

Defocusing and agentive prepositions in Early Sicilian

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1. OUTLINE

○ Object of investigation

The expression of the agent (A) by means of prepositional phrases (PP) in early Sicilian passive constructions (14th-15th cent.):

- semantic value of the prepositions (P) which mark the defocused participant (cf. Engl. *The mouse was eaten by the cat*);
- Ps' functional distribution is semantically motivated.

○ Italo-Romance agentive prepositions

- *per* "through" (< Lat. PER)
- *da* "from" (< Lat. DE + AB)
(cf. VINCENT 1997; ANDREOSE fc.)

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Como Iacovo de Saviello senatore fu cacciato de Campituoglio per lo puopolo (Cron. rom., 2, p. 6, rr. 18-19).
"How the senator Iacovo de Saviello was expelled from the Campidoglio by people"2) ... e lo re de Francia fu sconfitto dallo re de Egnilterra (Cron. rom., 1, p. 8, rr.9-11)
"...and the king of France was defeated by the king of England" |
|---|

○ Cross-vernacular variations

- absolute frequency of agentive PPs in passive (and impersonal) constructions;
- relative frequency of the different agentive Ps;
- diatopic lexical specificity: *di* < Lat. DE in Sicilian (and other Southern varieties)
(cf. ROHLFS 1969: 207 ff. and 219 ff.)

- #### ○ Corpus: *ARTESIA, Archivio testuale del siciliano antico* (University of Catania, <http://www.artesia.ovl.cnr.it>): 14th to 16th cent. - 244 texts (73 literary texts and 171 documents: 1 081 539 occurrences and 66 519 word forms).

2. THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS:

- #### ○ **Framework:** Cognitive Grammar (CG) (LANGACKER 1991; LURAGHI 2003, inter al.); Functional Linguistics (HOPPER & THOMPSON 1980; 2001; GIVÓN 1990, inter al.).

○ **Transitivity and Agentivity:**

- **Prototypical Agent:** the initiator of a prototypical transitive event, which is normally codified as a subject (as *Egle* in *Egle destroyed the documents*).
- **Canonical Event Model (CEM, LANGACKER 1991: 285-6):**
 - viewer's external vantage point (V) (epistemic neutrality);
 - single event → *minimal action chain* in which one discrete object transfers energy (*f*) to another through forceful or physical contact;
 - action-chain head is characterized as A, and the tail as a patient (O) which undergoes a resultant change of state (indicated by the arrow):
 - cause-effect relation, whose temporal sequence is represented as an oriented (asymmetric) spatial relation, with a start-point (A), a path (*f*), and an end-point (O).

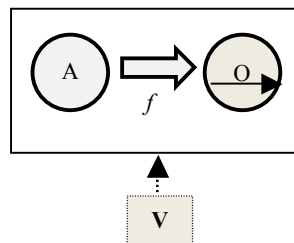


Fig. 1. CEM (LANGACKER 1991: 285, adapted)

○ **Multi-factorial Transitivity (LAKOFF 1977; HOPPER & THOMPSON 1980):**

	HIGH	LOW
PARTICIPANTS	2 or more participants, A and O	1 participant
KINESIS	Action	Non-action
ASPECT	Telic	Atelic
PUNCTUALITY	Punctual	Non-punctual
VOLITIONALITY	Volitional	Non-volitional
AFFIRMATION	Affirmative	Negative
MODE	Realis	Irrealis
AGENCY	A high in potency	A low in potency
AFFECTEDNESS OF O	O totally affected	O not affected
INDIVIDUATION OF O	O highly individuated	O non-individuated

Tab. 1. Multi-factorial Transitivity (HOPPER & THOMPSON 1980: 252, adapted)

▪ **A's interacting features:**

animacy, intentionality (or volitionality), control, non-mediation of the action (cf. LAKOFF 1977; COMRIE 1981; DELANCEY 1984; LURAGHI 2003; 2010)



Prototypically, A is the human participant who intentionally initiates and actually performs (i.e. controls) the action (LURAGHI 2003)

- Animacy: implied by Intentionality, but not necessarily by Control (natural forces/emotions can be conceived and coded as A);

- Mediation (presence of an Instrument/Intermediary, I): split of Agentivity features, i.e. Intentionality (primary A implied) and Control (LURAGHI 2010):
 - a) *Sharon dried her hair with the blower*;
 - b) *The blower dried her hair* (LANGACKER 1991: 332).

