

A Confusion of Names: Jacobus Victors and Jacob van de Kerckhoven¹

Since the 1970s, there has been much confusion concerning the identities of two seventeenth-century minor masters who specialized in the depiction of birds and both of whom were active for a period in Venice: the Dutch Jacobus Victors and the Flemish Jacob van de Kerckhoven. This problem was further compounded by the appearance of the names of Giacomo da Castello and Giacomo Cimiterio, as painters active in Venice and the Veneto in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and also specializing in the genre of bird painting.²

The first published reference to Jacobus Victors occurs during his own lifetime, in Martinioni's addendum to Sansovino's *Venezia Città Nobilissima* of 1663. The artist is recorded in Venice at the time, as 'Jacopo Fiechtor olandese... mirabile nel formar Animali volatili.'³ His name regularly appears in the encyclopedic artists' biographies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, beginning with Nagler (1835-52).⁴ Most of our contemporary knowledge of Victors, however, derives from the extensive archival research of Abraham Bredius,⁵ whose documentary and genealogical investigations firmly establish him as the brother of the Delft faienceur Victor Victors and halfbrother to the better-known Rembrandt pupil Jan Victors. Based on Bredius, it was previously believed that Jacobus Victors stopped painting in 1675, to devote himself to a more lucrative use for his models – a feather and bedding business. An old reference to a signed and dated painting of 1678 in Hermannstadt⁶ (present whereabouts unknown) may oblige us to amend that date, but the inventory of Victors' estate of 14 December 1705 confirms that his relatively substantial holdings (valued at more than fl. 30,000) derived largely from his commerce and not his art.⁷ Nevertheless, Victors' extant paintings provide rich testimony to his artistic talent. Executed in a sharp, realistic style, his *vogelstukken* are strongly lighted and meticulously rendered, their painstaking detail making them, in effect, avian portraits that enable the viewer to identify each particular species of bird depicted (figs. 1 and 2).

The Appendix to the present article lists all documents now known on Victors in the Amsterdam Archives.

Jacob van de Kerckhoven is a much more obscure figure than Jacobus Victors. Apparently, it was not until Rombouts and Van Lerijs' pioneering publication of 1864, on the St. Luke's Guild in Antwerp, that Van de Kerckhoven was recognized as a pupil of Jan Fyt in 1649.⁸ His name, nonetheless, is absent from all of the

subsequent standard reference compendia; neither Wurzbach, nor Thieme-Becker, nor Bernt mentions him.⁹ Nearly a century after Rombouts and Van Lerijs, Edith Greindl compiled a brief sketch of the artist amongst the followers of Jan Fyt, with a list of four monogrammed paintings and eleven attributed works.¹⁰ She rightly describes the style of those catalogued still-life pieces as tempered by 'un peu de fantaisie,' with Van de Kerckhoven frequently including overly ripe fruits and vegetables in his compositions, in the lush manner of his master (figs. 3 and 4).¹¹

Documents confirm the singularity of Giacomo Cimiterio and Jacob van de Kerckhoven. The extant rolls of master painters in the Venetian Academy include the following references:

