

Badiuzzaman Said Nursi's Theology of Resistance: A Postcolonial Reading of *Risale-i Nur*

Dhita Ayomi Purwaningtyas

Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia

dhitaayomi@unp.ac.id

Imam Khomaeni Hayatullah

University of Vienna, Austria

Hayatullahi96@univie.ac.at

Nindhya Ayomi Delahara

Universitas Darussalam Gontor, Indonesia

nindhyaayomi@unida.gontor.ac.id

Abstract

*This article explores Badiuzzaman Said Nursi's *Risale-i Nur* as a theological and cultural response to the secularizing project of early Republican Turkey. In a broader postcolonial context, the study examines how Nursi resisted the epistemological and spiritual consequences of Western modernity. The objective is to position *Risale-i Nur* as a form of decolonial Islamic thought that offers an alternative vision of modernity rooted in Qur'anic metaphysics and ethical spirituality. Using discourse analysis and postcolonial theory—especially Edward Said's *Orientalism* and Mignolo's epistemic disobedience—this qualitative study interprets Nursi's texts as acts of spiritual resistance. It finds that Nursi's resistance was not political rebellion but an ethical-spiritual struggle that reclaims Islamic knowledge, identity, and reason. Through informal networks (*dershanes*), educational reform, and ontological reorientation, *Risale-i Nur* functioned as a counter-hegemonic discourse. The article concludes that Nursi's work represents a constructive Islamic modernity—one that challenges secular paradigms while offering an integrated framework for faith, science, and culture.*

Keywords: *Said Nursi, *Risale-i Nur*, Postcolonial Resistance, Islamic Thought, Epistemic Decolonisation.*

Abstrak

Artikel ini menganalisis karya Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, Risalah Nur, sebagai respons teologis dan kultural terhadap proyek sekularisasi masa awal Republik Turki Modern. Dalam konteks pascakolonial, tulisan ini mengkaji bentuk resistensi Nursi terhadap modernitas Barat. Tujuan utama studi ini adalah memposisikan Risalah Nur sebagai pemikiran Islam dekolonial yang menawarkan visi alternatif modernitas berbasis Al-Qur'an, metafisik, dan etika spiritual. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah studi kualitatif dengan teori pascakolonial Edward Said dan konsep "epistemic disobedience" dari Walter Dignolo. Hasil analisis menyimpulkan bahwa Risalah Nur merupakan bentuk resistensi non-kekerasan yang diwujudkan melalui perjuangan etis-spiritual untuk merebut kembali pengetahuan dan identitas Islam. Melalui jaringan informal (dershane), reformasi pendidikan, dan reorientasi ontologis, Risalah Nur membangun wacana tandingan terhadap hegemoni Barat. Artikel ini menyimpulkan bahwa karya Nursi merepresentasikan bentuk modernitas Islam yang konstruktif dengan menawarkan dan integratif antara iman, ilmu, dan budaya.

Kata Kunci: *Said Nursi, Risalah Nur, Resistensi Pascakolonial, Pemikiran Islam, Dekolonisasi Epistemologi.*

Introduction

The early decades of the Turkish Republic witnessed an ambitious project of secular nation-building aimed at transforming the epistemic and cultural foundations of the former Ottoman polity. reforms such as the abolition of the caliphate, the ban on religious education, the shift to the Latin alphabet, and the suppression of Islamic expression in public life were not just political moves—they marked a deep overhaul of how knowledge and authority were understood and legitimised.¹ “Bediüzzaman” Said Nursi (1877–1960) emerged as a key intellectual voice amid this dramatic transformation. His magnum opus, *Risale-i Nur*, can be seen as a powerful intervention—an effort to challenge the underlying colonial logic of the secular modernisation project and to reclaim Islamic ways of knowing from the margins to which they had been pushed. Rather than opposing secularism through overt

¹ Serif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

political confrontation, Nursi articulated a spiritually grounded and intellectually rigorous counter-narrative that sought to restore the autonomy of Islamic knowledge traditions. By harmonising science, reason, and revelation, Nursi crafts a vision of Islamic modernity that destabilises the presumed universality of Western Enlightenment rationality.²

Recent scholarship on *Risale-i Nur* has increasingly recognized Said Nursi's contributions to Islamic intellectual revival, Islamic education, and ethical reform in the context of early Republican Turkey. These works have primarily focused on the spiritual³, educational⁴, and sociological dimensions of Nursi's thought⁵, often interpreting his project as a synthesis of contemporary issues⁶. While valuable, such readings tend to emphasize Nursi's piety and pedagogical strategy without fully engaging the broader epistemological implications of his resistance. This article builds on and moves beyond these perspectives by reinterpreting *Risale-i Nur* as a conscious act of epistemic disobedience, in the sense articulated by Mignolo and situating Nursi's work within the framework of decolonial theory. Unlike existing studies that frame Nursi within Islamic revivalism or quietist resistance, this article foregrounds his theological metaphysics as a site of epistemic reconstruction

² Şükran Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2005).

³ Nur Hadi Ihsan, Ridani Faulika Permana, and Abdullah Muslich Rizal Maulana, "Bediuzzaman Said Nursi and the Nature of Human Creation in His Major Works: Considering a New Breakthrough in Islamic Philosophy," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 12, no. 1 (2022): 114–37, <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.121.06>.

⁴ Abu Darda et al., "An Idea of Said Nursi's Islamic Educational Reform in the Risale-i Nur," *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education* 7, no. 2 (August 5, 2023): 454, <https://doi.org/10.35723/ajie.v7i2.317>.

⁵ Akhmad Rizqon Khamami, "The Nurcu Movement and Tafsir Risale-i Nur: Formation of Muslim Identity in the Midst of Modernization," *Mashdar: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 5, no. 1 (2023): 79–92, <https://doi.org/10.15548/mashdar.v5i1.6195>.

