

(6)

three women in the play experience their individual journeys in their own way and the way they experience these journeys is symbolic of the wider issues of male oppression, racism, religion and woman's place in society. It is interesting to see that all these women are from three different races: Patient is black, Elsa is British while Helen is Afrikaner. All three of them unite for the greater good - to fight against male dominance and stereotypes. As the title of the play indicates, these three women arrive at their Mecca in their separate ways and in their own fashion.

(9) ✓

Elsa Barlow has her own journey in the play, literal and metaphorical. Her first emotional journey starts when she gets romantically involved with David - (a married man). She experiences first-hand the oppressive nature of a love relationship. A woman has no voice in relationship except to be obedient and bear children who in turn become her burden and responsibility. In a nutshell, Elsa has just recently separated from her married boyfriend David, who had earlier promised to leave his wife for Elsa. When things did not work out the way she had thought they would, she had an abortion. The act of abortion leaves her emotionally scarred for life.

imagination and artistic freedom. Her candles and mirrors represents creativity and light. She began to have visions of "Mecca", a city of light and beauty. She responded to these visions by moulding camels which signify endurance and faith and hope that no matter how hard things are, she would ultimately reach her Mecca - a state artistic achievement. However her journey was not without incident. The community of Bethesda shunned her and vilified her. They made her out to be crazy. Markus, the local pastor, wanted her moved from her house to an old-age home in a bid to stop her from producing her artistic mouldings. They had expected her to live quietly and help out at church after the death of her husband, Stefanus.

(11) ✓

On her journey to enlightenment, Helen also moulded wisemen. The wisemen pointed to the religion of Islam, a different religion from christianity. In a way, Helen was introducing a new way of life so that there will be diversity in this backward and stagnant Bethesda. She wanted to bring life to it and make it grow out of its conservatism. The owls she moulded pointed to her and to others who were searching for ways that would lead to their individual "Meccas". Owl signifies wisdom and by extension, it suggests that people would need to be as wise as an owl in order to...

Elsa is also on a journey to find <sup>her</sup> and liberate people around her, especially ~~black~~. She is first and foremost against the apartheid Government that discriminates against coloured blacks. That is why she finds herself in trouble with her school's board of directors because she asked her coloured students to write a letter to the president about racial and apartheid. When pressed to offer an apology she declines. This is actually leading her her journey of self-fulfilment. She is ~~she is~~ affected in two ways when she crosses ~~p~~ with Patience. She is affected emotionally when she sees Patience's baby. She is reminded of the abortion she committed. The sight of Patience reminds ~~of~~ her of the results of apartheid.

(10) ✓  
Elsa also undertakes a physical journey from Cape-town to Bethesda. The journey is important to her in two ways. She sees herself in Helena and also the journey ~~at~~ makes her achieve enlightenment. So, the physical journey to Bethesda is a symbol one. It symbolizes her freedom and emancipation from male dominance,

Oppression  
On the other side, Helena is on a metaphorical journey to Mecca, a city of ~~of~~ faith and inspiration and creativity. for

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their journeys to Mecca. The mermaids signify that people can from different races, different religious inclination, different ages can co-exist in harmon and build up a vibrant society. The play ends with the promise that Helen will reach her "Mecca" by fulfilling her talent as an artist and this would make her life meaningful and worth living.

(2) ✓  
Patience undertakes a physical journey from the farm where her late husband had worked. She is now a single mother and her journey is aimless. She does not have a destination in mind and this in itself suggests that Patience is unlikely to arrive at her Mecca. She is a woman oppressed by the apartheid system as well as her male counterparts. For her, the hope of a "Mecca" would prove elusive. The baby she has is an added burden that would sink her down and make her another victim.

Apart from Patience, women in the play claim a hard-fought victory because they are, at last, free to make their decisions about their lives without any influence from men.

THEMATIC ISSUES: Aging, freedom, racism, rebellion, religion, art, women's place in society.

Since her husband's death, Miss Helen has lived alone and transformed her home into a work of art by making statues: cement wise men, camels, owls, mermaids. She also decorated the inside of her house with dozens of candles and mirrors. She has managed to create her own "Mecca of beauty and freedom" in the little town of Bethesda. Helena has become friends with a young teacher from Cape Town, Elsa Barlow, who sees an independent and artistic woman in Helen, while others view her as an old woman who went crazy after husband's death.

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In response to Helen's letter of distress, Elsa drives from Cape Town to make a surprise visit on the same day the local Pastor, Marius Beylereld, comes to Miss Helen's house to help with her application for to go and live at the local Old-age Home. Marius is serious about Helen moving to the old-age home because he is worried about her safety (she recently burned herself by accident), secondly, he is worried that Helen is committing idolatry by moulding her statues. Thirdly, Marius secretly loves Helen and by moving her to the old-age home, he would be closer to her and he would not have to compete with Helen's statues for attention. However, Helen finally makes a stand and refuses to go to live at the old-age home. She decides to live alone in her Mecca instead. Elsa Barlow gives her ~~the~~ strength and

to make up her mind at a time when the whole town of Bethesda is against her.

The play is exploring women's place in society and religious tolerance. For Helen, "Mecca" represents imagination and artistic freedom. Her candles and mirrors represent creativity and light. The community of Bethesda had expected Miss Helen to live quietly and help out at church after the death of her husband, Stefanus. However, Miss Helen began to have visions of "Mecca", a city of light and beauty. She responded to these visions by ~~pouring~~ ~~candles~~, wise men, owls, mermaids and sticking pieces of mirrors in the insides of her house. As a result of this, the whole community avoided her. She looked different to them. Marius, the pastor, is the only one who continued to visit her, because of his strong love for Helen.

(14)

Elsa Barlow has her own problems. She has recently separated from her married boyfriend, David, who had earlier promised to leave his wife for her. Second, she has had an abortion. She is also in trouble with her school's board of directors because she asks her colored students to write a letter to the president about racism and apartheid. She is an outspoken woman who loves Helen for her self-expression and self-fulfillment in a society where women are oppressed by their male counterparts. It is Elsa who points out to Helen that the community of Bethesda are jealous of her life as an artist and that