Julian, God, and the Art of Storytelling

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Akademisk avhandling

som med vederbörligt tillstånd av Rektor vid Umeå universitet för avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen framläggs till offentligt förvar i Hörsal G, Humanisthuset
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Avhandlingen kommer att försvaras på engelska

Fakultetsoppponent: professor Liz Herbert McAvoy, Department of English Literature and Creative Writing, Swansea University, Wales
Celebrated for her compassionate theology and subtle, subversive imagery, Julian of Norwich (c. 1343 – c. 1416), the earliest known woman writer in the English language, is also an accomplished storyteller. This study explores and compares the narrative strategies found in her two accounts of her visionary experience, *A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman* and *A Revelation of Love*. Reading these two non-fiction texts as narratives, this analysis brings Julian’s stories into dialogue with the narratives of her own time, Middle English literary theory, modern narratology, and the texts’ attention to their own telling. This reveals that Revelation includes, expands and transforms the plot, point of view, and characterization of Vision, while Revelation simultaneously implodes these narrative structures to hint at greater, divine structures. By creating a poetics of developing and enveloping in Revelation, Julian strategically depicts herself, God and the reader as characters in each other’s narratives and as participating in each other’s storytelling: she authorizes her own story by making it God’s and the reader’s as well.

**Keywords**
Middle English, Julian of Norwich, narratology, medieval literature, storytelling, feminist theology