Exile memories and the Dutch Revolt : the narrated diaspora, 1550 – 1750

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Chapter 4 - The reinvention of family history

Family memories and the change of generations

When John La Motte died in London in 1655 he was widely known and celebrated as an exemplary Christian whose life bore such a powerful testimony to his piety and godliness that the Puritan author Samuel Clarke included La Motte's biography in his work on 'The lives of sundry eminent persons in this later age'.[337] La Motte had served the city of London as an alderman and the local Dutch Reformed Stranger Church as an elder and deacon. In this function he had organized relief funds for persecuted Calvinists in Bohemia and Piedmont and made vigorous efforts on behalf of his afflicted coreligionists on the continent. A crucial element in the hagiographical accounts of his life was his own heritage of religious exile and persecution: La Motte had been born in Colchester to Flemish parents who had left their hometown of Ypres for England during the persecution under the Duke of Alba in the late 1560s. According to his biographers, it was due to his parents' uncompromising allegiance to their Reformed faith that their son grew up as a devout and pious man who did not ignore the fate of his persecuted coreligionists abroad. In his funeral sermon, preached by Fulk Bellers, La Motte was compared to the patriarch Abraham who had left his homeland of Chaldea to seek the land God had promised him. But even during his lifetime La Motte seems to have compared himself with biblical exiled heroes such as Moses and Abraham: on occasions like the coronation day of Elizabeth I or his own birthday he used to invite friends to meet at his home and as

> he would often say, he had desired their company, *to eat bread with him before the Lord* (as *Jethro* and *Moses* did) in remembrance of such and such signal *Mercies* and *Deliverances*, whereof *his memory was a living Chronicle*, especially those grand Deliverances, both before and since the *Reformation*, from under the great sufferings and bloody *Persecutions* in *France*, and the *Low Countries*, whereof he would often discourse in so punctuall and feeling a manner, as if he had been an eye-witness, yea a sharer in them, taking many arguments thence of encouraging both himself and others, to be still *mindfull of them in bonds and miseries, as being*

[337] Samuel Clarke, *The Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons in this Later Age*, London 1683, part 2, p. 102.

> *themselves in the body*: saying, why, *their case might have been ours, or may be yet, who knows*?[338]

The remembrance of his forefathers who had left Flanders for England evidently played a central role at these commemorative meetings. Obviously, La Motte, though born in England and participating in the local politics of London as an alderman of the city, strongly identified with his parents' exile. His sense of belonging to a diaspora of Reformed refugees all over Europe seems to have been a cornerstone of his religious identity and personal devotion.

According to Peter Ole Grell, people like La Motte belonged to the last generation of the international Calvinist diaspora. In the next generation, Grell argues, the bond with the exile heritage of their forefathers became diluted, and individuals began to conceive of themselves primarily as Dutch, German or English rather than as exiled strangers in a foreign land. Grell's observation seems to be accurate in general: the children of La Motte and his contemporaries did indeed marry into English, German or Dutch families and became absorbed in the host societies of their parents.[339] However, as I will show in this chapter, even among these later generations memories of exile continued to be preserved and transmitted not only in the various stranger churches but also, and perhaps more prominently, in family circles. Intermarrying with locals and participating in the social and political life of their new host societies did not prevent migrants and their descendants from continuing to appropriate and refashion the diasporic identities of their forefathers. However, the exile memories of subsequent generations of migrants were, of course, not the same as those of their forebears and had to be translated into the specific context of each new generation and its living conditions in a changing society. In genealogical accounts, letters and other sources the children and grandchildren had to reinvent and reinterpret the past of their ancestors on their own terms. As I will demonstrate on the basis of a selection of family histories of migrant families from the Southern Netherlands, the same accounts were often rewritten generation after generation. By comparing the various hands and examining crossed-out passages in

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[338] Fulk Bellers, *Abrahams Interment, or, The good old-mans buriall in a good old age. Opened in a sermon at Bartholomews exchange, July 24, 1655, at the funerall of the worshipfull John Lamotte, Esq., sometimes alderman of the city of London, London 1656, f. F4ff.*

[339] Ole Peter Grell, *Brethren in Christ*, p. 307.

the text I was able to attribute the various changes to specific family members from later generations. As these additions and modifications of the chronicles show, the exile narrative was often blended with discourses and historical references that were shared with the native societies in which the migrants lived.

The topic of generational identities and memories was first addressed and studied in early twentieth-century German sociology. As Karl Mannheim postulated in 1928 in his influential *The Problem of Generations*, every generation understands itself in terms of shared experiences and a characteristic attitude towards past and present.[340] Mannheim did not conceive of generations as unquestionable biological entities but rather as social constructions that were projected on cohorts of contemporaries by themselves or members of other generations. According to Mannheim, the formative experiences that shape the political and social consciousness of members of a distinct generation occur in late adolescence and early adulthood or between the ages of seventeen and twenty-five.[341] While only knowledge acquired from personal first-hand experiences constitutes a genuine generational consciousness, he stated, events preceding the life of a generation are perceived and interpreted according to these formative experiences. An impressive empirical study from the late 1980s by Howard Schuman and Jacqueline Scott, through a survey of more than a thousand US-Americans about important events in their lives, confirmed Mannheim's age categories. As Schuman and Scott were able to show, the consciousness of historical events as well as the meanings attached to them differed considerably between various generations.[342] While for example individuals between the ages of thirty and thirty-nine associated World War II primarily with the triumph of liberty and justice against barbarism, which evoked patriotic feelings in them, older persons, who could recall the 1940s, remembered the war primarily in terms of the tragedy of the victims and fallen soldiers.[343]

