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**Introduction**

Unlike other contributions to this special issue, this article focusses not on a digital adaptation *per se*, but rather reports on an Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded project which has applied digital tools to the study of a television adaptation of a classic novel of 19th Century English literature to produce a genetic edition. The project, ‘Transforming *Middlemarch*’ and this article, aim to demonstrate what new kinds of knowledge may be produced about the creative process of literary adaptation through the application of textual encoding, using Xtensible Mark-up Language (XML), to the source novel and television scripts. A genetic edition here is defined as the chronological intertextual digital encoding of an adaptation’s source texts. George Eliot’s novel was first published in serial form in 1871-2. The BBC’s second television serialisation of *Middlemarch* (the first was shown in seven parts in colour on the fledgling BBC 2 in 1968) was a co-production with WGBH Boston, originally broadcast on BBC 2 in six weekly episodes beginning on Wednesday 12th January 1994 at 9pm. The dramatization was executive produced by Rebecca Eaton (USA) and Michael Wearing (UK), produced by Louis Marks and directed by Anthony Page. Andrew Davies was the screenwriter.

In 2015, Davies loaned his considerable personal archive to De Montfort University’s Special Collections where it has been substantially digitised. Adaptations specialist Anna Blackwell and Archivist Natalie Hayton (both members of the project team), who oversaw the digitisation of the Davies collection, reported in 2017: ‘The archival material... on *Middlemarch* is perhaps the most extensive of all the titles in the collection, including draft screenplays, notes, revisions and correspondence. During the cataloguing process it was the
latter of these that provided the greatest insight into the tenor of the production process’ (Blackwell and Hayton, 7). The richness of the *Middlemarch* material (including two complete script iterations) was also one of the key factors in choosing this adaptation to produce a digital genetic edition.
What is a Genetic Edition?

Invoking biological metaphors is by no means new in adaptation studies. In 2007 Linda Hutcheon joined forces with biologist Gary R. Bortolotti to develop a theoretical ‘homology’:

Our hope is that biological thinking may help move us beyond the theoretical impasse in narrative adaptation studies represented by the continuing dominance of what is usually referred to as "fidelity discourse." This common determination to judge an adaptation's "success" only in relation to its faithfulness or closeness to the "original" or "source" text threatens to reinforce the current low estimation (in terms of cultural capital) of what is, in fact, a common and persistent way humans have always told and retold stories. (Bortolotti and Hutcheon, 444).

Interestingly, as the final clause quoted above indicates, this provocative analogy echoes both literary formalism (primary narratives as ‘replicators’) and the post-structuralist legacy of ‘intertextual dialogism’ (Stam, 64): adaptational ‘success’ measured by ‘persistence’ and ‘diversity’ (Bortolotti and Hutcheon, 450-1) rather than ‘fidelity’. This is dependent on both transmedia ‘mutations’ and the changing conditions of the transcultural environment (449) – affordances which encourage the further (re)materialization of adaptation studies (Murray, 2008; Meikle, 2013). And yet, Bortolotti and Hutcheon concede that what the discourse of evolutionary biology cannot reproduce is cultural selection based on intentionality: ‘it is people who change stories and do so with particular intentions’ (453). Moreover, from a political economy perspective, we might add that it is capital (cultural, economic, and institutional) that determines (enables and constrains) human agency. But
what if we were to think about the biological analogy not at the macro level (Bortolotti and Hutcheon) but in micro digital analyses of adaptation?

Recent developments in the application of Digital Humanities tools and methodologies to literary texts have produced some remarkable online editions of celebrated works which enable new insights into their gestation. For example, the University of Nottingham’s project ‘Odour of Chrysanthemums – a text in process’, invites the opportunity to compare four different versions of D.H. Lawrence’s short story having converted these texts to XML applying the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) standard. The keyword in its title is ‘process’. The promise is that something of an author’s creative process can be recovered through: (i) sequencing in order of composition/publication date different iterations of the same text, (ii) intertextual cross-referencing of the texts enabled by XML encoding, and (iii) editorial textual annotation. We might call this, with some poetic licence, a digital genetic sequencing of a text’s development over time: a genetic edition.