⁶ Moh. Isom Mudin et al., "Tasawwuf and Sustainability Crisis : A Multidisciplinary Approach to Waste Management in Indonesia Inspired by the Concept of Khilafah in the Risale-i Nur," *Tasfiyah: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 8, no. 2 (n.d.): 355–82.

and positions *Risale-i Nur* as a paradigmatic postcolonial Islamic text that destabilizes Eurocentric knowledge hierarchies through a distinctly Qur’anic rationality.

This article contends that the *Risale-i Nur* should be read through the lens of postcolonial theory, not just as a theological text, but as a deliberate act of decolonial resistance. In the context of the Turkish Republic’s aggressive turn toward Eurocentric secularism, which often dismissed Islamic traditions as backwards or irrelevant, Nursi’s work stands out as a bold intellectual response. Drawing on Edward Said’s critique of Orientalism, this article reads Nursi’s writings as a form of counter-discourse that challenges the deeply rooted colonial narrative that casts Islam as irrational, unchanging, and incompatible with modern life. Rather than simply reacting to political change, Nursi reclaims space for Islamic thought within modernity, undermining the binary oppositions between tradition and progress that Orientalism relies on.

In this regard, *Risale-i Nur* engages in what Said terms “contrapuntal reading”, disrupting dominant narratives of modernity by foregrounding subjugated forms of knowledge.⁷ Nursi’s theological modernism resists the internalisation of Western epistemological hierarchies and instead asserts the validity of Islamic metaphysics and scriptural reasoning as legitimate modes of engaging with science, ethics, and society.⁸ This mode of engagement resists the material and ideological consequences of Orientalism and reflects a broader struggle for cultural and epistemic sovereignty in post-imperial Muslim societies.

By situating Nursi’s work within the framework of postcolonial critique, this study emphasises the colonality of

⁷ Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983).

⁸ Nabila Huringiin, Achmad Reza Hutama Al Faruqi, and Achmad Wildan Sayyidul Bachr, “Harmonizing Society: Bediuzzaman Said Nursi’s Vision of Islamic Politics,” *Muharrrik: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Sosial* 6, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.37680/muharrrik.v6i1.3528>.

secular epistemologies and the subaltern position assigned to non-Western traditions of thought. Rather than emphasising resistance in the Foucauldian or Scottian sense, the article foregrounds the epistemological stakes of Nursi's intervention: his effort to reinstate Islamic categories of knowledge, language, and subjecthood as legitimate foundations for individual and collective life. In this light, *Risale-i Nur* does more than challenge the marginalisation of Islam within the secular framework of the modern Turkish Republic—it also pushes back against a global hierarchy of knowledge that has long privileged Euro-American ways of thinking.

This research uses a qualitative and interpretive approach, combining discourse analysis with postcolonial theory. Postcolonial theory provides a critical framework for understanding how Nursi's thought disrupts the hegemonic binaries between religion and reason, tradition and modernity, East and West. Edward Said's concept of Orientalism illuminates how secular Turkish nationalism, modelled after Western ideals, contributed to the marginalization of Islamic identity. Within this context, Nursi's insistence on the centrality of *tawhid* (divine unity) serves as a discursive strategy to resist epistemological colonization. *Risale-i Nur* is treated not just as a religious commentary but as a cultural text that expresses resistance and offers alternative ways of thinking. Through a close reading of Nursi's language, metaphysical ideas, and rhetorical strategies, the article aims to show how religious thought can offer more than spiritual guidance; it can also act as a powerful tool for cultural affirmation and open up space for alternative ways of knowing in a world still shaped by the aftershocks of colonialism.

The Socio-Political Context of Said Nursi

a. Repression of Islam in the Early Republic of Turkey

The emergence of the Turkish Republic in 1923, led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, reshaped Turkey into a secular nation by adopting the Western model. "He removed Islam from the

public sphere and relegated it to private life by closing madrasahs, restricting Sufi orders, and replacing the Arabic script with Latin.”. These moves disrupted people’s connection with religious traditions, sacred texts, and historical memory. Atatürk systematically forced detachment from their spiritual and cultural roots.

While the extreme reformation was often justified as a step toward modernisation, scholars noted that this form was an internal colonisation. Where the state reshapes its people through language and logic superiority.⁹ “This modernization drive has often been interpreted in Orientalist terms, portraying Ottoman-Islamic culture as outdated and lagging behind Western notions of progress.”. As Edward Said stated, in the Orientalist’s assumption, the Islamic world is portrayed as stagnant and in need of Western intervention to move into the future.¹⁰ In this context, expressions of religiosity were viewed as outdated but as a threat to the state’s vision of a modern, secular future.¹¹

Yet, for many Muslim scholars, especially Badiuzzaman Said Nursi, who lived in this reformation era, this secular project felt like more than just a political shift—it felt like an assault on their spiritual and intellectual foundations. The secular state was not simply cracking down on Islamic institutions; it was attempting to reshape how truth and knowledge were defined. By pushing religion out of the public sphere, the new regime undermined the very principles that had guided Islamic life for centuries, creating a vacuum that left Islamic ethics and metaphysics on the sidelines. Nursi saw this not only as a political move but as a crisis of meaning that threatened the very soul of Turkish society.¹²

⁹ M. Hakan Yavuz, *Nostalgia for the Empire: The Politics of Neo-Ottomanism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

¹⁰ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).

¹¹ M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *Atatürk—An Intellectual Biography* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2017).

¹² Şükran Vahide, “Toward an Intellectual Biography of Said Nursi,” in *Islam at the Crossroads: On the Life and Thought of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi* (University of New York Press, 2003), 1–20.

This period of Turkish history is about the dominance of a particular epistemology that privileged Western secularism.¹³ In this sense, Atatürk reformed political power and the global hierarchy of knowledge, where Western rationality dominated and marginalised other perspectives, especially Islam.

