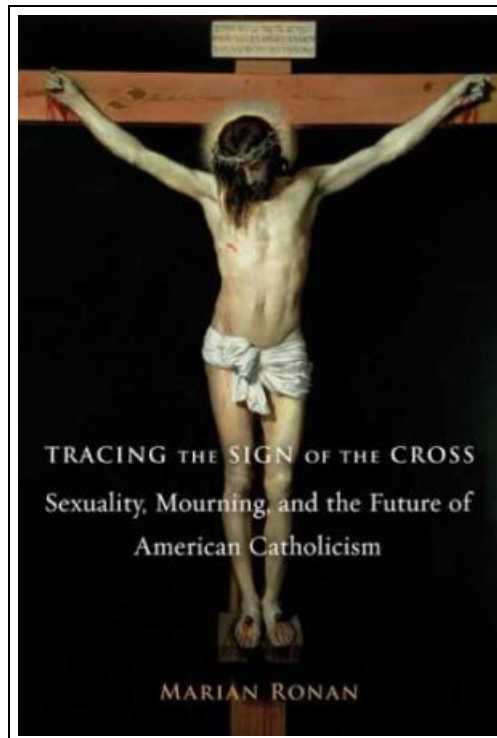


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Columbia University Press, United States, 2009. Hardback. Condition: New. Language: English . Brand New Book. Following World War II, millions of U.S. Catholics were poised to attain the American dream, while at Vatican Council II, the liberal vision of the church seemed finally to triumph. Yet by the end of the twentieth century, American Catholicism was in crisis, plagued by grave ideological divisions; a dwindling pool of priests, nuns, and monks; and declining financial resources. What went wrong? In *Tracing the Sign of the Cross*, Marian Ronan identifies the roots of this crisis in an inability on the part of American Catholics to mourn a variety of losses suffered in the last third of the twentieth century. Drawing on the work of four writers with distinctively Catholic imaginations, Ronan argues that endless battles over sexuality and gender in particular have kept American Catholics from confronting these losses, thus jeopardizing the future of Catholicism. The writings of James Carroll, the archetypal liberal American Catholic, form the basis of Ronan's exploration of the church in the decades following Vatican II. Carroll's writings, especially his memoir, *An American Requiem*, seem to embody the very engagement with loss Ronan calls for—yet a highly gendered pattern of resistance to mourning emerges throughout Carroll's writing. Ronan discerns a similar Catholic inability to mourn in the early works of the novelist Mary Gordon, the feminist philosopher of science Donna Haraway, and the essayist Richard Rodriguez. While Gordon's characters gradually engage their profound losses, Haraway's female cyborg dons a crown of thorns, and Rodriguez confronts his own gay/brown identity—contributing in all cases to a new and chastened vision of the church. Framed by the author's own personal experience, *Tracing the Sign of the Cross* is an intimate and persuasive account of Catholic...

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