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## “Bitte Jens” Kristensen: Cobbled Together

Jens Kristensen was born on June 3, 1825, the son of Christen Pedersen Tved and Maren Jensdatter from Ersted. He was the only boy in a family of five children. His oldest sister, Ane Margrethe, was five years older than he; Kirsten, the second daughter, was three years older than him; and his two younger sisters, Anne and Karen, were two and five years younger than he, respectively. Jens's father pressed his only son into service early, both helping make clogs—an endeavor that Jens continued with throughout his life—and later, when he was older, helping with the harvest. In a short biographical sketch of Jens that Tang Kristensen cobbled together from various sources and field notes, he writes:

Jens Kristensen (i daglig tale kaldet Bitte-Jens) er født den 3. juni 1825 i Ersted by, Årestrup sogn. Moderen var fra Årestrup, men faderen fra Tveden. Han har altid opholdt sig der på egnen, og han var kun en 8, 9 år, da han skulde til at hjælpe sin fader med at bore i træskoene. Hans fader var træskomand, og han har altid selv ernæret sig derved. Da han blev så vildele, at han kunde magte det, gik han dog i höstens tid

ud på høstarbejde. Han var med i 1848-krigen, boede i mange år i et hus i Ersted, det var der, jeg opsøgte ham, og for 5, 6 år siden flyttede han ud nordvest for Årestrup I Hovbakshuseue. Hans fader ejede kun et lille hus til 1 ko og 5, 6 får. Sine viser har han lært af sin moder, men hun sang dem alle med én tone. Faderen derimod var god til at synge, og af ham lærte han melodierne. Han kunde for resten også nogle viser. Jens har sunget mange viser sammen med Johan Pingel, der først var vejmand og siden blev banevogter henne ved Ellidshøj. Jens kalder alt, hvad han fortæller, noget sludder og vås, der ikke er værd at høre på, men skam slå ham, han mener ikke noget med det. Konen kan ikke lide alt det her gamle skidt, og i hendes nærværelse holder han ikke meget af at åbenbare sig. Heldigvis stikker hun jævnlig af ud til naboerne. Han er udmærket godt inde i det gamle tankesæt og de gamles levevis og fortæller ivrigt derom. (JAT vol. 6, 896; GKV 82)

[Jens Kristensen (in daily speech, called Bitte-Jens) was born the third of June 1825 in Ersted town. His mother was from Aarestrup but his father was from Tveden. He has always lived here in the area, and he was only eight or nine years old when he had to start helping his father drill out clogs. His father was a clog maker, and he has always supported himself doing that. When he got strong enough to handle it, he worked

during harvest time with the harvest work. He took part in the war of 1848 and lived for many years in a house in Ersted, that is where I visited him, and five or six years ago he moved to the northwest of Aarestrup to Hovbakshusene (Hovbaks houses). His father owned but a small house with one cow and five or six sheep. He learned his ballads from his mother, but she sang them all to one melody. In contrast, his father was a good singer and he learned the melodies from him. He also knew some ballads. Jens has sung many a ballad with Johan Pingel, who was first a road worker and later a railroad guard over in Ellidshøj. Jens calls everything that he tells a bunch of nonsense and not worth listening to, but no shame, he does not mean anything with it. His wife does not like all this old rubbish, and he does not like to open up in her presence. Luckily, she goes off to the neighbors with regularity. He is well attuned to the old mindset and the way the old people lived and he tells about it eagerly.]

This brief biography only hints at the complexity of Jens's life in Himmerland. Although he was not terribly wealthy, he was not terribly poor either. Jens lived an interesting life that spanned one of the greatest periods of change in recent Danish history. Through it all, he told stories.

### *Family Background*

Jens's father, Christen Pedersen, was born in Tveden, a small collection of houses in the middle of Rold forest, south of Ersted, on August 24, 1788. Christen's father, Peder Bødker, was a cooper and, according to census records, a smallholder—probably a copyholder to one of the larger manor farms in the area, possibly Mylenberg or Torstedlund. He had most likely come into possession of his house and land as a result of the land reforms of 1782 when both of those manors were partitioned. Following the naming conventions of the time, Jens's paternal grandfather took the name of his profession (*bødker*) and abandoned his patronymic.<sup>1</sup> Life in the forest for Peder Bødker, his wife and five children would not have been easy, given the challenges of forest life, where the soil was poor. Nevertheless, coopering was an important craft and, despite the high price trees could fetch at auction, barrels were always in demand.

When Peder's son Christen was in his twenties, he married Maren Jensdatter, from Årestrup, who was three years his junior, and together they moved to a small house in Ersted. They eventually bought this house from the manor farm, Torstedlund in the 1830s, again fallout from the land reforms of 1782. Ersted was at the time a very small collection of houses—hardly a village—several kilometers east of the larger village of Årestrup. Ersted had been partitioned in 1800, after which several farms were moved out onto the nearby heath, the same heath where Bitte Jens eventually bought a smallholding. The heath lay to the north and west of the village, while to the south of Ersted was the large *Rold skov* forest. That forest figures prominently in Jens's stories, often as the lair of robbers. To the east, there was also a forest and a deep river valley cut by Lindenborg river. Down by the river was the important water mill, Røde mølle.

The houses in Ersted itself were arranged in a broad ellipse around three small ponds, and Jens’s parents house was on the northeast side of town.<sup>2</sup> Very little happened in Ersted. The nearby town of Årestrup was the focal point of most local life, as both the parish church and the school were located there.

The house that Jens’s parents acquired was small, consisting originally of two *fag* or spans, and the living quarters were essentially shared with the animals in the winter. Jens later built onto the house as his family grew, turning it into an L-shaped structure, and eventually took over ownership of the house from his parents. In a standard *aftagt* arrangement, his parents continued to live there with Jens and his family through 1855. At that point, the local records get jumbled and things get somewhat murky. Whatever the case, either he or his parents moved from the house. The most likely scenario is that Jens left his parents in the Ersted house and moved his family outside of town to another house that he owned. Jens’s mother died September 3, 1861 of old age, and his father died March 4, 1874, also of old age, both of them living out their days in the little house in Ersted.

Jens’s second house was in *Hovbakshusene*, an area northwest of Årestrup, on Ersted heath. Oddly, *Hovbakshusene* does not appear on local maps, an indication that it was a short-lived grouping of small houses. This lack of staying power is not surprising given the origin of *Hovbakshusene*. In the aftermath of the three years war (1848-1850), the government launched a new housing policy designed to prevent the suddenly unemployed former soldiers from moving to the cities or returning “home” and burdening local parish poverty assistance boards. The program created thousands of smallholdings built on the Jutlandic heath, and these were offered for sale to the newly discharged soldiers at favorable prices.<sup>3</sup> Not surprisingly, many of these houses

were on the least desirable farmland and the lots themselves were not large. Although the program offered the newly discharged soldiers a chance to become landowners, it also guaranteed that their first years on that land would be marked by considerable toil and meager crop yields.

Jens was clever. By taking advantage of his parent's nearby house, and an *aftægt* agreement with them, he was able to purchase one of these government sponsored smallholdings and rent it out for the first several years. In so doing, his tenants improved the property, using their sweat to build his equity. Although it is unclear when Jens finally took residence in *Hovbakshusene*, by 1895 he and his wife had certainly moved there. During a trip with the photographer Peter Olsen in 1895, Tang Kristensen did not find "Bitte Jens" in Ersted: "Vi tog nu op til Støvring St. og kom til Jens Kristensen, der ikke boede længere i Ersted, men var flyttet op til Hovbakshusene, hvor vi saa tog ham." [We went up to Støvring Station and came to Jens Kristensen who no longer lived in Ersted, but had moved up to Hovbakshusene, where we photographed him] (MO 4, 72). Jens and his wife moved back to Ersted later in life, probably to his parents' old house.

At the time of Jens's birth, his father Christen was listed in the church book with the title *gårdmand*, an annotation that should not be confused with the more prosperous *gårdejer*.<sup>4</sup> Despite the seemingly grand title of *gårdmand*, the house that Christen bought in Ersted had no more land than could support a cow and five or six sheep. The censuses (*folketællinger*) from 1834 and 1840 make Christen's status much clearer: although the 1834 census listed him as a *husmand*, the 1840 census noted that he was a copyholder. In both censuses, annotations mentioned that he lived off his small plot, and supplemented his income by working as a cobbler. He probably had several small fields on which he would have planted barley, rye and wheat. Apart from

running his own small farm, Christen would have had to do villeinage at the manor farm that held the copyhold on his property. In addition, the local parish would have been able to press him into service to repair roads, shovel snow and other parish imposed work.<sup>5</sup>

Christen's children seem to have been reluctant to leave home, although the census records indicate that they went off and served at other farms from time to time. For instance, in 1834, the oldest daughter, Ane Margrethe, was not living at home, but she had returned by the 1845 census, still unmarried. By that point, her two youngest sisters had moved away from home to work as hired girls at local farms. Similarly, the older Kirsten was also away from home in 1845, but reappeared with a two-year-old child born out of wedlock in tow by the time of the 1850 census. She was not without skill though, and consequently was not as great a burden on her parents as she might otherwise have been. Much like Ane Margrete Jensdatter, Kirsten had learned how to weave and supplemented the family income with her work.

Jens, by way of contrast, continued to live at home through his twenties, a somewhat unusual state of affairs given the normal practice of young men and women leaving home soon after their confirmation to work as hired hands. Jens was confirmed on April 26, 1840, and the minister noted that his knowledge was “godt” [good]—a mediocre grade—while his behavior was a significantly better “meget godt” [very good]. In the years that followed, he worked for his father helping to make clogs. He also worked on local farms as a day laborer, which allowed him to live at home with his parents. Not until after his military service did he start a family of his own—all the while living in his parents' old house.

Even though the Danish constitution made army service universal, and not solely the burden of the peasant class, the

new organization of the military still meant that rural men could be conscripted. Given the state of affairs between Denmark and her southern neighbors in the 1840s, it is not surprising that Jens was called up to serve. He was initially recruited in 1850, near the end of the war, even though his name had first appeared in the conscription lists (*løgdsruller*) in 1841. People could linger on these lists for many years without being called up. Although the conscription lists were not very detailed, they did note that Jens was short, only five feet, one and three quarters inches tall.<sup>6</sup> In 1850, the average height of men called into the military was five feet five and one-quarter inches, a good three and a half inches taller than Jens (Dybdahl 1982, 15). Jens's late call up may have been related to his size—passed over at the start of the war, by the end of the war, the military needed every warm body they could get, irrespective of height.

