

T. S. Eliot's Misreading of Some Mythological Sources in *The Waste Land*

When love fails, a waste land develops.

Jewel Spears Brooker, *Teaching The Waste Land*

Liem Satya Limanta

English Department, Faculty of Letters, Petra Christian University, Siwalankerto

121-131, Surabaya 60236, East Java, Indonesia

e-mail: satya@peter.petra.ac.id

Abstract: Reading always entails an act of interpretation and all interpretation involves misreading. All poets cannot be separated from the previous ones. They must read and misread their precursors. T.S. Eliot misreads the mythological sources that he uses in his poem *The Waste Land*. This misreading is not a mistake, but it is meant to create new meaning to the available text. By misreading the previous texts, the poet creates a space of creativity for himself. There are six ways of misreading as explicated by Harold Bloom. In this article only three ways of misreading will be explained and applied, namely *clinamen*, *tessera*, and *kenosis*.

Key words: misreading, mythology, creativity

This article specifically deals with the mythological sources that T.S. Eliot uses in his poems and the way in which he creatively misreads those sources. I shall then trace and discuss those sources which Eliot deliberately misreads and integrates into his poem. The sources will be classified into three categories and the discussion will follow their appearance in the poem, namely the title: *The Waste Land*; the burial of the dead: the hyacinth garden scene; and the fire sermon: the dull canal scene.

Before analyzing the misreading of the sources, it is necessary to review the theory of misreading as explicated by Harold Bloom (1973). According to Bloom, there are six ways in which a poet misreads his precursor, namely *clinamen*, *tessera*, *kenosis*, *daemonization*, *askesis*, and *apophrades*. I will only explain the first three because those are the three ways Eliot implements in misreading his mythological sources.

First, *clinamen* is the way a poet may misread his precursor by "swerving away from his precursor". In simpler words, a poet makes "a

corrective movement in his own poem, which implies that the precursor poem went accurately up to a certain point, but then should have swerved, precisely in the direction that the new poem moves” (Bloom, 1973, p. 14). Secondly, *tessera* is the way a poet misreads his precursor by “so reading the parent-poem as to retain its terms but to mean them in another sense, as though the precursor had failed to go far enough” (p. 14). Thirdly, *kenosis* is the way a poet misreads his precursor by moving “towards discontinuity with the precursor” (p. 14). It is a mechanism of avoiding the repetition compulsion by undoing the previous pattern.

THE TITLE: *THE WASTE LAND*

Eliot acknowledged that he was indebted to two mythological sources, Jessie L. Weston’s *From Ritual to Romance* and Sir James Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*. These two sources become the foundation of Eliot’s poem for “his title, his plan, his symbolism, and many of his references to ancient religion and society” (Brooker & Bentley, 1990, p. 49). In *The Golden Bough*, Frazer studied fertility cults and vegetation myths. He tried to find the origin of religion as Darwin had tried to find the origin of species. Frazer discovered that human society developed faith in an evolutionary manner “from magic to religion to science” (p. 49). In the magic stage “people tried to control external events through ritual” (Brooker, 1994, p. 118) (p. 118). In religion people “tried to control events through petition to deities,” and in science by “understanding the laws of nature”. (p. 118).

In his elucidation of Eliot’s sources in his book *The Waste Land*, Grover Smith (1983) shows that Frazer was concerned with the “ritual problem”, that is, “the succession to the priesthood of Diana of the Sacred Wood at Nemi, ”where the priest took office by murdering his predecessor and retained it until ambushed and murdered in return” (p. 88). Before killing the old priest, however, the killer had to pluck the golden bough. In *Mastery and Escape*, Jewel Spears Brooker (1994) gives a lucid explanation of the killing and the plucking of the golden bough. She says:

... he [Frazer] concludes that all myths derive from a single myth, a monomyth In the parent myth the vitality of the land and of the people is intertwined with that of the king. When the king is healthy, the land is prosperous; when he is sick, the land is blighted, becoming a wasteland. The greatest misfortune would be sexual weakness or

impotence in the king for in the primitive agricultural economy, the king's reproductive abilities are inseparable from those of his people. To preclude the certain disaster that would accompany his *physical decline, he has to be killed and replaced before his vitality wanes*. In order to insure the transmission of the king's vitality, his successor must *pluck the golden bough, for the life force was associated with the energy of the sun and was thought to be contained in the golden bough of an oak tree* [emphasis added] (p. 117).

