

TRANSLATIONS OF THE POETRY OF VILIS PLŪDONS THROUGH THE PRISM OF TIME

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Abstract

The article addresses an understudied topic – translations of the Latvian classic poet Vilis Plūdons, whose 150th anniversary is being celebrated this year. Due to historical and political constraints, most of the poet's works have been translated into Russian. The first translations of Latvian classics appeared at the beginning of the 20th century when Latvia was still part of the Russian Empire – Plūdons was published alongside other Latvian writers in the first collection of Latvian literature translated into Russian and prepared in close collaboration with the Russian Symbolists. The poet's works were also included in the anthologies of Latvian poetry published in Russian during the first independence period. However, Plūdons was mostly translated during the Soviet years – during the occupation of Latvia, when anthologies, poetry collections, and selections were purposely published to introduce Latvian literature to Soviet readers in the context of general Russification. Plūdons' children's poetry, which was relatively free from censorship, was translated particularly extensively during this period. The most recent translations were published in Bauska, the poet's birthplace, in the 21st century. The present article chronologically examines the translations listed in the Latvian Library Union catalogue, focusing on the analysis of the translations of the poet's best-known poems in the context of the history of literature. The article reveals how the poet's work is treated in every given period and how this influences the choice and interpretation of the source texts. It also focuses on the personalities of the key translators. The study concludes that, in general, the translations of Plūdons' poetry attest to the historical trends in the translation of Latvian classical poetry, and that contemporary translations tend to showcase the poet as a man of his region and as an author of children's poetry.

Keywords: Latvian poetry classics, Vilis Plūdons, literary contacts, translations, literary movements, interpretations.

INTRODUCTION

Vilis Plūdons (1874 – 1940), also Vilis Plūdonis, born Vilis Lejnieks, was a Latvian poet, translator and teacher, one of the greatest Latvian lyrical poets and authors of children's poetry, a master of the Latvian ballad. He gained popularity for the poems "Requiem" (1899), "Two Worlds" (1899) and "Widow's Son" (1900), which have also been popular with translators. The year of the poet's 150th anniversary has brought into the spotlight the research on his work, including the translations of his poetry, which have barely been studied in the past. Ludmila Sproģe and Vera Vāvere's monograph "The Beginnings of Latvian Modernism and the 'Silver Age' of Russian Literature" [1] examines the early 20th-century Russian translation of Plūdons' "Requiem", however, Soviet and contemporary translations are yet to be explored. Since this study will examine the translations through the prism of time, it is essential to understand the evolution of the perspectives on Plūdons' creative work.

Plūdons is not much studied these days. Guntis Berelis, in his "History of Latvian Literature", regards the poet as one of the poetic reformers of the early 20th century, and one of those who is above and beyond any literary movement. The literary critic singles out Plūdons' allegorical poems "Two Worlds" and "Widow's Son", describing them as narrative poems that fall into the category of 'childish symbolism', being too one-dimensional they remain at the level of trivial allegories [2]. This is certainly open to debate, but it seems that this view has been shaped by Soviet literary scholarship, where both of Plūdons' poems are interpreted in the context of the realist tradition, as reflections of social contradictions and class struggles. The literary scholar and Plūdons' contemporary, Roberts Kļaušņš, who analyses both poems in his "History of Latvian Literature" of 1935 in the light of modernist aesthetics, is more in accord with Plūdons' spirit, noting that "The poet deeply shocks and captivates

