Words for the Colour Orange in Italian

What came first: 'orange' or oranges? Many people will hesitate when asked this question. Oranges are 'orange,' so they may have taken their name from the colour; then again, 'orange' is the colour of oranges, so they may have provided a convenient referent for the blending of red and yellow. In English, the idea of 'orange' is bound up inextricably with the fruit and its name. For while all oranges are not, in fact, 'orange' — some are almost yellow while tropic-grown oranges are green — most English-speakers will say first that the colour of oranges is 'orange.' By their homophony, the two words are self-reinforcing.

To answer our original question, oranges came first in English: 'orange' arose later in response to a definite semantic need. The orange itself was known in 14th-century England, but the space that 'orange' now occupies was filled only imperfectly by the neighboring colour terms. Chaucer was obliged to write of Lycurge, "The cercles of his eyen in his heed/ They gloweden bitwixen yellow and reed" (CT 1.2133-44 [I. 2131-32]; cf. Burnley 489-90). By the 16th century, however, orange had embraced its new sense as a colour and has remained a salient term up to the present day. In 1969, Berlin and Kay included 'orange' in their theory of a language's ordered acquisition of "basic colour terms." Its place as a central term in the English colour lexicon is largely unquestioned.

The same cannot be said of Italian. In his study of Romance colour terms, Kristol excluded 'orange,' which he considered with "indigo" to be too subtle a transitional colour, "trop peu importantes" (Color 48). Elsewhere he explained why:

On a statistical basis, 'orange' is not included in the first 25 color words of Italian . . . . I therefore do not mention it as basic; in Berlin and Kay's terms (6), it is not 'psychologically salient for informants.' ("Color systems" 139, n.7)

This is a surprising assertion. The average student in first-year Italian learns at least one of three words for 'orange': arancio, aranciato and arancione. Is it possible that these terms are in fact not salient for the native speaker of Italian? Or that their importance has been inflated by outsiders, who have superimposed their own assumptions about colour vocabulary onto the language? While the salience of 'orange' for the present-day speaker is beyond the scope of this paper, it will explore the problem of its past, or historical, salience in Italian. We will see
that, in fact, Italian has long possessed words for ‘orange’; there is even evidence to show a direct correlation between the introduction of the fruit and the development of a colour term or rather terms. But to illustrate this we must begin with a brief history of the orange tree’s cultivation; we must also consider, in somewhat greater detail, the names for the tree and fruit. This diachronic study is based mainly on the citations found in Battaglia’s Grande dizionario della lingua italiana (GDL). Although it is by no means in-depth, it will suggest several reasons why Kristol’s assertion may be at least partially true. Perhaps the most persuasive is that, until recently, no strong homophonic relationship has existed between words for oranges and for ‘orange.’

When did the orange first come to the Mediterranean and, more specifically, to Italy? The question is interesting in itself. The sour orange — relatively unknown in North America — originated in China and was cultivated there as early as 2,000 B.C. It slowly passed westward through India and Persia, while the sweet orange, a mutant form, followed much later. Some scientists have held that the citron was the only citrus fruit known in the Roman Mediterranean, but various evidence discredits this theory; probably the most compelling is that of Roman wall paintings and mosaics. We can readily observe that the people of Pompeii grew and depicted such citrus fruits as the lemon and the limetta, or sweet lime. Domenico Casella asserts that both the sour orange (melangola) and the sweet orange (arancia) also appear in the Pompeian paintings (360-64), although not all scholars agree. Unfortunately, Roman references to citrus of any kind are generally ambiguous. There is no mention of all three of the sweet orange’s attributes of a sweet flavor, pleasing scent and brilliant colour; nor does there seem to be any consistent name we can connect with the sour orange. “The Romans were acquainted with lemons and sour oranges as well as citrons,” R. W. Scora says; “many citrus groves, however, were abandoned during the disintegration of their empire and simply vanished” (370). Therefore, the orange does not appear to have played a significant role in the culture of classical Italy and afterwards disappeared altogether.

