

CYRUS C. DECOSTER (1915-1999) PAPERS, 1948-1999

Series 11/3/26/2

Box 1

Biography

Cyrus Cole DeCoster taught Spanish at Northwestern University for 16 years. Born in Leesburg, Virginia in 1915, DeCoster spent most of his childhood in St. Paul, Minnesota. He attended Harvard University from 1933 to 1937, where he majored in French, graduated magna cum laude, and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa.

DeCoster spent a year of study at the Sorbonne in France following graduation. He entered the University of Chicago in 1939 on a University Fellowship and earned a master's degree in French in 1940. The Second World War put DeCoster's academic work on hold. He served in the Navy from 1941 to 1946, working first as a communications officer in Panama before being reassigned to the USS Abercrombie in the Pacific. The Abercrombie saw combat at the Battle of the Philippine Sea and in the invasion of Okinawa.

Returning from the war, DeCoster accepted a position as Instructor of Romance Languages at Carleton College in 1946 while working towards a doctorate in Spanish from the University of Chicago. He received this degree in 1950. Meanwhile, he became Assistant Professor at Carleton in 1948 and Associate Professor in 1956. DeCoster's first book, *Correspondencia de Juan Valera*, was published at this time.

In 1957, DeCoster moved to the University of Kansas, where he became Professor of Romance Languages. He served as the Chairman of that Department from 1962-1965. DeCoster made his final career move, to Northwestern University, in 1969, where he was Professor of Spanish until his retirement in 1985. From 1973 to 1976 and 1979 to 1983, DeCoster served as the Chairman of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese.

Professor DeCoster was the author of 11 books (several of which were compilations of primary documents) and 35 scholarly articles. His focus was nineteenth century Spanish literature, and he authored works on Juan Valera, Pardo Bazán, and Pedro Antonio de Alarcón. His specialty was Valera. Indeed, so much of DeCoster's published work dealt with this figure that one reviewer called him "the leading American authority on Valera." His work was well reviewed by peers.

Cyrus DeCoster died of cancer in Evanston on January 29, 1999. His wife, Barbara, who was a student of his at Carleton, survived him. They were married in 1948 and celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary shortly before his death. The couple had a daughter and three sons.

Description of the Series

The Cyrus C. DeCoster Papers fill one box and span the years 1948-1999. The material summarizes Professor DeCoster's academic work, and is divided into six subseries: biographical material, published articles, book reviews, reviews of books, "Pardo Bazán" drafts, and Juan Valera research material.

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Biographical material spans the years 1983-1999. It consists of two curricula vitae and four obituaries. One CV lists only Professor DeCoster's work through 1983, while the other, though taking his work through to its conclusion in the late 1990s, is missing its second page. This page gap omits DeCoster's last four books and first eleven articles.

Published articles include a copy of every article Professor DeCoster wrote from 1950 through "Juan Valera: Cartas ineditas a Juan Moreno Gueto" (1980). (Please see his CVs in biographical material for chronology and bibliographic citations.) Several of these articles are reprints. "Valera: Critic of American Literature" (1960) is represented in both an English and Spanish versions. DeCoster's translation of Alfonso Sastre's "Escuadra Hacia la Muerte" ("The Condemned Squad"), published in *Players Magazine* in 1961, is foldered separately.

Photocopied book reviews, spanning the years 1948-1983, include a copy of every review Professor DeCoster wrote through his review of Peter Bly's *Perez Galdos: "La de Bringas"* (1983). For the most part, these reviews are filed chronologically. However, following the review of Alberto Jimenez's *Juan Valera y la generacion de 1868* (1956), which is listed as the fifth review in DeCoster's CV, seven of the following book reviews were copied onto two pieces of paper. As a result, there are gaps in the folder where reviews that would be placed in a given spot are instead found on one of these two sheets.

Reviews of DeCoster's books fill six folders, and are arranged by the title of the book reviewed.

The undated "Pardo Bazán" drafts fill 13 folders and consist of some handwritten but mostly typed drafts of "Pardo Bazán and Her Contemporaries," an article that was published in *Anales Galdosianos* in 1984 but is not included in this collection. Oddly, although the article itself was only about ten pages in length, it appears that DeCoster wrote and heavily edited over 200 pages of draft material. This may be a draft of another publication that was never finished. Given the confusing nature of this material, it has not been significantly rearranged; the material within the folders has been left unaltered, and the folders themselves have been placed in order based upon the numbering of the pages inside them. Additionally, two more complete drafts of the article and three related articles by other authors are placed in folders after the drafts.

Juan Valera research material is contained in two folders and dates between 1967 and 1968. It consists of two letters that were sent to DeCoster from Jim Howe, a friend in Washington D.C. who assisted DeCoster with his research on Juan Valera (perhaps by visiting the Library of Congress to obtain bibliographic citations and biographical information). There are also three undated booklets of DeCoster's research notes that seem to deal with Valera.

Provenance: The bulk of the Cyrus C. DeCoster Papers were donated to the University Archives by Professor DeCoster on February 1, 1985 as Accession Number 85-13. His widow, Barbara DeCoster, donated the Juan Valera research material to the University Archives on March 26, 2002 as Accession Number 02-36. The series also includes materials transferred to the University Archives by Russell Maylone of the Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special

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Collections as Accession Number 02-39 on April 5, 2002, and items from the University Archives' Faculty Biographical Files.

Restrictions: None.

Separations: A handful of duplicate articles was discarded.

Processor: David Smith; June 2002.

Reformatted by: Rachel C. Teuer; July 19, 2004.

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Container List

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
BIOGRAPHICAL			
1	1	Curriculum vitas, obituaries	1983-1999
PUBLISHED ARTICLES			
	2	Scholarly articles	1950-1980
	3	Translation: "The Condemned Squad" (Alfonso Sastre)	1961
BOOK REVIEWS			
	4	Reviews by DeCoster	1948-1984
REVIEWS OF BOOKS			
	5	Reviews of <i>Correspondencia de Juan Valera</i>	1956-1958
	6	Reviews of <i>Obras desconocidas de Juan Valera</i>	1965-1969
	7	Reviews of <i>Articulos de El Contemporaneo</i>	1967-1969
	8	Reviews of <i>Bibliografia critica de Juan Valera</i>	1971-1972
	9	Reviews of <i>Juan Valera</i>	1974-1977
	10	Reviews of <i>Pedro Antonio de Alcaron</i>	1980-1983
"PARDO BAZAN" DRAFTS			
	11	Early handwritten drafts	n.d.
	12	Handwritten draft of Clarin material	n.d.
	13	Drafts of "Menendez y Palayo" section	n.d.
	14	Draft of "Introduction"	n.d.
	15	Draft of "Career as Critic"	n.d.
	16	Draft of "Spanish Literature, etc." pp. 28-73	n.d.
	17	Draft of "Poetry, etc." pp. 74-113	n.d.
	18	Draft of "Early French Literature, etc." pp. 114-173	n.d.
	19	Draft of "Russian Literature" pp. 174-185	n.d.
	20	Draft of "Other writers" pp.185-205	n.d.
	21	Draft of "Conclusion" pp. 215-231	n.d.
	22	Two typed final drafts	n.d.
	23	Bazán related articles	1946-1969
JUAN VALERA RESEARCH MATERIAL			
	24	Correspondence with Jim Howe	1967-1968
	25	Research note booklets, Valera related	n.d.