Nursi's response to this condition was not rooted in political rebellion or partisan alignment but in a vision of spiritual renewal. He believed the Islamic tradition could offer a viable framework for addressing modern concerns if freed from authoritarian state control and rigid traditionalism. His *Risale-i Nur* corpus was designed to reconstruct an Islamic epistemology rooted in Qur'anic interpretation, rational reflection, and moral self-discipline. This was, in effect, a cultural and theological act of resistance against the homogenising force of state-imposed secularism.¹⁴

b. Exile, Imprisonment, and Censorship of Nursi's Thought

Due to his growing influence and refusal to conform to the dominant secular paradigm, Said Nursi became a subject of intense surveillance and persecution. From the 1920s to the 1950s, he was repeatedly exiled to remote villages such as Barla, Isparta, and Emirdağ. These periods of enforced isolation were part of a broader strategy by the Kemalist regime to suppress dissenting religious voices without generating public sympathy through outright executions or mass imprisonments.¹⁵ Despite limited access to printing presses and strict visitor restrictions, Nursi remained prolific in his writings.

Despite the state's efforts to silence him, Nursi developed a decentralised system of manuscript reproduction. His followers, often at significant personal risk, hand-copied and distributed the

¹³ Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi*.

¹⁴ Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi*.

¹⁵ Vahide, "Toward an Intellectual Biography of Said Nursi."

Risale-i Nur across Anatolia. This grassroots network of *dershanes* (informal study circles) became the heart of a counter-public sphere in which Islamic knowledge could be cultivated outside the purview of the state.¹⁶ These spaces became crucial for the renewal of Islamic thought, functioning as subtle yet powerful forms of intellectual and cultural resistance.”

Beyond his exile, Nursi faced numerous trials and imprisonments, notably in 1935 in Eskişehir, 1943 in Denizli, and 1948 in Afyon. Although he was often charged with inciting rebellion or organizing secret religious groups, no concrete evidence was presented to secure a definitive conviction. These legal proceedings illustrate how the secular legal system was instrumentalised to criminalise non-violent forms of spiritual expression. Nursi’s consistent acquittals suggest the weakness of the charges and the resilience of his non-political framing.¹⁷

The experience of incarceration profoundly shaped Nursi’s writings. Several of his letters from prison emphasize patience (*sabr*), trust in divine justice (*tawakkul*), and the spiritual value of suffering.”

Rather than responding with anger or retaliation, Nursi interpreted his ordeals as trials that affirmed the truth of his mission. This orientation reflects what James Scott termed the “weapons of the weak”—forms of everyday resistance that operate below the radar of official power.¹⁸ Nursi’s prison writings thus became a powerful source of inspiration for his followers, reinforcing a theology of resistance rooted in nonviolence and inner transformation.

¹⁶ Dhita Ayomi; Purwaningtyas, Yulia; Rimapradesi, and Achmad Reza Hutama Al Faruqi, “The Genealogy of Turkish Transnational Movement in Indonesia,” *Journal of Middle East and Islamic Studies* 11, no. 1 (June 25, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.7454/meis.v11i1.171>.

¹⁷ Ian S. Markham and Suendam Birinci Pirim, *An Introduction to Said Nursi: Life, Thought, and Writings* (Surrey: Ashgate, 1988).

¹⁸ James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

Postcolonial Discourse of Resistance in *Risale-i Nur*

a. Epistemological and Ontological Resistance

Risale-i Nur stands as a powerful critique of Western knowledge systems and their embedded colonial logic. Confronting the secular-nationalist ideology institutionalised by the early Turkish Republic—an ideology deeply influenced by Enlightenment rationalism and positivist scientism—Nursi rejected the assumption that truth and progress are the exclusive domain of Eurocentric modernity.¹⁹ Instead, he constructed a distinctly Islamic epistemology rooted in *tawhid* (divine unity), revelation, and spiritual reasoning.²⁰

Western modernity, particularly in its colonial form, established hierarchies that privileged secular reason over religious knowledge and empirical science over metaphysical inquiry. Gurinder Bhambra argues that excluding non-Western epistemologies formed the core of modernity's self-definition.²¹ In contrast, Said Nursi's *Risale-i Nur* embodies what Walter Mignolo terms “epistemic disobedience”—a deliberate rejection of colonial criteria for validating knowledge. Yet, unlike many secular postcolonial critiques that seek to dismantle Eurocentric paradigms through materialist or historicist lenses, Nursi's intervention is rooted in a revitalized theological epistemology. He does not merely challenge the dominance of secular reason; he reclaims revelation as an enduring and dynamic epistemic authority. “True science and true philosophy,” he asserts, “are the heralds and servants of the truths of faith; they are not enemies.” In doing so, Nursi articulates a vision wherein religious knowledge is not only rehabilitated but

¹⁹ Achmad Reza Utama Al Faruqi, *Pemikiran Badiuzzaman Said Nursi Tentang Kontribusi Sains Terhadap Peradaban Islam* (Tulungagung: UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung, 2025).

²⁰ Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi', *The Blackwell Companion to Contemporary Islamic Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006).

²¹ Gurinder K. Bhambra, *Rethinking Modernity: Postcolonialism and the Sociological Imagination* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

elevated as epistemologically central, offering a divergence from secular critiques by re-theologizing the very grounds of knowledge production.

While the application of Edward Said's Orientalism offers a foundational critique of how the West constructs the East as passive and irrational, Said Nursi's project demands a more layered reading that aligns with and transcends Said's emphasis on representation. As Homi Bhabha argues, resistance often occurs in ambivalent spaces where subaltern actors engage in what he terms "sly civility"—inhabiting dominant discourses while subtly undermining them from within.²² Nursi's writings embody this ambivalence; they are deeply embedded in the language of rationality, science, and reform, yet they repurpose these terms through an Islamic cosmology that displaces secular modernity's claim to universality.