Here we may turn aside to another issue that has some bearing on our topic. If the Romans did not talk about the orange, how (if at all) did they refer to the colour? J. André indicates that although classical Latin lacked a term for ‘orange’ derived from the fruit, it was well equipped to express subtle nuances of shade such as ‘orange’ (398-99). Like English ‘orange,’ luteus and croceus (also crocinus and crocatus) take their names from physical materials, respectively from the weed lutum used for producing a yellow-orange dye and from saffron, called crocum. Both words express a sense of ‘orange’ somewhat broader than our own, perhaps reflecting the variability of their referents. According to André, the primary sense of luteus was that of ‘orange’ although it could also describe yellow; croceus might vary from a yellow to a red-orange (151-55). Thus the terms described ‘orange’ “dans tous ses nuances, claires et foncées, proches du rouge ou du jaune pur” (161); André notes a greater particularity in his own language,
where, unlike *luteus*,

frs. jaune ne peut être confondu avec orange et inversement. Il ne viendrait à l’esprit de personne, par exemple, de dire que les fruit dénommés oranges sont jaunes. (394)

As for other terms for ‘orange,’ André claims that *flammus* (literally, “flame-like”) was a bright orange close to red that could be distinguished from *igneus* (“fire-like”), a bright red (114-15), but this distinction is perhaps oversubtle. *Fulvus*, a colour term with many senses, could also occasionally signify ‘orange’ (133).  

To return to the history of the fruit, the issues most relevant to our discussion are how and when oranges were reintroduced into Italy. It is well known that around the 10th century sour oranges began to be widely cultivated in Spain by the Arabs, spreading then into other parts of Europe, but it is less recognized that their diffusion into Italy may have been brought about by their simultaneous cultivation in Sicily. A “viam de Arangeriis” mentioned in a document from before 1094 testifies to the early presence of oranges in Sicily and, Girolamo Caracausi says, “fa pensare che non solo la Spagna . . . ma anche la Sicilia abbia contribuito alla diffusione dell’arancio in Europa” (108, n. 158). As for the date of the establishment of the sweet orange, many scholars suggest the late 15th or early 16th century, but a 1323 record from Abruzzi listing a series of fruits, “aranciorum, citrangulorum, lombarum, et lombonum,” may already distinguish between the sweet *arancium* and sour *citrangolum*. The introduction of sweeter oranges is likely to have corresponded to their greater diffusion and popularity, but there is already ample mention of them by the late 12th century.

This leads us naturally into a discussion of Italian words for the orange, which is necessary if we are to consider the words for the colour. This problem is complicated in itself. Arabic *narang(a)* was the source of European words for the orange, which in turn was derived from Sanskrit *naranjia* (= “frutto preferito dall’elefante” — *GDLI*) by means of Persian. While the languages of the Iberian peninsula and some northern Italian dialects have tended to preserve the initial “n,” historically Sicilian, Florentine, and Sardinian, as well as French, have eliminated it. The documented history for Italian names for the orange tree begins with the before-mentioned “viam de Arangeriis” (before 1094). Some one hundred years later we have the testimony of the Sicilian historian Hugo Falcan dus:

Vides ibi et lumias acetositate sua saporandis cibis ydoneas etarengias acetosonihilominus humore plenas interius, que magis pulchritudine sua visum oblectant quam ad aliu utiles videantur. (185)

You may see there both lemons, which by their sourness are suitable for seasoning food, and oranges, which are also filled with a sour liquid, and are more pleasing
to look at for their beauty, than they are useful.

This early appearance of the apheretic form arengia in Sicily suggests that the island may also have provided other parts of Italy with a name for the fruit. Arancio, the form used steadily in literary Italian up to the present day, first appears in the writings of the Florentine Francesco da Barberino. However, the feminine arancia is not used regularly to designate the fruit until the 19th and 20th centuries; furthermore, arancio is applied strictly to the tree until the 16th century.