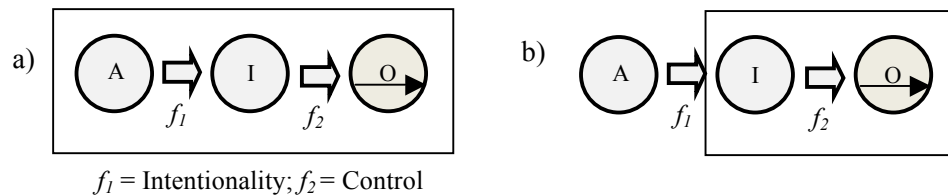


Fig. 2. Mediated action and Split Agency (LURAGHI 2003, LANGACKER 1991, adapted)

- **Agentivity hierarchy < Participants’ referential features:**
 human beings > animate entities > natural forces > emotions > inanimate entities
- **Individuation hierarchy:**
 PROPER ↔ COMMON; HUMAN/ANIMATE ↔ INANIMATE; CONCRETE ↔ ABSTRACT; SINGULAR ↔ PLURAL; COUNTABLE ↔ UNCOUNTABLE; REFERENTIAL/DEFINITE ↔ NON-REFERENTIAL (HOPPER & THOMPSON 1980: 253).
- **Referentiality hierarchy:**
 DEFINITE > REFERENTIAL-INDEFINITE > NON-REFERENTIAL > GENERIC (GIVÓN 1984: 407)
 → referential-indefinite A: unknown or unimportant, but with an unique reference (e.g. *someone*); generic A: (potentially universal) groups (*everyone, people*).
- **Agentivity < Semantics of predicates:**
Mark opened the door > *Mark surprised Luisa* (> *The painting surprised Mark*).

○ **Agentivity < Pragmatics of the event**

- **Passive and Agent-Defocusing:**

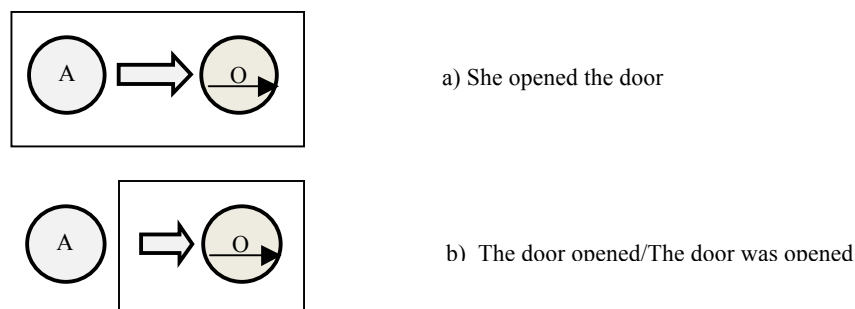


Fig. 3. Profiling and Defocusing (LANGACKER 1991: 333, adapted)

- Diathetic variations code the V’s vantage point variation (*construal*):
 - a) and b) frame the same event in alternative ways, foregrounding (focusing) or backgrounding (defocusing) a participant;
- the foregrounded participant (TR) is represented as grammatical subject, irrespective of the semantic role (A and O in a) and b), respectively);

- in b), the “origin” (A) of the event remains semantically implied as a LM, but the defocusing produces a decrease of Transitivity;
- the lack of syntactic coding and the prepositional coding represent different degrees at which the same strategy of A-defocusing is realized (cf. SHIBATANI 1985).



Working hypothesis: When different prepositions coexist in the coding of the defocused A, they convey different degrees of defocusing.

o **Prepositions in CG** (LANGACKER 1987: 214 ff.)

Atemporal relations (stative) (AR), basically represented as spatial configurations connecting entities (E₁ and E₂) in a holistic way:

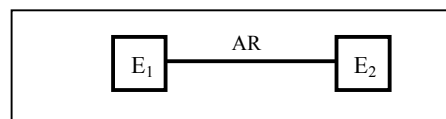


Fig. 5. Atemporal Relation (LANGACKER 1987: 215, adapted)

- *Asymmetry* between the two profiled entities: a foregrounded participant (TR) and a second salient entity (LM), which provides a point of reference to locate the TR and which is normally elaborated by the nominal directly following it (e.g. [I walk]_{TR} [through]_{AR} [the garden]_{LM}).
- *Non-spatial meanings*: metaphorical mapping of the basic configuration onto a more abstract domain.