A team of researchers from the Centre for Adaptations, the Centre for Textual Studies, the Cinema and Television History Institute and the Special Collections department of the Kimberlin Library at DMU, in partnership with the British Library, combined to develop a methodology for applying similar digital tools and intertextual approaches to a literary adaptation. In the case of Middlemarch (1994), the three core texts are the 1878 Cabinet Edition of George Eliot’s novel, the Revised Issue 3 of Andrew Davies’ Shooting script (dated 16.02.93) and the BBC Post-production script (1994). The raw text file of the Cabinet Edition was supplied by project consultant Beverley Rilett, Director of the George Eliot Archive at the University of Auburn, Alabama.\textsuperscript{1} It is the version of the novel closest to the W.J. Harvey Penguin Classics edition (1965) used by Andrew Davies. XML versions of the two scripts (held in PDF format in DMU Special Collections) were produced by OCR scanning.
All three texts were proofed and cleaned prior to encoding. They are presented in the digital genetic edition in three vertically scrolling columns in a static web page (HTML 5), with the novel on the left, the Shooting script in the middle, and the Post-production script on the right; a fourth column was added to the right-hand margin of the webpage for Notes, and a panel with longer editorial Commentaries sits at the foot (Fig.1).²

The first, and obvious, point to make is that this digital genetic edition of an adaptation of *Middlemarch* compares texts of different types, formats and conventions (a novel and two screenplays); in fact, even the two screenplays are of a different order, a Post-production script being a post-hoc printed record of a programme-as-broadcast. The second point, which follows, is that these texts represent the work of multiple creative agents. It is useful here to refer to the distinctions couched in copyright law, whereby ‘The Production is the media that is consumed by the public’ (represented by the Post-production script), ‘The Property is any material upon which the Production is directly based’ (in this case the Shooting script), and ‘The Underlying Work is the material upon which the Property was based’ (George Eliot’s novel) (Williams, 28). In order to address further the ramifications of this digital model for issues of authorship, let us first consider the intertextual encoding and cross-referencing capabilities of the resource.

Since this is a genetic edition not of *Middlemarch* the novel, but of Andrew Davies’ adaptation of *Middlemarch*, priority has been accorded in encoding and annotation to the Shooting script as the central text. It is Andrew Davies rather than George Eliot who is considered the primary author here. This was a key decision and is not uncontentious, since
it contravenes the inherent evolutionary logic of a sole-author, single-text model like ‘Odour of Chrysanthemums’. However, the genesis of an adaptation charts a very different course from that of a short story by a single author. It is worth reflecting further on this.

Jack Boozer has refocussed attention in adaptation studies to the centrality of the screenplay: ‘The composition of the screenplay illuminates the evolution of ideas that will determine the film production’s relationship to its source text’. (Boozer, 1; emphasis added). He elaborates:

It is the screenplay, not the source text, that is the most direct foundation and fulcrum for any adapted film ... Whatever alterations are made during shooting and editing, the adapted screenplay as it exists just before production starts is the most prescriptive guide to the film in the mind’s eye of writer and director.’ (Boozer, 4).

The digital genetic edition of Middlemarch positions Andrew Davies’ Shooting script as the ‘fulcrum’. Rather than circumventing authorship and intentionality, conceiving of adaptation as a polytextual process actually returns attention to its multiple creative agencies. It also foregrounds the adaptor’s authorial relationship to the source text. It this sense, it calls for a reorientation of notions of fidelity, examined through the digital intertexts of scripts. Boozer continues:

The screenplay can reveal the transformational decisions that account for a change in medium, as well as the initial story and dialogue alterations that point to the conceptual goal of the film adaptation. The issue of authorial intent, therefore, must be a part of any discussion of fidelity in adaptation. (Boozer, 9).
Digital tools can potentially contribute much to a reinvigoration of this debate by enabling readers to interrogate the scripts to see how the adaptation process evolves. What the decisions taken on how to encode a digital edition can bring to this debate is to reveal both qualitatively and quantitatively how the screenwriter’s crafting of the adaptation both respects the source text and renders it most televisual and appealing to a popular audience of the time.

One of the aims of ‘Transforming Middlemarch’ has been to produce a digital resource which is enriched by the wealth of material the landmark 1994 BBC series generated (during its making) and informed by rigorous production history research in order to document its landmark achievement. Accordingly, the genetic edition of Middlemarch has drawn on at least seven digital sources of underlying data in addition to the three core texts. These include: Andrew Davies’ hand-annotated Shooting script pages and correspondence, original location photographs of the Summer 1993 shoot taken by former Stamford Museum curator John F.H. Smith, production materials (from Gerry Scott’s Art Department) reproduced from Stamford Library and Museum collections, original interviews conducted by the authors with Davies, his script editor Susie Conklin, the production manager Julie Edwards, and actor Trevyn McGowan, transcripts of contemporary interviews with all the principal creative talents produced by BBC Education for the Screening Middlemarch education pack, 56 images of digitised pages from George Eliot’s handwritten manuscript (courtesy of the British Library and copyright holder), 56 audio extracts from the novel (produced by the project and read by a voice artist) and 43 video clips from the dramatisation. These digital paratextual assets are accessible via links from over 400 editorial Notes.
The purpose of drawing upon such a rich range of additional assets is to recover and document as much as is possible of the collaborative creative processes of a television adaptation. *Middlemarch* (1994) is, indisputably, Andrew Davies’ interpretation of George Eliot’s novel; indeed, Davies insists that ‘an adaptation particularly is a kind of reading of the book’ (Davies 2007, 242). But that interpretation has been fashioned into television drama by a whole ensemble of creative talents operating both in negotiation with and independently of the screenwriter. The genetic edition of *Middlemarch* invites a Janus-faced perspective (looking both backwards and forwards from the central Shooting script) and its structure enables these dynamic intertextual relationships to be kept in play via the network of cross-referencing and annotations that digital encoding enables.  

