From translation to publication: Slovenian literature and its pathways in France

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DOI: 10.31577/WLS.2026.18.3.9
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Translation of Slovenian literature. French publishing field. Translator agency. Networked literary spaces. Symbolic capital.

This article examines how literary translations from Slovenian, a peripheral language, came to be published in France between 1992 and 2025. After outlining the Slovenian–French publishing landscape, it presents case studies based on interviews with three translators. The analysis demonstrates that publication depended primarily on sustained mediation and collaboration involving a small number of translators and other literary actors, on the central role of the small-scale publishing pole, and on the mobilization of different forms of capital.

This work was supported by ARIS, the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (research core funding No. P6-0265).

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The path from translation to publication is rarely straightforward, and it often involves a complex network of actors, actions, and interactions. This article[1] examines these dynamics through a study of Slovenian literature translated into French, focusing on the largely invisible processes and relations through which translations sometimes reach publication. At issue, then, is the intermediate space between translation and publication, where literary projects may be advanced, delayed, reshaped, or abandoned.

The international circulation of literature, which "depends mostly on translation" (Sapiro 2008, 158), is shaped by interacting economic, political, and sociocultural factors (Heilbron 1999, 2008; Sapiro 2008). Translation into major languages such as French, which retains a central position in the international translation system and a long-standing literary prestige (Heilbron 1999, 2008; cf. Sapiro 2015), may confer broader international visibility on works from peripheral literary systems such as the Slovenian one (Juvan 2019; cf. van Es and Heilbron 2015). At the same time, central book markets are generally more self-sufficient because of their high level of domestic production, and therefore the proportion of translations is lower there than in more peripheral countries (Heilbron 1999). Moreover, publishing translated literature entails greater financial risk, especially when translations come from languages other than English and from relatively unknown authors (Heilbron 2008; Sapiro 2008; van Es and Heilbron 2015). The case of Slovenian literature in France can be situated within this broader structural and economic context: Slovenian has long accounted for less than 1% of all translated titles, thereby occupying a distinctly marginal position in the French translation market (Mezeg, Žigon, and Rozman 2024, 221).

Previous comparative research (e.g. Rozman, Žigon, and Mezeg 2023; Mezeg, Žigon, and Rozman 2024) has shown that Slovenian literature also occupies a peripheral position in other target-language markets, notably the German-speaking market and Italy, although the number of published translations has been considerably higher there, reflecting geographical proximity to Slovenia and strong historical, political, and cultural ties. From 2014 onwards, Slovenian cultural policy placed particular emphasis on translations into German in preparation for Slovenia's Guest of Honor presentation at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2023, further contributing to the increase in published translations. By contrast, relations between Slovenia and France have been far less extensive in these respects (Mezeg, Žigon, and Rozman 2024), while the French literary field has been described as structurally less open to literature from Central and Eastern Europe, particularly poetry (Métayer 2019).

The period under study (1992–2025) coincides with profound political, economic, institutional, and cultural transformations in Slovenia following its independence from Yugoslavia in 1991 and its accession to the European Union in 2004. As a small state, Slovenia has regarded the international promotion of its culture as an important means of enhancing its visibility abroad. This orientation has been reflected in increasingly systematic support – through newly established institutions and funding schemes – for the international circulation of Slovenian literature in translation (Blatnik 2023). Nevertheless, previous research (Rozman 2022, 329–331) shows that between 1991 and 2021, support for translations into French

remained considerably lower than for translations into Croatian, English, German, Hungarian, and Italian.

These observations raise the question of how translations of Slovenian literary works nevertheless reached publication in France, and through which networks and forms of mediation this became possible. Following Michaela Wolf and Alexandra Fukari's (2007) conception of a sociology of translation as an umbrella term encompassing different sociological approaches, the present study addresses this question by combining insights from Bourdieusian sociology with actor- and process-oriented approaches to translation as a social practice. Within this framework, Pierre Bourdieu's field theory conceptualizes the publishing field as a structured social space in which publishers occupy different positions and in which symbolic and economic logics shape access to publication (1993, 2008; Sapiro 2008). From the perspective of the sociology of translation, translation is understood as a socially embedded and collaborative process rather than a purely linguistic act (Bassnett and Lefevere 1990; Wolf and Fukari 2007). The translator is consequently no longer seen as an "isolated individual worker" (Tymoczko 2003, 198), but as part of a wider network[2] of agents or actors involved in the production and mediation of translated literature (Tymoczko 2003; Pym, Shlesinger, and Jettmarová 2006; Wolf and Fukari 2007; Milton and Bandia 2009; Roig-Sanz and Meylaerts 2018). The article contributes empirical insight into what translators "actually do and say they do in the widest possible contexts of their professional practice" (Zheng 2017, 31). It therefore shifts attention from translated texts and the act of translation alone to the actors and forms of mediation through which translations reached publication in France, paying particular attention to translators' agency.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF BIBLIOGRAPHIC DATA ON PUBLISHED TRANSLATIONS AND QUALITATIVE CASE STUDIES

The study adopts a mixed-methods approach previously used in sociological research on the production and circulation of translated literature (e.g. Poupaud 2007; Sapiro 2015). It combines a quantitative analysis of the publishing landscape of Slovenian literature in French translation during 1992–2025,[3] covering book editions[4] of prose, poetry, and drama, with qualitative case studies that illuminate several observations arising from the quantitative findings.