Considering these modern observations, we should be aware of the specific role of any new generation that reproduced and inscribed itself into its family

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[340] Karl Mannheim, 'The Problem of Generations', in: Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, ed. by Paul Kecskemeti, London 1952, pp. 276-322.
[341] Mannheim, 'The Problem of Generations', p. 300.
[342] Howard Schuman, Jacqueline Scott, 'Generations and Collective Memories', in: *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 54, No. 3 (June 1989), pp. 359-381.
[343] Ibid., p. 372.

histories and the memories that were handed over to them not only by their direct ancestors but also by the wider medial surroundings that merged various generational experiences. As the source material shows, memories of the family past became invested not only with new and different meanings by later generations, but sometimes they were also intentionally manipulated, especially when claims about someone's family history could impact his social status and position. The life of one's ancestors was, of course, much more important in early modern societies than it is today, and the need to present one's ancestry in brighter terms was often strong. Because descending from a family identified as treacherous or poor could seriously affect one's social status and, in the case of the elite, one's political career, the past often needed to be handled with care. At the same time, not all change in perspective regarding the family past was the result of deliberate manipulation; much of it resulted from organic changes in collective memories and the impact of new experiences of specific generations. Even in cases where family memories meticulously tried to preserve the past 'as it was', for example by the material evidence of original historical documents, the sources were put into new contexts and charged with new meanings and reinterpreted in the light of contemporary experiences.

Family memories between the diaspora and the host societies

While studies on early modern refugees from the Netherlands have sought to determine at what point individuals ceased to identify themselves with their exile past and started to see themselves as German, English or Dutch, I suggest a change of focus. Instead of posing the question of when the identification with the diaspora ended, I want to ask how diasporic identities and memories of flight and persecution were translated into German, Dutch and English contexts.[344] As the following cases show, neither political participation in the new society nor intermarrying with locals put an end to the memory cultures of the migrants. Migration sociologists such as Mary C. Waters and Herbert J. Gans have stressed the agency of the descendants of migrants regarding their 'ethnic options'. As Waters shows, descent is not a self-

[344] See e.g.: Grell, *Brethren in Christ*, p. 307; Grell, 'The Creation of a Transnational, Calvinist Network'. Al and Lesger, 'Twee volken besloten binnen Amstels wallen?'; Gerard van Gurp, 'Bosschenaars in de verstrooiing.', J. Briels, *De Zuidnederlandse immigratie in Amsterdam en Haarlem* , especially pp. 39f. and Briels, *Zuid-Nederlanders in de Republiek*, especially pp. 266ff.

explanatory quality but needs to be appropriated by following generations who often reinvent their heritage.[345] Such reinventions always add different meanings and functions to the identification with the migrant past. According to Gans, migrant identity in later generations often becomes manifest as 'symbolic ethnicity and religiosity'.[346] Belonging to a certain group does affect the lives of individuals in less immediate forms and, often, at lower costs. A problem of the application of this concept in an early modern context is that is almost impossible to define where 'actual' ethnicity ends 'symbolic ethnicity' begins. However, it allows us to think of migrants and their descendants as citizens of their new society and at the same time belonging to different imagined groups. While being fully 'assimilated', the descendants of Flemish refugees continued to refer to their forefathers' past until the eighteenth century or even later. The preservation of the ancestors' past did not necessarily produce isolated communities with memory cultures that were totally separated from the historical narratives of the host societies. Paradoxically, in many cases it was the very exile-narrative itself that allowed for participation and integration in local social systems and networks. When migrants were successful in claiming to have suffered much for the 'true faith', they could use such claims to gain a higher social status among their coreligionists in their new hometowns.

Virtually all the families studied in this chapter belonged to the higher social strata and some even to the economic and, finally, political elite of their host societies. As has been argued by scholars on early modern migration in the Netherlands, the social integration of Southern Netherlandish migrants in the Dutch Republic started in the lower social strata while migrants from the elite stayed relatively long within their own circles and intermarried with fellow Southerners. Niek Al and Clé Lesger have even postulated a process of 'integration from below'.[347] Although there is much evidence that endogamy was practiced longer in the migrant elite circles than in the lower social strata, the rich and well-educated families were not less integrated because they often married within their own group for a longer period. In fact, the relationship between the practice of endogamy and

[345] Mary C. Waters, *Ethnic Options. Choosing Identities in America*, Berkeley/Los Angeles 1990.
[346] Herbert J. Gans, 'Symbolic Ethnicity. The Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America', in: *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 2 (1979), pp. 1–20; Herbert J. Gans, 'Symbolic Ethnicity and Symbolic Religiosity. Towards a Comparison of Ethnic and Religious Acculturation', in: Ethnic and Racial Studies 17 (1994), pp. 577-592.
[347] Al and Lesger, 'Twee volken besloten binnen Amstels wallen?', p. 140.

the preservation of the feeling of belonging to the diaspora is far from straightforward. As we will see, the practice of ex- or endogamy may actually not be a robust indicator of the degree of identification with the new host society or the lost homelands.[348]