From the Shooting script, diamond icons direct the reader to the Notes column (far right). A note will typically record an observation about that place in the script, but will invariably also offer a range of additional links to the paratextual assets. Curly arrows point to cross-references (backwards) in the novel and/or (forwards) in the Post-production script, and on clicking the columns align horizontally and relevant text is highlighted. Notes also point to longer Commentaries on key scenes located in the footer panel. Before making some observations on what the network of intertextual references and annotations offer the reader about the adaptation process, there is something further to be said about the free navigation possibilities of the genetic edition.  

Whilst this section has established the key decisions made by the project team about the organisation of the central texts, their interrelationship and hierarchy, and the implications for our understanding of authorship and process in this model of screen adaptation, it would be wrong to imply that this is the only way in which the genetic edition operates or that our editorial perspective precludes other interpretations. The advantage
that digital encoding provides means that the reader can scroll through and search each text independently; this is facilitated by a show/hide toggle in the header bar. At the top of each text column is a hyperlinked contents list which leads directly to a particular chapter in the novel or scene in the script, and each of the three column headings is hyperlinked to return the reader from anywhere in that text back to the top. Control-F (or Command-F) displays the reader’s browser’s own free-text search box and the browser’s forward and backward arrows will enable steps to be retraced. Later, we will reflect on the future potential of the digital encoding for a range of users. Pragmatism has informed both the design of the web interface (HTML 5) in the interests of accessibility and sustainability, and the metadata management is based on a customised version of the Dublin Core template. The digital genetic edition is an open access web resource which will be co-hosted by the George Eliot Archive under a Creative Commons Licence CC-BY-SA 4.0. It is accessible via this url:

https://middlemarch.dmu.ac.uk

Adaptation: Process and Technique

To date, Sarah Cardwell has written the only full-length study of Andrew Davies’ career, which surveys the breadth of his varied output including original plays, film scripts and adaptations. Yet despite her focus and insights on matters of authorship, style and ‘voice’ across this body of work (informed by close textual analyses and original interviews), Cardwell pays comparatively little attention to Davies’ technique or modus operandi. The digital genetic edition produced by the ‘Transforming Middlemarch’ project, combining intertextual cross-referencing of the novel and scripts with paratextual assets and editorial annotation, enables unique insights into Davies’ procedure and technique. Production history research further underscores the collaborative practice of television adaptation.
The research team has identified, and documented in the genetic edition’s editorial Notes and Commentaries, at least six techniques at play in Davies’ adaptation of Middlemarch:

- Omission – choosing to leave out material
- Concision – keeping material but cutting out detail/minor elements
- Condensation – reducing a larger amount of material
- Invention – including completely new material
- Preservation – verbatim conservation of description or dialogue
- Juxtaposition and reordering – switching between plot lines or changing order of events to create particular effects

These techniques foreground the screenwriter’s relationship in script composition and revision to the source novel – Davies’ reading of Middlemarch. But the screenwriter is never an entirely free agent. His parameters are set by the production scale (six episodes) and ethos (period realism) and by budget (affording extensive location shooting on film and considerable allowance for production design and costumes). And his creative decisions from first drafts through as many as four script iterations leading up to the Shooting script, were made working in tandem with his script editor, Susie Conklin (formerly Chapman), producer, Louis Marks, and director Anthony Page.

It is one thing to identify Andrew Davies’ structural approach to adapting the novel which the genetic edition documents. However, in considering television adaptation as process, the other key interface is the interpretation of the script on screen: this is evidenced in the genetic edition in the relationship between the Shooting script and the Post-production script. This necessarily involves a whole raft of adaptive techniques particular to the production process including (although not limited to):
• Directorial/cinematographical decisions

• Changes made to the shooting schedule for pragmatic or budgetary reasons on location

• Editing changes made for timing or creative reasons

• Creative inputs by music; set design; props; costume

• Performative interpretations

There follows three examples from the genetic edition which illustrate the combination of Davies’ adaptive techniques and those of the production’s co-creators.

