O'Neill's deeply personal and social experience is expressed through myths used in his plays. He attempted to underscore the universality of man's basic oneness. As a dramatist of perplexing emotional upsurge he probed into the intricacies of human relationship in all its baffling ambiguity and far-reaching connotations. The myths and symbols have a creative role in his plays, as they represented the totality of his experience and coloured his imagination.

O'Neill was a dramatist of great imaginative power. A poet at heart he rendered his vision and sensibility compatible with the demands of the modern theatre. When his imagination - the penetrailia of his intricate urges and tremors of intuition - confronted and probed the outer reality, the inner world maneuvered the vital powers of his creativity. In this process myths and symbols gave a significant means of understanding the phenomena as perceived and felt by him. The use of the myth of the family curse, filial conflict in Beyond the Horizon and Long Day's Journey Into Night, and the myth of Jason and Medea in the structure of The First Man is suggestive of terrifying psychic experiences of his childhood and early youth.

Writing for the theatre O'Neill expressed his experience in terms of myths, for it allowed him to present the complications of the frightening forces that lay behind each explosive catastrophe. He incorporated the contemporary American myths to indict modern man's mad pursuits of materialism which made the world a spiritual and cultural wasteland. He denounced the contemporary emphasis on aquisition of material power and pelf by using the myth of success,
in Marco Millions in which Marco stands as a symbol of modern man in quest for becoming a millionaire even at the cost of losing out his soul and at best achieving only an ironic success.

O'Neill, the fashioner of the dramatic form, utilized the conventions of the Greek tragedy by preserving the dominant emotions of fear, horror, and a brooding sense of malignant fate. He adapted the classical myth of Electra in Mourning Becomes Electra to exploit the rich pastures of the Greek myths for the expression of his contemporary experience of disillusionment with the prevailing order. With his consummate mastery of the dramatic craft, and with a spirit of adventure and fortitude he treated the fabric of his plays with the classical myths without having any extant tradition of their use on the American stage. It proved to be an efficacious means of seeking judicious explanation and verification of a viable human experience of the elan vital. He sought to justify his use of myths by moulding the native content into classical form, maintaining the native ideas of democracy, and blurring the class distinctions, by placing it in the contemporary milieu and modernizing the setting and enlargening the scope of action to attain universal relevance.

The incorporation of the classical myth in the themes of his plays with essentially American background became not only imaginative extension of reality in his hands, but it helped to preserve the unique individuality of the characters also. The playwright's deviations from the original myths provided him with a rare power of accommodating new sociological imperatives in maintaining its unity in the basic patterns of myths.
O'Neill's was a creative spirit of unique richness and flexibility. He kept the theatrical devices shuffling without repeating the manner of earlier achievements, and never being content, did not allow them to be well enough alone. He progressed from early naturalism to expressionism and on to the brink of surrealism, but all through his symbolic intent remained ubiquitous in all his plays. Though he never claimed himself to be a symbolist, the echoes of symbols reverberate through all his creative strivings. The whole corpus of his artistic creations concentrated on the inner, emotional conflicts conveyed through symbols. Thus, symbols revealed the meaning and relevance of O'Neill's social vision and integrity of his art.

O'Neill portrayed the new social reality which had its moorings in his profound knowledge of character and society acquired in his youth and in later years of vast reading and reflection. He attempted to portray his spiritual aridity and moral exhaustion in the symbol of the dynamo. The nature symbols as the hills, the elms, the fountain, the sea, and the fog provided brooding background to the tragic frustration of his characters. Even the characters like Yank, Juan and Marco become symbols of modern man in quest for realization of his dreams. The South Sea island in Mourning Becomes Electra becomes an island of peace where all the characters long to go.

The symbols are woven inextricably in the expressionistic plays of O'Neill with a view to intensifying the thematic content. The symbolism of the masks in The Great God Brown seems very confusing at the first glance, as they are frequently shifted. But when Dion Anthony and Brown are considered as symbols of the two aspects of a
single individual, the shroud of obscurity becomes demystified. Thus, the symbols help in revealing the playwright's intentions and the hidden motive of the play.

Further, the symbolism of nomenclature, on which O'Neill erected the structure of his plays, served to bind the central incidents and episodes in a coherent and viable dramatic form. It reveals the playwright's awareness of the connotations and relevance that the nomenclature of the characters evokes. The use of onomastic associations created by these names runs through the whole gamut of O'Neill's writing. At other times, the names like Yank, Long, Brown, Marco, Melody and Adam symbolize the origin, occupation, traits of milieu, and personality of the characters. The name-symbolism giving new dimensions to the themes of the play reveals the protagonist as allegorical Everyman-a modern mythic Adam on the universal pilgrimage from divine origin to eternal repose.

O'Neill enriched the thematic relevance of his plays by using symbols without adhering to any specific dogma. Some of the critics have overlooked his achievements as a dramatic artist for not having paid enough attention to attaining poetically viable language of drama and lacking in felicity of expression. But O'Neill, while writing in an age of prose and realism, dealt with a dramatic content whose substance was highly poetic though the language hardly tends towards it. He wove a string of symbols in his plays and used such attendant devices extensively which both enriched his language and his dramatic expositons in his plays, though he never claimed to be a symbolist. He touched upon some of the most vibrant chords of human nature, and
articulated numerous tangles and concerns which could not be amenable to conveying of meaning except through the use of symbols.

With his artistic imagination O'Neill expressed and exteriorised the otherwise inexpressible experiences and mysteries of life by exploiting the vocabulary of symbolism. His varied and intricate symbolism expressed his vision through the powerful medium of his idées drama. If his plays were to be shorn of symbols, they will be rendered without any artistic import, or any abiding value of any significance and meaningful coherence of dramatic art of which one could be justly proud.

O'Neill's importance as a preeminent writer of modern tragedy lies in his ability to bring into relief those contours of human dilemma which had defied being confined in a reducible human experience and aim at conveying that sense of life which underlies all his belief in values of man's existence. This meaning is attained through a fusion of myths and symbols in his struggle to achieve a coherence which asserts itself in the doomed heroes of O'Neill in the relevance of their lives.

As a dramatist of the human fate grappling to find the quest for certainty in the scathing conflict of unrelieved darkness of the human soul, O'Neill exhibited a unique artistic integrity in his Promethean defiance against whatever operative forces prevailed over man's perennial struggle to assert himself. What gave his tragic vision its depth and spiritual sanctity was the ability to see through one's inward agony of the doomed, hapless victims of persecution in his harsh and insane world. Such was the intensity and sharpness of this tragic fate
that the cutting edge of its penetrating layers of meaning needed mythical re-enactment in the annals of man's continuing conflict against a larger-than-life Force. Myths, thus, became indispensable to an effective evaluation of Man's fate in our time and the way it had found its acceptance with the great masters of the Attic tragedy.