readers, conveying a radically new, as yet unknown understanding of poetry and perfection of form. He captures only a few moments, which he distils to a phosphorescence of action, colour and sound, that immense power of emotion and feelings that captivates the reader, not leaving much to think about, only to enjoy and float along with the poet's imagination. Theoretically, this is called the impressionistic slice of life, where one or several moments, striking and radiant, are captured in poetry or painting." [3] Likewise, the scholar treats the poem "Widow's Son" not as a clash of social classes, but as a clash of the old and the new worlds – the old world of peasantry versus the new world of modern anxiety: "The mind has uprooted all traditions, but the heart gravitates back to childhood." [4], where the dead widow's son also returns as the shadow of the dead, as the dove of one's soul. This stark contrast and dual worldview can be partially attributed to the influence of Romantic literature, which entered Latvian literature at the end of the 19th century, at the time when Plūdons was writing his poems. Meanwhile, during the Soviet years, Plūdons' work is generally described as full of contradictions. The "History of Latvian Literature" of 1957 accuses the poet of having a heterogeneously inconsistent worldview: "With his vacillations and ideological inconsistencies he is a characteristic petty-bourgeois intellectual. Already after the Revolution of 1905 – 1907, Plūdons wrote nationalistically tended poems, alongside the poems expressing genuinely democratic views on freedom for the people." [5] Despite the harsh criticism, the compilers of the volume conclude that during the most socially significant period of his literary activity, Plūdons produced many masterpieces that belong to the most splendid treasures of Latvian literature. Plūdons' rich, eloquent, and musical language and his masterly poetic form are also noted. Thus, it is evident that with the change of political powers, the interpretations of Plūdons' works also change.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research material was collected from the Latvian Library Union catalogue, and it shows that the poet is predominantly translated into Russian, as determined by the historical and political discourses of the time and by the typological similarity of his work to Russian literature. In total, the present study examines twenty-four sources: fourteen of which are published in Latvia (in Riga and Bauska), and the remaining in Russia (in Moscow and Leningrad – now St Petersburg). Many of them have become bibliographical rarities and are preserved in a single copy in the National Library of Latvia. These are collections of Latvian classical poetry, anthologies, selections, and editions of children's poetry. Considering the longitudinal scope of the material, the present article examines the translations of Plūdons' works chronologically, in the context of literary history, using descriptive, comparative, and biographical methods. The analysis of the translations of "Widow's Son" employs the elements of the structural-semiotic method.

RESULTS

The first notable translated collection of Plūdons' poems was "Сборник латышской литературы" ("Collection of Latvian Literature") [6], published in St Petersburg in 1916. The collection was edited by Valery Bryusov and Maxim Gorky. It is the first Russian edition of Latvian literature published courtesy of the close ties between Latvian modernists and representatives of Russian 'Silver Age' literature. The collection introduces Russian readers to the most important works of Latvian literature right from its origins and Latvian dainas (folk songs). The foreword by the literary critic Janis Jansons-Brauns briefly profiles each of the Latvian writers represented in the volume, emphasising the musicality and virtuosity of Plūdons' poetry. The collection includes two texts by the poet: his famous "Requiem" as translated by Alexander Blok (1880–1921) and "Two Worlds" translated by Vladislav Khodasevich (1886–1939).

Blok's translation of "Requiem" is considered one of the best translations of the poem and is also referenced by later translators of Plūdons' poetry. It has been reprinted in several editions, and no other translator has dared to create their own version of "Requiem", respecting Blok's authority. The poem's line-by-line translation was prepared by the Latvian writer Andrejs Kurcijs, who was personally acquainted with the Russian Symbolist. In his notes, Blok remarks on the simplicity, clarity, unhurried

pace, and distinctive Lutheranism of “Requiem” [7]. The poet abandons Plūdons’ dedication to his brother Jānis, the writer Visvaldis. Thus, Plūdons’ text loses its deeply personal, biographical element in translation, and the motifs of tragic experience take on the character of universal human suffering, which, like Blok’s talent, determines the unwavering relevance of this translation. Blok approached the text through associations with Russian literature: Fyodor Tyutchev’s poem “Я лютеран люблю богослуженье...” (“I like the Lutheran service...”) and Ivan Kozlov’s poem “Вечерний звон” (“Evening Bell”), the lines of which serve as the epigraph to “Requiem”. The motifs of Kozlov’s poem: his father’s home, the wind, the sleep of the grave, and a sad song, enter Blok’s translation, thereby underscoring the connection between the epigraph and the poem. The motif of the evening bell, an allusion to Kozlov’s text, is masterfully used by Plūdons himself at the phonological level in the refrain of “Requiem”. The history of the translation is well discussed in the monograph by Sproģe and Vāvere [8].

