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French bookshops revolt after prize selects novel self-published on Amazon

French booksellers have called on literary judges to “defend books and not those who threaten them”, after one of France’s most prestigious prizes selected a self-published novel available only via Amazon.

5 The author, Marco Koskas, who has published more than a dozen books via more traditional routes, told the Guardian he was forced into put out an edition of his book himself after no French publisher picked it up.

10 “Morally, above all, the bookshops refuse to ‘jump into the wolf’s mouth’,” the Syndicat said in a statement. Amazon not only wants to become “a major player in the book market, it wants to become the market itself by eliminating its competitors, organising unfair competition, replacing publishers, distributors and bookshops”.

Koskas declared bookshops should not be angry with him but with the publishers.

15 “Amazon offers authors a much more flexible contract than publishers, and above all, Amazon has no literary opinion. That is important. They do not get involved with what I write. They don’t ask for money to print my book, and they are paid when the product sells. What do I have to complain about?”

Renaudot jury member and author Patrick Besson said he had not noticed that the book was self-published via Amazon, and that he was only interested in the text.

20 “For us, literary prizes have an enormous impact and generate a lot of sales, so the stakes are high,” another French author said. “In France, our bookshops are doing better than elsewhere thanks to our attachment to paper books. But this relative good health is fragile”.

By Alison Flood, adapted from www.theguardian.com, September 15th, 2018