▪ **Agentive prepositions** (LURAGHI 2003; 2010):

- *Origin* (“from”) or *Path* (“through”):
 Lat. *ab/per*, It. *da*; Anc. It. *per*; Rum. *de*; Port. *de/por*; Sp. *por*; Fr. *par*; Gr. *apó*; Anc. Gr. *ek* “from”/ *diá* “through”; Germ. *von* “da”, Anc. Engl. *from*.

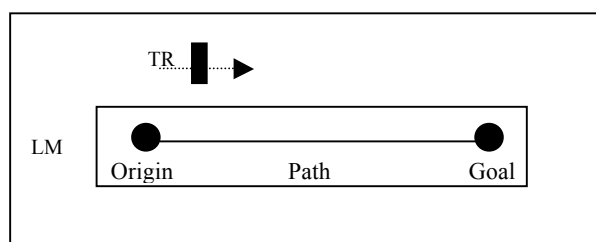


Fig.5. Motion Schema

- Agentive meaning: mapping on the oriented configuration of CEM;
- “from” and “through” relations imply different representations of the agent/event relation, which are based on different metaphors (LURAGHI 2003):
 1. AN AGENT IS AN ORIGIN (of the change of state);
 2. AN INTERMEDIARY IS A CHANNEL (through which A acts on O) → reduced degree of agentivity, implying Control but not Intentionality (*Split Agency*, LURAGHI 2010).



Working hypothesis revisited:

- a) When both metaphors are employed, the selection of the preposition originally linked to the meaning of Intermediation (i.e. a less agentive meaning) better expresses the decrease of the A's pragmatic salience (MOCCIARO 2009).
- b) Consequently, the choice of the agentive P is more likely linked to the (pragmatic) necessity of defocusing A, rather than to referential features only.
- c) The degree of Agentivity expressed through PP is a constructional feature, and is consistent with the whole construction's Transitivity.

3. Data

o Analytic Passive

- 60,9% of passive constructions (1299 / 2132 occurrences)
- Agentive PPs: 15,2% (197 / 1299)
- A's referential features: 74,6% Non-Individuated
- Agentive P *per*: 18,8% (37 / 197) → 26 Non-Individuated (59,5%)
- Agentive P *da/di* (allomorphs): 76,6% (151 / 197) → 112 Non-Individuated (74,8%)
(the remaining part: complex PP, introduced by *per / da: pir la parti di*)

- 3) Kista esti la ordinaciuni la quali esti facta **pir la Universitati di Palermu** (12, 33.2)
"This is the order which was made by the University of Palermo"
- 4) ...non obstanti ki **pir ipsu et pir lu nobili comiti Guillelmu di Peralta** vi sia stata violata la pachi (28, 73.18)
"...although the peace was broken by him and by the count Guillelmu di Peralta"
- 5) ...et suu beniamatu **di lu priolu e di tuti li atri frati** (104, 211.14)
"...and I am beloved by the prior and all the other friars"
- 6) ... li vestimenti soy non eranu stati abruscati nen tucati **da lu focu** (Dialogu XIVS, III, 103.26)
"his clothes were neither burned nor touched by the fire"
- 7) ... Poy ki zo li fu revelatu **da Deu**, illu cuntau li iorni (Dialogu XIVS, IV, 159.33/160.1)
"After this was revealed by God, he counted the days"

- Ps' functional distribution does not directly depend on the referential nature of the participants:
 - The prevalence of non-individuated participants is a phenomenon of passive constructions as a whole, which increased in the 15th cent.;
 - the more significant link between *da* and non-individuation more likely depends on the more significant presence of *da* in analytic passives (especially in texts of the 15th cent., when the P started to replace *per*).
- Nevertheless, when the two Ps co-occur (especially religious texts):
 - a) The name of God is always coded by *da*

- 8) ...li yorni di quista vita ni sunu **da Diu** prolongati e donati per emendarini di li vitii (SBenRegulaXVB, 58.16-18).
"The days of our life are prolonged and given by God so that we can amend our vices"
- 9) Et in pir zo nuy ... simu exauduti **da Deu** in li nostri prigerij (Dialogu XIVS, III, 97.9)
"And for this reason our prayers are fulfilled by God"

10) ...ma eu vullu recuntare li miraculi li quali foru facti **pir alcuni patri sancti**

(DialaguXIVS, III, 109.6-8).

