Were it possible to say,
Mother, I have seen more beautiful mothers,
A most loving mother,
And tell her there I will go,
Alexandra, I would have long gone from you.

But we have only one mother, none can replace,
Just as we have no choice to be born,
We can’t choose mothers;
We fall out of them like we fall out of life to death.

And Alexandra,
My beginning was knotted to you,
Just like you knot my destiny.
You throb in my inside silences
You are silent in my heart-beat that’s loud to me.

Alexandra often I’ve cried.
When I was thirsty my tongue tasted dust,
Dust burdening your nipples.
I cry Alexandra when I am thirsty.

Your breasts ooze the dirty waters of your dongsas,
Waters diluted with the blood of my brothers, your children,
Who once chose dongsas for death-beds.

Do you love me Alexandra, or what are you doing to me?
You frighten me, Mama.
You wear expressions like you would be nasty to me, \textit{personification}
You frighten me, Mama.

When I lie on your breast to rest, something tells me,
You are bloody cruel.

\textit{Alexandra, hell Metaphor}

What have you done to me?
I have seen people but I feel like I'm not one,
\textit{Alexandra} what are you doing to me?
I feel like I have \textit{sunk to such meekness}!
I lie flat while others walk on me to far places.
I have gone from you, many times,
I come back.
\textit{Alexandra, I love you;}
I know
When all these words become funny to me,
I silently waded back to you
And amid the \textit{rubble} I lay,
Simple and black.

\textit{Anaphora:} The repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses.
What is the poem about?
What is the subject of the poem?
Autobiography about the speaker's experience of growing up in the township of Alexandra, SA, at the height of apartheid.

Who is speaking?
1st person narrative “I”. The speaker's inner-child addresses his “mother”.

What is the location/setting of the poem?
In Alexandra, during apartheid.

Themes and messages of the poem:
Deals with the problems of squalor, violence, death, destitution, exploitation and the Black People’s quest for identity and a sense of community.

Attitudes and feelings in the poem:
Emotions and feelings of the speaker:
Warm feelings in stanza 1. The speaker is negative and hurt-filled, and sad and frustrated in line 22. He is scared in stanza 4.

Tone of the poem:
Warm tone created by the words “beautiful” & “loving”.
Line 22: Negative and hurt-filled emotions, including sadness and frustration.
Stanza 4: fear.

Form and structure of the poem (rhyme, rhythm, line length, stanza length, etc.):
Free verse (lines with no prescribed pattern or structure).
The effect of free verse is to make the poem sound like normal, natural conversation.
Written in 5 stanzas.

Type of poem:
Free verse.

Poetic devices (e.g. metaphors, similes, enjambment, alliteration, personification, etc.):
Explained in the poem above.
The speaker uses personification by likening Alexandra township to a mother. This allows the speaker to emphasise the bond he has with this place (Alexandra); wherever he goes he carries the “throb” of Alexandra deep within him – it has made him who he is.

Personal response to the poem (how do I feel, what impact does the poem have on me):

YOUR PERSONAL RESPONSE!