

# The Planners

They plan. They build. All spaces are gridded,  
Filled with permutations of possibilities.  
The buildings are in alignment with the roads  
Which meet at desired points  
Linked by bridges all hang  
In the grace of mathematics.  
They build and will not stop.  
Even the sea draws back  
and the skies surrender.

They erase the flaws,  
the blemishes of the past, knock off  
useless blocks with dental dexterity.  
All gaps are plugged  
with gleaming gold.  
The country wears perfect rows  
of shining teeth.  
Anesthesia, amnesia, hypnosis.  
They have the means.  
They have it all so it will not hurt,  
so history is new again.  
The piling will not stop.  
The drilling goes right through  
the fossils of last century.

But my heart would not bleed  
poetry. Not a single drop  
to stain the blueprint  
of our past's tomorrow.

## Summary

Boey Kim Cheng presents a skeptical view towards progress in "The Planners". Modernization is portrayed as destructive, and this is clearly shown through the use of extended metaphor, diction, and paradox.

## First stanza

In the first stanza, Cheng makes us feel as if progress is destructive by dehumanizing the planners and personifying nature. The fact that the pronoun "they" is used instead of directly naming the planners makes them seem ominous and mysterious. The planners are dehumanized. The mathematical/organization semantic field at the beginning of the poem shows that there isn't much that is surprising or interesting in the city. (e.g. "permutations", "in the grace of mathematics") The sea and sky are personified - they are drawing back and surrendering. Shows that the planners have driven nature out of the city.

## Second stanza

In the second stanza, Cheng shows that modernization is destructive through the use of extended metaphor and diction. Extended metaphor is introduced which lasts throughout the entire stanza. The extended metaphor equates the planners to dentists.