

Mary McCarthy's pretty loyal to Vasari's portrayal of Paolo Uccello. She describes him as a solitary character incredibly focused on work; to the point that he would just shut himself away to deal with his long term perspective project. Vasari speaks similarly of Uccello, even arguing that Uccello spent so much time on his project that he "nothing but waste his time, exhaust his powers, fill his mind with difficulties" McCarthy often quotes Vasari when describing the life of Uccello. And focuses on many of the recurring themes in his work, especially his withdrawal from social life and his interest in birds and animals, and architecture, over portrait drawing. The character who is most engaged in the text of Vasari would have to be Uccello, because Vasari really liked Uccello, which is why McCarthy cites his texts often.

It's interesting to note that both narrators are nameless and aren't described physically. This ambiguity emphasizes the reader's view of them as average, relatable teenagers, or as figures who are defined by their feelings. These vague descriptions illuminate the universality of the themes in both stories. Their lack of specific characterization assures that the concern with meaningless horror is something that can happen to anyone, anywhere—will happen to everyone, everywhere. These endings don't appeal to readers because of their hopeless depression: They appeal to readers because they present to us the struggle that we all face, at some point in our lives, to confront this common meaninglessness and to try to shape it into something we can understand and use.