A study of the variations on war theme in the major writers leads to an understanding of the post war problems. It is peculiar, though all of these writers Ernest Hemingway, Norman Mailer, James Jones and Joseph Heller lived through World War II, no two writers were confined to a single problem. Their touching upon various major problems presents a collective picture of the post world war society seething with physical, social, political and spiritual issues. The other, less important problems, complete the picture.

Physical violence as used by Ernest Hemingway was simplistically interpreted as a means to create horror. It is fallacious to dismiss it as so simple. Hemingway intends physical violence as the severest test of character and it presents the clearest vision to study life. It is the simplest form of violence which becomes an artistic, integral part of the novel. The physical nature of violence is described to be the correlative for hopelessness of existence.

Life is meaningless and Hemingway shows through a simple but effective symbol of a column of ants scrambling
over a burning log, the frantic but meaninglessness of human struggle. Or it is used through the wounded and severed legs of Passini to show the social disintegration. Physical violence is not just presented as something inflicted upon the main characters. It is also inflicted by main characters. Frederick Henry kicks the carabiniers and sets himself free before diving into the river. Hemingway uses physical violence as a means of advancing philosophical concepts.

Norman Mailer finds the American society sick and corrupt. He traces the origin of these maladies to totalitarianism. It is the other form of dictatorship and fascism which is characterised by the syndrome of oppression. Mailer does not see his characters as total "beasts" or total "seers." Each is a hybrid of these two. The bestiality of the G.I.'s is the result of their being conditioned to wartime behaviour by the warlords. Man is not afraid of becoming a "beast," but of becoming a "man." The conflict in the man between these two causes disharmony and man has to aim at harmony. The charge levelled against Mailer that he holds no ray of hope to humanity is baseless. Mailer contends, though man is corrupted and confused to the point of hopelessness, there are limits beyond which he cannot be pushed. Man yearns for
better world. But, unfortunately all his efforts are futile. All the characters whether they embody more good or more bad are humbled at the end.

James Jones the mythical American depicts the struggles of an insignificant group for dignity in *From Here to Eternity*. The sufferings of these characters are due to injustices inflicted upon them. Jones also offers solutions for these sufferings. But his depiction of the sufferings is more effective than his prescribing solutions. All the underdogs, whether they are victims of injustice like Maggio and Prewitt, or less sympathetic like Bloom and Preme win our sympathy. Jones sees all human beings as similar souls. The souls have been isolated because they have fallen away from God, since they are totally involved in "self." The "self" is looked upon as an enemy and it has to be subdued, to enable the soul to unite with God. Incidents occur in one's life that break his ego and lift the soul above animal level. At the end of Time, through reincarnations all souls become one with God.

Heller as a protest novelist deals with the problem of bondage and freedom. His protagonist Yossarian finds himself trapped in bondage which is the army. He hopes to get into a society like that of Sweden, where people are free and intelligent. He secures freedom which adds to the growth of his personality. The army and its exercises are as absurd as the
interpretation of *catch-22*.

Milo Minderbinder bombards his own squadron having entered into an agreement with the 'Germans' for a profit of cost plus six per cent. Thus profiteers make money out of the war situation. Yossarian's achieving freedom is transcending the situation which is characterised by absurdity. Thus Yossarian secures metaphysical freedom, through social and political freedom. The army, in this sense, is a symbol of bondage.

The four novelists, as it has been expected of them as war writers, have expressed their concepts of the army. Their notion of the army is same in the sense none sees it as a solution to society's problems. They bring out the various features of the established organisations which have been doing harm rather than good.

Ernest Hemingway took his life violently as his father had done. He has been known as a violent man. From this viewpoint critics tried to explain his use of violence as nothing significant or meaningful. Studies by Kenneth Mark Rosen reveal that violence was not used by Hemingway to create horrendous scenes. Mark Rosen has also classified violence into three types: Physical, Verbal and that of repressed self aggression.
As it has been pointed out Hemingway presents the simplest of these, the physical violence. The physical violence is the integral part of the scheme of the novel, which brings about "grace under pressure."

