

Lyonesse In History, Its Geography

Geography in Historical Fiction

We will find fewer clues from geography for *Lyonesse* being Historical Fiction, even in the face that it is surrounded by real-world locales – Armorica, Aquitaine, Galicia, Ireland, Britain, plus set in the Atlantic Ocean – and even though its name, Hybras, is a real (extant) legend. That notwithstanding, I aver we shall find something rather attention-grabbing out of unexpectedness.

Once again, let's look at some features which help qualify *Lyonesse* as a Historical Fiction. And once again I'm glad to remark they are tendered to readers upon a silver platter! Book One, Page One (Preliminary):

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Gildas and Nennius both make references to Hybras, though Bede is silent. Geoffrey of Monmouth alludes both the Lyonesse and Avallon [...]. Chrétien of Troyes rhapsodizes upon Ys and its pleasures; and Ys is also the frequent locale of early Armorican folk-tales.

This extract succinctly frames an orientation for the entire saga that may guide readers in crediting any Realness, any as there may be to the tale, to be under Historical Fiction. Recapping: hitherto in contributing to the case for Historical Fiction there were five real historical persons, three of whom were of instrumental help (Gildas, Bede, Nennius), and two with impact only upon the Legend of King Arthur.

In the geographical case, there are three offered places in the quote to look upon: Armorica, Ys, and Hybras (i.e., Lyonesse and Avallon). We must recognize, then, there is a little less on offer, yet one has an exceptionally intriguing *possibility* that the scales might tip toward support of Historical Fiction from geography. Or it might not.

At the least, a fresh feasibility will be presented!

First and easiest, the quote ends by saying, “[...] *Ys is also the frequent locale of early Armorican folk-tales.*” The French Atlantic coast was known in real History as Armorica, and it is valid historically for Jack to say the legendary Ys occurred in “*early Armorican folk-tales*”, something quite historically correct. In creating his epic Jack preserved Armorica to the east in his Lyonessian geography, but transposed Ys fictionally onto his own Elder Isles, still facing west to the Atlantic as it did on Armorica.

Secondly is the case of Ys itself. This city of Ys derives strictly out of legend, and just as we jettisoned two historical persons from enquiry supporting Historical Fiction (because they underwrote only to the Legend of King Arthur), we can equally dispense with Ys.

In case you ever wondered, here is a quick synopsis of the true Legend of Ys, as collated from the sources of Oxford Reference: Ys, and Wikipedia: Ys, (each link h/w available): [h/w paraphrased]
<https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803125227732>
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ys>

Ys, also spelled **Is** or **Kêr-Is** in Breton, is a mythical city on the coast of Brittany [France] that was swallowed up by the ocean. In the original Breton, the city receives the name of *Kêr Ys*, which translates as "low city". Different versions of the legend share several basic common elements. King Gradlon ruled in Ys, a city built on land reclaimed from the sea, sometimes described as rich in commerce and the arts, with Gradlon's palace being made of marble, cedar and gold. In some versions Gradlon built the city upon the request of his offspring Dahut, his willful and wayward daughter, who loved the sea. To protect Ys from inundation, a dike was built with a gate that was opened for ships during low tide. The one key that opened the gate was held by the king. In the oldest version, Dahut secretly entertains her lover, and the two of them, excited by wine, steal Gradlon's key to open the dike, flooding the city.

I would remark that Jack stayed true to the outline of that legend: his Ys is an opulent, self-contained, urban polity (almost a city-kingdom) facing west onto the Atlantic that in time becomes drowned. As a charming fable it was available to be garnered by Jack for his epic. Why should he not? Note the interesting similarity between the female name 'Dahut' and Jack's fictional kingdom 'Dahaut'! That suggests more evidence that Jack, in doing his research (and always hunting for words), certainly did become familiar with the Legend of Ys. It's just a guess, yet perhaps an almost certain likelihood.

Thirdly and last, but packed with atomic-bomb surprise for us, there is the large Elder Isles group, Hybras, also known variously as 'Hy-Brasil', 'Hybrasil' and 'Brasil'.

Hybras is an old legend obviously pre-existing Vance's saga, but strangely it is a chimera in its attachment to Reality! With this particular element, the situation we will find gets interesting!

