


‘Habitually Embodied’ Memories: The Materiality and Physicality of Music in Hardy’s Poetry

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This article reads Thomas Hardy’s many musical instrument poems as the meeting point for the concerns of several critical fields: material culture, memory studies and the emerging interdisciplinary field of musical haptics. Close readings illuminate not only their relevance to such enquiries, but also how Hardy’s manipulation of poetic form engenders a tactile musicality or ‘poetics of touch’ (as Marion Thain puts it). This article focuses on the aspects of these poems which have undergone least exploration: the depiction of the bodily effort involved in music-playing. While some of the poems are critical favourites (‘Old Furniture’) many of those studied here are routinely overlooked.

A mnemonically-minded poet, Hardy wrote about the memories objects hold and the memories that may be mediated through them. For Hardy, the history of objects is inseparable from that of their now-dead owners: person and thing are tied together in memory. This is in part due to an object’s inherent tangibility, and musical instruments are particularly tactile objects, benefiting from the further mnemonic of music itself.

The core of the article considers Hardy’s late poem ‘Haunting Fingers: A Phantasy in a Museum of Musical Instruments’, which hears instruments speak out their memories of being touched, and through memory feel ‘old muscles travel/Over their tense contours’. Revisions to the manuscript show Hardy removing ‘death’ and privileging instead the immediacy of remembered touch.

Paying attention to the reading and note-taking Hardy did within nineteenth-century science, this article traces Hardy’s imaginative explorations of the processes involved in playing musical instruments back to discoveries about the workings of the unconscious. Saleeby, James, Maudesley and Bastian informed Hardy’s knowledge of the science behind music-playing, while musical haptics helps this study unpack why Hardy attends to the interactions which take place at the point of mechanical contact: finger to key, and to string.

English novelist and poet Thomas Hardy lived through the transformation of the Victorian world into a burgeoning modern society.¹ He is also a poet of memory, thematizing memory in his verse, as well as engaging with the mnemonic forms of traditional versification. It is telling that in 1917, Hardy thanks J.J. Foster for sending the ‘beautiful volumes’ of *Miniature Painters*, but finds them

¹ I am indebted to the three anonymous readers of this article for their helpful suggestions in revising the article. The research presented here was partly funded by the AHRC as part of my doctorate, and much more recently owes its finished form to the ‘Diseases of Modern Life’ project at the University of Oxford, funded by the European Research Council under grant agreement 340121.

sad, too, as one looks at the various representations of human beauty and thinks how evanescent it all is, and how much more than has here left a record behind has passed utterly away without a trace remaining.²

There is an anxiety here about evanescence, that there might be no record of the various works and days of humankind. It was this sort of concern which motivated Hardy to be an obsessive documenter of experiences, and to allow himself to be affected by those material objects asserting the presence of the past through their physical form, as musical instruments do in the poems I study here.

For all society's changes, though, the world was still something to be understood and appreciated through the senses, physiologically as much as intellectually, and nineteenth-century scientists and philosophers theorized the role of the mind-body relationship, as evidenced in Hardy's own note-taking (see below). Any attempt to represent the sensory body (where size of physical feature is in accordance with the density of sensory nerves dedicated to it) reminds us of quite how much the hands dominate in the way the world is experienced. Our hands discover, then use, objects and are often the first point of contact with any surface: 'hands and fingers lead the investigation', as Marion Thain's phrase about Hardy puts it.³ However, my concern here is with a particular category of objects – musical instruments – and as scholars of musical haptics (explained below) point out, it is 'no accident that the parts of the body that interact with [musical] instruments – lips, fingers, hands – are the most highly populated by haptic receptors'.⁴ In focusing on such interactions, I seek to reveal Hardy as a near-scientific observer of the processes (and body parts) involved in music-playing, who imagines a possible aftermath musical instruments might have through memory.

Hardyean hands have undergone previous critical treatment, with J. Hillis Miller writing a chapter on 'Hands in Hardy'.⁵ Hillis Miller outlines the 'many ordinary idioms in English [which] use "hand" in literal or figurative fashion' and hypothesizes that 'what is most distinctive, singular, about a given writer may be identified by way of his or her manipulation of hand idioms'.⁶ Here, I am less interested in Hardy's use of hand idioms than his obsession with the use of fingers and hands to play musical instruments, as well as how this bodily

² Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy: 1914–1919, Volume 5*, ed. Richard Little Purdy and Michael Millgate (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985): 231.

³ Marion Thain, 'Thomas Hardy's Poetics of Touch', *Victorian Poetry* 51/2 (2013): 129–45, at 133. Thain is discussing the poem 'Old Furniture'.

⁴ Sile O'Modhrain and R. Brent Gillespie, 'Once More, with Feeling: Revisiting the Role of Touch in Performer-Instrument Interaction', in *Musical Haptics*, ed. Stefano Papetti and Charalampos Saitis (Cham: Springer, 2018): 11–27, at 12. Hardy was purportedly averse to being touched, with a removed reference in the biography to his 'avoid[ing] being touched by his playmates' (Florence Emily Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, ed. Michael Millgate (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984): 502). However, since this characteristic is associated with Hardy's schooldays, and his second wife Florence both chose not to reference it in the actual text and admitted that while 'This peculiarity never left him ... Probably no one else ever observed this' (502), it seems reductive to give it too much credence.

⁵ Hillis Miller also wrote 'Modernist Hand-Writing in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*', in *A Companion to Thomas Hardy*, ed. Keith Wilson (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009): 433–49, but this is of less relevance to my (poetic) enquiries here.

⁶ J. Hillis Miller, 'Hands in Hardy', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Thomas Hardy*, ed. Rosemarie Morgan (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010): 505–16, at 505.

input might be later retrieved as an output, channelled through a different body via memory.

Given the number of poems in which Hardy mentions music (one in eight has musical associations, according to Hold's estimate), I have had to define a strict perimeter.⁷ I focus only on those poems that foreground instruments manipulated primarily by the hands and fingers: keyboard and strings. Others have written on Hardy's use of singers and songs, or such cases as the (Aeolian) harp: here the viol/violin and the piano take precedence.⁸ Since this article focuses on the materiality of instruments and the physical body required to play them, I also limit my enquiries to literal instances of music, though Hardy's oeuvre is rich in musical metaphors.⁹ Finally, I leave Hardy's prose to other critics: the poems are my object of study, just as I argue that Hardy uses the forms of individual poems to study musical objects. This poetic focus is supported by Hillis Miller's claim that there is 'a thematic strand using hands that is threaded through Hardy's poems' which is 'not present ... in Hardy's fiction'.¹⁰

By way of methodological introduction, I point out two things. First, while this article does not lean heavily on Hardy's autobiography, his musical ancestry and knowledge as both a player and owner/inheritor of musical instruments is pertinent to the argument. Furthermore, as Edmund Gurney wrote in 1876, 'Few subjects in the present day are more widely discussed than music', and this was a discussion of which Hardy partook on a regular basis (as demonstrated below).¹¹ While Hardy's fictional output might see him remembered more in the rustic, folk customs of music, as a reader he was well-versed in the classical

⁷ Trevor Hold, *Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song-Composers* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2002): 401–2. Cited in Claire Seymour, 'Hardy and Music: Uncanny Sounds', in *A Companion to Thomas Hardy*, ed. Keith Wilson (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009): 223–38, at 225.

⁸ For book-length studies of Hardy and music, see Joan Grundy, *Hardy and the Sister Arts* (London: Macmillan, 1979), John Hughes 'Ecstatic Sound': *Music and Individuality in the Work of Thomas Hardy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001) and Mark Asquith, *Thomas Hardy, Metaphysics and Music* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). For song see Daniel Karlin, 'The Figure of the Singer in the Poetry of Thomas Hardy', in *The Achievement of Thomas Hardy*, ed. Phillip Mallett (London: Macmillan, 2000): 117–36 and C.M. Jackson-Houlston, 'Thomas Hardy's Use of Traditional Song', *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 44/3 (1989): 301–34. For the harp in Hardy see 'The Plucked Harp String: Desire, Courtship Ritual and the Debate Concerning Speech Theory' in Asquith, *Thomas Hardy Metaphysics and Music*, 78–103, as well as Mark Asquith, 'Philosophy, Metaphysics and Music in Hardy's Cosmic Vision', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Thomas Hardy*, ed. Rosemarie Morgan (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010): 187. I am also indebted to the list of writings concerned with 'Music and Dancing' that Paul Olsen lists in *A Thematic Guide to the Complete Poetry of Thomas Hardy*, typescript held at the University of Liverpool Library, 1983.

⁹ See Asquith, 'Hardy's Cosmic Vision', 188 and Seymour, 'Hardy and Music', 225, for a discussion of musical metaphors and examples of such in Hardy's prose.

¹⁰ Hillis Miller, 'Hands in Hardy', 511. Hillis Miller is referring to hands which appear without their presumed or expected accompanying bodies. Hands as part of a larger body engaged in labour are of course seen throughout Hardy's fiction, as analysed by Elaine Scarry in 'Work and the Body in Hardy and Other Nineteenth-Century Novelists', *Representations* 3 (1983): 90–123.

