

Have you ever wondered why people approach history, and by extension the keepers of history, with fear and dislike? It isn't just an inability or unwillingness to master names and dates and chronologies, although that surely plays a role. It is because historians, records officers, librarians, curators, and the like are servants of time, and the essence of time is death. The idea of being catalogued, sealed, and placed in a cabinet or on a shelf like a box of documents or a case of archeological samples is horrifying. It denies agency and importance, turning living people into things, into mere objects of study. The horror of Braniac as revealed in *The New 52: Futures End* is in precisely this. He is a servant of time, an avatar of death. His arrival is the signal that a world is ended, a timeline defunct. The only possible future for those who live in these universes, the only possible expression of their dreams and desires, is as a display in Braniac's museum of dead worlds. The power of this issue, its narrative art, is in the brutal depiction of Braniac's sampling process, the way in which he simply scoops up an entire city and prepares it for storage and study. The historical roots of Braniac, that is to say the literary roots, are as a machine intelligence, a thing of cold logic and inhuman science. Those roots are fully manifest in this issue, as the harsh power and shocking brutality of the Cosmic Gatherer's assault on New York shocks Superman into action despite his experiences in the war, turns Batman and Tim Drake away from their (still unexplained) personal conflict, and leaves the Justice League and the remnants of Stormwatch struck with horror. At last, after so much delay and diversion, this series reaches a turning point that is as clear and sharp as it is cosmic. The shadow of *Convergence* lies heavily on this issue. We see here how the stage for that event is set, what the conditions of the gathered worlds are, what the shared experiences of the inhabitants. The story of *Futures End* may be coming to a close, and possibly Braniac will even be defeated in his attempt to gather Manhattan from this timeline. But the greater story stretches before us, going on toward whatever lies waiting in the summer and the arrival of Darkseid and Anti-Monitor, and the anniversary of the first, and greatest, of D.C.'s crises. The post *The New 52: Futures End #40* appeared first on *Weekly Comic Book Review*.

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