Reinventing family history

In the first years after the migration from the Southern Netherlands few families recorded their past in written historical narratives. As the later writings of second- and third-generation migrants suggest, memories were handed down to them orally and often in fragmented and sometimes contradictory form. Such was the case in the family of playwright Joost van den Vondel. In the last years of his life he often talked to Remonstrant minister Geraardt Brandt, who would later, in 1682, three years after Vondel's death, write the playwright's biography. The account of his early life and the history of his persecuted parents from Antwerp were full of anecdotal details that suggest how the story was told within the family. According to Brandt, Peter Craanen, Vondel's maternal grandfather, tried to flee Antwerp as a Mennonite but was betrayed and had to escape his persecutors in haste. His pregnant wife Clementia, however, did not manage to escape and was sentenced to death. In order to prevent her execution her cousin inquired 'if she could not be saved by having one of her children baptized as a Catholic by a priest'[349] Brandt tells that Vondel's mother, who was already living with Peter Craanen in Cologne, was sent back to Antwerp to receive Catholic baptism in 1571. Clementia was indeed pardoned on her word that she would live as a Catholic in Antwerp. Once free, she fled to her husband and children in Cologne. As J. de Valk showed, this story was generally accurate; however, it was not Vondel's mother Sara who was brought to Antwerp to be baptized but his aunt Anna.[350]

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[348] As Herbert J. Gans has remarked on sociological studies on religious acculturation of Jews in the United States: 'Intermarriage, religious as well as ethnic, has generally been treted as an index of ethnic acculturation, in part because so little is yet known about what goes on in these marriages.' (Gans, 'Symbolic Ethnicity and Symbolic Religiosity', p. 583.

[349] 'Maar sedert uit den Markgrave verstaande, datze ten vuure was verweezen, en met zekeren Leeraar zou sterven, vondt hy zich in d'uiterste verlegenheit, badt om uitstel, en vraagde "Of men, een haarer kinderen van een' Priester Katholykelyk laatende doopen, haar niet zou konnen redden?"' (Geraardt Brandt, *Het leven van Joost van den Vondel,* ed. by Marieke M. van Oostrom and Riet Schenkeveld van der Dussen, Amsterdam 1986, p. 8).

[350] J. van der Valk, 'Vondels grootouders onder Alva om het geloof vervolgd', in: *Annuarium societas studiosorum reformatorum* (1912), pp. 98-99.

In the family history of the Vondels orally handed down to Geraardt Brandt Vondel's father too was a refugee who had fled Antwerp to escape from his Catholic persecutors. In fact, Joost van den Vondel the Elder had left his hometown as late as 1582 at a time when the city was firmly in the hands of Calvinist rebels and Mennonites were no longer violently persecuted.[351] In family memories like those of the Vondel family the history of the ancestors was preserved in the biblical imagery of flight and persecution and told in an anecdotal way. In Brandt's account the young parents of Vondel left Cologne when Joost the Elder learned that Mennonites in Holland enjoyed a greater measure of toleration:

> Following this advice, he, his wife and their children first went to Frankfurt and took a coach to Bremen, from where they went to Holland. They travelled in straightened circumstances, built a cradle between a few sticks and dried the diapers on the coach. Doing so, they displayed such modesty and demureness that their coachman, who carried this unassuming couple, said to someone: 'It is as if I travel with Joseph and Mary'.[352]

Obviously, many facts about the peregrinations of the family were changed in the course of time. Not only did the details of their flight from Antwerp shift over time but the route from Cologne to Holland sounds rather implausible. According to Brandt, Joost van den Vondel the Elder wanted to move to the Dutch Republic because of the tolerance for his religious confession. However, the route to Holland via Frankfurt and Bremen suggests that these places were either added to present the travel as a longer and more troublesome peregrination or the family travelled first southeast and then northwards for other reasons, most probably to look for work. While the facts about the migration of the Vondel family remain dubious, crucial interpretative details were preserved and retold, such as the story of the coachman who compared the young family to Mary and Joseph. The family history was not

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[351] Judith Pollmann, 'Vondel's Religion', in: *Jan Bloemendaal and Frans-Willem Korsten, Joost van den Vondel (1589-1679). Dutch Playwright in the Golden Age*, Leiden 2012, p. 93.

[352] 'Dien raadt volgende toogh hy met zyn vrouwe en kinderen eerst naar Frankfoort, van daar met de waagen op Breemen en voorts op Hollandt, zich onderweegen armelyk behelpende, maakende een wiegh tusschen eenige stokken, de luyeren droogende op den waaghen, met tekenen van zoodanige ingetoogenheit en zeedigheit, dat de Voerman, dit eenvoudigh paar voerende, tegens iemant zeide; 't is eveneens als of ik met Joseph en Maria over wegh reize.' (Brandt, *Het leven van Joost van den Vondel,* p. 11.)

recorded in written form until the late seventeenth century and had become subject to reinterpretations and changes during its oral transmission.

Very few migrant families from the Southern Netherlands recorded their history in the first generation. Members of generations who had migrated themselves or with their parents sometimes produced autobiographical texts in which they occasionally included passages about their parents and other ancestors, such as for example in the autobiographies of the scholar Caspar Barlaeus or the ministers Willem Baudartius and Jan de Wallois, but they rarely made any mention of their migration or their lives in their former homes.[353] Most of the written records and narratives of the past of the migrated families were produced by second and third generation migrants, often not until the mid-seventeenth century. As the cases of the Thijs and De Bacher families in chapter 2 of this book show, remembering was often a painful process once a return to the lost homeland became impossible. While memories of the past in Flanders and Brabant had originally served to fuel the hope for an early return, the failure of the military campaign to 'liberate' the Habsburg territories silenced their articulation. In many cases the next generations thus had to reconstruct a forgotten and fragmented family history and attempted to preserve what they could of the exile past of their forefathers. We can, for example, observe this phenomenon in the case of the Van der Muelen family. In the late seventeenth century, Willem van der Muelen, great-grandson of former Antwerp alderman Andries van der Meulen, who had left his hometown for Holland, recorded what he could remember of family stories. He also eagerly collected material evidence of his ancestor's refugee past, such as a letter of recommendation by the rebel government of Antwerp, to which he added that his great-grandfather had always behaved as a good official and remained loyal to the rebel cause, which forced him to leave his hometown:

