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**Only Mom Can Save the World: Maternal Myths of Salvation and Destruction in
Post-Apocalyptic Film**

This paper will present a comparative textual analysis of several recent films dealing with mothering in the post-apocalypse in order to examine a new maternal myth taking shape in response to anxieties surrounding the climate crisis, which I call only mom can save the world. This work is broken into four sections: the first section confronts the irrefutability of white, heteronormative family structure in these works; the second section examines maternal subjectivity on screen; the third section deals with maternal regret; finally, the fourth section questions mother love as representative of a ubiquitous and unfailing survival strategy. Using psychoanalytic film theory in conjunction with feminist maternal theory, I argue that – although these films ostensibly present very different formulations of motherhood – they both ultimately work to affirm or re-establish white, middle-class heteronormative motherhood as the most vital form of emotional and social connection in the face of world collapse. In her book, *The Myths of Motherhood*, maternal theorist Shari L. Thurer asserts that current myths of motherhood tell us that, the precise dose of a mother's love, punctually delivered, is the central factor in the well-being of the next generation, that is, the future. When considered within the context of contemporary anxieties surrounding ecological and economic disaster in our own world, this responsibility takes on new weight and immediacy.

Katrina Millan is a PhD student of Gender, Feminist, and Women's Studies at York University. She has an MA in English from Montclair State University. She spent five years working as an adjunct professor, teaching Film, Literature, and Writing. Her research focuses on maternal subjectivity and myth in post-apocalyptic films.