The quantitative analysis draws on bibliographic data from the Slovenian COBIB database, cross-checked and supplemented with the online catalogue of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, the Slovenian Bibliography of the National and University Library, and other relevant sources (Mezeg, Žigon, and Rozman 2024, 220). To examine diachronic developments, the dataset is organized into three full decades (1992–2001, 2002–2011, and 2012–2021) and the most recent period (2022–2025), with comparisons based on the average annual number of publications. For analytical purposes, a distinction is made between the pole of large-scale production, where sales and short-term economic profit are the principal criteria of success, and the pole of small-scale or limited production, where aesthetic, intellectual,

and cultural value carry greater weight (Sapiro 2008; van Es and Heilbron 2015). Publisher categories were established using publishers' websites and other publicly available sources, with organizational size, annual publishing output, ownership structure, and institutional form as criteria adapted from Marc Verboord (2011) and Jack McMartin (2019). Small-scale publishers comprised independent houses with up to ten employees and an annual output in the low double digits, as well as an "Other" category consisting of cultural associations, educational and academic institutions, diplomatic bodies, and other organizations; co-editions involving only such actors were likewise assigned to the small-scale pole. Large-scale publishers comprised independent houses with more than ten employees and an annual output in the high double digits to low triple digits, publishing groups and their constituent houses, and publishers belonging to multinational groups. Wherever possible, publishers were classified according to their structural position at the time of publication; where historical data were unavailable, the nearest reliably documented subsequent position was used.

The qualitative analysis is situated within broader research on the circulation of Slovenian literature in German, French, and Italian translation (e.g. Rozman, Žigon, and Mezeg 2023; Rozman 2025). The French component of this research, conducted in 2024, comprised eight semi-structured interviews (seven translators and one cultural intermediary) and seven written e-mail responses (six French editors and one translator). The case studies presented here draw primarily on interviews with three translators – Zdenka Štimac, Andrée Lück Gaye, and Guillaume Métayer – who met the selection criteria for the present analysis (they were either French translators or Slovenian translators long established in France and directly engaged with the French publishing field), providing sufficiently rich material to reconstruct the publication trajectories of individual works. Where relevant, additional material from interviews[5] with other translators and Slovenian literary professionals, together with written responses from French editors, is used to contextualize or corroborate specific observations.

PUBLISHING LANDSCAPE OF SLOVENIAN LITERATURE IN FRENCH TRANSLATION

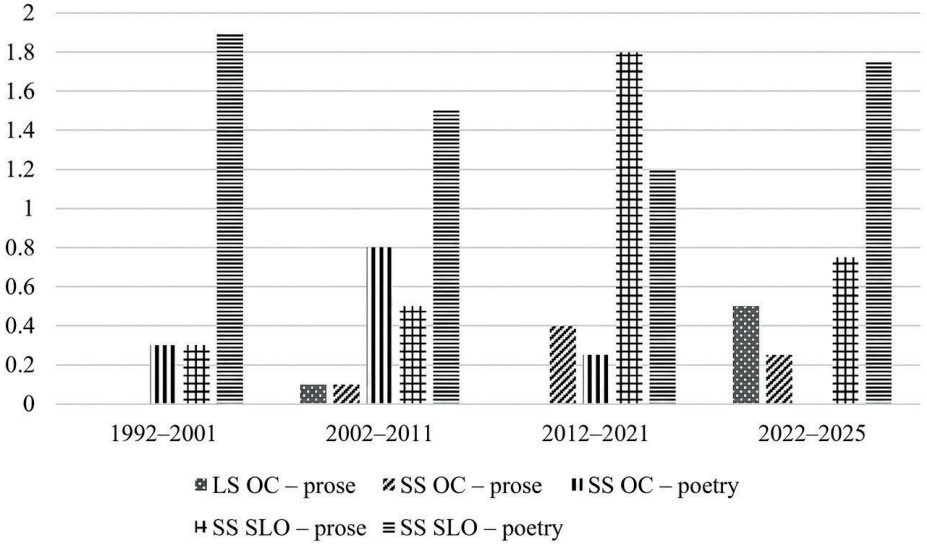
French translations of Slovenian literature have appeared not only in France but also in Slovenia and other countries (Mezeg 2020, 251–252). The quantitative overview therefore begins by presenting the distribution of translations across countries of publication, in order to situate editions issued in France within the broader production of Slovenian literature in French translation. As these publication contexts involve distinct trajectories and conditions of circulation, the remainder of the section focuses on editions published in France.