Unlike “Requiem”, the poem “Two Worlds” has been translated several times – the other translations were produced during the Soviet period. Khodasevich, who emigrated from Soviet Russia, became persona *non grata*, and his translations could not be republished in the USSR. The poem is based on stark contrasts: firstly, it is the life of seaside holidaymakers, where eternal fun, revelry and carnal pleasure reign – hence the poem’s subtitle: “Iz peldsezonas” (From Swim Season). When portraying this layer, the poet turns to sensually splendid Renaissance images: Bacchante, Venus, grace, nectar, the rose, a dazzlingly iridescent vessel, golden torches, Cupid, the heavenly morning. In his youth, the poet visited Horn’s garden in Majori, a place with magnificent electric lighting, which may have excited the poet’s imagination [9]. The Horn complex, built in 1870, comprising a hotel, restaurant, cinematograph, concert hall, and concert garden, where famous symphony orchestras performed, burnt down in a great fire with all the buildings in 1913. On the other hand, Plūdons, similar to the romantic marinas of the Romantic era, creates billowing, raging seascapes where a Latvian fisherman’s boat is caught in the waves. This layer is characterised by the national, the archaic, the harsh and the natural. Plūdons was born in the interior of Latvia, but between 1897 and 1898 he worked at the Biguņciems parish school by the sea, where he could observe the daily life of a Latvian fisherman. Plūdons creates striking contrasts – the shining gold and loud cheerfulness that accompany the revellers are replaced in his poem by the dumb, gloomy silence which accompanies the working people: “*Peld melnā tumsā melnās, mēmās laivas*” (“Black, mute boats float in the black darkness”) [10]; the ruthless, sensual love against the backdrop of a rich villa interior, what the author calls ‘the poetry of life’, is replaced by the prose of life – the poverty of a fishing hut, the duty of a wife and husband: “*Un kaktā tur, kur kails spīd salmu maiss, / Kas jaunību tai sāpēs nolaupījis, / Guļ bēdu dzimtas atspaidis vienīgais, / Ko nāves žaunās mīlzu vilnis rijis*” (“And in the corner where the straw sack lies bare, / That has torn away her youth in pain, / Lies the only upkeep of a miserable family, / Gulped into the jaws of death by a giant wave.”) [11]. The poem ends tragically, with the fisherman’s widow weeping desperately at her dead husband’s deathbed. Kļaušņš, analysing “Two Worlds”, notes that “*in reality, we do not find such a contrast in Jūrmala. The much-vaunted villas were built by the fishermen themselves. They are homely, happy and untroubled people who live more off their masters’ money than fishing. The fishermen themselves are rich, or at least well-off.*” [12]. The poet thus uses these stark contrasts as a modernist technique, creating striking visual images and juxtapositions. Overall, Khodasevich manages to maintain the sharp contrast, but in the last of these oppositions, the parallel created by Plūdons, associated with the motif of losing one’s virginity, is lost. The first layer uses the poetic metaphor “*roze, salnas neaizskartā*” (“the rose, untouched by frost”) [13], while the description of the fishermen’s life is dominated by the naturalistically stark message “*jaunību tai sāpēs nolaupījis*” (“that has torn away her youth in pain”). Khodasevich’s translation loses these parallels and changes the emphasis – not the wife’s youth is stolen, but the husband, still young, is prematurely deprived of life: “*Чья отстрадала молодость так скоро.*” (“Whose youth has passed away so soon”) [14]. This transformation seems most likely to be the result of an ambiguous or misunderstood parallel. It should be noted that in both subsequent translations of the poem, the motif of the loss of virginity in the description of the fishermen’s life is also reduced. Nevsky’s translation refers to the quickly passing youth of the fisherman’s wife [15]. Kopilova, on the other hand, brings up the image of the mattress – a witness of the widow’s tears and sorrow [16]. Although both latter translators of the poem were fluent in Latvian and, thus, able to understand the nuances, they chose

to abandon the harsh imagery of the original, despite these naturalistic elements being characteristic of Plūdons' work. This may be motivated by aesthetic and ideological considerations: during the Soviet period, "Two Worlds" was viewed not through the prism of modernist aesthetics, but as a set of social contradictions in which *"the truth of life, realistically depicted, appears as a severe indictment of the capitalist order"* [17]. At the same time, the poetic metaphor of the untouched rose as a symbol of virginity is preserved in all three settings: *"Ах, с невинной розой что сегодня случилось?"* ("Oh, what has happened to the innocent rose today?") [18]; *"Что в эту ночь с невинной розой стало?"* ("What happened to the innocent rose tonight?") [19]; *"Куда теперь? К какой невинной розе?"* ("Where to now? To which innocent rose?") [20]. It should be noted that the ironic subtitle of the poem, "Iz peldsezonas" (From the Swim Season), is preserved only in Khodasevich's translation, which suggests that the socialist realism tradition determined the interpretation of the poem during the Soviet period.