“but I want to recount the miracles, which were performed by some saints fathers”

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- b) *Per* is widely employed in the coding of miraculous events, in which the agentive participant conveys the secondary agency of Intermediation (i.e. controls the event but does not intentionally initiates it: it is the human instrument of a divine volition):



o **Si-passive**

- Low Transitivity: imperfective aspect; atelic predicates; modal overtones; no topicalization of O (CENNAMO 1998; SANSÒ 2003; 2006; ABRAHAM & LEISS 2006; BENTLEY 2006).
 - Focal attention on the event (represented as a dynamic-processual one), rather than on participants;
 - Employment: background situations; general/habitual and gnomic assertions, etc.
- 39,1 % of passive constructions (833 / 2132 occurrences)
 - Agentive PPs: 4,3% (36 / 1299)
 - A's referential features: 83,3% Non-Individuated
 - Agentive P *per*: 36,2% (13 / 36) → 9 Non-Individuated (69,2%)
 - Agentive P *da/di*: 52,8% (19 / 36) → Non-Individuated
- (the remaining part: complex PP, only introduced by *per*: *pir la parti di*)

- 11) ...et **da tucti** cum grandi hunuri si difindirà la virtuti (EneasXIVS, VI, 123.9)
“...and the virtue will be defended by everyone with great honour”
- 12) Rumpasi lu diyunu **da lu priuri** per lu frusteri (SBenRegulaXVB, 102.3-5)
“The fast-time must be interrupted for the foreigner by the prior”
- 13) ... si pagi **per lu vindituri** gr. ÷ et **per lu accactaturi** altru gr. ÷ (5, 18.4)
“50 grams must be paid by the seller and 50 grams by the purchaser”
- 14) ... in quattu infrascripti terri [...] si nchi mettanu iustizeri oy capitanei **per lu predictu conti Blascu** (10, 27.10)
“Judges or captains must be located in the four above-mentioned lands by the above-mentioned Count Blasco”
- 15) E cumplutu esti lu libru de sanctu Gregoriu lu quali si intitula ‘Lib[ru] [de] lu diala[gu] de sanctu Gregoriu’, lu quali si esti traslatatu da gra[m]at[ica] in vulgaru **pir Frati Iohanni Campulu** de Missina (DialaguXIVS, IV, 187.6-8)
“And the book of Saint Gregory has been completed, which was translated from Latin to Romance by friar Iohanni Campulu from Messina”.

- No direct link between P and participants' referentiality
- The percentage of *per* drastically increases (moreover, *da* spreads especially in the 15th cent.).

- Sicilian data are consistent with the overall analysis of the **Central and Southern Italo-Romance** vernaculars, in which the agentive PP represent the 16% (771/ 4802 occurrences) in analytic passives and the 3,8% in the *si*-passive (MOCCIARO in prep.):

16) È lu firmu et immobili fundamentu di la religioni di Christu di non essiri may mutatu **per nixuna tribulacioni e tempesta** (RegulaPenitenciaXVB, 44.9)

“the stable and immobile foundation of the religion of Christ is that it cannot be changed due to any suffering or storm”

17) ... et si non di vulissi **per si midemmi** satisfari, e per altrui fussi saputu, haia mania penitencia (ConstituciuniXIVB, 43.4)

“...and if he wouldn't want to do it by himself, and someone else should know it, he must be punished with a greater penance”

18) ... li porti grandissimi di lu albergu, li quali eranu firmati, si si apersiru mantinenti **per si midemmi** (EneasXVIF, 101.13-14)

“The enormous doors of the house, which were closed, suddenly opened by themselves”

ANALYTIC PASSIVE		Individuted A		Non-Individuted A		total	
		Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency
Da	% referentiality	72,0%	149	77,5	437	76,0	586
	% construction	25,4		74,6			
Per	% referentiality	20,3	42	20,9	118	20,8	160
	% construction	26,3		73,8			
Other PPs	% referentiality	7,2	16	1,6	9	3,2	25
	% construction	64,0		36,0			
agentivity	% referentiality	100,0	207	100,0	564	100,0	771
	% construction	26,9		73,2			

Table 2. Agentive coding in Central/Southern Italo-Romance Analytic Passive.

