



fig.1 Bethune Memorial House, Gravenhurst, Ontario, 2006. (Photo: Parks Canada)

THE UNMASKING OF DR. NORMAN BETHUNE

The role of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC) is to commemorate important events in Canadian history and honour Canadians who have made a nationally significant contribution to the country. In 1972, when the Board adopted a new criterion that “Canadians who have made an exceptional contribution outside Canada may be considered for commemoration,”¹ Dr. Norman Bethune (1890–1939) was immediately recommended as a person of national historic significance.² This endorsement coincided with Canada’s official recognition of the communist People’s Republic of China in 1970, and Prime Minister Pierre-Elliott Trudeau’s belief that Canada should no longer ignore Bethune’s heroic accomplishments.

Born in Gravenhurst, Ontario, Norman Bethune was studying medicine at the University of Toronto when he enlisted as a stretcher-bearer with the first Canadian contingent leaving for France at the outbreak of World War I.³ In 1916, after completing his studies he served in the Royal Navy and spent several years in Europe before moving to Detroit in 1924 to set up a medical practice. In the early twenties he developed pulmonary tuberculosis and after three years of illness, he underwent an experimental pneumothorax operation. By 1928, he was again in Montreal working under the surgeon Dr. Edward Archibald at the Royal Victoria Hospital. Here and at Hôpital du Sacré-Coeur in nearby Cartierville, he gained great distinction as a chest surgeon and pioneer in the treatment of tuberculosis.

During this period Bethune also formed the Montreal Group for the Security of People’s Health, which lobbied the Canadian government for radical changes to medical care and health services. In 1936 he travelled to Spain as a volunteer with the Canadian Red Cross where he organized a Canadian Mobile Blood Transfusion Unit for the front-line treatment of Republican Army soldiers. Bethune was now committed to communism and in 1938, at the time of the Second Sino-Japanese War, the American and Canadian League for Peace and Democracy asked him to travel to China. As health consultant to the northern border regions of Shan-Shi, Tas-Ha-Erh and Hebei, Bethune coordinated medical services for the wounded, opened the International Peace Hospital and established short-term training courses that graduated medical personnel every six weeks. Performing countless surgeries day and night at the front, Bethune

died of blood poisoning on 12 November 1939 after cutting his finger while operating on a soldier.

Before Bethune's official recognition by the Canadian government in 1972, few people in this country were aware of his achievements; since then, his life has been interpreted and celebrated at home and in China and Spain. This discussion investigates the presentation and interpretation of Bethune's symbolic identity evident in two permanent commemorative sites: the Bethune Memorial Museum in Gravenhurst and Place Norman Bethune in Montreal. Crucial to this investigation is the definition of his memory by various agencies, especially the Bethune Foundation, which was active in Montreal in the 1970s.

Norman Bethune Memorial Museum

After the Canadian government reestablished diplomatic relations with China, several Chinese delegations insisted on visiting the Presbyterian manse in Gravenhurst where Bethune was born on 3 March 1890. By the time the Department of External Affairs purchased the manse from Trinity United Church in 1973, it was becoming a shrine.⁴ As an editorial in *The Muskoka Sun* commented:

It has been the influence of Chinese friends that has brought more focus to bear on this Canadian. Pilgrimages to his birthplace in Gravenhurst resulted first of all in marked inconvenience to the resident United Church Minister, and then in a realization that Canada had failed to understand a man who was accorded such stature in another land. The establishment now, of a shrine...points the way to a recognition of a notable Canadian, not perhaps a successful one, but a man who made praiseworthy contributions to the world in his lifetime. Our "heroes" are not all victors, and in recognizing others we are showing awareness of the quality of humanity in the life of Canada.⁵

While Chinese delegations are often cited as the key factor in establishing the Bethune Memorial Museum, the critical force was the Bethune Memorial Committee based in Montreal, later incorporated as the Bethune Foundation/La Fondation Bethune.⁶ In late 1971, twelve of Bethune's friends and associates decided it was finally time to perpetuate the man's memory and spirit.⁷ The impetus was the Norman Bethune Symposium held at McGill's Redpath Hall on 25 November. The keynote speaker was Hazen Sise who also had been corresponding since 1967 with Peter H. Bennett, the secretary of the HSMBC, on behalf of Bethune.⁸ When his proposal to the government agency was twice refused on the grounds that Bethune's contributions to medicine were not extraordinary, Sise argued that the "prime motive for commemoration should not be his medical achievements per se" but ought "to concentrate on his having turned his back on what would have been a great career in the



fig.2 Parlour of Bethune Memorial House, 2008. (Photo: Parks Canada)

conventional sense in order to concentrate on all his innate qualities or drives – courage, energetic commitment to humanity, inventive skill and p rescience....” At the symposium, he articulated Bethune’s importance as a role model: “The function of the artist is to disturb. His duty is to rouse the sleepers, to shake the complacent pillars of the world. He reminds the world of its dark ancestry, shows the world its present, and points the way to its new birth. He is at once the product and preceptor of his time.”⁹ In his closing remarks Sise quoted Prime Minister Trudeau, who in April 1971 had complained on the floor of the House of Commons that this great Canadian was more recognized in China than in Canada. Finally, Sise announced the establishment of the Bethune Memorial Committee to remedy “this lamentable situation,” and was its chair until his death in 1974.