During the time of Latvian independence, several translations of Plūdons' poetry were published. In 1931, the anthology of Latvian poetry translated by Viktor Tretyakov was published in Riga [21]. Viktor Tretyakov (1888–1961) was a Russian poet, journalist, and translator from Riga; he continued the tradition of Nikolai Gumilyov in Russian emigration; he emigrated to Latvia from Russia in the early 1920s. The anthology contains Latvian Romantic and Symbolist poetry of the late 19th century. The collection includes several poems by Plūdons. Similar to the literary critic Jansons-Brauns, Tretyakov also highlights Plūdons' musicality: *"The poet is characterised by a remarkable simplicity and everything that befalls him on his way through life evokes in him an uplifting and melodious echo"* [22]. As a representative of Acmeism, Tretyakov is attracted by the materiality and imagery of Plūdons' poetry, which also informs his selection of poems: for example, he chooses to translate the sensual *"Rozes, ai, rozes!"* (Roses, oh roses!) from the collection *"Mūzas mirklī"* ("Moments of the Muse") (1925). In 1940, another anthology of Latvian poetry in Tretyakov's translation was published [23], containing two ballads by Plūdons, *"Salgaļes Mada loms"* ("Salgaļes Madis' catch") (1913) and *"Viesturs ceļā pie pāvesta legāta"* ("Viesturs on the way to the papal legate") (1921), which were dedicated to Latvia's past.

The occupation of Latvia in 1940 ushered in a new phase in the history of translations of Latvian classical literature, which became subject to strict censorship and Soviet ideology. This period was dominated by the Soviet school of translation: almost all prominent Latvian writers of the time, who were also translators and poets, developed their skills at the Maxim Gorky Literature Institute in Moscow and the courses and seminars organised by the Institute. While publishers and translators of the first half of the 20th century were attracted by the modernist form of Plūdons' poetry, its melodiousness and substance, the Soviet period was marked by the selection of poems based on their subject matter and ideological orientation. In 1955, a comprehensive anthology of Latvian poetry was published in Riga [24]. The anthology of Latvian poetry was arranged chronologically, from Latvian folk songs to the most recent Soviet poetry. Apparently, the Anthology's publishers used the first collection of Latvian literature as a model. The anthology includes several texts by Plūdons: "Requiem" translated by Blok, "Two Worlds" translated by Vladimir Nevsky, a fragmentary translation of "Widow's Son" by Vladimir Mirsky, as well as poems and ballads dedicated to the Revolution of 1905.

The 1905 riots, the first major perturbation that the Latvian nation experienced in the 20th century, require further commentary. It was in the Baltic provinces, the most advanced part of Russia, that the riots spread like wildfires. Dace Lūse, in her monograph *"Latvian Literature and Political Collisions of the 20th Century"*, notes that these tragic events affected almost every Latvian family: *"The Revolution showed that the people harboured a great hatred toward national humiliation, both at the hands of Baltic German landowners and Russian officials. The latter, moreover, pursued a widespread programme of Russification."* [25]. Indeed, hardly a writer could be found who did not touch on the events of 1905. One of the numerous works written by eyewitnesses is Plūdons' ballad *"Tīreļa noslēpums"* ("The Secret of the Moorland"), which appeared in 1913 in the book of lyrical poems *"Dzīves simfonijas"* ("The Symphonies of Life"), establishing the poet as the grand master of the ballad in Latvian literature. At the same time, the poet could not accept the Red Terror and refused to collaborate with the Bolsheviks. During the Soviet years, *"Tīreļa noslēpums"* ("The Secret of the Moorland") was recognised as the greatest of Plūdons' ballads [26] and, along with other poems dedicated to the revolution, was included in the first Soviet anthology. Plūdons' texts were translated

for this edition by Sergey Shervinsky, who was also the translator of the first collection of Latvian literature and by Vsevolod Rozhdestvensky, who in the early 1920s made a name for himself as an Acmeist. The edition contains a brief informative reference to the poet, who is highly appreciated for his works dedicated to the tragic events of 1905, which are said to be his best legacy. However, the poet is criticised for his *“petty-bourgeois oscillations”* and for *“abandoning his democratic views and siding with the bourgeois nationalists”* during the period of independent Latvia [27].