19 April 1685
'ser Giacomo Semiterio'

3 October 1686
'S Giacomo Semiterio'

5 June 1690
'Giacomo Van den Kerzchoven d'anni 53'

1712
'Giacomo Zimiterio vechissimo, non fù chiamato'.¹²

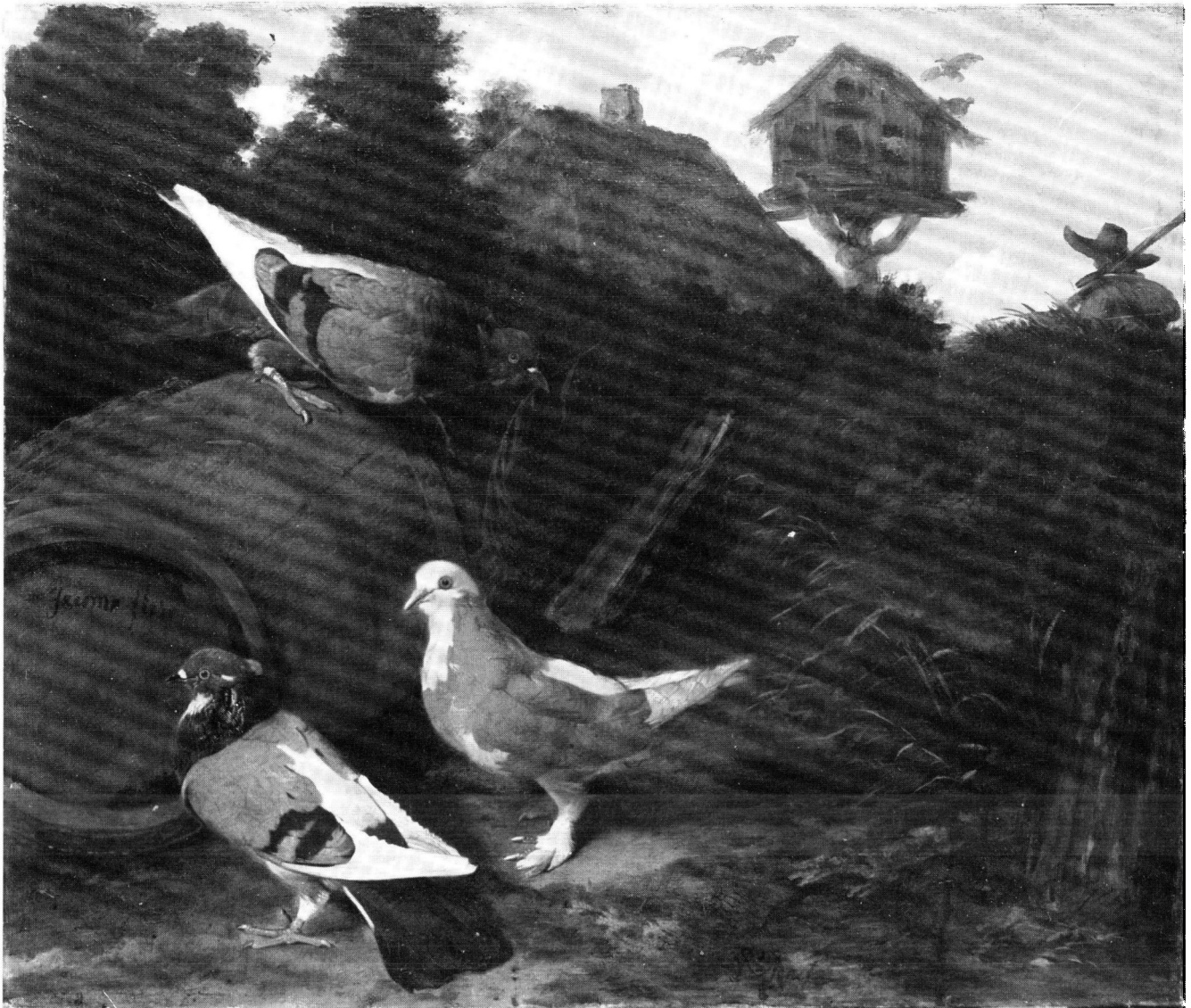
In 1815, Moschini compiled a more complete list of painters enrolled since the year 1687, and noted:

'Giacomo Cemitario o Van den Kerchoven 1687-1712'.¹³

Clearly, these two cognomens were used interchangeably, 'Cimiterio' (a derivative of 'cimitero' or 'cemetery') representing merely an Italian translation of the Flemish name 'Van de Kerckhoven' ('from the churchyard').¹⁴

In 1977, E. Antoniazzi Rossi published a citation from the inventory of the collection of the Marshall von Schulenburg (begun in 1724 in Venice), listing 'Giacomo Cimiterio da Castello' as the author of a kitchen scene filled with human figures, animals, and poultry.¹⁵ This conflation of the two Italian surnames suggests, perhaps, that the native Flemish artist took up residence in the Castello district of Venice after his emigration to Italy and the informal adoption of his Italianized name.

