

**Canto 14.14**

1 Now we came upon a meadow,  
and as blades of grass cover  
a field, so did shards of silvered glass  
4 constitute the ground we tread upon,  
as if the whole of that *Galerie de Glaces*  
had been shattered.  
7 As I surveyed the glade,  
I was forced to shield my eyes,  
for spread through that place  
10 were spheres of such  
great illumination that they  
rivalled that great orb in the sky.  
13 So I asked my guide, “Master,  
what is this place, and who  
are they who dwell here?”  
16 And he to me, “ We are now  
arrived in the realm of those who  
viewed themselves above all others.  
19 And these now roast alone, one

in the center of each sun, so that they may  
see nothing on any side or up.

22 Lest they turn blind, and so these  
proud creatures must look inward  
or gaze down upon the fractured

25 images of themselves at their feet,  
which plague both their sight and  
their motion.

28 Now I would have you speak to  
that soul in the heart of this menagerie,  
who will remain unheard until you approach.”

31 Then I grew fearful as I gazed upon my path,  
and urged my pilot, “Please, if I must  
speak to this sinner, carry me to his place.

34 I fear that my  
instruments of movement will  
be cleft in twain.

37 For as I progress, they will be cut  
by that harsh foundation  
upon which they tread.”

40 And he, “Fear not, my child, for  
your feet are not bare, like those  
of the damned.

43 Take heart, for the heat from these  
golden dungeons cannot harm you,  
or any whose soul still sits in his body.

46 I would guide you,  
but these same injuries that you are exempt  
from, still afflict me.”

49 And so, invigorated  
by my master’s counsel, I set forth on my  
reflective journey.

52 As I shuffled forward, head  
downcast, I came to notice, as in the deep  
of night the whole world slumbers, and

55 there are no sounds, so was I surrounded on  
sides by complete silence, and it was then that  
my master’s words became clear.

58 These corrupted beings were entirely isolated  
not only from the vision of others within  
their shells, but also from their noises and cries.

61 As I reached the sweltering sphere, I called  
out to the one inside, “Who are you  
to burn so in the center of this evil circle?”

64 From the interior came a voice  
of such a man that, although he remained

invisible, appeared still to stand tall.

67 His reply, "I was in life,  
what I am enclosed in now, and it was  
that title I saw fit to give myself that  
70 brought me to this pit where He who  
gave me my crown hath  
relegated me to.

73 In the days when I graced the Earth,  
I guided those below me on the path  
to fortune.

76 Indeed, all were embettered by my  
presence, except that one who did seek  
to outshine the Sun himself.

79 At his home-  
a mere shanty before mine own- he presented  
such marvels to my loyal courtiers.

82 He believed it possible to corrupt  
their minds and to sway  
them from my side to his.

85 Yet, I saw through this viper's 'miracles'  
and put him where he could never again  
see the Sun's light, much less challenge it.

88 The worm claimed

that he only wanted to raise my prestige,  
yet I thought I saw deceit in his eyes.

91 How could a mere intendant  
outshine his king, appointed  
by He who rules all?

94 Thus has my knowledge of  
mine own glory caused you to see  
me now in my present state.”

97 Then, hearing no more  
sound from that golden light,  
did I give my reply,

100 “Oh how the mightiest  
among us can fall  
to such depths!

103 I fear only that your  
placement in this fiery play  
doth augment your ego.”

106 And so, I left that Bourbon  
in his gilded tomb, to look upon  
naught, but his own darkness.

109 Then, as I returned to my  
leader, I saw that already a sheen  
of sweat had formed on his brow.

112 “Let us go then, my ward, for I  
feel this place’s torments drawing  
at my strength.”

115 So he resumed his path, and  
I followed, lest I lose my  
energy as well.