In 1957, an autobiographical story *“Mazā Anduļa pirmās bērnības atmiņas”* (*“First childhood memoirs of Little Andulis”*) [28] was translated. It is with this work that the Latvian poet establishes himself in children’s literature. The translator of the memoirs is Vika Doroshenko (born Frīda Dorošenko; 1923 – 1996), born in Smolensk, Russia, educated in Moscow, a World War II participant, who lived in Riga since 1945. Plūdons’ children’s literature was extensively translated during the Soviet period and was published in Riga, Latvia, and Moscow, the capital of the USSR.

In 1959, another two-volume anthology of Latvian poetry was published in Moscow and Leningrad [29]. Similar to the previous editions of this kind, it assembled Latvian poetry chronologically, from Latvian folk songs to the most recent Soviet poetry of the time. However, unlike the 1955 anthology, the selection of Plūdons’ texts here is less ideologically oriented, and no information on the writers, whose works are included in the anthology, is provided. Yet, there is a brief foreword by Jānis Sudrabkalns, *“Reflections on Latvian Poetry”*, written in strict accordance with the Soviet ideology. The anthology includes *“Requiem”* translated by Blok, *“Two Worlds”* translated by Nevsky, and other texts translated by Tretyakov, Nevsky, Shervinsky, and Rozhdestvensky. Additionally, in 1959, a separate collection of Plūdons’ poetry, *“В солнечные дали”* (*“To the Sunlit Faraways”*), was published in Riga [30]. The edition contains mainly works consistent with Soviet ideology: the poems *“To the Sunlit Faraways”* and *“Widow’s Son”*, poetry devoted to the events of 1905, including *“Tīreļa noslēpums”* (*The Secret of the Moorland*). The author of the afterword, Andris Vējāns, speaks disparagingly of Plūdons’ early work: the poet’s views have the stamp of petty-bourgeois narrow-mindedness, and during the period of independence he betrayed his earlier democratic views [31]. The principal translator of the collection is Vladimir Nevsky (1911–1968), who was born into a German family in St Petersburg and began his literary career as a poet and translator from German. He moved to Latvia in 1950, lived in Riga and learned Latvian. Nevsky’s translations have become classics and are still relevant today, especially his translations of the poetry of Alexander Chak. Vladimir Mirsky (1920-1998), the translator of *“Widow’s Son”*, was for many years a lecturer at the University of Latvia. Born in Odessa, he spent his childhood in Vilnius and moved with his mother to Riga in 1929 after the death of his father.

In 1965, the first collection of Plūdons’ children’s poetry translated into Russian, *“Заячья банька”* (*“Zaķīša Pirtīņa”*/ *“Hare bathhouse”*) [32], was published in Riga – the poem, with colourful illustrations, was reprinted as a separate edition in 1990 [33]. *“Hare bathhouse”* is one of the best-loved Latvian children’s poems and became especially popular after the release of the Latvian musical animated film in 1979. The collection was translated by Ludmila Kopilova (1940-1990). The information about her is rather scanty: she was a poet, graduated from the Gorky Literature Institute, translated from Latvian, and committed suicide at the age of fifty. She translated Andrejs Pumpurs’ epic *“Lāčplēsis”* (*“Bearslayer”*) into Russian, devoting fourteen years to the work. She was a laureate of the Jānis Rainis Prize, a teacher at Tukums Secondary School No. 2, and lived in Moscow. Five more collections of Plūdons’ children’s poetry were published in her translation: *“Золотой клубочек”* (*“Zelta kamoliņš”*/ *“Golden Ball”*) [34]; collections of children’s poetry by Latvian classical poets *“Мужичок-дождевичок”* (*“Lietus vīriņš”*/ *“Little Rain Man”*) [35] and *“Ивовая дудочка”* (*“Vītola stabulīte”*/ *“Willow Pipe”*) [36]; an illustrated collection of Plūdons’ children’s poetry, *“Песенка в сенокос”* (*“Siena pļaujas dziesmiņa”*/ *“Hay Harvest Song”*) [37]; the fairy tale *“Ёжикова одежда”* (*“Eža kažociņš”*/ *“Hedgehog’s Coat”*) [38]. Two years after the translator’s death, in 1992, the last collection of Latvian children’s poetry published in Russia, *“Мальчику”* (*“Puisēnam”*/ *“To the Boy”*), made its appearance [39]. Plūdons’ poetry for children often served as song lyrics: in 1989, the collection of lullabies of the peoples of the Soviet Union was published in Moscow and it included Plūdons’ poetry too [40]. The great Latvian composer Raimonds Pauls composed a song cycle *“Vītola stabules dziesmas”* (*“Songs of a Willow Pipe”*) based on Plūdons’ poems – the Russian texts were written by the

Latvian musicologist Olga Pētersone. The sheet music with the lyrics was published in Leningrad in 1990 [41].