Already in 1972, C.-G. Marcus had identified Jacob van de Kerckhoven with Giacomo da Castello, based on the stylistic similarities between the signed paintings of the former and those traditionally attributed to the latter.¹⁶ R. Pallucchini unduly took



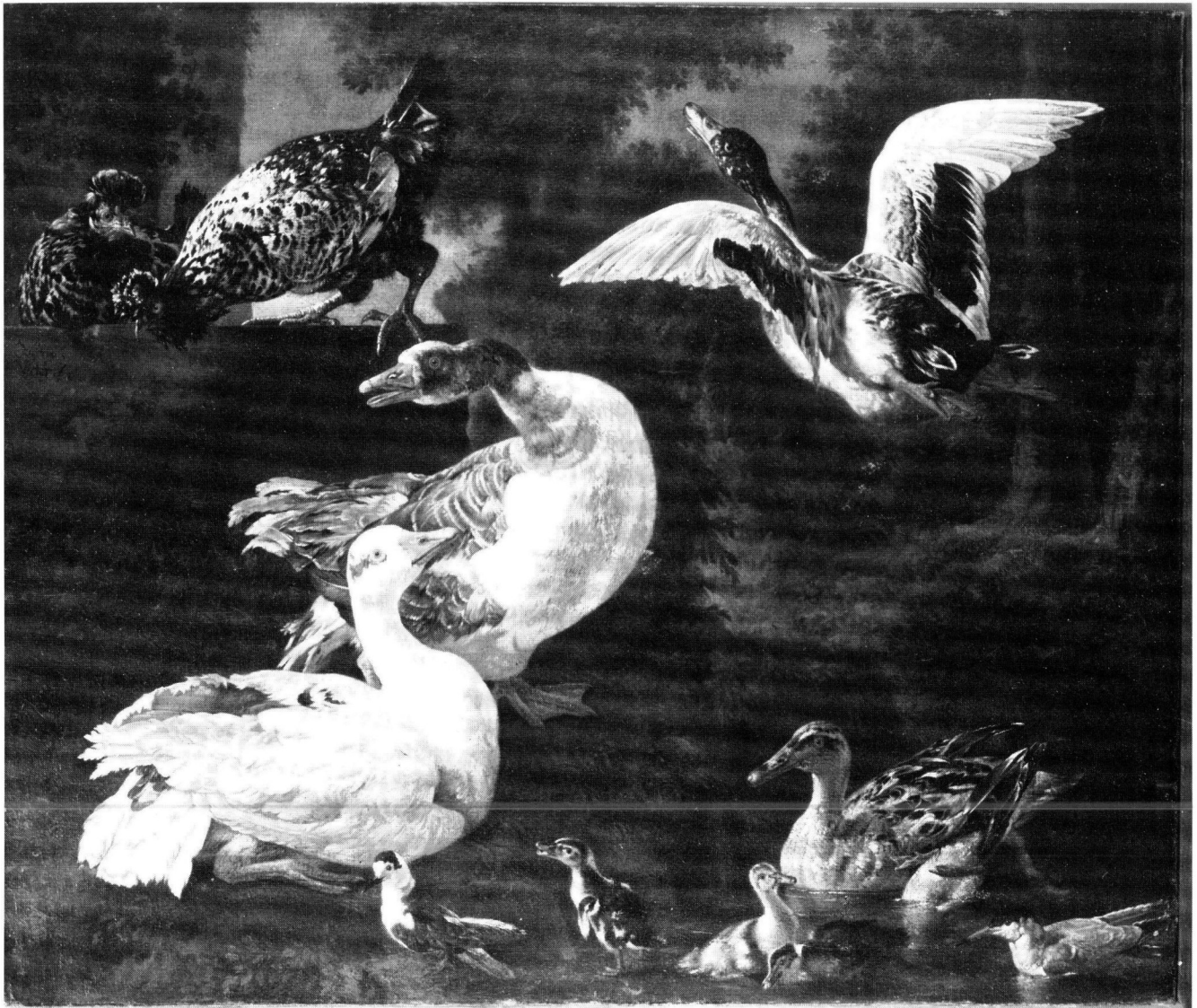
1
Jacobus Victors, *Three Pigeons*, signed. Landscape by Jacob van Ruisdael, monogrammed. Canvas, 73 × 86 cm. Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Kunst.

this identification one step further, when he insinuated the name of Jacobus Victors into the bird painter's aliases.¹⁷ He founded his hypothesis on the parity of the artists' first names (Jacobus and Giacomo), their specialized subject matter (the bird piece), and the fact that Victors is known to have been in Venice in 1663. But surviving documents in Amsterdam and Venice, prove this conflation of Victors with Van de Kerckhoven/Cimiterio da Castello untenable.