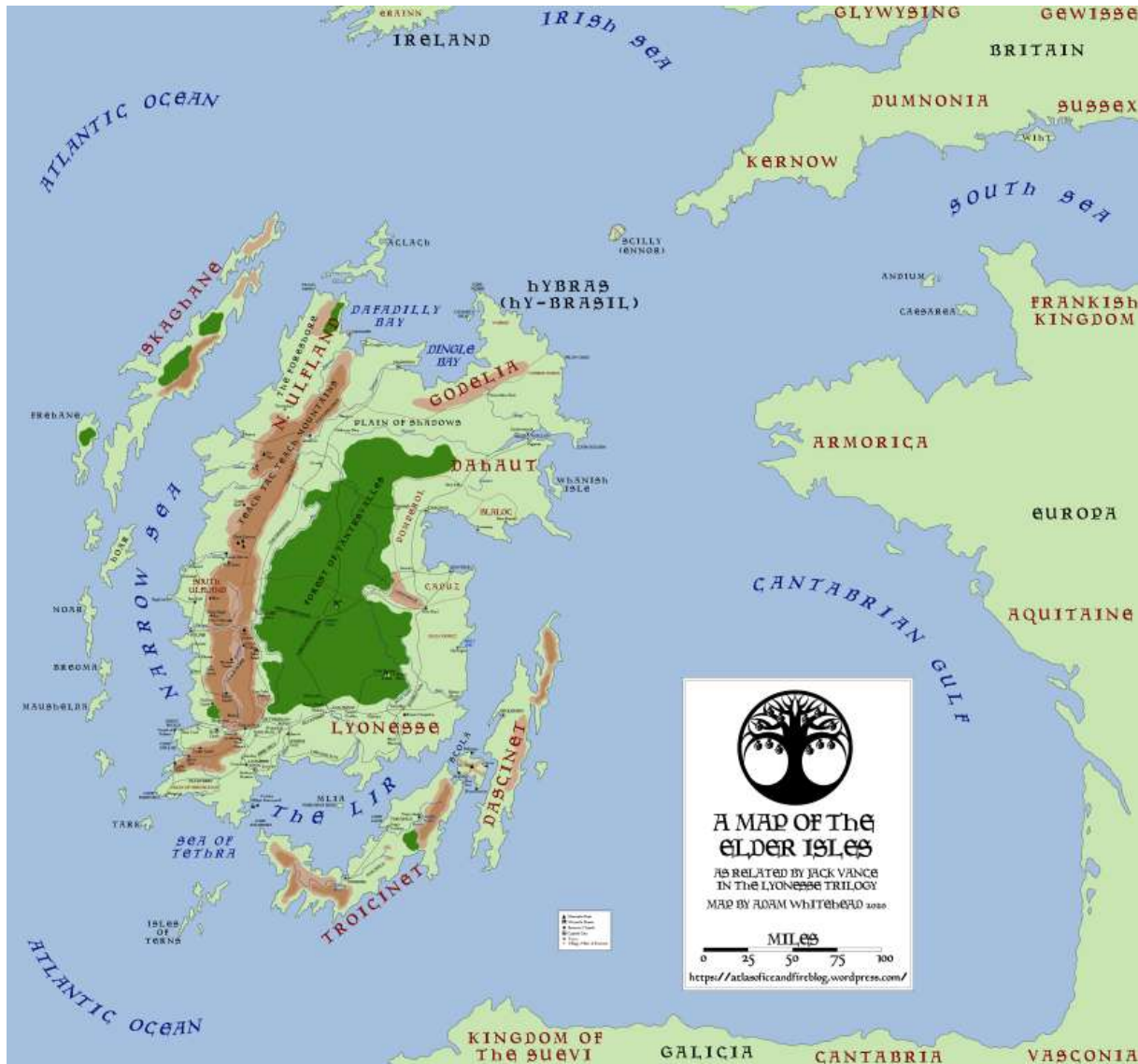
Context for it originates out of our own historical making of maps, a terribly solemn & sober endeavor from the real-world. This situation is tantamount to where King Arthur likewise came from pre-extant legend, built-up fictionally centuries ago by Geoffrey of Monmouth and Chrétien of Troyes and some others, but turned-out more profoundly grounded within Reality (i.e., not *of* Fiction) from a deeper British History. Hybras, in an analogous way, is based on the work of dedicated, serious map making. Wasn't there once something actually there to base the maps upon?

Let's note the name 'Hybras' is – like 'King Arthur' (and like 'Ys') – not an invention of Jack's nor his neologism (unlike, say, Blaloc). The words do obtain to 'realness' as words in culture but what lays behind those words is in the case of King Arthur a Historic Reality, in the case of Ys only legend, but in the case of Hybras something surprising . . . but WHEN only legendary, merely mist & smoke.

Speaking of which, the Legend of Hybras is a *"phantom island said to lie in the Atlantic Ocean west of Ireland. Irish myths described it as cloaked in mist except for one day every seven years, when it becomes visible but still cannot be reached"*, {Wikipedia: Brasil (mythical island)}.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brasil_\(mythical_island\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brasil_(mythical_island))

Critically, Vance has Hybras not west of Ireland, as it was in old legend and as it will turn-out to be in the forthcoming surprise disclosure, but south of Ireland and England, *"across the Cantabrian Gulf (now the Bay of Biscay) from Old Gaul"*, meaning France, particularly Armorica. It is the largest island group featured in our beloved saga; the main island contains Vance's kingdoms of North and South Ulfand, Dahaut, Caduz, Pomperol, Lyonesse, Godelia, and Blaloc.