Ludmila Kopilova is not just a translator of children's poetry. In 1970, a selection of Plūdons' poetry in her translation was published in Riga [42]. She writes of the Latvian poet: *"I am always happy when I read Plūdons in the original and at the same time sad because Russian readers do not know him. Translation has become a necessity of my life. I don't strive for literal accuracy; in a translation, it is hardly possible. But I do want the reader to feel, at least for a little while, the living pulsation of his poetry."* [43]. In her foreword, the translator refers to the first collection of Latvian literature and Blok's translation of "Requiem", which she uses to open the collection. The translator sees a similarity between Blok and Plūdons: both poets *"aspired to lead the nation out of the darkness of mournful poverty, turning its face towards the only wonderful and just outcome – revolution?"* [44]. Kopilova, however, closes this statement with a question mark, as if doubting the veracity of her own words. The author of the foreword states with regret that in the last years of his life, the Latvian poet failed to remain faithful to his progressive ideals, becoming *"an apologist for bourgeois Latvia"*. [45]. The selection is thematically structured in several parts – "Requiem" is followed by "Two Worlds" – the title of the poem also serves as the title of the first chapter. It includes poetry devoted to the Revolution of 1905 and social issues. The collection also includes the chapters titled "Via Dolorosa", which deals with the tragic experiences of Latvian refugees during World War I, "Elēgiskā fūga" ("Elegiac Fugue"), "Bērnības zemē" ("In the Land of Childhood"), which is dedicated to children's poetry, ballads, including "The Secret of the Moorland", the poem "Widow's Son" and a fragment of the poem "To the Sunlit Faraways" ("Uz saulaino tāli"). Compared to the artistic translations of Blok, Khodasevich, Tretyakov and Nevsky, her translation is rather amateurish: in her translation of "Two Worlds", striving to stylise the text on the model of high poetic genres, the translator creates unwieldy and awkward repetitions that are not characteristic of the original: *пьют питье; пучину пуча; хлам худой хибары; елею по аллеям*; strange rhymes: *бахвал / бокал; жар / хибар; юдоли / соли, похорон / Харон* [46], hence creating a comic effect.

In 1976, Kopilova's translation of "Widow's Son" was reprinted in a separate, illustrated edition in Moscow [47]. The academic Janīna Kursīte points out that "Widow's Son" is one of the most recognizable Latvian poems of the 20th century – *"dreamers (...). A type of a striver who, despite poverty and the antagonism of the world around him, seeks to acquire higher knowledge, to find the deeper meaning of life."* [48]. The translator transforms this image of a dreamer – *"bālo sapņu jaunekli"* ("pale young dreamer") - into a *"бескровный отрок"* ("bloodless teenager") tormented by capitalists [49]. By comparison, Mirsky's translation retains the original image of the dreamer: *"мечтатель"* [50]. The Plūdons' widow's son is a romantic, but Kopilova treats this character according to the literary canons of socialist realism, as an emerging revolutionary. The widow's son in the original is a 'striver', he is *"not afraid of tough fights"* [51], whereas in Kopilova's version he is not afraid of a "bloody battle": *"не трашусь кровополитной сечи"* [52]. By comparison, Mirsky's translation has no such connotation: *"не боюсь нужды и тяжких дней"* ("I do not fear privation and hard days") [53]. This transmutation might have been caused by the idiom 'dzert asinis' ('to drink blood') (to exploit cruelly; to behave very cruelly), in Russian 'пить кровь'. Thus, in Kopilova's interpretation of the widow's son, the persistent concept of blood (bloodshed) appears: *"На подушках их лбы бескровные блестят в поту"* ("On the pillows, their bloodless foreheads glisten with sweat") [54], while in the original text *"Bālas izdilušas spīd sejas tiem uz baltiem spilveniem"* ("Pale worn-out faces glisten on the white pillows") [55]. Plūdons makes much use of the epithet "pale" (pale moon, pale waxen faces, pale shadows) to showcase the romantic dreamer, but this is lost in translation: "bālas ēnas" ("pale shadows") [56] become *"сонный мрак"* ("sleepy darkness") [57]; *"Bāls mēness lodziņā viens vienīgais mans draugs"* ("Pale moon in the window is my only friend") [58] – *"Единственный мой друг – луна в окне глядит"* ("My only friend – the moon shines in the window") [59].

