The Artful Hermit. Cardinal Odoardo Farnese’s religious patronage and the spiritual meaning of landscape around 1600
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PREFACE

Both my historical awareness and fascination for Rome date from my first years at secondary school. One of the first persons I remember from that period is my history teacher, who was just as new to the school as I was. Before being employed, he had spent time doing historical research in Rome, and he used to tell us fascinating stories about its modern society containing so many remnants of the grand history of the Eternal city. When I finished university, I encountered my history-teacher again, and I realised that it had been his enthusiastic stories that stood at the basis of my own interest in Rome and its history.

The subject of landscape I discovered towards the end of my undergraduate studies, when I became fascinated with early nineteenth-century German landscape painting. The works by Joseph Anton Koch (1768-1839) proved to be open to all kinds of different interpretations, from religious and nationalistic to poetic and geological messages. Koch himself located the beginnings of landscape painting, which he consciously sought to recreate in his own day, during the early Seicento in Rome. This seemed to imply something about the meaning of early seventeenth-century landscape painting as well, but what? When Bert Treffers suggested to me to take this phenomenon and the Camerino degli Eremiti as subjects for my graduate research, the lines coincided and I embarked upon the project of which the following pages are the result.

My supervisors stimulated, helped, and lavished their critique on me. Bert Treffers never lost his faith in the project although I must have given him a hard time reading several drafts. Bram Kempers was equally supportive from the time he decided to take me on as his Ph.D. student. It was thanks to him that I was able to come to Amsterdam, get an institutional embedding of my project within the Huizinga-Institute and embark upon a new phase in my life. It is thanks to their discriminating eyes, the formulation of my ideas greatly improved along the way.

During my sojourns in Rome, many others were important to this book and to me personally. Sible de Blaauw, Eric Moormann, Andrew Hopkins, Sue Russell, Stefano Pierguidi, and many other friends have put up with my ongoing quest on Odoardo Farnese and his collection of landscapes. Along the way, Elisabeth Cropper and Charles Dempsey – with whom I studied in 2000 – Erich Schleier and Roberto Zapperi stimulated me to proceed. In the last phase of the manuscript, help and suggestions came from Ellinoor Bergvelt, Sible de Blaauw, Machtelt Israëls, Jan de Jong, Charlie Smid, Christina Strunck and Jean-François Uginet. Eric Moormann, Sandra Langereis and Harald Hendrix aided me in understanding and translating Italian and Latin
citations, and Andrew Hopkins scrutinised and corrected my English text.

Institutional support was crucial for this project. The Istituto Olandese a Roma, Ministero degli Affari Esteri of Italy, University of Amsterdam, the Reiman-de Bas Fonds, Fulbright Foundation, Radboud Stichting and Hendrik Muller Vaderlandsch Fonds supported periods of research and study in both Italy and the United States. The staff at various libraries and archives in Naples, Rome (especially at the Vatican Library, Teresianum and Bibliotheca Hertziana), Parma, Piacenza, Washington (Carmelite Institute at Whitefriars Hall) and Baltimore (Johns Hopkins) patiently provided me with everything I thought I needed.

More close at hand, in Amsterdam, the Huizinga Institute created a most stimulating context for reflecting on the different aspects of my research; it was there that I had many opportunities to present parts of my research, and enter many fruitful discussions with my fellow-Ph.D. students on how to tackle the problems related to artistic, cultural and religious history. Apart from that, I always found a willing ear and stimulating response of the staff at Huizinga for all my ideas and plans for travelling and researching abroad. My thanks also go to Dos Elshout, who willingly shared his office with me during these years of work and study.

Finally, it has been another historian, Martijn, who shared my troubles during the last phase of finishing the manuscript - literally. I made him finish his own book in Rome, during the hottest summer ever experienced there (since 1872), and he in turn made me relax on the Italian seashore, trying to find my own balance between otium and negotium.