Over the 34-year period under consideration, a total of 223 editions of Slovenian literature in French translation were documented, averaging 6.5 titles per year. Of these, 110 were published in France (49.3%), 82 in Slovenia (36.8%), 15 in other Francophone (e.g. Belgium, Canada) and non-Francophone (e.g. Austria, Croatia) countries (6.7%), and 16 as co-editions (7.2%). Including ten co-editions involving

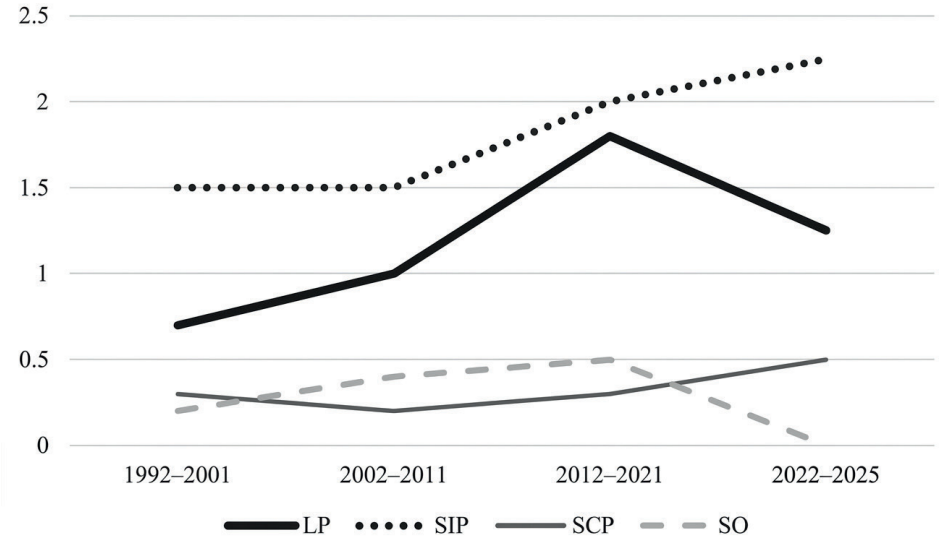
a French publisher, France participated in 120 editions (53.8%), confirming its central role in the circulation of Slovenian literature in French translation.

Publication outside France (Graph 1) took place almost exclusively at the small-scale pole. Translations published in other countries remained limited, consisting mainly of poetry in the first two periods and prose from the 2010s onwards, while six further poetry titles appeared as international co-editions. By contrast, publication in Slovenia was considerably more extensive, with poetry accounting for almost two thirds of the corpus, although prose gained greater prominence from the 2010s onwards, confirming the importance of small-scale publishing for genres with limited commercial prospects but considerable cultural value (cf. Gavura 2024). The large number of translations published in Slovenia highlights the role of source-culture initiatives by authors, translators, and cultural institutions in promoting Slovenian literature internationally.[6] Owing to their limited distribution, however, these editions rarely reach readers abroad and therefore primarily serve a promotional rather than a commercial function (Rozman 2025, 133–134).

An examination of translations published in France, including relevant co-editions (Graph 2), also shows a clear predominance of small-scale publishing channels (66.7%, compared with 33.3% for large-scale publishers). Small independent presses are the leading publisher type throughout, while large publishers reach their highest average annual output in 2012–2021, followed by a decline in the most recent period. Small-scale co-publishers and other small-scale actors (e.g. cultural associations, various institutions and organizations) make only a limited contribution to the overall volume of translations.



Graph 1. Average annual number of Slovenian literary works in French translation published outside France, by publication pole, publication location, and genre (LS = large-scale; SS = small-scale; OC = other countries; SLO = Slovenia)



