Contents

1. Introduction 1

2. Nonlinear Electrodynamics: Quantum Theory 3
2.1 Introduction to Proper-Time Methods 3
2.2 Polarization Tensor in External Fields 12
2.2.1 Derivation of $\Pi^{\mu\nu}$ 14
2.2.2 Applications 20
2.3 Induced Electromagnetic Current 32
2.4 Schwinger's Equivalence Theorem and the Axial-Vector Anomaly 46
2.4.1 Equivalence Theorem 46
2.4.2 Axial-Vector Anomaly 57

3. Nonlinear Electrodynamics: Effective-Action Approach 61
3.1 A First Look at Light Propagation 62
3.2 Light Cone Condition 65
3.2.1 Effective-Action Charge 69
3.2.2 Weak Electromagnetic Fields 70
3.2.3 Strong Magnetic Fields 71
3.2.4 Superstrong Magnetic Fields 74
3.3 Light Cone Condition for Various Vacua 79
3.3.1 "Unified Formula" 79
3.3.2 Light Cone Condition for Low-Energy Phenomena 83
3.3.3 Light Cone Conditions for High-Energy Phenomena . . 88
3.3.4 Measurability and Causality 89
3.4 Photon Splitting 93
3.5 QED Effective Action at Finite Temperature to One Loop 99
3.5.1 Imaginary-Time Formalism 101
3.5.2 Covariant Formulation 107
3.5.3 Effective Action 109
3.5.4 The $\bar{A}_u$ Field 114
3.5.5 Temperature-Induced Pair Production at One Loop? . . 117

3.5.6 Discussion . . . 118
3.6 QED Effective Action at Finite Temperature: Two-Loop Dominance . . . 119
3.6.1 Two-Loop Effective Action of QED at Low Temperature . . . 121
3.6.2 Light Propagation . . . 131
3.6.3 Photon Splitting . . . 145
3.6.4 Pair Production . . . 150
3.6.5 Discussion . . . 153

4. QED in Two Spatial Dimensions . . . 155
4.1 General Features of QED_{2+1} . . . 156
4.1.1 Classical Properties . . . 156
4.1.2 Quantum Theory . . . 158
4.2 Parity-Invariant QED_{2+1} . . . 161
4.3 The Effective Action for Irreducible QED_{2+1} . . . 165
4.3.1 QED_{2+1} for Nonconstant Fields . . . 174

5. Scattering of Light by Light . . . 181
5.1 Photon–Photon Scattering at Low Energies . . . 181
5.2 High-Energy Photon Scattering Close to the Forward Direction . . . 184

Appendices . . . 191
A Units, Metric and the Gamma Matrices . . . 191
B Invariants and Spectral Representation of the Maxwell Field Strength Tensor . . . 193
B.1 Invariants . . . 193
B.2 Spectral Representation of $F^{\mu\nu}$ . . . 195
B.3 Applications . . . 197
C More about the Commutator $\sigma^{\mu\nu}$ of Dirac Matrices . . . 198
D Elementary Calculations . . . 204
D.1 ϵ expansions . . . 204
D.2 Identities for Special Functions . . . 204
D.3 Nonstandard Integrals . . . 205
D.4 ϵ-Integration Techniques . . . 205
D.5 $\Pi^{\mu\nu}$ for Strong Magnetic Fields . . . 209
D.6 Generalized Gamma Function and Hurwitz Zeta Function . . . 213
D.7 Q Factor for Strong Magnetic Fields . . . 215
D.8 Summation Techniques for Finite-Temperature Physics 218
E Finite-Temperature Coordinate Frame . . . 221
E.1 Application 1 (Sect. 3.5) . . . 224
E.2 Application 2 (Sect. 3.6) . . . 227

F Two-Loop Effective Action of QED at Zero Temperature 227

References 230

Index 237