but Lycaos, whose name is similar to the Greek ὅλως that does mean "wolf." As readers have pointed out to me many times, Phaedrus actually means "brilliant" or "radiant." I was lucky. It could just as easily have meant something much worse.

The second error is much more serious because it has obscured the fundamental meaning of the book. Many people have noticed that the ending somehow does not clear things up, that something is missing. Some have called it a "Hollywood ending" that undermines the artistic integrity of the book. They are right, but this is not because a Hollywood ending was intended. It is because a much different ending was intended that was not sufficiently clear. In the intended ending it is not the narrator who triumphs over a villainous Phaedrus. It is an honorable Phaedrus who triumphs over the narrator that has been maligning him all the time. This is now made clearer in this edition by using a sans-serif type for Phaedrus's voice.

To expand on this, let me go back to a creative writing seminar held on winter afternoons in the early 1950s at the University of Minnesota. The teacher was Allen Tate, a distinguished poet and literary critic. Our subject for many sessions was Henry James's The Turn of the Screw, in which a governess tries to shield her two protegés from a ghostly presence but in the end fails, and they are killed. I was completely convinced that this was just a straightforward ghost story, but Tate said no. Henry James is up to more than that. The governess is not the heroine of this story. She is the villainess. It is not the ghost who kills the children but the governess's hysterical belief that a ghost exists. I couldn't believe this at first, but reread the story and saw that Tate was right. You can interpret it either way. How could I have missed it?

Tate explained that James was able to achieve this magic through the use of the first-person narrator. Tate said that the first person is the most difficult form because the writer is locked in the head of the narrator and can't get out. He can't say "meanwhile, back at the ranch" as a transition...

who has abandoned truth for popularity and social acceptance by his psychiatrists, his family, his employers, and his social acquaintances. He sees that the narrator doesn't want to be honest anymore, just an accepted member of the community, bowing and accommodating his way through the rest of his years.

Phaedrus is dominated by intellectual values. He didn't give a damn who liked or didn't like him. He was single-mindedly pursuing a truth he felt was of staggering importance to the world. The world had no idea of what he was trying to do and it was trying to kill him for his trouble. Now he had been socially destroyed—sinned. But the residue of what he knew still lingered in the narrator's brain, and that was the source of the conflict.

In the end it is Chris's agony that releases Phaedrus. When Chris asks, "Were you really insane," and the answer is "No," it is not the narrator but Phaedrus who answers. And when Chris says, "I knew it," he also understands that for the first time on this whole trip he is talking to his long-lost father again. The tension is gone. They have won it. The disemboweling narrator has vanished. "It's going to get better now," Phaedrus says. "You can sort of tell these things."

For more on the real Phaedrus, who is not a villainous ghost but rather a mild-mannered hyperintellectual, let me recommend Idle, a sequel that has been properly understood by very few. Let me also recommend www.nyc.org on the Internet, a group that is among those few that understand it.

*The London Telegraph and BBC radio.*