Jens was first called up to active service on January 5, 1850. He was assigned to the first company of the 11<sup>th</sup> Line Infantry Battalion on the thirtieth of March that same year after completing the normal ten-week basic training. He was one of twenty recruits for a company of two hundred (there were a total of seventy-four new recruits for the entire battalion). A battalion consisted of four companies, each with two hundred enlisted men. The need for this many recruits reflected both the high casualty rate suffered during the war and the much shorter service time required of conscripts. The active service commitment was sixteen months, down from six years prior to the military reforms. Jens probably served even less time since many soldiers were released once their battalions were put back on peacetime footing; the 11<sup>th</sup> Line Infantry Battalion stood down in late 1850.

Jens served without distinction and, according to family members, rarely spoke of his time in the military. When pressed, he would acknowledge that he had shot someone,



but then he would add, “det kunne da måske også have været en anden” [but it could have been someone else, too]. In his laconic remark one can trace both a recognition of the chaos associated with the battles in which he was involved, and his own unwillingness—not unlike that of many war veterans—to discuss the horror of combat. There is no doubt that he saw significant combat, since his company was in the thick of things at two major battles, and likely three. The battle at Helligbæk on July 24, 1850, the battle at Isted on July 25, 1850, and the battle at Stentenmühle on August 8, 1850 were all horrific, gruesome affairs, and the 11<sup>th</sup> Line Infantry Battallion suffered major casualties at each one (Svane 1879). Although the battle of Isted is considered by many war historians to be one of the most important victories ever for the Danish army, the battle on the previous day probably had a much more profound impact on Jens.

Along with Jens in the first company of the 11<sup>th</sup> Line Infantry Battalion was another young man from Ersted, Jens Nielsen. Nielsen had been recruited a few months earlier, even though he was several years younger than Bitte Jens, born February 19, 1827. He was confirmed a year after Jens and, given the tiny size of Ersted, it is inconceivable that the two did not know each other as children. Furthermore, once in the army, the regional bonds likely drew the two together—they were, after all, assigned to the same small company. Unlike Bitte Jens, though, Jens Nielsen never made it back to Ersted, falling in the battle at Helligbæk. He was one of six privates from the battalion killed during what was a bloody, chaotic and utterly mismanaged battle. Svane, in his account of the fight, describes a gruesome struggle to capture a hill from the enemy forces. Although the Danish soldiers successfully took the hill, they were then ordered to abandon it, and soon found themselves in pitched hand-to-hand combat in a nearby forest. Given these poor strategic

decisions, the confrontation devolved into a slaughter for both sides (Svane 1879, 49-51). The loss of a friend—or at least a childhood neighbor—and the subsequent horrors of the battle at Isted the following day, where another 25 members of the battalion died, must have had an impact on Jens's psyche. In two short days, Jens had been present when nearly one fifth of his battalion had been butchered. He later told people that he had been hit in the head with a bullet, and this had led to a loss of memory. It is unclear if or when he was wounded since Svane's history only lists the soldiers who were killed, and there is no way of confirming whether Jens was one of the ninety-nine privates listed as injured over the course of the three battles. Tellingly, his loss of memory was only temporary—affecting him at a certain time of day—and he regained all his faculties by the time he was fifty. Or at least so the story goes.

When Jens returned from the war, he set to the business of settling down, marrying Anne Sørensdatter of Årestrup on December 26, 1853. Anne, twenty-eight years old at the time, was the daughter of *gaardmand* Søren Sørensen and his wife Mette Jensdatter. In 1854, Anne and Jens had their first child, Ane Margrethe who apparently died at a young age since, by the time of the 1860 census, she was no longer listed as living with the family. It is possible that she was sent off as part of a foster arrangement to live with another family, a fairly common approach among smallholders to care for their youngest children. Jens, however, does not seem to have used this option for caring for children until he married his second wife and so one has to assume that Ane Margrethe died. The death of Ane Margrethe would not have been out of the ordinary, particularly among the poorer rural classes. Yet, by the last decades of the nineteenth century, infant and child mortality were falling rapidly (Dybdahl 1982, vol. 5, 30). There were several epidemics of measles, diphtheria, scarlet

fever and influenza that primarily affected children—with frighteningly high mortality rates—during this period, but better hygiene, better access to consistent food supplies, and a better understanding of care for the sick all contributed to a marked decrease in childhood mortality (Dybdahl 1982, vol. 5, 30-5).

Death was never too far away from the cotters' houses. On May 12, 1860, Jens's wife Anne died of scrofulous, a tubercular infection of the skin of the neck, not quite thirty-five years old. Jens remarried on November 2 of that same year, as most smallholdings relied on having both husband and wife available to do the necessary work. Statistical studies of marriage patterns during the nineteenth century up through 1870, reveal that it was common for people to remarry within two months of the loss of a spouse (Johansen 1979, vol. 4, 61-63). Jens's second wife was his twenty-year-old step-cousin from Gravlev, Maren Andersdatter, who was employed as a hired girl. She had at least two younger siblings: a brother Niels, eight years her junior, and a sister Maren Kirstine, ten years her junior. Her mother was Ane Lene Nielsdatter and her father was Anders Christensen Bundgaard, a fifty-seven year old copyholder from Gravlev. His last name is the source of the patronymic that Jens's sons Anders and Niels Peter later took as their legal name.<sup>7</sup> Maren's background was not much different than Jens's, as she also came from a family of smallholders. Together, Jens and Maren had five children: Ane, born in 1861; Anders, born in 1864; Marie Kirstine, born 1866; Ane Cathrine Margrethe, born 1869; and Niels Peter, born 1879. Anders grew up to be one of Denmark's most famous early twentieth century sculptors.

In Tang Kristensen's biographical sketch of Bitte Jens, he noted that Maren often left the house when he came to visit because she did not like to hear the stories that her husband

told, the implication being that she found the stories to be filled with superstition and, as a modern woman, was uninterested in the simple ways of the earlier generations. This representation of Maren is misleading: she herself was said to be prophetic (*synsk*), and a story in family tradition provided “proof” of her second sight. According to the story, her parents’ house burned in 1854, when Maren was fourteen. She believed she could “see” who had set the fire, and she brought her accusation to the court in Nibe. To the horror of the district judge, she accused the wife of the largest farmer in the area; despite the obvious class differences, her accusation was proven true, and the woman was sent to jail. Less dramatic stories suggest that Maren was able to know ahead of time when she would receive a letter from one of her children (Various 1995). Given her background, it is far more likely that Maren did not like to listen to her husband’s stories not because of their seeming endorsement of superstition, but rather because of his propensity to tell crude, even obscene, stories. Interestingly, while Bitte Jens told numerous stories of people with second sight, he never mentioned Maren’s alleged abilities to Tang Kristensen.

Documentation of Bitte Jens and Maren’s children’s lives is uneven. Their daughter Marie Kirstine is perhaps the hardest to follow in her early life; paradoxically, this lack of clarity helps illustrate an important aspect of rural life and the impact of economic pressures on family organization. While Marie Kirstine is listed in the church records under live births, she disappears from the local census records, and does not reappear until the 1880 census, when she suddenly appears as a thirteen year old girl. The lapse is not, however, as inexplicable as it may first seem. Rather, it points to the practice of fostering, both formal and informal, that acted as a social safety net within small communities and more extended networks of relatives. Formal fostering

arrangements were a component of developing programs for assisting the poor, and these were often straightforward business propositions—families bid for communal support to take children into their care; before reforms to this system with the child laws in 1889, it was shockingly common that foster arrangements would be rebid each year. Children caught in the system could find themselves shuttled from family to family on a yearly basis. The practice of housing children with the lowest bidder further added to the inhumanity of the system, because children were routinely exploited, chronically undernourished, and emotionally traumatized (Jørgensen 1940, 165).

There was, however, a more humane, informal network of fostering, in which families with young children would ask close friends or relatives to help care for the children in those first years, allowing the family to maintain or develop a sounder economic base, and not have to worry about disruptive and demanding infants and toddlers. When the children reached school age, or a bit before, they would return home. Jens and Maren’s son Anders was, shortly after his birth, sent into fosterage with his grandparents in Gravlev. The same—or at least a similar—fosterage arrangement was in place for Marie Kirstine during her earliest childhood. Anders was back at home with his parents by age five (in time for the 1870 census), and so it is likely that Marie Kirstine received similar treatment. Since the youngest brother Niels Peter also later took the name Bundgaard, as his older brother who had been in fosterage with his grandparents, it is likely that he too was sent to live with them when he was very young. Indeed, it could well be that Ane Cathrine Margrethe, the second to youngest, also had a stint in fosterage with her grandparents.<sup>8</sup>

### *The Local Environment*

Ersted perches on the northern border of Rold Skov, one of the largest forests in northern Jutland. The farmland here is not good since it is sandy, but the proximity of the forest, with its opportunities for charcoal production and access to wood for building barrels and making shoes, made it an economically attractive place to live. Indeed, forest covered more than a quarter of the parish in the late nineteenth century. Reclamation of the heath and swamplands was a major undertaking during the 1880s, and the arable land was increased considerably during the last decades of the nineteenth century, in no small part by efforts of smallholders and, equally important, ambitious farmers. Lindemborg River, marking the border between Hornum Herred and Hindsted Herred, cuts a dramatically deep valley to the east of Ersted, and at the bottom of the valley lay a large mill complex, *Røde Mølle*. Several large hills stand out in the terrain, notably Møgelhøj (99 meters), Torsted Bjerg (68 meters) and, most important for Jens's storytelling, Bavnehøj (88 meters).

Årestrup (1455 Aariztorp, 1462 Orestroph, 1798 Aarestrup) was the local parish seat, with a church originally built in the twelfth century, a parsonage (1884), and a schoolhouse (1885). It was part of the Hornum district of Aalborg county. The savings association in Årestrup was established in 1886, and provided local farmers and smallholders a new opportunity to borrow money. In 1910, Årestrup opened its own cooperative dairy and a sawmill. The rest of the parish was comprised of Ersted (1611 Ersteddt; 1688 Errested; 1800 Ersted), where Jens lived; Foldager (1664 Fold Agger); Torsted (1451 Torstet; 1798 Torsted) and a collection of houses and farms at Stubberup and Hellegde. Some of these place names, including Ersted and Torsted, indicate settlements in the area stretching back to the middle

ages; and archaeological finds suggest settlements stretching much further back, perhaps three thousand years (Trap 1058-9). There are several other noteworthy archaeological finds in the area, including two long mounds, and thirty-four mounds. Near Foldager, there was a large group of twenty-three mounds, although by the 1950s, only eight were left; the rest had most likely been plowed level to increase arable land or been used for marl. There is also a stone setting burial area from the late Iron Age near Torstedlund, and a bowl shaped stone in Årestrup that once had been the cover of a mound (Trap 1958, 1062).

