

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

## 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/msg00621.html>

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- *From:* "benlizro@xxxxxxxxxx" <benlizro@xxxxxxxxxx>
  - *Date:* Thu, 14 Aug 2008 14:38:56 -0700 (PDT)
- 

On Aug 14, 11:24 pm, analys...@xxxxxxxxxx wrote:

On Aug 14, 7:11 am, "benli...@xxxxxxxxxx" <benli...@xxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

On Aug 14, 10:36 pm, analys...@xxxxxxxxxx wrote:

On Aug 13, 9:44 pm, "benli...@xxxxxxxxxx"  
<benli...@xxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

On Aug 14, 12:40 pm,  
analys...@xxxxxxxxxx wrote:

On Aug 13, 12:19 pm,  
"Brian M. Scott"  
<b.sc...@xxxxxxxxxx>  
wrote:

On Wed, 13  
Aug 2008  
09:00:18  
-0400,  
Harlan  
Messinger  
<hmessinger.removet...@xxxxxxxxxx>  
wrote in  
<[news:6gg478Ffnud8U1@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:news:6gg478Ffnud8U1@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)>  
in sci.lang:

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

analys...@xxxxxxxxxxxx  
wrote:

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

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{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)

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II.  
224  
The  
Lords  
and  
we  
cannot  
yet  
get  
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

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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

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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  
Biblioplist 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.

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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.

If you extend "contemporaneously" to  
include fifty years after his  
death...

Just as you studiously avoid actual analysis  
of your disapprovals, you  
will want to avoid looking even fleetingly at  
the vastness of  
Shakespeare textual studies, where  
thousands of things are edited in,  
edited out, and completely rewritten for  
good reasons, bad reasons and

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no apparent reason at all. (OED notes a 1594 text with "fall off on a tree"!)

No, better to imagine that the Language Police were on the job in the 17th century, saving poor Will from his "solecism".

And now that you have "solecism" in your right hand and "barbarism" in your left, you could set up your own Usage Blog. Pilgrims would flock to hear your judgments, linguists wouldn't bother you, and you could get ahead with your work on the long-sought Panini-Fidditch Synthesis.

Ross Clark

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

–

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– Show  
quoted text  
-- Hide  
quoted text  
–

– Show quoted text -- Hide quoted text –

– Show quoted text –

Nice misdirection, might work with linguistics professors.

I'd ask where you imagined the "misdirection" to be, but you never answer.

You know the misdirection you attempted (and attempt below) and you got caught and are now trying to huff and puff your way out of it.

This makes your allegation pretty fireproof, doesn't it? You say I attempted misdirection (I guess I did pretty well, because you said "nice"), I ask you where and how, and you won't tell me because you claim I already know!  
Unanswerable!

If anybody has to explain, justify or defend anything its you.

Dare I ask what?

Apparently this was no more than a carrier for a gratuitous

swipe at "linguistics professors", those creatures of your imagination.

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You put out an unequivocal statement that this usage occurs  
in  
Shakespeare.

It does.

OK – looks like the most honorable conduct I can get out of you in  
this matter is to expose yourself for the record like this.

??

It is now incumbent on you to either retract it or research the  
different versions yourself and set the record straight.

LOL! Sorry, chum, as usual you have no idea how these things work. If  
\*you\*, in your desperation to prove that Shakespeare could not  
possibly have used "off of" (or he was just kidding, or putting on a  
dialect, or whatever), want to plunge into Bardo-textology, nobody  
else is going to do it for you. NOTE: I do not actually recommend this  
course of action. Your mental health is precarious enough.

The way the record stands now – you (and the OED and Willaim Safire it  
makes you feel better) stand accused of being not fully truthful.

Only by you, and you are so confused the accusation is not worth  
worrying about.

Nothing is incumbent on me except perhaps to watch you twist in the  
wind.

I was going to say "Don't waste your time waiting for that to happen",  
but no doubt I am already twisting, in the same little mental theatre

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where you have "demolished" that theory, "humiliated" this person, and are striding mightily towards the overthrow of comparative linguistics.

Your conduct in this matter has gone from sad to contemptible.

Your comments on this discussion have gone from goofy to stupid. Not a long trip, admittedly.

get a grip on yourself. This is really really uncharacteristically low.

Really? You find "stupid" lower than "contemptible"? Or are you saying my characteristic tone is higher than this? I really don't agree with either.

Ross Clark

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