¹¹ Edmund Gurney, 'On Some Disputed Points in Music', *Fortnightly Review* 20/115 (Jul. 1876): 106–30, at 106. This is the opening phrase of the article. See Asquith, 'Hardy's Cosmic Vision', 188–90, for a detailed discussion of Hardy's readings in nineteenth-century musicology.

tradition: his notebooks contain quotations from Sir George Groves' newly published *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* and he excerpts a newspaper article which notes that 'four years (1810–13) gave us the men [Chopin, Liszt, Wagner and Schumann] who revolutionized an art which had been preparing itself for them since prehistoric times', to give just two examples of the many entries.¹² Secondly, I include findings from the emerging interdisciplinary field of musical haptics in explaining Hardy's poetic imagery. This is not to be anachronistic, but because this field is now revealing the haptic or mechanical aspects of music-playing, not just the neural, which Hardy naturally observed and commented on. Though in the role of amateur musician rather than scientist, Hardy shares musical haptics' interest in 'understand[ing] the role of haptic interaction in music experience and instrumental performance'.¹³

This article begins with a consideration of material culture, in order to establish the unique qualities of musical instruments as objects of a particular kind, with reference to the well-known poem 'Old Furniture'. The second section explores in detail how Hardy foregrounds the physical effort that goes into music-playing, linking this to ideas of embodiment and music's affective power (as well as that of dance). At the core of the article is a reading of 'Haunting Fingers', in conjunction with the revisions seen on the manuscript copy held at the Dorset County Museum. Finally, these revisions are linked to the scientific discussions of reflex actions, nerves and habit-forming Hardy read about in the nineteenth-century periodical press, in order to understand how the embodiment at work in playing musical instruments downplays the conscious mind in favour of the motions of such 'hands behind hands', as the famous image of Hardy's 'Old Furniture' puts it. A useful shorthand for the particular aspect of Hardyean music with which I'm concerned is the second of Tim Armstrong's foci in 'Hardy, History, and Recorded Music', namely 'music as performed on or by the human instrument – especially the fingertips'.¹⁴

By focusing on 'the human instrument' in Hardy, I seek to reposition him as a writer who foregrounded the body and its own possible resonances, alongside those of the (musical) instrument. In my focus on embodiment and the senses, this article is in dialogue with Benjamin Morgan's 'materialist aesthetics', that 'many writers in nineteenth-century Britain ... described aesthetic experience as an event during which the embodied corporeality of a person and an artwork came into contact', though for Hardy this is negotiated through the art-producing bodies of human and instrument, then further channelled through memory.¹⁵ Throughout, I emphasize the contradictions – even binary oppositions – musical instruments bring into focus for Hardy: their possibilities for profound sound, but also silence; from the painstakingly willed to the unconscious playing wrought of habit.

¹² Both of these are from Lennart A. Björk, ed., *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy: Volume 2* (London: Macmillan, 1985): 475–6 and 150. Björk notes that the second article, titled only 'Music', featured in Hardy's local paper, the *Dorset Chronicle* on 8 June 1903.

¹³ Stefano Papetti and Charalampos Saitis, 'Musical Haptics: Introduction', in *Musical Haptics*, ed. Stefano Papetti and Charalampos Saitis (Cham: Springer, 2018): 1–7, at 1.

¹⁴ Tim Armstrong, 'Hardy, History, and Recorded Music', in *Thomas Hardy and Contemporary Literary Studies*, ed. Tim Dolin and Peter Widdowson (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004): 153–66, at 153.

¹⁵ Benjamin Morgan, *The Outward Mind: Materialist Aesthetics in Victorian Science and Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017): 5–6.

Musical Instruments as Memory Objects

Hardy was born into a musical family and was an accomplished musician, playing regularly and maintaining an encyclopaedic knowledge of both folk and hymn tunes throughout his life.¹⁶ The Dorset County Museum holds the Hardy family music book, which was written in by three generations of Thomas Hardys, and handled – presumably – by even more family members. In his autobiography-disguised-as-biography, Hardy describes his child-self as 'precocious ... [able] to tune a violin when of quite tender years'.¹⁷ Musical instruments, then, were part of the Hardy household, since 'The children had a quaint old piano for their practice, over which [Jemima, Hardy's mother] would sigh because she could not play it herself', and Hardy inherited his father's violin, displaying it in his study at Max Gate.¹⁸ Homes, for Hardy, contain musical instruments. This is not to downplay his knowledge of classical music, but readers will more often encounter Hardy's instrumentalists (or their remaining instruments) in venues more intimate than the concert hall.

With many of Hardy's poems taking place inside a home, he wrote about the memories objects hold and the memories which may be mediated through them. The material turn would have made sense to a man who writes as if it is self-evident that, in Sherry Turkle's words, 'We live our lives in the middle of things. Material culture carries emotions and ideas with startling intensity': Hardy had been so startled, and startles his reader in turn.¹⁹ The history of an object, as depicted in Hardy's poems, is inseparable from the history of its owners: person and thing are tied together in memory. In a typical Hardy poem, though, the object owners tend to be already a memory themselves – dead before the poem begins.

Since the owner is dead, there is an inevitable divorce between object and subject. The initial wrench tends to precede the poem and becomes the poem's topic. Elaine Scarry discerns the ways in which Hardy characters interact with their material world, particularly via unintentional touchings. While Scarry writes about traces produced rather than physical objects, this is a productive way of reading Hardy's object memory, as she is concerned with 'The material record of the interaction between man and world'.²⁰ Scarry creates a four-tier 'hierarchy of signs' within Hardy's work. While 'Hardy prefers that signs be companions rather than survivors' of the experience, the musical instruments of his poems fall into the second category, 'signs that outlive the activity that produced them'.²¹ Like the letter to J.J. Foster with which I began, Scarry underscores Hardy's wish for acts to leave 'a record behind'. Musical instruments, though, outlive a reciprocal, co-produced activity, and are imagined by Hardy to keep a residual memory of the experience.

¹⁶ See Hughes, *Ecstatic Sound*, 156–7 for a comprehensive overview of Hardy's autobiographical links with, and knowledge of, a variety of musical styles.

¹⁷ Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, 19. Claire Seymour discusses other passages of note regarding music in the *Life* in 'Hardy and Music', 226.

¹⁸ Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, 19.

¹⁹ Sherry Turkle, 'Introduction: The Things that Matter', in *Evocative Objects: Things We Think With*, ed. Sherry Turkle (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011): 3–10, at 6.

²⁰ Scarry, 'Work and the Body', 92.

²¹ Scarry, 'Work and the Body', 93.

Hardy's much commented-on poem 'Old Furniture' (1917) looks at inheriting objects owned by one's ancestors. The main interest for Hardy is the furniture's former handlers, and the notion that these objects bear this history of touch:

I know not how it may be with others
Who sit amid relics of householdry
That date from the days of their mothers' mothers,
But well I know how it is with me
Continually.

I see the hands of the generations
That owned each shiny familiar thing
In play on its knobs and indentations,
And with its ancient fashioning
Still dallying (485)²²

Objects are afforded life, in this vision, through their inherent tangibility: touching makes an object memorable and endows it with both past and present life. It is a heavily domestic scene Hardy offers, foregrounding these 'relics of householdry' or what Victor Buchli calls 'home cultures'.²³ The 'sensual knowledge regarding the home' here figures in the next generation's handling of these same pieces.²⁴ While these objects are 'owned' the poem is less about ownership than interaction, especially since the furniture always outlasts its owner.²⁵ As Galia Benziman writes, this poem 'demonstrates how narrow and misleading is the perspective that usually guides us – that of the single lifespan', since this furniture's own biography spans several human lives.²⁶

Although this is a non-traumatic mnemonic encounter, Hardy's poem bears comparison with Hirschian postmemory. The objects as depicted here represent 'a generational structure of transmission embedded in multiple forms of mediation'.²⁷ While Hirsch deals primarily with the medium of photography, the idea that media 'carry not only information about the past but enable us to reach its emotional register' fits Hardy's portrayal.²⁸ In fact, Hardy does not just study 'the ways in which material objects carry memory traces from one generation to

²² All quotations from Hardy's poems are taken from *The Complete Poems: Variorum Edition*, ed. James Gibson (New York: Macmillan, 1978), with page numbers given in the text. The dates are given in brackets afterwards, with the proviso that unless Hardy dated them individually, this is the date of publication. However, it should be remembered that Hardy often wrote poems long before he published them.

²³ Victor Buchli, 'Households and "Home Cultures"', in *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*, ed. Dan Hicks and Mary C. Beaudry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010): 502–17, at 503.

²⁴ Buchli, 'Households and "Home Cultures"', 513.

²⁵ As J. Hillis Miller observes of 'Old Furniture', 'Here, as in all these poems, the material object or the material places survives. Those survivors occasion the spectral return of those who touched the objects or who were once present at the place they now haunt' ('Hands in Hardy', 513).

²⁶ Galia Benziman, *Thomas Hardy's Elegiac Prose and Poetry: Codes of Bereavement* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018): 58.

²⁷ Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012): 35 (original emphasis).

²⁸ Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 52.

the next', but also manages to abstract qualities from people themselves.²⁹ The conceit of the poem 'Heredity' (1917) is the objectification of inherited family features which, separate from both inheritors and ancestors, 'lives on' (434) outside the human life-span. Though anthropomorphized as a speaker, heredity seems more of an object in its ability to project 'trait and trace' (434), the stable thing that can remain. Hardy's note-taking evidences his following of nineteenth-century debates linking memory and heredity, such as Ewald Hering's belief that 'offspring carry on the memory of all the impressions that their ancestors acquired or received', or Henry Maudsley's notion that 'everybody, in the main lines of his thoughts, feelings & conduct, really recalls the experiences of his forefathers'.³⁰ In such a context, the direct link to the past the speaker of 'Old Furniture' seems to attain is no longer so strange.

