Epilogue

The work presented in this thesis was carried out in the Physics of Nanodevices group at the University of Groningen, between April 2004 and June 2008. Only about half a year before the start of this project, during my master's research and research internship, I realized that I really enjoyed doing experimental work, and decided I wanted to do a PhD. Looking back now, I have never regretted that choice, although things did not go quite as planned (as if they ever). From my interviews before the start of the project, it seemed that it was simply a matter of measuring spin accumulation and then the real work would start. How wrong were we... Clearly we had underestimated the amount of issues (mainly technical) that had to be solved, I seriously think the lock-in amplifier is the only item of the entire set-up that made it to the end unchanged. Nevertheless, it is really an undescribable feeling to finally succeed in what you have been working for, and when you are, at that moment, running your long-anticipated experiment and it works!

The results I presented in this thesis are the result of work that I did together with students, technicians and other colleagues. Therefore I want to use this opportunity to thank a number of people, some for directly contributing to this work, others simply for creating a pleasant environment to live and work.

First and foremost, I want to thank Caspar van der Wal for being the best supervisor I could have wished for. I really enjoyed working together and owe you lots of thanks for everything that you have taught me and for all your hard work that made you much more than just a supervisor. Your critical view and perseverance made all of my work and, in fact, my whole working style so much better, that I am sure I will profit from that my entire career. That you have not always made my life easier, could not have been illustrated better than in the cartoon entitled "Erik and Caspar in Dilbertland" in our coffee room, about the seemingly infinite loops of making changes to conference abstracts, papers, and (of course) this thesis.

Also, I want to thank Bart van Wees, not only for giving me the opportunity

to do this project, but also because it was your course on mesoscopic physics that inspired me to do a PhD your group. I am impressed by your physical insight and intuition, and your ability as a "devil's advocate" to always ask the questions I was hoping to avoid, or find weak points in any line of reasoning.

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During my time as a PhD student I worked closely together with Alex Lerescu, Ji Liu and Javaid Iqbal (aka Goraya). Alex, thank you for teaching me the basics of device fabrication and doing measurements at a few milliKelvin, I really wish that you could have joined in the success that came with the new fridge. Ji, I wish you good luck in writing your thesis. Goraya, you are now the man in charge, I hope you will become a successful experimentalist!

I also owe a lot of thanks to the students that I worked with, Mikel Boute, Friederich Limbach, Joost Flipse and Sander Kamerbeek, your work ended up in this thesis one way or another. Thanks for all the help, I enjoyed being your supervisor.

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