

Dialectology

---for Jacques Van Keymeulen, on his retirement

--- by John Nerbonne

Sing, O muse a learned hymn!
Of Gilliéron and Brothers Grimm.
Their works were great and yet unsung,
These scholars of the human tongue.

Not just poems and books and song,
We listen to what comes along.
Streektaal, slang, and dialect
All rate attention and respect!

We move about, log what we've heard,
The novel sound, the local word.
Not the speech of fine bourgeois,
Instead the argot and patois.

And once you put it on a map,
Heeding sounds and overlap,
The even street talk's systematic,
Not sloppy noise, not enigmatic!

Chart break lines, too, adding luster
(But check on whether many cluster!)
Bloomfield says it all makes sense:
Talk's alike, where ties are dense.

They know all this and more in Ghent,
From atlases and documents,
And from Hoogleraar Doctor Jacques.
We thank now and wish him luck!