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**Introduction**

Andrea Ruthven and Gabriella Ferri

The chapters collected in this volume are only a few of those which came out of the Evil, Women and the Feminine conference held at the University of East Anglia, May 2010, hosted by the Inter-Disciplinary.Net. Recognizing that some of the chapters, in expanded form, which were to be presented at the conference and engage with one another, opening up a space for dialogue, we have decided to bring them together, and present them here, in a form that we hope, they work together to elicit a richer understanding of women who push the limits of 'normal femininity'.

For many of the authors collected here, the notion of femininity serves to highlight the very constructedness of the idea that 'bad' women are all of the same kind. Within the more rigid category of 'good' women, one can be surprised, is one that necessarily relies on the notion of the binary foil which gives her meaning. Both, if not for the patriarchal lens that imposes a prescribed (and one which the chapters presented in this volume look at) gender, cannot escape being penned into this mould and reinterpreted in terms of a woman.

The first section in this volume, *Monstrous Ill*: Different Deviations from the Maternal Female. Three Cases: Kidnapping: Motherhood at Any Cost, looks at three cases of kidnapping in the United States. What these cases reveal is that motherhood, or a pregnant woman, confers a special status on her, and that mothering is often less desirable than in a man’s mind. This chapter raises the question of how such actions (like murder or forced Caesarean section) can be a form of giving life. Though, if the role of motherhood is often seen as a means of protection, the offspring is often seen as a means of giving life. Though, if the role of motherhood is often seen as a means of protection, the offspring is often seen as a means of giving life.

Continuing this section, Andrea Ruthven’s Unnaturally: Technologies of Reproduction and Hiromi Goto’s ‘Hopeful Monsters’, looks at the relationship, so long considered natural (though disrupted by reproductive technologies. If so