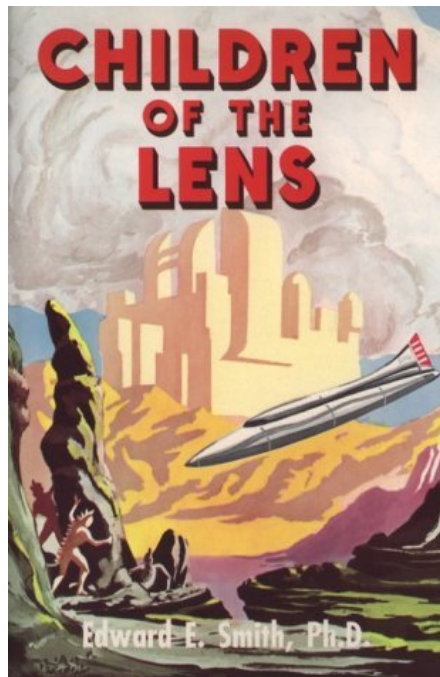




Children of the Lens

E.E. "Doc" Smith , Ric Binkley (Illustrator)

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It was beginning to look as if no one could prevent the destruction of the Universe. For a strange intelligence was directing the destruction of all civilization from the icy depths of space.

Kim Kinnison of the Patrol was one of the few men who knew how near the end was. And in the last desperate plan to save all life, he knew he had to use his children as bait for the evil powers of the planet Floor.

Children of the Lens Details

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Author : E.E. "Doc" Smith , Ric Binkley (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review Children of the Lens for online ebook

Wanda says

More adventures in ancient science fiction—certainly Smith’s series does not stand up to today’s standards, but it certainly shows where sci fi had its beginnings. Reading it is rather like an archaeological dig, exposing the roots of the genre. I’m glad to see in this book that the female characters get to step up and show what they’re made of. Clarrisa dons her gray Lensman leathers (which still fit after having five children, including two sets of twins). Her four daughters keep all the male Lensmen (and even the Arisians) on their toes. Mind you, it’s implied that there just aren’t any men out there who will ever measure up to these women and that they better get used to a celibate life. Clarissa, after all, has been the only female Lensman and she and Kim Kinnison (Stage Two Lensman) have produced the only stage-three Lensman children. The four daughters have only their brother Kit and, to some extent, their father Kim as their male equals. Obviously the Arisians’ breeding program has come to a screeching halt unless they were planning to mate brother to sister like dog breeders. So it’s just as well that the Arisians have ridden out of town, leaving everything to the new sheriff, ...er, I mean to the Galactic Patrol, by book’s end.

It is fiction of its era—matters are very black and white, characters are all good or all bad, whole scale destruction is good if it is done by the right people. Written in the years following World War II, this is hardly a surprising outlook. It’s been 100 years since the beginning of WWI, and we’re just starting to see a more nuanced history of that event starting to spread into popular culture, replacing the good guys and bad guys with military guys on both sides. Science fiction has come a long way, too, in the ensuing 50+ years and we enjoy the products of that progress.

This is my 148th book read from the NPR list of great science fiction and fantasy.

Blair says

The climactic finale of the Lensman series, this one continues on where the others left off. Civilization is in a tremendous battle for supremacy of two galaxies. The Lensmen are the force of Civilization, and the Kinnison Family is the ultimate in evolution of the Lensmen. They are tasked with bringing the war to a successful close by eradicating all vestiges of the evil masterminds seeking to overthrow society. Only by developing their full potential and working together will they be able to conquer, but can they do it in time?

If you liked the others in the series, this one is a great climax. The book (as do the others in the series) presume a hyperspeed pace of action but include enough new ideas to keep one occupied. If you are a strict stickler for quantum physics, you will get bent out of shape about some of the proposed technologies, but it makes for a fun story.

Diana says

Great story but e-conversion needs editing

I first fell in love with this book in college reading it before any of the others. I have read it so many times that , it wasn't hard to spot the missing chunk out of chapter 8 and the many misspellings even if the result of

character recognition was a correct word but not the word for that context. I highly recommend that readers choose a used paperback until this e-conversion has been edited.

