

# Guide to the David Rakoff Papers

GEN MSS 1015



by Beinecke staff, Brooke McManus

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library  
P. O. Box 208330  
New Haven, CT 06520-8330  
(203) 432-2977  
beinecke.library@yale.edu  
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**CALL NUMBER:** GEN MSS 1015

**CREATOR:** Rakoff, David

**TITLE:** David Rakoff papers

**DATES:** circa 1949-2020

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 18.85 linear feet (23 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** The collection consists of writings, correspondence, datebooks, notebooks, financial papers, photographs, artwork, rubber stamps, printed materials, audiovisual materials, and other papers by, to, or relating to David Rakoff. Writings include multiple drafts of Rakoff's essay collections *Fraud*, *Don't Get Too Comfortable*, and *Half Empty*.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.rakoff>

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## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.rakoff>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to [beinecke.images@yale.edu](mailto:beinecke.images@yale.edu).

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b.        box  
    item barcode

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Purchased from David Rakoff on the Edwin J. Beinecke Book Fund, 2012; and gift of Gina Rakoff, 2019, 2020.

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### Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Box 16 (film reels): Restricted fragile material. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.

Box 17 (computer disks): Restricted fragile material. Reference copies of electronic files may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.

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## Conditions Governing Use

The David Rakoff Papers is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

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## Preferred Citation

David Rakoff Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

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## Processing Information

Collections are processed to a variety of levels, depending on the work necessary to make them usable, their perceived research value, the availability of staff, competing priorities, and whether or not further accruals are expected. The library attempts to provide a basic level of preservation and access for all collections as they are acquired, and does more extensive processing of higher priority collections as time and resources permit.

This collection received a basic level of processing, including rehousing and minimal organization.

Information included in the Description of Papers note and Collection Contents section is drawn from information supplied with the collection and from an initial survey of the contents. Folder titles appearing in the contents list below are often based on those provided by the creator or previous custodian. Titles have not been verified against the contents of the folders in all cases. Otherwise, folder titles are supplied by staff during initial processing.

This finding aid may be updated periodically to account for new acquisitions to the collection and/or revisions in arrangement and description.

Former call number: UNCAT MSS 1281.

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## David Rakoff (1964-2012)

David Rakoff was a Canadian writer based in New York City known for humorous non-fiction essays and as a contributor to the radio program *This American Life*.

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## Scope and Contents

The collection consists of writings, correspondence, datebooks, notebooks, financial papers, photographs, artwork, rubber stamps, printed materials, audiovisual materials, and other papers by, to, or relating to David Rakoff. Writings include multiple drafts of Rakoff's essay collections *Fraud*, *Don't Get Too Comfortable*, and *Half Empty*.

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## Arrangement

Organized into eight series: I. Correspondence, 1949-2012. II. Writings, 1990s-2000s. III. Personal Papers, 1980s-2010s. IV. Printed Materials, 1990s-2008. V. Audiovisual Materials, 1980s. VI. Electronic Media, 2000s. VII. September 2019 Acquisition, 1976-2019. VIII. December 2020 Acquisition, 1968-2020.

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## Collection Contents

### Series VII: September 2019 Acquisition, 1976–2019

4.50 linear feet (4 boxes)

This series primarily consists of condolence letters and cards to David Rakoff's family following his death in 2012 and printed material by or about Rakoff, in addition to early correspondence and personal papers of Rakoff.

Organized into two subseries: Correspondence and Other Papers, and Printed Material.

b.1	Correspondence	1955
b.1	Correspondence	1970
b.1	Correspondence	1974
b.1	Correspondence	1980
b.1	Correspondence <i>2 Folders</i>	1982
b.1	Correspondence <i>2 Folders</i>	1983
b.1	Correspondence <i>2 Folders</i>	1984
b.1	Correspondence <i>4 Folders</i>	1985
b.1	Correspondence <i>2 Folders</i>	1986
b.1	Correspondence <i>3 Folders</i>	1988
b.1	Correspondence <i>3 Folders</i>	1989
b.1	Correspondence <i>2 Folders</i>	1990
b.2	Correspondence <i>2 Folders</i>	1991
b.2	Correspondence <i>2 Folders</i>	1992
b.2	Correspondence <i>3 Folders</i>	1993
b.2	Correspondence <i>2 Folders</i>	1994
b.2	Correspondence <i>2 Folders</i>	1995

