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**Typewriter Poetry in South Africa:  
An Overview with Reference to Three Artists**

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**Abstract**

Concrete poetry as a genre is essentially a Modernist development resulting from the use of the typewriter as increasingly accessible writing tool in the twentieth century. The transformation of the typewritten word, and the qualities of type itself, into a visual medium is a development with far-reaching consequences. Concrete poetry is a direct result of the interface between typewriter and text. A perennial and transnational genre, it was practised and published in South Africa by a few writers in small magazines in the 1960s. These examples and their specific presence within a global context are innovative and interesting works in their own right. They also provide an insight into a little-studied anti-establishment and counter-mainstream trend within the South African poetry of the period. As such, the concrete poetry produced and circulated within the country's small avant-gardist scene can be read as an alternative not only to the local literary culture but also an alternative aspect of global Modernism. In this paper, I present the work of three South African writers involved in the production of typewriter-created concrete poetry. I discuss selected poems as semantic and semiotic visual/literary texts, and place them within local and global contexts. The emphasis is on the importance of the typewriter to the development of concrete poetry locally and internationally, and the technology's influence on literary work with a visual, abstracted or concrete presence.

**Keywords:** *Transnational Modernism; concrete poetry; South African poetry; typewriter poetry*