students-prisoners. It was their hope to overthrow the Sadat regime. But authoritarian governments in all three countries cracked down on activism, employing “female respectability” as a strategy. The US intervention in the region exacerbated the situation by supporting authoritarianism, to sustain stability and the status quo. Pratt tells how women activists in Lebanon had to turn to humanitarian concerns after the conditions of Palestinian refugees worsened, with the 1982 “barbarous” and “ugly” invasion by the Israel (p. 107) and the departure of the Palestinian Liberation Movement (PLO) for Tunis. Of note here are the massacres of Sabra and Shatila by the Christian Maronites, with Israeli soldiers’ support. Trying to rebuild the camps after the Israeli invasion, women humanitarian activists were further obstructed by the “terrible” campaign of terror inflicted by the same Lebanese faction (p. 107).

Three main causes led to the downturn in the region, from the late 1980s: globalization, US hegemony, and NGOs. Pratt adds that 1990s militarization and securitization has negatively impacted women’s and leftist political movements, especially as women’s activism was marginalized and “female respectability” reinscribed. Her nuanced discussion of women’s activism within the complex contemporary geopolitical context of the local and global is evidence of the contradictory, harder path women activists are trying to (re)negotiate.

*Embodying Geopolitics* by Nicola Pratt is groundbreaking research. Scholars and graduate students will find the author’s extensive scholarship informative and up to date, in the fields of critical geopolitics, postcolonial studies, and feminist scholarship in geopolitics and international relations.

**Alexa Firat and R. Shareah Taleghani, Editors, *Generations of Dissent: Intellectual, Cultural Production, and the State in the Middle East and North Africa.***

*Generations of Dissent* is an informative study of dissent in its broadest sense. With no specific translation for the Arabic *muʿarada*, its usage involves multiple, interconnected meanings of resistance, opposition, and protest, all in one (p. 6). Born out of the particular sociopolitical and cultural milieu of the specific country, dissent is not necessarily democratic nor does it advocate for democracy. Taking their cue from Robert Ivie’s idea, the writers define dissent as an “act of protest, discourse of confrontation, and condition of alienation that is contrasted with consensus or even perceived as a goad to new consensus” (p. 7). Crossing geographical and generic boundaries and covering diverse cultural productions across the
Levant and North Africa over the last seven decades, the collection of essays maps the complex, multiple ways in which dissenting discourses against state hegemony were brewing, growing, and gathering force before the 2010–11 Uprisings. Michel Foucault insists: “power is not just repressive, but generative” (p. 3), hence the use of the term “generational” in the title. The essays also override the simplistic binary since the state in many cases has coopted cultural productions as a means of control and legitimation. This review will highlight the essay regarding the Egyptian intellectual scene.

With a total of ten essays, the book is in three parts. The essays in Part I, “Dismantling and Negotiating State Discourses,” explore negative state discourses from Algeria, Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon. “Exile and Dissident Identities” in Part II examines the themes of exile, identity formation, dislocation, and the return by cultural workers from Jordan, Jewish Morocco, Turkey, and Jewish-Iran and -Iraq. Part III, “Subversive Aesthetics,” focuses on creative aesthetics of dissent in the fiction of magic realism from Egypt and journalistic writing by Kurdish women in Turkey, concluding with the discussion of dissenting filmmaking from Syria. With this range of countries and the selected fiction, film, music, and journalistic writing from majority and minority groups, the study offers eclectic analyses that are insightful, diverse, and dynamic. It is refreshing to read about works by overlooked groups, such as the Kurdish women in Turkey, Iraqi and Iranian Jews, or past Jewish-Muslim encounters in Morocco. Whereas Kurdish women engage journalistic writing for self-expression to voice gender dissent against state-sponsored media discourse, the Iranian and Iraqi Jews employ memoirs and novels from their exilic spaces, in new adopted languages, to explore their relationships from within the Iran-Iraq war.

Eman Morsi’s “The Gatekeepers” is illuminating for tracing the rise of Egyptian intellectuals as the protectors of the revolution and the nation, in the post-1952 revolution. Her focus is the 1953 exchange in the popular magazine *Ruz al-Yusuf*, between Jamal Abdel Nasser and Fatima al-Yusuf. The debate engaged crucial subjects in al-Yusuf’s open letter for the building of the nation-state: the notions of freedom, national sovereignty, good citizenship, modernity, progress, and economic planning (pp. 38-45). This early initiation of many debates to follow among the intellectual elite between 1952 and 1953 set the strategic trend for the relationship between the state and the Egyptian intellectual class. It was then that the role of intellectuals as “Gatekeepers” was born, through Abdel-Nasser’s ability to direct the debates toward the goals of decolonization, self-determination, collective unity, progress, and modernization. From then on, Egyptian writers and intellectuals swore “allegiance to the institutionalized revolution” (p. 44) so to speak, and the legitimization of the nation-state. Thus, when the regime turned authoritarian, repressive, and exclusive, dissenters were imprisoned, Muslim Brothers were
forced to go underground, and communists were tortured. The writer concludes: “The regime’s vague rhetoric, along with the lack of an inbuilt accountability system, meant that the military could rule forever with impunity” (p. 46). What is remarkable is that the cooptation of the intellectuals that had begun (and was manipulated) by Abdel Nasser has been carried over into the 21st century. Morsi’s analysis explains the reasons behind the July 22, 2013 endorsement by the Egyptian Writers’ Union of the commander in chief of the armed forces, Abdel Fatah al-Sisi. He has been perceived since then as the protector of the national security of Egypt, even though military rule holds absolute power in the country.

Generations of Dissent is an eye-opener about the intellectual dissenting scene that prepared for the Uprisings, launched in 2010–11 onward. Scholars and students of Middle East Studies, minority and comparative studies, and social science and cultural studies would find this study enlightening.

Notes