b. 2	Correspondence	1996
b. 2	Correspondence	1997
b. 2	Correspondence <i>3 Folders</i>	1998
b. 2	Correspondence <i>2 Folders</i>	1999
b. 2	Correspondence <i>2 Folders</i>	2000
b. 3	Correspondence <i>2 Folders</i>	2001
b. 3	Correspondence <i>2 Folders</i>	2002
b. 3	Correspondence <i>2 Folders</i>	2003
b. 3	Correspondence <i>2 Folders</i>	2004
b. 3	Correspondence <i>3 Folders</i>	2005
b. 3	Correspondence <i>3 Folders</i>	2006
b. 3	Correspondence <i>2 Folders</i>	2007
b. 3	Correspondence	2008
b. 3	Correspondence <i>3 Folders</i>	2009
b. 3	Correspondence	2010
b. 3	Correspondence	2012
b. 4	Correspondence <i>20 Folders</i>	undated
	Material previously intermixed with correspondence	1949-2010s
b. 5	Artwork - small painting and sketch	circa 2001
b. 5	The Boston Star Material was tightly folded into a long U-shape.	1995 Summer
b. 5	Home-made books	
b. 5	Miscellaneous ephemera	
b. 5	Miscellaneous newspapers and clippings	

## Material previously intermixed with correspondence (continued)

b. 5	The New Yorker	1995
b. 5	The New York Times - various <i>2 Folders</i>	
b. 5	Paper napkin - "Marry me please"	
b. 5	Personal and financial papers	
b. 5	Photographs <i>2 Folders</i>	
b. 5	Playbill - A Streetcar Named Desire	1949 October 31
b. 5	Playbills <i>17 Folders</i>	1950s-2008
b. 6	Programs and event announcements <i>5 Folders</i>	
b. 6	Small sewing kit and penny	
b. 6	Thank-you notes Mostly from young students.	
b. 6	The Village Voice	1995 January 31
b. 6	Writings by David Rakoff and others <i>2 Folders</i>	

**Series VIII: December 2020 Acquisition, 1968–2020***2.66 linear feet (2 boxes)*

This series contains writings, family and personal correspondence, artwork, ephemera, printed material, and a small amount of papers related to David Rakoff's high school and college years, including a pin from Columbia University. Also present are a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal, financial records, and a eulogy for Rakoff.

Arranged alphabetically by folder title.

b. 6	Articles and reviews, published <i>2 Folders</i>	
b. 6	Articles and reviews - typescripts, some with edits	
b. 6	Chanel / Haute couture	
b. 6	"David Rakoff - New Script" - 3 clean typescript copies, removed from binder, with blank application to Actors' Equity Association <i>2 Folders</i>	
b. 6	Don't Get Too Comfortable - second draft, corrected, with comments by Kendra Harpoter (Doubleday)	2004
b. 6	Don't Get Too Comfortable - typescripts with notes, commentary and letter by Bill Thomas (Doubleday) <i>2 Folders</i>	
b. 6	eine DATA base - NAM JUNE PAIK - edition cantz	1993
b. 6	Fraud: Essays - commentary and corrections from Pamela Murray	2000 September 25
b. 6	Fraud: Essays - handwritten comments	
b. 6	Fraud: Essays - miscellaneous TS pages with corrections	
b. 6	Fraud: Essays - typescript, first draft with edits and artwork <i>2 Folders</i>	
b. 7	Fraud - "Re-draft" - clean typescript with artwork <i>2 Folders</i>	2000 October
b. 7	Fraud - "Re-draft" - typescript with edits <i>2 Folders</i>	2000 October
b. 7	Half Empty - bound galleys <i>2 Folders</i>	2010
b. 7	Half Empty - typescript with edits and commentary by Bill Thomas (Doubleday) <i>2 Folders</i>	2010
b. 7	Little Freida Mysteries - typescript with highlighting, and rehearsal schedule	
b. 7	The Little Freida Mysteries - typescript with notes and highlighting	
b. 7	"March Drama Department Play" - rough draft and untitled script, removed from binder with clipping	



b.7	Miscellaneous drafts, transcripts, etc.
b.7	Miscellaneous script pages - typescript with edits and highlighting
b.7	Pages from a script with highlighting and edits, removed from binder
b.7	Script with edits, photocopied
b.7	"World of Damages" [?] <i>2 Folders</i>

**Series I: Correspondence, 1949-2012**

Arranged chronologically. Materials previously intermixed with correspondence are grouped together following the correspondence.