The main economic player in the area was the manor farm, Torstedlund. As far as manor farms go, it was modest, with only 22.8 barrels of *hartkorn* in land valuation, hardly enough to qualify it as a *gods*, but at the very high end of the *proprietar* scale. In 1724, Torstedlund manor was folded into the larger Nørlund manor, as part of a purchase of Torstedlund and Albæk manor by Count Chr. Fr. Lewetzau, who bought the two farms for 34,860 rixdollars. The combined estate had a valuation of 712 barrels of *hartkorn*, including all of the affiliated farms. In 1811, the house of Restrup was dissolved, and all of its farms were sold for 1.15 million rixdollars to Malte Ulrik Friis. A series of sales followed but by 1826, Torstedlund and Nørlund had been consolidated into one large estate by a single owner, Carl de Neergaard.

Nørlund manor has a long and confusing history as well. Records date it as far back as the 1300s, when it was denounced as a robber fort that was later destroyed by King Valdemar Atterdag. After she took the throne, Queen Margaret I forbid any further building there in 1396, and subsequently tore down a small fort that was being used by a band of robbers as a base of operations to attack travelers, an event that Jens mentioned in several of his stories (see BJK

1.25 and 1.27). In 1570, Ludvig Munk Nørlund took over the manor, marking the beginning of a noble era at Nørlund. His daughter, Kirsten Munk, was married “to the left hand” with King Christian IV (see BJK 1.28). Nørlund manor traded hands frequently over the next several centuries, including a sale to Iver Rosenkrantz-Lewetzau, under whose control the manor became a hereditary holding (*stamhus*) in the Restrup lineage. In the early nineteenth century, the manor was consolidated with Torstedlund and Albæk manors, and later sold in 1830 to krigsråd Rasmus Conradsen, who started a glassworks, Conradsminde, there in 1834. The glassworks failed, and in 1868, the manor was taken over by Commander Emil Bluhme. He established a sawmill there and, for much of the nineteenth century, a large part of the estate’s income came from the forest. This emphasis on forestry over grain or animal production was unusual for manor farms. A major storm in 1910 felled a large number of trees on the estate’s land, and plunged it into a financial crisis. As a result, the estate was sold to real estate speculators (Trap 1958, 1060).

The two manor farms, Torstedlund and Albæk, constituted an independent judicial district (*birk*), a status which had been granted by King Christian V in 1686 to Admiral Chr. Bielke, the manor lord at the time. All of the peasants who had villeinage at either farm, as well as everything that Bielke could acquire within a three-mile radius of the manor farms, belonged to this *birk*. With the purchase of the two manor farms in 1724, all of the Restrup lineage holdings came under this administration. The *birk* held judicial sway for nearly a century but, by 1814, with the various legal and land reforms, it was disestablished, and the judicial administration of the areas reverted to the local districts (*herreder*) (Trap 1958, 1060-1).

Årestrup parish along with Haverslev parish comprised a pastorate. Årestrup was under the deanship in Fleskum and



Hornum Herred. The church in Årestrup is an unusual structure, constructed predominantly of granite blocks, and laid out on an east-west axis, with the tower in the west, and the entry foyer to the north. In 1888 the church was restored, at which point workers discovered chalk paintings from the sixteenth century, the same period as that of the church bell, which is from 1582. Perhaps the most interesting feature of the church in the context of Bitte Jens’s life is a plaster relief of Abel’s Death, executed by his son, Anders Bundgaard.

The farmland around Ersted and Årestrup was greatly influenced by the surrounding heath, and the mineral wealth in the area. On his first visit to the area, Tang Kristensen wrote,

Det var ellers en underlig Egn at færdes i. Smaavejene var graa eller hvide, for Kalken stak hele Tiden oven ud af Jorden, og mine Støvler blev helt hvide deraf. Der oppe kommer de nemt afsted med at gjøre deres Veje i Stand og holde dem vedlige, da Kalken er saa haard og bindende, at der ikke behøves Grus paa dem. Jeg kunde jo se, at naar man pløjer Jorden der, kommer Kalken ogsaa frem, og Jorden kan da under gunstige Vejrforhold give stærke Afgrøder af Korn, men Straa bliver der kun lidt af. Alt dette lagde jeg Mærke til strags, jeg kom der, og fik Bekræftelse derpaa de følgende Dage (MO vol. 3, 79).

[It was a strange area in which to travel. All the small roads were either gray or white, since the lime deposits kept poking up out of the ground, and my boots turned

completely white because of that. It is easy for them to repair and maintain their roads up there, since the lime is so hard and sticks together so well that there's no need for gravel. I also noticed that when you plow the earth there, the lime comes up too, and the earth can give plentiful grain harvests if the weather is good, but they do not get much straw. I noticed all of that as soon as I got there, and this was confirmed over the following days.]

These unusual environmental features left their mark on Jens's storytelling and his son Anders's artistic production.

Critics have long noted that Anders Bundgaard's sculpture is closely linked to the physical and natural environment of Himmerland, where he grew up herding sheep and helping his father. His son, Jens Andersen Bundgaard, writing in a local historical journal, noted, "Naturen har altid været en kunstnerisk oplevelse for ham, lige fra han var en lille dreng på Ersted hede. Derfra stammer hans stil. Det var naturens pragt, han var betaget af" [Nature has always been an artistic experience for him, ever since he was a little boy on Ersted heath. That is where his style comes from. It was the splendor of nature that moved him] (Various 1995). During his youth, Anders often mused that if he were rich, he would purchase Thindbæk Møllegård, since he considered it the most beautiful place he knew. In 1905, he did just that. The mill lay a few hundred meters downstream from Røde Mølle, and two and a half kilometers east of Ersted. The mill was no longer used as such, but rather rich lime deposits in the nearby hills allowed Anders to expand the mining enterprise there. It is interesting to note then, the significant change in status in Bitte Jens's family, all within

one generation: from a poor cotter family, the family became a relatively well-to-do family, fully integrated in capital economic developments and at the forefront of national cultural production.

Anders’s sculptures are often said by critics to be closely linked to his father’s stories, which in turn are also closely related to the local topography. Yet Anders’s best-known sculptures do not reflect that connection clearly, particularly those works based on religious motifs. Others reflect the connection to a small degree, implicitly illustrating aspects of the fantasy realm of the fairy tale. Indeed, the polar bears that he sculpted for the roof of the Copenhagen city hall were, in his own mind, linked to the fairy tales that his father told, although they could just as easily have been seen as representations of the polar bears on the Danish royal coat of arms (representing Greenland). Even though polar bears do not appear in any of the stories Bitte Jens told to Tang Kristensen, Anders’s comments that he was inspired by his father’s stories hint at an even larger repertoire than recorded by both Tang Kristensen and the local teacher, Karl Hjorth.<sup>9</sup>

Anders’s most famous statue—that of Gefjon plowing Sjælland out of Skåne—is also linked to Bitte Jens’s stories but only anecdotally. Nordic mythology had gained widespread popularity during the mid nineteenth century, largely through the efforts of N. F. S. Grundtvig. Nordic mythology at the time was also closely linked to the folk high school (*folkehøjskole*) movement. Snorri Sturluson’s Edda and Saxo’s Chronicle of the Danes had both been translated into Danish, and both works were widely available to the newly literate rural populations.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, Nordic mythology was deliberately used as a touchstone for being Danish minded (*danskesindet*) in the various nationalist movements that took hold both during mid century, and in the aftermath of the Schleswig-Holstein debacle. Stories from Nordic

mythology informed several of Anders's other sculptures as well, most notably a sculpture of the norns, Fenja and Menja, grinding out the fates of men, an image closely related to the agricultural work of Bitte Jens's (but not Anders's) childhood. Anders did not cite Snorri or Saxo as his main inspiration for these mythological sculptures. Instead he recalled sitting under the finishing table where his father sat putting the last touches on clogs and recounting these myths. By linking the stories to his father, Anders narratively anchored his sculptures in the local traditions and people of Jutland, and by extension peasant (*almue*) culture, as opposed to anchoring them in the deliberate national Romantic revivals of Nordic mythology represented by Grundtvig's written translations of Snorri and Saxo. The Gefjon fountain certainly emphasized the physicality of her endeavor and his representation of the bulls in particular, with steam pouring out of their noses as they strained against the plow, clearly built on Anders's own personal experience with animals and plowing. In this way, one can interpret the sculpture as more closely related to the emergent, realistic folk breakthrough (*folkelig gennembrud*) literature and a neo-Romanticism that was more socially progressive than its earlier Romantic counterparts (late eighteenth and early nineteenth century).

Some of Anders's other art works were more closely related to local topographical features and his father's legends. One of the best examples of this connection can be found in his work *Skat i gemme* [Hidden treasure], that plays on one of his father's frequent story motifs, namely buried treasure. In the sculpture, Anders took advantage of the huge caverns that were left behind from the mining operations in Tindbæk, converting them into an elaborate underground art museum. His original intention was to carve a series of reliefs in the walls, organically connecting his art to the earth itself. A mining accident that killed his son Christian interrupted his

plans, and he only completed one bas relief; this one relief hints at the clear connection in his mind between the earth, his art, and the stories that accrued to the local landscape. Entitled *Bakkernes Ånd* [The Spirit of the Hills], it shows a reclining woman cuddling up with a three-headed snake, presumably a *lindorm* (see BJK 1.13). In the background, a mineworker is busy with his work, tearing apart the hill. The contrast of hill spirit and mine worker sets into relief the very tensions that Bitte Jens addressed in many of his stories between the modern, capitalist redefinition of the environment and the earlier relationship between farmer and the often hidden, spiritual dimension of the landscape. Although Anders never completed the reliefs intended for his underground museum, the plaster casts of many of his sculptures were moved into the mine, and the current museum highlights the connection between Anders’s art, the local environment and his father’s storytelling.

### *Everyday Life in Ersted and Årestrup*

There is little documentation of the rhythms of Jens’s everyday life, apart from several small biographical sketches that appeared in the *Årbog for Himmerland og Kjær Herred* (Yearbook for Himmerland and Kjær Counties), as well as two short interviews with his son, Anders Bundgaard, about his childhood in Årestrup. J. A. Bundgaard’s short “Bondedreng i Ersted, 1864-1880” (Farm Boy in Ersted, 1864-1880), also in *Årbog for Himmerland og Kjær Herred*, provides some information about the daily life of the young men and women in the area. Perhaps the best document for understanding the daily rhythms of life on the farms near Årestrup does not come from Bitte Jens’s immediate circle but rather from a daily journal kept by farmer Niels Peter

Nielsen Krogh, Øster Bjerregård, Årestrup (b. April 17, 1859, d. 1912). Niels Peter's father, Kristen Nielsen Krogh (b. May 26, 1829) owned one of the two Bjerregårde farms on the northwest border of Årestrup. Eventually Niels Peter took over the farm when his father retired on a standard *afægt* arrangement. Over the course of several years, Niels Peter made short daily entries in his journal, irrespective of whether something major had happened or not. These notations included descriptions of the weather, and a line or two describing the events of the day. Reading through a year of the journal offers fascinating insight into the concerns and the tasks of a farmer in the Årestrup area.