Prior to the 16th century then, the fruit must have been denoted by another form. The obvious candidate is melarancia, which first appears in Ugieri Apugliese, thus slightly predating arancio. The clarity of the relation between arancio (tree) and melarancia (fruit) may have been clouded in the late 14th century by the introduction of melarancio for the tree. By the 16th century, as with arancio, there are many examples of cross-over: melarancia might be used for the tree, melarancio for the fruit. This may be evidence of a semantic shift in arancio, at least as it forms a part of larger compounds. While Ugieri’s 13th century “mele arance” probably had the underlying sense of “fruit of the orange tree,” by the 16th century, the -arancio element was increasingly understood as adjectival. Learned etymologists of the period relate it to Latin aurantia, as we see in Accarisio’s Vocabolario of 1543:

**Arancio, e Melarancio, è frutto che alcuni latinate bene lo chiamano Malum citreum, et altri malum aureum, il colore suo gli ha dato il nome latino, et volgare, che sia come de l’oro. (46r)**

Mattioli offers a similar explanation:

aranci non vuol dir altro che aurantia poma, che non significa altro che pomi di colore d’oro.

One notices that the color of the orange is likened to gold throughout the GDLI’s attestations, for example, in Mattioli: “gli aranci poi sono più carichi di colore d’oro . . . dei limoni,” or in Meninni: “Per te serba l’arancio i pomi d’oro.” We will later see that gold is one aspect of colour terms for ‘orange.’

The adjectival application of -arancio is evident in a less common lexical form for the orange. The practice of using poma instead of mela with a perceived adjective, which gave Italian the word pomodoro, also resulted in a number of instances of pomarancio/a from the 14th to the 17th centuries. The second component of the word appears to be understood as a colour adjective in Del Carretto: “Polastri rossi e verdi caponi e pome arancie . . . .” Likewise, in Fazio degli Uberti, a series of names for trees collocate with adjectives: “la palma invitta, e con mille altri insieme/ l’alto frassino ancor, la querzia ombrosa,/ l’aurato cetro poi, la poma rancia.”

The third significant form for the orange, narancio, was used by educated writers — many but not all Venetian or northern, such as Ariosto — from the
13th to the 16th centuries, although it still endures in northern dialects, such as Venetian naranza, Milanese naranz, Cremonese naraans, etc. According to the GDLI’s examples, narancio could designate the tree or fruit, but narancia, which appeared at the same time, was used solely for the fruit. The GDLI and Michelagnoli’s Dizionario veneziano-italiano suggest that the Spanish naranja, attested from the 14th century, is the source of this form, but the first occurrences of the word in Italy predate the period of Spanish influence. Another possibility is that Venetians trading in the eastern Mediterranean got the word from Byzantine Greek or more directly from trade with the Arabs. Such contact with the East might explain the few non-apheretic forms in Calabria and Puglia, cited by Cara-causi (109). Despite its considerable influence, narancio will be less important to us when we consider terms for ‘orange.’

Arancio and melaranciola were thus the accepted forms for the orange (whether tree or fruit) in literary Italian after the 16th century. The reduction which resulted in Dante’s influential word for the colour, rancio, is attested in only a few apheretic forms for the tree or its fruit. An anonymous Venetian writer on cooking (14th) uses ranzo for the fruit, while Messisburgo uses rancetto — although both also employ narancio. Terms were not mutually exclusive: Ariosto, for instance, uses both narancio and melarancia. We should also note that the bitter orange or the orange in general might be called a melangolo/a, a term used continually from the 14th century, or citrangola, a late medieval term. The extremely popular designation for the sweet orange, portogallo, seems to have come into use in the 18th century. By now it will be obvious that no simple relationship between oranges and ‘orange’ could exist in Italian. There were several forms available at any time to designate the orange, each of which might have provided a basis for a colour term.

The information provided by the Sprach- und Sachatlas Italiens und der Süd-schweiz complements the historical forms we have just been examining. The map charted for “L’ARANCIA” (Karte 1272) gives a bird’s-eye view of the distribution of forms for the fruit as surveyed in the year 1921. It is striking how virtually all the historic forms we have mentioned are represented. Forms of portogallo stretch in a belt from Piedmont to western Lombardy and through most of the northern part of Emilia Romagna, where they meet the area held by narancia in Veneto, Friuli, and Trentino Alto Adige; in the Ticino region north of Lugano in Switzerland, both arans and pomarans appear. Arancia holds a solid place in Tuscany and in south-western Emilia Romagna (with getron forms in Liguria); in south-eastern Emilia Romagna, however, melarancia takes over, which gradually becomes melangola in the Marches and Umbria. Portogallo completely dominates the southern portion of the peninsula except for Puglia, where variations of maranza are found (a reflection of the influence of Venice or of the East?), and the southern tip of Calabria has Sicilian forms. Sicily and Sardegna both use forms similar to arancia except for a strip from Enna to Ragusa, where portogallo appears. This fascinating picture illustrates that the salience of the modern
arancio, aranciato, and arancione cannot (or could not in 1921) be universally guaranteed.

