

NIGHTBOAT BOOKS
PRESS RELEASE

INVASIVE SPECIES
MARWA HELAL

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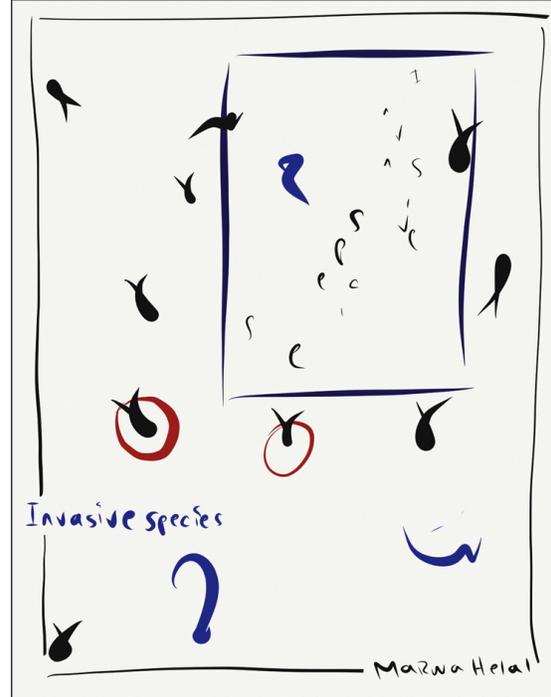
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A vernacular debut that uncompromisingly journeys towards its sole destination: the decolonization of the imagination

In *Invasive species*, Marwa Helal’s searing politically charged poems touch on our collective humanity and build new pathways for empathy, etching themselves into memory. This work centers on urgent themes in our cultural landscape, creating space for unseen victims of discriminatory foreign (read: immigration) policy: migrants, refugees—the displaced. Helal transfers lived experiences of dislocation and relocation onto the reader by obscuring borders through language.

Marwa Helal voyages across borders of genre, form, and faith to deliver us beyond simple citizenship and into a higher understanding of our *leaving note* dreams. These poems are travelin’ papers—inventive, hard fought, sweat swollen passports into an America that bristles with hope through the same mouth that curses it’s home-grown. This is the arrival of a poet whose work huddles you in like a small and human shelter, squares you by the shoulder, looks you in the eye until you find yourself saying it with her—*i’ve grown tired of keeping a safe distance.*—**TYEHIMBA JESS**

If poetry is a history of the people, *Invasive species* is a critical chronicle of our times. Marwa Helal’s work uncovers the personal toll of policies and language derived in exceedingly white and oppressive vacuums. Helal unflinchingly delivers a combustible amalgam of docupoetics, memoir and formal innovation that enacts the heartache of longing for rest in an unwelcoming land—a land where no one truly sees you yet everyone knows you’re there. This debut is a brilliant light that exposes the rusty apparatus of the colonizer’s toolbox while deepening the ongoing conversation around immigration, boundary and human rights.—**AIREA D MATTHEWS**

Inventive. Undomesticated. *Invasive species* is a lively reworking on English, its deadly syntax of interrogation, of interview, questionnaire, cubicle, and cartography through a “beast of no nation.” Written of distance, in displacement, Helal’s poems require a new language, a language she builds nimbly, steadily. The result is gorgeous and gutting, rising to its own invocation, “let every letter represent a human standing in protest,” inviting us to rise as well.—**SOLMAZ SHARIF**

MARWA HELAL is the author of the chapbook *I Am Made To Leave I Am Made To Return* and winner of *BOMB* Magazine’s Biennial Contest. Born in Al Mansurah, Egypt, Helal currently lives in Brooklyn, New York.

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