The daily demands of Jens's life were probably different from those confronting Niels Peter, given that Jens was a smallholder, and Niels Peter was a farm owner. Nevertheless, considering the relatively small size of Niels Peter's farm, and the *afægt* arrangement that kept his father under the same roof (albeit a larger roof), the general contours of daily life were probably similar: animals to care for, chaff to cut, grain to be readied for planting. There were, of course, social and political distinctions between farmer and cotter, and these distinctions were mirrored in the types of social engagements that dot Niels Peter's journal—he and his father frequently visited with the social elite of the area, including the forest ranger (*skovfoged*) and the miller's family at *Røde Mølle*. Despite this class difference, the economic difference may not have been that great. Just as Jens needed to supplement his farming income with a craft, in his case making wooden clogs, Niels Peter had to do the same.

Niels Peter's journal makes evident the constancy in daily life, with entries several years apart being essentially interchangeable. For example, on January fourth, 1887, he wrote, "Frost. Fodret kreaturerne. Skaaren hakkelse. Søren flyttet i Sovekamret" [Frost. Fed the animals. Cut chaff. Søren

moved to the bedroom].<sup>11</sup> By way of comparison, on January sixteenth, 1895, he wrote, “Tøvejr. Fodret kreaturene. Skaaren hakkelse.” [Thaw. Fed the animals. Cut chaff.] Despite this seeming constancy, the journal includes small interruptions in this constancy that signaled the incremental yet important changes in social and economic organization that were the hallmark of the period. While the goal here is not to explore Niels Peter’s life in detail, several general observations on his everyday life as recorded in his journal may help with a deeper understanding of what it was like to live and work in Årestrup and Ersted in the late 1880s and the 1890s.

Early January was of course marked by the celebration of the final days of Christmas, New Year’s and Epiphany (*Hellig Trekongersdag*). Niels Peter noted a series of visits with neighbors, a couple of remaining Christmas parties (*julegilde*) on January seventh and eighth, and the usual feeding of the animals and cutting of chaff. He was an avid card player, and in January 1887, he spent three nights playing cards, several times accompanied by his father, who still owned the farm. He was also apparently was a fiddler, and played at several parties during the month—a “girl dance” (*pigebal*) on Sunday, January ninth at J. Pedersen’s house, and another dance (*bal*) on Sunday, January thirtieth. Throughout the year, Niels Peter and several others from the area played at parties, almost on a monthly basis.<sup>12</sup> Visits from neighbors, and particularly card playing, was reserved for the darker months, from November through February.

Other events that he noted include Niels Skomager—likely a local day laborer—hired to help with the threshing several days in a row (January twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth), the sale of a pig in Skørping (January tenth), a cow brought to bull at Torstedlund (January eleventh), the birth of a calf (January twelfth), the purchase of several pigs (January

sixteenth), and a trip to Aalborg to pay for a baby ram purchased at auction in Skørping (January fifteenth). The farm had acquired several mechanical devices, and he noted on January twenty-ninth that he had “machined” (*maskinet*) four barrels of barley.

Niels Peter was clearly active in the local savings association, as he attended several association meetings (January seventh and twenty-first). Later in the year (April fifteenth), he was elected chairman of the association, a reflection of his status in the surrounding community, despite his relative youth (twenty-nine years old). He was also engaged in cultural events in the town, attending public lectures at Årestrup School (for example, February twelfth). These lectures covered a wide range of topics, from advances in farm technology to cultural questions (indeed, Tang Kristensen often himself went on lecture tours to speak about his work on Danish tradition) to aspects of regional and national politics.

Årestrup School had a long history, one that stretched back further in time than the school reforms of 1814. One of the first attempts at school reform had been launched nearly a century earlier, in 1708, when the poverty assistance law required that manor lords establish schools. This law led to the establishment of several, privately funded schools. Greggers Krabbe, the owner of Torstedlund at the time, had the jump on his fellow manor lords, having established a local school in 1648, with the goal of “flittigen informere og lære fattige Skolebørn udi deres Catechismus og Børnelærdom og anden Gudfrygtigheds Øvelse, som og at læse Skrift, skrive og regne, saa vidt enhver efter sin Aar og Alder kan fatte og begribe” [to diligently inform and teach poor school children their Catechism and children’s learning and other exercises in piety, and also to read writing, write and do arithmetic to the extent that each can understand and comprehend based on



their age] (Johansen 1948, 5). By 1739, a new law attempted to impose curricular reform for the entire kingdom, and changed the structure of the various schools (including the *rytterskoler* that were established in 1735 on the Crown estates) so that the connection between church and school was clearly established.<sup>13</sup>

By the early nineteenth century, Årestrup had a long schooling tradition. From 1810-1836, Niels Larsen Krabbe ran the school, as the last of the “sognedegne,” or church functionaries. Later teachers, although administered by the local church, were hired primarily to teach (Nørr 1994). Lars Peder Krabsen, who was the first teacher to have actual training as a teacher, ran the school from 1836-1853. He was followed by Jens Larsen, from 1853-1876, who wove for people to supplement his income. Jens Larsen was also Bitte Jens and Niels Peter’s teacher. Karl Hjorth, the teacher who introduced Tang Kristensen to Bitte Jens and also collected Bitte Jens’s ballads and melodies, taught in the school from 1876-1888. Hjorth was from Jerslev, a town fifty-six kilometers to the north, where Niels Peter and his wife had some family connections. Hjorth was followed by Christian Helmod Flyger (1888-1900) and Axel Jensen (1900-1906).

In an entry from much later in the year, November twenty-second, Jens Peter mentioned that a meeting at the school had raised the issue of morality (*sædelighed*). In the 1880s, the morality debate (*sædelighedfejden*) and the question of women’s rights and freedom were front and center in the cultural debates not only in Copenhagen, but also far out into the countryside. The national election was perhaps more politically important, and Jens Peter mentions it in two January entries. On January twentieth, he noted, “Til prøvevalg i Forsamlingshuset i Trængstrup” [To trial election in the meeting house in Trængstrup] and on January twenty-eighth, “Til folketingsvalg i Brørstrup. Valgt J. Vestergaard.”

[To parliamentary elections in Brorstrup. Elected J. Vestergaard].<sup>14</sup>

February and March proceeded in much the same way, with increasing focus on preparations for the upcoming planting season. Throughout the year, various holidays disrupted the daily rhythms, but only in a minor fashion—Carnival (*fastelavn*), like many other holidays, required baking, and the holiday was usually marked by visits to neighbors. Niels Peter continued to employ Niels Skomager to help thresh, and he regularly attended meetings of the savings association.

On a local political level, it is interesting to note that Niels Peter also attended a railways meeting in Års. By 1887, the rail network was built out, although other spurs were constantly being added. Års was on a central spur of the Jutlandic railways that branched off from the main western Jutlandic line, at Viborg. The terminus of the line was at Løgstør at Aggersund—although initially the terminus was at Ålestrup (the Ålestrup-Løgstør extension was first built in 1966; in 2002, passenger traffic on Viborg-Løgstør was eliminated). The meeting was likely to have been a planning meeting, since the Viborg-Ålestrup line was not opened until several years later in 1893, whereas the main Randers-Aalborg line (on which Støvring station lay) was opened already in 1869. These planning meetings were held not only to discuss the route of the rail lines, but also to discuss the location of the stations. At times, parishes would provide funding, often through the local savings bank, in return for certain concessions such as the location of a station.<sup>15</sup> Having a station nearby could be a great boon to the local economy.

Niels Peter's journal reveals several interesting aspects of mobility in late nineteenth century Denmark. On the local level, Niels Peter and his father traveled fairly easily and regularly throughout the area, likely by wagon or carriage. On

a more regional level, he and his father made use of the ever-expanding rail network—allowing them to travel easily to Aalborg for example—and were actively engaged in expanding that rail network. The embrace of technology among farmers is also reflected in their use of machines to assist in the farm work. Although Bitte Jens was probably not as involved in these local political decisions, the application of technology on the local level, or the political discussions that led to the expansion of transportation and by extension business opportunities—he certainly would have been aware of these developments and their increasing impact on his daily life and livelihood.

As February wore on, Niels Peter began bringing wood back from the forest, a major, and communal undertaking. On the seventh and eighth, he drove two loads of wood home, and from the ninth through the fifteenth, a load each day; on the fifteenth, there was a *tragilde* or a “wood party,” a celebration to mark the end of a cold, difficult task. The wood was used for various things at Niels Peter’s farm, including wooden shoes, an interesting intersection with Bitte Jens’s sideline as clog maker. Already on the first of March, Niels Peter noted that he had begun sawing the wood for wooden shoes.

The weather throughout the month was unforgivingly cold, with frost, snow and high winds and, along with the work in the forest, it left Niels Peter battling a cold that forced him to bed on the fifteenth. His father fell ill soon there after. Although health care was becoming increasingly sophisticated, illness was a constant threat and, given the relentless work pace on small farms and smallholdings, could have a significant negative impact on the family economy. Unlike his father’s cold, Niels Peter’s cold was serious, and he lay in bed for an entire week. Finally, someone went to the doctor on his behalf. Whatever was given to him must have

worked, since already on the twenty-fourth, he went to Aalborg with butter for an exposition; several weeks later, on a beautiful early March day, he traveled again to Aalborg to enter his butter in a competition, and won third prize. Later in March, on the twenty-sixth, he went to Nibe to display his butter once more. Yet despite his success with his butter, the days of private production of dairy products, particularly on small farms, were numbered. By the late 1880s, the cooperative movement had taken hold, and there was an increased emphasis on consistency of production, particularly for items such as butter. Without consistent controls on quality, the small farmers and cotters would never be able to export their goods to the lucrative overseas market (an advantage held by the wealthier manor farms). With the development of better production methods, the switch to beets and similar crops for animal fodder, and the advent of the cooperatives, this barrier to markets was eliminated, and small farmers such as Niels Peter had greater opportunities for the sale of their products.