> Certification by the magistrate of Antwerp that my great-grandfather Andries van der Muelen, Lord of Ranst and Millegem and member of the Council of Brabant, has been an alderman in this town and has always behaved as a good regent. He has requested this declaration when he left

[353] See: P.C. Molhuisen (ed.), 'Leven van Willem Baudaert door hemzelven bcschreven', Kronijk van het Historisch Genootschap 5 (1849), pp. 225-249; Koert van der Horst, 'A "Vita Casparis Barlaei" written by Himself', in: *Lias. Sources and Documents Relating to the Early Modern History of Ideas*, vol. 9 (1982), afl. 1, pp. 57-83. For De Wallois, see: UB Amsterdam, collectie handschriften, III, F13.

Antwerp after the town had surrendered to the Duke of Parma. Date: August 13, 1585.[354]

The Van der Muelen family also preserved a silver tazza that had been given to Andries van der Meulen in 1582 with an inscription in which his loyalty to the town and to the Reformed religion was praised.[355] The family members' engagement with their ancestors' past had first become manifest in the second generation after the migration to the Dutch Republic: Andries van der Muelen the Younger, Willem's grandfather, was deeply concerned with proving that the Van der Muelens were descendants of a Southern Netherlandish nobleman who had served the King of France in the eleventh century. In the 1640s he corresponded frequently with his relatives, particularly with his cousin Daniel de Hochepied, to gather more information about the assumed noble descent of his family and even changed his name from Van der Meulen to van der Muelen when his genealogical studies seemed to suggest that this spelling was more correct.[356] In addition to this assumed connection to a noble family it was the family's fate of having fled the South for the sake of the Reformed faith that interested him. In 1650 he asked Nicolas de Malapert, a friend of his parents from their time in Antwerp, to sign an affidavit that his parents had left Antwerp in 1585, immediately after the siege of Parma although the city's Protestant inhabitants had been granted a four-year grace period in which to settle their affairs before the mandatory obligation to convert to Catholicism came into force.[357] By doing so, he could prove that they had been uncompromising Protestants, unwilling to live under the new Habsburg Catholic regime. He also wrote down the story of his uncle Jan van der Meulen who had lost his life defending his hometown during the 'Spanish Fury', a devastating mutiny of Habsburg soldiers in 1576.[358]

In the case the Martens family, also from Antwerp, the same pattern is recognizable. Within the circle of this family a wide range of sources was

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[354] 'Certificatie van de Magistraet te Antwerpen dat mijn overgrootvader Andries van der Muelen Heere van Ranst en Millegem, Raet van Staete van Brabant is geweest schepen in derselver stadt, en sich altijt als een goet regent gedragen heeft, welcke certificatie sijn Ed. versocht heeft toen sijn Ed. van Antwerpen is gaen woonen nadat die Stadt aen den Hertogh van Parma was overgegaen, van dato 13 Aug. 1585.' (Het Utrechts Archief, 57, inv.nr. 27).
[355] Wim Nys (ed.), *Zilver uit Antwerpen*, Antwerp 2006, p. 42 (exhibition catalog).
[356] Het Utrechts Archief, 57, inv.nr. 58.
[357] Ibid., 57, inv.nr. 59.
[358] Ibid., 57, inv.nr. 3.

transmitted to future generations in which the family history was not only preserved but also frequently rewritten. The narrative of the family's past was transmitted in various manuscripts and fragments that all heavily borrow from each other, and through a comparison of handwritings and textual structures it is possible to reconstruct how the family memories in the Martens family evolved over time and how the history of the family was rewritten by succeeding generations.[359]

Very much like Andries van der Meulen the Elder and Johan Thijs, Hans Martens did not leave much information about his flight from the South although later sources suggest that he sometimes talked to his children about their family's past. The only notes he left were in tabular form and concerned his parents, the births of his children, as well as some notes on his marriage and business.[360] Hans's son Carel was an ambitious youth, who was so eager to enter the elite networks of Holland and Utrecht that he went to the Synod of Holland as a seventeen-year-old and asked everyone he thought important enough to write in his *album amicorum*.[361] We can find Francis Gomarus, Gisbert Voetius and other famous Counter-Remonstrant theologians in the book but also various members of the Nassau family and poets and scholars like Daniel Heinsius. Carel Martens not only copied his father's autobiographical notes but added a more detailed biographical description and tried to find out as much as he could about his family's past.[362] In 1633, he invited his uncle Jacques Martens to Utrecht to confer with his half-brother Hans and to write down everything they recalled about their ancestors. When Carel's son Jacob married Aletta Pater, a girl from an influential Utrecht patrician family, Carel and his wife Jacoba Lampsins, also from a rich Southern family, commissioned four paintings by Ferdinand Bol, which, as art historian Margriet van Eikema-Hommes has argued persuasively, symbolically represented the entrance of an exiled family into the established elite of Utrecht.[363] All four paintings show well-known biblical and classical foreigners and exiles, such as Aeneas, Moses, Abraham and the people