Hardy's ability to imagine 'see[ing] the hands' comes from the signs of past touch on the 'Old Furniture': the reader intuits these things are 'shiny' because often touched (this same 'shine' returns later in the discussion of Hardy's musical instruments). The nature of this touching is telling too: rather than strict functional use, these objects have been touched by hands 'in play', 'dallying' – movements of affectionate purposelessness. The speaker's 'non-utilitarian ability' to observe this 'captures all the rich layers of meaning in the environment rather than just the flat contemporary surface': these memories of materiality enliven and repopulate the scene.³¹ To feel the 'knobs and indentations' betrays an intimate knowledge of the object's surface, both the knowledge of ancestors past and the speaker's presumed present engagement. As Patricia O'Neill notes, 'Hardy's aim is not to make the furniture a symbol for the dead, but to see the relationship between the objects and their possessors'.³² This relationship is, I argue, particularly true of Hardy's musical instruments, since they allow the human body to reach beyond its solo capabilities and create instead a dynamic interaction between two bodies.

The fourth and fifth stanzas of 'Old Furniture' introduce two more inherited objects: the clock and the viol. Again the focus is on fingers: 'a foggy finger,/ Moving', 'fingers are dancing': paired with a continuous verb, these fingers are forever moving. While these objects are supposedly stationary in the present, the poem seems to anticipate present movement from past sources:

Hands behind hands, growing paler and paler,
As in a mirror a candle-flame
Shows images of itself, each frailer
As it recedes, though the eye may frame
Its shape the same.

²⁹ Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 178.

³⁰ This first is Richard Heath's article discussing Hering's views, 'The Little Prophets of the Cevennes', *Contemporary Review* 49 (Jan. 1886), 131. Cited in Lennart A. Björk, ed., *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy, Volume 1* (London: Macmillan, 1985): 168. The second quotation is from an excerpt Hardy made from Maudsley's *Natural Causes and Supernatural Seemings* (1886). Cited in Björk, *Literary Notebooks 1*, 201.

³¹ Benziman, *Elegiac Prose and Poetry*, 58. Benziman reads 'Old Furniture's' final stanza in too negative a light in my opinion, seeing it as negating all that goes before. I instead focus on those stanzas where the history of touch holds the speaker rapt.

³² Patricia O'Neill, 'Thomas Hardy: Poetics of a Postromantic', *Victorian Poetry* 27/2 (1989): 129–145, 142.

On the clock's dull dial a foggy finger,
 Moving to set the minutes right
 With tentative touches that lift and linger
 In the wont of a moth on a summer night,
 Creeps to my sight.

On this old viol, too, fingers are dancing –
 As whilom – just over the strings by the nut,
 The tip of a bow receding, advancing
 In airy quivers, as if it would cut
 The plaintive gut. (486)

In this vision of generational memory, it is not people who live on but their 'hands' – memory become haptic feedback, the past (not just music) resonating at one's fingertips. For Hillis Miller, 'these ghostly hands are disembodied ... they are detached from any body, even a ghostly one'.³³ However, as Thain points out, Hardy visualizes 'the fingers on the fingerboard of an old instrument': in one sense, the speaker sees exactly what should be present in the appropriate place.³⁴ Hillis Miller overstates the case when he claims that 'these phantom hands ... can no longer either touch or be touched. They dramatically express a *Noli me tangere*.' As I will show, this does not account for the unique relationship between hands/fingers and those objects, especially musical instruments, that they touch.³⁵ Though the influence of past owners 'recedes', these past handlers still retain some aura of presence, particularly because by transforming the down-bow, up-bow sequence into 'receding, advancing', Hardy maintains a kind of perpetual motion.

The verse form itself also reasserts return in its outright repetitions – 'hands behind hands ... paler and paler' – as well through the use of the additional shortened last line, making the rhyme scheme ABABB. It is not just the eye which 'may frame/Its shape the same', but that Hardy's verse enacts a framing that builds 'the same' sonic and rhythmic units back into the structure, even while the lines' logic insists upon difference and loss.

These stanzas, which lead to the viol, are much more heavily punctuated than the earlier two, and therefore the rhythm of the lines – the poem's own music – starts to become more idiosyncratic. I mention this because Hardy may have been encouraged to think of his language in musical terms: he cut out a 1904 article from *Academy* called 'Musical Full Stops', which asked 'What would the critics and the cultivated public say of a writer who spread a sentence over many pages ... that contained not a single full stop and only a few commas?'.³⁶ The author claims that 'music-makers of to-day and the near past' do exactly that, by 'flow[ing] on in an uninterrupted stream of themes and motives worked into an intricate embroidery music'. For the author of this article at least, and Hardy its reader, writing and music shared the same need for phrasing to give it appreciable, comprehensible, shape.

³³ Hillis Miller, 'Hands in Hardy', 512.

³⁴ Thain, 'Thomas Hardy's Poetics of Touch', 134.

³⁵ Hillis Miller, 'Hands in Hardy', 516. Thain reads 'Old Furniture' much more convincingly, in my opinion, via phenomenology and the particularly tactile form of seeing the poem promotes ('Thomas Hardy's Poetics of Touch', 130–35).

³⁶ Björk, *Literary Notebooks 2*, 171. Björk's notes (p. 531) explain that this article is from *Academy*, lxvii (1 Oct 1904) 262–3.

O'Neill details how the original version of stanza five identified the viol as 'my father's', with the sixth stanza then dedicated to his playing. In this previous version, 'the ghosts of ditties' emanated from the violin, but, as O'Neill argues, 'It is much harder to visualize such ghosts than the "hands" and "fingers" and "face" in the rest of the poem'.³⁷ Rather than the ghostly presence, Hardy puts back the physical body parts next to the violin's own body (as O'Neill notes, there is a 'play on the double meaning of "gut"', further pointing to the violin as another body).³⁸ Hardy's revisions, removing the reference to his father, refuse to 'specify [y] the object in a way that would limit its universality', allowing the reader increased imaginative engagement with these memories.³⁹

Musical instruments are not normal possessions, but instead 'represent a very special class of objects'.⁴⁰ They require craft and skill to make, and ownership itself is not enough: they require craft and skill to use as they were intended – to play them. Musical instruments, then, are specialized possessions; indeed, O'Modhrain and Gillespie claim that 'As examples of tools that require fine motor control, they are hard to beat' because they are 'designed to be manipulated and to respond, through sound, to the finest nuances of movement'.⁴¹ Since musical instruments cannot be used (well) by everyone, they may also be more strongly associated with the identity of the owner, which certainly seems the case for Hardy. One way to put the distinctive relationship between musical instruments and human touch into perspective is to offer a counter-example: the use of architectural tools in 'Cathedral Façade at Midnight'.⁴² Trained as an architect and appreciative of the art form, this particular Hardy poem nevertheless views the sculptures 'Of prophet, king, queen, cardinal in state, / That dead men's tools had striven to simulate', but, despite the men's efforts, 'the stiff images stood irradiate', 'stiff' and 'stood' indicating passivity (703). Musical instruments avoid ever becoming merely 'dead men's tools' because, perhaps, their artistic productions are reliant on human touch, are produced in real-time. The memory, then, of such a profound debt to human touch seems to live on. Although Hardy's players are dead, their musical instruments retain powerful memories of exertion and embodiment (not to mention rhapsodic transport) and – somewhat miraculously – appear to remember for themselves. This will be further borne out by the subsequent sections.

With one of the goals of musical haptics to develop new instruments capable of increased haptic interaction, scholars have been led to consider the process of instrument-making:

musical instruments are not generally designed by engineers. Rather, they are designed by craftsmen and musicians – and usually by ways of many iterations of artistry and skill. Oftentimes that skill is handed down through generations in a process of apprenticeship that lacks engineering analysis altogether. Modern devices, on

³⁷ O'Neill, 'Thomas Hardy: Poetics of a Postromantic', 143.

³⁸ O'Neill, 'Thomas Hardy: Poetics of a Postromantic', 143.

³⁹ O'Neill, 'Thomas Hardy: Poetics of a Postromantic', 143. O'Neill goes on to observe how Hardy's archaic language aids the sense of the return of something old-fashioned. It is a detailed and under-quoted critique of 'Old Furniture', but I do not have the space to dwell on it here.

⁴⁰ O'Modhrain and Gillespie, 'Once More, With Feeling', 23.

⁴¹ O'Modhrain and Gillespie, 'Once More, With Feeling', 23.

⁴² I am indebted to Andrew Hewitt for this fine counterexample, and I have benefitted keenly from his expertise on affect in Hardy's corpus.

the other hand – those designed by engineers – might function as extensions of the brain, but not so much as extensions of the body.⁴³

The types of instruments with which Hardy deals come from this ‘hand[ing] down through generations’, instruments whose development process was intimately connected with the body, not just those bodies involved in their creation but the playability of an instrument as judged by a fellow human body. It is the role of the body as regards musical instruments that I argue Hardy foregrounds in his verse.

However, Hardy consistently problematizes the exact role of the (human) body, by putting it into conjunction with a material (other) body and insisting upon some reciprocity in order for the object’s memories to be transmitted. Hardy attends to the very material qualities of objects as his speakers remember with them: ‘Old Furniture’ keeps returning to material properties – ‘knobs and indentations’, ‘dial’, ‘by the nut’, ‘the plaintive gut’. As Andrew Jones notes ‘the materiality of objects is best seen as impinging on people sensually and physically at a fundamental level ... objects can act as physical traces of past events which are amenable to the process of reading’.⁴⁴ Hardy both reads the memories of these objects and allows them to be read through his verse.

