What we have called rivers of type might be defined as those white portions between the printed words on a page of type which sometime form significant patterns. Discovering this phenomenon for the first time, I wondered why it had taken me so long, half my life in fact. I made a hobby of collecting rare examples, trying to find the longest river, the tallest vertical, the longest angle. They have a fugitive quality which adds zest to the search. My greatest moment was when I found a perfect circle. I raced to the Xerox machine, but in spite of a bookmark and a note of the page number, the circle had disappeared from my sight. I still open that book at odd moments hoping to catch that elusive circle unawares, but alas!

John McClellan, who is a master of words and word play, took an interest in the hobby and I asked him to write an introduction to it. He obliged me with the following analysis, explaining why rivers may be overlooked by even the most ardent reader, with some hints on how to become a connoisseur.

Being trained from childhood to look for and evaluate the printed section of a page, it is understandable that we have difficulty in willfully ignoring the words themselves in favor of the empty white spaces. In like manner, the tenacity of childhood training is illustrated by the accompanying sketch of the goblet - or is it a drawing of two heads? It depends on whether the viewer selects the black or the white image as being the more important. People usually spot the goblet first and the faces second.

However, to return to our River, it is possible for these seemingly empty spaces to take on unexpected significance when we acquire the facility of finding meaningful patterns that may be hidden in the printed page. The excerpt on the next page will illustrate this. Try covering the right-hand one and seeing if you can find the rivers in the left, without the key.

If we stress 'meaningful' it is because the patterns of white
reflective. The Irish were invading those days. Fine old houses were the Irish, a few, were becoming acceptable, of course, though so the periphery with their charities. Allan was enjoying himself. He admired. He avoided answering origins with the utmost defines reference, he did not improvise.

in that. They spoke of music, matching words, for his vocabulary suit of his enormous reading.

are usually amorphous and incoherent; here, we use the term in the literal sense — 'full of meaning'. This meaning will, of course, vary with different individuals, for a pattern that has significance for one may not have it for another.

With some practice — usually of a pleasurable nature, like reading oneself to sleep at bedtime — one may begin to see interesting patterns emerging from the page; that 'end-of-the-day' drowsiness, when the bars of the wide awake, realistic world are beginning to grow flexible, is conducive to finding Rivers, and other whimsies the reader may like. (Because the first impression of those lines running through the pages was one of fluidity we have called them Rivers, but it must not be thought that these are the only patterns to appear.)

Sometimes by turning the page through a small angle, realism is diminished and the appearance of the abstract is facilitated. In much the same way landscape painters cut down an overabundance of realism by viewing their subject upside down — in fact, by almost standing on their heads! Colors and forms, thus emancipated from their usual frame of reference, stand out vividly on their own merits.

It is probably unnecessary to add that the duller the book the better the chance of finding Rivers; the more enthralling the contents, the less chance for our interest to dawdle off serendipitously into playful channels. But it is not for us to meddle in the reading habits of others. We shall be very glad to hear that some readers have tried this pleasant diversion with success. On the other hand, our feelings might be mixed if we received a letter reading, in part, "...I have just finished reading Paradise Lost, and guess what? On page 352 I found an almost perfect hangman’s noose!"....

Following are a few examples on which you might want to try your skill before tackling your own reading matter. We have used the more obvious examples. We leave it to you to discover the fleeting shapes, the graceful landscapes, the elusive nudes. Here's another hint: squint your eyes a little when you see promising things. It helps to bring them out. Have fun!
It's hard to find a straight river of more than nine lines. My longest is eleven.

Two crescents on the same page!

"I never told you," said Tony. "That is where we are going.

Tony and Dolores started to cry. They could not meet the eyes of the others.

Dolores saw the color in DeWitt's eyes and said quickly, "Maybe.

Oh, maybe he had," I rowed. "The color of his eyes just got a reason, don't they, Daddy?"

Tony regarded his brother DeWitt. "It was seldom self-rebuke anyone, but even from DeWitt. "And"

A tear drop

The rocking of the ship did not quell the rocking of the ship.

"I am indissoluble," said Stirling, smiling at me.

A lazy river

At any rate, it was too late.

A bend sinister

A bend dexter

A tear drop

A bend sinister

A bend dexter