Frazer, according to Grover Smith (1983), "connected the ritual killing of the Priest of Nemi (*The Golden Bough*, Vol. 1, Article 1) with the sacrifice of kings as tribal scapegoats (Vols. 4, 9) and with other ritual ordeals, sometimes involving sexual mutilation (Vol. 6, note iv), to which in some cults the priest was subjected" (p. 89). What is most important to notice is that in the fertility religion, the myth of the dying god is always central.

Hands (1993) noted that the term 'waste land' appears many times in Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* (p. 67). Weston, who took material from Frazer and from other anthropologists, tried to discover the relationship between the ancient vegetation myths and fertility ceremonies. She traced further the relationship of the myths and the rituals with Christianity and particularly with the Holy Grail legend. She found a pattern of the fertility myth in the story of the Fisher King who had been "rendered impotent by maiming or sickness" (Brooks as cited in Martin, pp. 59-60). The Fisher King's impotence brings drought and sterility to the whole land where "crops do not grow and animals cannot reproduce" (p. 59). The curse on the land can be removed and the 'waste land' can be revived only if a 'questing knight' can ask proper "ritual questions about the Grail (or Cup) and the Lance—originally fertility symbols, female and male respectively" (Abrams & Greenblatt, p. 2369).

The importance of this background is to give the context of the two basic mythological references Eliot uses and to show how he misreads them or shifts their meaning. Both Frazer and Weston agree that the well-being of the king is intertwined with the prosperity of his land, and his sickness brings about barrenness and sterility to that land. Eliot follows this pattern, but he also does something else. He tries to show the cause of the wasting of the land in the modern context. Weston has studied the various versions of the Grail legend. Generally, there are five basic patterns. The first is that the Fisher King has been sick and the land has been laid waste,

and the task of the hero is to inquire about the nature of the Grail and thus through his success to heal the King and to restore the land to its fruitfulness. This pattern can be seen in *Bleheris*, *Diû Crône*, and *Perceval* versions (Weston, 1920, pp. 11-13). The second is that the land is not waste and the King is not ill. The failure of the predestined hero to ask about the nature of the Grail is the cause of the land being laid waste and the King's illness (p. 15). This can be seen in the *Parlevaus* version. The third, a variation of the two patterns, is that the illness of the King may precede or have nothing to do with the hero's visit to the Grail castle and his failure, but the desolation of the land is caused by his failure to ask the question (p. 16). This pattern can be seen in the *Paredur* version. In another version, the fourth pattern, *Parzival*, the land and the King are blighted with infirmity and sterility but the punishment falls on the hero, not on the land, because he fails to ask the question (p. 17). Finally, in the version of *Sone de Nansai* that deals with Joseph d'Armathie, Joseph who is the Fisher King is "ensnared by the beauty of the daughter of the pagan King of Norway, whom he has slain" (p. 17). He then baptises the girl, although at heart she is still an unbeliever, and marries her. This act evokes the wrath of God, and Joseph is punished for his sin and in turn brings desolation upon his land (p. 20).

Having studied all the versions, Weston concludes that "the story postulates a close connection between the vitality of a certain King, and the prosperity of his kingdom; the forces of the ruler being weakened or destroyed, by wound, sickness, old age, or death, the land becomes Waste, and the task of the hero is that of restoration" (p. 21). Thus, Weston is not exact about the cause of the land's being wasted in her conclusion to *From Ritual to Romance*. She only refers to the natural causes of it, namely 'wound, sickness, old age, or death'. In *Quest of the Holy Grail*, however, she explains this rather more precisely. According to Cleanth Brooks (1968), in one of the Grail manuscripts, Weston points out "how the court of the rich Fisher King was withdrawn from the knowledge of men when certain of the maidens who frequented the shrine were raped and had their golden cups taken from them" (p. 68).