[359] Het Utrechts Archief, 1002, inv.nrs. 2; 3; 4; 99. The inventory numbers 2 and 4 contain various manuscripts and fragments, sometimes bound together. The inventory number 3 and 99 contain two final synoptic versions that are based on the earlier manuscripts. Numbers 4 and 99 are written by Jacob Martens while number 3 was probably written after his death.
[360] Ibid., 1002, inv.nr. 1.
[361] Ibid., 1002, inv.nr. 40.
[362] Ibid., 1002, inv.nr. 60.
[363] Margriet van Eikema Hommes, *Art and Allegiance in the Dutch Golden Age. The Ambitions of a Wealthy Widow in a Painted Chamber by Ferdinand Bol*, Amsterdam 2012, pp. 151ff.

of Israel in Babylonian captivity. In the paintings the depicted exiles are presented as victors, who despite the hardships of exile had been successful in creating a new genealogy. Like Aeneas, the Martens and Lampsins families had founded a New Troy, and like Abraham and Moses they were bound for the 'promised land' and fathered a new generation of godly people. Just as with the La Mottes in England, the dissemination of the exile narrative could improve their status in the elite circles of Reformed orthodoxy.[364]

Ferdinand Bol, *Aeneas ontvangt een nieuwe wapenuitrusting uit handen van Venus in de werkplaats van Vulcanus*,
Rijksmuseum Amsterdam

Jacob, Hans Martens' grandson, put his family's history into a more structured narrative form and wrote it down in a 'memorie boeck' of which there are

[364] Ibid., p. 165.

still various copies and fragments extant.[365] Starting in 1663, Jacob took the notes of his father and grandfather and complemented them with things he knew from family stories, such as the exact places in Antwerp where his great-grandparents were buried. The actual narrative 'plot' begins with the migration of Hans and his siblings in the period of the very early Revolt:

> The children of Francoys Martens fled to Amsterdam for religion's sake under the Spanish persecution and were separated from each other during the reign of the Princess of Parma as well as the persecution of the Duke of Alba.[366]

Even though Hans Martens' considerably older brothers were already young adults in the days of Margaret of Parma, Hans himself was born in 1555 and only twelve years old when Margaret resigned and was replaced by the Duke of Alba. His notes show that Jacob was in doubt about the date when his grandfather had left Antwerp:

> Hans Martens fled Antwerp for religion's sake during the troubles under the Duke of Alba in the year ... (*lacuna in all existing manuscripts*) and left for Amsterdam with some of his brothers and sisters, where he settled down in silence as a merchant. Through the persecutions he had become a devout and godly man, who did not care about the grandeur of the world and because he wanted to avoid recognition, he refused to use his family's coat of arms.[367]

The lacuna in the text about the year of Hans Martens' flight from Antwerp can be found in all existing copies of the manuscript. Obviously, the period of Alba and Margaret of Parma had left such a deep impression on the collective memory of the Dutch Republic that in the oral tradition the historical events of the 1560s and the

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[365] Het Utrechts Archief, 1002, inv.nrs. 2; 3; 4; 99. Inv.nr. 2 contains the original manuscripts of Carel Martens, which were written after his meeting with his uncle Jacques who provided him with information on the family's past.

[366] Het Utrechts Archief, 1002, inv.nr. 2: 'De kinderen van Francoys Martens sijn onder vervolginge der Spaenjaerden om de religie, soo onder de princesse van Parma, als de vervolginge van Duc 'd Alva van den anderen gheraeckt.'

[367] Ibid., inv.nr. 2: 'Hans Martens is uijt Antwerpen om de religie ende troubele tijden van Duc' d Alva in den jaer … naer Amsterdam gevlucht, met eenigen van sijn Broeders ende susters, alwaer Hans Martens sich stillekens heeft nedergeset, ende de negotie bijder handt genomen, ende een devot ende godtsalig man door de vervolgingen met de grootsheyt der werelt niet behept, als mede omdat hij niet bekent soude worden heeft syn eijgen wapen noijt willen voeren maer heeft de twee ossenhoofden met een schaepshooft op een vergult velt aengenomen welck wapen naderhandt bij sijne desententen altijt is gevoert […].'

1580s became mixed up. It is, however, rather unlikely that the young teenager Hans had indeed left his hometown as early as the 1560s when his parents still lived in Antwerp. The first records of his existence in Amsterdam date from 1581, a time when Antwerp was still in rebel hands.

By the time of Jacob's marriage the Martens family had already entered the Reformed elite of Utrecht, and the story of the grandfather who 'did not care about the grandeur and the haughtiness of the world' and had become a 'devout and godly man' in and through exile fitted well into the circles of orthodox-Reformed Utrecht in the era of Gisbert Voetius, the prominent theologian of the Dutch 'Further Reformation'. Nevertheless this narrative also had a problematic aspect. The earliest versions of the manuscripts read:

> But [Hans Martens] has always said to his children that he descended from the best and finest families of Antwerp, but that he had learned through the persecution to hold in disdain the grandeur of old families and to keep himself quiet and humble and therefore refused to use his coat of arms which could be found everywhere among his popish family in Antwerp.[368]

At the time when the story was written down the members of the Martens family were themselves acting like an 'old family' and had become conscious of their family and dynastic identity. And, of course, Jacob himself already recognized the inconsistency of this narrative. In later manuscripts he changed the text and crossed out all the passages about Hans's contempt 'for old and famous families'. The phrase 'he had learned through the persecution to hold in disdain the grandeur of old families' was from then on erased and replaced with: '[...] the persecutions taught him to forget his ancestry.'[369] The final manuscript that makes use of the older versions took over this adjustment and added explicitly that Hans Martens had been persecuted 'for religion's sake' and that his estrangement from his family in the South was due to their Catholicism.[370]

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[368] Ibid.: '[…] doch heeft [Hans Martens] aen sijne kinderen altijd geseyt dat hij vande grootste ende fraaijste geslachten van Antwerpen was, maer dat door de vervolginge geleert was de grootsheyt van geslachten te verachten ende sich nederich ende still te houden, als mede dat onder sijn paepse vrienden sijn rechte wapen, ende geslacht boom altijd te vinden was.'
[369] Ibid., 1002, inv.nr. 4; 99.
[370] Ibid., 1002, inv.nr. 3.