The committee’s mandate was to expand awareness of Bethune’s contribution to society and to inspire people and organizations to emulate his spirit of internationalism and service to humanity. With such goals at the forefront, Sise was active in various projects, including organizing a photographic exhibition on Bethune,¹⁰ sponsoring symposia and encouraging student and teacher exchanges through China-Canadian scholarships. He also pursued the

acquisition of the manse where Bethune was born.¹¹ Although the family had left Gravenhurst when he was only three, “For years Norman spent his summers at Gravenhurst. Here, in the Muskoka Lakes, he developed a passion for swimming...and showed delight with the forests and the summer skies.”¹² After the manse was purchased in 1973, it was restored to its late nineteenth-century condition to reflect the time period when it was occupied by the Bethune family. In 1976, the museum opened under the supervision of Parks Canada and in 1996 it was finally designated as a national historic site.

As one arrives at the Bethune Memorial House, the view is pure nostalgia: a clapboarded house, a maple-shaded street, a proper garden (fig.1).¹³ Once inside, visitors see cloaks and hats hanging in the hall and the minister’s visiting cards resting on a table, as well as the original wallpaper that was custom-reproduced and new carpets that were made in late-nineteenth-century patterns. The rooms are furnished with artifacts that are true to the time and period, such as baby clothes and an antique cradle and pram in the master bedroom, although none of the objects is original to the house. The texts on the wall, the tract by the bed and the harmonium in the drawing room further betray a middle-class Presbyterian household (fig.2). On the ground floor, the study includes a massive desk, a bookcase holding an assortment of religious texts and a composite photograph of the minister’s Divinity class at Knox College.

Organic unity and preservation are the guidelines of restoration¹⁴ and therefore, the purpose of scholarly research is to guarantee that the setting and objects on display reflect historical fact. In the case of the Bethune Memorial House, the restoration team was troubled by the fact that no one knew which room Bethune was born in and respectful Chinese visitors were most interested in this particular room. Although his birth certificate stated he was born at home, Margie Lou Shaver, curator of the National Historic Parks and Sites Branch of Parks Canada, was reluctant to merely guess where Bethune’s mother actually gave birth: “an attempt at isolated and conjectural refurnishing in a structure considered of significance in our external relations can only reflect adversely on the credibility of this Branch and place us in an indefensible position.”¹⁵ In the end, visitor expectations won out, confirming that the effect on the visitor sometimes takes precedence over strict historical accuracy.

In addition to reflecting late Victorian taste, the restoration of the house was designed thematically to communicate Bethune’s convictions about social justice and human welfare. At the end of the tour, visitors enter a memorial room showing images of Bethune from different periods of his life. His graduation photograph from the School of Medicine at the University of Toronto is on display and nearby a large replica of a Chinese painting shows Bethune performing surgery in a makeshift hospital in the Shanxi-Hobei border region of China,

where the fighting was fierce. White lab jackets are provided for visitors to wear when they take photographs of themselves in front of the memorabilia: tourists are invited to imagine themselves as Bethune, to impersonate the man they have come to admire.

Despite the painstaking attention to historical detail and the visitors' expectations, it is questionable whether the Bethune Memorial House truly acknowledges his brilliant and often difficult character. It might be surprising to know that Bethune regarded Canadian society, especially the medical profession, with contempt and considered it complacent, self-absorbed and corrupt, without care or compassion for the sick and destitute. Is it possible to see the Bethune Memorial House as an ironic commentary on the environment against which Bethune rebelled? Indeed, the memorial may present an unusual example of what museologists label "heritage dissonance." Bethune chose to depart from certain aspects of his own heritage and the memorial reminds us that no individual has a single identity and that the very construction of identity is complex. Over the course of his life Bethune belonged to a variety of communities and connected differently with each of them.

In contrast, the Visitor Centre next to the Bethune Memorial House clearly documents the activities of Bethune's life, including his social commitment, his medical achievements and his self-sacrificing death in China. The Centre attempts to do full justice to the many experiences that identify the man, such as his battles with tuberculosis as a patient and doctor, his efforts as an innovative thoracic surgeon, his service to the wounded on the battlefields of Spain and China, his contributions as a poet and artist and his work organizing art classes for poor children in Montreal. It also commemorates numerous contemporaries who were deeply affected by Bethune, such as social activists and physicians Wendell MacLeod, H.E. Shister and Francis McNaughton, blood specialists Paul Weil and Charles Drew, as well as architect Hazen Sise, writer Ted Allan and artists Fritz Brandtner, Marian Scott and Paraskeva Clark.¹⁶