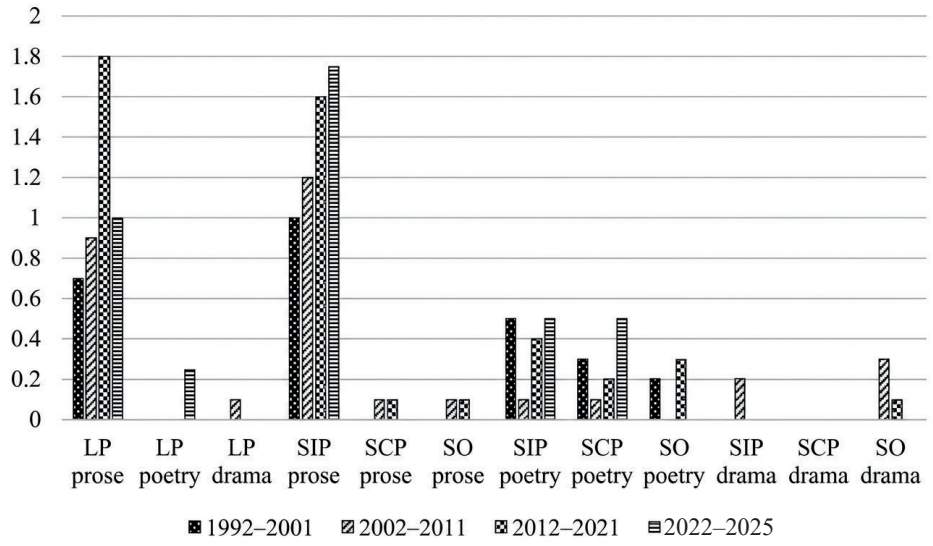
Graph 2. Average annual number of Slovenian literary works in French translation published in France, by publisher type (LP = large-scale publishers; SIP = small independent publishers; SCP = small-scale co-publishers; SO = other small-scale publishers)

Important differences also emerge in the distribution of genres across publisher types and periods (Graph 3). In contrast to publications in Slovenia and elsewhere, prose editions clearly predominate in France (72.5%), while poetry occupies a smaller but distinct position in the corpus (21.7%), and drama remains marginal (5.8%). Throughout the period, prose circulates through both the small- and large-scale publishing poles, with shifting patterns of participation, whereas poetry is concentrated at the small-scale pole, apart from a single publication in the most recent period.

The first post-independence decade (1992–2001) includes works by both earlier and contemporary authors, as well as several reprints of previously published translations, indicating that some Slovenian voices (e.g. Vladimir Bartol and Boris Pahor) had already established a presence in the French literary field. It also highlights the prominent role of translators such as Zdenka Štimac and Andrée Lück Gaye, while several publications received subsidies from the Trubar Foundation[7] and the French Centre national du livre (CNL; National Book Centre). Between 2002 and 2011, several new Slovenian authors entered the French literary field, among whom Drago Jančar emerged as the most prominent new figure within the small-scale pole. Andrée Lück Gaye was the most active translator, responsible for one third of all editions published during this period, while the Trubar Foundation continued to support several publications.

The next period (2012–2021) saw the strongest growth in publication, driven mainly by prose. At the small-scale pole, the establishment of Éditions franco-slovènes & Cie by Zdenka Štimac in 2012 provided an important new platform for Slovenian prose and poetry, accounting for almost one fifth of all editions. Most of these were translated by Štimac and supported by translation subsidies from the Trubar

Foundation and the Slovenian Book Agency or JAK[8] (Javna agencija za knjigo Republike Slovenije), which began operating in 2009. This period was also characterized by Andrée Lück Gaye's extensive translation activity (more than two fifths of all editions), including Jančar's novels and short stories, which from 2014 onwards represented half of all large-scale editions and marked a turning point in his publication trajectory.



Graph 3. Average annual number of Slovenian literary works in French translation published in France, by genre and publisher type (LP = large publishers; SIP = small independent publishers; SCP = small-scale co-publishers; SO = other small-scale publishers)

Although spanning only four years, the most recent period (2022–2025) confirms the central role of the small-scale publishing pole, supported by continued funding from JAK, while publication at the large-scale pole declined, with one important exception: Aleš Šteger's poetry collection, published by Gallimard, marked the first appearance of Slovenian poetry at the large-scale pole. Andrée Lück Gaye remained the most active prose translator, but – with the exception of Jančar – her new translations appeared exclusively with small-scale publishers.

These initial observations call for a closer examination of the processes through which Slovenian literary works reached publication in France and of the different actors and forms of mediation involved. These issues are explored through selected case studies.

TRANSLATOR AGENCY AND PUBLICATION TRAJECTORIES

The project included interviews with several of the most prolific and active translators in the Slovenian–French translation space: Zdenka Štimac[9], Andrée Lück Gaye[10], and Guillaume Métayer[11]. Although the translation projects examined here ultimately reached publication, the case studies also reveal unsuccessful submis-

sions, abandoned or postponed projects, and sustained efforts to secure a publisher, experiences similarly recalled by other translators interviewed (e.g. Liza Japelj Carone[12] and Mathias Rambaud[13]). These case studies were analytically selected because the publication trajectories they reconstruct help explain several patterns emerging from the quantitative analysis, including the central role of individual translators, the importance of small-scale publishing initiatives, and the pathways through which authors such as Drago Jančar and Aleš Šteger reached large-scale publishers in France.