The rest of the month of February was filled with visits from neighbors, cutting chaff and feeding the animals. In early March, several events stand out: a stallion was born early in the morning on the fourth (one of the few times Niels Peter actually recorded a time, here three a.m.), the first lamb of the year was born (on the thirteenth), and his wife Ane Margrethe went to bible study (*bibellasning*) in Ersted. Bible study was both a social affair and a religious undertaking. By the late nineteenth century, various religious groups had become quite popular throughout Denmark, and many of these contested the absolute religious authority of the Danish Folk Church—indeed, part of the constitutional reforms of 1849 were directly related to popular movements challenging that authority. This bible class was probably held either by Grundtvigians or the Inner Mission, as these were the two

most active groups in the area, and both proposed that the individual—rather than ecclesiastic officials—should be the focus of religious awakening. Given the forward mindset of Niels Peter, and his vote for the farmers’ party *Venstre*, it seems most likely that the meeting would have been held by Grundtvigians.

It is interesting that Ane Margrethe attended bible study for several reasons. First, her attendance appears to have been an anomaly—perhaps she attended with a friend who was trying to convert her. In any event, it was her only visit to the bible study for the entire year. Second, as with many other farmers, Niels Peter and his family were hardly regulars at church services. Indeed, attending church services was such an unusual event that Niels Peter noted when he had been to the church; he did so twice during the entire year: on February sixth, they attended church for normal Sunday services and on April seventeenth, they attended a confirmation. Most other Sundays were given to small chores around the farm, visiting neighbors, local travel, and fiddling at parties. Even on days such as Easter, there was no mention of church attendance; indeed, on Easter Monday, Niels Peter noted that he played fiddle at a local party.

By March eighth, Niels Peter was able to write that he had his oat stack in the barn, a total of thirteen and a half shocks, a fairly large amount, again underscoring the significant difference between Niels Peter’s and Jens’s economic circumstances. Two events further underscored the differences between the ambitious and relatively well off farmer, Niels Peter, and the much poorer Bitte Jens. On March fifteenth, Niels Peter attended a local meeting of the agricultural association (*landboforening*) at Hjedsbæk Inn, five kilometers north and west of Årestrup. The *landboforening* was one of the most important organizations for the burgeoning class of farmers (*gårdmænd*). Not only did the organization

provide access to information about technological advances in agriculture, and training in modern techniques, but it also served as a special interest representing the collective goals of the farmers on a regional and national basis. The *landboforening* also played a significant role in the farmers' development of an "imagined community," the very basis of *Venstre's* development as an important political party.

On March sixteenth, Niels Peter traveled to Aalborg for another exhibition of agricultural produce and, at the same time, joined the "Skütteforening" or rifle club (*skytteforening*). In the aftermath of the Danish military defeat in 1864, and a concomitant rise in nationalist feelings throughout the country, numerous rifle clubs were established throughout Denmark. By the 1880s, with Estrup's imposition of the provisional budgets (and by extension provisional government), there was an additional component to these local rifle associations, as they were largely populated by *Venstremænd* (members of the political party Left or *Venstre*), and represented, at least in Estrup's estimation, a threat to the power which he had consolidated in Copenhagen. While the groups were banned in the early 1880s, the ban was lifted in 1885. By 1887, the Aalborg club had been reestablished and Niels Peter was able to join—another clear declaration of Niels Peter's allegiance to the ever stronger farmers' party, *Venstre*, and yet another indication of the growing social divide between the farmers and the cotters—while the contours of day-to-day life may have been similar, the paths of political and social engagement were divergent.

Back on the farm, though, things were normal. From March tenth through the twelfth and again from the twenty-third through the twenty-fifth, Niels Peter did the finish work on the clogs that he had made out of wood that he had brought home from the forest earlier in the year. The time between doing the finish work and the initial cutting of wood

for the clogs suggests that he had sent the pieces to local clog makers—such as Bitte Jens—to be made into shoes, reserving the finish work for himself.<sup>16</sup> Late March also saw the birth of several lambs, and on the twenty-sixth, a bull born to the white-spotted cow (*hvidbroget kø*).

At the very beginning of April, under clear skies, Niels Peter began plowing his fields. But work in the fields was not all-consuming, and he found time to play for a festive gathering (*lejestue*) on the day after Easter at Hjedsbæk Inn, and a sixtieth birthday party for his friend Kristen Østergaard. The “machining” of grain continued, and on the sixteenth, it amounted to six barrels of oats. On the twentieth and twenty-first, he prepared a field for sowing, and harrowed the oat fields. By the end of April, he had planted carrots and potatoes, as well as sown several fields with oats, fertilized his barley field, harrowed the fallow field, and sold a one-year-old calf to a neighbor.

Most of May was taken up with sowing fields, and harrowing the various fields that had already been sown or were lying fallow. On the ninth, with his father in Aalborg with the accounts and tax records, he spent the day working at harrowing part of the heath, where several days later he planted potatoes as well. By the tenth, he had started sending his calves out to graze on grass. The twelfth was taken up with a trip to the market in Skørping. Again, on the fourteenth, Niels Peter was away from home, this time traveling to Aalborg for a general assembly. Although it is unclear from his notation, the general assembly was probably that of the *Landboforening*. On the same day, he and his father sent a cow up to a bull at Torstedlund, the nearest manor farm.

May and June were busy months, packed with farm work, and social and political engagements. Niels Peter’s wife celebrated her birthday on May seventeenth, in the midst of

getting the potatoes planted.<sup>17</sup> By the end of May, the tailor had come by to sew clothes (they were delivered on June twelfth), the cows were again grazing, Niels Peter had driven two shocks and forty-eight bundles of oats off, been to a meeting at Jens Petersen's place with the newly elected member of the Rigsdag, Jens Vestergaard, been mildly ill (on the twenty-fifth), celebrated his father's birthday (on the twenty-sixth), fertilized the potato patch, cut peat in the heath, washed and sheared the ram, attended several meetings of the savings association and played at a party at Hjedbæk plantation. In June, Niels Peter planted beets, cut peat in the heath with Christian Hand, a local daylaborer, wrote a *stamtavle* or genealogy for his horse "Jette" (likely in preparation to sell or show her), and got ready to thatch the roof. He also brought three loads of clay from Ersted—possibly from the clay pit that Bitte Jens owned jointly with several other men in Ersted—for a new threshing floor, which he lay the day after getting the clay.

Several unusual events interrupted the otherwise steady pace of the work during the month. On the political level, Niels Peter played at a constitution day party (*grundlovsfest*) in Oplev Krat on June fifth. The celebration of constitution day during the late 1880s took on a particularly political tone, as Estrup's government in Copenhagen continued the end-run around the democratically elected parliament (*rigsdag*), by blocking normal budgetary debate, and issuing provisional budgets. The *grundlovsfest* was an opportunity for people to publicly show their support for the democratic principles of the constitution and implicitly challenge the legitimacy of Estrup's government; *Venstre* and the farmers were at the forefront of this moderate resistance.

Later in the month, Niels Peter and his wife traveled north to Vendsyssel to Jerslev. After a three-day trip, they returned and, on the very next day, Niels Peter made a large



investment in property, purchasing “Engerd” (Matrikel 143) from Årestrup meadow for two thousand crowns. The contract was finalized on July third. This purchase alone underscores the considerable economic distance between a farmer such as Niels Peter and the much poorer Bitte Jens. While Bitte Jens was trying to make a go of it with his small lot, Niels Peter was investing in expansion and capital development. These differences echoed throughout Jutland in the late 1800s, and contributed to the ever-increasing divide between the farmers and the cotters.

During the month of July, Niels Peter hired a local carpenter to thatch his roof while he tended to the fields, weeded the beets, drove loads of peat back from the heath (ten loads on the fourteenth and fifteenth of July) and brought his animals to various fairs (his ram won fifth prize in one of these local fairs). By mid July, he was already helping to cut hay in some of the area fields. The work was collective, and it was not until the twenty-third that he mentioned that the hay had been cut in his own fields. By the end of July, he and his father had raked and stacked the hay in their fields. In August, he began harvesting the rye and the barley; by mid August, the rye was in (thirteen loads, or sixteen shocks and seven bundles), and the oats had been harvested from several fields. The fallow fields had been plowed under again, and the rye that had been planted on the earlier heath had also been harvested. The short, almost terse entries hide the extraordinary amount of work that must have lain behind them; the workdays were long, and during much of the month, the weather was hardly cooperative, alternating between wind and rain. By the end of August, Niels Peter had shod his horse Jette, had begun tarring an unthatched roof (possibly the roof of a barn), and repaired the walls of the farm. His farmhouse was most likely a half-timber structure that needed annual upkeep of the stucco. He had also begun

driving fertilizer out to the newly harvested fields, particularly the heath fields, using manure from his animals.

September and October saw the end of the harvest. In early September, Niels Peter sold a horse for two hundred and fifty crowns, finished fertilizing, sowed a crop of barley, and plowed the stubble back into the harvested fields. In mid September, he purchased an order of honey, a key ingredient in baking and brewing at the time. The end of September was marked by home improvement projects, including a new kitchen table and a new floor in the entryway. By October, the weather had become much cooler, and by mid October, soon after all of the fields had been plowed and fertilized, there was an unseasonably early snowstorm. The storm was only a minor interruption, and he harvested his potatoes, sold another horse for two hundred crowns, and finished harvesting his beets.

By November, the pattern of feeding the animals, cutting chaff, visiting friends and playing cards dominated once again. On the first of November, a new girl was hired, Sine Krabsen. By this time, May first and November first were well established as the days that hired hands moved to new employment if their contracts were up and had not been renewed. It was also at this time of year that spikes in marriages took place: young men and women, freed from their contracts, could now marry and pursue a life together, often acquiring a small house, either with or without land (Dybdahl 1982).

Niels Peter's father, exhausted from the work of the harvest, fell ill, and several days later, the doctor was sent for; by the end of the week, he was better, although his convalescence lasted well into the next week. In mid November, along with N. Skomager and C. Hendriksen, Niels Peter set out boundary markers in the swamp—likely in anticipation of beginning a reclamation project. By the end of

the month, he had brought lumber out to the swamp to build a bridge. On November seventeenth, his father went to the forest auction—it was here that the wood was purchased that was driven home in January. Otherwise, little of note happened: he and his wife bought some pigs, and a cow was brought to the bull.

