

May, 11, 2018

Andrew Hamilton
President, New York University

Katharine Fleming
Provost, New York University

Dear President Hamilton and Provost Fleming,

We write as long-term colleagues of Professor Avital Ronell who has been under investigation by the Title IX offices at New York University. Although we have no access to the confidential dossier, we have all worked for many years in close proximity to Professor Ronell and accumulated collectively years of experience to support our view of her capacity as teacher and a scholar, but also as someone who has served as Chair of both the Departments of German and Comparative Literature at New York University. We have all seen her relationship with students, and some of us know the individual who has waged this malicious campaign against her. We wish to communicate first in the clearest terms our profound and enduring admiration for Professor Ronell whose mentorship of students has been no less than remarkable over many years. We deplore the damage that this legal proceeding causes her, and seek to register in clear terms our objection to any judgment against her. We hold that the allegations against her do not constitute actual evidence, but rather support the view that malicious intention has animated and sustained this legal nightmare.

As you know, Professor Ronell has changed the course of German Studies, Comparative Literature, and the field of philosophy and literature over the years of her teaching, writing, and service. She is responsible for building the field of literary studies at New York University, but also throughout Europe as a result of her brilliant scholarship and spirit of intellectual generosity. Her students now teach at leading research institutions in the US, France, and Germany, and her intellectual influence is felt throughout the humanities, including media and technology studies, feminist theory, and comparative literary study. There is arguably no more important figure in literary studies at New York University than Avital Ronell whose intellectual power and fierce commitment to students and colleagues has established her as an exemplary intellectual and mentor throughout the academy. As you know, she is the Jacques Derrida Chair of Philosophy at the European Graduate School and she was recently given the award of Chevalier of Arts and Letters by the French government.

We testify to the grace, the keen wit, and the intellectual commitment of Professor Ronell and ask that she be accorded the dignity rightly deserved by someone of her international standing and reputation. If she were to be terminated or relieved of her duties, the injustice would be widely recognized and opposed. The ensuing loss for the humanities, for New York University, and for intellectual life during these times would be no less than enormous and would rightly invite widespread and intense public scrutiny. We ask that you approach this material with a clear understanding of the long history of her thoughtful and successive mentorship, the singular brilliance of this intellectual, the international reputation she has rightly earned as a stellar scholar in her field, her enduring commitments to the university, and the illuminated world she has brought to your campus where colleagues and students thrive in her company and under her guidance. She deserves a fair hearing, one that expresses respect, dignity, and human solicitude in addition to our enduring admiration.

Sincerely,

Judith Butler, Maxine Elliot Professor, Department of Comparative Literature, University of California, Berkeley, President-Elect, Modern Language Association (2020)

Emily Apter, Julius Silver Professor of French and Comparative Literature Chair, Department of Comparative Literature, New York University

Catharine Stimpson, University Professor, New York University, former Dean of the Graduate School

John T. Hamilton, William R. Kenan Professor of German and Comparative Literature Chair, Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures, Harvard University

Isabelle Alfandary, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle, Présidente de l'assemblée collégiale du collège international de philosophie, Paris

Jean-Luc Nancy, Professeur émérite, Université de Strasbourg

Edward J. Sullivan, Helen Gould Sheppard Professor of the History of Art Institute of Fine Arts - Deputy Director, Department of Art History New York University

Geoffrey Bennington, Asa G. Candler Professor of Modern French Thought, Emory University; Chair, Department of Comparative Literature

Laurence Rickels, writer and professor, European Graduate School; Visiting Professor, New York University

Pierre Alfari, Professor, Paris School of Fine Arts

Peter Connor, Professor of German, Barnard College

Manthia Diawara, Professor of Cinema Studies, Tisch School of the Arts, New York University

Denis Hollier, Department of French Literature, Thought, and Culture, New York University

Christopher Wood, Professor and Chair, Department of German, New York University

Susan Bernstein, Professor of German and Comparative Literature, Brown University

Cathy Caruth, Frank H.T. Rhodes Professor of Humane Letters, Cornell University

Cynthia Chase, Professor of French and Comparative Literature, Cornell University

Jonathan Culler, Distinguished Professor of French and Comparative Literature, Cornell University

Diane Davis, Professor and Chair, Department of Rhetoric, University of Texas-Austin

Hent de Vries, Paulette Goddard Professor of the Humanities, New York University

Bernhard Siegert, Professor for the History and Theory of Cultural Techniques
Bauhaus University Weimar

Joan W. Scott, Professor Emerita, School of Social Science, Institute for Advanced Study

Hans-Christian von Herrmann, Professor of Literature, Technical University Berlin

Suzanne Doppelt, writer and photographer, Paris; faculty, European Graduate School

Rudiger Campe, Professor of German, NYU and Frankfurt an der Oder

Vincent Broqua, Associate Professor of French at the University of Paris Est Créteil

Christopher Fynsk, Dean and Professor, European Graduate School

Elizabeth Rottenberg, Professor of Philosophy, DePaul University

Antje Pfannkuchen, Associate Professor of German, Dickinson College

Emanuela Bianchi, Associate Professor, Department of Comparative Literature
New York University

Mina Cheon, faculty, Maryland Institute College of Art

Michael G. Levine, Professor of German, Rutgers University

Paul North, Professor of German, Yale University

Elissa Marder, Chair, Department of French and Italian, Emory University

Nicola Behrmann, Associate Professor, German Languages and Literatures, Rutgers University-
New Brunswick

Kristina Mendocino, Mellon Assistant Professor of Humanities and German, Brown University

Jeffrey Wallon, Professor of Comparative Literature, Hampshire College

Francois Noudelmann, Professor of Philosophy, University of Paris VIII

Jesus Mario Lozano Alamilla, Professor of Music, Universidad de las Americas Puebla, Mexico

Sam Weber, Professor of German, Northwestern University

Peter Fenves, Joan and Sarepta Harrison Professor of Literature, Department of German, Northwestern University

Shoshana Felman, Woodruff Professor of Comparative Literature and French, Emory University

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, University Professor, Columbia University

Slavoj Zizek, Distinguished Professor, Humanities Institute, University of London, Global Professor, New York University

Marc Redfield, Chair, Department of Comparative Literature, Brown University

Peter Szendy, David Herlihy Professor of Comparative Literature and Humanities

Anselm Haverkamp, Professor emeritus NYU and Honorary Professor of Philosophy, Ludwig Maximilians-University Munich/ Germany

Barbara Vinken, Chair of Romance Languages, Ludwig Maximilians-University Munich, Germany

Arno Böhler, Professor University of Vienna, Department of Philosophy and University of Applied Arts Vienna

Susanne Valerie Granzer, Professor, University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna

Elizabeth Weed, editor, *differences*, former director, Pembroke Center, Brown University