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 SOUTHERN POST-APOCALYPTIC SPACE

# BLACK MOUNTAIN'S

## POST-APOCALYPTIC CIVIL WAR IN WILLIAM FORSTCHEN'S *ONE SECOND AFTER*

BY KATHALEEN AMENDE  
 WITH PHOTOGRAPHY BY KAREN NEAL

**“THE THREAT IS  
 REAL, AND WE AS  
 AMERICANS MUST  
 FACE THAT THREAT,  
 PREPARE, AND  
 KNOW WHAT TO DO  
 TO PREVENT IT.”**

—Newt Gingrich (13)

In 1967, Frank Kermode's *The Sense of an Ending* became one of the foremost studies of apocalypticism.<sup>1</sup> In his work, Kermode posits that we are imbued with a sense of the ending of all things. In the creation of apocalyptic literature, he argues, we attempt to put a framework around our feelings that the end is well and truly nigh. Christian apocalyptic narratives such as those found in Daniel, Ezekiel, and Revelations, he tells us, offer apocalypse as a process – revelation and uncovering, followed by cataclysm, suffering and then, ultimately, a New Jerusalem where the end literally becomes a new beginning. Kermode's work, incredibly relevant in the era of cold war nuclear anxiety and post-Holocaust trauma, has stood as the benchmark for how we see ourselves in these end times when the truth has been revealed and the cataclysm is coming.

At the turn of the millennium, however, James Berger argued that apocalypticism changed: we no longer feel the end is coming, he says, but that it has already come, “that the conclusive catastrophe has already occurred, the crisis is over . . . and the ceaseless activity of our time . . . is only a complex form of stasis.”<sup>2</sup> We have become a people not of *apocalyptic* sensibilities, but of *post-apocalyptic* sensibilities. Jean Baudrillard, in his aptly named *America*, expands upon this idea, pointing out that, from the time of the Pilgrims, who believed that the end times had come to Europe and that the New World was their New Jerusalem, America has been seen as the place one goes *after* the

<sup>1</sup> Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1966).

<sup>2</sup> James Berger, *After the End: Representations of Post-Apocalypse* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1999) xiii; subsequently cited parenthetically.