This special issue celebrates the work of two luminaries: the late Annette Patterson and the late Paul Brock, who between them contributed so much to English education. The last open issue 51.1 included a moving vale by Wayne Sawyer to Paul Brock. The vale to Annette Patterson by Brian Moon in this issue is republished here from the Western Australian ETA journal Interpretations. The call for papers went out half a year ago and so many articles were submitted, some will be published mid-year in the next issue. The rest of the issue comments on Literature and curriculum themes, both of which were key concerns for both Annette Patterson and Paul Brock. National Perspectives from around the states are included in this first issue for the year and, as always, exciting events and plans are underway to inspire and support English educators across the country.

The Garth Boomer address to the 2016 AATE national conference ‘worlds of wonder’ delivered in Adelaide by Paul Sommer opens this issue. Sommer reflects on Boomer’s influence on the introduction of film study into English, which represented a significant curriculum change at the time. The current Australian Curriculum classifies film as literary – an interesting inclusion considering much other multimedia classified as ‘everyday, deploys literary features; leaving hybrid forms such as digital stories, the photographic or video essay and literary hypertext in an emergent and perhaps floating aesthetic space. Sommer suggests we use these forms to respond to film study, rather than the standardised test. Garth Boomer, like Annette Patterson and Paul Brock, pushed the boundaries of literary categorisation and Sommer reflects on how this can be done with film by examining it as a coalescence of conceptual spaces. Sommer spoke of Boomer’s concept of ‘fissures’ and his inclusive definition of literature ‘as a form of conversation, as a complex social act’. Sommer discusses the textual elements and spaces afforded by film study, which lift it beyond the visual and he concludes with advice on studying film in the classroom space.

Annette Patterson researched English and Literacy Curriculum and pedagogy, literacy, literature teaching, professional development of English teachers, reading in the secondary classroom in Australia, Secondary English curriculum, Sociology of reading, Teacher education, historical investigations of Reading Pedagogy, the Figure of the Teacher and Literacy Education. Annette Patterson’s later work also took a historical view of the curriculum examined the various roles of the English teacher and readers. Annette Patterson’s work on gender issues and reading was ground-breaking and the article by Margaret Merger, “Do males really prefer non-fiction, and why does it matter?” would have been welcomed by Annette as a researcher of gender and as a former West Australian. Like Annette’s work which always pushed boundaries, Merger challenges the commonly held view that boys prefer non-fiction. Merger’s paper questions the legitimacy of using an essentialist framework to generate knowledge about how to best encourage males to read and explores the risks inherent in this practice.

Annette would also have been interested in David Hastie’s article, ‘Teacher and institutional self-censorship of English texts in NSW Protestant schools’. Hastie’s paper explores patterns of text selection and exclusion around English Teachers’ self-censorship. The article argues that faith-based and ideological factors as well as institutional pressures influence text selection and exclusion across State and independent sectors.

Paul Brock’s work focussed significantly on curriculum change and professional learning and the next group of papers in this issue reflect on this theme. Lisa Knezevic and James Albright’s article, ‘Responding to a national English curriculum: The embedded approach
to change of the Catholic Education Office Melbourne,’ is the first of these. Albright and Knezevic investigate the professional learning around the implementation of the Australian Curriculum: English; as experienced by primary school teachers in two Catholic primary schools in Melbourne. Using a Bourdieusian lens the researchers found that professional learning about literacy in English is coordinated and customised by a number of external factors from the wider field of education as well as institutional influences.

Fittingly Duncan Driver’s paper also casts a lens on how the role of teachers and readers has changed according to the paradigms of each of the main ‘Post-Dartmouth’ curricular changes. This follows the theme explored in the previous issue of this journal (51.3) and Driver argues that each approach to the study of literature had strengths and weaknesses. In preserving the concept of the aesthetic and the centrality of the text in the study of literature, Driver advocates a social, interactive and eclectic (‘mix and match”) approach to literature in current English classrooms.

Articles by Andrew Goodwyn and Bill Green also continue the international and national and Post-Dartmouth debates from the previous issue. Andrew Goodwyn’s paper, ‘From Personal Growth (1966) to Personal Growth and Social Agency (2016) – Proposing an Invigorated Model for the 21st Century’ deploys contemporary Critical Realist theories of identity, to re-articulate Personal Growth from its Post-Dartmouth origins. Goodwyn proposes a broader conceptualisation of an ‘omniculture’, and offers a prototype model; or professional ideology of Personal Growth combined with Social/Cultural Agency. Although Goodwyn’s context is England, there are ideas in this paper which offer a way to interpret the implicit references to personal growth in our national English curriculum in culturally diverse Australia.

Bill Green’s paper “English as Rhetoric? – Once More, with Feeling” explores the territory of rhetoric as an organising principle for textuality and meaning in English curriculum theory and practice. Green conceptualises and relates aspects of ‘new rhetoric’ to the three strands of the current Australian curriculum, advocating a ‘playful’ open-ended version of this concept for ‘doing things with texts’ in English. The paper brings together a contemporary concept of rhetoric (including dimensions of ethics and aesthetics), history and pedagogy, as crucial considerations for the renewal of English teaching.

The final section of this issue is dedicated to memorial reflections on outstanding figures who have contributed so much to the field of English in Australia. Rory Harris’ elegy to Jen Haines opens this section. This is followed by an illuminating tribute to Paul Brock by his wife Jackie Manuel and his daughters, Sophie and Amelia Brock, titled ‘Why English Teachers Matter: Some reflections on the life of Dr Paul Brock AM’. This personal valedictory piece concludes with ‘a message to the profession,’ in the form of an extract from Paul’s own professional writing. If there is any doubt that curriculum matters and concerns move in cycles, please read this powerful tribute. It is poignant in this time of high stakes testing of ‘literacy’ and the rhetoric around standards, that Paul wrote a historical account detailing the recurring, mythical discourse of declining standards forever mobilised and sensationalised by politicians and media.

This commemorative issue concludes with Bronwyn Mellor’s personal and professional reflections on Annette Patterson. The title says much about Annette’s character: ‘The Gentle Dissenter: Revisiting Annette Patterson’s Research in English’. Having worked with Annette myself and writing my PhD under her supervision, I found Bronwyn’s account of Annette’s life and work extremely accurate and moving. Those of us who knew and loved her would agree that Annette was both a ‘scholar and a gentlewoman’. Annette would have enjoyed my switching the gender in this idiom.

Deb McPherson’s valuable reading and viewing column, as always, provides inspiration for teachers considering new texts for the classroom.

Finally I hope everyone is becoming excited about the AATE conference in Hobart this year and that some of you are considering braving the cold and presenting a paper or workshop or attending to engage in stimulating professional renewal. Our erstwhile boundary-pushing friends and colleagues Paul Brock and Annette Patterson would approve of us doing so. It is a tribute to them that their scholarship is still quoted and discussed today; their legacy to English lives on in our work. Even though they have left us, their dedication and passion lives on in the work they shared which will continue to grow and develop into the ideas of the next generation of scholars and teachers of English. On behalf of all of us we applaud their brilliance and courage and thank them for their generosity of spirit.

Anita Jetnikoff