	Diaries and Day planners	1988-2009
b. 7	Day planner	1988
b. 7	Day planner	1989
b. 7	Day planner	1990
b. 7	Diary	1991 March - November
b. 7	Day planner	1992
b. 7	Day planner	1993
b. 7	Day planner	1994
b. 8	Day planner	1995
b. 8	Day planner	1996
b. 8	Blank notebook with journal entries, sketches, miscellaneous inserts	1996 November - December
b. 8	Desk diary	1997
b. 8	Day planner	1998
b. 8	Day planner	1999
b. 8	Day planner	2000
b. 8	Day planner	2001
b. 8	Day planner	2002
b. 8	Day planner	2003
b. 8	Day planner	2004
b. 8	Day planner	2006
b. 8	Day planner	2007
b. 8	Day planner	2008
b. 8	Day planner	2009
b. 8	Diary	1998 August - 1999 May
b. 8	Diary	1999 April - October

## Diaries and Day planners (continued)

b. 8	Diary	1999 November / December – 2000 May
b. 8	Diary	2000 June-2001 January
b. 9	Diary	2001 February - 2002 March
b. 9	Diary	2002 May 9 and June 24 – 2003 January
b. 9	Diary	2003 February - 2006 December
b. 9	Diary	2007 January
b. 9	Personal notebook - "Tokyo, Iceland, Aspen, Loch Ness..."	1999 April
b. 9	Personal notebook	2002 August - 2003 October
b. 9	Personal notebook - "Maybe"	circa 2003 - 2006
b. 9	Personal notebook - "Because"	circa 2004
b. 9	Personal notebook	circa 2004 - 2006
b. 9	Personal notebook - "New [...] SAD"	circa 2007
Financial papers		
b. 9	Don't Get Too Comfortable - publication agreement	
b. 9	Fraud - Financial papers and related correspondence	
Photographs and slides		
b. 9	Photographs <i>7 Folders</i>	
b. 10	Photographs <i>10 Folders</i>	
b. 10	Photonegatives and trimmings	
b. 10	Slides <i>2 Folders</i>	
b. 10	"Backstage Press" tag and receipts - [Removed from photographs]	
b. 10	Correspondence and ephemera related to photographs	

## Artwork

## Artwork (continued)

b. 10	"Basic Books" graphics
b. 10	"Green/Renzi" graphics
b. 10	Half Empty artwork
b. 10	Herter Studios and other graphics
b. 10	Miscellaneous graphics
b. 10	Modern Times graphics and cutouts
Rubber stamps	
b. 10	Patterns for rubber stamps
b. 11	Ribbon Originally tied around the rubber stamps.
b. 11	Hand-carved rubber stamps <i>3 Folders</i>
b. 12	Hand-carved rubber stamps <i>3 Folders</i>
b. 13	Hand-carved rubber stamps - Basic Books
b. 13	Hand-carved rubber stamps - Harter studio <i>2 Folders</i>
b. 10	Stationery

**Series II: Writings, 1990s-2000s**

Writings include typescripts, corrected proofs, and galleys for works including *Fraud*, *Don't Get Too Comfortable*, and *Half Empty*. See also Series I. Correspondence.

Arranged alphabetically by file title.

b. 10	The New York Times Magazine	2001 September 23
b. 10	The New York Times and Observatory	1996-1997
b. 10	The New Yorker	2001 September 24 and 2008 November 17
b. 10	Press reviews of theater productions <i>2 Folders</i>	1990s
b. 14	The New York Times	2008 November 5
b. 14	Daily News	2001 September 12
b. 14	New York Post	2001 September 12
b. 14	The New York Times - two copies	2001 September 12
b. 15	The New York Times Book Review- Paperback Best Sellers - Framed	2006 October 29

**Series III: Personal papers, 1980s-2010s**

Personal papers include diaries and day planners, financial papers, photographs and slides, artwork, and rubber stamps. See also Series I. Correspondence.

Diaries are arranged chronologically.

b. 16, IIIII 39002141090028	Camera Original "Pain D'Amour", David Rakoff / Tosh Ozawa <i>1 Film Cartridge (Super 8) 00:06:42 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> Silent, black and white film.  Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	1980s
b. 16, IIIII 39002141190018	C.1 Single Lat., Striped P. D'A. <i>1 Film Cartridge (Super 8) 00:06:41 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> There is no audio on this reel.  Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	1980s

**Series IV: Printed materials, 1990s - 2008**

Printed materials include various New York periodicals and clippings of theatre reviews. See also Series I. Correspondence.