Mailer presents violence in *The Naked and the Dead* though he hates it. War in the novel is the background of the generalised external crisis. For Mailer combat is the chief means by which the higher laws of life become incarnate in human experience. War is the external subject and the internal theme is "the crisis in human values - identity, humanity, men and the nature of their enemies in our time."

In Jones's *From Here to Eternity* erring soldiers are sent to the stockade which is detestable. The violent punishment to which soldiers are subjected makes it a nightmare. Prewitt is Jones's spokesman. Prewitt refuses to box in his new company, because he has blinded a man. Captain Holmes tells sergeant Warden to give him treatment. The power mad brigadier General Slater recruits Dynamite Holmes. All of these details speak of James Jones's aversion to violence.

Heller treats violence in his own inimitable way in *catch-22*. Milo Minderbinder bombards his own squadron
for profit. Mately's whore is ubiquitous with her knife to take Yossarian's life. Boys on either side of the bomb line are laying down their lives for what they are told is their country. All of these incidents are absurd. So is the violence which is of no meaning.

One of Frederick Henry's major concerns in the novel *A Farewell to Arms* is the rejection of the arms of war. It amounts to escaping the army. He has understood the meaninglessness of life. The struggle one has to put up in it, though frantic, is also meaningless. If a man is to glean any meaning from existence which is seething with violence he has to cling to honesty. Mailer looks at the army as a microcosm of the American society sick and corrupt. In it the totalitarian forces try to gain control. If the forces succeed in gaining the army the latter becomes a "non living" organisation. Forces of liberalism represented by Hearn try to contain the fascism of Cummings. But liberalism fails being ineffective. It is an indication to Cummings that fascism is taking possession of America. Thus the beast in the fascist general's nature rises. When it rises it is venomous and it goes to the extent of taking Hearn's life.

James Jones's novel *From Here to Eternity* is the first great army novel given to the American nation. It is about a
peace time army. Jones's novel is a proletarian one.

Jones also presents the army as a microcosm of the corrupt society. In it there is place for favouritism and machinations. There are wonderful characters like Prewitt and Warden in the army. Demolishing such characters is a loss to humanity. Unfortunately all of these characters struggling for dignity are eventually doomed. As Warden sees the coming of war he is already towards submerging his individuality in the anonymity and that is expected of every true soldier.

Heller's army being placed on a romantic Mediterranean island of Pianosa has no rational design at all. Absurdity rules the island on which everything is irrational. More than that Heller presents the army as a symbol of bondage. When the protagonist is aware of it, he plays tricks and then protests to escape it.

The four writers also differ in their attitudes towards God. None of them is an atheist, but none has faith in Him. Hemingway treats the earth as a physical godless world. His protagonist does not look up to God in a crisis. He behaves as if prayer is ineffective. Mailer has scant regard for God. The soldiers on Anopopei are aware of the presence of a force which is God, but they do not depend upon him for help. There is an eternal conflict between God and the Devil which is
between good and evil. Man is not a helpless victim of the conflict. He is the battle ground of the conflict and he is free to align himself with any force. Mailer contends if God is taken as a creator and not as the Omnipotent or the architect of destiny, all the evils are the record of devil's victory over God. Thus in the present novel Mailer takes a malevolent view of God which he subsequently alters.

James Jones voices different views on God. He rejects the Old Testament's God of Vengeance as well as the New Testament's God of Forgiveness. He wants an ever evolving God who neither sees, nor hears, nor talks of sin, since there is no sin.

Jones's theory of God has a touch of Emerson's concept, since it explains Him as an amalgam of ever evolving souls through various reincarnations. By the end of Time all the souls, lifted above the animal level through subduing the self, will amalgamate with God.

Colonel Cathcart's ambition to get his photo printed in The Saturday Evening Post in emulation of an American Colonel in England, by holding prayers is discouraged by the chaplain. The chaplain says that the enlisted men and the officers pray to the same God and He is likely listening to
Haller does not take God seriously. Everything he sees around is absurd which cannot be if the Biblical God is serious about his created world.