We now have sufficient background to consider terms for the colour itself. While we have no compelling illustration of a semantic gap between red and yellow, we do have evidence of a spontaneous development of ‘orange’ terms in the late 13th century. A Latin passage from Sicily once again provides us with the first clue. Caracausi prints the following entry from a total inventory of 1279, some three hundred years after the establishment of the plant there (roughly the same interval between the first appearance of orange in English and its first use as a colour term): “glimpectas tres de duabus coloribus cum listis ad aurum quorum una est viridis, alia kyachla, et alia arangina” (108; my emphasis), “three mantles of two colours with hems in gold, of which one is green, one blue, and the other orange.” The term is marked as an adjective by the “-in” suffix which is still to be found in Sicilian arancinu, “del colore dell’arancia” (Piccitto), and in Sardinian aranginu (Porru).

Two forms, arancio and arancioso, are found in a 14th-century manuscript known as the “Zibaldone dell’Andreini.” Here the evidence is tantalizing though somewhat mystifying. Arancio disappears after this attestation and does not resurface until the 19th century; furthermore, I can find no other occurrences of arancioso. Yet both terms are listed in the 1741 dictionary of the Crusca and in Tommaso’s 1865 dictionary as “voci antiche,” where arancio is given as “per arancioso,” although both the 1863 Crusca and the GDLI omit the latter form. More in-depth research is required to determine whether these words are poorly attested early terms for ‘orange’ or mere spurious forms.

The form that achieved prestige and wide usage from the 14th century onwards is the truncated rancio. It is already somewhat removed from the form of its referent, perhaps arancio or, more likely, metarancia. Nicolò Del Bene uses rancio to describe the orange in a way that suggests he is unaware of their etymological link: “Scorsi con maraviglia e con dilettto alto e ramoso arancio,/ di bianchi fiori e di frutto almo e rancio/carco, avanzar con verde chioma il tetto.” Thus the colour word and its referent might be divorced, which could account for the fact that rancio does not always describe the ‘orange’ of the fruit. Early in its career, rancio took on a semi-technical sense describing dyed cloth or its tint, e.g., “Rancio d’Aiot” (Compagnia di Calimala, 1318) and “panni vermelli e verdi e gialli e sanguegni e uricellati e ranci” (Statuti Senesi, 1298-1309). More significant, however, is the use of the word that Dante makes in the Divina Commedia. The two appearances of rancio in the Commedia prove to be somewhat of a watershed in later use. In the first instance, he describes the cloaks worn by the Hypocrites: “Le cappe rance/son di piombo sì grosse, che li pesi/ fan così cigolar le lor bilance” (Inf. 23.100-02). It is tempting to think that these cloaks are dyed with the particular tint just mentioned, but a previous detail in the canto reveals that a colour other than ‘orange’ is meant: “Elli avean cappe con cappucci bassi . . . Di fuor dorate son, sì ch’elli abbaglia;/ ma dentro tutte piombo . . .” (61, 64-
65). This *rancio*, then, signifies a brilliant gold or gilded colour. Dante uses *rancio* again in the *Purgatorio* to describe the dawn: “le bianche e le vermiglie guance,/là dov’i’era, de la bella Aurora/ per troppa etate divenivan rance” (*Purg.* 2.7-9). *Rancio* as gold or gilded does not fit the sense of the metaphor, instead, a faded yellow seems to be meant. Thus neither of Dante’s uses of the word corresponds directly to the colour we associate with the fruit.17

