

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

Alison Cornish, associate professor of Italian, with tenure, Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to professor of Italian, with tenure, Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	1990	Stanford University
M.A.	1987	Cornell University
B.A.	1984	University of California, Berkeley

Professional Record:

2000 – present	Associate Professor, Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, University of Michigan
1995 – 2000	Assistant Professor, Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, University of Michigan
1991 – 1995	Assistant Professor, Department of Italian, Yale University

Summary of Evaluations:

Teaching – Professor Cornish is a dedicated and enthusiastic teacher of Italian literature and culture pertaining to medieval and early-modern Italy. She primarily teaches at the undergraduate level and strives to use literature and culture as tools in teaching and strengthening students' language skills. To that end she offers an innovative course entitled "Italian through Opera" in which students hone their language skills through the memorization and performance of a complete opera in Italian. She also regularly teaches a course in English on Dante's *Divine Comedy*, a fundamental offering for the humanities at Michigan.

Research – Professor Cornish works on medieval and Renaissance Italian literature up to 1700 with a focus on Dante. She is a resourceful close reader of texts who does not shy away from projects that require impressive erudition and voluminous research. Since promotion she has published eight articles and has a major book forthcoming on translations and adaptations into the Italian vernaculars of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Her first book established her reputation as a first-rate Dante scholar; her second book ranges much more widely and is praised by all the reviewers as a groundbreaking contribution to her field.

Recent and Significant Publications:

Vernacular Translation in Dante's Italy, Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2011.

"Volgarizzamenti: To remember and to forget," in *Memory and Invention: Medieval and Renaissance Literature, Art, and Music*, A. M. B. Berger and M. Rossi (eds.), *I Tatti Studies*, Olschki, 2009, pp. 1-14.

"Sons and lovers: Guido in Paradise," *Modern Language Notes*, 124, 2009, pp. 551-569.

"Not like an Arab": Poetry and astronomy in the Episode of Idalogos in Boccaccio's *Filocolo*," *Annali d'Italianistica*, 23, 2005, pp. 55-68.

Service – Professor Cornish has been a devoted worker on behalf of the Italian program since her arrival in 1995; she has been the driving force behind its curricular revisions, the growth in its undergraduate majors, and the institution of a minor in Italian. She has also served significantly in departmental governance through membership on the Graduate and Executive committees. In the academic profession at large she has served actively on committees of the Modern Language Association, and in 2010 was the principal organizer of the annual American Association of Italian Studies conference, held on this occasion in Ann Arbor.

External Reviews:

Reviewer (A)

“...this is an extraordinarily strong case, supported by several new articles published since her tenure, but centered on a new book which is a model of high-order scholarship, on an innovative topic of exceptional importance, a book which, and I say this in an entirely positive spirit, will be *useful* and hence influential in a way that very few scholarly books ever are.”

Reviewer (B)

“The author’s *Vernacular Translation in Dante’s Italy* is probably one of the half-dozen works published in the discipline in the last ten years that is really important. As I anticipated earlier, it will help to shape how that field is conceived in the years to come, especially as translation studies are being increasingly mainstreamed as part of the contemporary humanities curriculum.”

Reviewer (C)

“She never mounts an argument, or even a thought, unless it is anchored in the text. The result is that her readings, even those that seem marginal, are soundly supported and not easily dismissed, certainly not as the product of whim. Her analyses invariably proceed in a logical and cogent manner, and they are also always shored up by reference to the critical tradition. ... Her production of scholarship, both in quality and quantity, more than satisfies the normal expectations for advancement to the highest rank.”

Reviewer (D)

“She is, in my opinion, one of a very select group of outstanding US Italianists [in her generation]...who combine an impressive record of publications (in terms of productivity, originality, and careful placement with major presses and journals) with a strong international reputation in both Italy and other English-speaking countries.”

Reviewer (E)

“I read [*Vernacular Translation in Dante’s Italy*]...with engagement and I learned quite a bit from it. It is fully accessible to non-expert readers, and it tells what is a story of cultural as well as literary history with clarity and elegance. The critical mind behind it is sharp and agile, and the book will confirm Professor Cornish’s reputation as a leading scholar-critic of Italian literature. This is a very strong case. Professor Cornish is eminently deserving of promotion to Professor with tenure.”

Reviewer (F)

“Alison is an exceptionally well-trained medievalist and Dante scholar. I think of her scholarship as meticulous, solid, dense, clearly written, and carefully thought out. It is often very

elegant. I have the sense that she tinkers, working on essays and chapters for a long time, polishing them until she feels they are just right. In this respect she's a cautious scholar, but intellectually she can be an adventurous one. ... Needless to say, Alison has my strongest recommendation for promotion to full professor."

Reviewer (G)

"This book will consolidate and enhance Cornish's reputation as one of the leading scholars of late medieval and early modern Italian literature and culture currently working in the United States. Cornish's research contributions to the field...represent the basis for a very compelling case for promotion to Professor, one that would pass muster, I believe, at any major research university."

Reviewer (H)


"The forthcoming book changes our very conception of the period called 'the Origins' of Italian literature; I think it will be seen as a landmark in the English-speaking scholarly world and in Italy and would not be surprised if it is, in the next few years, translated into Italian and published in Italy, where most American Dante scholarship escapes notice."

Reviewer (I)

"She has done an enormous service to the community of early modern Europeanists in writing in her inimitably clear and limpid prose the story of how classical and biblical material—historical and philosophical and rhetorical and ethical—was vulgarized and transmitted in the nascent vernaculars. *Vernacular Translation in Dante's Italy* is a singular achievement and it will make an enormous—and deserved—splash when it appears."

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Cornish is a deeply learned and highly original scholar. She has been the most central figure in Michigan's growing undergraduate and now graduate programs in Italian for the past fifteen years. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Associate Professor Alison Cornish be promoted to the rank of professor of Italian, with tenure, Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.



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

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