TEXT WITH EACH WORD USED JUST ONCE

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Doug Nufer's *Never Again,* a novel of approximately 40 thousand words, is by far the longest text in which no word is repeated. In the Feb 1995 Word Ways I published a two-hundred-word essay on this topic, using each word only once, and noted that H.J. Verschuyl had created a document of similar length in Dutch, reprinted in Battus's *Opperlandse taal- & letterkunde* (Querido, 1981). The longest-known accidental text is a 66-word window from Rudyard Kipling's "Brother Square-Toes" in *Rewards and Fairies*, reported by Mike Keith in the Nov 2002 Word Ways.

How did he do it? He wrote in a laconic newspaper-headline style omitting pronouns, articles and prepositions. He made extensive use of dialect speech, foreign words, and creative spelling, often to make a punny point: bassnote clefhanger, turdseye viewer, Huey's dewy lunacy, fantastic fourgasms, shit-hit fanatics. In addition, he coined hundreds of hyphenated phrases composed of words used individually elsewhere: stroke-by-missed-stroke, tilt-a-mill, bass-thumped, water-to-air, soldier-of-fortunately. Most importantly, he constructed ever-more-elaborate circumlocutions, much in the spirit of Anthony Sebastian's "Fourwords" in the May 1994 Word Ways (in how many different ways can one allude to "four"?).

The most critical need for alternatives arose when referring to the hero. Nufer had to resort to creative rephrasing of the name George Raymond: Mr. Raymond, George R., Gorge Ramond, Georgy-porgy, Raymond's, GR, ex-George, G.R.'s, George's. To avoid ever-more-contrived names, Nufer changed the hero's name to Terrence Rafferty and Matthew Peretz. The latter name is used in the last half of the novel, but Nufer often concatenated it with George's traveling companion, Margarite Youngblood: Matt/Margie, Margarite's, Maggie, Matty, M&M, Marge, Matteo/Margarita, Marga, Mate, Marg's, Margarita's/Matteo's, Marg'rita, Mara's, Mar/Mat, Marga's, Math's, Margari, George-Matteo, Hanna-Margarita, Marge's.

Because of the rather dense style and the unfamiliar words, the book reads somewhat slowly, but the plot can be followed without difficulty.

Even under constraint, Nufer found space for a logological allusion; **"subbookkeepers redux!" doubletaken nebbish underlings** exhibits the only four-consecutive-doubled-letters word in English. **Columbia riverrunners, riverrun** echoes the first word of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake,* and OuLiPan Georges Perec gets the nod twice, for his e-less *La Disparation* and for his seminal work *Life: A User's Manual:* **deemphasize life user manual's unsurpassable dictum**.

Writing this book would have been impossible before the computer, essential for determining whether or not a putative word has already been used. Nufer in fact uses most of the 100 commonest words listed in Kucera & Francis's *Computational Analysis of Present-Day American English* (1967), apparently omitting **in, is, he, him, has, other, first, our, did, years**. However, the usage distribution is extremely clumpy. Fifteen of the 90 words occur on page 1, five on page 18, and four on page 29; in fact, half of the words have been used by page 31, less than one-sixth of the way through the 200-page novel!