Report by Beert Verstraete on his research and research-related activities during his year of sabbatical leave, 2010-11,

in accordance with article 24.23 of the Thirteenth Collective Agreement, prepared and submitted to: Dr Tom Herman, VP, Academic; Dr Robert Perrins, Dean of Arts; Dr Paul Doerr, Chair of the Department of History and Classics; and the Sabbatical Leave Committee.

My last annual career development meeting took place on May 10, 2010. I thought, therefore, it was advisable to cover all my research and research-related activities that took place since that date. In addition, since I am retiring as of July 1st and may be away for considerable periods of time in July and August, I thought it would be a good idea to prepare and submit at this point (June 20th).

I will first direct myself to the two major projects I detailed in the application I submitted on September 1st, 2009, for a year of sabbatical leave. I will start with the editing project, the collection of papers provisionally entitled, Age-Discrepant Male Homosexuality: Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives, of which Dr Thomas Hubbard, Professor of Classics at the University of Texas in Austin, is the co-editor. In my application, I noted that the Taylor & Francis Group, which was originally slated to publish this collection in 2009/2010, had, at the last moment, declined to publish the manuscript I submitted to them in March of 2009, this being done for obvious, if not explicitly stated, reasons of intellectual censorship. In addition to launching a series protests with various American professional associations, Tom and I started what turned out to be lengthy search for an alternative publisher. It was not until well into last year, that an American publisher, the Left Coast Press, expressed a clear interest. Publication was made conditional, though, on major cuts being made in the original manuscript (especially the lead-article by Dr Bruce Rind), which had a total length of more than 300,000 words. Fortunately, with the co-operation of nearly all the contributors, this was accomplished within a relatively short period, and the manuscript has now gone to the publisher for a final vetting. Tom and I are hoping now for the long-delayed publication to take place late this year or early next.

My other major project was to be a monograph on male homoerotic poetry from the ancient Roman world. After giving this project a considerable amount of thought and doing some preliminary writing last fall, I decided finally early this year to broaden the scope of this study substantially by transforming it into a comparative-literary study of male homoerotic poetry, both ancient-Roman from the 1st century BCE and modern-Western from the late 19th to the early 21st century. This is not intended to be an encyclopedic work, and is therefore focused on a number of carefully selected poets, and my emphasis will be on comparative poetics not on biographically oriented commentary. Over the past several months, I have done a vast amount of reading for this purpose, mainly in the primary sources, the poetry, of course. A few of these these poets, although considered major poets in their own countries, are not well known in the English-speaking world, and it is a pleasure for me, therefore, to be able to introduce them to a new, English-speaking public. Here I can draw, in addition to my Latin and ancient Greek, on my knowledge of several modern languages (French, Italian, Spanish, German, Dutch, and modern Greek), so that I am not overly dependent on translations—one poet (Dutch), in fact, has never been translated into English. The outline of chapters is shaping up into something like the following: Chapter I, General Introduction; Chapter II, Horace and Tibullus (Roman, 1st century BCE); Chapter III,
Stefan George (German, 1868-1933) and Constantine Cavafy (Greek- Egyptian, 1863-1933); Chapter IV, Hart Crane (American, 1899-1932) and Federico Garcia Lorca (Spanish, 1898-1936); Chapter V, Willem de Mèrode (Dutch, 1887-1939) and Sandro Penna (Italian, 1906-1977); Chapter VI—possibly two chapters, VI and VII—will be devoted to Canadian poets, both Anglophone and Francophone, of the 20th and the early 21st centuries; Canadian poets over this period illustrate exceptionally well the general move from a variety of realist and neo-romantic poetics to an almost bewildering assortment of modernisms. The poets featured in chapters II through V have been deliberately chosen and paired because of the marked contrasts they show in their poetics. Interesting comparisons and contrasts will also certainly emerge in the chapter(s) on Canadian poets. There will be a concluding chapter which will draw together the various thematic threads put out in the preceding chapters. The tentative title of my book is: Soulscapes of Eros: Studies in Male Homoerotic Poetry, Ancient and Modern. Finally, I wish to emphasize that my intended reading audience goes well beyond the most obvious one, i.e. scholars engaged in what is now often called Queer Studies; my ideal reader will, in fact, be anyone who has a love of poetry combined with a keen interest in how poetics are transformed across cultures and centuries.

The next two paragraphs will detail the much shorter scholarly projects I have completed since May 2010. First of all, there are two reviews: a review (of slightly over 4000 words) of Brian Richardson’s The Manuscript Culture of Renaissance Italy, Cambridge University Press, 2009—this has just been published in the Italian Quarterly 45, winter and spring 2008, 85-91; and a review (of slightly over 2000 words) of Craig Williams’s Roman Homosexuality, Second Edition, Oxford University Press, 2010, and published in the online journal, the Bryn Mawr Classical Review 2010:07:51 (I also did a review of the 1999 first edition and this was published in the Journal of Homosexuality in 2000).

I vetted two scholarly works for academic colleagues in Waterloo, Ontario, and Boston. Dr Robert Prus, Professor of Sociology at the University of Waterloo, sent me last fall, for my comments, the chapters of his projected book on Greco-Roman rhetoric. The book’s central argument is that, in their practice, didactics, and theorizing, the ancient Greek and Roman rhetoricians anticipated key insights into human interaction that have been developed by 20th century sociology, especially the sociology of the Symbolic Interactionist School, which is the main intellectual driving force behind his own research. Over the years, in fact, I have vetted many of his conference and for-publication papers on the same subject. More recently, I vetted the new edition prepared by John Lauritsen (an independent scholar in Boston) of the more than 190-years old Thomas Medwin-Percy Bysshe Shelley translation of Aeschylus’ Oresteia trilogy.

Finally the following are the conferences I have attended and the papers I have presented there since May 2010:

I attended the annual meeting of the Classical Association of Canada, Université Laval, May 2010—here, together with Tom Hubbard of the University of Texas, I organized a special session, “Diachronic Aspects of Greek Paederasty,” and chaired this session; attended a conference, “Truth Matters,” devoted to fundamental philosophical issues, held at Victoria University, University of Toronto, and organized by the Institute of Christian Studies, August 2010 (I have presented papers and acted as a respondent at a few of the Institute’s earlier conferences); annual meeting of the Atlantic Classical
Association, Saint Mary’s University, October 2010—I presented a paper, “Propertius 4.10 in Counterpoint with the Other Aetiological Elegies of Book Four”; annual meeting of the Classical Association of Canada, Dalhousie University-Kings College, May 2011—I presented a revised version of my 2010 ACA paper; attended the annual meeting of the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Netherlandic Studies, University of New Brunswick-St Thomas University, May 2011 (I have presented papers at many earlier CAANS conferences and served as the Association’s president from 1996 to 1999).

Respectfully submitted by

Beert C. Verstraete

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