

Re: observable language change – "off of" makes it to the NY Times

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Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2008-08/msg00595.html>

- *From:* analyst41@xxxxxxxxxxx
 - *Date:* Wed, 13 Aug 2008 17:40:34 -0700 (PDT)
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On Aug 13, 12:19 pm, "Brian M. Scott" <b.sc...@xxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

On Wed, 13 Aug 2008 09:00:18 -0400, Harlan Messinger
<hmessinger.removet...@xxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in
<news:6gg478Ffnud8U1@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> in sci.lang:

analys...@xxxxxxxxxxx wrote:

On Aug 12, 3:05 pm, Adam Funk <a24...@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
wrote:

On 2008-08-12, Harlan Messinger wrote:

For crying out loud, do you think he made this up? From the OED:
?c1450 in G. Müller Aus mittelengl. Medizintexten (1929) 116 Take a sponfull of {th}e licour..of of {th}e fyir and sette it in good place
tyl {th}at it be ny colde, soo as {th}ou mayst suffryn to holdyn
{th}er-in {th}in hand.
a1616 SHAKESPEARE Henry VI, Pt. 2 (1623) II. i. 98 A fall off of [1594 Falling off on] a Tree. 1667 A. MARVELL Corr. in Wks. (1875) II. 224 The Lords and we cannot yet get

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off of the
difficultyes risen betwixt us.
1678 J. BUNYAN Pilgrim's
Progress 49
About a furlong off of the
Porters Lodge. 1712 R.
STEELE Spectator No.
306 {page}6, I could not
keep my Eyes off of her.

I had no idea the expression had such a
respectable pedigree. Maybe
I'll start using it in formal writing after all.
:-)

Wiily S was only doing dialect when he used "off of".

Really? Would you care to provide evidence for this assertion? Or are
you just decreeing this to be so because it doesn't fit your theory?

Indeed, one has only to check the other lines spoken by
Saunders Simpcox to see that they are not dialect.

Something must have warned you that all is not kosher with this quote
(witness your "in any case" follow-up below)

From a fascinating source called the American Bibliopolist published
in 1875:

start quote:

The expression " off of ; thing, " " he was getting off of his horse,"
etc., is often heard, and thought to be exceedingly vulgar. Yet
Shakespeare uses it in // Hen. VI, 3, f. " Cardinal. What, art thou
lame ? Simpcox. Ay, God Almighty help me I Suffolk. How earnest thou
so ? Simpcox. A fall off of J tree. Wife. A plum-tree, master." It is
remarkable that this is the language of the First and second Folios ;
in the Third and Fourth " of " is omitted

end quote.

(This quote is somewhat distorted – "earnest" for "camest" etc.
because I am using the text version of the PDF doc)

If this is correct then OED, Haralan and Ross are guilty of
misinformation. It seems that even contemporaneously with
Shakespeare, there were attempts to edit this solecism out of his
texts.

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And in
any case this wouldn't explain Andrew Marvell's use of the
compound preposition in his correspondence, or Bunyan's use
in 'Pilgrim's Progress'.

[...]

Brian– Hide quoted text –

– Show quoted text –