We make no apology for the fact that our chapter on psychoanalytic understandings of frigidity focuses more on the work of Marie Bonaparte than on that of Freud or any other psychoanalyst. Without doubt, Bonaparte was a Freudian thinker, and Freud’s teleological mapping of feminine pleasure between clitoris and vagina helped structure the ideas of Bonaparte and of all other psychoanalytic thinkers who wrote about female sexuality throughout the first half of the twentieth century. However, Bonaparte warrants a concentrated study, not only because her elaboration of Freudian theory about female bodies into a full theory of frigidity went far beyond anything Freud had dared to envisage, but also because she complicates the history of sexuality to an extraordinary degree. The politics of gender and the medicalization of female sexual lack were for her matters of great subjective importance, and her example shows how such ideas were taken up by the first generation of articulate female intellectuals. She engaged with these issues fruitfully, if problematically and even painfully. When we read the description of female ‘frigidity’ sufferers in the accounts of nineteenth-century doctors, it is difficult to speculate credibly about the experience of those patients when confronted with the medical categories applied to them. In the writings of Marie Bonaparte, on the other hand, we have an account not only of how one woman conceived her own pathology in those terms, but also an insight into how, by theorizing that experience, she contributed to the intellectual psychologization of female sexuality.

Bonaparte is also an exemplary figure for the more general historical contribution we are seeking to make in this book, in that she emphasizes the ambivalent status of frigidity from a feminist point of view. The story of Marie Bonaparte’s clitoris reveals that sexual categories often imagined today to form part of the most repressive or misogynist discourses...
of the past were in fact, in their own time, those most riddled with ambiguity in relation to gender, national and racial politics. On the one hand, Bonaparte's baffling ambiguity, when measured against recent feminist contestations of genital pleasure, suggests a radical alterity of the past she inhabited, while, on the other hand, her anathematized reputation within canonical works of feminist theory shows just how much such debates continue to have relevance, as normative views of orgasm are further elaborated and disputed. Bonaparte's bifurcated vision of clitoral and vaginal pleasure and her passionate conception of frigidity as virile clitoridism have made her the object of disdain and disavowal across feminist and psychoanalytic thought since the 1960s. For Kate Millet and Betty Friedan, Bonaparte was all the worse because she was a woman – a traitor to feminism and a lackey of the misogynist Freud. Bonaparte's work is soaked in reverence for Freud, and that tends to obscure the important departure she made from his conclusions about the meaning of frigidity and how to treat it. It was no doubt her intention to appear obedient to Freud's model and to show him gratitude for the unequivocal support he gave to her and to other female psychoanalysts of the time. But it would be an error to take such displays of deference as signs of a weak-minded submission, of unreflective mimesis or of a lack of initiative and originality on her part. A careful examination of the various texts Bonaparte wrote about female sexuality suggests a significantly greater complexity than is generally recognized in broad characterizations of her ideas. But there is more to it than that. By studying Marie Bonaparte, we can learn more about the place of frigidity in the history of ideas. And we can come to understand her unique intellectual persona by studying her life and work within the contexts of the international psychoanalytic community and of the national and public gender politics of interwar France and Europe.

In the history of feminism Bonaparte has not merely been ignored: she has been thoroughly reviled. Betty Friedan, in that pivotal work of ‘second wave’ feminism, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), openly attacked Bonaparte on feminist grounds for the first time, describing her as a lackey of Freud, who was in turn pilloried by Friedan as one of the most dangerous misogynist thinkers of the modern age. Kate Millet's discussion of Bonaparte in her *Sexual Politics* of 1969 had perhaps even more influence on the overall establishment of Bonaparte as an anti-feminist icon. For Millet, Bonaparte was part of the ‘reactionary’ trend of Freudian women. In these two works that have regularly held a place in the essential reading lists of women's studies courses throughout the English-speaking world and have seen numerous