S.Speakman says

My dad lent me Starship Troopers after I watched the movie with him. If I remember correctly I believe he stated "Those aren't Gorilla Suits!", followed by him dashing into the attic. Later that night, not being able to sleep due to his rummaging above my ceiling, I went up and asked him what he was doing. "Finding you the book!" was his response, and later that night I started reading my first science-fiction book. Needless to say I developed an appetite for them, and this was his next recommendation.

Roddy Williams says

Probably the quintessential Space Opera of its time, the Lensman series has dated - although not so badly as the work of some of his contemporaries - due mainly, in my opinion, to Smith's rather one-dimensional characterisation, his dialogue and his depiction of female roles. Paradoxically, given the rather limited characterisation of the humans his aliens are sometimes truly alien. Indeed, the mindsets of some of the non-human protagonists are often far more skilfully depicted than their human counterparts.

Despite that, provided one bears in mind the social climate in which this was written and reads the novel in context, they can still be hugely enjoyable.

The term 'Space Opera' is actually used within the text at one point when Kim Kinnison – the hero of the series – goes undercover posing as a writer of the genre. Whether the alter ego was based on anyone in particular is not known.

This is the finale to Smith's six volume saga. Smith was an early forerunner of today's 'Big Concept' writers such as Greg Bear and Stephen Baxter, and though some of his scientific fabulations seem somewhat preposterous by today's standards it was Smith and writers like him who created that 'sense of wonder' for many readers, not only when this was published as a magazine serial in the Nineteen Forties, but when republished in book form in the fifties and (for reasons unknown) enjoying an unexpected renaissance in the mid-seventies. The series has recently been republished by an independent publisher and hopefully will find a new generation of readers.

Smith's strength lies in his ability to convey the vastness of Time and Space, his premise being that billions of years ago a race of humanoids – The Arisians - was born in our galaxy and evolved far beyond the point at which humanity now stands.

They learned that by observation and the calculations of their powerful minds they could predict the future to a certain degree. They knew that a galaxy was about to pass completely through their own galaxy, and that the gravitational pull of suns against each other would produce billions of new planets, upon which Life would evolve.

They also knew that another ancient race, the cruel and tyrannical Eddorians, had plans to dominate both galaxies and sate their immortal lust for power.

The Arisians only advantage was that the Eddorians were not aware of their existence, and so was set in motion a plan which was to span millions of years, taking us through the fall of Atlantis, the Roman Empire and thus through the Twentieth Century and beyond.

In essence, this is an epic war of ideologies, in that the Arisians represent democracy and free will, while the Eddorians represent a system of Hierarchical totalitarianism, enforced by a militaristic regime (In this respect it is interesting to compare the physical description of Smith's Eddorians with Heinlein's Puppet Masters, who themselves are a metaphor for the forces of Communism. Both are sexless, emotionless amorphous creatures, who reproduce by binary fission, with each new half retaining the memories and skills of the

original).

The Arisians' secret weapon is a selective breeding programme which has been in operation on four different planets since intelligent life evolved.

Only one of the four races can go on to produce the super-beings capable of defeating the Eddorians.

Humans, of course, win the 'race' race and the couple selectively bred to give birth to the Homo Superior children are inevitably white and North American.

This idea of selectively breeding humans rather puts a dent into the concept of Arisians as benign Guardians of Democracy, and although one can argue that it was the Arisians' only option, it is never really addressed as a moral issue within the text.

The Children themselves are four girls and boy who, in their late teens, have to conceal that fact that they are the most powerful – if underdeveloped as yet – beings in the Universe. We are led to believe that the girls will ultimately become the wives of their brother, and the mothers of the race that will replace the Arisians as Guardians of Civilisation.

An oddly incestuous episode also ensues between Kit (the boy) and his mother in a strange scene where she – in need of brain-restructuring and training, for want of a better phrase - allows the mind of her son to enter hers, rather than submit to mental penetration by the Arisians (of whom she has an incurable phobia).

The description of this act is oddly violent and not a little sexual, made worse by the rather stilted professions of love between Mother and son before the procedure.

But Hell, this is Pulp Fiction. It never pretends to be Shakespeare, and despite its political incorrectness I still find it a nostalgic and stonking good read.

Ed says

This is actually about the whole Lensman series. I found the books to be greatly engaging. I read them first as a child, then read them again in my 30's, then my 40's. Sure some (a lot) of the science is out to lunch now, but it is still a good action read.

Ian says

personally i didn't like it as much as the others because it felt repetitive and did not have as much content as the last 5 in the series.