Tangible Hauntings: Vitality Revisited

The previous section focused on the mnemonic potential of material objects, but what is so compelling about Hardy’s musical instrument poems is that they draw on another powerful mnemonic device: music. As Claire Seymour writes, ‘the spell cast by music is often at its most potent when it is associated with memory’.⁴⁵ John Hughes has written at length about ‘music [as] a privileged tool of memory, capable of recapturing the ecstasies of the past’.⁴⁶ Music has a dual purpose in terms of memory in ‘carrying out this twin project of documenting the past and bringing it to life. Repeatedly [Hardy] exploits its power to tantalize the present with flickers of past affections and associations. At its most extreme, it works as a veritable time-machine’.⁴⁷ Hughes outlines two of memory’s aims: to document, but also to make happen again. Hughes’s exemplar for music as a ‘time-machine’ is Hardy’s sonnet ‘Rome: On the Palatine’ (April 1887) where, thanks to a Strauss waltz, ‘Time seemed fiction, Past and Present one’ (103). The mnemonic potential of music in which I am interested is less to do with hearing music again than imagining the physical playing of it again – re-inhabiting the act, rather than re-hearing the product. These Hardy poems have a double lease on memory – through music as well as material culture – but one which is primarily transmitted through the body, rather than through the traditional seat of memory, the brain.⁴⁸

⁴³ O’Modhrain and Gillespie, ‘Once More, With Feeling’, 19.

⁴⁴ Andrew Jones, *Memory and Material Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 19.

⁴⁵ Seymour, ‘Hardy and Music’, 227.

⁴⁶ Hughes, *Ecstatic Sound*, 153.

⁴⁷ Hughes, *Ecstatic Sound*, 159.

⁴⁸ This is similar to the argument Andrew Jones makes, that ‘rather than treating memory as a function of the internal processes of the human mind, we might consider memory to be

In a recent lecture, Mark Ford mimed bow movements to accompany his point that Hardy practised his violin.⁴⁹ While we all know what violin-playing looks like, this illustrated once again the physical movements of the fingers and hands that take place as part of this, and that the mention of music-playing brings forth a physical response. Unplayed instruments bespeak death for Hardy, because they are not fulfilling their natural purpose. The speaker who returns to 'The House of Hospitalities' (1909) finds it empty and 'The worm has bored the viol/That used to lead the tune' (206), much as the reader imagines the worm is at work on the former musician. Similarly, 'Ten Years Since' (November 1922; which marks the tenth anniversary of the death of Hardy's first wife, Emma) acknowledges that 'the piano wires are rustier' (722). What we see in Hardy is the materiality of the instrument pitted against the ephemera of the musical performance as well as, as is usual for Hardy, the limited term of human life. However, if instruments lying silent indicates death, then their being played – and even just the memory of such playing – figures as a marker of vitality.

Hardy's 'The Self-Unseeing' (1901) has the same conceit as 'Hospitalities' (the return to a location of former activity), but this time the music is replayed in memory: 'He who played stood there,/Bowing it higher and higher' (166), the end-stop and line break encouraging the reader to position this ghost in her/his imagination. The choice of the verb 'bowing' foregrounds the physical act specific to violin-playing without mentioning the instrument itself: the activity concerning the object takes precedence. 'Higher and higher' suggests the effort involved in this performance and Tom Paulin reads the rhythm of the line as giving 'an intent, upward movement to the lines, comprising Hardy's rendition of his father's fiddle-playing'.⁵⁰

Hardy's father as a musician appears in several poems, including 'A Church Romance' (1906), which immortalizes the meeting of Hardy's parents.⁵¹ While critics have commented on the church setting, or how the speaker adopts Jemima's (unknowable) perspective, my interest is in the palpable effort involved.⁵²

One strenuous viol's inspirer seems to throw
A message from his string to her below (252)

The vigour of this playing is mirrored in the enjambment as Hardy phrases over the verse's bar-line to join the viol-player to 'her below'. 'Strenuous' speaks of labour, but musical work here is a labour of love, since this overture is how, according to the poem, 'their hearts' bond began', but in emphasizing the strenuousness applied, Hardy keeps the reader firmly attending to the materiality of the sonically related 'string', even if it is also figuratively a heart-string.

produced through the encounter between people and the material world' (*Memory and Material Culture*, 26).

⁴⁹ Mark Ford, 'Thomas Hardy – Half a Londoner', 16 July 2018, 23rd International Thomas Hardy Festival & Conference, United Church, Dorchester.

⁵⁰ Tom Paulin, "'The Proudest Songster of Them All": Some Thoughts on Three "Everyday" Lyrics', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Thomas Hardy*, ed. Rosemarie Morgan (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010): 487–94, at 490. See also John Hughes's reading of 'The Self-Unseeing' in *The Expression of Things: Themes in Thomas Hardy's Fiction and Poetry* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2018), 49–51.

⁵¹ Hardy sets the poem in '(Mellstock: circa 1835)' (252).

⁵² See Hughes, *The Expression of Things*, 43–6.

Musical haptics is newly conceptualizing the 'performer-instrument interaction [as] a dynamic coupling between a mechanical system and a biomechanical instrumentalist'.⁵³ O'Modhrain and Gillespie attend to the injection of energy from the performer as s/he interacts with the instrument, and, since 'most acoustic instruments are strong enough to push back', while the most recognizable energy emitted from musical performance is that of sound, 'another portion is dissipated, and yet another portion is returned back to the player at the mechanical contact'.⁵⁴ The coupled system model accounts for music's conducting energy not just through but *between* two – previously distinct – bodies. This joining together of bodies is similar to how Hardy depicts the relationship between person and instrument, though from a poetic, personal, perspective rather than a scientific one.

'To My Father's Violin' (1916) follows a similar trajectory to 'Old Furniture' (in that the final stanza dashes the illusions created by memory), and shares themes with both 'Hospitalities' and 'Self-Unseeing' in that the playing of (actual, live) music is past. With his father now dead, Hardy addresses the violin as the 'you' to whom one can still speak in the present:

In the gallery west the nave,
But a few yards from his grave,
Did you, tucked beneath his chin, to his bowing
Guide the homely harmony
Of the quire
Who for long years strenuously –
Son and sire –
Caught the strains that at his fingering low or higher
From your four thin threads and eff-holes came outflowing.

And, too, what merry tunes
He would bow at nights or noons
That chanced to find him bent to lute a measure,
When he made you speak his heart (451)

These lines, the second stanza and opening of the third, adumbrate the joint life lived by father and violin. 'Tucked beneath his chin' positions the violin in (expected) intimate proximity to his father to the point that 'son and sire' seems to project onto them (although it more strictly refers to choir members, and the generational reach of father-and-violin's combined music). This time, the efforts of the musician pass to the choir, with them catching 'strenuously ... the strains', as if the one's musical efforts calls for a consequentially skilled response. Human and instrument bodies are figured in consecutive lines and with specifically musical terms, when 'his fingering' – which inevitably conjures up an image of the name-sake fingers – is followed by 'your four thin threads and eff-holes'. Moreover, as DeSales Harrison notes, 'If the violin shares the body of the father, it also shares the body of the poem as well'.⁵⁵ The father's body later – in a linguistic haunting – appears to cradle the violin: 'That chanced to find him bent to lute a measure' is an unusual phrase. While the literal meaning is 'you could find my father at any hour intent on playing a tune', 'bent to lute' provides the image of someone

⁵³ O'Modhrain and Gillespie, 'Once More, With Feeling', 12.

⁵⁴ O'Modhrain and Gillespie, 'Once More, With Feeling', 12–13 (the example here is of pressing a piano key).

⁵⁵ DeSales Harrison, *The End of the Mind: The Edge of the Intelligible in Hardy, Stevens, Larkin, Plath, and Gluck* (New York: Routledge, 2005): 64.

playing a lute, an instrument which the body literally bends around, or cradles. 'Lute' here is a rare verb meaning to sound like a lute, but Hardy also keeps the homonym 'loot' in reserve, given that 'he *made* you speak'. Father and violin are further enmeshed by the fact that 'he made *you* speak *his* heart', as if an intense emotional and physical transference takes place from one body to another.

Energy is transferred outwards from both bodies, too. The choir are moved to sing skilfully, and a later stanza regrets that the father is now where 'No bowing wakes a congregation to wonder' (452). Another violinist, that from 'At Madame Tussaud's in Victorian Years', similarly transports those listening, even making 'these wax figures, who nothing can do ... longing they too could wake notes that appeal' to an audience (492). In *Ecstatic Sound*, Hughes notes how musical scenes carry, for Hardy, 'a condensed affective signal, bringing about these transmissions of the past', and his most recent book dwells on how Hardy's uses of music involve 'an experience of relatedness'.⁵⁶ While perhaps more emotionally than physically (though 'both the performer and the audience are reached by vibrations conveyed through the air and solid media such as the floor' during live performance), other bodies, too, are moved by Hardyean music.⁵⁷ Phillip Mallett argues, with reference to Hardy's reading of philosophers (especially Comte), that 'the intimacy of the relationship between the physiological and the affective in Hardy's work is unprecedented in English fiction', and this carries into Hardy's poetry.⁵⁸

It is worth remembering that a prominent theory of music contemporary with Hardy made great claims for the role of emotion. Herbert Spencer's 1857 'On the Origin and Function of Music', argues that 'variations of the voice are the physiological results of variations of feeling' and explanation should be sought 'in this general relation between mental and muscular excitements'.⁵⁹ I shall continue to argue for Hardy's particular depictions of the 'muscular excitements' involved in music playing, but it is important that Hardy read Spencer's argument that 'there is a physiological relation ... between feeling and muscular action', a relation that seems to work in reverse as well in Hardyean music-playing, as musical performers move listeners.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Hughes, *Ecstatic Sound*, 170; *The Expression of Things*, 27.

⁵⁷ Papetti and Saitis, 'Introduction', 2.

⁵⁸ Phillip Mallett, 'Hardy and Philosophy', in *A Companion to Thomas Hardy*, ed. Keith Wilson (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009): 21–35, at 26.

