“Comincia il libro chiamato Decameron, cognominato principe Galeotto, nel quale si contengono cento novella, in diece di dette da sette donne e da tre giovani uomini” [Here begins the book named Decameron, surnamed prince Galehaut, which contains one hundred stories told in ten days by seven women and three young men] (Decameron 3). These words, which precede the narrative incipit of the Decameron, have long attracted the attention of Boccaccio and Dante scholars. The connection with Dante has been remarked both for the cross-textual reference implied in the qualifying nickname galeotto (Galahad or Galehaut) given to the book—which Dante first used in Canto V of his Inferno—and for the reliance on the numbers 3, 7, and 10 that, in the Decameron, replicate the numerology subtending Dante’s Divine Comedy. The issue of the cognomen (surname, nickname) is particularly vexing, because scholars differ on how to interpret Boccaccio’s attribution of “Prince Galehaut” to his work. Since Dante’s original mention is fraught with the negative connotations directly or indirectly contained in Francesca’s words, many wonder why Boccaccio would so prominently display his book’s association with the legendary Arthurian hero Galehaut and his role as intermediary in the illicit love affair between Queen Guinevere and Sir Lancelot; especially because Boccaccio insists on this association by making the nickname also the last word of the book (“Thus ends the book called Decameron, surnamed prince Galehaut” [1261, emphasis added]).

Initially, readers of the Decameron understood the cross-textual reference as the first of Boccaccio’s many nods to the authority of Dante, a writer Boccaccio admired, as suggested in his Trattatello in laude di Dante and in his acceptance to give public lectures on Dante’s Divine Comedy toward the end of his life. The surname refers to a book/legend that, in
Dante’s *Comedy*, acts as the intermediary for the infelicitous love affair between Francesca and her brother-in-law Paolo Malatesta (“Galeotto fu il libro e chi lo scrisse” [Galehaut was the book and who wrote it] *Inf. V*, 102). The Arthurian legend’s negative valence is clear in Francesca’s words (which do not necessarily reflect Dante’s point of view). By having Francesca attribute the fault for the love affair to the book and who wrote it (not her or Paolo), Dante shows that the sinner is unable to recognize her agency in the sin. In doing so, and this becomes important when exploring Boccaccio’s use of the term, he distances himself as pilgrim and writer from Francesca’s words, and questions his own interpretation of the Arthurian legend, courtly love, and even the *stilnovisti*’s further elaboration of the theories of love *en vogue* during the late Middle Ages. Therein lies, for many, the crux of the issue. In referring intertextually to the Arthurian legend mentioned in Dante’s *Inferno*, is Boccaccio alerting his (female?) readership to the negative valence that Francesca assigns to it? Or is he parodically reversing the negative valence that Francesca and possibly Dante attribute to the Arthurian tale to shine a more positive light on the world of courtly love that it subtends, while taking a jab at Dante? 

Lucia Battaglia Ricci espouses the latter possibility in *Ragionare nel giardino. Boccaccio e i cicli pittorici del “Trionfo della Morte.”* The author explores the complex relationship between Boccaccio’s *Decameron* (in particular the group of storytellers and the *locus amoenus* of the garden) and the cultural *zeitgeist* embodied most ostensibly by the invitation to repent one’s earthly delights championed in frescos like the “Triumph of Death” in the Camposanto of Pisa, which predates rather than follows Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, as some critics once suggested; by Jacopo Passavanti’s sermons to repent the sins of the flesh; and, ultimately, even by Dante’s literary trip through the afterlife. Through a careful analysis, Battaglia Ricci concludes that the fresco might have provided an inspiration for Boccaccio’s choice of the *brigata* (the group of storytellers) and the narrative *loci* of secluded, harmonious gardens to offer an alternate philosophy of life to his audience. Moreover, as she juxtaposes the worldview proffered by Boccaccio’s *brigata*—through the author’s *galeotto* book—to Dante’s as it is presented especially through the episode of Paolo and Francesca, Battaglia Ricci shows that, in the *Decameron*, Boccaccio “worries about exonerating writing and the usefulness of literary texts, for which one can appropriately say ‘We read one day for pleasure,’ from the accusation that Dante had succinctly leveled in the blunt formula contained in the famous verse ‘Galeotto was the book and who wrote it’” (180, emphasis in the original). As evidence, she adduces an example of rebellion by Boccaccio against the authority of his putative, literary father, Dante.