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’. 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 organised 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 was 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 even 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 as Moses and Abraham: on occasions like the Accession 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 punctual 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 mindful of them in bonds and miseries, as being themselves in the body: saying, why, their case might have been ours, or may be yet, who knows? [Beller's italics]2

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.3

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