Eliot is even more specific than Weston about the cause of the waste land in a modern context. The abundance of allusions in his poem shows why the land of the modern world has become waste. On this matter, Brooker (1988) has suggested that "when love fails, a waste land develops" (p. 103). The text of the poem establishes this motif as the poet

creatively misreads his diverse sources, which range far beyond the merely mythological.

The first misreading of a source can be found in the boudoir scene where a man and a woman are involved in a dull, bitter, and piercing conversation about their futile relationship:

'My nerves are bad tonight. Yes, bad. Stay with me.

'Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak.

'What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?

'I never know what you are thinking. Think.'

(Abrams, & Greenblatt, 2000, p. 2373).

The woman in her desperation and nervousness repeatedly asks the man about the prospect of their future relationship. She tries to find meaning in her life and in their relationship. The reader is not told about the kind of relationship between them. It may be that of husband and wife, or of lovers, or even of a prostitute and her visitor. It is possible that this conversation is made after they have had sexual intercourse. Anthony Hands (1993) has provided the readers of *The Waste Land* with many possible sources for this scene. In *Lamia*, Keats describes the banquet-room of Lamia in such a way as to give a sacred atmosphere where the twelve tables stood "each shringing in the midst the image of a God" (p. 85). In *The Golden Ass*, Lucius Apuleius also gives a detailed description of the Cupid's palace when Psyche enters it: "One recognised, even at the entering, the delightful hostelry of a God, Golden pillars sustained the roof, Well might it seem a place fashioned for the *conversation of gods with men!*" [emphasis added] (as cited in Hands, p. 85). Eliot depicts the boudoir almost with as much detail as these two references, but his description creates a different effect. The Philomel picture ruins the sacred environment created by the splendour of the ornaments suited to the presence of a divine being, as in a shrine. In Greek mythology, Philomela was raped by the King Tereus. Her sister, Procne, who was the wife of Tereus avenged Tereus' crime by killing their own son and serving it to him in a stew. When Tereus realized what had happened, he tried to kill the two women, and they were all changed into birds: Tereus into a hawk, Procne into a swallow, and Philomela into a nightingale. Besides the sight of Philomel picture, Eliot also uses the sense of smell to create the unfruitful relationship between the man and the woman in this scene. The

romantic situation in which lovers are supposed to meet is staled by the *synthetic* perfumes that “drowned the sense in odours.”

To the woman’s question, the man gives two pessimistic replies: “I think we are in rats’ alley” (Abrams & Greenblatt, 2000, p. 2373) and “Those are pearls that were his eyes” (p. 2374). Both allusions refer to death or lack of hope. The first recalls the “battlefield trenches” (Smith, 1983, p. 111) and the second to Ariel’s song in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* by which Ferdinand, the Prince of Naples, was directed to his beloved, Miranda. Ferdinand in response to the music only says: “The ditty does remember my drowned father” (Brooks as cited in Martin, p. 69) The other allusions in this boudoir scene are the Enobarbus’ account of Cleopatra on her barge in Shakespeare’s *Anthony and Cleopatra*, Iachimo’s deception of Imogen in *Cymbeline*, and Pope’s *Rape of the Lock* (Traversi, 1976, p. 31). According to Traversi, Eliot’s use of these references emphasise the notion of betrayal, threat, rape, and death because love is “divorced from any conception of mutual or life-giving relationship between the sexes” (p. 32), and where “love and lust have become one” (p. 33). The “laquearia” allusion from Virgil’s *Aenid* is no less descriptive because it also depicts “the feast given by Dido for Aenas, her lover who will in the end abandon her” (Hands, 1993, p. 88). Like Traversi, Brooks (1968) has drawn notices to John Crowe Ransom’s conclusion about love and lust with different analogy in art and science:

Love is the aesthetic of sex; lust is the science. Love implies a deferring of the satisfaction of the desire; it implies a certain asceticism and a ritual. Lust drives forward urgently and scientifically to the immediate extirpation of the desire. Our contemporary waste land is in large part the result of our scientific attitude – of our complete secularization (p. 68).