The geographical re-imagination of the family past

While families like the La Mottes in England and the Martens family in the Dutch Republic represented their past in terms of godliness and confessional steadfastness when entering Puritan and orthodox-Reformed networks, others deployed discourses of patriotism and national consciousness to establish their position in their host societies. Some families also replaced the discourse of religious exile with one of geographical belonging and Netherlandish patriotism which they hoped could help their integration into the regent networks of Holland and Utrecht. The members of the wealthy Van Panhuys family, whose forefathers had also fled Antwerp, not only invented a noble lineage for their forefathers but also strongly emphasized the notion of their common Netherlandish ancestry that united them with their neighbors. While most of their ancestors originally came from Limburg and the region around Trier and Liège, they had established themselves in the elite merchant circles of Antwerp during the sixteenth century. The cousins Servaes and Batholomeus van Panhuys collected many documents about their family from the Southern Netherlands and argued that they were compatriots to the Hollanders and Utrechters rather than 'foreigners'. Their insistence on the family's Netherlandish origin was successful: by the 1640s the first family members had become regents in several Holland and Utrecht towns. Bartholomeus, for example, became the highest bailiff of Amersfoort, and Servaes was made pensionary of Schoonhoven. Servaes also became a member of the States of Holland and called himself 'Lord of Schoonhoven', even though this title did not have any clearly defined meaning.[371]

Servaes' and Batholomeus' ambitions, however, were even greater, and they tried to gain acceptance as members of the Holland and Utrecht nobilities. When in 1642 Bartholomeus presented a number of documents by which he wanted to prove his noble ancestry, the Utrecht *ridderschap* declared that they believed his claims on nobility but could not accept him because recognition of nobility was a provincial issue and descent from Southern Netherlandish nobles did not count in

[371] Also the descendants of the Van der Muelen family called themselves lords of Ranst (Andries van der Muelen), Laag Nieuwkoop, Blijenburg, Gieltjesdorp and Portengen (Willem van der Muelen). On the ambivalent character of such titles, see: Detlev H.H. van Heest and Lambertus van Poelgeest, 'Leydenaars en hun heerlijke titels', in: *Leids Jaarboekje* 75 (1938), pp. 119-138, esp. p. 119f.

Utrecht.[372] The two cousins did not give up their attempts and continued to try to be recognized as nobles. In their family chronicle they stretched the unity of all Netherlandish provinces and even extended the historical realm of the Low Countries by presenting not only its actual inhabitants but also Germans and Frenchmen from the border regions as descendants of the ancient Batavians. They introduced the history of their bloodline with a lengthy account about the ancient Germanic tribe that populated the Low Countries and that had been praised by Tacitus for their virtues and bravery.[373] The Batavian past was a popular motif in the historical discourse in the seventeenth-century Low Countries though the actual geographical origin of the Batavians was disputed by the various provinces of the Northern Netherlands, which claimed to be descendants of this legendary tribe.

These disputes are not mentioned in the Van Panhuys chronicle, and a common Netherlandish origin is evoked: the ancient Low Countries are portrayed as stretching from the Meuse region to Northern France and even the French noble house of Capet is included in the list of old Netherlandish noble families. While the Batavian myth had often been used to prove provincial superiority, in the Panhuyses' account it was deployed to serve the notion of a bond between all Netherlanders and to create a notion of unity. By appealing to the patriotic feelings of the inhabitants of the Dutch Republic, the Panhuys family tried to evoke a connection between themselves as migrants and the elites in their new hometowns in Holland and Utrecht. The same discourses were used in the petition letters, in which they claimed their Netherlandish noble ancestry. While the Holland and Utrecht knighthoods were rather unimpressed, the various new hometowns of the family members accepted the family's claims and granted them the privileges of nobles. In 1643 the magistrate of The Hague declared:

> Following earnest and patient requests, the following act is granted: The burgomaster of The Hague, who has been presented some documents which prove Lord Servaes van Panhuys is of noble descent from within the

[372] Nationaal Archief Den Haag, 1.10.64, inv.nr. 25. On the difficulties faced by newcomers trying to enter the exclusive oligarchies of the Holland and Zeeland nobility, see: H. van Dijk and D.J. Roorda, 'Social Mobility under the Regents of the Republic', in: *Acta Historiae Neerlandicae* IX (1976), pp. 76-102.

[373] Regionaal Archief Leiden, LB 6331, *Cort verhael van het out ende adelijck geslachte van Panhuijs, afcomstich uut den lande ende vorstendom van Limburg*, 1270-1817, fol.5r.

Netherlandish provinces and therefore granted exemption from all civic taxes.[374]

In 1660, the family was recognized as of noble origin in Amsterdam.[375] In both towns, the decision to grant them the privilege of civic tax exemptions was based not merely on their claims of nobility but explicitly on their assumed descent from a Netherlandish noble family.