The image of St Petersburg, the capital of northern Russia, undergoes a similar transformation in Kopilova's translation. In Plūdons' work, Pēterpils – the 'palace of the northern lights' – is a symbol of the palace of knowledge, the high peak of the mountain of knowledge. The poet, who has never been to St Petersburg, creates an image of a fantasy city, conjuring the motif of the north: the winter, the icy wind, the icy life, the winter frost, the icy mountain. The translator, on the other hand, sees St Petersburg

as the ‘city of revolution’ – it is with the storming of the Winter Palace that the October Revolution begins. The revolution motif appears in the line “*Ai, māmūlīt! Mums ausīs, ausīs rīts*” (“Oh, dear mother! The dawn shall come; the dawn shall come”) [60]. The words of Plūdons’ widow’s son may be interpreted as the expectations of a better future and hopes that brighter times will come one day. However, in the translation, this metaphor takes on other connotations: “*О милая, крепись! Уже восток рюмян*” (“Oh, dear, hold on! The East is already blushing”) [61], i.e. revolution, “*the only wonderful and just outcome*” [62], is at hand. This connotation is evoked by associative themes: dawn – the Aurora – the Baltic Fleet cruiser that signalled the capture of the Winter Palace on 25 October 1917. By comparison, Mirsky’s translation does not contain such transformations: “*О мама, матушка, увидим утро мы*” (“Oh, dear mother, we shall see the morning too”) [63]. This image of the dawn of the Red Revolution within a single five-line stanza is reinforced by the translation of ‘egļu meži’ (‘spruce forests’) as ‘краснолесье’ (red forests) [64]. These ideologically labelled vibrations of the October Revolution are reflected not only in colour symbolism (red, pink, blood, bloodless), but also at the phonological level: alliteration – a persistent repetition of the rolling trill /r/ sound can be observed in the translation: *бескровный отрок; сонный мрак; крепись! Уже восток рюмян; краснолесье; не траиусь кровопролитной сечи*. The translator ascribes a special symbolic meaning to the image of the sun, which, she believes, “*in Plūdons’ language means revolution*” [65], which is probably why it is emphasised in the translation of the first lines of the poem: ‘morning’ is replaced by ‘sun’ [66]. Meanwhile, Mirsky’s translation does not include such transformations: “до утра” (“until morning”) [67]. Obviously, the treatment of the sun as a symbol of revolution is based on the allegories of the poem “To the Sunlit Faraways”, much analysed in the Soviet period [68].

The last Soviet translation of Plūdons’ poetry was published in 1986 in Riga in the book of Latvian classical poetry “Пути огня” (“The Paths of Fire”) [69], compiled and translated by Leonid Cherevichnik. The title of the collection is the title of a poem by Pāvils Rozītis. The book includes several poems by Plūdons, including the ballad “The Secret of the Moorland”. Leonid Cherevichnik (1937–2011) – poet and translator, born in Kharkiv, Ukraine, spent his childhood and youth in Kiev, graduated from the Maxim Gorky Literature Institute, moved to Riga in 1964 to work in the editorial office of the publishing house “Liesma”, was the head of the poetry department of the magazine “Daugava” – also during the period of independent Latvia.

After the restoration of Latvia’s independence in 1991, Latvian classics is mostly translated by the members of the local Russian diaspora, and their choice of the material to translate is often personal and subjective. The only 21st-century translator of Plūdons’ poetry is Sergey Zhuravlov (1954), a poet, poetry translator, publicist, Plūdons’ compatriot from Bauska; born in Latvia, graduated from the Faculty of Philology at the University of Latvia, where he studied Russian language and literature. The poet is active as the chair of the Russian Culture Centre “Uļej”, organising literary and musical events and lectures. He has published books on Russian writers and Russian singers in Latvia. His first books were devoted to the Bauska region, in the collection “У развалин ливонский замка” (“At the ruins of the Livonian castle”) [70], alongside his own writing, the author published his translations of his compatriot Plūdons, mostly children’s poetry. In the foreword, the translator shares his memories of his first encounter with the poet: “*Once in my youth, returning along the steep, bush-covered bank of the Mēmele river from a long ski walk ... I came across a small grave in a pine forest. A rough string of footprints, buried in deep snow, led to a dark gravestone ... In the snow, near a granite stone, flowers were blushing. ‘Vilis Plūdons the Poet’ – read with mixed feelings, amazement, trembling of the soul, reverence <...> Next to the name of the writer I saw another – Ināra, his beloved, prematurely deceased daughter.*” [71] In 2008, two more collections of Plūdons’ poetry for children were published in Riga and Bauska in Zhuravlov’s translation: “В стране детства” (“In the Land of Childhood”) [72] and “Светлая красавица” (“The Fair Beauty”) [73].

