

## TRUTH IN MAPS?

HE SAID, 'TELL ME, ASKAR. DO YOU FIND TRUTH IN THE MAPS YOU DRAW?'

My mind became the blotted paper one had covered worthless writings with, but it took me nowhere, it mapped nothing, indicating no pathway to follow. I repeated the question aloud to myself as if to be sure, 'Do I find truth in the maps I draw?' and waited to see if the coarse ink on the blotted brain would dry, and if I would be able to visualize a clearer image, of which I could make better sense myself. All I could see was a beam of dust the sun had stirred nearer the window. I remained silent.

Uncle Hilaal clarified his point more. 'Do you carve out of your soul the invented truth of the maps you draw? Or does the daily truth match, for you, the reality you draw and the maps others draw?'

Now, I walked the pathways of my thoughts cautiously. I was an old man negotiating with his feet (he was nearly blind—longsighted as well as shortsighted—you may as well ask, how can that be? but he was!) the hazardous, slippery staircase of a condemned building, ancient as himself. I was sure everything would collapse on my head before long. With the confidence of one who's regained possession of a mislaid identity: 'Sometimes,' I began to say, 'I identify *a* truth in the maps which I draw. When I identify *this* truth, I label it as such, pickle it as though I were to share it with you, and Salaado. I hope, as dreamers do, that the dreamt dream will match the dreamt reality—that is, the invented truth of one's imagination. My maps invent nothing. They copy a given reality, they map out the roads a dreamer has walked, they identify a notional truth.'

*From Nuruddin Farah, Maps (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 216.*

dw 200/225