Even though these claims were sometimes disputed during the seventeenth century, the family was able to enter the elite circles of the Dutch Republic. For centuries, the emphasis on their Netherlandishness and their 'natural' bonds with their neighbors in the North remained a crucial element of the tale they told about their own history. When the family was at last officially admitted to the nobility in the new Kingdom of the Netherlands in the nineteenth century, the family chronicles were extended and the Panhuyses presented as an old and well-established Netherlandish family.[376]

While the first generation of migrants of the Panhuys family fashioned themselves as religious exiles on a pilgrimage, such language was replaced with references to their Netherlandish ancestry in the writings of their descendants later in the seventeenth century.[377] Servaes Panhuys and his cousin Bartholomeus were particularly concerned with the family past and made and collected many drawings of houses, tombs, coats of arms and monuments of their forefathers. They were particularly proud of a memorial pillar that had been raised by Pieter Panhuys in 1566 in the Ardennes highlands close to Jalhay. In 1670, Servaes Panhuys asked some younger family members to travel to the Southern Netherlands and look for the pillar. After they found it they made some drawings and requested an affidavit by a Maastricht notary confirming that their description corresponded to the real pillar.[378] While they noted that the monument, which was later reconstructed and still exists

[374] Nationaal Archief Den Haag, 1.10.64, inv.nr. 8: 'Op 't versouck ende lang ernstich aenhouden is verleent de volgende acte: Burgemeester van 's Gravenhage verthoont sijnde eenighe bescheyden daer by haer ghebleecken dat Jr. Servaes van Panhuijs is van adelijcken exctractie uytten Nederlantsche Provincie, Hebben sijne Edt. vergunt ende vergunnen hem mits dese vrydommen van alle des stadts accijsen [sic].'

[375] *Cort verhael van het out ende adelijck geslachte van Panhuijs*, fol. 18r-v, 24r-v.

[376] Ibid., fol. 5r.

[377] When Pieter Panhuys died in 1585 in Amsterdam, his friend Johan Radermacher wrote a poem for his tombstone that depicted him as a religious pilgrim (Bostoen e.a. [eds], *Album Joannis Rotarii*, fol. 169r.).

[378] Nationaal Archief Den Haag, 1.10.64, inv.nr. 10. Other drawings of the pillar and other family monuments can be found in: Ibid, 1.10.64, inv.nr. 15, 16, 54 and in the *Cort verhael van het out ende adelijck geslachte van Panhuijs*, fol. 41v-44r.

today, had been destroyed in a storm, Servaes could now prove the accounts of his ancestors and their fame in the Southern Netherlands. On the drawing the Panhuyses showed to the Maastricht notary who signed the affidavit the inscription on the pillar's foot was depicted correctly. However, on later drawings the family made and preserved, they changed an inconspicuous but important detail: while the actual inscription identified Pieter Panhuys as 'natif de Limborch', his descendants replaced this part with 'Burgemr. d' Envers'.[379] Pieter Panhuys the Elder had been an alderman of Antwerp but never a burgomaster; however, for the status of his ambitious descendants it was clearly important to give him a higher rank.

The 'Colonne Panhaus' (Nationaal Archief Den Haag, 1.10.64, inv.nr. 8)

[379] Nationaal Archief Den Haag, 1.10.64, inv.nr. 10.

While such obvious forgeries were rather exceptional, many migrated patrician families made dubious claims about their ancestors. A pronounced interest in their families' genealogy was quite common among later generations of Southern Netherlandish migrants who sought to define their position among the Holland and Utrecht elites. The Van Panhuyses were related to a number of other Southern families in the Dutch Republic who all were concerned with their genealogy, which they tried to trace back to assumed noble ancestors. These included the Godin, Malapert, De la Faille and Vivien families as well as the Van der Muelens, who were also related to the Della Failles.[380] For families with great ambitions a migration past could in fact be very attractive since their claims to nobility could not easily be refuted. Dutchmen whose parents came from the region where they currently resided could never make such claims since their ancestry could quickly be examined. But for those who sought social advancement a migration background could be a great opportunity.

How important the good reputation of their parents and grandparents was to newcomers who wanted to participate in the local elite circles of the Dutch Republic is also illustrated by their attempts to legally protect the status of their ancestors. Presenting affidavits and personal testimonies about the life of their forefathers was not uncommon among the elite of second- and third-generation Southern Netherlandish migrants in the middle of the seventeenth century. Not only the Van Panhuys family but also the Van der Muelens and De la Courts requested and preserved affidavits that proved that their ancestors were of respectable lineage and had served the right political causes.[381] The reputation of their parents and grandparents was not only a question of personal pride and honor but could also be regarded as an indication of one's qualification for public office. When fervent anti-Orangist Pieter de la Court, who was born of Ypres parents, was attacked by anonymous sympathizers of the House of Orange, his parents as well as he became targets of slander and suspicion. In 1648, an anonymous Orangist pamphlet appeared that depicted his father, Pieter De la Court the Elder as a pimp:

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[380] See for the genealogical records of these families, see: Het Utrechts Archief, 204, inv.nrs. 318, 319, 320, 321, 322 (De Malapert); Ibid., 57, inv.nrs. 6,7 (Della Faille); Ibid., 57, inv.nr. 3 (Van der Muelen); Nationaal Archief Den Haag, 1.10.64, inv.nr. 88 (Godin).

[381] See for the affidavits of the Van der Muelen family, see: Het Utrechts Archief, 57, inv.nrs. 27 and 59. For the De La Court family, see: Noordam, 'Leiden als ideale stad', p. 22.