DISCUSSION

By and large, the translations of Plūdons’ poetry provide a telling testimony to the historical trends in the translation of Latvian classical poetry. Similar tendencies were revealed in the study of Aspazija’s poetry translations [74]. However, while the 150th anniversary of Aspazija’s birth was a catalyst for the

publication of new translations, and new collections of poetry, including multilingual and bilingual – Latvian and Russian, the year of Plūdons' jubilee has not yielded anything similar. There are several reasons for this: firstly, the political situation has changed – the war in Ukraine, unleashed by Russia, has reduced the demand for Russian translations. Secondly, it is the scale of the poet: Aspazija is a playwright, a poet, a shaper of the Latvian poetic language, a feminist, a cultural and socio-political activist. Unlike Aspazija, Plūdons is not honoured with an entry in the National Encyclopaedia. Aspazija's anniversary in Latvia was celebrated on a large scale across the country, with performances dedicated to the poet and her work staged in Latvia's major theatres, including the improvisation "Mīlas svētība" ("The Blessing of Love"), featuring the latest Russian translations of Aspazija's works staged at the Mikhail Chekhov's Riga Russian Theatre. Plūdons has not been entirely neglected as evidenced by the production of "Widow's Son" at the Valmiera Theatre at the end of 2023 and by some concert programmes and exhibitions dedicated to the poet's jubilee. However, recent translations show that the poet is nowadays largely showcased as a man of his region and an author of children's poetry.

CONCLUSIONS

Periodical translations of Plūdons' works can be divided into three stages: 1. translations made in the first half of the 20th century, before the occupation of Latvia, i.e. during the period when Latvia was part of the Russian Empire and during the time of independent Latvia; 2. translations of the Soviet years, when Plūdons' work is interpreted consistently with Soviet ideology and the canons of socialist realist literature, and when children's poetry, which is relatively free from censorship, was widely translated; 3. current translations produced at the time when Latvia regained its independence.

The translations cover Plūdons' poems for which he gained popularity: the poems "Requiem", "Two Worlds", "Widow's Son", "To the Sunlit Faraways", and the ballad "The Secret of the Moorland". The most outstanding translation of all time is Blok's "Requiem", which has been reprinted four times. The enduring value of the translation may be attributed to Blok's personality and his talent. Most of Plūdons' poetry is represented in poetry anthologies and collections that introduce the reader to Latvian literature, its history, or Latvian classics. By and large, Plūdons' translators were members of the Latvian Russian diaspora: Viktor Tretyakov, Vladimir Nevsky, Vladimir Mirsky, Vika Doroshenko, Leonid Cherevichnik and Sergey Zhuravlov.

The translators translated and interpreted Plūdons' works in the spirit of their time, and within the literary movement they represented. The poets who were born before the October Revolution and began their work as modernists: Symbolists and Acmeists, as Plūdons' contemporaries, feel the rhythmic pulsation of the original, their translations are organic, and the language of their translations is the closest to the language of the source text. The poets of this period are attracted by the form of Plūdons' poetry, its imagery, and musicality. The selection of the translation material in the Soviet period, on the other hand, is based on the subject matter and content of the poetry. The poets who began their creative journey in the early 1920s interpret Plūdons' works as classics, respecting the artistic means of expression of the source texts and the peculiarities of the system of images. However, Ludmila Kopilova, who was born in 1940, grew up and matured as a writer under the influence of Soviet ideology, already belongs to a different, Soviet, generation. Therefore, the translator's attempts to stylise the text of the translation in the spirit of antiquity, using outdated vocabulary, and imitating high literary genres, are unsuccessful and produce comic effect. Her interpretation of "Widow's Son" is undeniably in line with socialist realist literature – a capitalist-tormented teenager on the eve of the Great Revolution seems much more accessible than the romantic dreamer, who does not fit into the paradigm of the literary movement represented by the translator.

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