In December, Niels Peter sat down to write an article about fertilizer, most likely with the intent of having it published by the agricultural society. On December third, he went off to Aalborg to purchase paper for his article, a distance of twenty-seven kilometers! The next day, the family was visited by Jørgen Knudsen from Foldager concerning music instruction—it is unclear whether he was offering or seeking instruction, although given Niels Peter’s frequent travel to parties to fiddle, it seems likely that it was the latter. There are no further notations about this, so Niels Peter probably did not take Jørgen on as a student. Indeed, there is nothing to suggest that Niels Peter taught anyone music. On the eighth, he slaughtered a pig for home consumption, a fairly common practice, and one that would guarantee an excellent ham for Christmas celebrations later in the month. During the weekend of the tenth and eleventh, Niels Peter wrote his article about manure, and by the twelfth, he was able to send the completed article off to Århus (another indication that the article was intended for the agricultural society—there had probably been a general call for articles at the general assembly (*generalforsamling*) that he attended earlier in the year, with a deadline by the end of the year). The end of the month was taken up with preparations for Christmas, and the machining of the harvested grain. On the twenty-second, Niels Peter and his wife hosted a dance, but otherwise spent the Christmas season visiting nearby friends.

The year has a clear rhythm, governed by planting seasons and the weather. At the same time, the advent of the

railway, significantly better roads, and much better communication allowed the local to be connected to the regional and the national. The little towns of Årestrup and Ersted were not as isolated as they perhaps were earlier in the century. Rather, political movements, such as the rise of the farmers' party *Venstre*, and cultural movements, such as the *sædelighedsfejde*, erupted in the local landscape and local individuals became involved in these larger movements. The school, and local commissions and organizations had supplanted the church as the center of local engagement. Niels Peter's journal also draws into sharp relief the distinctions between classes—upwardly mobile farmers, who had access to reasonable capital and were able to expand their farms, as opposed to the more stagnant smallholders and day laborers who, without capital and without resources, were unable to expand their opportunities.

### *Making Clogs*

Jens did not keep a journal like Niels Peter, and so it is hard to describe in similar detail a year in his life. The patterns of planting, harrowing, harvesting, threshing, feeding and caring for animals, repairing buildings, buying wood and making clogs, doing household chores and baking, and visiting with neighbors and friends must have been more or less the same. It is unlikely that Jens was involved at the same level in regional and national politics, and there is no indication that Jens had any local responsibilities (such as Niels Peter's involvement in the savings association). Nevertheless, it is likely that Jens took part in local cultural arrangements (meetings at the school house), and probably even attended some of the same parties as Niels Peter.

Although Jens’s main work revolved around his smallholding, and keeping enough food on the table for his family, an important sideline—or *binæring*—was the production of wooden shoes (clogs). While there were several types of clogs routinely made in northern Jutland—a fact to which Jens alluded in his stories—by far the most common were ones made out of a single piece of wood. Clogs were work shoes, and were worn at all times of year, and for all kinds of outdoor work. The making of clogs was considered a skilled craft, and Jens had learned the craft starting in his early childhood. The work proceeded in three main phases, and as Niels Peter’s journal makes clear, most of the work was completed by the end of March.

The first phase was acquiring the wood, a process that was done entirely on speculation. Wood was purchased before being felled at auctions in the nearby forest. Although other wood supplies might have been bought on a supplemental basis from farmers (such as Niels Peter), Jens and his cohort acquired the majority of their wood at these auctions, held usually in late October or November, after all the leaves had fallen from the trees. The best trees for making clogs were thirty inches around (75 centimeters), without knots or obvious bends. Smaller trees were not suited for making clogs.

In December, the trees were felled using wood axes, wood saws, steel wedges and a long wooden sledge known as a *nyder* (Various 1995). Once the trees had been felled, they were cut into three to four meter (ten to thirteen feet) lengths, and allowed to dry in the forest. In January or February, depending on the weather, the purchased logs were loaded onto a wagon, and driven back to the farm. Jens used oxen to pull his wagon, and it is likely that several men assisted each other—the wood party to which Niels Peter alludes reflects the communal nature of getting the loads of wood back from

the forest. When the wagon arrived at Jens Peter's house, they would tip it over, spilling the logs into the farm's courtyard, and then right the wagon again using poles for leverage.

Jens would start working the wood in the morning, using a series of specialized tools to fashion the shoes from a solid piece of wood. The wood was first sawed down to size—both across and lengthwise. From one length of wood, thirty inches in diameter, one could make two pairs of clogs (Various 1995). The rough wood was then drilled out using a series of boring devices. First it was clamped to a drilling bench (*bulestol*), and then the various parts of the shoe were fashioned. The *foreborenaver* was used to rough out the foot hole, the *blokøkse* was used to shape the exterior wood, the *tåjern* fashioned the toe box, the *brystbor* was used to complete the hole, while the *slettenaver* and *skraber* were used to finish the clog. The last part of the process was the less exacting finish work, referred to as *at talle*, because the clog would not only be polished, but also rubbed with tallow (*talle*) to condition the wood. The clogs were marked with the clog maker's mark, and then smoked to finish the conditioning of the wood. Bitte Jens's mark was a cross on the top portion of the clog, but apparently he only put this mark on women's clogs (Various 1995).

### *Overview of Bitte Jens's Repertoire*

Jens's repertoire is marked not only by extraordinary scope but also by considerable generic diversity. Indeed, many of Jens's stories and ballads play with the very conventions of genre itself. Accordingly, a description by genre of the stories and songs that Bitte Jens told and sang is bound to be somewhat loose. Jens was a masterful storyteller

and singer, and his repertoire was far ranging. Tang Kristensen’s collecting biases likely influenced Bitte Jens in what he chose to perform, particularly during their first session together, but as their relationship developed, Bitte Jens seems to have taken control of the sessions, and Tang Kristensen cleverly allowed him free rein.

Bitte Jens’s repertoire consists of eighty-three legends and descriptions of local events or topographical phenomena, three descriptions of folk practice, ten jocular tales or *schwank*, twenty examples of folk speech, including sayings, proverbs, and descriptions of dialect, four fairytales and folktales, sixteen ballads, and four short notations that relate to Tang Kristensen’s fieldwork.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps the most striking single feature of Bitte Jens’s repertoire is his sense of humor. Although many of his legends detail frightening encounters with the supernatural—most often with witches, robbers and mound dwellers—they are interspersed with humorous stories about local farmers and ministers. As is the case in many smallholders’ stories, the tension between classes, particularly between peasants and the nobility but also between smallholders and farm owners, is apparent in many of Jens’s stories. Much of his humor borders on the obscene, and Tang Kristensen went to extraordinary lengths in some cases to eliminate the obscenity from his stories (Tangherlini 2008a). Bitte Jens’s sense of humor surfaces not only in his jocular tales, but also in his folktales, legends and, importantly, his ballads.

Despite the seeming comprehensiveness of Tang Kristensen’s collecting efforts with Bitte Jens, it appears he only scratched the surface. Anders Bundgaard, his son, alluded to numerous stories—particularly mythological ones—that do not appear in Tang Kristensen’s notebooks. More important are references to Bitte Jens’s good friend, Johan Pingel, with whom he apparently often sang ballads.

Tang Kristensen contacted Pingel in 1896, but by that time, Pingel was seventy-eight years old, and was having difficulty with his memory:

Men paa Vejen var jeg saa inde hos Banevogter Johan Kristian Pingel, som var bleven mig anbefalet. Han boede i et Vogterhus et godt Stykke syd for Stationen og var nu 78 Aar, saa han kunde nu ikke ret længe beholde Pladsen. Han sang nogle Viser for mig og fortalte ogsaa noget, men han var alligevel ikke saa dygtig, som jeg havde forestillet mig. Hukommelsen slog ham ret tit fejl. (MO vol. 4, 102).

[Along the way, I went in to railway guard Johan Kristian Pingel, who had been recommended to me. He lived in a guard house a good piece south of the station, and he was now 78 years old, so he could not keep the place much longer. He sang some ballads for me and also told some things, but he was not as good as I had expected. His memory failed him frequently.]

Karl Hjorth's collections, particularly of ballads and melodies, also point to a slightly larger repertoire than that collected by Tang Kristensen.

*Sessions One and Two—February 1887*

Tang Kristensen visited Bitte Jens for the first time in February of 1887, probably on Tuesday the eighth or Wednesday the ninth. He visited him for the second time on



Friday the eleventh or Saturday the twelfth. February was very cold according to Niels Peter’s journal, but it did not become stormy until later in the month. The fieldtrip started early in February, on the third, and was at the instigation of a teacher in Vokslev named Schytte, who had invited Tang Kristensen to the area to hold a lecture (MO vol. 3, 77). Tang Kristensen had met Schytte at a school meeting in Støvring in 1885, where he also met Karl Hjorth for the first time. Hjorth later became Tang Kristensen’s contact for Bitte Jens:

Altsaa tog jeg til Støvring d. 4de Januar og traf godt nok Karl Hjort, som var kjørende derhen. Efter Mødet fulgtes jeg med ham hjem. Den Vej kom jeg senere til at gaa til Fods, men nu var det Nat, og jeg saa ikke noget til Egnen. K. Hjort var Enkemand og havde en lille Søn, som var et og alt for ham. Han var noget fin paa det og noget pillen, men jeg befandt mig dog vel hos ham, og da han havde megen Interesse for vore Folkeminder og tillige var meget musikalsk, blev han mig siden en god Støtte. (MO vol. 3, 29).

[So I went to Støvring on the fourth of January and met Karl Hjort, who was driving in that direction. After we met, I went home with him. I later walked that same road, but now it was nighttime and I did not get to see any of the area. K. Hjort was a widower and had a little son who was everything for him. He was a bit of a dandy and a bit persnickety, but I was comfortable with him and since he was interested in our

folklore and was also very musical, he later became a great help for me.]

Although Tang Kristensen collected several stories and ballads during that visit in 1885, there is no indication that he collected anything from Jens Kristensen.

The field trip in February of 1887 was not terribly long, lasting no more than two weeks. He was back home in Brandstrup already on February eighteenth. But the trip represented one of Tang Kristensen's first trips to Himmerland, and particularly the area near Årestrup and Ersted. He started his trip in Støvring and continued on to Vokslev (to hold his lecture). After the lecture, he headed again through Støvring to Lynbjærg, Støvring hede, and Mastrup, before heading on to Ersted.