The available evidence suggests that Dante’s use of *rancio* tended to lead his literary successors away from the base referent of *rancio*. This had two manifestations, the first of which was purely literary and derivative. Following Dante’s model, *rancio* became a word commonly used in poetic contexts to describe the colour of the sky at the approach of dawn. Boccaccio, himself a source of imitation, writes, “L’aaurora già vermiglia cominciava, appressandosi il sole, a divenir rancia,” thus reinforcing the tradition; thus Caro writes, “Avea l’aaurora già vermiglia e rancia/ scolarite le stelle,” likewise, Tasso, “Il vermiglio suole/cangiarsi in rancio quando Apollo è giunto,” and, as late as the 19th century, Massaia, “l’aaurora cominciava a prendere il color rancio.” Dante’s legacy is particularly apparent where *rancio* collocates with *vermiglio* and *bianco*, as in Vasari: “Nel sopraccielo farei l’Aurora in sunun carro d’oro, che uscissi d’un mare tranquillo, vestita di bianco, vermiglio, e rancio,” and Becelli: “L’alba la camicia in dosso/posto s’aveva come neve bianca/ e due farsetti, un rancio, l’altro rosso . . . .” In this capacity, *rancio* acted as a sort of poetic or epic tag, taking over the place occupied by *croceus* and *luteus* in Virgilian descriptions of *Aurora*.18 It is difficult to pinpoint as a particular hue. Nevertheless, it gradually came into more general use to describe the sky or the light of the sun, as we see from Comanini, “Questo aere . . . ora è limpido, or è torbido . . . . ora di color rancio nell’oriente, ora di color vermiglio nell’occidente,” to Butti, “Il sole . . . lasciava cadere a perpendicolo i suoi raggi infocati, che si slargavano in macchie rance su le praterie.”

The second effect of Dante’s use of *rancio* was that it fed into a general uncertainty about the nature of *rancio* in the 16th century. The sense of *rancio* as golden or gilded does not stray too far from descriptions of the fruit. Yet the orange might as easily be described as yellow, as we see in Leonardo Sellaio: “Tolli quella superfizie gialla ch’hanno i pomiranci . . . .”; thus, in 1568, Daniello glossed the *Inferno* passage, “cappe rancie: gialle.” With this uncertainty came the possibility of homonymic conflict. Although the homonym *rancio* as an abbreviated form of *rancido* (for “rotten” or “repugnant”) is not attested until the second half of the 15th century, Dante’s use of *rancio* lent itself to reinterpretation with this other *rancio*. Thus in his dictionary of 1543, Accarasio includes all three senses of “yellow,” “golden,” and “rotten” in an attempt to explain the word’s occurrences in Dante and Boccaccio:

**RANCIO, è rancidus latino, che diciamo la carne salata essere rancia, quando è vecchia tanto che non è buona da mangiare, che di vermiglia è fatta gialla, per ciò il co-lore rancio diciamo il giallo e vale vecchio; . . . . “le cappe rance son di piombo” ciò è le cappe che a noi sono vecchie . . . ., ci sono moleste come cosa
rancia, o vero rancio cio è dotare di fuori. (234r)

Alunno, in his dictionary published in the same year, tends towards red in his definition: "RANCIA, rossa; di color ranzato . . . et pro rancida" (144v); however, in the 1557 thesauric refashioning of his dictionary, he reverts to Accarisi’s definition: "RANCIO, è color giallo, lat. croceus . . ., et alcuna volta significa vecchio, onde diciamo la carne salata esser rancia," etc. (98v).

