

AUGUST 11, 2018

Hoyle, Fred [hoyle_fred]

Tagged: Author [/category/authors/author]

Prev

Next

Incoming/Citation

Checklist

Alpha

Chron



(1915-2001) UK astronomer and author, famed in the former capacity for his maverick views on many subjects, including a long-held advocacy of the Steady State Universe theory that the Universe had been in a state of constant creation for ever (see Continuous Creation [/entry/continuous_creation]), a concept replaced after much acrimony by the universally preferred Big Bang theory advocated by George Gamow [/entry/gamow_george] and others (Hoyle in fact coined the term "Big Bang", though disparagingly; see Cosmology [/entry/cosmology]). A possible consequence of his combative attitude towards theory and his colleagues was the apparent weariness which afflicted him in 1973, the year of his knighthood, when he resigned his posts at Cambridge University as Plumian professor of Astronomy [/entry/astronomy] and experimental philosophy, and as director of the Cambridge Institute of Theoretical Astronomy, which he had founded. Though he held other substantial positions, he did at this time much increase the rate of his writing, both fiction and nonfiction. Earlier, his first nonfiction (and first book altogether), *The Nature of the Universe* (**1950**), had eloquently popularized his Cosmology [/entry/cosmology] in 1950s terms, as did what is possibly his most important popularization, *Frontiers of Astronomy* (**1955**); later works, like *Astronomy and Cosmology* (**1975**), *Astronomy Today* (**1975**; vt *Highlights in Astronomy* **1975**) and *The Universe According to Hoyle* (**1982**), aggressively updated those arguments.

More unusual postulates about the nature of the Universe were presented – with Chandra Wickramasinghe (1939-) – in books such as *Lifecloud: The Origin of Life in the Universe* (**1979**), *Diseases from Space* (**1979**), *Evolution from Space* (**1981**), *Cosmic Life-Force* (**1988**) and *Life on Mars* (**1998**), which sophisticate the Panspermia [/entry/panspermia] theory of Svante Arrhenius (1859-1927), arguing that complex organic molecules, including viruses, form in the nuclei of Comets [/entry/comets] and are deposited on Earth during close encounters or impacts; they there join the gene pool, making a radically non-Darwinian form of Evolution [/entry/evolution] possible. Nowhere perhaps has the sf concept of Uplift [/entry/uplift] been taken more seriously. *Ice: The Ultimate Human Catastrophe* (**1981**) argues that a new Ice Age is imminent.

It might be suggested that Hoyle's formidable reputation and powers as a scientific intellect obscured the true nature of his sf, none of which is told with anything like a strict adherence to scientific principles, plausible or speculative. The reverse is the case: Hoyle's best sf conducts, damn the torpedoes, an exhilarating set of Thought Experiments [/entry/thought_experiment], without any regard to genuine hard science (or for that matter Hard SF [/entry/hard_sf]). His first novel, *The Black Cloud* (**1957**) postulates the arrival of a sentient cloud of gas from space which – in a manner reminiscent of the work of Edmond Hamilton [/entry/hamilton_edmond] – proceeds to block the Sun [/entry/sun]'s rays, throwing Earth into shadow and initiating disastrous Climate Change [/entry/climate_change] – unknowingly, since the cloud has no concept of planet-dwelling life. After First Contact [/entry/first_contact] and the establishing of Communication [/entry/communications], it just as inadvertently kills two scientists who attempt a full understanding of its nature via a kind of download process, since such intense exposure to the cloud's mentality overwhelmingly displaces their human Perception [/entry/perception] or conceptual grasp of reality (see Basilisks [/entry/basilisks]). In later novels, offers of Transcendence [/entry/transcendence] would affect Hoyle's Scientists [/entry/scientists] like catnip, giving them the chance both to escape "orthodox" science and to demonstrate an impatient contempt for civilian dealings: his books, though they typically read as mystical romps into the transcendental, are of absorbing interest for their aggressive presentation of the argument that science-educated people are more fit to govern than arts-educated people, partly because numeracy is a necessary qualification for rulers but also because civilians face life through a tangle of disenabling emotions. Hoyle's work, therefore, even when it seems mainly expressive of a holiday escapism, is consistently political (see Politics [/entry/politics]) in orientation (see comments on *The Inferno* below).