The entire visit spans field diary pages 3164a-3281a, and Jens's stories are recorded on pages 3236a-3251a and again from 3262b-3268a. Concerning his first series of visits with Bitte Jens, Tang Kristensen wrote:

Herfra tog jeg saa igjen over til Aarestrup og søgte naturligvis til Karl Hjort, som viste mig hen til Bitte-Jens i Ersted, nogle spredte Huse, et Stykke øst for Aarestrup By. Jeg traf godt nok Manden, og fik ham ogsaa til at fortælle for mig, men det kunde Konen ikke lide, og hun skyndte sig nu at komme af Vejen. Hvor hun blev af, véd jeg ikke, men jeg saa ikke mere til hende al den Tid, jeg opholdt mig der i Huset. Jens var god til at fortælle, og han kunde saa udmærket gjøre Rede for gammel Skik og Brug der paa Egnen og især for den gamle Dialekt, som de gamle havde talt med, men som den

yngre Slægt nu var ved at forlade. Han var altsaa en udmærket Mand at komme til. Han havde en Søster, som boede oppe ved Vejen til Stationen, og hun sang ogsaa lidt for mig, men var ikke nær saa god til at huske som Broderen. Henne hos Karl Hjort fik jeg Mad og Nattely, for hos Jens Kristensen kunde det jo ikke lade sig gøre, da Konen var forsvunden. Ellers fik jeg Indtryk af, at Jens, som for Resten ikke var særdeles lille af Vægst, var helt stor af Sønnen derovre i København. Han var Billedhugger og havde saa godt som arbejdet sig selv frem. Senere er samme Søn jo bleven en berømt Mand, da det er ham, der har lavet det store Springvand ude i Grønningen, som forestiller Gefion, der pløjer Sjælland ud fra Skaane, og som jeg tit senere har staaet og beundret.<sup>19</sup> Faderen fortalte mig en Del om ham, som var af stor Interesse, netop fordi han særlig dvælede ved, hvordan Sønnen der hjemme havde vist sine betydelige Evner. (MO vol. 3, 82-3).

[From here I went over to Aarestrup again and naturally sought out Karl Hjort, who showed me to Bitte Jens in Ersted, a group of scattered houses a little bit east of Aarestrup town. I met the man and got him to tell for me, but his wife did not like that, and she hurried up and left. I have no idea where she went, but I did not see any more of her while I was there at the house. Jens was a good storyteller and he was also able

to explain old customs from the area, particularly the old dialect that the old ones had spoken, but the younger people are now abandoning. He was an excellent man to meet. He had a sister who lived up on the road to the station and she also sang a little bit for me, but she was not nearly as good as her brother at remembering. At Karl Hjort's place I got food and lodgings, because it was not possible at Jens Christensen's place, as his wife had disappeared. Otherwise I got the impression that Jens who, by the way, was not that short, was quite proud of his son over in Copenhagen. He was a sculptor and had worked his way up. Later that same son became a famous man, as it was he who made the large fountain out at the Grønningen that shows Gefjon plowing Sjælland out of Skåne and that I have later stood and admired. His father told me a bit about him and that was interesting in large part because he dwelled on how his son had already shown his considerable talents at home.]

Tang Kristensen mentioned Jens's sister, Kirsten, whom he also visited on that same trip in February 1887, apparently right after visiting Jens. Her stories are recorded on pages 3268a-3272a of the field diary. Despite mentioning that Kirsten sang for him, he only recorded stories from her in the field diaries—there are no ballads in the field diaries attributed to Kirsten. The published versions of her stories can be found in *Danske Sagn* (III 271, 446, 1544 and IV 39). He also repeated the claim that Jens was not short, despite

the military records to the contrary. Tang Kristensen in this note also mentioned up Jens’s son Anders, but he must have conflated later discussions with Jens because at the time in 1887, Anders was still a young man, perhaps twenty-two, and was a student of Stephan Sinding in Copenhagen. Anders had yet to accomplish anything of note, although that would hardly prevent Jens from being proud of his son’s achievements at that time.

In his first session with Tang Kristensen, Jens sang numerous ballads. Although Svend Grundtvig had died four years earlier, Tang Kristensen still emphasized ballads and folktales in his initial collecting efforts with new informants. Jens started the session with nine ballads—over half of the ballads that he would eventually sing for Tang Kristensen. But once he had finished singing, he turned his attention to legends (18) and folktales (2). He interrupted his storytelling with another ballad, before returning to legends and jocular tales. The most remarkable story the Jens told that day was an obscene story that was published as two distinct stories, eliding the obscene parts (Tangherlini 2008a).

Tang Kristensen’s second session followed soon after the first, and occurred during the same field trip. This much shorter session comprised only six pages in the field diaries (3262b-3268a).

### *Session Three—May 1888*

Tang Kristensen did not return to Ersted until May of 1888. The trip was short, and he accomplished very little collecting, probably because people were busy with farming tasks. Yet it was an important trip for Tang Kristensen, as the young and ambitious Axel Olrik accompanied him. Tang Kristensen viewed the trip as a chance to teach Olrik the

fieldwork ropes but as their time together wore on, Tang Kristensen lost patience with Olrik. In his memoirs, he took pleasure in describing Olrik's inexperience in collecting stories and, more importantly, walking the rugged Danish landscape:

Lidt hen i Maj fik jeg saa Brev fra Axel Olrik, at han Kunde have Lyst til at gjøre en Fodrejse sammen med mig og vilde da komme over til Brandstrup, saa snart det passede mig. Jeg foreslog ham at komme strags, da jeg i Juni ønskede at være i Kjøbenhavn, og Tiden skulde jo bruges saa godt som muligt, imens jeg havde Hjælpelæreren. Han kom da ogsaa strags efter, og saa skulde vi jo afsted med det samme. Jeg syntes, at vi skulde tage en Tur op i Himmerland. Nu havde jeg lige været der og var kjendt med Forholdene. Ikke just fordi det var den bedste Egn at komme til, men Rejsen vilde ikke blive saa dyr, og jeg havde ogsaa Lyst til, at han skulde lære Pilmanden at kjende og høre ham fortælle for os. Olrik havde intet at indvende, og saa tog vi om Morgen en tur til Viborg og derfra med Dagvognen til Gjedsted. Det var vist ret morsomt for ham at prøve saadant et Befordringsmiddel. (MO vol. 3, 180-1).

[A bit into the month of May I received a letter from Axel Olrik. He indicated that he wanted to go on a walking trip with me and that he would come to Brandstrup as soon as it was convenient for me. I suggested that

he come immediately since I wanted to be in Copenhagen in June. Also I had to use my time as best as I possibly could while I still had the substitute teacher. He came soon thereafter and we left immediately. I thought we could take a trip up to Himmerland. I had just been there and knew the lay of the land. Not only was it the best place to go, but also the trip wouldn't be too expensive and I wanted him to meet Pilmanden and hear him tell for us. Olrik had nothing against that so we went in the morning to Viborg and from there by day coach to Gjedsted. It was apparently quite amusing for him to try that type of transportation.]

Olrik's experience with a ghost at the manor farm Lerkenfelt is one of the best known stories about Danish folklorists:

Fra Gjedsted tog vi til Lerkenfeldt, efter at vi først lige havde været inde hos Jakobsens i Vesterbølle. Der vilde vi ikke lægge os ind for Natten, da de ikke havde Plads til os begge. Jeg vilde jo ikke forlange, at Olrik skulde dele Seng med mig, men paa Lerkenfeldt vidste jeg, der var Plads nok. Vi blev ogsaa vel modtagne og kom til at ligge i det samme Værelse, som jeg før havde ligget i, og hvor det spøjte. Jeg laa i en almindelig Jærnseng i den Side af Værelset, der var længst fra Døren, og han kom til at ligge i en stor gammeldags Himmelseng. Det gik som sædvanligt med mig, at jeg fik kun lidt Søvn. Om Morgen, da vi var staaet op, spurgte

jeg ham, hvordan han havde sovet. “Aa, ikke videre godt.” Han var vaagnet hen paa Natten, maaske ved Midnatstid, og da havde han set en lille Mand pusle omkring henne ved Kakkellovnen. Det undrede han sig jo meget over, men Skikkelsen var da forsvunden igjen, og han forestillede sig nu, at det var en Drøm, han havde haft. Jeg sagde intet til dette, og da jeg ikke med et eneste Ord havde ymtet til ham om, at det efter Folkensnakken spøjte her i Værelset, saa kunde jeg ikke lade være at have mine egne Tanker ved det, han der fortalte. (MO vol. 3, 181).

[We went to Lerkenfeldt from Gjedsted after we had been in to visit the Jakobsens in Vesterbølle briefly. We did not want to stay there for the night, because they did not have space for both of us. I did not want to ask Olrik to share a bed with me, as I knew there was plenty of room at Lerkenfeldt. We were well received and wound up sleeping in the same room that I had slept in before and where there was a haunt. I lay in a normal iron bed the furthest from the door and he wound up sleeping in a big, old-fashioned canopy bed. As usual, I only got a little sleep. In the morning, after we had gotten up, I asked him how he had slept. “Oh, not so well.” He had woken up during the night, perhaps around midnight, and then he had seen a little man rustling about by the potbelly stove. He was quite puzzled by that



but the figure had disappeared again and he imagined that it had been a dream. I said nothing and as I had not hinted with even a single word that there was a great deal of talk that the room was haunted, I could not help but have my own ideas about what he told me.]

Olrik never made it to Ersted because his feet were sore, so Tang Kristensen continued on alone and, after visiting Jens, returned home:

Jeg gik nu ind til Aarestrup By og laa hos Lærer Hjort om Natten, og næste Dag gik jeg hen til Jens Kristensen i Ersted, som baade fortalte for mig og sang for mig, og det, jeg fik skrevet hos ham, var helt igjennem gode Ting. Det var nu helt morsomt, at Jens altid lod, som han ikke kunde noget videre, og han vilde give det Udseende af, at der heller ikke var noget ved det, han fortalte. Hans Kone forsvandt som sædvanlig, naar jeg kom, og Jens begyndte, saa det var øjensynligt, at hun ikke kunde lide at høre paa dette, og godt var det, hun gik, for saa havde vi bedre Ro til at drøfte Sagerne. Hun gik i By, og jeg saa hende saa ikke mere, mens jeg var der. Fra Ersted tog jeg saa hjem igjen, og saa blev den Tur ikke til mere. (MO vol. 3, 182-3).

[I now went to Aarestrup town and stayed at Teacher Hjort's place for the night and the next day I went over to Jens Kristensen in

Ersted who both told stories and sang for me, and the things I wrote down there were altogether good things. It was quite funny the way Jens would pretend that he did not know anything else and he would also give a look as if to say that there was nothing behind the things he did tell. His wife disappeared as usual when I came, and Jens began, and so it was apparent that she did not like to listen to that stuff and it was good that she left because then we had more peace and quiet to discuss things. She went to town and I did not see her anymore while I was there. I went home again from Ersted, and then that was the end of that trip.]

By Tang Kristensen's standards, the trip was short, and the only significant collecting he did was with Bitte Jens.

