ABSTRACT

T. S. Eliot once remarked: “I have tried to point out the importance of the relation of the poem with other poems by other authors and suggested the conception of poetry as a living whole of all the poetry that has ever been written.”¹ The interpretation of his poetry depends on literary tradition and its understanding. By alluding to dead authors, Eliot created an oeuvre that can be fully understood only through research. He also contrasts the contexts of the past and present, and reinforces the importance of borrowing in the creative process. One of the authors that recurs in Eliot’s writing is William Shakespeare. Eliot paid tribute to the Elizabethan playwright through the use of dramatic monologue, quotations and allusions to his themes and motifs. In this way, he expresses his longing for English cultural heritage, as Shakespeare is a symbol of Englishness. This bachelor thesis explores the influence that Shakespeare had on both Eliot’s literary criticism and poetry, primarily in the period from the 1910s to the 1930s. With especial emphasis on Hamlet and Coriolanus, the thesis explores those qualities which Eliot emphasized and which would prove important for his own work, above all “The Love Song of Alfred J. Prufrock,” The Waste Land and Four Quartets, as well as minor poems such as “Ode” and Coriolan.