Anselm Turmeda (Palma de Mallorca, c. 1355 – Tunis, c. 1423) was a Franciscan friar, theologian, astrologer, writer in Catalan, convert to Islam and customs official at the port of Tunis. Depending on who tells his story, he is remembered as a traitor, martyr, apostate, sage or saint.

He left Mallorca, fleeing a place he could no longer inhabit, crossed the Mediterranean and reinvented himself in Tunis as **Abdallah al-Tarjuman (Abdallah ibn Abdallah al-Tarjuman al-Mayurqi, "the Mallorcan"). Tarjuman** or "translator", was the title he received in recognition of the work he carried out in the service of the Hafsid court in Tunis, where he learned Arabic. While on the northern shores of the Mediterranean he was remembered as a renegade for abandoning his original religion, on the southern shores he was welcomed with open arms.

His tomb, a small mausoleum, stands in the medina of Tunis, at the entrance to the Saddlers' Souk (Souq es-Sekkajine), next to Bab Menara gate, in an ancient walled cemetery. To this day, it continues to receive visitors and remains a prominent landmark in the center of the city. For centuries, Christians and Muslims alike claimed him as their own, unaware that they were referring to the same man. It was not until the nineteenth century that it was discovered that the great author of Catalan literature and the Arab polemicist were one and the same person. Since his death, he has been forgotten, rediscovered, venerated and forgotten several times over. **Turmeda** is, quite simply, a figure who cannot be contained within any category of origin, just as history itself resists any single interpretation.

Clara Carvajal works with social myths—both classical and contemporary—and deconstructs the cultural frameworks that sustain them, in order to reveal the meaning that eludes us while we live within them. It is from this perspective that she approaches *La Disputa del asno*, written in Catalan in Tunis in 1417–1418: a philosophical fable in the form of a debate, in which a friar argues that human beings are superior to other animals, while a donkey, the author's alter ego, argues the opposite. Beneath the guise of a tale, the work humorously dismantles the arguments of religious authority and denounces a Church transformed into a machinery of power abuse. This reading gives rise to a series of gouache drawings on paper, the first step in a broader project aimed at reclaiming the author and his text in the face of the oblivion and censorship that have accompanied them. The animals, drawn in black with an almost childlike simplicity of form, unfold as a catalogue in which every figure is both the same and different. The more elaborately rendered donkey increasingly comes to resemble its author.

The work takes this journey as its starting point to examine our contemporary Mediterranean, exploring it as a space of circulation, exchange and cultural and ideological confrontation. Against the image of a sea separating two shores conceived as irreconcilable worlds, the piece reclaims its historical

condition as a crossroads, where ideas, narratives and intellectual traditions meet, transform and cross borders. *The Disputation* itself is an example of this cultural transmission. **Al-Tarjuman** wrote it in Catalan, basing it on an account from the Rasa'il Ikhwan al-Safa (Epistles of the Brethren of Purity), an encyclopedia of Islamic philosophy with Neoplatonic inspiration that emerged in the Iraqi city of Basra in the 10th century, and whose imprint and influence reached major thinkers such as Ibn Arabi (1165–1240).

Its moralising, naturalistic gaze to animals, which strikes us today as remarkably modern, was already part of a widespread literary tradition in the classical Islamic world, as seen in works such as *Kitab al-Hayawan (The Book of Animals, al-Jahiz, 9th century)* and *Calila wa Dimna (Ibn al-Muqaffa', 8th century).* All of this formed part of a vast intellectual traffic that crossed the Mediterranean and would later nourish the European Renaissance. Humanism thus preserves an Islamic ideological, scientific and intellectual archive that Europe has yet to fully acknowledge.

Still relatively little known, the figure of **Al-Tarjuman** reminds us that the cultural borders we take for granted today are themselves historical constructions, and that for centuries people lived, wrote and thought across them.

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