As was quoted above, Giacomo van de Kerckhoven's age was given as 53 in 1690 in Venice. But on 15 February 1686, Jacobus Victors was cited as 45 years old in Amsterdam,¹⁸ and therefore would have been 50, not 53, in 1690. When Jacob van de Kerckhoven was first documented in Antwerp in 1649, as an apprentice of the Flemish master Fyt, Jacobus Victors would have been only 9 years old and a bit young to begin his professional training.¹⁹ Victors, furthermore, signed notarized documents in Amsterdam on 28 August, 7 September, and 17 October of 1686 (see Appendix, document # 9);²⁰ it is unlikely that he could have been in

Venice on 3 October of that year, when 'Giacomo Semiterio' paid his dues to the Accademia.²¹ Finally, Jacobus Victors died on 5 December 1705, was buried on 11 December in the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam (see Appendix, document # 21), and an inventory of his estate was drawn up on 14 December.²² The elderly 'Giacomo Zimiterio' was listed, but not called, in the roll of painters in Venice as late as 1712 – the year in which he is marked as deceased by Moschini.²³ There can be no doubt that these incompatible references represent the biographical data on two different and distinct artists.²⁴

This conclusion accords well with the thematic and stylistic evidence of the paintings. In general, Victors shows a marked penchant for depicting live birds in an outdoor barnyard setting, while Van de Kerckhoven varies his still-life subjects to include dead birds and/or game, shellfish, and abundant produce filling a dark architectural interior. Because of his greater variety of still-life motifs, Van de Kerckhoven tends toward a more coloristic palette than Victors, in whose works richly modulated tones of



2
 Jacobus Victors, *Poultry*, signed. Canvas, 121.5 × 144 cm. Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Kunst.

brown, grey, black, and white predominate. A greater sense of three-dimensional space is apparent in Victors; his compositions are less crowded and his backgrounds more open than Van de Kerckhoven's. In contrast, Van de Kerckhoven's proliferation of forms within a very limited area results in a slightly claustropho-

bic feeling of compression. The presence of two disparate artistic hands in these hitherto problematic bird paintings thus becomes clear: Jacobus Victors represents the sturdiness of his native Dutch style, Jacob van de Kerckhoven the lavishness of the Flemish manner in which he trained.

APPENDIX

All documents cited herein are deposited in the Gemeentelijke Archiefdienst, Amsterdam, and all are previously unpublished. The spellings of the proper names of persons and places have been retained from the original manuscripts and are italicized. For additional documents on Jacobus Victors and his family, see A. D. de Vries, 'Biografische Aanteekeningen,' *Oud Holland* 4 (1886), pp. 219-21; Bredius, 1915-22, vol. 2, pp. 585-600 and vol. 7, pp. 255-56; and Miller, 1985, vol. 1, pp. 245-67.

1. 2 August 1644. Baptism of the artist's first wife, Judith Chevyn, daughter of *Anneke Schepers* and *Antonij Sevijn*. Doop- en Trouw- en Begravenisregisters, Nieuwe Kerk, # 42/421.
2. 4 March 1672. Baptism of *Lomvies*, son of *Jacob Victor* and *Judith Chevijn*. Doop- en Trouw- en Begravenisregisters, Wester Kerk, # 107/11.
3. 20 November 1673. Baptism of *Antoni*, son of *Jacobus Victor* and *Judick Sevyn*. Doop- en Trouw- en Begravenisregisters, Oude Kerk, # 10/201.



3
Jacob van de Kerckhoven, *Gamepiece with Fruits and Vegetables*, monogrammed. Canvas, 107.5 × 152.5 cm. Stuttgart, Staatsgalerie.

4. 18 March 1676. Baptism of *Fannia* [Femina], child of *Jacobus Victor* and *Judith Chevijn*. Doop- en Trouw- en Begravenisregisters, Nieuwe Kerk, # 44/460.
5. 1 February 1679. Baptism of *Maria Jacoba*, daughter of *Jacobus Victor* and *Judick Sevijn*. Doop- en Trouw- en Begravenisregisters, Nieuwe Kerk, # 44/544.
6. 13 September 1679. Burial of *Maria Paeuw*, widow of *Louis Victor*, and mother of the artist. Doop- en Trouw- en Begravenisregisters, Nieuwe Kerk, # 1056/176.
7. 29 October 1683. Baptism of *Anna Jacoba*, daughter of *Jacobus Victor* and *Maria Gramsbergen*. Doop- en Trouw- en Begravenisregisters, Oude Kerk, # 11/228.
8. 18 January 1686. Baptism of *Jacobus*, son of *Jacobus Victor* and *Marija Gramberg*. Doop- en Trouw- en Begravenisregisters, Oude Kerk, # 12/54.
9. 28 August, 7 September, and 17 October 1686. Activities of *Jacobus Victor* and *Jacobus Ploos van Amstel* as guardians of Victor's niece, *Femina Schepper*, daughter of the late *Lambert Schepper*. Notariële Archieven, Prot. Not. Nicolaus van Loosdrecht, # 5697.
10. 10 February 1687. *Jacobus Ploos van Amstel* and his uncle *Jacobus Victor* are again cited as guardians of *Femina Schepper*, con-