Ossian's Ride (**1959**), his second novel, is told initially in a manner reminiscent of John Buchan [/entry/buchan_john] or Geoffrey Household [/entry/household_geoffrey]: a protagonist, on the run in rough-and-tumble Ireland from a posse of incompetent agents, gradually uncovers an underlying sf plot – at which point the book changes course utterly. Stranded Aliens [/entry/aliens] have been planning to transform Earth into a rationalized, high-tech,

skyscraper-packed, motorway-dominated Utopia [/entry/utopias], by force if necessary: they offer to recruit the protagonist, who joins them gladly; the novel is one of the few unfettered tributes to relentless modernization to be found in sf literature after World War Two. With John Elliot [/entry/elliott_john], Hoyle next published *A for Andromeda: A Novel of Tomorrow* (**1962**) and *Andromeda Breakthrough: A Novel of Tomorrow's Universe* (**1964**), adapted from their television serials *A for Andromeda* [/entry/a_for_andromeda] and *The Andromeda Breakthrough* [/entry/andromeda_breakthrough_the]. With the exception of one further solo novel, *October the First is Too Late* (**1966**), an emotionally disjointing excursion through Timeslip [/entry/timeslip]-afflicted areas of Earth, and a collection of stories, *Element 79* (coll **1967**), Hoyle for some 20 years concentrated exclusively on collaborative work; *Comet Halley* (**1985**) noticeably lacked the drive of his collaborations. The obvious power of his personality is reflected in the fact that the novels written with Elliot, and the more important ones with his son Geoffrey Hoyle [/entry/hoyle_geoffrey], differ in no significant way from the early solo efforts.

In the first novel with Geoffrey, *Fifth Planet* (**1963**), an alien intelligence offers, as usual, a challenge – and an ultimate marriage of minds – to a scientist who must attempt to make sense of events on Achilles, a grassy, wandering planet. *Rockets in Ursa Major* (1962 as unpublished children's play by Hoyle; rev **1969**) and its sequel, *Into Deepest Space* (**1974**), are spasmodic Space Operas [/entry/space_opera] involving an Alien [/entry/alien]-guided trip through a Black Hole [/entry/black_holes]. The protagonist of *The Incandescent Ones* (**1977**), trapped on a Dystopian [/entry/dystopian] Earth, finds to his relief that he is an Android [/entry/androids], and thus entitled to disincorporate into the higher consciousnesses who inhabit Jupiter [/entry/jupiter]. *The Westminster Disaster* (**1978**) welcomes a terrorist-inspired nuclear destruction of London [/entry/london], with the buildings of Whitehall coming "down like so many rotten fruit", an image reminiscent of H G Wells [/entry/wells_h_g]'s *The Shape of Things to Come* (**1933**) at its most terrifying, but in this case written *after* World War Two [/entry/world_war_two]. Most interesting perhaps of these later novels is *The Inferno* (**1973**), in which an explosion at the galactic core wipes out all human life except for small groups, mainly in Scotland, which an extremely impatient scientist comes to rule: as wish-fulfilment, the tale is perhaps more self-revealing than many "civilian" authors would dare to pen; the power of the book, nevertheless, is very considerable. By this point, Hoyle and his son had become adept at a style whose apparent disjointedness concealed an intensity which scathed the mundane world. In his best work, Hoyle demonstrates not the power of scientific method but the personal allure of transcendental intoxication. His appeal is straightforward. In his hands, sf does not explain. It releases. [JC/PN]

See also:

Anti-Intellectualism in SF [/entry/anti-intellectualism_in_sf]; Conceptual Breakthrough [/entry/conceptual_breakthrough]; Cybernetics [/entry/cybernetics]; Disaster [/entry/disaster]; Intelligence [/entry/intelligence]; Invention [/entry/invention]; Living Worlds [/entry/living_worlds]; Mathematics [/entry/mathematics]; Parallel Worlds [/entry/parallel_worlds]; Physics [/entry/physics].