Despite the influence of Dante’s use of the term and the confusion at large, even in the 16th century rancio might yet be used for ‘orange.’ William Thomas, whom we cited at the beginning of the paper, misunderstands Alunno’s headword, but translates the word correctly: “RANCIA ROSSA, orenge tawnie colour and sometime rancio for rotten or stinkylng,” and the first edition of the Crusca’s dictionary (1612) gives the correct etymology of rancio: “RANCIO, Colore della melarancia matura, alqual diciamo DORE, lat. CROCEUS.” However, the definition in the 1623 edition reflects the old etymology: "Rancio è colore un poco piùacco di quel dell’oro; ma assai confaecente [sic] con esso." Leaving the sphere of dictionaries, we find that rancio was still used to describe cloth in the 16th century: “Procedevano quattro trombetti vestiti di raso ranzo e altrittanti di cremesino” (Documenti sul parentado Medici-Gonzaga, 1582-84), and Daniello Bartoli uses it to describe the colour of hats: “Gli ebrei strettì dentro un serraglio e marcati col cappel rancio.” Indeed, the duller objects to which it is applied suggest that it is not the golden colour of dawn, but in fact an ‘orange’ colour, as in Galucci: “Vi è pepe lungo di diversi colori, verde e rosso e rancio,” Marino: “rancio coturno il bianco pié gli veste,” and Spallanzani: “Le pareti si osservano diffarmamente scabrose e lorde di concrezioni di color rancio.” In 16th-century theatre, rancio had enough of a unique identity to be given a special significance, as we see in Gottifredi: “Ogni colore ha il suo significato: il verde speranza, il nero fermezza e dolore, il giallo disperazione, il rancio contento . . . .” Certainly, by the 18th century, rancio was precise enough to be used to distinguish different shades of the orange fruit itself, as in Gerolamo Baruffaldi: “Venga il pestacchio/col suo potacchio/ e ‘l portogallo/trà rancio e giallo.” Algarotti ranges it unambiguously among the colours of the spectrum: “il rosso è nell’estremità inferiore . . . a cui segue il rancio e a questo il giallo.” Therefore, despite the vagueness of rancio’s poetic use and the confusion with ranci(d)o, the word never completely lost its basis in the colour of the fruit and seems to have been reconfirmed in that meaning at least by the 18th century.

In the 16th century, ranciato appeared as an alternative form for ‘orange.’ Its status as a new and probably more popular form is hinted by the fact that although the major dictionaries do not include it, Alunno uses it in his definition of rancia, “di color ranzato.” On the other hand, John Florio, less intent on 14th-century models, does provide a translation in his 1598 dictionary: “RANCIATO, orenge tawnie colour.” The GDLI indicates that, like rancio, the word has enjoyed continued use even into the 20th century, e.g., Pasolini: “Le logge/giallo-
gnole e ranciate dei friulani/ venchi." Its usage differs somewhat from *rancio*. With its participial ending, *ranciato* is less likely to be used as a substantive, except as "colore ranciato." It might be used in conjunction with another colour to indicate nuances of shade (e.g., "giallo ranciato," "rosso ranciato"), but this seems to be mainly a phenomenon of the last two centuries. Independent of the *Aurora/rancia* tradition — in the *GDLI* only 19th- and 20th-century attestations have *ranciato* describing the colour of the sky or sunlight — *ranciato* had a more precise and less poetic application than *rancio*. It appears in factual or scientific accounts until the 19th century, as in G. Soderini: "I merli... son neri morati co'l becco ranciato," Magalotti: "Quella polvere ranciata di Messico," and Targioni Tozzetti: "La sostanza ossea è calcinata, punteggiata di ranciato." In the 16th century, Lomazzi uses it among an impressive array of shades related to yellow: "Nella natura di giallo sono i colori rosati, incarnati, flaminei, dorati e ranzati." The word inherits *rancio*'s duty as a quasi-technical term referring to tinted cloth, as we see in Aretino: "La mattina mi fece una veste di raso ranciato glorioso," and Vittorio Lancellotti: "avevano bande di taffetà ranciato, con merletti d'oro." It might also describe dress, again in Lomazzi: "in abito turchin ranciato e bigio." We saw that in the 16th century Gottifredi connected *rancio* with *contento*; Grazzini makes the same association with *ranciato*: "L'Allegrezza, di bianco e di ranciato vestita." Nicolò Franco provides an interesting explanation for this association: "Il color ranciato altro non nota che letizia e contantezza per essere conforme a l'oro." Therefore, *ranciato* appears to have been a stabler term, better known and more widely applicable than *rancio*, though in form also removed from its referent.

Alongside *rancio* and *ranciato*, there are isolated attestations of other forms before the 19th century, perhaps signs of less recorded trends. The Venetian Galuci and Gualdo-Priorato (from Vicenza) use words which derive from the north-eastern *narancio*: respectively, "Vi ne sono altre che chiamano clavele d'India e pareno un veluto nero e naranzato finissimo" (1596) and "Vi era un altr'ordine di Nuova Scozia, che porta una cintella naranzetta..." (1655). The Milanese Longhi has instead "nerancio" without an adjectival or attributive suffix.19 Cesare Manzini describes the colour of birds with the longer name for the fruit: "Altri cardellini si dilettano di spinaroli, cioè che nascono in spine, e parimente quelli c'hanno color di melarancie"; Tanara uses the name for the sour orange: "Dalle parti e nell'ali [la pennisce maggiore] è ornata di vari colori, tra' quali risplende il bianco, il color di melangola ed il negro" (my emphasis). Other alternative forms are found in the 20th century, which reflect the intentionally dialectal usage of the authors, e.g., Gadda: "In ogni nuovo cartellone della serie color naranzo, lungo il muro di San Marco... egli vedeva una nuova stazione del suo tromboso calvario."