- b. 17           INTOLERABLE dir: ALISON MACLEAN © 2006 32:00 MIN  
2012-genm-76-0001  
*1 DVD-R 1594392576 bytes (1.59 Gigabytes. This reflects the size of the carrier media, but may not accurately reflect the extent of digital files available for research.)*
- 
- b. 17           THE NATURALIZED Preview Screener FLICKER FLACKER FILMS  
2012-genm-76-0002  
*1 DVD-R 3600252928 bytes (3.60 Gigabytes. This reflects the size of the carrier media, but may not accurately reflect the extent of digital files available for research.)*
- 
- b. 17           DAVID RAKOFF @ Cd coop--  
2012-genm-76-0003  
*1 CD-R 58026192 bytes (58.03 Megabytes. This reflects the size of the carrier media, but may not accurately reflect the extent of digital files available for research.)*
- 
- b. 17           DAVID RAKOFF PHOTO SCANS & VOICEOVER VERSIONS  
2012-genm-76-0004  
*1 CD-R 377557152 bytes (377.56 Megabytes. This reflects the size of the carrier media, but may not accurately reflect the extent of digital files available for research.)*
- 
- b. 17           [no label information]  
2012-genm-76-0005  
*1 External Hard Drive 736556537 bytes (736.55 Megabytes.)*
-

**Series V: Audiovisual materials, 1980s**

Restricted fragile material. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.

## Correspondence and Other Papers

This subseries contains condolence letters to David Rakoff's family, ephemera from tributes to Rakoff, and materials related to posthumously published works, such as *Love, Dishonor, Marry, Die, Cherish, Perish*. Also included are school papers, financial documents, and letters from Rakoff to his family during his travels and studies in Israel and London in the 1980s.

Arranged alphabetically by folder title.

b. 18	"Barbra's Farewell"	2000
b. 19	Condolence letters	2013
b. 18	Correspondence Includes a few photographs of Rakoff.	1976-1988
b. 18	Davey's apartment	1994-1997
b. 18	Emails	2013-2019
b. 18	Ephemera Includes a photograph of Rakoff and Alexa Junge.	1997-2013
b. 18	Eulogy, cremation certificate, donation letter	2012
b. 18	For: Gina and Vivian Rakoff [materials related to David's writings and death]	2013
b. 18	<i>Love, Dishonor, Marry, Die, Cherish, Perish</i>	
b. 18	Bound galley	2013
b. 18	Photocopy	2013
b. 18	Stage adaptation	2015
b. 18	School papers	1979, 1985
b. 18	Stephen Leacock Medal of Humour	2009, 2011
b. 18	<i>The Uncollected David Rakoff</i>	2015
b. 18	Yom Kippur	2012-2013

## Printed Material

This subseries consists of magazines, clippings, and computer printouts featuring writings by or about David Rakoff. Included are posthumous book reviews and articles, as well as a few clippings related to Rakoff's theater performances.

Arranged alphabetically by title, with clippings and printouts filed at the end of the sequence.

b. 20	Canadian Living	2010
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## Printed Material (continued)

b. 20	Columbia Magazine	2012
b. 20	Conde Nast Traveler	2008
b. 20	EnRoute	2005
b. 20	GQ	2003, 2010
b. 20	Gourmet	2006
b. 20	Maclean's	2001
b. 20	New York	2010
b. 21	The New York Times Magazine	1994-2012
b. 20	The New Yorker	1995-2014
b. 20	Nextbook Reader	2006
b. 20	Outside	1998-2003
b. 20	People	2001
b. 20	Saturday Night	1999
b. 21	Saturday Night	2001
b. 20	Sharp	2013
b. 20	Vogue	2001
b. 20	The Walrus	2013
b. 20	Clippings, "The Little Frieda Mysteries"	1997
b. 20	Clippings and printouts, unsorted	circa 1990s-2010s

**Series VI: Electronic media, 2000s***4 Folders*

Includes CDs, DVDs and an external hard drive.

Restricted fragile material. Reference copies of electronic files may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.

b. 17

b. 22	"The After-Taste"	undated
b. 23	Artwork	circa 1993
b. 22	Artwork and broadside	1989–2013
b. 22	Columbia University program and Dean's List pin	1986
b. 22	Correspondence [including illustrated envelopes and original artwork by Rakoff]	1968–1997
b. 22	Correspondence	2014–2020
b. 22	Ephemera	1993–2019
b. 22	Eulogy for David Rakoff	2012
b. 22	"Feminism in Meiji" [senior seminar paper]	1986
b. 22	Financial papers	2012–2013
b. 22	Forest Hill Collegiate	1982
b. 22	<i>Love, Dishonor, Marry, Die, Cherish, Perish</i> , draft, corrected	circa 2013
b. 22	Printed material	1995–2019
b. 22	Woody Allen [printout of blog posts by Rakoff on Woody Allen Film Festival]	2006
b. 23	Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal	2012

## **Selected Search Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### **Subjects**

Authors, Canadian -- 20th Century -- Archives  
Authors, Canadian -- 21st century -- Archives  
Essayists, Canadian -- 20th Century -- Archives  
Essayists, Canadian -- 21st century -- Archives  
Gay authors

### **Genres / Formats**

Audiovisual materials  
Born digital  
Photographs

### **Names**

Rakoff, David