Ion induced radiation damage on the molecular level
Alvarado Chacon, Fresia

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It was more than six years ago when I left the warmth of my country in order to pursue a dream. Now that I am very close to achieve it, I can only say *How time flies when one has fun!* I still remember the day when I boarded that plane on the way to Russia, afraid of the cold weather and the new language but extremely excited about how many new things I will learn. At that moment, I did not know that I will board many other planes and that my main objective will be finally accomplished here in Groningen. All this *flying time* which passed so fast would not have been the same without all the nice people who helped to make it *fun*!

And as the story is long, the list of people who participated in the track of “making a dream come true” is also long and I do not want to skip anyone.

First of all, I want to thank my present supervisors: without them the experimental research carried out for this thesis would have been impossible. Thomas, thanks for believing in me since the beginning. Thanks for including me in all the bio-activities and giving me the opportunity of participating in so many conferences and collaborations. That was really great! Thanks also for helping me in the process of “making career”. Ronnie, thanks for trying to teach me atomic physics during four years and stand all my bad jokes! Thanks to both of you for reading my thesis again and again... and again and also for giving useful comments and suggestions. Thanks also for correcting my papers with so much patience. Thanks for all the nice conversations. Reinhard, thanks for all the comments and questions which made me understand the physics behind my experiment much better. Thanks for being there in spite that you were not my official supervisor. I want also to thank the three of you for encouraging within the Atomic Physics group (ATF), the social atmosphere it has.

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I was very lucky that during my PhD time, my research topic was part of COST Action P9: RADAM. This European network started exactly the same year that my PhD contract began. All meetings and collaborations from this network and the recently started ITSLEIF were very valuable for my PhD research. Every conference, meeting or visit I encountered a lot of interesting scientists from different areas willing to interchange knowledge and ideas.

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During my PhD time I also had the opportunity to collaborate with different groups. In the first month after arriving to the Netherlands I was already sent to Amsterdam to do measurements in the group of Mark Vrakking. Thanks to Mark for hosting me and thanks to Franck Lepine for performing the experiments with me, although I had no experience and was even scared of the turbo pumps. Thanks also to Tania and Yongfeng for the company. But this was only the beginning. In this four years, I made several visits to Caen in France, for the experiments with clusters. Thanks to my collaborators there for making our beam times such a pleasant experience, actually the best were the night shifts, the fridge was always full!! Thanks to Bernd, Bruno, Jimmy, Virgil and all the co–workers from CIRIL/GANIL.

France is one of my favorite places for going to conferences and doing experiments, therefore I was not against of doing some measurements in Lyon in the group of Serge Martin. Thanks to Li, Richard, LiBin, Jerome and Serge for letting me put some sugar in your setup. Travelling from Groningen to France was not enough. Later on, Austria became one of my favorite destinations. I was a few times visiting our friends in Innsbruck, in the group of Tilmann Märk. Special thanks to Paul Scheier for having the doors of his group’s lab open for me. Thanks also to Stefan, Fabio and the rest of the group for hosting me during my visits.

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