"Speak within Door," Othello, IV, ii, 144

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of abuse at Italian organ-grinders by gamins in the streets of Birmingham, and possibly—but I have no evidence—in other parts of Warwickshire or of the midlands. It may well be the direct descendant of the ‘Basimecu’ which Shakespeare (2nd Part of *Henry VI*, iv, vii, 31) puts into the mouth of Jack Cade:—‘What canst thou answer to my majesty for giving up Normandy unto Monsieur Basimecu, the Dauphin of France?’ In spite of the fragmentary nature of the evidence, there is every probability that it has been for centuries an abusive epithet for foreigners of Latin race.

‘Esbat’ is another provincialism, which I believe I am putting on record for the first time. It is known to me only as jocularly used by my father, a Warwickshire man born and bred. I recollect it being applied to the carrying on of idle conversation, for instance at the end of a meal, when people should be about their business again; ‘sit esbatting’ was a frequent phrase. The word bears the stress on the first syllable, with *s* unvoiced. Its origin must be the Old French *esbatre* (now *ébattre*); Cotgrave’s synonyms for *s’Esbatre* are to the point:—‘To sport, play, dally, jeast, pass away the time in mirth, and recreation.’ The fact that the introduction of the verb into English can hardly be of later date than the fifteenth century makes it the more remarkable that it has remained hitherto unrecorded. The derivative *esbatement* (modern French *ébattement*), ‘amusement, diversion,’ is given in the Oxford Dictionary from Caxton (two instances) and Sir Thomas Elyot’s *Governour*.

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‘SPEAK WITHIN DOOR,’ *Othello*, iv, ii, 144.

The right explanation of this phrase is given by Johnson: ‘Do not clamour so as to be heard beyond the house,’ i.e., Lower your tone, ‘Don’t speak so loud; and the interpretation receives striking corroboration from the use in my own family of a similar synonymous phrase, ‘Speak within the house.’ Another idiom, like ‘bozzimacu’ (see above), traceable—at present—only in Shakespeare and modern Warwickshire usage. It is possible, of course, that Johnson, being a midlander, knew the expression in current use.

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