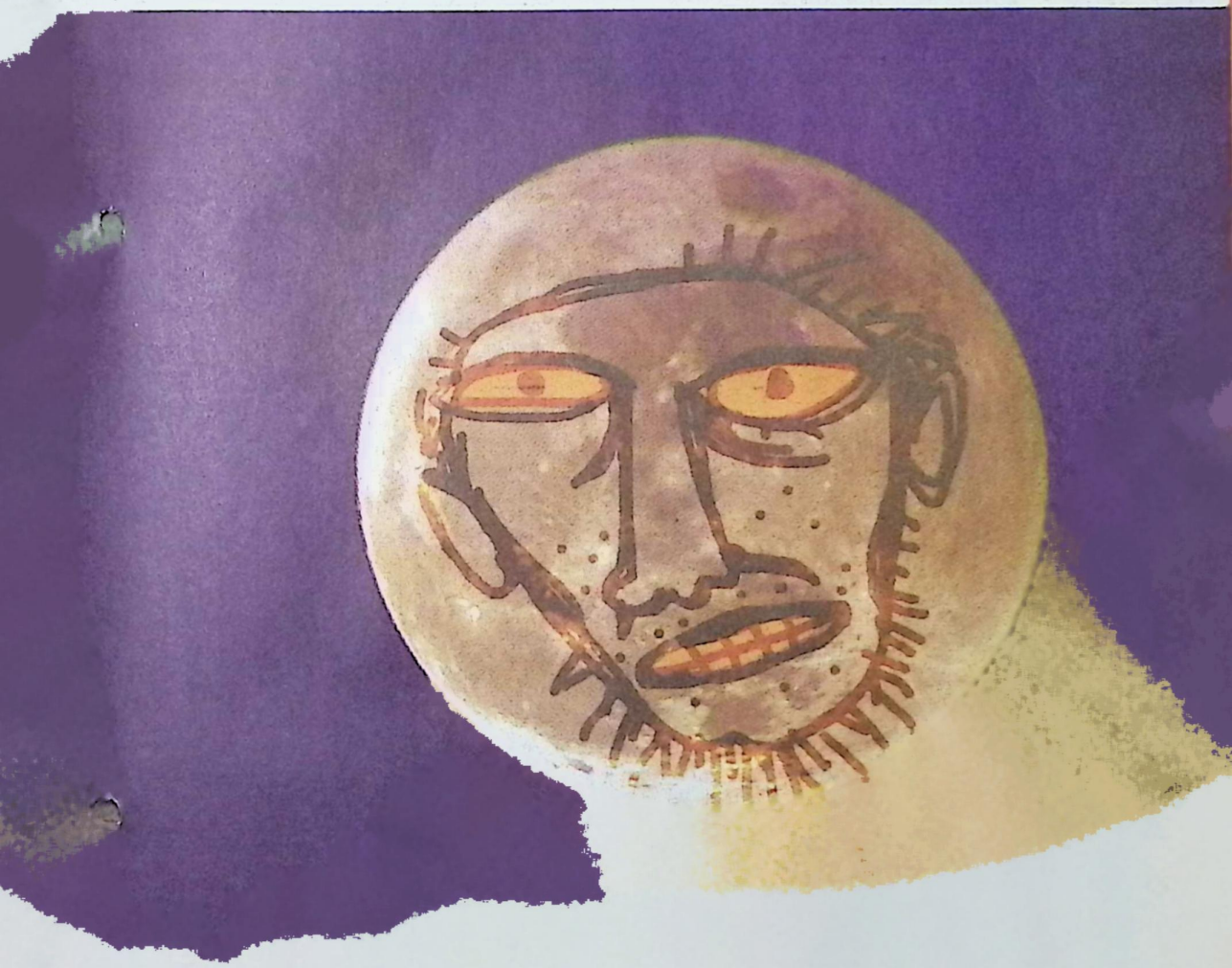
shame we cannot easily live down. This collaborator, of course, has by now had his comeuppance, with loads of young Bengalis all posting their own images on the moon and at least one naughty man noting in a cartoon that the proverbial old woman on the moon is now in a state of pregnancy. The arrow of suspicion points at the collaborator.



The purity of the moon needs to be restored, in the interest of faith and poetry. Muslims all over the world observe some of their most significant religious occasions on a sighting of the new moon. Hindu women observe fasts in the light of the moon as a mark of respect and love for their husbands. There are all the songs we once sang about love and the moon in our youth. Andy Williams' *Moon River* and Frank Sinatra's *Fly Me to the Moon*, besides a load of melodies around the moon in Bengali and Urdu, have defined our approach to aesthetics.

The moon has been worshipped by tribes and races throughout the course of recorded time. The sea has been in spate and the tides have risen owing to the presence of the full moon in the sky; and moonstruck lovers, having had a surfeit of lunar gleam falling on them, have gone beautifully mad in the realms of poetry. Dogs have bayed at the moon and the ghosts of dead men have made merry in the silences of cemeteries. Werewolves, we have been informed, have prowled the wooded regions of the earth on nights of brilliant moonshine. Porphyria's lover strangled her with her long hair because he loved her too much, because she was his moon who had become everybody's moon. That was his way of possessing her for all time.

The moon, in ways bigger than we can imagine, speaks for us, with all our virtues and our frailties. The moon is we. It was Kahlil Gibran who told us not very long ago, "We are all like the bright moon; we still have our darker side."

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