Though explained in different phraseology, the cause of the waste land may be said to derive from, as Brooker (1988) says in *Approaches to Teaching Eliot’s Poetry and Plays*, the failure of love (p. 105).

The pub scene also supports this interpretation. Two women are gossiping about Lil and Albert in a pub. The gist of their conversation is that Lil, though absent but clearly visible because she is described concretely as being thirty-one years old and having bad teeth, suffers in her relationship with her husband. She has had five children and almost died in

giving birth to the last. Her body is damaged or deformed gradually as the result of the abortion. Her husband, Albert, demands that she be physically attractive. When he was demobilised and returned home, Albert wanted to have “a good time” with his wife. Brooker and Bentley (1990) suggest that “Lil has become sick and perhaps barren by being treated as an adjunct of Albert’s lust” (p. 115). Lil, like the woman in the boudoir scene, fears that Albert will leave her. These two scenes, the boudoir and pub, occur in Part II of *The Waste Land, A Game of Chess*, which itself is an allusion to two of Thomas Middleton’s plays *A Game of Chess* and *Women Beware Women*. These plays are concerned with seduction and rape. The scene of the second play is performed on two levels. Livia downstairs “distracts Bianca’s Mother(-in-law) by a game of chess, while above—visible to the audience but not to those on the stage below—the Duke seduces Bianca. The moves in the game of chess reflect on the seduction above. ‘Duke’ is a seventeenth-century term for a rook in chess.” (Hands, 1993, p. 85). Once again it is sexuality as lust devoid of love that makes human relationships become stale and meaningless.

In the scene involving the clerk and the typist in “The Fire Sermon”, a similar attitude of human relationship can be found. The title of this part is taken from the Buddha’s sermon that warns against “the fire of lust and other passions that destroy people and prevent their regeneration” (Abrams & Greenblatt, p. 2375). The allusions to Philomela’s rape, to Queen Elizabeth and the Earl of Leicester’s (Robert Dudley) sterile affair and to St. Augustine’s *Confessions* that depicts his youthful lust, all give a vivid picture how lust may ‘burn’ people and lead them to ‘ashes’ that become completely waste and barren. The result of lust is clearly seen in the typist. The carbuncular clerk’s gusto of lust makes him assault her at once. She acts lifelessly like an automaton, to use Brooker and Bentley’s (1990) term, being “bored and tired,” giving “no response, no defence,” having her consciousness numbed at the departing lover, and being “glad when it’s over” (p. 123). This scene undergirds the principle previously illustrated that sex as lust devoid of love has a deadly stiffening effect.

It is interesting to note that in almost each allusion to the lust episodes, sex is closely related to death. Ferdinand’s reply to Ariel’s song, the man’s reply in the boudoir scene, the Philomela’s rape resulting in the horrible murder of the son by his own mother, Lil’s dying as a result of the abortion, and lastly Ophelia’s departing words before her death at the end of *A Game of Chess*, all suggest the failure of love. In fertility cults, death

brings hope for new life just as a seed must drop on the ground and ‘dies’ that it may bring forth a new plant. Here lust results in death. From these examples, it is clear that Eliot has shifted the meaning of the “Waste Land” from its original source into a new context, namely from the waste land in the myth as the result of the stealing of the cup into the modern waste land as the result of lust. Thus, he applies Bloom’s second revisionary ratio, *tessera* by retaining the terms but giving them a new meaning.

THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD: THE HYACINTH GARDEN SCENE

A further example of Eliot’s misreading of his mythological sources is found in the hyacinth garden scene. This episode also depicts a relationship between lovers that fails. In *The Golden Bough* Frazer still sees a ‘joyful resurrection’ from the calamity that befalls Hyacinth:

According to the legend, Hyacinth was the youngest and handsomest son of the ancient king Amyclas, who had his capital at Amyclae in the beautiful vale of Sparta. One day playing at quoits with Apollo, he was accidentally killed by a blow of the god’s quoit. Bitterly the god lamented the death of his friend. The hyacinth—“that sanguine flower inscribed with woe”—sprang from the blood of the hapless youth, as anemones and roses from the blood of Adonis, and violets from the blood of Attis: like these vernal flowers it *heralded the advent of another spring* and gladdened the hearts of men with the *promise* of a joyful resurrection [emphasis added] (as cited in Hands, p. 77).

In the *Metamorphoses* Ovid describes how the sun god, Phoebus or Apollo, loves Hyacinthus very much and laments for the accidental death of the king’s son (Ovid, pp. 229-30). Phoebus even inscribes his grief on the flower’s petals which are marked AI AI (Greek words that mean “alas”). In the reading of his mythological source, Eliot shifts the meaning of the story by merging the two sexes.

In Ovid’s story, Hyacinthus is the son of the ancient king Amyclas. In *The Waste Land* the reference to hyacinth is applied to a girl: ‘You gave me hyacinths first a year ago; / They called me the hyacinth girl’ (Abrams & Greenblatt, p. 2371)

Here Eliot merges the image of the male legendary hero with a girl. This merging of sexes is a very important element in Eliot's work. In a note to *The Fire Sermon* he emphasizes Tiresias' role:

Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a 'character', is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest. Just as the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants melts into the Phoenician Sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and *the two sexes meet in Tiresias*. What Tiresias *sees* [sic.], in fact, is the substance of the poem [emphasis added] (as cited in Abrams & Greenblatt, p. 2376).

While the merging of the two sexes is indeed one of the central images in *The Waste Land*, and physical union does take place, there is no real merging of body and mind in the couples depicted in the poem. Such union only takes place symbolically in Tiresias who is nonexistent as a character in the poem. This failure of merging results in sterility. It also recalls the symbol of the Lance and the Cup of the Holy Grail legend. Many references in *The Waste Land* seem to suggest the failure of this merging.

The response of the man in this scene clearly shows how he fails to fulfil his function in complementing the girl:

-- Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden
Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
Looking into the heart of light, the silence (Abrams & Greenblatt,
p. 2371)

Eliot notes on Tiresias and states that "all the women are one woman," but it is also clear that the man in this scene recalls those in the boudoir, the pub, the scene with the clerk and the typist, and in the story of Philomela. The man in the boudoir scene acts heartlessly, like his counterpart in the hyacinth episode. The statement of the man in the hyacinth garden is repeated in the woman's question in the boudoir scene:

'Do
'You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember'

'Nothing?'

"Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?"

(Abrams & Greenblatt, p. 2374)

Both men are neither alive nor dead. They cannot know or see or remember anything either. The clerk, Albert, and the King Tereus in the Greek mythology also serve the same function, as the representations of lust for lust's sake. They do not function as complements to women since they only focus on their own sexual satisfaction. On this incomplementarity that brings about barrenness (especially related to myth), Brooker and Bentley (1990) say:

Finally, myth associates females with direct experience and males with reason, faith, or some other method of gaining knowledge of what cannot be observed. In myth, female closeness and male remoteness form the complementary conditions for both *health* and *knowledge*. In *The Waste Land*, such complementarity does not exist, and as in myth, this absence of connection is associated with *disease* and *waste* [emphasis added] (p. 116).

Cleanth Brooks (1968) has drawn attention to the paradox of death-in-life. He says that "Life devoid of meaning is death; sacrifice, even the sacrificial death, may be life-giving, an awakening to life" (p. 60) suggesting the paradox of life-from-death. Men in those scenes who live only on lust cannot make relations with others. Their lives are devoid of meaning and thus they are dead while still alive. They are the living dead. These figures will be resuscitated in *The Hollow Men*.