Moreover, Walter Mignolo's "epistemic disobedience" concept is particularly instructive here. Nursi does not merely oppose Western knowledge systems; he refuses to recognise their exclusive epistemic authority by foregrounding Qur'anic reasoning as both spiritually rich and intellectually rigorous. However, unlike many strands of postcolonial theory that centre on liberation through political rupture or identity politics, Nursi locates transformation in epistemological realignment and moral regeneration. This position challenges post-Enlightenment assumptions about where resistance resides and how it should be enacted.

Nursi's ontological resistance begins with a simple yet radical claim: all existence is an *āyah*, a sign pointing to the Divine. In contrast to the mechanistic ontology of modern science, which treats nature as autonomous and value-neutral, Nursi interprets the cosmos as *kitab al-kawn*—a divine text that discloses metaphysical meaning. "Causes are nothing but the apparent means; real effect

²² Homi K. Bhabha, *Nation and Narration* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

comes from the Divine command”.²³ This assertion reframes causality, rejecting Enlightenment materialism and restoring agency to the Divine.

Through this ontological vision, Nursi lays the foundation for an alternative epistemology in which knowledge is sacred, purposeful, and ethically grounded. Rather than compartmentalising science and religion, he advocates for their integration: religious sciences illuminate the conscience, while modern sciences enlighten the intellect.²⁴ Together, they form a holistic framework for understanding reality. This synthesis challenges the colonial dichotomy between “religious” and “scientific,” offering instead a model of sacred rationality—an epistemology anchored in both reason and revelation.

Nursi furthers this critique by depicting every element of creation as reflective of divine names and attributes. In this framework, knowledge is not neutral or instrumental, but a means of drawing closer to God.²⁵ The act of knowing becomes an act of worship.²⁶ This cosmological epistemology sharply contrasts with the secular-materialist framework of Western thought, which strips the world of transcendence and confines truth to the observable and measurable.

Said Nursi's epistemological resistance lies in rejecting secular rationalism and reasserting *tawhidic* unity as the axis of all knowledge. Faris and Patria observe that Western epistemology tends to fragment knowledge, marginalise metaphysics, and privilege anthropocentric reason over divine revelation.²⁷ This

²³ Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, *The Words* (Nasr City: Sozler Publications, 1992).

²⁴ Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi*.

²⁵ Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, *Al-Lama'at* (Tangerang: Risalah Nur Press, 2018).

²⁶ Achmad Reza Hutama Al Faruqi, Muhammad Hadi Wannes, and Muhammad Arief, “Mafhūm Khalq Al-‘Ālam Inda Badī’Uzzamān Sa’īd Al-Nūrsī,” *Tasfiyah: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 7, no. 1 (April 29, 2023): 143–64, <https://doi.org/10.21111/tasfiyah.v7i1.9207>.

²⁷ Waleed Fekry Faris and Muhammad Yusuf Patria, “Integration of Knowledge:

reductionist tendency is precisely what Nursi contests through his insistence that revelation and reason are not conflicting but converging sources of truth. In *Risale-i Nur*, Nursi reconfigures knowledge as a spiritually charged engagement with reality, where knowing is both cognitive and moral and theological. His approach exemplifies what decolonial theories term “epistemic disobedience,” but with a distinctly Qur’anic inflexion that bypasses secular post-Enlightenment categories.

Risale-i Nur is the decolonial potential project. It models a form of “soft resistance” that does not seek to imitate Western paradigms but to reconstruct knowledge from within Islamic metaphysics.²⁸ Nursi’s selective engagement with Western thought is captured in his metaphor: “Europe and civilisation are like a shop window; their goods are of two kinds: one beneficial, the other harmful. We must choose the beneficial and leave the harmful.”²⁹

At its heart, *Risale-i Nur* is Nursi’s way of saying that Muslims do not need to give up their faith to engage with the modern world. Instead of rejecting science or modern thinking, he shows that these tools can—and should—be understood through the lens of the Qur’an. By doing so, he restores confidence in Islamic ways of knowing and thinking, offering believers a grounded sense of intellectual freedom rooted in their tradition. It’s a quiet but powerful stand against the idea that truth must always come from the West. In doing so, he offers a postcolonial critique that is both oppositional and constructive, pointing toward an Islamic epistemic future that is spiritually rooted, intellectually rigorous, and ontologically whole.

Western & Islamic Perspectives,” *The Journal of Risale-i Nur Studies* 6, no. 2 (2023): 1–13.

²⁸ Douglas H. Garrison, “Intellectual Roots of Islamic Politics in Contemporary Turkey: Religion and Politics in the Thought of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi,” *Zaytoon* Spring 201, no. May 2011 (2011): 4–16.

²⁹ Nursi, *Al-Lama’at*.

b. Islam as an Alternative Rationality and Resource of Progress

Nursi proposes an alternative way of conceptualising reason, not as something owned or defined by the West, but as something profoundly shaped by faith. Instead of accepting that reason must be separate from religion, he turns to the Qur'an as a guide, showing how spiritual insight can shape intellect. Inspired by al-Attas's idea of *adab*, as the discipline that harmonizes knowledge, action, and being in accordance with divine revelation,³⁰ Said Nursi advances a distinctive interpretation that both aligns with and extends this formulation. While al-Attas defines *adab* primarily as the recognition and internalization of the proper place of things within the order of creation, thereby linking knowledge directly to spiritual and ethical comportment, Nursi emphasizes *adab* as an epistemological orientation in which reason itself is subordinate to revelation. For Nursi, the intellect (*'aql*) is not autonomous but must operate within the illumination of prophetic guidance. This hierarchy of knowledge culminates in what he terms *hikmah* (wisdom), a holistic integration of the intellect, the heart (*qalb*), and the soul (*nafs*) directed toward divine truth. In this way, Nursi's use of *adab* not only echoes al-Attas's call for spiritually disciplined knowledge but also expands it by embedding *adab* within an explicitly theological framework of resistance against secular epistemic autonomy.³¹

Nursi paints a simple but powerful picture: every atom in the universe follows God's command, like a soldier carrying out their duty.³² For Nursi, this is not just a poetic idea—it is his way of illustrating that the world is full of meaning and structure. In contrast to modern perspectives that often view knowledge as a tool for power or control, he sees it as something sacred. To him, knowledge is not just for mastering the world, but for helping us understand our

³⁰ Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam: A Framework for an Islamic Philosophy of Education* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1980).