WHEN PUBLICATION FAILS: THE TRANSLATOR AS PUBLISHER

Zdenka Štimac, a translator of Slovenian origin living in France, began translating out of the desire to share with her French friends works that were largely unavailable to them. One of her first major attempts to place a Slovenian text with French publishers concerned Drago Jančar's play *Veliki briljantni valček* (1985; Eng. trans. *The Great Brilliant Waltz*, 2007). After translating a sample in the 1990s, she sent it to several publishers whose contacts had been given to her by Evgen Bavčar, one of the key mediators of Slovenian literature in France, only to encounter the same response: Who was Jančar, and had he been translated elsewhere? The issue was not simply the quality of the text itself, but whether the author had acquired sufficient visibility to reduce the perceived risk of publication. Štimac eventually abandoned the project; only much later, once Jančar had become better known in France, did the translation re-emerge in another context. This early experience points to a recurring mechanism in the publication of literature from the periphery: publishers often look for prior forms of literary recognition before committing themselves. It should also be understood within the broader context of Slovenia's limited visibility in France at the time. As Liza Japelj Carone, a translator who for nearly three decades was responsible for cultural affairs at the Slovenian Embassy in Paris, recalled, introducing Slovenian literature to French audiences in the early 1990s first required explaining what Slovenia was and where it was located. Although its accession to the European Union somewhat increased general awareness, most translators, French editors, and Slovenian literary professionals interviewed agreed that Slovenia and its literature remain little known there.

Bavčar's mediation remained important at the beginning of Štimac's translation career. Through his contacts, works by France Bevk and Alojz Rebula were placed with Éditions du Cerf, and Štimac was chosen as their translator. She was later able to place two translations directly with Gallimard after approaching the publisher at the suggestion of a colleague then working there as a press attaché. As Štimac notes, Gallimard's acceptance of the first translation, Brina Svit's *Con brio* (1998; French trans. *Con brio*, 1999), which she had initiated herself with the author, was largely a matter of chance. Beyond these few early placements with large publishers, however, her translation activity in the 1990s and 2000s centered mainly on poetry and on excerpts of prose and drama, often undertaken at the initiative of authors (e.g. the poet Tomaž Šalamun) or other Slovenian actors (e.g. translators and members of various associations). These translations were primarily in small-scale publi-

cations, whether in anthologies and independent editions published in Slovenia or France, or in Canadian, French, and Swiss literary journals (e.g. *Dédale*, *Estuaire*, *Rémanences*).

These initial publications, however, did not alter the broader difficulty of finding French publishers for translations from Slovenian. Since translation did not provide a stable livelihood, Štimac trained and worked as a proofreader while continuing to translate. After years of unsuccessful attempts to interest publishers in Slovenian authors she considered important, and after several projects already underway had been abandoned, she founded Éditions franco-slovènes & Cie in 2012. The creation of the press was both pragmatic and symbolic: pragmatic because, as Štimac herself explains, it resulted from not finding a market for her translations, and symbolic because it created an autonomous space for the presentation of Slovenian literature in French. This autonomy also allowed her to choose texts according to literary preference rather than market logic; as she puts it, she translates and publishes what she likes (e.g. novels by Marko Sosič and poetry by Srečko Kosovel). Her case thus highlights the importance of taste-driven selection within small-scale publishing, where personal commitment may substitute for the market calculations that weigh more heavily elsewhere in the publishing field.

Yet this autonomy came at a cost. As translation alone could not provide a living, Štimac continued to work primarily as a proofreader, while running her press remained a secondary activity. The press nevertheless required her to assume a range of tasks usually distributed across an established publishing house, from editorial preparation and funding applications to promotion and event organization. Securing subsidies from JAK was crucial, as it provided at least partial compensation for work that would otherwise have remained unpaid. Most of the books were published independently, and only more recently did she begin to collaborate with others, particularly with the poet and puppeteer Mateja Bizjak Petit, resulting in co-editions. She also organized readings, recitals, and book-related performances, took part in smaller fairs, and collaborated with Slovenian associations in France in an effort to increase the visibility of the books. Yet sales remained low and media attention minimal. In the long term, this model proved difficult to sustain, as it depended heavily on personal investment, subsidies, and small-scale collaborative networks. The transfer of the press to Bizjak Petit in 2025, while Štimac continues as its main translator, reflects both the possibilities and the limits of translator-led publishing: when ordinary routes to publication remain blocked, translator agency may extend beyond translation and mediation to create the very conditions of publication, but such infrastructure remains fragile when it depends on unpaid labor and unstable forms of support.