It is difficult to explain the re-appearance of the adjective *arancio* and the simultaneous introductions of *aranciato* and *arancione* in 19th-century literature. Perhaps these forms reflect a popular trend whereby *rancio* and *ranciato* were re-
etymologized on the basis of arancia. The dictionaries of the 18th and 19th centuries may have had a hand in the process as well, by giving these forms legitimacy in the written language. As we have noted, the 1741 Crusca is the first to cite the Zibaldone dell’Andreini’s arancio and arancioso (yet as “voci antiche”). Remarkably, it also includes aranciato, “di color d’arancia, ranciato,” although this predates the GDL’s first attestation of the adjective. Costa and Cardinali’s Dizionario and Manuzzi’s Vocabolario repeat the Crusca’s definitions virtually verbatim; Tommaseo’s dictionary, on the other hand, omits aranciato but defines the new form arancione, “di colore arancioso molto acceso.” One has the sense of trends current in the language which are only hinted at by these dictionaries.

Whatever the case, it is certain that ‘orange’ has had ample written representation in the 19th and 20th centuries. In several authors of the 19th and early 20th centuries, there is a confluence of the old forms (rancio and ranciato) and of the new (arancio, aranciato, and arancione): for example, arancio, arancione and ranciato all appear in the writings of Tommaseo. D’Annunzio’s use is even wider. He might use arancio to describe the sun, “Il sole caldo di arancio la prendeva tutta con una violenza d’incendio,” or the sails of boats, “Le barche si avanzano alla foce lentamente con le grandi vele arance, rosse a strisce,” but also ranciato, “le vele ranciate sciamano lungo la foce,” and aranciato, perhaps with the nuance of “tinted with” (or “shaped like?”), to describe the moon, “la luna, aranciata, enorme, quasi piena, sorgeva sull’anello dell’orizzonte,” or the beaks of geese, “una torma di oche andava schiamazzando, bianca, lenta, con larghi bechi aranciati.” The examples from D’Annunzio illustrate how the abundance of forms — all obviously from the same base — for ‘orange’ corresponds to its greater stability as a basic colour. Words for ‘orange’ are applied generally, no longer subordinate to yellow or linked with gold. Only a few considerations distinguish the three in usage. The augmentative arancione often describes a particularly bright, luminous ‘orange’ although it might also describe a less intense colour, as in Cecchi: “Sui ginocchi reggeva una scatola quadra, color arancione.” Furthermore, like ranciato, aranciato is used almost exclusively as an adjective, and might have the sense of shading, e.g., “giallo aranciato.” Therefore, with rancio and ranciato gradually going out of fashion, arancio, aranciato, and arancione emerge as the central, nearly synonymous terms for ‘orange’ in this century.

In this paper, we have offered a number of reasons why, historically, ‘orange’ may not be (or have been) as salient a colour term as ‘orange’ in English. Its separation from the words for the fruit remains the strongest reason. The vagueness of the literary rancio and its clash with ranci(d)o were early problems that were later cleared up. The relative newness of arancio, aranciato, and arancione may render them less solidly fixed in the “basic” colour vocabulary than other colour terms, yet on the whole, words for ‘orange’ have had widespread use since at least the 17th century, if not two or three centuries earlier. Perhaps Kristol’s statement needs to be reevaluated. It is probably important not to assess the
"psychological salience" of a word, particularly a colour term, on the basis of its relative frequency: there may simply be fewer objects to identify as ‘orange.'

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NOTES

1 I should like to express my thanks to Prof. G. Clivio and Low Soon Ai for their comments and help in getting this paper into its present form.

2 Unless listed under “Works Cited,” citations are drawn from this source and will appear with the author’s name, if known, which will be expanded if there is risk of confusion, and the author’s dates, unless a more specific publication date is accessible in the GDLI’s Indice.