³¹ Nursi, *The Words*.

³² Nursi, *Al-Lama'at*.

place in it and live in harmony with God's will. According to Nursi, progress is not achieved by subjugating nature, but by aligning human action with the divine rhythm embedded in creation.

Nursi explains that true wisdom lies in discerning the unity that underlies the diversity of existence and in perceiving the Divine through the multiplicity of creation.³³ This conception reframes rationality not as the mere accumulation of empirical data, as in secular empiricism, but as a spiritual journey toward recognising the oneness of God through the signs embedded in the material world. By doing so, Nursi challenges the fragmentation of knowledge characteristic of modern secular thought and offers an integrated epistemology in which observation and reason serve the higher aim of *tawhid* (divine unity). This approach spiritualises rational inquiry and positions it as a form of worship and resistance to epistemic domination. His educational model, *Medresetü'z-Zebra*, institutionalised this epistemology, fostering scientific and spiritual literacy despite state suppression. These communities embodied a decolonial modernity, reclaiming tradition as a critical and evolving framework.

Nursi positions Islam not as reactionary but as a viable intellectual paradigm. Nursi's thought thus becomes a constructive critique, envisioning rationality through a postcolonial Islamic lens. In this sense, Nursi's project resonates with decolonial theorists such as Walter D. Mignolo, who argue for the delinking of epistemology from colonial modernity and advocate for the re-centering of subaltern ways of knowing. Like these theorists, Nursi rejects the coloniality of knowledge, yet his framework is distinctly theological: he grounds reason within a metaphysical and prophetic order rather than within humanist or materialist frameworks. Thus, his work exemplifies a postcolonial Islamic rationality that is both critical of Western epistemic dominance and generative of its own ontological and epistemological structures.

³³ Nursi, *The Words*.

c. Cultural and Ethical Strategies of Resistance

Said Nursi's model of resistance in *Risale-i Nur* is deeply rooted in cultural practice and ethical restraint, rather than political confrontation. Confronted with the aggressive secularisation of the early Turkish Republic, Nursi developed a strategy of cultural and moral renewal that resisted hegemonic power structures through symbolic actions, daily life practices, and a prophetic ethic of nonviolence. His approach reveals a sophisticated framework of resistance grounded in Islamic values, demonstrating how spiritual formation, education, language, and ethics can become powerful tools of decolonisation and agency.

A cornerstone of Nursi's cultural resistance was his vision for *Medresetü'z-Zebra*, an educational model that sought to integrate religious sciences with modern rational disciplines. It is an integrative model reconciling traditional Islamic sciences with modern secular disciplines. This model articulates a triadic unity of spirituality, rationality, and moral refinement, offering an antidote to the fragmented curriculum imposed by Western-style education.³⁴ For Nursi, resistance is not merely oppositional; it is constructive, grounded in the formation of spiritually attuned and intellectually empowered individuals. His educational theory resists colonial binaries by refusing the dichotomy between sacred and scientific knowledge. Instead, he envisages a holistic pedagogy combining divine revelation with empirical inquiry, cultivating both the heart and the mind.

Though never fully realised, the project symbolised an alternative epistemology that challenged the rigid dichotomy between reason and revelation institutionalised in secular educational reforms.³⁵ Education, for Nursi, was not simply about

³⁴ Nur Hadi Ihsan, Hasanah Purnamasari, and Dhita Ayomi Purwaningtyas, "Said Nursi Education Concept: Integration of Spiritual, Intellectual, and Moral Dimensions," *Muaddib: Studi Kependidikan Dan Keislaman* 11, no. 1 (2021): 76–87, <https://doi.org/10.24269/muaddib.v1i1.4172>.

³⁵ Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi*.

transmitting knowledge, but about forming ethical and spiritually conscious individuals capable of resisting ideological domination.

Language was another key battleground. In contrast to Kemalist reforms that replaced Ottoman Turkish and Arabic terminology with a secularised linguistic order, Nursi employed colloquial Turkish to make religious concepts accessible to the general public. This linguistic reappropriation functioned as a form of cultural empowerment, restoring Islamic vocabulary and thought to everyday speech and resisting cultural erasure.³⁶ Reintegrating sacred language into daily life was a subtle but profound act of reclaiming the cognitive world of Muslim identity.

Equally important were the spatial and temporal dimensions of resistance. The Kemalist state sought to secularise not only institutions but also public space and time through bans on Islamic dress, suppression of ritual, and the imposition of Western norms.³⁷ In response, Nursi and his followers cultivated *dershanes*—informal study circles functioning as heterotopic spaces for spiritual renewal. These gatherings fostered new rhythms of religious life, modelled ethical community, and created micro-environments of resistance that operated outside the control of the state.³⁸ Nursi's followers engaged in a bodily and temporal decolonisation of public life through acts such as prayer, Qur'anic recitation, and moral discussion.

At the core of Nursi's approach is a steady, deeply held commitment to nonviolence. Despite facing repeated exile, imprisonment, and constant monitoring by the state, he never called for rebellion or endorsed violence. His refusal was not out of fear or resignation. It reflected a deliberate moral conviction that real, lasting transformation must be achieved through peaceful

³⁶ Alev Çinar, *Modernity, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey: Bodies, Places, and Time* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

³⁷ Çinar.

