## Contents

1 Introduction .......................................................... 13
   1.1 Motivation and Outline of this Thesis .......................... 13
   1.2 The Life-Cycle of Massive Stars ............................... 15
   1.3 Interferometry and the Quest for Spatial Resolution ........ 18
      1.3.1 The turbulent Earth atmosphere ......................... 18
      1.3.2 Speckle interferometry and adaptive optics imaging ... 19
      1.3.3 Long-baseline interferometry ............................. 20

2 Principles of Long-Baseline Interferometry ......................... 21
   2.1 Basics of Interferometry ........................................ 21
   2.2 Interferometric Observables ...................................... 23
      2.2.1 Visibility ................................................ 23
      2.2.2 Closure phase and bispectrum ............................ 23
      2.2.3 Differential observables .................................. 25
   2.3 Array Geometry and Optical Path Delays ....................... 26
   2.4 Fringe Signal Coding ........................................... 26
      2.4.1 Coaxial beam combination ................................ 26
      2.4.2 Multiaxial beam combination ............................. 27
   2.5 The van-Cittert-Zernike Theorem ............................... 28
      2.5.1 Basic analytic visibility profiles ......................... 28

3 The IOTA/IONIC3 Interferometer ...................................... 31
   3.1 Overview and Context ........................................... 32
   3.2 Instrument Design and Signal Coding ........................... 32
   3.3 Constructing the interferograms ............................... 33
      3.3.1 Extracting the visibility using the Continuous Wavelet Transform ........................................... 37
      3.3.2 Extracting the closure phase ............................. 39
## 4 The VLTI/AMBER Interferometer

4.1 Optical Design and Signal Coding
   4.1.1 The VLT interferometer and its infrastructure
   4.1.2 The AMBER instrument
4.2 AMBER Data Reduction Pipeline
4.3 Determining Wavelength Shifts
4.4 Data Selection
   4.4.1 Photometric selection
   4.4.2 Fringe SNR selection
   4.4.3 Piston selection
4.5 Data Averaging and Calibration
4.6 Investigating the Dependence of AMBER Results on the Bad Pixel Mask

## 5 Image Reconstruction Algorithms

5.1 Overview and Context
5.2 Reconstruction of Simple Binary Structure
5.3 Reconstruction of Complex Structure
5.4 Reconstruction of Complex, Extended Structure: The IAU Imaging Beauty Contest 2006
5.5 Conclusions

## 6 Radiative Transfer Modeling of the Active Accretion Disk around MWC 147

6.1 Overview and Context
6.2 Introduction
6.3 Observations and Data Reduction
   6.3.1 PTI
   6.3.2 VLTI/AMBER
   6.3.3 VLTI/MIDI
   6.3.4 Complementary Speitzer/IRS spectra
6.4 Results
   6.4.1 MIR spectrum
   6.4.2 Geometric model fits
      6.4.2.1 Wavelength-dependent characteristic sizes
6.5 Interpretation
   6.5.1 Wavelength-dependent size and comparison with analytic disk models
   6.5.2 The correlated spectrum – indications of grain growth
6.6 2-D Radiative Transfer Simulations
   6.6.1 SED analysis
Contents

7.5.4.4 Numerical molecular hydrodynamic simulations 124
7.5.4.5 Possible precession mechanisms 126
7.5.5 The IRS2 companion and flow interaction with the IRS2 UC H II region 128
7.5.6 Outflow structures from IRS1 at larger spatial scales 129
7.6 Evidence for Triggered Star Formation in the NGC 7538 Star Forming Region 129
7.7 Summary and Conclusions 130

8 Visual/Infrared Interferometry of the Orion Trapezium stars θ Ori C and D 133
8.1 Overview and Context 133
8.2 Introduction 136
8.3 Observations and Data Reduction 137
  8.3.1 Bispectrum speckle interferometry 137
  8.3.2 IOTA long-baseline interferometry 140
8.4 Aperture Synthesis Imaging 141
8.5 Model Fitting 143
  8.5.1 Binary model fitting for θ Ori C 143
  8.5.2 Resolved structure around θ Ori D: Potential detection of a companion 146
8.6 Results 146
  8.6.1 Preliminary physical orbit and dynamical masses of the θ Ori C binary system 146
  8.6.2 Dynamical masses and parallaxes 150
  8.6.3 The orbital parameters in the context of reported periodicities 151
  8.6.4 Nature of the θ Ori C components 151
  8.6.5 Nature of the potential θ Ori D companion 154
8.7 Conclusions 155

9 Near-Infrared Interferometry of η Carinae using VLTI/AMBER 157
9.1 Overview and Context 157
9.2 Introduction 159
9.3 AMBER Observations and Data Processing 163
9.4 Observational Results and Interpretation 166
  9.4.1 Comparison of the observed wavelength dependence of the visibility with the NLTE radiative transfer model of Hillier et al. (2001) 166
  9.4.2 Continuum visibilities 171
    9.4.2.1 Comparison of the continuum visibilities with the Hillier et al. (2001) model predictions 171
    9.4.2.2 Comparison of the VINCI and AMBER continuum visibilities 172
  9.4.3 Elongated shape of the continuum intensity distribution 173
9.4.4 Continuum-corrected visibilities .......................................................... 174
  9.4.4.1 Continuum-corrected visibility in the Brγ emission line ................. 174
  9.4.4.2 Continuum-corrected visibility in the He I emission line ............... 178
9.4.5 Differential Phases and Closure Phases ................................................. 179
9.4.6 Modeling with an inclined aspherical wind geometry ............................. 180
9.4.7 Feasibility of the detection of the hypothetical hot companion and the wind-wind
  interaction zone ....................................................................................... 184
  9.4.7.1 A simple binary continuum model .................................................. 184
  9.4.7.2 Can AMBER detect a He I wind-wind interaction zone shifted a few
  mas from the primary wind? ................................................................. 187
9.5 Conclusions ............................................................................................... 189
9.6 APPENDIX: Wavelength Calibration .......................................................... 191
9.7 APPENDIX: Continuum Uniform Disk and Gauss Diameter Fits ............... 192
9.8 APPENDIX: Visibility and Differential Phase of an Emission Line Object ........ 195

10 Summary and Outlook .................................................................................. 197
  10.1 Radiative Transfer Modeling of the Active Accretion Disk around MWC 147 ... 198
  10.2 Signatures of Outflow Precession from the Young High-Mass Star NGC 7538 IRS1 . 198
  10.3 Visual/Infrared Interferometry of the Orion Trapezium Stars θ Ori C and D .... 199
  10.4 Near-Infrared Interferometry of η Carinae using VLTI/AMBER ............ 200
  10.5 Future Perspectives ............................................................................ 201

List of Publications ......................................................................................... 202
Curriculum Vitae .......................................................................................... 207
Acknowledgements ...................................................................................... 209
Bibliography ............................................................................................... 211