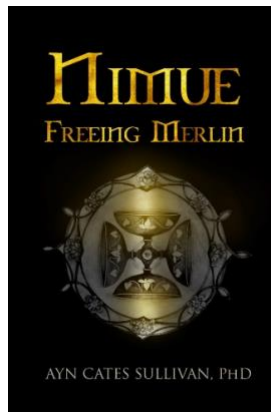


Nimue Press Release

New Novel *Nimue* Mixes Arthurian Myth with Timely Heroine's Journey



A fantastical first novel has just been released from best-selling author Ayn Cates Sullivan, MA, MFA, PhD. It is the latest addition to her award-winning Legends of the Grail series. The fantasy tale, Nimue: Freeing Merlin, continues to explore magical ancient mythology while presenting a contemporary story of self-discovery relevant to today's readers.

Charlottesville, VA | March 8, 2021. In her award-winning work *Legends of the Grail*, best-selling author Ayn Cates Sullivan, MA, MFA, PhD shared a charming collection of traditional stories of Celtic Goddesses, and in the subsequent celebrated *Heroines of Avalon & Other Tales*, she put together a fascinating set of Welsh and British legends of goddesses and other wise women. In both honored 2018 books, she reimagined accounts of these women of myth and transformed their representation from demonization to empowerment. Now, in her first novel *Nimue: Freeing Merlin*, Dr. Sullivan delivers a mix of contemporary story and a re-envisioned Arthurian mythological past to take the reader on a Heroine's Journey of self-discovery.

"The known stories of King Arthur are major Hero's Journeys, where the hero goes out and raids to find the powerful Holy Grail," notes Dr. Sullivan, who has a PhD in Anglo-Irish Literature with an emphasis on Celtic Mythology. "With *Nimue*, I wrote a Heroine's Journey, which is more internal. It's about becoming receptive and open to the gifts you want to have."

As the novel *Nimue* begins in 21st-century New York City, 17-year-old Nina and her mother, Diana, are finally finding their footing while recovering from the death of Nina's father, Felix. Diana wants to return to Great Britain to reconnect with her roots. Daughter and mother embark on the trip to London together, and Nina discovers over time that their roots are deeper and more mystical than they realized. Nina eventually is captured by Morgan, Goddess of the Sea and sister of King Arthur. Morgan's role is to literally push Nina into her journey to 5th century Ynys Witrin, so the young woman can discover who she really is. Guess who? The Avalonian Priestess of the Moon, Nimue—the title character.

Dr. Sullivan's background was pivotal in birthing both the storyline in *Nimue* and her earlier works that are part of the *Legends of the Grail* series. After receiving a Masters in poetry at Columbia University, she was awarded an overseas research grant from Kings College, London to study the work of Lady

Gregory for a PhD. This folklorist from the late 19th century, early 20th is considered largely responsible for the Irish Literary Revival. By learning Gaelic, Lady Gregory resurrected the traditional Irish tales, and then she gave them to William Butler Yeats, the poet and dramatist who made them famous. Dr. Sullivan spent more than 10 years researching the traditional stories herself, and completed her PhD in Anglo-Irish Literature at King's College, London in 1993.

Dr. Sullivan's research into Nimue and Morgan began in much the same academic way she'd used with other mythological characters—reading what had been written about them. Then she went to the places where they were thought to exist and meditated on their stories to see what came up. Sometimes local people or mystics would tell her versions of the tales that they knew.

"When I studied these characters' traditional stories, I had to pick through the multiple versions of the stories—there are disparities," Dr. Sullivan says. "I also had to consider the morality of the times. Remember, we went through 800 years of witch-burning in Europe. Nimue and Morgan would be considered witches, but they are actually quite powerful women."

The author was excited when she first found powerful women in ancient mythology. "I had never come across any female characters in my research that were anything other than pieces of furniture, basically," she observes. "In Celtic mythology, you can't have a hero without the woman who helps him tap into his power. And the women are as powerful as the men, if not more so." The author notes that Nimue is an interesting crossover between the Celtic myths and the Arthurian legends.

Dr. Sullivan says that the mythological stories she taps into have been told at least since the 5th century, and every generation in their countries of origin has told them because of the wisdom they contain. In America, these mythical female characters have been largely unknown. Then, in 2015, Nimue appeared as a character with dark powers in ABC's *Once Upon a Time*, and she is currently the protagonist in the Netflix series *Cursed*, a re-envisioned dark and violent take which places Nimue in jeopardy because of her mystical gifts.

"One of the things I like about my characterization of Nimue is that while the story is not dark, she is still complex," Ayn shares. "At one point in the novel she is divided into an evil Nimue and a good one. And then the story explores what she has to do to become whole again. I think there are many ways we are all divided."

Dr. Sullivan developed the novel by heavily reworking a combination of her own memoir and her original re-telling of the myth surrounding the ancient wizard Merlin and his beloved, the mage Nimue.

"The memoir was about my own trip to London and some of the magical things that happened there," Dr. Sullivan remembers. "However after I wrote it, I decided not to publish the book. I'd also written a long story about the complex relationship between Merlin and Nimue. She loves him, but is forced to imprison him in a cave when the world turns against his magic and all the traditional sacred ways. The Nimue story was too long for *Heroines of Avalon*, so it just sat for a long time." But when she blended the two works together, it worked beautifully.

She hopes her story will inspire readers to go on their own heroine's journey at this challenging time of COVID-19. "The journey's really about going inward through meditation and exploring your own archetypes. Which of your archetypes are the strongest? Is it the teacher? The lover? The fool? The empress/goddess? The magician? Where are your strengths?"

In Part IV of the novel *Nimue*, "Entering the Avalonian Temple," Dr. Sullivan provides practices and a visualization that can assist readers in additional explorations. These include ways to celebrate

Nimue and Merlin, natural symbols and colors related to the two characters, and a visualization to achieve the Faery Grail, the Holy Grail and the Galactic Grail and become your own grail heroine.

Nimue: Freeing Merlin was selected by BookBlubz as an International Women's Day Book.

Ayn Cates Sullivan, MA, MFA, PhD is an award-winning, best-selling author of 12 books, and she has won over 30 literary awards. Weaving ancient wisdom traditions together with personal experience, Dr. Sullivan focuses on mythology, folklore and envisioning a new humanity. She is the President of Infinite Light Publishing & Media. She is also host of Wisdom of the Ages on the SuperPower Network with over 277,000 monthly listeners.

Illustrations: *The Legends of the Grail* series, including *Nimue*, are ornamented by beautiful illustrations by artist Belle Crow duCray.

The Official Website for Author Ayn Cates Sullivan, MA, MFA, PhD

<http://ayncatessullivan.com/>

More Info on the YA Novel *Nimue: Free Merlin*

<http://ayncatessullivan.com/nimue-freeing-merlin/>

Other Books by Ayn Cates Sullivan, MA, MFA, PhD

<http://ayncatessullivan.com/my-books/>

Dr. Sullivan's Podcast, "Wisdom of the Ages: Weaving the Sacred Into Everyday"

<https://superpowerexperts.com/wisdom-of-the-ages/>