3 Casella identifies the fruit depicted in House VI, 16, 15 as an orange, but Jean-Michel Croisille lists it in his catalogue as a “pomme” with a question mark (96, 251 B). Furthermore, there is no way to identify a depicted orange as a sweet orange, for as De Candolle observes, the only distinction between the two is one of taste, not appearance (182).

4 The GDLI indicates that there is a learned tradition of croceo in Italian, as well as a 16th century luteo, but like fulvo neither term seems to respond to a need to express ‘orange’ in particular.


6 Similar forms are found in other languages of the area, such as Armenian. Curiously, Arabic now uses a form similar to it. portogallo for both the fruit and the colour.

7 Perhaps the result of a false identification of the "n" as an indefinite article.

8 Caracausi compares the post-tonic “er” of “Arangeriis” to that found in the Sicilian word arancera, “la pianta dell’arancio” (108).

9 The various words derived from arancio — arancera (a green house for the orange plants in winter), aranceto (an area cultivated with oranges), and aranciaio (a vendor of oranges) — all seem to be developments of the last two centuries, although the word aranciata, for the well-known drink, goes back to the 16th century.

10 The formation of this word relates it to that group of Italian words including melogranola or melangolo/a, which, as in Latin, combine the base form mela (Lat. malum) with an adjective indicating a characteristic or origin; related too are those fruits formed with poma.

11 Cf. Alonso.

12 Du Cange cites the form υπραντελα in Nicolaus Myrepsus, a 12th-century Alexandrian doctor (I, 991; cf. Index Auctorum II, 58).

13 Portogallo is the word used in many Italian dialects: portigal or portugal in Piedmont;
purtugal in Bologna and Ferrara (but also mlaranz and aranz); in Abruzzi purtehalle; in Reggio Calabria purtugalù (but also arangiu); and in Sicily partallu or variations (but also aranciu). As for other dialect versions, Genoese simply uses the general word çetrón; Sardinian, despite its prolonged period under Spanish rule, has arangiu, which recalls the original Sicilian word; not surprisingly, Calabria has numerous forms, which include laranghi, apparently a neo-Greek word.

Note that this ‘orange’ is kept distinct from the gold of the fringes.

Listed in the 1863 Crusca as Laurenziana 148 bis.

Found in the GDLI’s Indice under Statuto dell’Università e Arte della lana di Siena.

Even among scholars today there is some disagreement about the precise nature of Dante’s rancio. Of the Inferno occurrence, the Enciclopedia Dantesca (Bosco) indicates, “L’aggettivo indica il colore...” while Bosco & Reggio write, “[cappe rance:] gialle, cioè dorate” (343, n. 100).

The formula which occurs three times in Virgil, “Et iam prima novo spargebat lumine terras/ Tithoni croceum linquens Aurora cubile” (Geo. 1.447; Aen. 4.585 and 9.460), is re-fashioned by Caro: “Titone sia un vecchio tutto canuto sopra un letto ranciato.” Elsewhere in the Aeneid, Virgil uses the other ‘orange’ word luteus to describe Aurora: “Ianque rubescebat radis mare et aethere ab alto/ Aurora in roseis fulgebant lutea bigis” (7.25-26). Dante and many of his successors seem to have been aware of the chromatic equivalence of rancio to croceus and luteus.

A curiously similar but probably unrelated colour word is attested at the end of the 13th century: “La quale memoria fo adomata de tabole de rame, de sotto e de letere narate, convenevilemente scritte” (Miracolde Roma; my emphasis). The GDLI suggests, “derivato per aferesi dal lat. inauratus, participio passato di inaurare, ‘rivestire d’oro, dorare.’”

Zingarelli: “Che ha il colore acceso dell’arancia matura.”

Ranz for ‘orange’ still exists in Bolognese and the dialects of Romagna. Berti’s note on this term is interesting: “In bolognese, l’usiamo specialmente parlando di tessuto di seta, che abbia perduto la freschezza del color bianco.” This sense seems to owe something to that old clash between It. rancio and rancido. Furthermore, she notes that when applied to people, it indicates “pallida, smorta, di color giallognolo.”

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