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-Chief Editor

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## “Darkness Visible”: Critiquing Orchida Mukherjee’s *An Ode to Illusions*

Nitai Saha

Orchida Mukherjee has conjured up a nihilistic world in her collection of poems titled “An Ode to Illusions”. In the present world, the purity of the soul has been corrupted by the destructive forces that accompany chaos. Her poems reflect the vast indifferent universe and the loss of mercy and pity in the hearts of people. Mukherjee in her own characteristic way acknowledges some common sufferings and wrongs inflicted upon humanity at large. At the same time, she seeps into women lives, and explores the territory of longing and yearning of women. Mukherjee writes in her usual frank open-mindedness about the predicament of women in general in her poems. The confessional poems in the collection depend upon the honesty of the writer, and Orchida Mukherjee has justified it by being self in her poetic works. But there are attempts at transcendence in the voice of resistance in an otherwise meaningless existence.

**Keywords:** Nihilistic world, Confessional, transcendence, resistance

Goethe’s estimation that “Altogether, man is a darkened being; he knows not whence he comes, nor whither he goes: he knows little of the world, least of himself” (404) can be a great cue to grasp the world Orchida Mukherjee has conjured up in her collection of poems titled *An Ode to Illusions*.

The opening poem of the volume “An Ode to Illusions” acquaints us with Mukherjee’s nihilistic vision of the world: “An earthling— /raving and alone, /cosseted and thrown/ tormented by harrowing agonies...” (AOI1) In her elucidation of being ‘An earthling, bizarre and stark’ (AOI1), the purity of the soul has been corrupted by the destruction that accompanies chaos. The poem “Born into a World” reflects the vast indifferent universe and the loss of mercy and pity in the hearts of people. Metaphors cover the poem “Not your fault” starting from “saccharine lips”, “bohemian ribs” until “hazelnut eyes”. The poem “It would have been better” is an idyllic call for ‘two parallel’ lives, ‘neither intersecting/nor touching each other’ so as to shun ‘living futile lives’. (AOI14)

“Where are the Gods” is revelatory in nature that questions the very existence of