(i) The Two Sisters

If we are looking for ‘genotypes’ in classic novel adaptation then the sisterly ‘bedroom scene’ is surely one that Andrew Davies has made his own. It would be interesting to speculate whether Davies had already drafted the candelit dialogue between Jane and Elizabeth Bennett in the opening episode of *Pride and Prejudice* when he wrote the Jewellery Scene (1/7) in *Middlemarch*. What is certain is that subsequently, Susannah Harker (who had also starred in Davies’ *House of Cards* (1990)) was cast as Jane alongside Jennifer Ehle’s Elizabeth, while her younger sister Caroline plays Celia Brooke, Dorothea’s younger sister in *Middlemarch*. Comparisons are irresistible.

The serious point of course is that scenes of domestic intimacy in which eligible young women at the centre of classic English novels discuss their feelings and affections, are vital to establishing their contrasting characters and their desires, and to securing the viewer’s emotional investment in their development. Scene 1/7 in *Middlemarch*, as the genetic edition shows, offers a close reading of an episode in Chapter 1 of the novel. Davies’ location for the scene incorporates, not unusually, a direct quotation from the novel in his
opening stage direction: ‘This is the "pretty sitting room which divided the bedrooms of the sisters". So we might glimpse their bedrooms through open doors’ (SS, 1/8).

However, this late-afternoon scene in the Shooting script follows immediately after the sisters’ introduction, which sees them riding with carefree abandon across open countryside. Eliot tells us early of Dorothea’s indulgent enjoyment of riding and the sexual attraction it provoked: ‘Most men thought her bewitching when she was on horseback ... Riding was an indulgence which she allowed herself in spite of conscientious qualms; she felt that she enjoyed it in a pagan sensuous way, and always looked forward to renouncing it.’ (Ch.1, 11). Andrew Davies’ stage directions precis this observation and frame our heroine in close-up: ‘the first thing we see is Dorothea’s face, rapt, intent, glowing, in a kind of quiet ecstasy as she canters along. Her lips are parted. We can hear her breathing. We are going to hear and see enough of her spirituality later on, for now let’s see a beautiful and passionate young woman.’ (SS, 1/3). Our indulgence in this spirited but innocent scene of sisters at leisure is arrested by their short-cut return through woodland where they encounter a poor itinerant labouring family, with young children. Before we learn of Dorothea’s spirituality, we see not only her beauty and passion, but also her compassion and distress in encountering human misery.

In editing, as the Post-production script shows, this riding scene was then juxtaposed with five short scenes establishing Lydgate’s early days as a doctor in *Middlemarch* and his relationships with Farebrother and Bulstrode. This is evidence of Davies’ desire to focus the viewer’s attention on the community before Dorothea’s story:

If I had followed the text more faithfully the first twenty minutes would have been spent on two rich young women sitting in a big house with too much money and too little to do, wondering who they were going to marry. Entertaining perhaps,
but it’s not what Eliot’s about. You have to look at the big picture (Harris, 100).

This view evidently prevailed in post-production. However, in the original Shooting script, scene 1/7 followed directly. It is the first to place Dorothea and Celia Brooke in the domestic environment of their own rooms at Tipton Grange. Its significance for Andrew Davies is apparent in correspondence early in the development of the script with the first producer attached to the project, David Snodin. In his letter of 10 July 1991, Davies offers four reasons why this scene is crucial as exposition of the sisters' characters and attitudes (see Fig.2), but his adaptive methods here are also worth exploring.

For instance, Davies expertly selects and applies verbatim phrases from Eliot’s dialogue and descriptions of the sisters' reactions in Chapter 1. He does so both in their speeches and in his stage directions. Celia’s arguments in favour of them wearing the jewellery (not to, would be lacking 'in respect to Mamma's memory' and 'surely... there are women in heaven now who wore jewels') are taken from just one paragraph on pages 14-15 of the novel. Davies, however, intersperses them throughout the scene to maintain the momentum of Celia’s attempts at persuasion. In the Shooting script, too, Dorothea dismisses the thought of wearing a cross as a 'trinket' only to be suddenly taken, just as she is in Chapter 1 with the sheer beauty of the gems. She marvels ‘how deeply colours seem to ... penetrate one ... like scent. They look like fragments of heaven’ (SS, 1/10). Yet by the Post-production script, Dorothea’s attitude to wearing the jewels in company has lost the more self-judgemental line taken from Eliot’s dialogue (‘Who knows to what level I may sink?’), instead retaining a
more ambivalent and suggestive, ‘Perhaps I shall’ (PP, 1/22). In performance, Juliet Aubrey subtly conveys the way Dorothea is torn between physical feelings evoked by the gems and her urge to renounce worldly temptations.