⁵⁹ Herbert Spencer, 'On the Origin and Function of Music' in *Essays on Education and Kindred Subjects* (The Floating Press), www.proquest.com (accessed 26 Jul 2018): 603–42, at 608–9. Hardy's notebooks show him affirming 'Mr. Sp[encer] is right' after an excerpt from Edmund Gurney's rebuttal 'On Some Disputed Points in Music' (cited in Björk, *Literary Notebooks* 1, 51). Hardy may also have appreciated Spencer's claim that 'An unusually emotional nature being thus the general characteristic of musical composers' (having detailed the sensitive temperaments of Mozart, Beethoven and Chopin, 627) since Hardy's autobiography claims his own 'ecstatic temperament, extraordinarily sensitive to music' (*The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, 19). Darwin's *The Expression of the Emotions* (1872) would also stress music's ability to recall emotions, and Hardy noted from John Addington Symonds 1890 *Essays Speculative and Suggestive* that 'all that a word conveys has already become a thought, while all that musical sounds convey remains within the region of emotion which has not been intellectualized' (Björk, *Literary Notebooks* 2, 34).

⁶⁰ Spencer, 'On the Origin and Function of Music', 632. See Seymour, 'Hardy and Music', 231, for music's effect on listeners, which Seymour relates to Freud's concept of the uncanny. For embodiment in Hardy's fiction see Benjamin Morgan's 'Hardy's Nerves: *The Return of the*

The projected embodiment from these musical memories, then, involves more human bodies than just the coupled performer and instrument. A key reason for this is that much of the music Hardy imagines was played at dances, for dancing. 'Could I but Will' (1922; a poem whose subtitle specifies '*Verses 1, 3, key major; verse 2, key minor*') asks for 'music of rare ravishment,/In strains that move the toes and heels!' (637).⁶¹ Again, Hardy specifies the body parts implicated: the music is directed to the very locations which distinguish different dance steps – toe and heel. When 'foot' enters the poem it is as a verb, that the dancers may 'foot with zest/Ecstatic reels'. 'Foot' is a favoured Hardy verb, encapsulating the embodied action of dancing, even as it also underscores the poem's own metrical 'feet': once again music and poem merge into one.⁶²

The epitome of danced embodiment is Jenny in 'The Dance at the Phoenix' (1898). Fifty-nine and a woman who 'passed as elderly', upon hearing music from the Phoenix Inn she leaves her husband asleep in bed to have one last riotous night of dancing with the officers. She returns to bed, but her husband awakes in the morning to find her dead. While it is a sonic call-to-arms Jenny hears, the effects are markedly physical: 'the throbbing "Soldier's Joy"' among others leads 'spring-tide blood' to 'scour ... through her like a flood/That whisked the years away' (45). In the final reckoning, this exertion proves too much and 'burst[s] her bosom's master-vein', but when engaged in the act of dancing, Jenny becomes more alive than she has been for years.⁶³ 'Seized and whirled' by a variety of male partners, Jenny is the subject of dynamic verbs and able to impress with her prowess: 'They cheered her as she soared and swooped' (46). Human body, musical rhythm and poetic form merge into one:

The favourite Quick-step 'Speed-the-Plough' –
 (Cross hands, cast off, and wheel) –
 'The Triumph', 'Sylph', 'The Row-dow-dow',
 Famed 'Major Malley's Reel',
 'The Duke of York's', 'The Fairy Dance',
 'The Bridge of Lodi' (brought from France),
 She beat out, toe and heel. (46)

The last three lines of this, the fifteenth stanza of 22, demonstrates the driving iambic rhythm urging the poem forward. The reader is privy neither to the musical content nor the dances in any real detail, but the list of song/dance titles points to breathless exertion (which is reinforced by the quick shorthand to the steps of 'Speed-the-Plough' steps, as if we might be able to join in just as dancers are pairing up). Armstrong notes Hardy's awareness of 'the ability of music and dance to carry the memory of the body's plenitude for those they leave behind', and while Jenny's husband is crucially unaware of her choreographic exploits, most of Hardy's

Native' in *The Outward Mind*, 117–23. This writes back to Scarry's assertion that 'Human consciousness is always, for Hardy, embodied human consciousness' ('Work and the Body', 91).

⁶¹ 'The Dance at the Phoenix' also has a Hardy dancer 'beat[ing] it out, toe and heel' to a variety of named melodies (46).

⁶² 'Song to an Old Burden' (1925) opens with the speaker admitting 'The feet have left the wormholed flooring,/That danced to the ancient air' and exclaiming 'Shall I then foot around around around,/As once I footed there!' (830).

⁶³ Joan Grundy writes of the relation of rhythmical or danced beat to 'the sense of life itself', in *Hardy and the Sister Arts*, 137. Claire Seymour similarly discusses 'the rhythm of life' in 'Hardy and Music', 238.

speakers are dwelling on exactly those moments of living with, and through, music.⁶⁴ It is against this backdrop of music's many embodiments that I turn to Hardy's poem 'Haunting Fingers' (1921).

'Haunting Fingers' takes place in a 'Museum of Musical Instruments' and gives voice to different instruments on their previous players for two stanzas, followed by the speaker's comment on the scene in a shorter ballad stanza. It is an odd poem, too-often dismissed, and I give the opening three stanzas here to show the alternating verse pattern:

'Are you awake,
Comrades, this silent night?
Well 'twere if all of our glossy gluey make
Lay in the damp without, and fell to fragments quite!'

O viol, my friend,
I watch, though Phosphor nears,
And I fain would drowse away to its utter end
This dumb dark stowage after our loud melodious years!'

And they felt past handlers clutch them,
Though none was in the room,
Old players' dead fingers touch them,
Shrunk in the tomb. (590)

Although the last two lines here make explicit the condition of death to this situation (the instruments would otherwise be with their respective musicians, rather than in a museum), since the poem opens on speech, the reader is led first to conceive of a continuation of some form of musical life. These instruments display an unwillingness to be alone – 'Are you awake ... my friend' – and speak to each other to (re)establish the sense of community. The idea of instruments as social objects (usually meaning played with others in a band/orchestra, or to provide accompaniment to dancing) is here recast as socializing with one another, commiserating over their losses. Indeed, the congenial overtures of 'comrades', 'my friend', 'good mate' suggest instruments missing their partners and trying to make do with substitutes. In a way different from the foreign instruments Bates studies, Hardy imaginatively enacts what Eliot Bates calls 'the social life of musical instruments'.⁶⁵ Like Hardy, Bates argues for

taking objects, and particularly musical instruments, seriously – but not simply as things that humans use or make or exchange, or as passive artifacts from which sound emanates. Much of the power, mystique, and allure of musical instruments, I argue, is inextricable from the myriad situations where instruments are entangled in webs of complex relationships – between humans and objects, between humans and humans, and between objects and other objects.⁶⁶

'Haunting Fingers' is a unique, and impossible, situation for the discussion of this topic, but the very artistic license Hardy takes allows him space to explore the particularity of human touch for musical instruments.

⁶⁴ Armstrong, 'Hardy, History, and Recorded Music', 155.

⁶⁵ Eliot Bates, 'The Social Life of Musical Instruments', *Ethnomusicology* 56/3 (2012): 363–95.

⁶⁶ Bates, 'The Social Life of Musical Instruments', 364.

Individual instruments are given the chance to bear a testimony of touch: a harpsichord remembers 'The tender pat/Of her aery fingertips/Upon me daily' (591) – the quality of the playing merits attention. Hardy mirrors the concerns of musical haptics in 'explicitly consider[ing] the role of the musician's body in the process of extracting behaviors from a musical instrument', although Hardy is paying homage and remembering.⁶⁷ It is not just the 'past handlers' who awaken at these memories, but the instruments themselves are reinvigorated by memory. While the contra-basso defines "'this voiceless, crippled, corpselike state'", this is, ironically, voiced and the subsequent speakers dwell more on the liveliness of their previous lives than their current inertia. The harpsichord remembers a near-symbiotic relationship where "'Tones of hers fell forth with mine/In sowings of sound so sweet no lover could withstand!'" (591). While her tones might more recognizably be the musician singing while playing, it also – thanks to the alliteration, enjambment and sibilance – invites the reading that their separate 'tones' formed a singular 'sound' capable of bewitching men.

The harpsichord affects its audience in terms of romantic love, but each instrument has its own story of affective power. The drum marvels "'What a host/I stirred – even when crape mufflings gagged me well-nigh dumb!'" ; the viol notes "'much tune have I set free/To spur the dance'" ; the shawm ensured "'hymn and psalm/Poured from devout souls met in Sabbath sanctitude'" ; and the lyre accompanied comic dramas, "'scenes that fed love, hope, wit, rapture, mirth, desire!'" (591).⁶⁸ These memories are not valuable simply for their autobiographical information, but because they speak to the wider effects of embodiment which these musical instruments set in motion: they 'stirred', 'spur[red]', made 'pour' and 'fed', actions which themselves have a sense of touch, or at least being touched. As Armstrong notes, 'Since music is not itself a representation, it seems that what we recall is an embodied state'.⁶⁹ For all of the various musical contexts the poem returns to haunt, we hear only the instruments' current voices with verbs appropriate to them: the drum 'reverbed', the viol 'trilled', the shawm 'mourned ... subdued' and the lyre 'twanged' (but it is 'sick', after all). While this is in part Hardy at his most fanciful, it is also Hardy directing the reader away from sound memories to felt memory, to re-embodiment a moment. Much as Thain notes of 'Old Furniture', 'it is noticeable that touch is the preferred access to a history that is there to be felt, but not heard'.⁷⁰ But if Hardy does not intend for us to hear the sonic content of the memories, he does intend us to hear the remembering through his verse:

'Once I could thrill
The populace through and through,
Wake them to passioned pulsings past their will', ...
(A contra-basso spake so, and the rest sighed anew.)

And they felt old muscles travel
Over their tense contours,
And with long skill unravel
Cunningest scores.

