

Ortenberg.
A first visit.
A homecoming? –
Feeling foreign.
Like any place.

A lifelong dream realized.
A return at last
to ancestral homeland
and this homeland, too,
is no home.

Ortenberg –
today and over two centuries gone.
 And between them:
 The long settlers' trek to the Volga.
 For the first, hardship,
 for the next, death,
 for the last, bread.

 Day by day,
 Ortenberg fades from memory,
 foreign becomes familiar,
 homesickness dims to embers.

 Oppression, war and exile
 caused longing to flare up:
 „Our home is the Vogelsberg region!“

 Decades we spent fighting
 until we were let go
 to the place we dreamed of.
 At last, in Germany we arrived – – –
forever condemned to be strangers.
A felled tree,
trying in vain
to find its roots again.

Perhaps
you have to have a home
to feel you don't need it.

Lilija Tenhagen
during my first visit in Ortenberg