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Poster Presentation 32

**HAIL MARY: ZORAIDA'S SEARCH FOR A
CHRISTIAN GODDESS**

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In addition to captivating its readers with the exciting and inspirational adventures of an anachronistic yet good-intentioned knight, Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra's *Don Quixote de la Mancha* also presents us with certain important social and political issues of Spain's history. The conflict between the Christian culture and the Islamic culture is apparent throughout Cervantes' masterpiece, and the subject of religious conversion, be it forced or freely chosen, is also raised. The character Zoraida, a Moorish woman desiring to become a Christian, presents an interesting case study of this relationship between the two faiths. Although Zoraida seems to be simply moving from one patriarchal society to another, Cervantes, in reality, has created a female character in search of a powerful and admirable woman to worship. Within Catholicism, Zoraida, and many religious of the past and present, have found the Virgin Mary to be just this powerful woman, an encounter which has greatly influenced their manner of prayer and worship.