The deliberate omission of elements from the novel is also a strategy Davies’ employs when adapting this scene. Hints at Dorothea’s spiritual and puritanical principles are reined back by the screenwriter for his 1990s audience. For the benefit of the actor and director only, he notes in the stage direction, that Dorothea’s rejection of the jewels is ‘not just Puritan asceticism’ (SS, 1/9). Dorothea’s goodness is conveyed rather through her social conscience as embodied in her plans for the farmworkers’ cottages.

Davies uses the scene to reveal Dorothea’s and Celia’s differences as sensual young women. Celia, the younger teenager, is excited to wear the jewels at a dinner where they will have guests; she relishes the attention they will grant her and the timing of her request to Dorothea to look at the jewellery is no coincidence. At first Dorothea consciously rejects the jewels but then her senses take over as she studies them as Eliot notes ‘under a current of feeling, as sudden as the gleam’ (17) of the emeralds. The difference, which intertextual digital analysis enables, is that Davies focuses Dorothea’s reaction on the physical whereas Eliot blends this with the spiritual.

(ii) Heritage Soap: The Vincys at Breakfast

In just two and a half minutes Scene 1/21 introduces the viewer to the Vincy family, framing Rosamond, as George Eliot does in Chapter 11, between her doting mother and her brother, Fred. Initially, Andrew Davies preserves from the novel two clear distinctions between Rosamond and Mrs Vincy in terms of manners – Rosamond cannot understand how any sophisticated home could stink of kippers this late in the day – and language, when she
recommends that ‘the pick of’ is a phrase no woman of class would use. In the screen
version, this distinction is perpetuated in the morning leisure activities the two women
choose – Mrs Vincy is mending, while Rosamond is engaged in the more decorative
occupation of painting.

When Fred arrives downstairs, he immediately provokes his sister by addressing her
as ‘Rosie’ – a childish shortening of her name. This is firmly met with her correcting riposte:
‘Rosamond’. This first exchange is of Davies’ invention to show that Rosamond is a young
woman keen to have her views felt in the household. She follows her mother into the
breakfast room to quiz Fred on his choice of a ‘grilled bone’ and in the rest of the scene
Davies produces a pared down version of their longer exchange from the novel. The
crossfire of their quick exchanges is lightened in the screen version through the
performances of Trevyn McDowell and Jonathan Firth. They are like modern teenagers
arguing, but an affection underlies their verbal sparring. This is also conveyed in the slightly
conspiratorial rolling of eyes they share as their mother insists that they must visit their
Uncle Featherstone or they will never receive a legacy from him. The viewer is also made
aware in the way that this scene edits medium close-ups of more familiar human contact
between these three characters than those more formally arranged in the scenes at Tipton.
Furthermore, Mrs Vincy’s kiss on Fred’s cheek as he sits down to breakfast and hug for her
daughter on her decision to ride to Stone Court, neither of which are given as stage
directions in the scripts, can also be viewed as a sign of parental indulgence that has led to
these rather spoilt offspring (brought out in direction and performance). Certainly, the
interchanges between brother and sister are more transactional in the novel, with
Rosamond calculating that she must pander to Fred by accompanying his ‘wheezy
performance’ (Ch.11, 154) on the flute for an hour in order that he will accompany her to Stone Court the following day.

The reworking of the location for this scene, which in the Shooting script takes place in the drawing room-cum-breakfast room at the Vincys’, was brought about by the location managers, Sam Breckman and Jeff Golding, choosing a town house in Stamford which had two smaller reception rooms on its first floor. Lighting these rooms, and deciding on the camera positions, posed a challenge for cinematographer, Brian Tufano. But the ‘bright high-key’ effect he creates of strong morning light pouring into both rooms (produced by four powerful scissor-lift and scaffold-mounted lamps and two interior lamps bouncing light off polystyrene panels) also contributes to the characterisation of Fred and particularly Rosamond in this expositional scene (Fig.3). In addition, close-ups from different camera angles later allowed the director (Anthony Page) and editor (Paul Tothill) choices in the cutting-room about character, point-of-view and emphasis (Fig.4). Once in the breakfast room, Rosamond is lit mostly from the side, enhancing both her head movements and facial expressions as she quick-wittedly delivers her lines. This lighting also successfully facilitates the transition between the two rooms that helps to give this scene its pace.

Another indication of how technical adaptive aspects of the production meld with the script to result in an overall look and produce an auto-suggestive effect on the audience is
summed up by this comment from Tufano in the BBC Education video *Screening Middlemarch*:

One could say that the morning effect is in the eye of the beholder... what you do is create a bright high-key effect of bright sunlight... filtering into a room and the rest is conveyed by the fact that it was breakfast and that they talk about getting up at 10.30 in the morning and having a late start to the day.