⁶⁷ O'Modhrain and Gillespie, 'Once More, With Feeling', 13.

⁶⁸ I am indebted to F.B. Pinion's gloss of 'I faced the sock' as referring to 'played at comedies. In classical drama, actors wore low shoes ('socks') for comedy, but were buskined for tragedy', in *A Commentary on the Poems of Thomas Hardy* (London: Macmillan, 1976): 171.

⁶⁹ Armstrong, 'Hardy, History, and Recorded Music', 157.

⁷⁰ Thain, 'Poetics of Touch', 134.

Like the repetition, the contra-basso's ability to 'thrill' passes through the line break, and the trochaic inversion on 'Wake them' reasserts attention. The bracketed last line of the stanza, though, beginning with a gentle iambic rhythm moves into an anapest ('and the rest') to then fall heavily on the stressed syllable 'sighed'. The poem itself 'sighs' even as it asserts that the contra-basso still holds power to evoke an unwilling response (the sigh) from the surrounding audience, this time of instruments. Armstrong observes, of these lines, 'What the instruments recall involves the ability of performance to convey emotion; to connect the individual will, in Schopenhauerian terms, to the general Will via that empathetic throbbing'.⁷¹ While Hardy's interest in the Schopenhauerian Will is well-documented, and discussed in relation to music, the physical aspects of these poems has been downplayed in favour of the metaphysical.⁷² 'Cunningest' was a rare word even in Hardy's time derived from the verb 'to know', but this knowledge is tactile, something that can only be 'unravell[ed]' by the mechanical movements of the 'muscles' haunting these instruments.

Musical instruments have the potential to reach a multitude of people. When the harpsichord's 'clavier was filmed with fingers' (591), it is unclear if this is the ten fingers of the 'her' spoken of, or if the plural points towards several players. This 'film', a near-unnoticeable overlay, is more in line with Scarry's traces left, though here it is a composite 'film' of several 'fingers' having touched the keyboard: there is an unstated succession of 'hands behind hands'. Hardy again brings the reader to the immediacy and materiality of touch.

The harpsichord also directs the reader to "'My keys' white shine,/Now sallow'". Like 'each shiny familiar thing' of the 'Old Furniture', the keys' 'shine' comes from being touched, meeting the very fingertip touches for which they are specifically designed. The related poem, 'A Duettist to Her Pianoforte' (1922), also sees 'your time-worn sheen', but in this poem – subtitled 'A Song of Silence (E.L.H.–H.C.H)' the speaker resolves never to play again due to the death of her duet partner.⁷³ While the poem misses this partner, the 'Pianoforte' itself is seen as another important ally, since 'you/Answered our fingers with ecstasy' (586), again characterizing the human-instrument relationship as one in which energy is transferred through physical contact. Like 'To My Father's Violin', the 'you' addressed is a musical instrument, one who – for its ability to transfigure the player's intentions into music – almost usurps the one mourned.

It is not just that 'every sound moves memories', but that the music calls back a haunter: were the speaker to 'fling your polyphones, plaints, and quavers/Afresh on the air,/Too quick would the small white shapes be here/Of the fellow twain of hands so dear;/And a black-tressed profile, and pale smooth ear' (587). Like 'Haunting Fingers' or those present in 'Old Furniture', the previously appropriate body parts appear on cue, and music is shown to have the power to enliven the

⁷¹ Armstrong, 'Hardy, History, and Recorded Music', 160.

⁷² Mark Asquith's scholarship explores music and metaphysics in depth (see 'Hardy's Cosmic Vision' and *Metaphysics and Music*). Armstrong's 'Hardy, History, and Recorded Music' also pays attention to the Schopenhauerian in Hardy, and Phillip Mallett reads Schopenhauerian philosophy into Hardy's fiction ('Hardy and Philosophy', 30–4).

⁷³ The initials refer to Emma Lavinia Hardy (Hardy's first wife) and 'her sister Helen, wife of the Rev. Caddell Holder, rector of St Juliot', who died in December 1900 (Pinion, *Commentary*, 170).

dead.⁷⁴ Again these are ‘impalpable hands without even apparitional bodies’, but again, Hardy only envisages those organs relevant: hands and ears.⁷⁵ The body of the pianoforte is similarly reduced to its constituent parts in the poem, with the reader catching a glimpse of ‘your ivory rows’ and ‘your pleated show/Of silk, now hoar,/Each nodding hammer, and pedal and key’, but never the instrument as a whole (586–7). Hillis Miller complains about the dissections of Hardy’s (human) bodies, but does not account for the instruments’ being similarly anatomized (which helps to explain the hands’ appearing alone). It can be no mistake that ‘A Duettist’, with its ‘heavily-haunted harmony’, appears just three poems before ‘Haunting Fingers’ in *Late Lyrics*.

In looking at the draft manuscript of ‘Haunting Fingers’, held at the Dorset County Museum, it is clear from Hardy’s revisions to this poem that he wanted to engender present action from this remembering, rather than staid former life. The title had originally been ‘Dead Fingers’, but Hardy altered this to ‘Haunting Fingers’, still hinting at death but not stating it overtly. As in ‘Old Furniture’, the continuous verb offers uninterrupted movement rather than stasis. While he maintained the ‘dead fingers’ of the initial stanza, Hardy removed several other references to death, such as in the sixth stanza,

And they felt ~~dead~~ old^ fingers^ touches^^muscles^ travel
 Over their tense contours,
 And with ~~old~~ ^long^ skill unravel
 Cunningest scores.⁷⁶

‘Dead touches’ is both difficult to imagine and oxymoronic, and Hardy chooses instead to give these ‘Haunting Fingers’ physical form to the tune of musculature. With ‘muscles’ having been mentioned, the reader is primed to receive the ‘tense’ of the next line as regards muscular tension. ‘These tense contours’, though, belong to the instrument, so through his one change, Hardy resurrects two living bodies: the past player’s, but the instrument itself has also borrowed some bodily form. Furthermore, by switching ‘old’ for ‘long’, Hardy avoids repetition but, more, emphasizes the vista of time person and object shared, as well as the length of time required to acquire such ‘skill’.

In the twelfth stanza, a similar change sees ‘And he feels the dead fingers on him’ transform to ‘And he feels apt touches on him/From those that pressed him then’, the consonant cluster adding further sonic life to the line. ‘Apt’ makes these haunting fingers alert, prepared and fitted to what increasingly seems a natural purpose, even if Hardy writes of dead people playing abandoned instruments. ‘Pressed’ of the next line again asserts the material joining of bodies in intimate relation: ‘pressed’ is more delicate, and private, than ‘played’. Noticeably, the revisions are mainly to the 8686 ballad stanzas, so Hardy changed the narrative framing around the instruments’ verbalizations to sustain the possibility for life, rather than falling back on the overriding condition of death.

In the last stanza, ‘each dead player’ becomes ‘each past player’, attending more to lineage than mortality. With these textual revisions, Hardy revives the lives of

⁷⁴ This is also the conjecture or wish of the speaker of ‘To My Father’s Violin: ‘He might liven at the sound/Of your string, revealing you had not foregone him’ (451).

⁷⁵ Hillis Miller, ‘Hands in Hardy’, 513.

⁷⁶ My transcript of manuscript H.1957.39.26 in the Single Poem MSs of the Thomas Hardy Archive at the Dorset County Museum.

these now-stored instruments, as well as those of their former players. It is only by looking at the manuscript, and seeing Hardy's crossings-out of 'dead' (using the pen held by his own fingers and hand), that the radical shift is clear. Hughes contends that the 'consolatory glimmerings of memory' in 'Haunting Fingers' are of an 'admittedly forlorn and fanciful type'.⁷⁷ While the whole poem is undoubtedly fanciful, it is the attention to the bodily interactions between person and instrument that keep the poem, for me, from being ludicrous and much more vital (for the duration of the remembered interaction) than 'forlorn' allows.

All of the revisions point the reader back towards past action and away from present inaction. 'Dead fingers' would lie flat to the instrument's surface, in a proximity too close and without use. Instead, the 'apt touches' and muscularity of the imagined (by the reader) and remembered (by the instruments) fingers are not just alive but have physical form and are skilful. The dexterity of digits required to play musical instruments – and particularly the piano and the violin – seems for Hardy to be an important marker of vitality, and one worth keeping in mind.

The Habit of Haunting; the Haunting of Habit

This very dexterity was a subject for scientific debates of the day, which used the playing of musical instruments not just as a metaphor, but as an example of the point they wished to illustrate. In 1904, Hardy copied out a passage from Caleb Saleeby's article in *Academy*:⁷⁸

The Human Will – Reflex action. A reflex arc consists of a sensory nerve fibre, such as, let us say, the optic nerve; a sensory cell, such as those from wh. the fibres of the optic nerve are derived; & a motor cell & fibre, such as those wh. control the muscular tissues of the iris. When a beam of light enters the eye, the reflex arc is called into action, the iris is stimul'd. & the pupil contracts. ... It is entirely independent of consciousness. [...] Whilst will emerges from reflex action, to reflex action will can return ... e.g. piano-playing & c.⁷⁹

Having described the reflex arc at cellular level in explaining how the eye receives light, Saleeby notes that 'It is entirely independent of consciousness': a sequence of events is activated and carried out. Crucially, the end of the extract Hardy copies claims 'Whilst will emerges from reflex action, to reflex action will can return ... e.g. piano-playing'. The 'muscles' of 'Haunting Fingers' are here seen in scientific framing as a reflex arc, and it is more likely that Hardy was thinking of this physiological response specifically in relation to music since this extract comes only four notebook entries after Hardy's cutting (with handwritten reference) of 'Musical Full Stops', as discussed earlier. As Armstrong writes of the Saleeby quotation, 'Individual will here is a kind of free-floating agency produced by the failure of the human mechanism to act fully mechanically – something represented in ['Haunting Fingers'] as the residual consciousness of the instruments'.⁸⁰ While

⁷⁷ Hughes, *Ecstatic Sound*, 171.