Sir Fred Hoyle

born Gilstead, Yorkshire: 24 June 1915

died Christchurch, Dorset: 20 August 2001

works

- Alphabetical
- Chronological

series

Andromeda

- A for Andromeda: A Novel of Tomorrow* [http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=A+for+Andromeda&field-author=Hoyle+Fred] (London: Souvenir Press, **1962**) with John Elliot [/entry/elliott_john] [tie to the television serial: **Andromeda**: hb/JN]
- The Andromeda Breakthrough: A Novel of Tomorrow's Universe* [http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Andromeda+Breakthrough&field-author=Hoyle+Fred] (London: Souvenir Press, **1964**) with John Elliot [/entry/elliott_john] [tie to the television serial: **Andromeda**: hb/uncredited]

Ursa Major

- Rockets in Ursa Major* [http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=Rockets+in+Ursa+Major&field-author=Hoyle+Fred] (London: William Heinemann, **1969**) with Geoffrey Hoyle [/entry/hoyle_geoffrey] [**Ursa Major**: hb/]

- *Into Deepest Space* [<http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=Into+Deepest+Space&field-author=Hoyle+Fred>] (New York: Harper and Row, **1974**) with Geoffrey Hoyle [/entry/hoyle_geoffrey] [**Ursa Major**: hb/Luba Litwak]

Professor Gamma

- *The Energy Pirate* [<http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Energy+Pirate&field-author=Hoyle+Fred>] (Loughborough, Leicestershire: Ladybird, **1982**) with Geoffrey Hoyle [/entry/hoyle_geoffrey] [chap: **Professor Gamma**: hb/nonpictorial]
- *The Frozen Planet of Azuron* [<http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Frozen+Planet+of+Azuron&field-author=Hoyle+Fred>] (Loughborough, Leicestershire: Ladybird, **1982**) with Geoffrey Hoyle [/entry/hoyle_geoffrey] [chap: **Professor Gamma**: hb/nonpictorial]
- *The Giants of Universal Park* [<http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Giants+of+Universal+Park&field-author=Hoyle+Fred>] (Loughborough, Leicestershire: Ladybird, **1982**) with Geoffrey Hoyle [/entry/hoyle_geoffrey] [chap: **Professor Gamma**: hb/nonpictorial]
- *The Planet of Death* [<http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Planet+of+Death&field-author=Hoyle+Fred>] (Loughborough, Leicestershire: Ladybird, **1982**) with Geoffrey Hoyle [/entry/hoyle_geoffrey] [chap: **Professor Gamma**: hb/nonpictorial]

individual titles

- *The Black Cloud* [<http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Black+Cloud&field-author=Hoyle+Fred>] (London: William Heinemann, **1957**) [hb/Desmond Skirrow]
- *Ossian's Ride* [<http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=Ossian+Ride&field-author=Hoyle+Fred>] (London: William Heinemann, **1959**) [hb/William Sanders]
- *Fifth Planet* [<http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=Fifth+Planet&field-author=Hoyle+Fred>] (London: William Heinemann, **1963**) with Geoffrey Hoyle [/entry/hoyle_geoffrey] [hb/Thomas Simmonds]
- *October the First is Too Late* [<http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=October+the+First+is+Too+Late&field-author=Hoyle+Fred>] (London: William Heinemann, **1966**) [hb/]
- *Element 79* [<http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=Element+79&field-author=Hoyle+Fred>] (New York: New American Library, **1967**) [coll: hb/Stanislaw Zagorski]
- *Seven Steps to the Sun* [<http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=Seven+Steps+to+the+Sun&field-author=Hoyle+Fred>] (London: William Heinemann, **1970**) with Geoffrey Hoyle [/entry/hoyle_geoffrey] [hb/Trevor Smith]
- *The Molecule Men and The Monster of Loch Ness: Two Short Novels* [<http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Molecule+Men+and+The+Monster+of+Loch+Ness&field-author=Hoyle+Fred>] (London: William Heinemann, **1971**) with Geoffrey Hoyle [/entry/hoyle_geoffrey] [coll: Loch Ness Monster [/entry/loch_ness_monster]: hb/]
 - *The Molecule Men* [<http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Molecule+Men&field-author=Hoyle+Fred>] (New York: Harper and Row, **1972**) with Geoffrey Hoyle [/entry/hoyle_geoffrey] [coll: vt of the above: hb/]
- *The Inferno* [<http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Inferno&field-author=Hoyle+Fred>] (London: William Heinemann, **1973**) with Geoffrey Hoyle [/entry/hoyle_geoffrey] [hb/]
- *The Incandescent Ones* [<http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Incandescent+Ones&field-author=Hoyle+Fred>] (New York: Harper and Row, **1977**) with Geoffrey Hoyle [/entry/hoyle_geoffrey] [hb/Muriel Nasser]
- *The Westminster Disaster* [<http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Westminster+Disaster&field-author=Hoyle+Fred>] (London: William Heinemann, **1978**) with Geoffrey Hoyle [/entry/hoyle_geoffrey] [hb/]
- *Comet Halley: A Novel in Two Parts* [<http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=Comet+Halley&field-author=Hoyle+Fred>] (London: Michael Joseph, **1985**) [hb/Richard Appleby]




