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# Acknowledgments

After an effort of four years—a period occasionally troubled by frustration but quite enjoyable for most of the time—this work has (momentarily) come to a close. It was, altogether, a good time. Perhaps one of the more attractive features of an academic profession is that there is considerable freedom in making choices, and that the future is therefore unknown. This work, then, can to some extent be regarded as the product of opportunism—its existence being unimaginable four years ago.

I owe a lot of this opportunistic element to my promotor, Xander Tielens. His tentacles stretched across 5 000 miles. When I thought that our understanding on issues had finally settled, I often thought wrong: this scientific maverick could always find another twist or suggest an extension to an already voluminous work. I sometimes felt this thesis would cross the 1 000 mark had I followed all of Xander's suggestions. Understandably, it sometimes led to rather fierce debates. But in the process they also significantly improved the quality of this thesis.

One of the more defining moments, of course, was Xander's decision to move to a sunnier place on this planet. It was here, at NASA-Ames, that I came into contact with Jeff Cuzzi and, in a broader context, the great world of the meteoriticists. I really enjoyed the visits to the bear state, which also turned out to be very productive.

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I also enjoyed the many visits to our sister institute, the Anton Pannekoek, in Amsterdam. After a journey of ~3 hours by public transport I was always welcomed by a fresh cup of coffee and the familiar faces of Carsten Dominik and my comrade-in-arms, Dominik Paszun. It was really from the Dominiks that I learned the intimate details of the fabulous world of dusty aggregates.