While researching in Nantes, a port city enriched by the slave trade, celebrated French novelist Fabienne Kanor encountered a chilling report written in 1774 by the commander of a slave ship, Le Soleil. Captain Louis Mosnier explained the loss of valuable “cargo” when fourteen African women escaped from the ship’s hold and leaped into the sea, rather than be taken into slavery. Half of them drowned or were eaten by sharks.

From this historical episode, Kanor has composed a powerful novel that shifts our focus from commerce to the women themselves. In this polyphonic work, each woman tells her own story.