Preface

A desire to study Faulkner's exploration of human experience has led me to write this thesis. Faulkner is considered as a difficult writer. Many even find him repulsive for the way he follows in the use of language in his fictions. From the beginning to the end of his literary career, William Faulkner had difficulty in winning his right to be regarded as a major American writer. The controversy over his artistic merits and defects, which began with the publication of his first novel *Soldiers' Pay* had not ended by the time of his death and shows no immediate sign of abatement. At one extreme, the most assertive among his admirers are so positive that Faulkner is by far the best writer of prose fiction America has ever produced and they resent any faultfinding. At the other extreme, some equally vocal detractors continue the condemnation of Faulkner as an illiterate who liked to wallow in psychopathic horrors while keeping his laments over the Northern assault to the South.

Many believe that it was Malcolm Cowley who ignited a fresh interest in Faulkner by his publication of *The Portable Faulkner*, a book consisting of assorted pieces of Faulkner's works, which probably led him to win Nobel Prize for literature in the year 1959. Like T.S. Eliot, who revived the metaphysical poets of the late Elizabethan period by pointing out some vital merits hitherto unnoticed in them, thereby arousing fresh interest in their poetry, Cowley, in his preface to *The Portable Faulkner*, pointed out the saga of Yoknapatawpha world as a main clue to which all the pieces of his individual works are fitted giving new significance to the works.

To understand Faulkner as a writer of merit, we should turn to the response
of the Europeans, especially the French critics instead of turning to his native critics. The European critics have praised Faulkner as a major novelist of the twentieth century, and translators have already begun to make his works well known in many European countries. French readers, who are comfortably familiar with experimental trends and innovations throughout modern poetry and prose, find Faulkner's bold idiom understandable and even fascinating. But many Americans, who noticed the glowing tributes sent from Paris to New York concerning Faulkner's art, were either annoyed or indifferent in the early period.

The reappearance of Compson family in Absalom, Absalom! and also the publication of the Compson Appendix in The Portable Faulkner is the result of Faulkner's realization that his fictional world Yoknapatawpha has given him new possibilities of writing fictions with new freedom and new dimension. Faulkner maintained that he had found his "own little postage stamp of native soil" that his talent would not be able to exhaust in his life time. He discovered that the Yoknapatawpha world is a cosmos over which he has complete mastery with the genius and delight of the master creator who could move the chess pieces of his creation at his sweet will, yet all the time leaving behind the fables of human civilization for the reader.

His Yoknapatawpha County is an important fictional strategy that serves like a patent of his fictional world which he alone could use. All the major fictions discussed here have their background to this fictitious world. So in the first chapter I have tried to focus on this world on both physical and symbolical levels. The physical and their moral implications are deeply interlinked. Physically it gives a sense of history which enables the reader to form his profound understanding of
the implications of his novel. On the level of symbolic meaning it yields to interpretations which carry universal and timeless moral significance.

In the subsequent four chapters an attempt has been made to examine Faulkner's ways of exploring human experience through his major fictions. In the seemingly orderlessness of his creations, there is a profound consistency of the idea of legend and reality, which turns out to be a matter of great significance as this idea emerges clearly with its various implications in human affairs in the progressive revelations of his novels. The contrast of legend and reality used by Faulkner in his novels indicates the validity of one basic assumption that his characters, saturated with the traits of illusion arising from their attempt to take shelter in the former as their security, become bizarre figures. Taking this lead I have tried to show Faulkner's skillful examination of the shades and layers of this problem in the individual novels discussed in this thesis.

The sixth chapter of this thesis deals with Faulkner's technical and stylistic achievements. As the title of the chapter suggests it has been divided into two sections: the first part dealing with Faulkner's technical achievement and the second part throwing light on his examination of the use of language in the formation of behavioural and psychological response of characters. And I have given a brief analysis of the thesis in the concluding chapter.