cerning the disposition of the estate of her father. Notariële Archieven, Prot. Not. Nicolaus van Loosdrecht, # 5698.

11. 25 February 1687. Burial of *Jacob Ploos van Amstel*. Doop- en Trouw- en Begravenisregisters, # 1056/323.

12. 4 March 1687. Inventory of the estate of the late *Jacobus Ploos van Amstel*, in his life *verwercoper* [paint and dye seller]. *Jacobus Victor* and *Joannes van Drogenborst* are guardians of the minor children. Among the goods of the estate are the contents of the shop (including all types of paint, dyes, and inks), household effects, and '6 stuks sleghte schilderijtjes.' Notariële Archieven, Prot. Not. Nicolaus van Loosdrecht, # 5698.

13. 25 August 1687. *Jacobus Victor* acts as guardian over the four minor children of *Jacobus Ploos van Amstel*. Notariële Archieven, Prot. Not. Daniel Luijcken, # 5603, pp. 253-58v.

14. 9 October 1687. Burial of a child of *Jacobus Victor* and *Maria Gramsbergen* of the *N. Dijk*. Doop- en Trouw- en Begravenisregisters, Nieuwe Kerk, # 1056/332.

15. 31 December 1688. Baptism of *Anna Maria*, daughter of *Jacobus Victor* and *Maria Gramsbergen*. Doop- en Trouw- en Begravenisregisters, Oude Kerk, # 12/253.



4
Jacob van de Kerckhoven. *Birdpiece with Fruits and Vegetables*. Canvas, 107.5 × 153.5 cm. Stuttgart, Staatsgalerie.

16. 25 March 1689. Burial of a child of *Jacob Victor* and *Maria Gramsbergen* of the *N: Dijk*. Doop- en Trouw- en Begravenisregisters, Nieuwe Kerk, # 1057/9.

17. 24 October 1691. Burial of a child of *Jacobus Victor* and *Maria Gramsbergen* of the *N: Dijk*. Doop- en Trouw- en Begravenisregisters, Nieuwe Kerk, # 1057/27.

18. 15 February 1692. Wedding banns of *Maria Buijs* of Haarlem and *Louis Victor Jacobsz* of the *N dijk*, accompanied by his father *Jacobus Victors*. Doop- en Trouw- en Begravenisregisters, # 520/277.

19. 2 November 1696. Wedding banns of *Anna de Bascoert* and *Antonij Victor, winckelier*, of the *N. dyk*, accompanied by his father *Jacobus Victor*. Doop- en Trouw- en Begravenisregisters, # 526/284.

20. 19 August 1704. *Louis Victor Jacobs* and *Maria Buijs*, before his departure in the service of the Society of Surinam, acknowledge a debt to his father, *Jacob Victor*, in the amount of fl. 300, to be paid over three years without interest. Notariële Archieven, Prot. Not. Joannes Slijck, # 6239, pp. 1003-05.

21. 11 December 1705. Burial of *Jacobus Victor* of the *Nieuwendijk*. Doop- en Trouw- en Begravenisregisters, Nieuwe Kerk, # 1057/108.

22. 21 May 1706. Wedding banns of *Govert van Schijndel* and *Femina Victor* of the *N: dijk*, one of the artist's two surviving children and heiress to the paternal business (see the agreement over the estate of *Jacobus Victors* of 21 December 1706, Notariële Archieven, Prot. Not. Joannes Backer, # 4645B, film # 5388, pp. 1414-30; previously cited in *Bredius*, 1915-22, vol.2, pp.594-95). Doop- en Trouw- en Begravenisregisters, # 540/84.