MEDIATION, NETWORKS, AND RECOGNITION

Andrée Lück Gaye's experience offers a different perspective, highlighting the importance of mediation, personal and professional networks, and recognition in shaping access to publication. Living and working in France as a teacher of French, she learned Slovenian because of her family origins and began translating at the sugges-

tion of her teacher Claude Vincenot at INALCO in Paris (Lück Gaye 2020). Her earliest important published translations were linked to Boris Pahor, whose entry into France in the 1990s was decisively supported by the philosopher and photographer Evgen Bavčar, already mentioned above in connection with Štimac's early translation career. Through this mediation, Pahor's works, including *Nekropola* (1967; French trans. *Pèlerin parmi les ombres*, 1990; Eng. trans. *Pilgrim among the Shadows*, 1995) and *Spopad s pomladjo* (1978; French trans. *Printemps difficile*, 1995; Eng. trans. *A Difficult Spring*, 2009), appeared with important French publishers and received significant media attention. This also gave Lück Gaye early visibility as a translator. It is noteworthy that *Printemps difficile* appeared at Phébus under its founder, Jean-Pierre Sicre, who had already published Vladimir Bartol's *Alamut*[14] (1937) there in 1988. This followed Jean-Didier Castagnou, "a French expert in Slavic studies" living in Ljubljana at the time (Vodopivec 2012, 4), learning during a chance encounter with Lück Gaye and her husband in Ljubljana in the mid-1980s that an unpublished French translation of the novel by Vincenot had existed since the 1970s,[15] and bringing it to Sicre's attention (Vodopivec 2012, 4; Lück Gaye 2021). Such cases suggest that access to publication depended not on any stable institutional channel, but on the conjunction of the right book, the right intermediary, and the right publishing context.

A comparable pattern can be seen in the case of Drago Jančar, whose reception in France unfolded across different publishing scales over time. As discussed above, Jančar was initially difficult to place in France. A turning point came in the early 2000s, when Lück Gaye was invited by Jančar to translate a collection of ten short stories, published under the title *L'Élève de Joyce* (2003)[16] by L'Esprit des Péninsules, founded by Éric Naulleau. Here too, publication rested on personal connections: according to Lück Gaye, Naulleau's interest in a Slovenian writer was encouraged by his Bulgarian wife, who was interested in Balkan literature. The significance of this first publication lay not only in the book itself, but in what followed: positive reviews, further translations with small presses such as L'Esprit des Péninsules and Passage du Nord-Ouest, which have notably helped to draw attention to Jančar (Lück Gaye 2020), and growing critical attention that secured him a place in French literary circles. The translation of Jančar's 1985 play *Veliki briljantni valček*, first undertaken by Štimac (as mentioned above) and later completed by Lück Gaye, was finally published in French as *La grande valse brillante* in 2007. This example highlights the personal and closely interconnected character of the relatively small network through which Slovenian literature circulated in French translation. This phase of increasing recognition prepared the ground for Jančar's later entry into a larger publishing structure, when the novel *To noč sem jo videl* (2010; French trans. *Cette nuit, je l'ai vue*, 2014; Eng. trans. *I Saw Her That Night*, 2016) appeared with Phébus and received the Prix du Meilleur livre étranger (Best foreign book prize) the same year. Lück Gaye's role in this process was not limited to translation alone. She herself proposed *Cette nuit, je l'ai vue* to Daniel Arsand, an editor at Phébus whom she had come to know earlier when she agreed to retranslate Bartol's *Alamut* (2012; Lück Gaye 2021). From that point onward, Jančar's position in France

became more firmly established, and Phébus continued to publish his later novels, for which Lück Gaye submitted presentations and sample translations even before their publication in Slovenia.

Yet even after Jančar's success and Lück Gaye's own growing symbolic capital as a prose translator, further reinforced by the major French translation prize she received in 2023, some projects still proved difficult to place. A revealing example is Florjan Lipuš's *Boštjanov let* (2003; French trans. *Le vol de Boštjan*, 2021 [Boštjan's flight]), which Lück Gaye discussed in a blog interview, noting Peter Handke's enthusiastic article on the novel in the daily newspaper *Libération* and her search for a publisher (Lück Gaye 2014). Having come across that interview several years later, Olivier Desmettre, founder of the small press Éditions do, contacted her directly (Lück Gaye 2020) and decided to publish the novel after reading a sample translation and receiving confirmation of its quality from a fellow publisher.[17] Here, blog visibility functioned as an unexpected mediating space between translator and publisher, while the final decision was reinforced by prior validation from actors already trusted in the target literary field. It was also through Desmettre that, after a long search (Lück Gaye 2014, 2020) and numerous refusals, Lück Gaye recently found a publisher for Marjan Tomšič's *Grenko morje* (2002; French trans. *Les Alexandrines*, 2025 [Bitter sea]). For lesser-known authors writing in a peripheral language, publication in France does not automatically follow from the literary quality of a work or the prestige of its translator. Instead, it depends on other actors, spaces, and circumstances, before the work eventually reaches a typically small-scale publisher willing to take an interest in it and assume the associated risk. In this respect, Lück Gaye emphasizes that, while financial support is important, translators into French primarily need greater assistance from Slovenian publishers and institutions in establishing contacts with publishers in France.

