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## Book review

cultural geographies

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*Landscapes of Detectorists*. Edited by Innes Keighren and Joanne Norcup. Axminster, Devon: Uniformbooks. 2020. 112pp. £12.00. ISBN: 9781910010242.

*Landscapes of Detectorists* is a book for fans. It's a book for fans of the eponymous BBC situational comedy. But it's also a book for fans of geography, whether professionals or amateur enthusiasts. The book works through a simple pretence: that there is something wonderfully geographic at the heart of *Detectorists*.

Running for three seasons (2014–2017), *Detectorists* follows the plight of two amateur metal detectorists, Lance (Toby Jones) and Andy (Mackenzie Crook), alongside their friends and families, as they search (mostly in vain) for ancient Saxon treasures. The show plays off stereotypical Englishness. It shows the awkwardness of the 'typical' English man's psyche. It is full of dry English humour. And of course, it is set in idyllic English arable landscapes. Yet, as with all good comedy, *Detectorists* works to subvert these stereotypes, revealing behind them a more complex set of places and possible identities and relations.

It is this nuance that *Landscapes of Detectorists* seeks to uncover, with each of the four geographers approaching the show from a different angle. Innes Keighren writes of knowledge and authority in reading the landscape, unveiling the tensions between technical expertise and tacit knowledges – or between metal detectors and detectorists – that run throughout the show. Isla Forsyth then turns to the objects on display in the show, noting that, beyond gold, *Detectorists* is full of mundane treasures, each of which provide insight into the depth of connection between place, landscape, and culture. Andrew Harris's chapter on verticality then shows how the complex relationship between the aerial, surface, and subsurface serves to firmly locate the characters within not only the landscape but also within themselves. Finally, Joanne Norcup looks at the disruptive gender roles on display in the show and how these link to knowledge production and expertise, particularly focussing on Andy's wife Becky who is fittingly a geography graduate.

Alongside a formal introduction, the book is tied together with a foreword by Mackenzie Crook and a concluding chapter from Adam Tandy, the producer of the show's first two series. Tandy's discussion is interesting, partly because it provides additional production details but also because he returns the analysis to its original setting in the making of the show, knitting the two elements of the book together and reminding us 'geography degrees' [sic] (pp.15, 95) that these imaginary places emerge from thrown-togetherness as much as the real world does.

In the introduction to the book, Keighren and Norcup suggest that this is not a book that fits neatly into contemporary frameworks for academic writing. I agree. It is quite lightly referenced, and although they suggest three themes that run throughout the book – popular comedy geographies, landscapes and the geographical imagination, and hobby geographies – these remain open-ended, with limited effort made to impose discrete conclusions onto them. The book's ethos is closer to creative non-fiction than academic writing in this sense. This is far from a critique,

however, particularly as this ethos gives the book a much greater reach to popularise geographical thinking, and cultural geography more specifically, for a broad non-academic audience; something that is also helped hugely by the authors' careful, engaging, entertaining and humorous analyses.

As Forsyth's chapter notes, there is a beauty that can be found in mundane objects. It would be inappropriate therefore not to recognise the beauty of *Landscapes of Detectorists* as a book. It is adorned by stills from the programme, many of them given a full page. These images are perfectly situated and help to knit together the experience of the programme with the analysis provided, creating a truly fabulous reading experience. The production team should be credited for this.

*Landscapes of Detectorists* will be enjoyed by geographers of all persuasions. It is also a book for sharing: one to add to reading lists, yes, but to lend to non-geography friends as well, to show them what it's all about. It's an excellent and entertaining book, and whether you have seen the show or not, be prepared to find yourself joining Lance and Andy in Danebury shortly after you read it.

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