23. 9 January 1720. Burial of *Maria Gramsberge*, widow of *Jacobus Victor*. Doop- en Trouw- en Begravenisregisters, Nieuwe Kerk, # 1058/4.

24. 2 August 1720. Wedding banns of *Femina Victor* of the *Nieuwendijk* and *Jan Rietboren*. Doop- en Trouw- en Begravenisregisters, # 557/275.

25. 19 June 1725. Burial of *Antonij Victor* of the *Nieuwendijk*, son of the artist. Doop- en Trouw- en Begravenisregisters, Nieuwe Kerk, # 1058/33.

26. 11 August 1760. Burial of *Femina Victor*, widow of *Jan Rietboren*. Doop- en Trouw- en Begravenisregisters, Nieuwe Kerk, # 1059/26v.

NOTES

¹ I would like to acknowledge the assistance of the following institutions and individuals in the course of my research: the Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie, The Hague; the Witt Library, London; the Archivio di Stato, Cini Foundation, and Biblioteca Correr, Venice; Maurice Cope; Robert Hallisey; J. Nieuwstraten; and especially S. A. C. Dudok van Heel of the Gemeentelijke Archiefdienst, Amsterdam. Funding for my research travel was provided by grants from the American Philosophical Society and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

² See Claude-Gérard Marcus, 'Jacob van de Kerckhoven ou Giacomo da Castello. Deux noms... un seul artiste,' *Art et Curiosité* (Sept. 1972), pp. 55-61; Elena Favaro, *L'Arte dei Pittori in Venezia*, Florence, 1975; Elisabetta Antoniazzi Rossi, 'Ulteriori considerazioni sull'inventario della collezione del Maresciallo von Schulenburg,' *Arte Veneta* 31 (1977), pp. 126-34; and Rodolfo Pallucchini, *La Pittura Veneziana del Seicento*, vol. 1, Milan, 1981.

³ Giustiniano Martini, *Aggiunta zu Sansovino's Venetia Città Nobilissima*, Venice, 1663, p. 22 (reprint, Farnborough, 1968).

⁴ G. K. Nagler, *Neues Allgemeines Künstler-Lexikon*, Munich, 1835-52, vol. 22, p. 530 (reprint, Leipzig, 1924). Earlier, Roeland van Eijnden and Adriaan van der Willigen, *Geschiedenis der Vaderlandsche Schilderkunst, sedert de helft der XV^{de} eeuw*, Haarlem, 1816-40, vol. 1, pp. 106-08, and J. C. H. and C. Immerzeel, eds., *De levens en werken der Hollandsche en Vlaamsche kunstschilders, beeldhouwers, graveurs en bouwmeesters*, Amsterdam, 1842-43, vol. 1, pp. 191-92 (reprint, Amsterdam, 1974), give very confused accounts of a bird painter in the Victors family, to whom they attribute the mythical name of 'Lauw.'

⁵ Abraham Bredius, *Kunstler-Inventare*, The Hague, 1915-22, vol. 2, pp. 585-95. A supplementary appendix of previously unpublished documents on Jacobus Victors and his family follows the present article.

⁶ A painting of *Poultry and a Rabbit*, bearing the inscription 'Jacomo victor 1678,' is cited in Alfred von Wurzbach, *Niederländisches Künstler-Lexikon*, 1906-11, vol. 3, p. 788 (reprint, Amsterdam, 1963).

⁷ Gemeentelijke Archiefdienst, Amsterdam, Notariële Archieven, Prot. Not. Joannes Backer, #4641 (film #5385). Also cited in Bredius, 1915-22, vol. 2, p. 586.

⁸ Philippe Rombouts and Théodore van Lerijs, *Les Liggeren et autres archives historiques de la Gilde anversoise de Saint-Jac*, Antwerp and The Hague, 1864, vol. 2, pp. 208 and 209.

⁹ Jacobus Victors, however, is included in all three: Wurzbach, 1906-11, vol. 3, p. 788; U. Thieme and F. Becker, *Allgemeines Lexikon der Bildenden Künstler*, Leipzig, 1907-50, vol. 34, p. 330; and Walther Bernt, *Die Niederländischen Maler des 17. Jahrhunderts*, Munich, 1948/60, vol. 3, no. 935.

