

Acknowledgements

This is it man! It's game over man! I'm not going back in there man! These people survived science for over twenty years; so why don't you put them in charge man! But I have to admit, science is better than aliens.

The chapters of this thesis and the manuscripts not incorporated herein (see cv on page 226) result from an unbelievable series of opportunities that various friends and colleagues have offered me. The beginning step was my first visit to the office of Henk Brinkhuis in the summer of 2000. After following several of his classes (and of other people from our group) during my undergraduate, I decided to do my masters with him which started in the spring of 2001. Fortunately, he had just been on Ocean Drilling Program Leg 189 in the Southern Ocean, and he had me work on dinocysts from the vital Eocene-Oligocene transitions recovered during that leg. From the start, it was clear that the dinocyst data should be combined with some carbonate geochemistry, which was planned to be done by shipboard party member Stephen Schellenberg. Stephen, at that time, was a Post-doc with Jim Zachos in at the University of California at Santa Cruz. When the dinocyst work was done, Henk, Stephen and Jim arranged for me to go to Santa Cruz in 2002 and do these analyses myself. While in Santa Cruz, Jim suggested me to apply for the undergraduate student trainee position on ODP Leg 208 on the Walvis Ridge, which I immediately did.

In the mean while, Henk had tried several times to receive funding from the Netherlands organisation for scientific research for a PhD student to focus on the PETM, but these proposals were hardly taken seriously. Later that year, it was indeed decided that I could sail on ODP Leg 208 during March to May 2003, and we recovered fantastic cores through the PETM and discovered the *Elmo* horizon. Again, in the mean while, Henk and also Andy Lotter were gathering money for a PhD student from various sources: the Laboratory of Palaeobotany and Palynology Foundation, the TNO-Utrecht University Biogeology Center and the (then still) Faculty of Biology, literally squeezing out all dollars and cents. Finally, they managed, and offered this position to me. They even allowed me to work on the palynomorph-barren sections from the Walvis Ridge. In addition, Henk got to sail on the Arctic Coring Expedition (Integrated ODP Expedition 302) in the summer of 2004, and they had the sheer luck to recover a PETM section from there too, which was ideally suited for organic proxy-work, including dinocysts. Henk invited me to do the palynological analyses on the PETM. Altogether, a series of cases where I was at the right time in the right place enabled me to work on both deep marine subtropical carbonates from the

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Walvis Ridge, as well as organic-rich siliciclastics from the North Pole. It can be worse...

The man who was the initiation to this and has remained a continuous driving force (not only behind the scenes) is Henk Brinkhuis. So thank you Henk for all the grappa-hangovers and for being such a close friend despite the fact that I picked some forams for a thesis with you as a co-promotor. My promotor, Andy Lotter, who has made the unimaginable transition from a Holocene Swis..err., Central European Lake-guy to almost a true early Paleogene marine geologist, thank you for all the help and support. I would also like to thank Jim Zachos for having me in Santa Cruz during my masters and inviting me to sail on ODP Leg 208. Thanks Jim, thanks a lot! During Leg 208 I got to know Lucas Lourens and I really appreciate the way we are cooperating and constantly discussing results: thanks! Also many thanks to Dick Kroon for having me in his lab for running the 1263 PETM bulk isotope records and dissolving some *Elmo* forams. Thanks also to all the people in Dick's department that helped me running these samples. It has been a pleasure to get into some hardcore organic geochemistry together with Stefan Schouten, Jaap Sinninghe Damsté, Gert-Jan Reichart and Mark Pagani. I enjoyed discussions on the data from this thesis with Jerry Dickens and he was a great help in improving the quality of several of the manuscripts. Many thanks to all of you!

ODP and now IODP expeditions come with large and good scientific parties. I would like to thank the scientific parties of ODP Legs 189 and 208 and the ACEX. In particular, Stephen A. Schellenberg (I still keep the direction indicator of the CRX), Catherine Stickley (STICK!), Ursula (Ulla) Röhl, and Ellen Thomas. Also, Jan Backman, Steve Bohaty, Gabe Bowen, Julie Bowles, Tim Bralower, Ken Caldeira, Erica Crouch, Rob DeConto, Gerald Dickens, Simone Galeotti, Sam Gibbs, Phil Gingerich and Frits Hilgen (for some Wyoming dust biting), Ian Harding, Chris Hollis, Matt Huber, Cédric John, Clay Kelly, Paul Koch, K.C. Lohmann, Kate Moran, Ken Miller, Simonetta Monechi, Paul Pearson, Jörg Pross, Isabella Raffi, Domenico Rio, Bas van de Schootbrugge, Birger Schmitz, Lisa Sloan, Debby Thomas, Scott Wing, and many others, thanks! I would also like to thank the people at the various core repositories, particularly Gar Esmay (thanks also for proper curation of the UST) and Walter Hale.

Importantly, I thank the Palaeobotanical and Palynological Society Utrecht (PPGU) for moral support and espresso supply. And, of course, all people from our group, including office mates Merlijn en Jeroen, but also other staff, post-docs and PhDs Timme & Franci (Giacomo and his first word), Ollie, Walter, Tom, Lenny, Marloes, (Holger, I'll mention you below at TNO, ok?), Rike, Wolfram, Nina, Frederike, Emi, Micha, Peter, Welmoed and Alice. Invaluable were also Marjolein, Natasja, Jan, Ton, Leonard and Zwier. Robin D. and Peter B. did and are doing a great job with their Masters projects. People from TNO: Oscar

Acknowledgements

Abbink, who was also involved in arranging funding for my project. Dirk Munsterman, Roel Verreusel, Frans (Pa) Bunnik, (Holger, I think I mentioned you above at LPP) thanks! Also the people from the strat-pal (Jan Willem Zacheriasse en Tanja Kouwenhoven for their help with foraminifer taxonomy and Hemmo, Martin, Anja and others) and Organic Geochemistry (CSI-Utrecht, particularly Cornelia, Diana en Elisabeth who helped me with extracting lipids for TEX₈₆ and BIT analyses), thanks!

Finally, the ones that have really always supported me in an incredible way: Jos, Puck, Fieke en ook Bas, ik hou van jouw. Dank! De Polkanaria's Bas, Marten, Martine and Sandor, thanks for the songs with more than two chords! Oma, dank voor de eindeloze Rummicub en vooral Canasta dagen! Also the rest of the Families Sluijs and vd Lest (sorry gasten, ik heb geen ruimte voor 600 namen, er waren volgens de leescommissie al genoeg bladzijden gevuld met onzin). Further, my Utrecht friends Akkie, Naomi, Annelies, Ralph (dank voor de reislustigheid en zo meer), Daan en Remke, (ROE)L! of was het nou (PIM, Jack?), Paddy en Chrissie, Martijn en Judith, Kleine Joost, Jeroen en Susannie, Grote Joost, Willem, Jochem... and many others (you know who you are) from De Bastaard, including Arnold! Finally, I would like to thank the cover design team Puck and Fieke, and also Daan and Martijn, and my paranimfen Nina en Jos.