³⁸ Michel Foucault and Jay Miskowicz, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (2012): 22–27.

means and moral dialogue. Instead, he advanced “*mânevî cihad*” (*jihād Ma’navî*)—a spiritual jihad based on *sabır* (patience), *tawakkul* (trust in God), and inner transformation. His prison writings vividly reflect this ethic, transforming punishment spaces into sites of moral growth. In doing so, Nursi embodied James Scott’s concept of “hidden transcripts”—subtle, everyday forms of resistance that erode power from within.³⁹

This ethic of nonviolence is not a form of passivity, but a conscious critique of structural oppression and reactive militancy. For Nursi, violence reproduces the logic of the systems it seeks to overthrow. Instead, his resistance is proactive, grounded in Qur’anic values and prophetic teachings that prioritise justice,⁴⁰ humility, and knowledge over domination and spectacle. As such, his approach aligns with Homi Bhabha’s notion of “sly civility”—inhabiting dominant forms while subtly subverting them from within.⁴¹

In postcolonial terms, the Nurcu movement articulates a decolonial praxis that avoids the trap of mimicking colonial modalities of power. Nursi re-signifies Islamic concepts, repurposes cultural idioms, and reclaims spiritual authority without retreating into nostalgic traditionalism or assimilationist modernity. His writings encourage a sacralisation of the everyday, where acts such as observing nature, practising gratitude, and mindful living are redefined as worshipful forms of resistance.

Ultimately, *Risale-i Nur* offers more than a critique of secularism; it presents a comprehensive moral alternative. It mobilises education, language, space, and ethics to construct a counter-hegemonic way of life. This cultural and ethical resistance not only challenges colonial and nationalist structures but also

³⁹ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

⁴⁰ Achmad Reza Hutama Al Faruqi, Rif’at Husnul Ma’afi, and Aria Nur Kamal, “Bedi’uzzamān Sa’id Nūrsī on Social Justice: Analysis from Islamic Philosophy Tradition,” *Kontemplasi: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 11, no. 1 (2023).

⁴¹ Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*.

contributes to a wider Islamic liberation thought, demonstrating how subaltern religious actors can resist domination without replicating its violence. Nursi's spiritual-humanist paradigm reveals a distinct path for Islamic modernity—ethically coherent, non-violent, and profoundly transformative.⁴²

d. Reclaiming Postcolonial Muslim Identity

At the heart of Said Nursi's intellectual and spiritual project is the formation of a Muslim subject who embodies both inner piety and public ethical awareness. In response to the Kemalist regime's efforts to secularize Turkish identity and suppress Islamic expression, Nursi developed an alternative vision of Muslim identity—one that withstands both secular integration and inert traditionalism. Through *Risale-i Nur*, he expressed a spiritually rooted and epistemologically decolonized self, shaped not through power or political rebellion, but through faith, discipline, and critical consciousness.

By rejecting the binaries of colonial modernity—especially the division between the sacred and the secular—Nursi reimagines identity as spiritually rooted yet socially responsive. Instead, he promotes a “spiritual modernity,” a synthesis where Islamic faith guides engagement with modern challenges without being subordinate to them. This model of modernity does not oppose material progress but reinterprets it within a metaphysical framework, where ethical and spiritual values govern technological and social development. In Nursi's view, faith is not a retreat from modernity but a way to transform it—integrating divine purpose at the heart of worldly life engagement.

This vision of spiritual-modern Muslim identity echoes in various forms within the broader landscape of postcolonial Islamic thought. For instance, Muhammad Iqbal, writing in British India,

⁴² Ramli Awang et al., “A Challenge from Teaching to Social Movement: Bediüzzaman Said Nursi's Struggles for Modification in Turkey,” *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, no. January 2016 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2015.v6n6s1p444>.

similarly emphasised the reconstruction of Islamic epistemology through “the principle of movement in the structure of Islam”.⁴³ Both Nursi and Iqbal viewed revelation not as antithetical to reason but as its source and ethical compass. However, while Nursi focused on spiritual resilience through communal pedagogy and ethical patience, Iqbal advocated for an assertive reinterpretation of *ijtihad* and selfhood, positioning the self as autonomous and divinely accountable.

Meanwhile, Ali Shariati, emerging from the Iranian context, also developed a theology of resistance with a more overt political focus. Shariati saw religious consciousness as a revolutionary force capable of overthrowing colonialism and authoritarianism. While Nursi avoided political confrontation in favor of moral reform, Shariati embraced religio-political activism, combining Islamic metaphysics with sociological critique. Both figures, however, converge in their resistance to Western epistemic dominance and their efforts to revive Islam's vitality as a framework for modern society life.⁴⁴

In *Risale-i Nur*, faith (*imān*) is not a passive belief but a dynamic, formative force. It equips the believer to confront existential and social crises with *sabr* (patience), *tawakkul* (trust in God), and *jihad al-nafs* (spiritual struggle). Nursi emphasises that genuine strength lies not in political aggression but in moral endurance and deep prayer.⁴⁵ He suggests that true dignity comes from faith, even for the weakest individuals, while disbelief, regardless of power, leads to ontological emptiness.⁴⁶ This ethical framework reorients empowerment from external domination to inner sovereignty.

This inward transformation, however, is not disconnected from social and political realities. Nursi's goal was to cultivate a

⁴³ Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (California: Stanford University Press, 2012).

⁴⁴ Ali Shariati, *What Is to Be Done: The Enlightened Thinkers and an Islamic Renaissance* (Houston: The Institute for Research and Islamic Studies, 1986).

⁴⁵ Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, *Al-Maktubat* (Tangerang: Risalah Nur Press, 2017).

⁴⁶ Nursi, *Al-Lama'at*.

subject who is spiritually devout, socially and politically conscious. His educational vision—realised in *dershanes* and community-based learning circles—functioned as loci of alternative subject formation. As Khamami observed in Jakarta, Nurcu followers continue to read *Risale-i Nur* daily as a practice of identity formation and spiritual resistance.⁴⁷ These informal networks fostered a Qur'an-based pedagogy of reflection, mutual learning, and moral accountability, bypassing the ideological constraints of the secular state. This was a form of “discursive jihad”—resisting domination not through confrontation, but through creating ethical and intellectual lifeworlds rooted in revelation.