Fred says

Finally!!

Once again, e.e. doc writes in an older style. To make matters worse, he tends to be verbose and uses many really obscure words. Worst of all, this last installment continues with numerous typos and apparent editorial errors. All in all, while remaining classic sci-fi, the series, as it stands, is cumbersome and difficult to read.

Karl Kindt says

The previous book's energy and ability to surprise lagged somewhat, but this book saves the series from

losing its momentum. How many stories have a loving husband and wife and their responsible children saving the galaxy? I lost track of which daughter was which, but their snappy patter and interplay make this an entertaining and worthwhile continuation of the LENSMAN series.

Darth says

In true space opera style this wraps everything up just a little too neatly to be believable, but if it didnt, it wouldnt really be space opera now would it?

The things that had been impossible and unthinkable for the first 5 volumes are accomplished in a whirl by a few extra talented kids zipping around the bad guys home planets and lancing them with mental bolts too strong to be resisted. Still worthwhile to me though.

Richard Roberts says

What there's more? You'd be forgiven for thinking that this marked the end of the Lensman series, there's still one more on my shelf to read though. Great flow in this story, somehow the last quarter or less of the book packed in more and more. I thought I was on the wind down a few times only to have another jolt. Brilliant.

Steven Grimm says

Sporadically enjoyable but by this point in the series the breathless style has worn out its welcome. The introduction of the children is a breath of fresh air that keeps the story from being tedious, but the revelation of the main antagonists of the series is clumsy and they go from being unknown to defeated in way too little time to feel like an imminent threat. This series was a huge influence on science fiction, but its successors in the genre really surpassed it in every respect.

William Rood says

The only five star I will give to one of the lensmens books written by the beloved Dr Smith. This has every space opera element and trope. The technology and weapons are now at the ridiculous level (super luminal planets traveling down hyper tubes from Nth space dimension to literally obliterate an entire solar system from existence). The fleet conflicts are in the billions of space ships vs billions of space ships. The children of the lens, a single male and two sets of female twins, the product of the Red and Grey lensmen marriage, form a hyper intelligent bond called "The Unit", whose powers even Mentor of Arisia cannot fathom. Using the amassed power of all of the lensmen in the two universes on rapport, the 2nd stage lensmen, the entire mental power of the Arisians, and of course, all being led by children of the lens, the Eddorian threat is finally extinguished from existence.

The Arisians themselves transcend to the next plane of existence, and a plot device that hooks readers for sequels and future books galore (that sadly never came into being) is used that left me with a warm smile at its eloquence.

A relived narrative from my childhood, I will always cherish this series.

Grace says

I really should have started with an earlier book in the series, but this was the one in the opshop... I have fond memories of reading some of the author's books in high school and I have to say, I think a lot of future sci-fi writers and movie/TV creators were inspired by this writer. The story arc is huge and spans generations. He has amazing ideas for species and technology that weren't even dreamed of at the time he was writing. He is a precursor to George Lucas and J.M Straczynski (is that how you spell it? Can I buy a vowel? Heheheh!) I still finished the book even though it had some pages missing and is the 6th in a series. That is high praise! It is a little dated and sexist, but what do you expect from an author born in 1890? Its still good old-fashioned space adventure!

Elly says

Fun to reread, or rather to listen to again. I own both the audiobook, and also a rather old paperback copy somewhere. This is the end of the serie. EE Doc Smith did write another book in the series, but that is not a continuation of this book, but another story in the same universe. There exist also some stories like that written by others.

Some suspension of disbelieve is needed, in this book as in the full series. Smith uses some physics, and that is clearly dated. That does not make it a bad story, just makes is light reading.

I'll probably come back to this, sometime...

Scott says

Only 50% of the way through this random inheritance, but I have already decided that I now need to go and purchase the whole series from the start. A new (old...?) favourite Sci-Fi author of mine, for sure.

The Fizza says

And so the last book in The Famous Lensman series, Children of the Lens - originally serialized in the magazine Astounding in 1947, comes to an end.

Marking this epic space opera, which began over Two Billion years ago as the our Galaxy collided with another, as the seminal work it appears to be.

Perhaps not as good as the penultimate book in the series, mostly because it introduces five new characters, the four daughters and one son of Kimball Kinnison & Clarissa MacDougall without much ability to add depth or texture to them before they are needed as the tools by the Arisians in their war with Eddor.

