systems that make such massive projects possible.

In a few of the essays (most of which appeared in the *American Scientist*), one wishes for less of Petroski's reasoned description and more of the conflict, indecision, ambition, and even humiliation that engineers experience when they juggle the givens of the physical world with the unpredictabilities of social, political, and economic interests. The author's talent, however, is a writing style characterized by seemingly effortless serendipity, drawing the nonspecialist as well as the technical expert into his topics in pleasurable and unexpected ways.

—Miriam R. Levin