nonfiction (selected)

- *The Nature of the Universe* [<http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Nature+of+the+Universe&field-author=Hoyle+Fred>] (Oxford, Oxfordshire: Basil Blackwell, **1950**) [nonfiction: hb/]
- *Frontiers of Astronomy* [<http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=Frontiers+of+Astronomy&field-author=Hoyle+Fred>] (London: William Heinemann, **1955**) [nonfiction: hb/]
- *Lifecloud: The Origin of Life in the Universe* [<http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=Lifecloud&field-author=Hoyle+Fred>] (London: J M Dent, **1979**) with Chandra Wickramasinghe [nonfiction: hb/]
- *Diseases from Space* [<http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=Diseases+from+Space&field-author=Hoyle+Fred>] (London: J M Dent, **1979**) with Chandra Wickramasinghe [nonfiction: hb/]
- *Evolution from Space* [<http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=Evolution+from+Space&field-author=Hoyle+Fred>] (London: J M Dent, **1981**) with Chandra Wickramasinghe [nonfiction: hb/]
- *The Small World of Fred Hoyle: An Autobiography* [<http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Small+World+of+Fred+Hoyle&field-author=Hoyle+Fred>] (London:

Michael Joseph, **1986**) [nonfiction: hb/]

- *Cosmic Life-Force: The Power of Life Across the Universe* [<http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=Cosmic+Life-Force&field-author=Hoyle+Fred>] (London: J M Dent, **1988**) with Chandra Wickramasinghe [nonfiction: hb/]
- *Life on Mars* [<http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=Life+on+Mars&field-author=Hoyle+Fred>] (Bristol, England: Clinical Press, **1998**) with Chandra Wickramasinghe [nonfiction: hb/]

links

- Fred Hoyle  [<http://www.fredhoyle.com/>]
- Internet Speculative Fiction Database  [<http://www.isfdb.org/cgi-bin/ea.cgi?1311>]
- Picture Gallery  [http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/gallery.php?link=hoyle_fred]

Previous versions of this entry

- 14/02/2007 [/archives/hoyle_fred/37827]
 - 21/12/2011 [/archives/hoyle_fred/47877]
 - 27/05/2012 [/archives/hoyle_fred/48250]
 - 02/06/2012 [/archives/hoyle_fred/53192]
 - 04/08/2012 [/archives/hoyle_fred/56901]
 - 20/08/2012 [/archives/hoyle_fred/76294]
 - 10/08/2013 [/archives/hoyle_fred/80130]
 - 05/09/2013 [/archives/hoyle_fred/80257]
 - 05/09/2013 [/archives/hoyle_fred/80258]
 - 11/09/2013 [/archives/hoyle_fred/81826]
 - 17/12/2013 [/archives/hoyle_fred/83272]
 - 06/02/2014 [/archives/hoyle_fred/86070]
 - 28/04/2014 [/archives/hoyle_fred/89569]
 - 02/07/2014 [/archives/hoyle_fred/100200]
 - 22/10/2014 [/archives/hoyle_fred/109743]
 - 29/03/2015 [/archives/hoyle_fred/111095]
 - 02/04/2015 [/archives/hoyle_fred/117577]
 - 24/06/2015 [/archives/hoyle_fred/125082]
 - 15/10/2015 [/archives/hoyle_fred/128894]
 - 11/02/2016 [/archives/hoyle_fred/131417]
 - 26/04/2016 [/archives/hoyle_fred/141686]
 - 19/01/2017 [/archives/hoyle_fred/150028]
 - 04/04/2017 [/archives/hoyle_fred/167990]
-