FROM NETWORKED LITERARY SPACES TO POETIC VISIBILITY

The last case shifts the focus from prose to poetry and illustrates how publication can develop out of networked literary spaces. A French poet, critic, researcher, member of the literary journal *Po&sie*, and translator primarily from German and Hungarian, Guillaume Métayer came to Slovenian poetry in 2008 through the festival Days of Poetry and Wine in Medana,[18] where he met Tomaž Šalamun and Aleš Šteger. Returning to the festival on several occasions, he developed contacts that led to his first contributions to the translation of Slovenian poetry into French, primarily through revising and reworking translations by others. Between 2014 and 2015, these collaborations resulted in two co-edited anthologies and in the publication of a few poems by Šalamun in *Po&sie*. His more sustained engagement began when Šteger asked him to rework an existing French draft of the poetry collection *Knjiga reči* (2005; French trans. *Le livre des choses*, 2017; Eng. trans. *The Book of Things: Poems*, 2010), originally translated by Mathias Rambaud, who recalled that his repeated attempts to place the manuscript with French publishers had been unsuccessful. Métayer accepted, despite not knowing Slovenian, and reworked the manuscript in close dialogue with the poet.[19] He then approached

Circé, a small French publisher with whom he had already collaborated, and the collection appeared in 2017.

Métayer's experience also underlines the extent of the work required beyond translation itself to make poetry from Central or Eastern Europe visible in France. In his account, the translator of such poetry must often seek out journals, critics, editors, and public events, while also writing about the work and helping to create the conditions for its reception. This was also the case with Šteger: after *Le livre des choses*, Métayer, who over the years had built up a wide network of contacts in literary and particularly poetic circles, continued to promote Šteger's poetry through readings and institutional events in France, to which he invited important figures from the literary field, leading in turn to several articles and reviews in esteemed journals and magazines (e.g. *Europe*, *Le Monde des livres*). Métayer himself also wrote more broadly on Central European poetry, notably in the double special issue *Europe, centrale* of *Po&sie*, where he drew attention to the near absence of Central European poets, including Croatian, Hungarian, Slovak, and Slovenian, from two of the most prestigious French poetry series published by Gallimard and Seuil (Métayer 2019). This intervention may have contributed to Gallimard's later decision to publish a Central European poet: Métayer was approached by an editor he had known from his years at the Sorbonne, who informed him that Gallimard wished to commission a volume of Šteger's poems. Prepared rapidly in close collaboration with the poet, the collection *Nad nebom pod zemljo* (2015; French trans. *Au-delà du ciel sous la terre*, 2024; Eng. trans. *Above the Sky Beneath the Earth*, 2019) appeared in the prestigious series Du monde entier [From all over the world]. According to Métayer, the project did not receive support from the CNL, and no application was submitted to JAK. The publication was accompanied by three successful events in Paris devoted to Šteger and his poetry, organized by the translator and editor, followed by strong critical reception in a number of journals, magazines, and blogs (e.g. *La cause littéraire*, *La Croix*, *Poesibao*), as well as two prestigious poetry prizes. This case therefore demonstrates that, in the field of poetry, access to the French literary field may depend on the translator's sustained mediation and symbolic capital accumulated in journals and other networked literary spaces. Publication by a prestigious house then appears as the later validation both of the poetic work and of the translator's role in making it visible. Métayer nevertheless stressed that many French readers have little prior knowledge to help them situate Slovenia and its literature, a situation that publication by Gallimard alone cannot change. Ultimately, in his view, what matters is not where an author comes from but the work itself and whether it succeeds in attracting interested readers and critics.

CONCLUSION

The trajectories reconstructed in this article from interviews with three translators help explain several patterns emerging from the analysis of bibliographic data. The prominent role of individual translators in bringing Slovenian literary works to publication in France reflects an agency extending well beyond transla-

tion itself. Taking on multiple roles, they initiated or pursued translation projects and collaborated across literary and social spaces to advance them towards publication, echoing observations from other peripheral-to-central translation contexts (e.g. Pym, Shlesinger, and Jettmarová 2006; Yılmaz 2020). The trajectories likewise show that Slovenian literature circulated predominantly through the small-scale pole, where willingness to invest in lesser-known authors and trust-based professional relationships created publication opportunities that rarely arose within more market-oriented publishing structures (Sapiro 2008; van Es and Heilbron 2015). On average, only a few translations were published each year, reflecting weak market demand and the persistently low visibility of Slovenian literature in France, as confirmed by most interviewees. The gradual entry of only a few authors (e.g. Jančar and Šteger) into the large-scale pole followed cumulative processes of mediation, literary recognition, and editorial validation (Sapiro 2008; van Es and Heilbron 2015). The increase in published translations since the 2010s therefore reflects not a broader growth in demand for Slovenian literature but, as the case studies show, the emergence of new publication opportunities alongside increasing recognition of a small number of authors, particularly Jančar. However, as Marko Juvan observes, the "worlding" of a peripheral literature, i.e., its positioning and circulation in the global literary space, is not possible "without translations and consecrations that are motivated by durable or raising demands of the transnational literary market" (2019, 251).

