

## Wanderer's Nightsong II

Cabin where Goethe wrote the poem



"Wanderer's Nightsong II (Über allen Gipfeln) is often considered the perhaps most perfect lyric in the German language.[2] Goethe probably wrote it on the evening of September 6, 1780 onto the wall of a wooden gamekeeper lodge on top of the Kickelhahn mountain (in the Thuringian Forest Range) near Ilmenau where he, according to a letter to Charlotte von Stein, spent the night.[3]

English plaque in the cabin

Above all summits

it is calm.

In all the tree-tops

you feel

scarcely a breath;

The birds in the forest are silent,

just wait, soon

you will rest as well.

Ein gleiches (German)

Über allen Gipfeln

Ist Ruh,

In allen Wipfeln

Spürest du

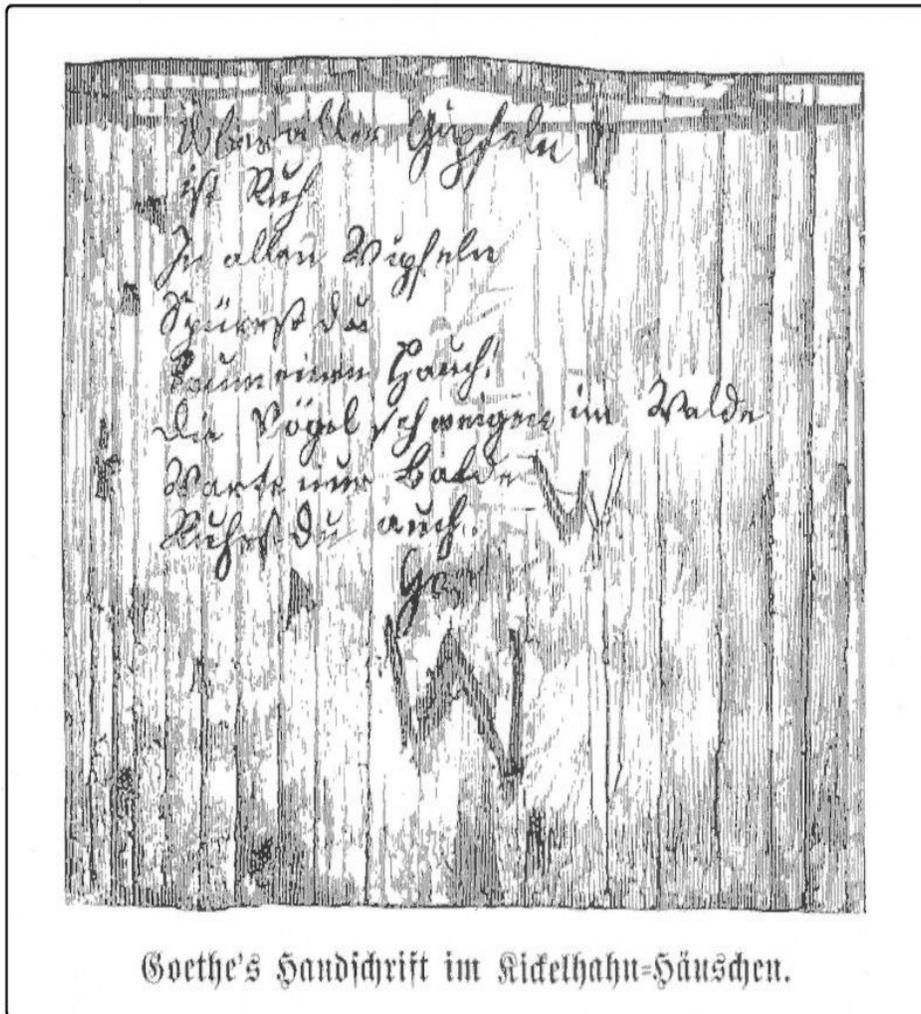
Kaum einen Hauch;

Die Vögelein schweigen im Walde.

Warte nur, balde

Ruhest du auch.

1872 facsimile, in Die Gartenlaube



Goethe's friend Karl Ludwig von Knebel mentioned the writing in his diary, it is also documented in transcriptions by Johann Gottfried Herder and Luise von Göchhausen. However, the handwriting is not preserved. It was first published—without authorization—by August Adolph von Hennings in 1800 and again by August von Kotzebue in 1803. An English version appeared in the Monthly Magazine in February 1801.[4] The second poem was also set by Franz Schubert, in 1823. As Goethe wrote to Carl Friedrich Zelter, he revisited the cabin more than 50 years later on August 27, 1831, about six months before his death. The poet recognised his handwriting and reportedly broke out in tears.

The accomplished poem unites landscape, creation and beings in evening silence, while man may still be restless but will expect sleep, death and eternal peace. In one small piece of poetry, Goethe wanders the whole cosmos.