In this instance Eliot applies the revisionary ratio that Harold Bloom described as *kenosis*. By avoiding the repetition compulsion in using the mythological Hyacinth story and by "undoing" it, Eliot creates discontinuity from it. This undoing of the precursor is done by creating the "hyacinth girl." Bloom notes that the central problem of the later poet or *ephebe* is repetition because "repetition dialectically raised to re-creation is the ephebe's road of excess, leading away from the horror of finding himself to be only a copy or a replica" (Bloom, 1973, p. 80). In other words, Eliot has undone the "precursor's pattern by a deliberate, willed loss in continuity" (p. 90) by creating the "hyacinth girl" and shifting the hope of the resurrection of the king's son in the original context into the

hope of the union (complementarity) between man and woman in the modern context.

THE FIRE SERMON: THE DULL CANAL SCENE

The last example I use to show Eliot's misreading of the mythological source is taken from "The Fire Sermon," the third section of the poem. The second stanza of this section depicts a man fishing in a dull canal. While fishing, he was musing on his past experience, on his father's death and his father's brother's wreck, a reference to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. The environment where he was fishing shows the staleness and the horror of death: "White bodies naked on the low damp ground / And bones cast in a little low dry garret, / Rattled by the rat's foot only, year to year" (Abrams & Greenblatt, p. 2375). The remembrance of death and the staleness are exacerbated by what happens around him: "But at my back from time to time I hear / The sound of horns and motors, which shall bring / Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring" (pp. 2375-76). These short lines have already contained two references comprising both the present and the past, from Marvell's *To His Coy Mistress* and John Day's *Parliament of Bees*, the latter itself an allusion to a mythological goddess of chastity and hunting, Diana. Here, the allusion to the goddess Diana is relevant for elucidation.

John Day's lines from *Parliament of Bees* go as follow:
When of the sudden, listening, you shall hear
A noise of horns and hunting, which shall bring
Actaeon to Diana in the spring,
Where all shall see her naked skin... (p. 2376).

John Day makes a shift of meaning to the original Ovid's story of Actaeon in *Metamorphoses* by putting "all shall see her naked skin" (emphasis added). In *Metamorphoses*, Ovid tells that Actaeon, the grandson of Cadmus, wandered to the sacred wood of Diana called Gargaphie. In the depths of the wood there lay a pool of pure water that Diana usually used to bathe after hunting. In his wandering, Actaeon incidentally found the bathing place of Diana and saw her nakedness. Diana then cursed Actaeon into a stag and he was later chased and ravaged by his own hounds (Ovid, pp. 78-80). In Ovid's story, it is only Actaeon who saw the goddess, but John Day shifted the scene of the profanation of divinity into the profanation done by all. The point that is important here, however, is not

John Day's misreading but Eliot's. On the matter of the profanation of the sacred Brooker and Bentley " (1990) make a very interesting comment: "The story conveys a commonplace message: Mortals cannot survive certain kinds of knowledge; they cannot survive looking directly at *naked divinity*" [emphasis added] (p. 134).

In using the references both of Ovid and John Day, Eliot misreads creatively for ironic purpose to fit it in his modern context. The sacred wood is replaced by the dirty and dull canal; the sound of horns and hunting is replaced by that of horns and motors; Diana and the nymphs accompanying her are replaced by Mrs. Porter and her daughter; Actaeon is replaced by Sweeney; and lastly, the washing of Diana in the pool of pure water of spring is replaced by the feet washing in the soda water. Although uncertain about the source of the ballad he quoted, Eliot said that it was reported from Australia [Eliot's note]. The version of the song, which was popular among the Australian troops in World War I, went as follows:

O the moon shines bright on Mrs. Porter
 And on the daughter
 Of Mrs. Porter
 They wash their feet in soda water
 And so they oughter
 To keep them clean (Abrams & Greenblatt, p. 2376)