Despite spreading things a little thin, EE "Doc" Smith finds all the lose ends from the previous books and

gets us on track for the final battle with Boskone.

Children weaves its way into the larger tapestry of the Lensman series with its, soon to be cliché but still immensely fun fight against the dark hands of the Eddorians.

What's interesting is that the five children's power is so immense, making one wonder how many times Frank Herbert read this series, that they have to hide the true workings of things from everyone around them.

On a different note this book does address some of, what we in the 21st Century would call, the sexism in the series as 4 out of the 5 'big guns' are women and Clarissa steps up to her role as 2nd Stage Lensman in a more equal footing. Still we can't forget what 1947 was like in the depiction of gender roles.

I guess what strikes me most is the bizarre and unfettered imagination of it all. As well as the levels of demolition mankind can reach in future wars, going as far as hurling planets at enemies with science. Six books into the first Space Opera written some aspects might seem convoluted but the ending is delivered at perfect pitch and the reader really does feel as though a great epic has come to an end. Of course, you should after 2 Billion years!

Smith, at times, is a little inadvertently creepy with his wunderkind and eugenics but if you can get past some of the pseudoscience he believed in to see this space epic for the no-holds-barred action adventure series it is and let it take you away you will love it.

Highly recommended, as is the series, to any old school space opera lover!

Joshua says

This is the final book in the series, and possibly the best. I won't lie, Triplanetary (The first) was a little rough for me at the start, and the prose of the entire series isn't all that spectacular (it's ancient space opera, what do you expect?) but for someone with a love of space opera, and all that space opera entails...

I laughed with joy reading this series. Out loud. Not a laughter of humor, or disdain, but joy at the sheer audacity of the story and characters. If you happen to be a fan of the anime Tengen Toppa Gurren Lagann, you know what this is like.

Read this series. You will never look at the word "sunbeam" the same again.

Manny says

"Und now, mit zere heimliche übermenschliche powers, ze all-Aryan children of ze pure Kinnison bloodline vill *rid* ze universe of ze plutocratic communist Jewish Eddorian scum! Jawohl, ze Final Solution! Shall I tell you vot happens? All ze, how you say, gory details?"

"Oh yes uncle Adolf... I mean E.E. Doc! Yes please!"

Gar says

After the painfully uneven stumbles of Second Stage, the series finishes out with not so much a bang but an absurdicous series of them. The Arisian master breeding program for humanity has reached its culmination in the titular kids; there are five of them but I defy anyone to be able to tell them apart. (Parts where our narrator insists they have different personalities don't count. Show, don't tell!) They all get trained to Third Stage Lensmanship, which is beyond even Arisian capacities (they're more of a 2.5-stage Lens level, I suppose), which means it's time for the final throwdown with the evil shoggoths of Eddore.

The physics is good goofy nonsense fun (supernovas defy all of even Arisian science's explanation!), and the culmination of the ongoing arms race is just sublimely ridiculous in a thoroughly enjoyable way. (The effects of the final physical weapon of Civilization is "indescribability cubed!") Meanwhile, Eddore itself is finally righteously genocided by the combined and focused mental power of all of Civilization's Lensmen acting in a sort of psionic phased array, which I'm pretty sure is a seminal plot point that a shittion of genre fiction owes E.E. Smith for big time--like a lot of the elements throughout the whole affair.

Awkward bits of earlier books in the series are mostly avoided, by way of Smith for the most part avoiding anything about actual human beings interacting in a believable fashion. It's very episodic up to the end of the various characters shouting "clear ether!" cheerfully at each other and then being demigods at bad guys while the Lenskids secretly be gods to the demigods. Okay, granted, the final chapter is titled "The Power of Love" but that's mostly just amusingly goofy, plus it's balanced out by the wonderfully ludicrous nature of the final ultimate trap that Eddore tried to dispose of our main hero Kimball Kinnison with (it involved hurling him naked through a random series of alternate universes in permanent and theoretically irrecoverable exile, which of course he's recovered from by the power of loove.) It was also balanced out by relief that all the skirting and dancing about and not-subtle hints that there was to be a whole lot of incest in the Lenskids' future--being that they're the ultimate physical and mental form of humanity and all, and the kids of Adam and Eve needed to breed with someone!--was not what the concluding chapter was actually about.