

Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Metallic point contacts as a physical tool	5
2.1	Electron focusing	5
2.2	Normal-metal contacts	8
2.3	Superconducting contacts	10
2.4	Tunneling phenomena	11
3	Fundamentals of PCS theory	17
3.1	Ballistic regime	17
3.2	Backflow current	19
3.3	Background	23
3.4	Diffusive regime	25
3.5	Thermal regime	28
3.6	Heterocontacts	30
3.7	Superconducting contacts	34
3.7.1	S-c-N contacts	34
3.7.2	S-c-S contacts	36
4	Experimental techniques	41
4.1	Fabrication of point contacts	41
4.1.1	Thin films	41
4.1.2	Needle-anvil	42
4.1.3	Shear method	42
4.1.4	Lithography	43
4.1.5	Break junctions	43
4.2	Sampling of point contacts	45
4.3	Electronic methods and schema	46
4.4	Point-contact drivers	50
5	PCS of quasiparticle excitations	53
5.1	Electron–phonon interaction	53
5.1.1	Alkali metals	53
5.1.2	Noble metals	58
5.1.3	Bivalent metals	60

5.1.4	Magnetically ordered metals	62
5.1.5	Polyvalent metals	64
5.1.6	Transition metals	69
5.2	Electron–magnon interaction	76
5.3	Alloys and compounds	78
5.4	Local vibrations	81
5.5	Heterocontacts	87
5.6	Two-phonon processes	89
6	PCS of nonphononic scattering mechanisms	99
6.1	Paramagnetic impurities	99
6.1.1	Kondo scattering	99
6.1.2	Spin glass	103
6.1.3	Size effect	106
6.2	Two-level systems	107
6.3	Crystal field	112
6.4	Valence and spin fluctuations	118
7	Thermal effects in point contacts	125
7.1	Thermal conductivity of point contacts	125
7.2	Thermoelectric effects in ballistic regime	127
7.3	Thermal regime in clean metals	130
7.4	Heterocontacts in thermal regime	134
8	Point contacts in the magnetic field	139
8.1	Magnetoresistance	139
8.2	Magnetooscillations	142
8.3	EPI in a magnetic field	146
8.4	Magnetofingerprints	149
9	Electrical fluctuations in point contacts	153
9.1	Physics of noise	153
9.2	Two-level systems	154
9.3	Point-contact noise spectroscopy	158
10	Point contacts under irradiation	165
10.1	Relaxation processes	166
10.2	Rectification in point contacts	167
10.3	Study of phonon relaxation	169
10.4	Thermal effects	171
11	PCS of semimetals, semiconductors, and dielectrics	175
11.1	Localization effects	175
11.2	Thermal transport	179
11.3	Electrical transport	184

11.4	Contacts between dielectrics	189
12	PCS of superconductors	193
12.1	Phonon structure in superconducting contacts.....	193
12.2	Spectroscopy of the energy gap	200
12.2.1	Simple metals	200
12.2.2	Magnetic field behavior	205
12.2.3	Compounds	209
12.3	Spectroscopy of the spin polarization	211
12.4	Large contacts	214
13	PCS of high-T_c and other uncommon superconductors ...	223
13.1	Selection rules and contact models	224
13.2	$\text{La}_{1.8}\text{Sr}_{0.2}\text{CuO}_4$	226
13.3	1:2:3 compounds	230
13.4	Bi and Hg cuprates	236
13.5	Borocarbides	238
13.6	Organic superconductors	242
13.7	MgB_2	244
13.8	Sr_2RuO_4	246
14	PCS of heavy-fermion systems	251
14.1	Heavy-fermion phenomena	251
14.2	Normal state	254
14.2.1	PC spectra interpretation	254
14.2.2	Scrutiny of URu_2Si_2	256
14.3	Superconducting state	262
14.3.1	S-c-N contacts	262
14.3.2	S-c-S contacts	266
14.3.3	Break junctions	271
15	New trends in research	281
15.1	Conductance quantization	281
15.2	From one-atom contact to one-atom wire	283
15.3	Carbon nanotubes	286
15.4	Study of mesoscopic particles	288
15.5	Light-induced electron focusing	289
	Index	293