

Spiritual truth in literature of shusaku endo

Literature



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Spiritual Truth In Literature Of Shusaku Endo

If Otsu dies at the end of the book, does he die as a Christian martyr or as an idealistic humanitarian? Support your argument, using evidence from *Deep River*.

This novel by Shusaku Endo is in some ways a spiritual experience. It takes the story of people seeking absolutes and shows them just how ambiguous life can really be sometimes. They are looking for spiritual truth in a filthy, polluted river which is also surrounding by feelings of love and regeneration. The story of Otsu is in some sense the defining one. A disgraced Christian priest, he dies as a idealistic humanitarian. Doctrine and dogma are not for him—he is interested in something more. In the end Otsu is able to show the reader “ the difference between being alive and truly living.”

Naruse's relationship with Otsu is at the heart of how the reader perceives the character and eventually comes to interpret his death as an idealist. Dressed in rags and essentially a penitent, Otsu is seen by Naruse in a completely new light—very different than how she saw him as a young man when she cruelly spurned him. He has lived his belief. He is not the sort of religious figure who leads a superficial spiritual life or does so in order to gain status in society. He is principled down to his very last breath. As Endo writes towards the novel's end: “ Otsu's words were substantiated by the life of misfortune he had led.”

However, Otsu does not teach Naruse anything about the Christian doctrine. Instead he reveals to her a sense of possibility. She says in the novel, “ I have learned though that there is a river of humanity. Though I still don't know what lies at the end of that flowing river. But I feel as though I've started to understand what I was yearning for through all the many mistakes

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of my past.” He is changing her idea of what is possible and what it means to believe and to lead a good life. But he isn't handing her a copy of the Bible and telling her she should read it. He is living an example that is more complex than any particular teaching. Otsu's god is also the god of all other religions. It could be said he is pantheist who believes god is everywhere and in everything. That is part of the reason he calls god an “ onion.” Onions have many layer and it is clear that Otsu believes god has many layers and faces too.

Unlike in traditional Christianity which is about duality and good and evil. Otsu seems to find things ambiguous as do all of the chracters who see moral ambiguity in Indian culture and society and the teeming crowds are the Ganges River and the living mixing with the dead. Life is more complicated than any religious teachings. It is more various and it makes less sense. Otsu is a believer, but it is hard to say he is a believer of a specific version of Christianity. He is more of a believer that the human spirit is powerful and can do almost anything. Therefore it makes sense to think of him less as a Christian than as an idealistic humanist.