

Elizabeth Bishop: On "The Man-Moth"

I've forgotten what it was that was supposed to be "mammoth." But the misprint seemed meant for me. An oracle spoke from the page of the New York Times, kindly explaining New York City to me, at least for a moment.

One is offered such oracular statements all the time, but often misses them, gets lazy about writing them out in detail, or the meaning refuses to stay put. This poem seems to have stayed put fairly well ? but as [Thomas] "Fats" Waller used to say, "One never knows, do one?"

from Elizabeth Bishop, "On 'The Man-Moth,'" in *Poet's Choice*, ed. Paul Engle and Joseph Langland (New York: Dial, 1962), 101.

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