In the novel, this breakfast scene is the first time the reader encounters Fred. At home he comes across as a confident if conceited young man of education. In the adaptation Fred first appears in Scene 1/17 playing billiards at The Green Dragon. He loses, is summoned by the horsedealer Bambridge and forced to confess that he still can't repay his debt to him. Thus, Fred's feckless indolence is established in advance of his reluctance to get out of bed in the morning.

This short scene analysis has shown how the genetic edition's assemblage of digitised paratexts enhance the user's appreciation of the collaborative process of screen adaptation, involving multiple creative agencies in the interpretation of Davies' Shooting script.

(iii) Mr Mawmsey

The previous two examples examined show Davies' adept technique in selecting key lines from Eliot's characters' dialogue verbatim to reproduce scenes in compressed form which are staged in the novel. Indeed, Davies' approach to adapting *Middlemarch* proceeded from the recognition that 'George Eliot's a wonderful writer to work with, and her dialogue her brilliant; the way she writes scenes and describes the movements of a character suggest
that she would have been a very good screen writer herself’ (1993, 75). Davies’ sensitivity to the dramatic strengths of his source, is reinforced and nuanced by Script Editor Susie Conklin’s observation that:

he had no need to write his own dialogue for his own sake, because he’s a writer, but he was very good at knowing what was just too wordy or how you might just take a bit of that long, chewy line and make it just a little more lively... Andrew had a very good instinct ... about making sure something has a dramatic background to it and not overloading it or being so precious about the book that you have something that doesn't come alive.

(Conklin, 5-6.)

There are also many instances, examined in the editorial notes and commentaries in the genetic edition, where Davies invents scenes that don’t appear in the novel at all, often to substitute for Eliot’s narrational elaboration of the Middlemarch community (eg the opening of the new Fever Hospital (2/1) and the Lydges’ wedding (3/25)).

Lydgate and Farebrother’s encounter with the grocer Mr Mawmsey (Scene 4/6) is an instance where Davies constructs a scene that is only briefly reported in Chapter 45 the novel, to illustrate how Lydgate’s advanced notions of charging for consultations rather than prescriptions become the talk of Middlemarch. Lydgate is accosted by the grocer Mawmsey from the ‘Top Market’ (Ch.45, 259), who enquires politely why Mrs Mawmsey has not received her strengthening medicine. He is bemused when Lydgate ridicules such placebos and suggests, ‘Let her take a glass of wine with her dinner’. He explains, condescendingly that if doctors could charge for their visits it would curb overprescribing – indeed ‘overdosing the king’s lieges’ which is ‘the worst kind of treason’. Farebrother may smile at this analogy, but it leaves Mawmsey and his assistant confused. In this brief scene, Davies
distils the mood of the whole chapter where the Middlemarch medics, as well as patients like Mrs Mawmsey, discuss Lydgate’s new ideas with disdain leading, in Chapter 46, to their refusal to work at the new Fever Hospital.

The character of Mawmsey is itself a distillation by Davies of the Middlemarch mentality. Eliot describes him as a grocer ‘whose retail deference was of the cordial, encouraging kind —jocosely complimentary’ (Ch.45, 259), which lulls Lydgate into his smugly humorous analogy of ‘overdosing the king’s lieges’. In fact, the novel tells that Mawmsey’s mask of seeming dullness belies his cunning, revealed when he crows to his wife: ‘I was not going to tell him my opinion. Hear everything and judge for yourself is my motto. ...People often pretend to tell me things, when they might as well say, “Mawmsey, you’re a fool.”’ (Ch.45, 261). The essence of this character is embodied in Ken Campbell’s performance, down to his red hair ‘arranged in a flame-like pyramid’ (Ch.45, 259). Campbell (known for his idiosyncratic and provocative one-man stage shows) fuses the 'jocosely complimentary' tone of Eliot's Mawmsey with the 'grandly confidential' note for Mawmsey in Davies' stage directions.

As Davies’ annotated page of the Shooting script reveals (Fig.6), he felt the ending of this scene needed enhancing to show Mawmsey’s indignation at Lydgate's 'overdosing'. And the new line in the Post-production script, spoken to his assistant Atkins, shows his solution to this and also perhaps indicates that the grocer is not looking forward to bringing the news to his wife. While he is smiling and deferential in craving Lydgate’s attention, once he is out of earshot he mutters cantankerously, ‘Mrs Mawmsey is not a well woman. Mrs Mawmsey
needs her strengthening medicine’ (PP, 4/26). Because of Lydgate’s poor explanation and superior disregard, and Middlemarch’s resistance to change, the viewer knows that Mawmsey remains unpersuaded by the doctor’s obscure logic.

