

# Sacred Heart University

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From the Selected Works of Michelle Loris

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Michelle Loris

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*Catholic Studies faculty are, from left, Daniel Rober, Jennifer Reek and Brent Little.*

Three professors in Sacred Heart University's [Department of Catholic Studies](#) recently published books that explore aspects of Catholic intellectual tradition (CIT), a 2,000-year-old examination by theologians, philosophers, writers, artists and others seeking answers about God, humanity, society and nature. "The Catholic intellectual tradition is at the core of our mission statement and we have built our foundation around it here at Sacred Heart," said [Michelle Loris](#), associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and chair of the Department of Catholic Studies. She said the new books—written by Professors Brent Little, Jennifer Reek and Daniel Rober—are relevant to the interdisciplinary nature of Catholic studies.

[Brent Little](#), a lecturer at SHU, has co-edited *Revelation and Convergence: Flannery O'Connor and the Catholic Intellectual Tradition*. He produced the collection of essays with theologian Mark Bosco, formerly of Loyola University in Chicago, who now serves as Georgetown University's vice president for mission and ministry.

The essays originally were presented in abbreviated form at a 2011 conference dedicated to O'Connor, an American writer, at Loyola University. Little said the scholars included in this collection represent historical, literary and theological perspectives of O'Connor's life and work.

The collection explores O'Connor's wide-ranging engagement with the CIT. She was influenced, Little said, both by her Catholic contemporaries and those of the recent past (late 19th- and early 20th-century thinkers), as well as the classical Catholic tradition of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. Many CIT instructors assign O'Connor in their classes, he said, as her stories' creative engagement with Catholic themes such as faith, grace, sin and redemption represent the interdisciplinary nature of the CIT.

Little earned his master's of theological studies from Boston College and a Ph.D. in theology from Loyola University.

**Jennifer Reek**, who teaches seminars in Great Books in the Catholic Intellectual Tradition at SHU, has authored *A Poetics of Church: Readings and Writing Sacred Spaces of Poetic Dwelling*. She explained that it relates to CIT through its interdisciplinary nature, its method of research by "conversation," and its concern with the Church.

The book aims to create "alternatives to more institutional and conventional ways of thinking and of being 'Church,'" according to its publisher, Routledge. "Structured as a spiritual and literary journey, the work moves from models of the institutional Catholic Church into more radical and ambiguous textual spaces, which [Reek] creates by bringing together an unorthodox group of thinkers referred to as 'poet-companions': the 16th-century founder of the Society of Jesus, Ignatius of Loyola, the French thinkers Gaston Bachelard and Hélène Cixous, the French poet Yves Bonnefoy and the English playwright Dennis Potter."

Reek has a Ph.D. from the Centre for Literature, Theology and the Arts, University of Glasgow. Her work has appeared in journals such as *Literature and Theology* and *Contemporary Women's Writing*. She also was co-editor of the fourth volume of the Routledge Power of the Word series, *Thresholds of Wonder: Poetry, Philosophy and Theology in Conversation*.

**Daniel Rober's** book, *Recognizing the Gift: Toward a Renewed Theology of Nature and Grace*, began as his Ph.D. dissertation at Fordham University, inspired in part by studies with theologian Jean-Luc Marion at the University of Chicago. Rober said it seeks to address two gaps in contemporary theological discourse by revisiting and reassessing theological debates about nature and grace from the 1940s and 1950s in light of renewed attacks on them from certain conservative circles and developments in political and liberation theology that postdated these debates. The book also examines how recent philosophical works in the field of phenomenology (a branch of Continental philosophy that began in the early 20th century with the work of Edmund Husserl), particularly those of Marion, mesh very well with Catholic theology and make theological statements, he said.

Rober holds a Ph.D. from Fordham University in systematic theology, as well as a bachelor's degree from the University of Notre Dame and a master's in theology from the University of Chicago. His current research focuses on the intersection of Catholic theology and discourses surrounding the secular.

<http://www.sacredheart.edu/aboutshu/news/newsstories/2017/september/three-catholic-studies-professors-publish-new-books-on-the-catholic-intellectual-tradition.html>