

The Dante encyclopedia

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Pettinaio, a Franciscan hermit known to have been living in Siena during Sapia's lifetime. She calls Pier Pettinaio's prayers a form of *caritate* ("charity," *Purg.* 13.129), and since documents survive chronicling her foundation of a hospital in Siena with her husband and her donations to it before her death, Sapia's exemplification of envy may also be a demonstration of the power of charity, with which envy is countered in Dante's *Purgatorio*. The passage is considered by many critics to constitute one of Dante's most masterful psychological portraits.

Claudia Rattazzi Papka

Saracens

During the Middle Ages, Christians referred to Muslims as "Ishmaelites," "Agarenes" (after Hagar, the mother of Ishmael), or, most frequently, "Saracens." The ninth-century Byzantine theologian John of Damascus traces the origin of the term to Gen. 16:8. Although it connotes both religious and ethnic difference (that is, both Muslim and Arab), the term is never used to refer to Christian Arabs. Dante refers explicitly to *saracini* in *Inf.* 27.87, where Guido da Montefeltro condemns Pope Boniface VIII for persecuting the Colonna family, making war against Christians *e non con Saracin né con Giudei* ("and not with Saracens or with Jews"). Dante also alludes to *saracine*, or Saracen women, in the context of the lascivious displays of flesh by Florentine women (*Purg.* 23.103), invoking the popular association of Islam with lust and lechery (see "Islam"). In the sphere of Mars, the poet meets his ancestor Cacciaguida, who recounts how he was martyred during the Second Crusade by the Muslims, that *gente turpa* ("base folk," *Par.* 15.145). It is noteworthy that Dante includes Renouard (*Rinoardo*, *Par.* 18.46), a converted Saracen featured in the Guillaume d'Orange cycle of *chansons de geste*, in his list of fictional and historical warriors for Christ: this suggests that, for Dante, the Saracens are *gente turpa* only as long as they resist conversion. In *Com.* 2.8.9, Dante notes that *Saracini*, along with Jews and Tartars, are among those peoples who believe in the immortality of the soul. In *Epist.* 5.11.4, Dante describes the Saracen persecution of Christians along with the biblical Egyptian persecution of Israelites in order to draw an analogy with the political situation of his own day.

Suzanne Conklin Akbari

Sarah

Wife of Abraham and mother in old age of Isaac in Genesis, Sarah (*Sarra*) was a figure for the New Covenant and the heavenly Jerusalem in Gal. 4:22–26 and appears in Dante's celestial rose in the Empyrean Heaven, on the fourth level of Mary's line (*Par.* 32.10).

Joan M. Ferrante

Sassol Mascheroni

Florentine lord of the Toschi family who killed his ward and cousin or nephew, the only son of his uncle or brother (or alternately the brother himself) for his inheritance. Tortured and beheaded for this crime against kin, he is punished in the ninth circle of Hell by being locked in the ice of Caina along with the fratricides and patricides. The Anonimo Fiorentino (the Anonymous Florentine commentator) states that Sassol's story was so well known that all Tuscany retold it—a fact made clear by fellow sinner Camiscion de' Pazzi, who remarks that if Dante is a Tuscan he will certainly recognize his name (*Inf.* 32.65).

Roy Rosenstein

Satan

One of four names attributed to the king of Hell in the *Inferno*, the others being Beelzebub, Dis, and Lucifer. The name of Satan (*Satàn*) is the first to appear, and it is proclaimed twice by one of Lucifer's minions, Pluto, in a barely intelligible exclamation (*Inf.* 7.1). The word "Satan," in Hebrew, means "messenger," "enemy," or "adversary."

Dino Cervigni

Saturn

The father of Jupiter, as well as the seventh planet and heaven in Dante's cosmology. In Dante's works, the god Saturn (*Saturno*) was king of Crete and later of Italy, whose reign was considered to be the Golden Age. (See *Inf.* 14.95–96; *Purg.* 22.70–71, 28.139–140; *Par.* 22.26–27, 22.145; *Mon.* 1.11.1.) The planet was thought to exert a cold influence on Earth. In his *Rime petrose*, especially in the first ("Io son venuto al punto de la rota"), Dante draws on the lore of Saturn in connection with his own temperament.

Because it was the highest of the seven planets and the slowest to revolve around Earth, Dante compares Saturn to astronomy, which he considered to be the highest of the sciences and the one