Si-PASSIVE		Individuted A		Non-Individuted A		total	
		Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency
Da	% referentiality	19,0%	4	42,9%	60	39,8%	64
	% construction	6,5%		93,8%			
Per	% referentiality	71,4%	15	51,4%	72	54,0%	87
	% construction	17,2%		82,8%			
Other PPs	% referentiality	9,5%	2	5,7%	8	6,2%	10
	% construction	20%		80%			
agentivity	% referentiality	100,0%	22	100,0%	140	100,0%	161
	% construction	13,0%		87,0%			

Table 3. Agentive coding in Central/Southern Italo-Romance Si-Passive.

o **Non-Passive contexts:**

- *Per* codes secondary agentivity (Intermediation), non-intentional causal roles, i.e. Cause, as in 16, and Internal-Cause, as in 17-18:



19) Quistu memoriali *esti factu per me Iohanni Fridericu*, illu quali è scriptu di mia propria manu tutti quilli persuni ki mi divinu dari et tutti quilli ki divinu **richipiri da mi** (57.2-5)

“These memoirs have been made by me Ihoanni Fridericu, in which I listed both people being in debt with me and people who have to receive (money) from me”

20) Item divi aviry **da lu dictu nutaru Petru**... de certi dinary (58.12912)

“He has to receive from the above-mentioned notary Petru ... money”

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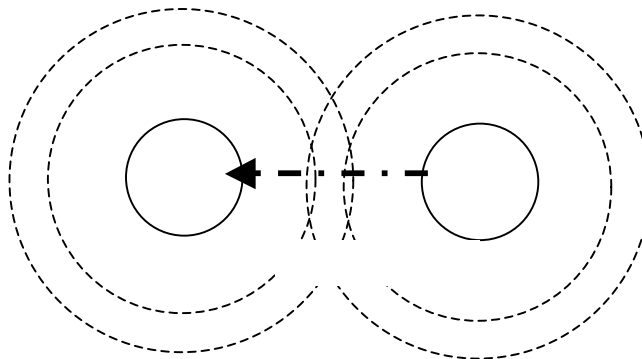
- **Lexical passives:** seemingly passives with inactive predicates (“to receive”, “to obtain”, “to have”), whose subject corresponds to the non-active participant (Recipient) in the directional configuration of the event (“give → receive”, cf. LANGACKER 1991: 331):



- the source (the Donor, A) is coded by a PP always introduced by *da*:
 - Morpho-syntactically: peripheral coding of A (active sentence)
 - Semantically: prototypical A (referentiality, individuation, intentionality/control)
- early developed and stable usage, also occurring when *per* is the only agentive P



- this usage more likely represents the beginning of *da* as agentive preposition, and is triggered by *prototypical effects*:
 - An innovation initially affects the less marked instances of the phenomenon (TIMBERLAKE 1977; LAZZERONI 2002): on a referential level, the coding by means of *da* initially affects prototypical instances of A, due to the basic semantics of the new agentive preposition.
 - Consistently with the prototypical hypothesis of linguistic changes (cfr. WINTERS 1989), these instances occupy the periphery of the prepositional coding of A (active sentences):



- When *da* spreads into the passive domain, *per* begins to retract towards secondary agentivity: the value of Intermediation is peripheral in respect to Agentivity, but it is central in the semantics of *per*.
- Within the passive domain, the presence of *da* reflects the agentive participants' hierarchy salience, depending on the whole construction's Transitivity:
 - it is more typically linked to the analytic passive;