From a Bourdieusian perspective, the effects of translators' agency depended on their positions within the French publishing field and on the mobilization and conversion of different forms of capital through mediation and collaboration with other actors. Zdenka Štimac initially occupied a relatively weak position in the field, relying heavily on intermediaries and personal contacts; confronted with repeated difficulties in securing publication, she eventually created an alternative space for Slovenian literature by founding her own publishing house, with most translations supported by Slovenian subsidies. By contrast, Andrée Lück Gaye gradually accumulated symbolic and relational capital through the successful publication of authors such as Pahor and later Jančar, their positive reception, and major literary prizes, thereby strengthening her position, although this did not remove the structural barriers she faced when placing lesser-known Slovenian writers in the most recent period. Unlike Štimac and Lück Gaye, whose positions developed over decades of translating Slovenian literature, Guillaume Métayer entered the Slovenian–French translation space by transferring the literary, intellectual, and relational capital he had accumulated elsewhere to the translation and promotion of Slovenian poetry.

Finally, while the case studies have demonstrated the importance of Slovenian institutional support, particularly for the translator-owned press, the circulation of Slovenian literature in France since the 1990s has largely depended on a small number of individual translators and literary mediators whose exceptional commitment has been crucial in helping Slovenian literature cross national borders and secure publication in France. This also points to the fragility of the configuration

of literary circulation that has emerged over several decades, and whose long-term sustainability cannot be taken for granted.

NOTES

[1] The authors thank the reviewers for their thoughtful comments and suggestions, which helped clarify the research problem and methodology and strengthen the overall coherence of the article.

[2] A network is a complex set of relations among different actors (i.e., individuals, institutions or even texts involved in a process of cultural exchange) within a cultural or social field.

[3] The year 1992 was selected because it represents the first full year following Slovenia's independence in 1991, when translations into French began to increase (Mezeg 2020). As for the year 2025, those publications recorded in the Slovenian COBIB (https://www.cobiss.si/) by the end of February 2026 were included. A discussion of the broader historical, geopolitical, institutional, and sociocultural factors that have shaped the evolution of translation flows of Slovenian literature into French lies beyond the scope of this article.

[4] Each publication of a translation – whether a first edition, reprint, paperback, e-book, or new translation – is counted as a separate bibliographic record.

[5] Interviews were also conducted with Slovenian authors. However, as none of them authored a work whose trajectory is reconstructed here, their responses are not used.

[6] Such publications are often presented at international literary events and circulated among foreign publishers, editors, and literary agents to stimulate interest in Slovenian literature (Rozman 2025, 133–134).

[7] Established in 1992 as a joint initiative of the Slovenian Writers' Association, Slovenian PEN, and the Centre for Slovenian Literature, the Trubar Foundation supported foreign publishers by covering up to 50% of the printing costs of Slovenian literary works published abroad. Its activities were transferred to the Slovenian Book Agency (JAK) in 2019 (Blatnik 2023, 555–556).

[8] JAK is Slovenia's national public agency for the book sector. Its activities include funding translations of Slovenian authors into foreign languages and supporting the international promotion of Slovenian literature (Blatnik 2023, 559).

[9] Zdenka Štimac, interview by the authors via Zoom, March 13, 2024, recording.

[10] Andrée Lück Gaye, interview by Adriana Mezeg, Ljubljana, March 22, 2024, recording.

[11] Guillaume Métayer, interview by Adriana Mezeg, Paris, September 11, 2024, recording.

[12] Liza Japelj Carone, interview by the authors, Paris, September 10, 2024, recording.

[13] Mathias Rambaud, interview by the authors via Zoom, March 11, 2024, recording.

[14] *Alamut* is one of the most reprinted and best-selling Slovenian books in France (see Mezeg, Žigon, and Rozman 2024, 226).

[15] The French translation was initiated by "the writer Mira Mihelič and the Director of the National and University Library of Ljubljana, Jaro Dolar", but long remained unpublished "due to a lack of interest from French and Slovene publishers" (Vodopivec 2012, 4).

[16] The French volume does not correspond to any previously published Slovenian collection, although individual stories predate it; for example, the title story "Joyceov učenec" appeared in the literary journal *Nova revija* in January 1998. Collections bearing the corresponding English and Slovenian titles were published only later: *Joyce's Pupil* in 2006 and *Joyceov učenec* in 2008. Their selections of stories overlap with, but are not identical to, that of the 2003 French volume.

[17] Olivier Desmettre, e-mail message to Julija Rozman, April 9, 2024.

[18] Since 2010, the festival has been held in the historic town of Ptuj in eastern Slovenia.

[19] Collaborative translation, in which a target-language translator works with the author or another bilingual mediator, is well established in literary translation from minor into major languages (e.g. Ožbot 2011).

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