Nursi's emphasis on self-discipline and ethical agency is central to his resistance model. He positioned faith as a cognitive and affective instrument capable of dismantling the ideological colonisation of the Muslim mind. This vision of identity is active and constructive: Muslims are not merely reacting to external pressures but actively reshaping their world through knowledge, morality, and sincerity (*ikhlās*). In this sense, *Risale-i Nur* reclaims Islam not as a nostalgic relic but as a living force of spiritual-political consciousness.

Furthermore, Nursi's concept of the Muslim subject is deeply humanistic and inclusive. Nursi envisioned a society guided by Qur'anic ethics, where pluralism and strong faith coexist. Turner notes that his critique of Western modernity was not a rejection of its tools but a redirection of its purpose through an Islamic cosmology that emphasizes divine accountability at the heart of public life.

In reclaiming postcolonial Muslim identity, Nursi thus offered more than a critique of secular hegemony—he constructed a robust framework for subject formation, rooted in spiritual integrity and intellectual independence. His work contributes to the decolonisation of Islamic selfhood by redefining agency in

⁴⁷ Khamami, “The Nurcu Movement and Tafsir Risale-i Nur: Formation of Muslim Identity in the Midst of Modernization.”

terms of political control, ethical clarity and ontological confidence. Through *Risale-i Nur*, Nursi enables the emergence of a Muslim subject who can resist domination, articulate faith confidently, and engage the world with moral purpose.

Individual Transformation as Resistance

At the heart of Nursi's challenge to hegemonic secularism lies his conviction that systemic change is predicated on inner moral reform. In contrast to the Republican state's vision of a secular citizen, Nursi's formation of the critical Muslim subject begins with spiritual awakening and culminates in ethical-political consciousness. He reconfigures the idea of resistance, not as direct rebellion but as a profound articulation of the self in defiance of imposed ontologies.

The Turkish state's secular nationalism attempted to delegitimise religious expressions in the public sphere. Nursi's theological resistance countered this by proposing a Qur'an-centred worldview that questioned the epistemic neutrality of the state. Nursi emphasises tawhid as a profound challenge to the foundations of the secular worldview. By centring on tawhid, he unsettles the internal logic of secular modernity and highlights the ideological assumptions it often conceals. This aligns with decolonial critiques, such as Dipesh Chakrabarty, which urge us to take seriously the knowledge systems and cosmologies of those traditionally dismissed or marginalised.

Rather than withdrawing into pietism, Nursi created a political theology centred on communal ethics. His vision of a just society was not based on ethnonationalist loyalty but on shared spiritual principles. The notion of a 'moral republic'—as derived from Qur'anic guidance—posed a radical alternative to the Turkish state's secular imaginary.

The dissemination of the *Risale-i Nur* through clandestine study circles represents a strategy of decentralised resistance. These

networks acted as epistemic sanctuaries where counter-hegemonic ideas could circulate, much like digital counter-publics today. In this context, reading becomes an act of resistance; interpretation becomes a political intervention.

Nursi's refusal to engage in violent rebellion was not born of passivity but strategic and theological calculation. His non-confrontational stance must be understood as a principled commitment to ethical politics. As Turner notes, the state's moral authority is destabilised when individuals refuse its epistemic legitimacy.⁴⁸ In this sense, the transformed Muslim subject, formed through spiritual pedagogy and ethical community, becomes a radical site of dissent, articulating a decolonial Islamic modernity that is neither co-opted nor silenced.

Conclusion

Said Nursi's *Risale-i Nur* emerges not just as a theological collection, but as a deliberate response to the epistemological crisis caused by the Kemalist project of secular modernity. Instead of choosing between tradition and progress, it develops a counter-epistemology that reclaims Islamic metaphysics as a valid basis. His form of resistance is neither reactionary nor nostalgic; it is intentionally decolonial, rejecting both copying Western models and accepting their epistemic frameworks hegemony.

Crucially, Nursi's non-violent resistance challenges traditional narratives of political opposition by emphasizing transformation within the self. This shift toward ethical subjectivity as a site of resistance questions the authoritarian state and the liberal belief that agency only exists through institutional or militant activism. His pedagogical approach, communal study circles, and theological writings form an underground counter-public sphere—an arena for marginalized voices and intellectual liberation.

⁴⁸ Turner, "The Six-Sided Vision of Said Nursi: Towards a Spiritual Architecture of the *Risale-i Nur*."

Analytically, Nursi's strategy should be viewed as a radical redefinition of power and resistance: he provincializes secular rationality, spiritualizes reason, and reclaims tradition as a dynamic space for critique and reform. In doing so, *Risale-i Nur* offers a postcolonial Islamic modernity that is ethically coherent, epistemologically sovereign, and spiritually resilient. Nursi's legacy encourages scholars to rethink resistance not merely as an oppositional force, but as a generative project of epistemic reconstruction grounded in revelation, reason, and moral agency.

