and stimulating story-telling. He cogently details Franklin's struggles to determine what he believed and to live by Christian moral principles and the 13 virtues Franklin delineated in his autobiography. Kidd shows that Franklin was a religious pragmatist who most valued a religion's ability to motivate people to promote the public good and act selflessly. We are indebted to Kidd for carefully explaining Franklin's complex, enigmatic faith—and his long "internal tug-of-war between skepticism and traditional faith"—and how deeply it affected his life (176).

***Creative Conformity: The Feminist Politics of U.S. Catholic and Iranian Shi'i Women*. By Elizabeth M. Bucar. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2011. xxv+201 pp. $39.95 paper.**

doi:10.1017/S1755048318000135

Mary Elaine Hegland
Santa Clara University

Although in the genre of discourse analysis, *Creative Conformity* will appeal to those interested in gender, religious, or resistance politics. Bucar investigates the similarities in how U.S. Catholic women and Iranian Shi'i women work within their religious traditions to try to persuade and pressure religious authorities and their religious communities to improve conditions for women. Top leaders in both religions consider themselves to know the wishes of God better than other believers, and therefore to be better equipped to inform adherents what they should believe and how they should act—making it challenging for believers to acceptably exercise independent thought.

Women are considered to have played significant roles in both Catholic and Shi'i religions. Even today, women's appearance, qualities, and activities are seen as central to each tradition. Therefore, in order to fashion women into appropriate Catholics and Shi'i Muslims, many rules and expectations govern women. Women's bodies, reproductive activities, and lives are crucial identity markers in both religious traditions. Since in both religions males occupy or populate the hierarchy, male theologians govern female believers. How can women have a say in the discussion about what they are, how they must think and behave to be a good

Catholic or Shi'i Muslim? For women who wish to keep their good standing in their religious community, but also do not want to accept wholeheartedly the dictates of the male hierarchies over them, what can they do?

Living in the Islamic Republic of Iran, a country ruled by religious authorities, Iranian women face greater dilemmas. The law of the land is determined by Shi'i Muslim clerics. Women cannot too blatantly opt out of the religion or the rules imposed on them. American women have it easier; clerics are not running the country. Women have the political freedom to leave Catholicism if they want. In each country, some former believers are becoming less engaged with Shi'i Islam or Catholicism. Much is due to the respective religious hierarchies' pronouncements about women, as well as the authoritarian, hierarchical structures making it difficult for people to raise their own ideas and objections. In Iran, many are becoming secular or interested in Sufism, Zoroastrianism, or Christianity. Many people no longer take clerics and their pronouncements seriously. In the United States, some Catholics are dropping out, and those who remain often do not adhere to Catholic religious law, such as on birth control, pre-marital sex, and homosexuality.

In both countries, some women want to change religious dogma and clerical views in order to have more equal opportunities and live their chosen lives within their religious tradition. Bucar focuses on specific texts from religious authorities and the discourse strategies women apply to modify Catholic and Shi'i dogma regarding women.

In the United States, many Catholics are engaged in efforts to emphasize the "Catholic" identity of institutions, adherents, and even, it seems, states and the nation as a whole—by which they apparently mean preventing abortion, birth control, and gay marriage. Court cases have been filed. In Iran, more people are disillusioned with the "Islamic Republic" government and even with Shi'i Islam in general. People pressure is burgeoning; perhaps now the ayatollahs ruling the country will become more amenable to alternative interpretations of Shi'i Islam that lessen restrictions on women and provide them with more rights.

Breaking into the fray in both countries are some innovative, talented, and tenacious women struggling against patriarchy in many arenas with a variety of stances and methods. The women featured in this book, however, are working from within their religions. They are not revolutionary radicals seeking to overthrow the male religious hierarchy or wipe out religious dogma regarding women. Their ways are more subtle. A certain level of acquiescence and conformity is necessary, they know, to accomplish what they want. They work by means of some intricate discourse

strategies, revealed through the discourse analysis performed by Elizabeth Bucar. Reading about the women and their subtle resistance, one is inspired and encouraged.

I appreciate the author's description of her personal interaction with individuals and groups in both countries. The author's anecdote about her first meeting with an activist Iranian woman, Shahla Habibi, pulls the reader into the story. When Bucar used the term "feminist" to refer to Habibi, the activist reacted strongly and treated Bucar to negative comments about western feminism and feminists. Bucar's discussion about her own resulting introspection informs about cultural differences and the difficulties of cross-cultural research. Her description of the actors and her experiences does much to engage the reader and present a holistic picture of the two arenas. One learns much about the actors who are promoting, negotiating, and resisting religious beliefs and practices and gains a better understanding of dynamics of religious politics and processes of religious change. Buscar's deconstruction of women's discourse resistance methods is astute.

Religions are not static. Sometimes beliefs and practices that adherents understand as primal are modifications or innovations. Religions are susceptible to environmental conditions and pressures for change. However, sometimes individual interference is needed to push authorities to accept change. In *Creative Conformity*, we meet some individuals who are changing religious history—and along with it, social history.

If she can spend a little effort learning the specialized discourse vocabulary and untangling a few too long and complicated sentences, any interested reader will find these women and their negotiations and reinterpretations of dogma to be fascinating. I recommend this book highly, even to the general reader interested in how women work within their religious traditions to reform them—and thereby have effects on gender dynamics and political process and hierarchies in their societies. Even as a secular outsider, I reveled in their clever mental acrobatics and gifted social interaction and admired the intrepid women who dispute with their sexist clerics and dogma without alienating them or their religious communities. Although most of the women in this book would not consider themselves to be feminist, I agree with Bucar that they are. They work within their religious traditions to improve perceptions of and opportunities for women as Catholics and Shi'i Muslims.