The feet washing is ironic in Eliot's text and Brooker and Bentley (1990) constitute a "perversion[s] of religious rituals and experiences" (p. 135). The end of this second stanza of this part of the poem ends in a quotation from Verlain's *Parsifal*, a reference to Holy Grail legend: "Et O ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans la coupole" (p. 135) (And O those children's voices singing in the dome). This line depicts the choir sung by the children in the dome of the Grail castle "at a ceremony preceding the restoration of the wounded king and the lifting of the curse from the waste land" (Brooker & Bentley, 1990, p. 135) after he succeeded in resisting all sexual temptation to keep himself pure for the Grail (Abrams & Greenblatt, p. 2376), and in Wagner's *Parzifal*, the questing knight is depicted having "his feet washed before entering the castle of the Grail" (p. 2376). Brooker and Bentley (1990) go on to say that the reference to Mrs. Porter and her daughter is "to debase to triviality both of the foot washing of Christ and the purification of the Fisher King" because in several

versions of the ballad, Mrs. Porter and her daughter are “prostitutes who wash themselves after visits from customers” (p. 135).

Thus, in using the mythological source of Actaeon and Diana accompanied by literary sources from John Day, Andrew Marvell, and Wagner, Eliot shifts the meaning of the scene from the reverence to chastity, purity, and sacredness of the mythological context into debaseness, lust, and profanation of the modern world. In this case Eliot executes Bloom's first revisionary ratio of misprision, *clinamen*, as Eliot goes along with the sources to a certain extent and then swerves away from them.

CONCLUSION

Reading a literary text always involves misreading since it entails an act of interpretation and according to Paul de Man all interpretation is misreading (as cited in Leitch, 1983). In this context, misreading is not a mistake of reading, but giving a new meaning to the available text based on the reader's new context. This is in line with what Leitch stated that a text would only be literary as long as it “permits and encourages misreading” (p. 185).

Misreading is a very creative way of reading literary works that may bring about fresh and interesting outlook. In the analysis above, I have shown that T.S. Eliot misreads the mythological sources that he uses in his poem *The Waste Land*. There are three ways that Eliot executes in misreading the mythological sources, namely *clinamen*, *tessera*, and *kenosis*. The misreading that Eliot did on the mythological sources is meant to give new meaning to the old texts based on Eliot's contemporary context of a world devoid of love, filled with lust, which produced the waste land in the modern world. In a word, Eliot's misreading of the mythological sources is very effective and it enriches their meaning. Eliot has been able to use myths to express his ideas of “the waste land” in his contemporary world.

REFERENCES

- Abrams, M. H. & Greenblatt, S. (Eds.). (2000). *The Norton anthology of English literature*. (7th ed., Vol. 2). New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Bloom, H. (1973). *The anxiety of influence: A theory of poetry*. New York: Oxford UP.

- Brooker, J. S. (1988). When love fails: Reading *The Waste Land* with undergraduates. In J. S. Brooker (Ed.), *Approaches to teaching Eliot's poetry and plays* (pp. 103-108). New York: MLA.
- (1994). *Mastery and escape: T. S. Eliot and the dialectic of modernism*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Brooker, J. S. & Bently, J. (1990). *Reading The Waste Land: Modernism and the limits of interpretation*. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press.
- Brooks, C. (1968). The waste land: Critique of the myth. In J. Martin (Ed.), *A collection of critical essays on "The Waste Land"* (pp. 59-86). Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Hands, A. (1993). *Sources for the poetry of T. S. Eliot*. Oxford: Hadrian Books.
- Leitch, V. B. (1983). *Deconstructive criticism: An advanced introduction*. New York: Columbia UP.
- Ovid. (1955). *Metamorphoses*. trans. Mary M. Innes. London: Penguin Books.
- Smith, G. (1983). *The waste land*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Traversi, D. (1976). *T. S. Eliot the longer poems: The waste land, ash Wednesday, four quartets*. London: Bodley Head.
- Weston, J. L. (1920). *From ritual to romance*. London: Cambridge UP.