

PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION  
The University of Michigan  
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

Approved by the Regents  
May 15, 2008

Peter Ho Davies, associate professor of English language and literature, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to professor of English language and literature, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

M.A.	1997	University of Cambridge
M.A.	1994	Boston University
B.A.	1989	University of Cambridge
B.A.	1987	Manchester University

Professional Record:

2003 – 2006	Helen Zell Director of Master of Fine Arts Program in Creative Writing, Department of English Language and Literature, University of Michigan
2002 – present	Associate Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, University of Michigan,
2001 – 2002	William Wilhartz Assistant Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, University of Michigan
1999 – 2001	Assistant Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, University of Michigan
1997 – 1999	Assistant Professor and Director of Fiction, Creative Writing Program, University of Oregon

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching – Professor Davies has taught fiction writing workshops and the history of the short story to both undergraduate and graduate students. Student evaluations consistently place him in the highest quartile and they enthusiastically praise him. He is a dedicated teacher and in insightful reader, frequently providing abundant commentary on students' fiction and generously going over their revisions and exercises. He is resourceful in his methods and eager to experiment with new and improved ways of nurturing the talent and intellectual curiosity of the budding writers under his supervision.

Research – Professor Davies continues to publish short fiction in such prestigious locales as *Harper's* and *The Paris Review*. With the publication of *The Welsh Girl* he has extended his repertoire beyond the short story into the novel. This is a deeply intelligent performance. It is both closely focused and broad in implication, enlarging his emotional range. From first to final page, the novel deals with those matters of racial and ethnic identity treated in Professor Davies' short stories, and does so again in historical context—though *The Welsh Girl* represents a new beginning as well as an important addition to earlier work.

Recent and Significant Publications:

*The Welsh Girl*, Houghton Mifflin, 2007, Hebrew and Greek translations forthcoming.  
“Minotaur,” in *Mixed: A Multi-Racial Anthology*, C. Prasad (ed.), Norton Press, pp. 65-68.

“What you know,” *The Art of the Short Story*, W. Martin (ed.), Houghton Mifflin, 2006, pp. 1004-1013.

“The Hull Case,” *The Contemporary American Short Story*, P. Shreve and B. M. Nguyen (eds.), Longman, 2004, pp. 136-150.

Service – Professor Davies chaired the Master of Fine Arts Program in Creative Writing from winter 2003 through fall 2006 (with a year-long break to hold a Guggenheim Fellowship). He left the program significantly strengthened and improved, both materially and structurally, and his tenure as chair is likely to leave a lasting impression on the shape of the program for many years to come.

#### External Reviews:

##### Reviewer (A)

“This is, in sum, a most distinguished record, and one, gulp, far better than my own at a similar stage in my career. ... His are ‘the goods’ we prize: important publication; formal national and international recognition of the importance of said publication; continued productivity; and, for lack of a better term, the requisite profile (including readings, talks and lectures yonder in America, as well as serving as a judge for contests, a consulting editor for a literary magazine, and a visiting writer/scholar). ... He deserves, let me be plain, more recognition, for his is a prodigious talent.”

##### Reviewer (B)

“This hiring has been a lucky one for the English Department at Michigan because Peter has proved to be a fine teacher, a wonderful writer and colleague, and...an excellent ambassador and fund-raiser for the M.F.A. program. Many other first rank writing programs would like to have him on their faculty. Several, as you know, have already tried to hire him away from Michigan; I am sure that they will continue to do so... The stories are deeply intelligent but use their intelligence not in the service of frigid trickery or mere tours de force but more often for a sly high comedy of manners that manages to sneak a considerable amount of feeling in through the back door.”

##### Reviewer (C)

“The blend of the lyric and the dramatic, of lovely prose and hard-won, well-researched, nicely integrated quotidian detail really impressed me. It’s not just an impressive and beautifully written historical novel, though it’s that too; it’s also one that, by tapping into Peter’s own unique reservoir of identity confusion, is truly affecting. ...I can’t imagine a school that wouldn’t love and be lucky to have him, and that wouldn’t benefit enormously from his presence once he was there.”

##### Reviewer (D)

“With his two collections, *Equal Love* and *The Ugliest House in the World*, Peter has established himself as one of the finest short story writers working today. His stories are swift, fun to read, and immensely varied in tone and structure. One approaches them anticipating adventure, and they pay off. In reading and rereading his stories, I am struck by his boldness, his capacity to control his material, and the elegance of his prose.”

Reviewer (E)

“I am rarely a fan of historical novels—I tend to agree with Henry James on this score—but am a great and inspired admirer of *The Welsh Girl*. I can think of few contemporary writers capable of rendering a past world so immediately and with so little artificiality and fuss. ... His professional accolades are numerous, and impressive; but the value of his work does not depend upon these endorsements: Peter is that rare and genuine thing, a writer whose career is purely the product of his remarkable work, rather than one whose work is secondary to some sort of ‘literary career.’ He is a gem...”

Reviewer (F)

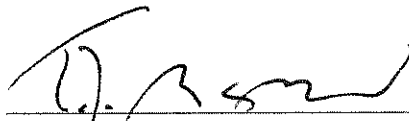
“What strikes a reader immediately in Peter’s fiction is the broad range of his interests and his abilities. He writes about the intricacies of private life—family, love affairs, parents and children—with the same insight and care as he does about large social and political themes. In fact he sees no strict separation between the large and the small, the social and the personal. ... He falls into no easy category: he is in the great realist tradition...except he shows no bitterness and has more compassion for his characters.”

Reviewer (G)

“...I loved the novel, was absolutely astounded and gripped by the opening on Rudolph Hess being interrogated, felt utterly at home in Peter’s so richly described time and place. It struck me as a tour de force of historical re-imagining. ... Peter’s gifts as a teacher and a person are so notable, and so much a part of his national reputation, that it would be silly for me not to mention them. ... He is a brilliant teacher of creative writing, well grounded in theory and craft, a responsible and responsive colleague, and a warm, generous mentor.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Davies has been an important member of the Master of Fine Arts Program in Creative Writing. As author, teacher, and colleague, he has been first-rate. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Associate Professor Peter Ho Davies be promoted to the rank of professor of English language and literature, with tenure, in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.



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Terrence J. McDonald  
Arthur F. Thurnau Professor,  
Professor of History, and Dean  
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

May 2008