- 226) ... *Alta sta ad hunc per ad hunc hunc in regione metatui sfusi in abilitate una sola legge univoluol*
 24) *et così se dice da multi che nella regione de Tartaria ... (Cronaca volg. isidoriana, chema galicata per me sanegam egilak VII, 116)*
 XIV sec. ex. p. 219, ff. 1-4)
 "that Emperor of Byzantium be enough doctm if want will be atome in dicitur to continue cause I was
 it is said by many people that in Tartaria."
 22) *Rebut agansioa brosi parla de la vita e sanctitate e miraculi de alcuni sancti patri* Murray Edwards College
 25) *Language and its use in the culture of voy per quissi nostri nemici (Dest. Troja, L7, p. 96)* University of Cambridge
 27) *E sub dicitur a visum cultura s'era per noi... (Purg., XXV, 109-111).* 19-20 March 2010
 ff. 18-20)
 "the first book on ethics the last the die, the holiness, and the miracles of a few
 "so that it would be possible to talk about you by our enemies"
 saints fathers the percentage of *per* increased in *si*-passive, in that it better conveys the decrease of
 salience of the agentive participant."
 23) *Tali via ... la quali si vay in li bosky (Eneas XIVF, 107.6-7)*
 "This way through which one goes to the woods"

4. **Open-ended questions and further hypotheses:**

- o **De-Subjective *Si*-Constructions** (further decrease of Transitivity due to the lack of O, cf. HASPELMATH 1990)

- a) Transitive predicates, denoting durative activities;
- b) Unergative predicates
- c) Unaccusative predicates → only verbs of motion ("to go", "to come"), whose participant is a less prototypical A (*affected actor*, BENTLEY 2006):

- The presence of agentive PP is rare in Southern and Central vernaculars (never in Sicilian), and is always linked to a non-individuated reference;
- Constraint on the feature of agentivity of the participant (always active participant):
 - Only 1 unergative predicate (with a modal) (in 25): *per*.
 - No unaccusatives.

➤ **Other varieties (Florentine):**

- A few instances of unaccusative predicates in Dante Alighieri → motion verbs (the more agentive among unaccusatives, implying control and intentionality): *per*.

- **Corpus Artesia 2009 = Artesia - Archivio Testuale del Siciliano Antico, Università di Catania, (<http://www.artesia.unict.it/>):**

(5) - Altro brano dei capitoli della gabella di Girgenti, in Rinaldi (2005), n. 5, p. 18.
(10) - Capitoli di pace, in Rinaldi (2005), n. 10, pp. 26-29.
(12) - Ordinanza sulla moneta, in Rinaldi (2005), n. 12, pp. 32-35.
(28) - Risposte di Federico IV ai baroni del regno, in Rinaldi (2005), n. 28, pp. 70-84.
(57) - Incipit di un quaderno di dare e avere, in Rinaldi (2005), n. 57, pp. 123-124.
(58) - Testamento del mercante messinese Pino Campolo, in Rinaldi (2005), n. 58, pp. 124-142
(104) - Frate Stefano di Calatamauro scrive al priore Montecassino, in Rinaldi (2005), n.104, pp. 208-211.
ConstituciuiniXIVB - Constituciuini di lu abbati e di li monachi, in Branciforti (1953), pp. 27-43.
DialaguXIVS - Iohanni Campulu, Libru de lu Dialagu de sanctu Gregoriu = Santangelo (1933).
EneasXIVF - Angilu di Capua, Istoria di Eneas, ms. A = Folena (1956).
RegulaPenitenciaXVB - Regula di li frati e soru di la penitencia, in Branciforti (1953), pp. 44-55.
SBenRegulaXVB - Regula di santu Benedittu abbati, in Branciforti (1953), pp. 56-119.

- **OVI = Opera del vocabolario italiano (http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/efts/ARTFL/projects/OVI/index_it.html):**

Cron. Volg. Isid. = Anonimo [1400], La «Cronaca volgare» isidoriana. Testo tre-quattrocentesco di area abruzzese, a cura di Paolo D'Achille, L'Aquila, Deputazione Abruzzese di Storia Patria, 1982 [testo pp. 113-220].

Cron. Rom. = Anonimo Romano [1400], Cronica, ed. critica a cura di Giuseppe Porta, Milano, Adelphi, 1979.)

Destr. Troya = Libro de la destructione de Troya, a cura di Nicola De Blasi, Roma, Bonacci, 1986.

Inf. =

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