⁷⁸ For Hardy's relationship with Caleb Saleeby see Samuel Hynes, 'The Hardy–Saleeby Letters', *The Princeton University Library Chronicle* 67/1 (2005): 135–9.

⁷⁹ Björk, ed., *Literary Notebooks* 2, 174.

⁸⁰ Armstrong, 'Hardy, History, and Recorded Music', 161.

the human body is not 'fully mechanical', these reflex actions are natural instances of automaticity even within artistic expression.

Phyllis Weliver, in her monograph *Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction, 1860–1900*, notes that 'learning to play the piano was frequently used as an example in associationist psychology', offering examples from the eighteenth-century onwards.⁸¹ Through writers such as William Hamilton, E.S. Dallas, Herbert Spencer and G.H. Lewes, Weliver shows that 'Music-making as representative of automotive processes was a significant and recurring example in scientific studies which led to an understanding that there can be multiple levels of consciousness coexisting within one person'.⁸² The notion of 'levels of consciousness', of which Weliver speaks, was being followed by Hardy as a reader. He noted from G.H. Lewes's 1877 article 'The Course of Modern Thought', 'Physiology began to disclose that all the mental processes were (mathematically speaking) functions of physical processes'.⁸³ Hardy was supremely interested in the interrelationship between consciousness and unconsciousness, and the role of will and volition, and this is something which – by tracing currents in nineteenth-century scientific and philosophical writings – can be seen to have implications for how Hardy conceptualizes and writes about music-playing.⁸⁴

In a 1907 letter about the philosophical framework of his verse epic *The Dynasts*, Hardy outlines a markedly Schopenhauerian vision of free will versus the Universal Will, noting that 'the will of man is [...] neither wholly free nor wholly unfree'.⁸⁵ Hardy ends his theorization with

whenever it happens that all the rest of the Great Will is in equilibrium the minute portion called one person's will is free, just as a performer's fingers will go on playing the pianoforte of themselves when he talks or thinks of something else & the head does not rule them.⁸⁶

In this case, the pianist's fingers are used as an analogy for a metaphysical concept rather than a physical one, but it again reinforces the fact that fingers on a piano can operate independent of the greater human whole, and particularly of consciousness.⁸⁷ Piano-playing here does not preclude other mental activity – 'talks or thinks of something else' – because the playing is a mechanical action.⁸⁸

⁸¹ Phyllis Weliver, *Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction, 1860–1900: Representations of Music, Science and Gender in the Leisured Home* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000): 8. See also Weliver's excellent examples of 'Source Readings' in Appendix A (285–98).

⁸² Weliver, *Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction*, 8–9.

⁸³ Björk, *Literary Notebooks 1*, 92 (original emphasis). This article was originally published on page 325 of the 1 March 1877 edition of *Fortnightly Review*.

⁸⁴ A glance at pages 108 through 113 of Björk, *Literary Notebooks 2* offers a good glut of references to these topics through cross-section of authors, including Spencer and Spinoza.

⁸⁵ Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy: Volume 3: 1902–1908*, ed. Richard Little Purdy and Michael Millgate (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982): 255.

⁸⁶ Hardy, *The Collected Letters*, 255.

⁸⁷ Armstrong believes Hardy drew this analogy specifically from the Saleeby passage ('Hardy, History, and Recorded Music', 160–61). See also Asquith, 'Hardy's Cosmic Vision', 186–7.

⁸⁸ Thanks to Weliver's inclusion of an excerpt from Samuel Butler's *Life and Habit* (1877), I see that Hardy's phrasing is remarkably similar to Butler's: 'Taking then, the art of playing the piano as an example of the kind of action we are in search of, we observe that a practised player will perform very difficult pieces apparently without effort, often, indeed, while

William James's chapter on 'Habit' from his 1890 *Principles of Psychology* makes a similar observation to Saleeby with noticeably the same example:

habit diminishes the conscious attention with which our acts are performed. One may state this abstractly thus: If an act require for its execution a chain, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, etc., of successive nervous events, then in the first performances of the action the conscious will must choose each of these events from a number of wrong alternatives that tend to present themselves; but habit soon brings it about that each event calls up its own appropriate successor without any alternative offering itself, and without any reference to the conscious will, until at last the whole chain, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, rattles itself off as soon as A occurs, just as if A and the rest of the chain were fused into a continuous stream. ... A glance at the musical hieroglyphics, and the pianist's fingers have rippled through a cataract of notes.⁸⁹

While we do not know that Hardy read this specific passage (though he was reading and making notes from James's writings), it is useful in once again demonstrating the climate of explaining physiological habits – those movements unmonitored by consciousness – with reference to playing a musical instrument. Once the chain of habit has been securely established (in this case by practising the piano), at the appropriate cue that chain is set in motion 'without any reference to the conscious will'. James, too, only refers to the 'fingers' of the hypothetical pianist, because they are the only body parts implicated in this action.

The verbs James uses also reflect the automaticity of habit: 'each event *calls up*', 'the pianist's fingers *have rippled*'. In each case, the word itself suggests the notion of the act comes from elsewhere than conscious decision. Hardy's poems marshal verbs in similar ways regarding musical performances. The speaker of 'To My Father's Violin' remembers 'the strains that at his fingering low or higher/From your four thin threads and eff-holes came out-flowing' (451). Rather than a stream of consciousness, a non-conscious stream of music emanates forth once the two bodies have combined and the father's individual will (even his distinct person) dissolved. 'The Last Performance', a poem written in 1912 presumably about Emma Hardy, sees a woman determine to play one final time (predictably, 'her life outflow' in the end). However, if the initial decision to play was hers, 'When I returned from town at nightfall/Notes continued to pour/As when I had left two hours before' seems to display a musician caught up in a process of playing of which she is not in conscious control. Once again, Hardy uses enjambment to express music's irrepressibility. Like James's liquid-related 'rippled', Hardy too chooses 'flowing' and 'poured' to indicate the sheer continuity of the mechanics of music-playing.

'In the Small Hours' (1922) depicts more of a Schopenhauerian reverie, given that the speaker is in bed playing 'a dreamland viol and bow', but when s/he wants to play old music from 'years ago' finds that 'the tunes flew back to my

thinking and talking of something quite other than his music' (cited in Weliver, *Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction*, 292). That said, I can find no evidence that Hardy read this particular work of Butler's, although he takes notes from an article which refers to 'Butler's fantasy' about the rapid growth of the machines (by which it means Butler's novel *Erewhon* (1872)). Hardy's note is from 'The Machine', *Times Literary Supplement* (1 July 1926), cited in Björk's *Literary Notebooks 2*, 229–31.

⁸⁹ William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, Volume 1 of *The Works of William James*, ed. Frederick H. Burkhardt, Fredson Bowers and Ignas K. Skrupskelis (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981): 119 (original emphasis).

fingers', bypassing the brain entirely to be transmitted directly to her/his dextrous digits (648). If the will is annihilated, then so is the tyranny of the present, for it is not until the end of the music and its attendant resurrected memories, 'at morning's sly increeping' that the speaker (re)discovers, sadly, 'that Now, not Then, held reign'. Hardy's musicians find their fingers working beyond their control when playing a piece they know more by touch than by heart.

Copying passages from Henry Maudsley's *Natural Causes*, Hardy knew that 'Habit is acquired faculty, wh. means function-made structure – structural knowledge, in fact – & therefore the automatic & easy performance of acts wh. were performed at first only with conscious labour'.⁹⁰ Although Maudsley does not use the image of the piano, the same ideas of automaticity recur in his definition of 'habit'. While habit-forming is an act involving the memory, this is what is called procedural memory (unconscious memory for skills) which is preserved even in severe cases of amnesia. As Armstrong writes of 'Haunting Fingers', if the music is remembered by the players, it is 'remembered ... by their playing fingers rather than their conscious minds'.⁹¹ With practice, the need for 'conscious labour' drops away, highlighted by Maudsley just as it was by Saleeby and James.

An earlier note from the 'Studies, Specimens &c'. notebook sees Hardy write 'motor processes: an almost automatic act'.⁹² This is from H. Charlton Bastian's 1869 'On the Physiology of Thinking': Hardy had long been reading and considering such ideas of non-conscious acts. Bastian's main interest is in proving that the production of speech sounds is automatic (what he calls 'the physiology of spoken thought'), but he recites the same arguments about 'reflex action' where 'no distinct rousing of the consciousness need be involved'.⁹³ Although Hardy's notetaking only reaches page 63 of the article,⁹⁴ Bastian goes on to compare his physiological studies of speech production with 'what takes place when a person plays extemporaneously on a musical instrument – say on a piano'.⁹⁵ He focuses on aspects of music-playing similar to those seen in Hardy's poems:

by dint of long practice and habit there must have grown up in the person that sort of knowledge, which now seems intuitive, as to how, when, and in what manner to touch the various notes so as to make the instrument produce the desired sounds. ... the ideal *sound*-combination is, so to speak, the subject of thought itself, and therefore should arouse consciousness more as its successive parts become nascent and act as stimuli, inciting to the rapid and precise secondarily automatic movements performed by the hands and fingers.⁹⁶

⁹⁰ Cited in Björk, *Literary Notebooks 1*, 197.

⁹¹ Armstrong, 'Hardy, History, and Recorded Music', 161.