Future research should investigate how *Risale-i Nur* has been received, interpreted, and mobilised within various postcolonial Muslim societies beyond its Turkish context. Given that many Muslim-majority nations have undergone similar experiences of colonial disruption, epistemic dislocation, and secular state-building, a comparative analysis could illuminate how Nursi's model of spiritual-intellectual resistance resonates across diverse socio-political landscapes. Addressing these issues would contribute to the global understanding of *Risale-i Nur* as a postcolonial Islamic text and broader debates on Islamic intellectual decolonisation, identity formation, and spiritual pedagogy in the modern Muslim world.[]

References

- Abu-Rabi', Ibrahim M. *The Blackwell Companion to Contemporary Islamic Thought*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.
- Al-Attas, Syed Muhammad Naquib. *The Concept of Education in Islam: A Framework for an Islamic Philosophy of Education*. Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1980.
- Awang, Ramli, Kamaruzaman Yusoff, Mansoureh Ebrahimi, and Omer Yilmaz. "A Challenge from Teaching to Social Movement: Bediüzzaman Said Nursi's Struggles for Modification in Turkey." *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, no. January 2016 (2015). <https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2015.v6n6s1p444>.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *Nation and Narration*. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Bhambra, Gurinder K. *Rethinking Modernity: Postcolonialism and the*

- Sociological Imagination*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Çınar, Alev. *Modernity, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey: Bodies, Places, and Time*. London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.
- Darda, Abu, Cecep Sobar Rochmat, Mehmet Zeki Aydin, and Adinda Citra Bayangkara. "An Idea of Said Nursi's Islamic Educational Reform in the Risale-I Nur." *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education* 7, no. 2 (August 5, 2023): 454. <https://doi.org/10.35723/ajie.v7i2.317>.
- Faris, Waleed Fekry, and Muhammad Yusuf Patria. "Integration of Knowledge: Western & Islamic Perspectives." *The Journal of Risale-i Nur Studies* 6, no. 2 (2023): 1–13.
- Faruqi, Achmad Reza Hutama Al. *Pemikiran Badiuzzaman Said Nursi Tentang Kontribusi Sains Terhadap Peradaban Islam*. Tulungagung: UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung, 2025.
- Faruqi, Achmad Reza Hutama Al, Rif'at Husnul Ma'afi, and Aria Nur Kamal. "Bedi'uzzamān Sa'īd Nūrsī on Social Justice: Analysis from Islamic Philosophy Tradition." *Kontemplasi: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 11, no. 1 (2023).
- Faruqi, Achmad Reza Hutama Al, Muhammad Hadi Wannes, and Muhammad Arief. "Mafhūm Khalq Al-‘Ālam Inda Bad'Uzzamān Sa'īd Al-Nūrsī." *Tasfiyah: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 7, no. 1 (April 29, 2023): 143–64. <https://doi.org/10.21111/tasfiyah.v7i1.9207>.
- Foucault, Michel, and Jay Miskowic. "Of Other Spaces." *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (2012): 22–27.
- Garrison, Douglas H. "Intellectual Roots of Islamic Politics in Contemporary Turkey: Religion and Politics in the Thought of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi." *Zaytoon* Spring 201, no. May 2011 (2011): 4–16.
- Hanioglu, M. Şükrü. *Atatürk: An Intellectual Biography*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2017.
- Huringiin, Nabila, Achmad Reza Hutama Al Faruqi, and Achmad Wildan Sayyidul Bachr. "Harmonizing Society: Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Vision of Islamic Politics." *Muharrrik: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Sosial* 6, no. 2 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.37680/muharrrik.v6i1.3528>.

- Ihsan, Nur Hadi, Ridani Faulika Permana, and Abdullah Muslich Rizal Maulana. "Bediuzzaman Said Nursi and the Nature of Human Creation in His Major Works: Considering a New Breakthrough in Islamic Philosophy." *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 12, no. 1 (2022): 114–37. <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.121.06>.
- Ihsan, Nur Hadi, Hasanah Purnamasari, and Dhita Ayomi Purwaningtyas. "Said Nursi Education Concept: Integration of Spiritual, Intellectual, and Moral Dimensions." *Muaddib: Studi Kependidikan Dan Keislaman* 11, no. 1 (2021): 76–87. <https://doi.org/10.24269/muaddib.v1i1.4172>.
- Iqbal, Muhammad. *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. California: Stanford University Press, 2012.
- Khamami, Akhmad Rizqon. "The Nurcu Movement and Tafsir Risale-i Nur: Formation of Muslim Identity in the Midst of Modernization." *Mashdar: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 5, no. 1 (2023): 79–92. <https://doi.org/10.15548/mashdar.v5i1.6195>.
- Mardin, Serif. *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989.
- Markham, Ian S., and Suendam Birinci Pirim. *An Introduction to Said Nursi: Life, Thought, and Writings*. Surrey: Ashgate, 1988.
- Mudin, Moh. Isom, Nabila Huringiin, Mohamed Hedi Ouannes, and Tugba Turkoglu. "Tasawwuf and Sustainability Crisis : A Multidisciplinary Approach to Waste Management in Indonesia Inspired by the Concept of Khilafah in the Risale-i Nur." *Tasfiyah: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 8, no. 2 (n.d.): 355–82.
- Nursi, Bediüzzaman Said. *Al-Lama'at*. Tangerang: Risalah Nur Press, 2018.
- . *Al-Maktubat*. Tangerang: Risalah Nur Press, 2017.
- . *The Words*. Nasr City: Sozler Publications, 1992.
- Purwaningtyas, Dhita Ayomi, Yulia; Rimapradesi, and Achmad Reza Hutama Al Faruqi. "The Genealogy of Turkish Transnational Movement in Indonesia." *Jurnal of Middle East and Islamic Studies* 11, no. 1 (June 25, 2024). <https://doi.org/10.7454/meis.v11i1.171>.
- Said, Edward. *The World, the Text, and the Critic*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983.

- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1978.
- Scott, James C. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.
- . *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.
- Shariati, Ali. *What Is to Be Done: The Enlightened Thinkers and an Islamic Renaissance*. Houston: The Institute for Research and Islamic Studies, 1986.
- Turner, Colin. “The Six-Sided Vision of Said Nursi: Towards a Spiritual Architecture of the Risale-i Nur.” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 19, no. 1 (2008): 53–71. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510340701770295>.
- Vahide, Şükran. *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2005.
- . “Toward an Intellectual Biography of Said Nursi.” In *Islam at the Crossroads: On the Life and Thought of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi*, 1–20. University of New York Press, 2003.
- Yavuz, M. Hakan. *Nostalgia for the Empire: The Politics of Neo-Ottomanism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020.