¹⁰ Edith Greindl, *Les Peintres Flamands de Nature Morte au XVII^e Siècle*, Brussels, 1956, pp. 108, 258-61, 329, and 365 (reprint, Sterrebeck, 1983).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

¹² Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Milizia da Mar, b. 550-51, Pittori; also cited in Favaro, 1975, pp. 201, 208, 215, and 221.

¹³ Biblioteca del Museo Civico Correr, ms. Moschini XIX, Nota de' pittori registrati ne' libri della Veneta Accademia, trattate l'anno 1815, pp. 24r-25v; also cited in Favaro, 1975, pp. 155-56.

¹⁴ See Antoniazzi Rossi, 1977, p. 131 and Pallucchini, 1981, p. 328.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Marcus, 1972. On Castello, see Nagler, 1835-52, vol. 2, p. 500; Thieme-Becker, 1907-50, vol. 6, p. 153; Luigi Lanzi, *Storia pittorica della Italia*, Florence, 1808, vol. 2, p. 213 (English ed., London, 1847); and Stefano Ticozzi, *Dizionario degli architetti, scultori, pittori...*, Milan, 1830-33, vol. 1, p. 296.

¹⁷ Pallucchini, 1981, pp. 327-28. Marcus, 1972, p. 60, astutely avoided making this error by noting the stylistic discrepancies between the paintings assigned to Kerckhoven/da Castello and a signed and dated work of 1661 by Jacobus Victors in the Museo Civico in Vicenza - its inscription having become legible after the painting's restoration in 1959; see Andrea Ballarin, 'Un dipinto di Jacopo Victor,' *Vita Vicentina* 3 (April-May 1959), pp. 8-9.

¹⁸ Gemeentelijke Archiefdienst, Amsterdam, Notariële Archieven, Prot. Not. Gerrit Steeman, #2644 (film #2668). Also cited in Abraham Bredius, 1915-22, vol. 2, p. 592.

¹⁹ The exact date of Victors' birth has not been found, but based on the document cited above (n. 18) and others, has been set at c. 1640. At that time, Victors' parents lived on the Rokin in Amsterdam, near the Nieuwe Zijds Kapel; see Debra Miller, 'Jan Victors (1619-76),' Ph.D. diss., University of Delaware, 1985, vol. 1, p. 266. According to S. A. C. Dudok van Heel, the family most likely would have used that church for the baptism of their newborn son; but as the baptismal records for the Nieuwe Zijds Kapel only begin in October 1644, there is no extant documentation for Jacobus Victors' baptism around 1640.

²⁰ Gemeentelijke Archiefdienst, Amsterdam, Notariële Archieven, Prot. Not. Nicolaus van Loos-

drecht, #5697, recording the activities of Jacobus Victors as guardian of his niece Femma Schepper.

²¹ *Supra*, n. 12. Apparently by this time in Amsterdam, Jacobus Victors had already given up painting as his primary profession in favor of a feather and bedding business. E.g., in the wedding banns of Victors and his first wife, Judith Cheyvin, of 3 January 1671, he is listed as 'coopman' ('merchant'); Gemeentelijke Archiefdienst, Amsterdam, Doop- en Trouw- en Begravenisregisters, #496/60. And in the wedding contract of 10 July 1681 with his second wife, Maria Gramsbergen, Victors' occupation is given as 'Winckelier' ('shopkeeper' or 'retailer') rather than painter; Gemeentelijke Archiefdienst, Amsterdam, Notariële Archieven, Prot. Not. Jacobus HELLERUS, #2513 (film #2617), pp. 26-31. Both also cited in Bredius, 1915-22, vol. 2, pp. 588 and 591.

²² Gemeentelijke Archiefdienst, Amsterdam, Doop- en Trouw- en Begravenisregisters, Nieuwe Kerk, #1057/108; and *supra*, n. 7.

²³ *Supra*, n. 12.

²⁴ It is also worth noting that no references to the surnames of Kerckhoven, Cimiterio, or Castello have been located amongst the Victors documents in the Amsterdam archives, although Victors did occasionally sign his first name as 'Jacomo'. E.g., a facsimile signature from a document of 8 May 1679, in which the 40-year-old merchant, 'Sr Jacomo Victors,' makes a business agreement concerning indigo, is reproduced in Bredius, 1915-22, vol. 2, p. 590. His paintings are almost invariably signed 'Jacomo' Victors rather than 'Jacobus', as in figs. 1 and 2.