⁹² Pamela Dalziel and Michael Millgate ed., *Thomas Hardy's 'Studies, Specimens &c'. Notebook* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994): 85. The original article particularly concerns 'the Physiology of Thinking in its special dependence upon Language' and was published in the *Fortnightly Review* 5/25 (Jan. 1869): 57–71 in *British Periodicals: Collection 1*, www.proquest.com/products-services/british_periodicals.html (accessed 30 Jul 2018).

⁹³ Bastian, 'Physiology of Thinking', 69, 68.

⁹⁴ According to Dalziel and Millgate's notes, although they note 'cf. ... 66.19 for a similar phrase' (since Hardy's quotation is not exact) ('*Studies, Specimens &c'*', 151).

⁹⁵ Bastian, 'Physiology of Thinking', 69. Bastian also distinguishes between conscious and non-conscious memory, noting that 'it has been most strongly insisted upon by Herbert Spencer, that the functions of conscious memory end where an automatic sequence begins' (66).

⁹⁶ Bastian, 'Physiology of Thinking', 69–70 (original emphasis).

Musical instruments partook of scientific discussion in the nineteenth century, and this was part of the knowledge and imagery Hardy incorporated into his own writing. While such articles piqued interest, in this era, in such metaphysical possibilities as mesmerism and automatic writing, I argue that it also informs Hardy's understanding of physically learned habits, including music-playing.⁹⁷ The very fact that the examples Hardy came across are mainly different from those Weliver highlights only further proves her point that 'Keyboard playing was a recurring nineteenth-century example of how association worked and how habits were acquired'.⁹⁸

Writing on 'Work and the Body in Hardy', Scarry notes that 'The human creature is for him not now and then but habitually embodied: it has at every moment a physical circumference and boundary'.⁹⁹ 'Habitually embodied' is an interesting phrase for this discussion, since I argue that in his memories of playing musical instruments, Hardy offers the reader the embodiment specific to having acquired habit. In modelling the processes of acoustic instrument performance, O'Modhrain and Gillespie emphasize that it 'involves the active and passive elements of the sensorimotor systems'.¹⁰⁰ They offer examples (such as piano trills) where mechanical actions out-perform 'the speed of cognitive processes', so 'certain behaviors in the musician-/instrument-coupled dynamics can be attributed to an inner loop, not involving closed-loop control by the musician's nervous system'.¹⁰¹ Certain mechanical operations happen independently of the brain, even as the brain receives and responds to other complex inputs, such as those received by the ear.

Through practice, musicians acquire enough muscle memory that their fingers can play through complex phrases and pieces without necessarily having to provide that 'conscious labour' of which Maudsley speaks.¹⁰² Thus, playing a musical instrument shares something with haunting, though in life: that parts of the body are moved by something other than conscious thought. Therefore, it is not quite so very odd that Hardy should choose to give only the 'fingers' or the 'hands' in these remembered encounters, and not the whole body. This is where I part company with Hillis Miller. For him, Hardy's hands are subject to a 'double disembodiment', because Hardy 'suggest[s] that even when the people who "owned" these hands as parts of their bodies were alive, it was the hands rather than the whole volitional embodied person that were at play', but this same separation is true in life thanks to the workings of those physical habits at one remove from consciousness.¹⁰³ While Hillis Miller sees this as disembodiment, I would argue that Hardy represents the specific form of embodiment true of a musician playing a musical instrument. 'I Was Not He' (1922) depicts a memory of a live person playing a piano, yet still Hardy only offers select body parts: 'It was not I who sang/ Beside the keys you touched so true/With note-bent eyes' (572). These are not

⁹⁷ See Armstrong, 'Hardy, History, and Recorded Music', 161. Armstrong also links Hardy's interest in freedom from the conscious Will to Paterian aesthetics.

⁹⁸ Weliver, *Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction*, 86.

⁹⁹ Scarry, 'Work and the Body', 90.

¹⁰⁰ O'Modhrain and Gillespie, 'Once More, With Feeling', 23.

¹⁰¹ O'Modhrain and Gillespie, 'Once More, With Feeling', 21.

¹⁰² See Alan H.D. Watson, 'What Can Studying Musicians Tell Us About Motor Control of the Hand?', *Journal of Anatomy* 208/4 (Apr 2006): 527–42 for a detailed scientific explanation of how such motor skills are learned, weaning off conscious brain activity until 'the replaying of these sequences becomes fully automatic'.

¹⁰³ Hillis Miller, 'Hands in Hardy', 513.

hauntings, not disembodied, but they do accurately represent the concentration of the musician mid-piece (the 'not I' also hinting at a lapsing of consciousness). The reader's attention, like the piano-player's and the lover's, is attuned to 'the keys you touched', the physical contact with a material surface which allows the expression of music.

As Hardy ends 'To My Father's Violin', with violin remaining and his father in the grave, 'here alone I sadly con/Your present dumbness, shape your olden story' (452). The speaker may feel 'sad' but there is still a person present to tell the 'olden story', even if the instrument is now 'dumb'. Admittedly, Hardy needs the archaic verb 'con' for the rhyme with 'wan', but 'con' has senses of get to know, study or learn (especially by committing to memory), but another meaning of this verb is to direct or steer a ship, ironically gesturing towards the speaker's authorial role in 'shap[ing] your olden story'. The version of the father-violin narrative to be received is mediated through both the violin and the speaker of the poem. Hardy's poems affirm the reciprocal relationship between persons and objects:

Objects need symbolic framings, storylines and human spokespersons in order to acquire social lives; social relationships and practices in turn need to be materially grounded in order to gain temporal and spatial endurance.¹⁰⁴

Hardy's poems satisfy both conditions, with spokespersons in the form of speaker and poet, while in versifying such object encounters at all, they are given another lease on life through literary culture. Moreover, by choosing to foreground musical instruments, Hardy inspires an imaginative remembering born of handling objects, so that the past feels tangible in the present. Memory materializes, for Hardy, when there is a present body through which it can be mediated (though that body may belong to an instrument rather than a person). The reader is one more mediation as s/he imaginatively encounters these objects and instruments via the material culture of the page, the screen or oral transmission.

In looking at Hardy's musical instrument poems, it becomes clear that while he sees 'the object as a companion in life experience', instruments – because of their intimate connection with the human body – are much more than mere companions.¹⁰⁵ I pick on those poems specifically about memories mediated through musical instruments because Hardy himself was a talented musician and musicians 'are known to establish a very intimate, rich haptic exchange with their instruments, resulting in truly embodied interaction that is hard to find in other human-machine contexts', something I argue Hardy depicts imaginatively but accurately.¹⁰⁶ Hardy returns readers to the fingers and the hands (of the body) as much as he returns to the strings and keys (of the instrument), because these are not metonymic representations but rather the key material contacts involved in music-playing.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Dick Pels, Kevin Hetherington and Frédéric Vendenbreghe, 'The Status of the Object: Performances, Mediations, and Techniques', *Theory, Culture and Society* 19/5–6 (2002): 1–21, 11.

¹⁰⁵ Turkle, 'Introduction', 5.

¹⁰⁶ Papetti and Saitis, 'Introduction', 2.

¹⁰⁷ Elaine Scarry also asserts the link between the hands and the ability to make things, noting 'throughout the literature of creation the hands become the most resonant and meaning-laden part of the human anatomy' ('Work and the Body', 110).

As musical haptics is only now theorizing, 'the musician is not playing the musical instrument but instead playing the coupled dynamics of his or her own body and instrument'.¹⁰⁸ Without wishing to detract from the inherent strangeness of such poems as 'Old Furniture' or 'Haunting Fingers', I argue that Hardy restores the significance of the complex bodily interactions crucial to these 'coupled dynamics' and extends outwards to consider the embodiments music can create at large. The music in these poems is not played live, for the players are no longer alive, but through his prolonged attendance to musical memories – and the physical actions that originally set them in motion – Hardy brings this music alive as a tactile, felt medium. Hardy encourages the reader to forget, albeit momentarily, that none of this is happening right now, if indeed it ever did.

Musical instruments are a site of contradiction for Hardy. While they can speak eloquently, they cannot do it alone and are otherwise silent; while music is ephemeral and sounds only in real-time, its memories can linger long in both mind and body; while they can be markers of vibrancy, vigour and vitality, they also bespeak loss: musical instruments offer Hardy a material interface between life and death. But it is Hardy himself who provides many more contradictions to be had in and of musical instruments, in his insistence on reminding the reader both of the very mechanical aspects of music-playing and simultaneously music's emotional power; his revivifying of the past and ignoring of present circumstance; the artistic licence he takes in introducing the ghostly idea of haunting to the material solidity of musical instruments. Hardy's poems insist upon the muscularity of music, rather than its ephemera, that its production is rooted in physiological actions more than mental ones. He reorients the reader's sensory appreciation of music towards *touch* over sound, to the *felt* over the heard. Memory, another ephemeral and intangible phenomenon, similarly seems to have more sinew in these poems, as Hardy privileges memories of the working body. Yet the great contradiction in terms is the huge trick Hardy pulls off in the mind of the reader, since it is a markedly conscious effort which goes into making these poetic representations realistic depictions of music-playing according to both experience and contemporary theorizations, while leaning on poetic devices such as rhyme and metre to assert the impossible presence of the past.

Reading Hardy through the lenses of material culture, memory studies and musical haptics challenges us to see him as a scientifically informed player and receiver of music, while highlighting the imaginative departures he makes in order to invest value in the things we live by, and to alert readers once again to the unique power of music to affect us in myriad ways, both at the time and afterwards. Himself a product of the nineteenth-century climate of discussions around the nature of physiology and psychology, Hardy experiments with putting these ideas into conjunction with everyday experience and brings the science of habit into the habitat of the home, to create poems by turns recognizable and surprising, anatomical and fantastical.

¹⁰⁸ O'Modhrain and Gillespie, 'Once More, With Feeling', 21.