*Session Four—August 1895*

Apart from Tang Kristensen's very last visit to Bitte Jens, in August 1895, when he and Peter Olsen photographed him, Tang Kristensen made only one more visit to Bitte Jens. This visit took place on June 26, 1889, and was part of a trip that Tang Kristensen made with the painter Viggo Jastrau. On the trip, Tang Kristensen interviewed nine informants. Describing this trip, Tang Kristensen wrote:

Vi drog saa videre og kom endelig op til Skjörping Station. Her fik vi Mad, og saa gik vi derfra hen til Skjörping Kirkegaard, hvor han tegnede Bolværket og Pengebøssen af

ved den hellige Kilde, som den Gang endnu stod der i sin gamle ærværdige Skikkelse. Inde i Vaabenhuset stod endnu en hel Del Krykker og gamle Kjæppe og oppe paa Vaabenhusloftet laa der ogsaa en hel Bunke. Jeg havde jo før været der og set det hele, og derfor ville jeg gjerne have Jastrau derop og tegne Kilden af. Degnen var med os der oppe, og han viste os, hvad der laa paa Loftet. Da vi var færdige med Tegningen, gik vi ned til Degnens, og han gav os Mad og tilbød at ville kjøre os til Støvring, hvor vi skulde overnatte. Vi kjørte saa, og det var noget for Jastrau, da han absolut ikke kunde holde ud at følge med mig. Han var jo noget svær og spiste dygtig, hvor han kom. Han havde anskaffet sig et Par Turistsko, men de klemte ham, saa han ikke kunde gaa i dem, og saa kunde han heller ikke godt komme op om Morgen. Jeg var da allerede kjed af det Følgeskab, og vore Samtaler, mens vi fulgtes ad, var heller ikke egnede til, at vi skulde være særlig glade ved hinanden. Ikke saadan at forstaa, at vi gik og skjændtes, men vi havde saa vidt forskellige Anskuelser om meget. Det var jo ret kjedeligt for mig at gaa og høre paa, men han mente det vist heller ikke saa slemt, som han sagde det. Hans Tegning af Skjörping-Kilden tog han ligeledes med sig, men jeg har siden faaet den af ham. Baade Bolværk og det hele er nu forsvundet, alt er jævnet med Jorden. Godt var det da, at jeg fik Kildebogen reddet. Jeg meddelte Arkivar Saxild i Viborg, at jeg

havde set den, og bad ham drage Omsorg for, at den kom til Arkivet, og det har han ogsaa gjort. Paa Kjøreturen til Støvring saa vi Buderupholm og Buderup Kirke, som stod der saa ensom paa Bakkehældet. Det gjorde et ret sært Indtryk paa mig. Vi var ogsaa inde paa de Volde, hvor Røverslottet fordum laa, idet vi stod af Vognen og gik derhen. Da jeg kom hjem fra min Rejse, sendte jeg den rare og gjæstfrie Lærer en af mine Bøger som en Erkjendtlighed. Næste Dag gik vi saa over Gravlev til Aarestrup, idet jeg gjerne ogsaa vilde have Jens Kristensen tegnet. Men nu var Jastrau træt. I Støvring var jeg inde hos gamle Mosbæk om Morgen og fik ham til at fortælle noget for mig, og i Aarestrup gik jeg samme Morgen hen til Jens Kristensen i Ersted. Da Jastrau endnu ikke var staaet op, og jeg ikke havde Tid til at vente efter ham, bad jeg Karl Hjort hilse ham fra mig og sige ham Farvel, hvis han vilde blive her en Dags Tid og hvile ud, hvilket han havde ladet sig forstaa med. Vi skiltes altsaa ad her, men ikke som Uvenner, vi kunde blot ikke følges ad. (MO vol. 3, 259-60).

[We continued on and finally got to Skjörping Station. We got food here and then we went from there to Skjörping cemetery, where he drew the bulwarks and the collection box by the holy spring which at that time still had its old, worthy form. There were still a large number of pots and

old wooden sticks inside the vestibule and there was also a whole bunch of them in the vestibule's attic. I had been there before and seen all of that and so I wanted Jastrau up there to sketch all of it. The parish clerk was up there with us and he showed us what was up in the attic. When we were done with the drawing, we went down to the parish clerk's house and he fed us and offered to drive us to Støvring where we were going to spend the night. So off we drove and it was really something for Jastrau, since he absolutely could not stand accompanying with me. He was a bit hefty and ate well wherever we went. He had acquired a pair of tourist shoes, but they pinched his feet, so he could not walk in them, and he could not get up in the morning either. I was already sick of his company and our discussions, as we walked along together, were not conducive to us being terribly happy with each other. That is not to say that we went along arguing, but we had such different opinions about so many things. It was quite annoying for me to walk along and listen to this, but he did not mean it as badly as he said it. He took his drawing of the Skjørping spring with him, but I got it from him later. Both the bulwarks and everything has now disappeared, everything has been leveled with the ground. So it was good that I managed to save the spring's visitor book. I notified Archivist Saxild in Viborg that I had seen it and I asked him to make sure that it

got to the archive, and he did that as well. We saw Buderupholm and Buderup Church on the drive to Støvring, it stood there so alone on the hilltop, and it made a real impression on me. We also went in to the ramparts where the robber fort had been as we got off the wagon and walked there. When I got home from my trip, I sent the nice and hospitable teacher one of my books out of gratitude. The next day we walked to Aarestrup via Gravlev, as I also wanted him to draw Jens Kristensen. But Jastrau was tired. In the morning, I visited Old Mosbæk in Støvring and got him to tell for me, and that same morning I went over to Jens Kristensen in Ersted. As Jastrau had not yet gotten up and since I did not have time to wait for him, I asked Karl Hjort to greet him from me and say goodbye to him, if he wanted to stay there for a day to rest as he had indicated he wanted to do. We split up there but not on unfriendly terms, we just could not accompany each other.]

It is disappointing that Jastrau was too tired to draw a portrait of Jens.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> In a similar move, Jens's father Christen later abandoned the patronymic Pedersen, and took the name "Tved" after the place where he was born and raised.

<sup>2</sup> Most place names ending in “-sted” are prefixed with a personal name, here the early Danish name Erre (Various 1995). Local archaeological finds from a limestone quarry reveal indications of settlement dating back three thousand years.

<sup>3</sup> The policy was in effect an early Danish version of the U.S. “GI bill” that allowed tens of thousands of WWII veterans the chance to buy houses.

<sup>4</sup> The *gårdmand* annotation was used for smallholders (*husmand*) who had land as opposed to the landless *indsidder*.

<sup>5</sup> Villeinage was not abolished until 1850 although, by 1848, parish imposed work had been eliminated (Poulsen and Jørgensen 1942, 99-100).

<sup>6</sup> Quite apart from everything, this fact seems to undermine the notion that his nickname “bitte” did not refer to his size but rather was a nickname that had been in the family for generations. There is no reason that a nickname with a long family history cannot refer to stature, as height is a genetically inherited trait. According to one source, the nickname referred to a relative who served as a soldier for twenty-two years in the Thirty Years War (Various 1995), and should be spelled “Bette” rather than “Bitte.” There are several other examples of the nickname “Bette” being used in the Årestrup area, including a journeyman miller named Jens at Nørvad Mill, seven kilometers to the south of Ersted, who was also a well-known fiddler (*spillemand*). He went by the name “Bette Jens” in the 1860s and 1870s (Unknown 1995a: 7).

<sup>7</sup> Bundgaard is not necessarily a place name, and is common in Northern Jutland. It might date back to the time of the Skipper Clement Peasant Revolt in 1534. At that time, the free peasant farms were known as “bundgårde.”

<sup>8</sup> It is difficult to ascertain whether Niels Peter and Ane Cathrine Margrethe were in fosterage in Gravlev, since there

are no census records between their birth and their reappearance in the census records living with their parents. The 1870 census, however, does show that Marie Kirstine (spelled Maren Kjerstine) lived with her grandparents.

<sup>9</sup> In *Minder og Oplevelser*, Tang Kristensen spells his name “Hjort.”

<sup>10</sup> The first extant translation of Saxo into Danish was by the Danish folklorist Anders Sørensen Vedel, in 1575. Another translation by Sejer Schousbølle came out in 1752. More important were Grundtvig’s translation in 1818-22, along with his translation of Snorri’s *Heimskringla*, over the same years, and his translation of *Beowulf* in 1820 (Lauring 1984, viii-ix). Grundtvig’s *Nordens mytologi* (Nordic Mythology), based on Snorri’s Edda, had appeared in 1808.

<sup>11</sup> Søren was an elderly lodger at the farm.

<sup>12</sup> Niels Peter was a part of the same network of fiddlers (*spillemand*) to which Peder Johansen and Jyde Peter belonged.

<sup>13</sup> See also the chapter on Ane Margrete Jensdatter.

<sup>14</sup> J. Vestergaard is presumably farm owner Jens Sørensen Vestergaard from Årestrup, a member of the *Venstre* party.

<sup>15</sup> See discussion of the railway in Mejlbj in the chapter on Ane Margrete Jensdatter.

<sup>16</sup> This was not an unusual work pattern. See, “Fremstillingen af træsko” (The Manufacture of Clogs) in *Østjysk hjemstavn* (1946).

<sup>17</sup> Although potatoes had arrived in Denmark in the early eighteenth century, it was not until the mid to late nineteenth century that they became an important vegetable crop, quite suited for planting on the heath that surrounded Årestrup. Niels Peter again reveals his forward thinking with the amount of work he spends on cultivating potatoes.

<sup>18</sup> In *Interpreting Legend* (Tangherlini 1994, 83), I noted that Jens sang twenty-six ballads; this is clearly a misprint, and



should be adjusted downward to sixteen. I also wrote that his repertoire consisted of fifty-five legends, twenty descriptions, two jokes, two sayings, seven folktales, and sixteen ballads. Including the ballads and melodies collected by Karl Hjorth that were not incorporated by Tang Kristensen boosts this number significantly. A different accounting of Bitte Jens’s stories and songs, including the two or three stories collected by Karl Hjorth, but published by Tang Kristensen, leads to a different count, in part due to differences in underlying descriptions of genres, and in part due to discovery of additional materials in Tang Kristensen’s field diaries and at the Danish Folklore Archive. These discoveries increased the total number of records in his repertoire from one hundred twelve to one hundred forty.

<sup>19</sup> Tang Kristensen has the location of the statue wrong: although the original idea was to place the statue at the Copenhagen city hall, the monument was constructed as part of a large fountain at Langelinie, not Grønningen, in 1908, after Bundgaard was named in 1899 the winner of an 1898 competition sponsored by København Kommunes Kunstfond (Copenhagen’s Municipal Art Foundation).