Well now on to the surprise, for in a way it is redolent with regard to the historical Uther Pendragon and King Arthur, also pre-existing as legend fantasies.

Is a pre-existing legend anything to tally as Real History? I firmly opine NOT, but as it turns out there is a very astounding aspect of Reality to Hybras! The phantom island of Irish myth has actually been found!

“Hy-Brasil - An ancient sunken island has been rediscovered. The island was a real place, now underwater due to collapsing ocean floor at southwest area of Porcupine Bank. Currently 1000 feet below water in the southern area of Porcupine Bank.” Enjoy **“HY-BRASIL LOCATION FOUND! Hybrasil, Hy Brasil, Brazil Island”** {Youtube, 8:09, from Dec 29, 2016}

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wNh7InYjDAM>



If the lost Irish Hybras of legend was real, does that mean that Vance's Hybras was real? Of course not!

Discovered in 2015 is the very Hybras of old legend, west of Ireland, where map makers had always projected it to be; emphatically again, Jack's Hybras is south of Ireland.

So a 'new' way to look at this serendipitous situation is that there is an Irish legendary Hybras, and a novelistic Lyonessian Hybras, even though the later indubitably queued off and was inspired by the former.

However, there is more to this, which is the point of looking toward geography in support of Historical Fiction. Geology will come to the aid of geography.

What is NOT mere legend is something of an exact analogue to this sunken island of the old legend of Lost Hybras, one which derives from the greater extension of Europe from the last Ice Age (16,000 BC).

The model is that Vance's Hybras was a remnant of this vast land shelf, called on the map Doggerland. Given most of Doggerland became submerged by rising sea levels, Jack's Hybras hypothetically could have been a stubborn non-inundated area of Doggerland west of Brittany (Armorica) and south of Ireland although closer, and a bit northward relative to Cornwall, England. All in all it would be somewhat north of Hybras in the map shown first (above).

This Real Geologic History has been known widely in the Twentieth Century, and certainly during Jack's adulthood, although better technology has improved Doggerland's demarcations. As a science buff, including in the field of geology, Jack would most assuredly have been aware of it. And there is proof that he was coming from *Space Opera*, (VIE vol. 18, p. 147), written as far back as 1964: "Thirty thousand years ago a race of Earth-folk inhabited a pleasant land whose exact location was now

unknown -- some thought it to be Greenland, others the land now submerged below the Bay of Biscay."
The Bay of Biscay is precisely the vicinity of Vance's Hybras, and Doggerland as well.

What this signifies is that the Lyonesian Hybras can be considered as obtaining a tiny bit more Realness than something of dismissible whole-cloth imagination and the purest of fantasy!

It is a fragile notion, a weak contention, and a flimsy projection, but I would urge this thought: it still is a concept on MUCH firmer grounding (thanks to our knowledge of Doggerland) than any sunken continent in the Pacific and/or Indian Oceans, such as Lemuria or Mu, which are attached to pseudoarcheology and fringe-science. Doggerland is positively NOT pseudogeology. Lyonesian Hybras is from an epic otherwise well ensconced within Historical Fiction, albeit that Hybras is a Fiction as to itself.

It is best cautious to conclude that the Lyonesian Hybras does NOT aid with the History aspect of Historical Fiction, at least not in severe black & white terms.

But with fingers crossed (mine), what it does add, provocatively, is greyness!

It is greyness in that what happened to a former historic Lost Hybras of the map makers – which became deflated into legend because it had sunk, until it was rediscovered undersea and became recovered in status – could correspondingly become the history of a Lyonesian Hybras, one founded upon what had lingered as a stalwart chunk of Doggerland. Undersea remnants have only to be found.

I find it enjoyable to speculate about because no one knows what future undersea explorations will discover; it took until 2015 to rediscover the old map maker's Hybras west of Ireland.

Perhaps the innate *magica materia* of Hybras helped hold it afloat for 16.5 millennia more in time!

Geologically, 16.5 millennia is less than a snap of the fingers.

The Europe That Was

At the end of the last ice age, Britain formed the northwestern corner of an icy continent. Warming climate exposed a vast continental shelf for humans to inhabit. Further warming and rising seas gradually flooded low-lying lands. Some 8,200 years ago, a catastrophic release of water from a North American glacial lake and a tsunami from a submarine landslide off Norway inundated whatever remained of Doggerland.