That filthy bastard has filled
his shabby purse with gold,
through lying, cheating
and skimping on every penny.
Hypocrisy and falsehood
have made that odd rogue rich.
His father was a pimp,
How come he's so well-off? [382]

De la Court took this attack very seriously and felt that he had to respond. De la Court asked his son-in-law, who was a professor at Leiden University, to write a declaration in the name of four witnesses who testified that they had known De la Court's father and that he had been a wealthy farmer in the Ypres region who was known for his honesty. In addition to his farm Pieter the Elder had also kept a hostel, but his son now had it recorded that it was frequented by respectable burghers and nobles from Brussels and Ypres. Being called a descendant of an innkeeper with a dubious reputation was an intolerable slight that needed to be fended off. De la Court felt that this slander could not just be ignored but had to be answered with an official affidavit. Even if the defamation of De la Court was anonymous, it was serious enough to demand the response of a legal statement and the declaration of four witnesses. The good reputation of the ancestors was of crucial importance, especially for newcomers who wanted to establish themselves in the ranks of the local elite.

Permeable memories

Like the Van Panhuyses and Van der Muelens, the Coymans family from Flanders was also eager to prove its respectable descent and enter the regent circles of Holland. In 1624, Maria Coymans married the Amsterdam regent Joan

[382] 'Die goore rot-sack heeft met gout
Zyn schurfde sack ghevult:
Door lieghen ende bedrieghen,
En knibbelen op een deuyt.
Door deuchdens schyn, en als vals te zyn
Wiert ryck, een vreemde guyt.
Want vader was een hoere-weert
Hoe komt nu rijck die quant?'
(Cited in: Noordam, 'Leiden als ideale stad', p. 22.)

Huydecoper.[383] From then on, marriages with the well-established Huydecoper family and other Amsterdam regent dynasties became common, and the family was able to secure its influence on local politics. By the end of the seventeenth century, the Coymans family was related not only to old Amsterdam regent families but also to other influential newcomers like the famous merchants De Geer and Trip, who descended from Liège and Zaltbommel. Like these families, they undertook genealogical research and traced back their ancestry to lower nobles from the Southern Netherlands.[384] Despite their established position in the Amsterdam elite, the Coymans family never tried to hide its Southern origin. Rather, the family members loudly proclaimed their Flemish ancestry and until the eighteenth century continued a family chronicle which described how and why their ancestors had moved to Holland.[385] Obviously, they no longer had to choose between belonging to either the Amsterdam establishment or the Southern newcomers. Both their Flemish and their Holland family histories were integrated and did not conflict with each other.

The cases of the family histories of the Martenses, Van der Muelens, Coymanses and many other Southern families in the Republic show how memories were preserved long after the time that their descendants had married into local families and had begun to participate in local politics and cultural life. While exile narratives had initially emphasized the migrants' status as strangers who hoped for a return to their homeland, from the second generation onwards their character and function changed: instead of stressing the differences between strangers and locals, the memory of an exile past could help the children of the refugees to build ties with the networks of the local host societies. Stories of exile and suffering served as a narrative of origin that legitimized the status of the migrant families as *homines novi*. The mists that had settled over some family origins before the time of migration could be seized upon to claim a higher social status: since the family was not known in the host society, stories about noble descent could hardly be disproved. At the same time the assertion that the ancestors had been so godly and pious that they had avoided any identification with their popish relatives and therefore denied

[383] Het Utrechts Archief, 67, inv.nr. 28. On later marriages with members of the Huydecoper family, see e.g.: Ibid., 67, inv.nr. 49.
[384] Ibid., 67, inv.nr. 11.
[385] Ibid., 67, inv.nr. 10.

their ancestry could be also be appealing to the religious elites of their new hometowns.

Instead of forming exclusive 'memory ghettos', these migrant families therefore developed memory cultures that did not separate them from the discourses and narratives of their host societies but in fact proved highly permeable. Migrant families easily combined their own exile narratives with the religious and political discourses of their host societies, such as the hospitality towards their ancestors under Queen Elizabeth and her restoration of Protestantism in England or the narrative of the struggle against the Spanish oppressors in the Dutch Republic. The imagined diaspora of the numerous refugee families from the Southern Netherlands should therefore not be understood as constituting a dividing line between locals and strangers. It was not *despite*, but rather *because* of, the commemoration of their immigrant background that these families were able to enter local networks and attain a higher social status in their host society. Becoming Dutch, English or German did not imply oblivion of the diasporic past while the identification with the local society could perfectly be combined with the cultivation and reinvention of the exile narrative and identity.

These findings also carry some important methodological implications. While migrant diasporas are often understood as producing an exclusive form of identification with their own group, endogamy and the transmission of traditions and memories are often used as the most important indicators of the degree to which the diaspora remains extant.[386] However, as I hope to have shown, the notion of a transnational diaspora does not have to be diminished by the strengthening ties of the individual migrants with their host societies. In migration studies, a diaspora should therefore not be conceived of as something which is extractable from a given set of data on marriage patterns or social and economic behavior but rather as a horizon of belonging and identification which needs to be expressed only occasionally and which does not have to conflict with the loyalties migrants feel towards the communities where they reside. As the cases of the La Motte, Martens or Van der Meulen families show, the opposite development could also occur:

[386] See e.g.: Al and Lesger, 'Twee volken besloten binnen Amstels wallen'?; Van Gurp, 'Bosschenaars in de verstrooiing', pp. 420ff.; Leo Adriaenssen, 'De brabantisering van Haarlem in 1579-1609', in: *Noordbrabants historisch Jaarboek*, 24 (2007), pp. 102-135, there pp. 120ff.

remembering exile strengthened their feeling of belonging to their host society. Being Protestant, being English or Dutch and descending from an exiled family were identities so closely welded together that they were no longer separable.