Such scenes show how digital encoding enables a level of close intertextual analysis which makes this resource useful not only to scholars of Eliot and adaptation, but points the way to the potential application of this technology for student study guides at GCSE and A-level where screen adaptations are frequently used as a gateway to the literary source. A key area of contention here relates to an understanding of the distinctive formal attributes of narration across the two media.

The examples above show how Davies’ beautifully-crafted vignettes frame the contributions of minor characters in the novel, and how such apparently incidental events can be constructed with economy to convey so much of what is rendered in the novel via Eliot’s ubiquitous narrator. One of the main criticisms of an adaptation which was almost universally praised on first broadcast, was that voiced by the likes of David Gervais and Margaret Harris about its failure to find an adequate televisual corollary for George Eliot’s narrative voice; yet the genetic edition serves to demonstrate the range of strategies adopted to convey the narrator’s tone of rhetorical irony.

Director Anthony Page indicated that:

It was a deliberate choice of Andrew’s not to have any kind of voice over which you could have done. I mean you could have had a narration, because she does like to comment and to moralise, and I mean I can imagine an
adaptation where you would do that... which would give it a very different, much more philosophical and literary feeling. This is much more direct and popular and modern (Page, 60-1 and 66-7).

Davies himself has been even more candid in the difficulty presented for an adaptor by Eliot’s narrative voice: ‘which telegraphs all her punches in a way that you can foretell the whole story from what she says about the characters early on’. His aim was ‘to remove all this pressure and just let the scenes happen so that we can feel the characters at their own pace in a way’ (Davies, 1993: 96-7). It is only at the end of the final episode that a narrative voice-over, performed by Judi Dench, quotes from Eliot’s Finale over resumé scenes of the three central couples. Davies explained this decision in interview:

I wanted to keep her out of it so far as possible because she writes such a wonderful story I wanted it to tell itself. But then right at the end I thought ... it’s important about what happens to the characters after the end of the story because this isn’t one of those stories that ends and so they lived happily ever after; they live fairly happily and some of them not very happily at all, and I thought whose voice can say this? – not one of the characters.

(Davies, 1993: 93)

The ‘Transforming Middlemarch’ team chose to commission voice recordings of over 50 extracts from the novel illustrating the range of tonal colours in Eliot’s narrator’s mode of address. In a genetic edition which privileges Davies’ Shooting script as its ‘fulcrum’, these additional audio clips (linked from each relevant passage in the novel) provide another counterpoint which enables the reader to explore the extent to which the adaptation provides effective televisual solutions to the challenges of narrative voice.
One of the things evident from the close scrutiny of the digitised scripts and illustrative assets which the genetic edition enables is that narration is diffused and incorporated indirectly on multiple levels in the adaptation: in stage directions, in invented scenes, in narrative voice re-attributed as dialogue; then also in mise-en-scène and costume, performance, camerawork and editing, and musical score. When addressing the matter of Andrew Davies’ authorial voice, Sarah Cardwell usefully identifies his dominant tone as one of ‘sympathetic irony’ (Cardwell, 183). This is as insightful and accurate in describing Middlemarch as any other of his extensive catalogue of classic novel adaptations. And, furthermore, it is precisely the tone of George Eliot’s own narrative voice.

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that digital textual encoding offers rich new possibilities for exploring the intertextual relationships, between screen adaptations and their literary sources. It shows how access to archival sources and close comparative analyses of screenplays draw attention to the praxis of screen adaptation and reframe debates in adaptation studies about authorship and fidelity. Although the attention here has been focussed on process and technique and on the implications for a pluralist conception of creative agency, the potential for further study presented by genetic editions is considerable. For example, through the current level of encoding, it would be possible to identify and analyse all Davies’ stage and delivery directions and what they reveal about his interpretation of character, or to map the interpolation and nature of the extra-diegetic musical score (which the edition has also encoded). Further coding to this could reveal the proportion of lines from GE’s novel that Andrew Davies employs verbatim in his script or to analyse the recap sequences (identified in the PP script) at the beginning of Episodes 2 to 6.
which would make an intriguing commentary on the meta-narrativization across the series. Visualisations of scene re-ordering between the Shooting script and Post-production script can illustrate creative decisions made about narrative and plot. But beyond the interests of adaptations scholars (and those of Eliot scholars and television historians too), genetic editions offer broader scope to provide educational resources for A-level literature and media students through the possibilities of intertextual and paratextual exploration presented by digital learning. And, with appropriate adaptation, they have the potential to impact the digital environments of museums and heritage sites too.

Early feedback suggests that this model could be instructive to screenwriting students in demonstrating adaptive processes and techniques. Educationalists (including representative of publishers, exam boards and teachers) have expressed broad interest in the study guide potential of a reversed-engineered version which exploits screen adaptations to direct students back to examinable learning points in the literary text (which might be best achieved through a ‘key scenes’ approach). ‘Transforming Middlemarch’ is also to be featured in the ‘Exploring Eliot’ virtual exhibition https://exploringeliot.org as well as the George Eliot Archive: https://georgeeliotarchive.org. There is palpable interest in notable screen adaptations and their paratexts among devotees of literary heritage as enhancements to museum spaces, both physical and virtual. But all these potentialities come with the same caveat which is that the challenge of shaping the design of this technology to specific audiences/users is key to future developments in the field of digital adaptation. What the small team of researchers working on ‘Transforming Middlemarch’ has discovered is that the digital encoding of texts renders their semantic attributes more malleable to new kinds of investigation and comparative analyses. The Text Encoding
Initiative guidelines have proved to be an invaluable framework for facilitating intertextual enquiry in adaptation in dynamic new ways.

Notes

2 The Notes column was originally conceived as a horizontal panel at the foot of the page. However, in beta-testing feedback from DH students at the University of Auburn it was recommended that right-margin column positioning enabled better horizontal navigation across the three texts. The footer panel was then designated for Commentary – longer editorial analyses derived from the Notes for key adaptive moments.
4 Transforming MIDDLEMARCH. https://middlemarch.dmu.ac.uk/edition/ (accessed 16/01/23). All subsequent citations from George Eliot’s MIDDLEMARCH and from Andrew Davies’ Shooting script (SS) and Post-production script (PP), are taken from the genetic edition ‘Transforming MIDDLEMARCH’.

References

Conklin, Susie. Unpublished interview conducted by Lucy Hobbs and Justin Smith via Zoom, 3 February 2022, for ‘Transforming MIDDLEMARCH’ project, De Montfort University Special Collections, UK.

Davies, Andrew. Unpublished interview with Lucy Hobbs and Justin Smith, 22 February 2022, for 'Transforming Middlemarch' project, De Montfort University Special Collections, UK.


Screening Middlemarch: 19th century novel to 90s television. Dir. Suzanne Davies. UK (BBC Education/BFI). 1994


Created from dmu on 2023-01-07 12:12:50.
Figure 1. Genetic Edition Webpage Layout

508x317mm (144 x 144 DPI)
Here are some of the other things that scene tells us:

1. Dorothea spends her spare time designing model cottages for farmworkers.

2. The sisters' mother has been dead for at least six months.

3. Dorothea is the elder sister and is the dominant, deciding one, though it looks as if Celia often gets her way by subtle wiles. In their sisterly relationship they take on something like archetypical masculine and feminine roles.

4. The scene is also about the girls as sexual beings and as sex objects. Jewellery is worn to attract men who are possible husbands. Jewellery is also about sensuality in a more personal, individual sense, about girls enjoying their own beauty, their own femininity, their own sexuality. The scene is saying that Celia has no problems with this, and that Dorothea has. Now I'm not sure whether George Eliot would agree with me, but I am suggesting that Dorothy3ea has these problems not only because she is very religious, idealistic and self-denying, but because she is underneath all this much more highly sexed than Celia: "It's strange how deeply colours seem to...penetrate one."

Ref Code: PM-50. Title: Extract from letter to David Snodin from Andrew Davies giving his interpretation of insights offered by the jewellery scene (Scene 1.7) Date: 1991-07-10. Format: .png. Source: D/061/A043/C/01, Papers of Andrew Davies, Screenwriter, De Montfort University Special Collections UK, https://specialcollections.catalogue.dmu.ac.uk/records/D/061/A/043/C/01

Figure 2. Extract from letter to David Snodin from Andrew Davies, 10/07/91.

296x220mm (144 x 144 DPI)

Figure 3. The Vincy Breakfast Scene Lighting Plan.

252x183mm (144 x 144 DPI)
Figure 4. Scissor lifts lighting room in Vincy house location from street in Stamford, 20/07/93.

330x220mm (144 x 144 DPI)
Figure 5. Doorway entrance set to Mawmsey’s Grocery with signage and props, Stamford, 27/07/93.

121x219mm (144 x 144 DPI)
LYDGATE
The reason doctors prescribe so much medicine Mr. Mawmesy is because it’s the only way they can make their money. If men like Wrench could charge for consultations, they wouldn’t need to overdose the king’s liege – and that’s the worst kind of treason, eh? Good day to you.

And off he goes with FAREBROTHER, who has been amused by this exchange.

Mawmesy

Over edge?

Mawmesy: No, I don’t see that at all.

And he says (this to a lady passing by) as a customary gesture from his shop, “His assistant. Mawmesy.”

Mr. Mawmesy is not a well man.

Mr. Mawmesy needs help strengthening his medicine.

I read minds if we last this scene – and it is rather nice – it needs a bit more of an ending.

- 4/10 -