The Centre also displays visual evidence of his life (figs.3 and 4), including copies of some of his own paintings: *TB's Progress*,¹⁷ produced in 1926 when he was a patient at the Trudeau sanatorium in Saranac Lake and *Night Operating Theatre* (fig.5),¹⁸ a bird's-eye view of Bethune performing emergency surgery at the Sacré-Coeur Hospital. There is also his self-portrait painted under the tutelage of Marian Scott.¹⁹ These images co-mingle with representations that originate primarily in China, including a photograph of a statue of Bethune in front of the International Hospital in Shijiazhuang near his tomb, along with a colour print titled "Our Doctor Bethune" that appeared in a picture book published by the Foreign Language Press in 1975. This illustration was accompanied by the annotation: "Though always on the move in this wartime



fig.3 Bethune Memorial House Visitor Centre, 2009, images from his life in Spain and China. (Photo: Parks Canada)



fig.4 Bethune Memorial House Visitor Centre, 2009, images of his life in Canada.
(Photo: Parks Canada)

situation, Comrade Bethune gave medical care not only to the wounded soldiers but also to the people. So the people affectionately called him 'Our Doctor Bethune'."

Visitors to the memorial site are directed first to the Centre, where they tour the exhibition and watch a ten-minute video excerpted from a 1964 National Film Board of Canada documentary;²⁰ they then continue on to the Bethune Memorial House. This strategy is a recent development: when the museum first opened, greater emphasis was placed on the home and daily life of the Bethune family. The staff dressed in Victorian costume and acted out household tasks: Monday was washday, Tuesday was ironing, Wednesday was sewing, Thursday was cleaning and Friday and Saturday were baking and cooking. A Bible and silver tea set were displayed on Sunday. This privileging of Victorian life coincided with the Canadian government's reluctance to define Bethune politically: while it celebrated the Victorian aspect of the house and honored the doctor who once briefly lived there, it denied that he was an actively engaged communist.²¹



fig. 5 Norman Bethune, **Night Operating Theatre**, 1936, oil on canvas, Medical Library, Royal Victoria Hospital, Montreal. (Photo: Royal Victoria Hospital Multi Media Services Department)



fig.6 Ceramic figure of Dr. Bethune on a chestnut horse. Gifted to Bethune Memorial House by the Chinese Association of Science and Technology in 1982. (Photo: Parks Canada)

Today the Bethune Memorial House finds most of its meaning through Bethune's symbolic importance in China. Although efforts have been made to bring Canadians from other parts of the country to Gravenhurst,²² the majority of visitors are from China or vacationing Chinese Canadians. Significantly, they are welcomed to the Visitor Centre by guides who speak Mandarin. Over the years, visitors have brought gifts, including statues of Bethune (fig.6). However, few of these presents relate specifically to Bethune; the rest are Chinese memorabilia of all types.²³ The gift-giving ritual can take the form of an official presentation by a visiting business group or may be an anonymous gesture from someone touched by their experience. The growing collection of hundreds of donated objects has led to the implementation of policies for their evaluation, management and maintenance;²⁴ they are displayed in the Visitor Centre on a rotational basis and occasionally exhibited at other venues.

The representations of Bethune are of particular interest because they encompass the full spectrum of images circulating in China. For example, on 30 August 1976, an embroidered picture of Bethune was presented by a delegation of seventeen Chinese diplomats and officials; Bethune also appears in woodcuts reminiscent of brightly coloured Chinese folk prints. In one poster, "Time is Money," he rides a galloping horse; in another created by the Salt City Peasants, Workers and Soldier Cultural Revolution Committee, he floats in the sky while his memory lives on in the minds of the workers marching below. The workers carry Mao Zedong's Red Book, which includes the essay "In Memory of Norman Bethune,"²⁵ written by Mao soon after Bethune's death. Another Cultural Revolution block print titled *Raise Mao's Theory Highly and Raise the Greatest Red Flag*, portrays Lin Biao, a brilliant Red Army commander who is also holding Mao's book. Below the picture is the caption: "Serve the People, In memory of Bai Qui En [the name Bethune was given in China]. Yu Gong can move the Mountain." The proverb implies that everything, even the most difficult task, can be accomplished one step at a time.

Thus it is no surprise that the Bethune Memorial House has become an excellent resource for promoting Canada's relationship with China, often providing the backdrop for events that cemented agreements between the two countries. For example, a photograph taken on 9 August 2007, records the Honourable Tony Clement, MP and Minister of Health, and Dr. Alan Bernstein, President of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, announcing the creation of the Canada-China Norman Bethune Health Research Scholarships for young Chinese students wishing to study at the doctoral level in Canada. The many such publicity photos taken at the Bethune Memorial House serve as reminders that heritage is made up of parts of the past that may be selected for contemporary purposes, whether economic, cultural, political or social. Those who use historic sites for gain are, in effect, capitalizing on the business of heritage.

Another recent example of the use of the Bethune Memorial House is "The China Market Study" completed in 2007 by the Manning Consulting Group.²⁶ This was "an assessment of the opportunities and issues facing the District of Muskoka, the Town of Gravenhurst and Parks Canada's Bethune Memorial House National Historic Site in attracting and developing the international Chinese traveller and domestic ethnic Chinese traveller markets." It was produced in conjunction with a (failed) proposal to expand the interpretive centre at the site and build a Chinese Canadian Culture Centre in Gravenhurst. The study followed Canada's similarly unsuccessful 2005 attempt to gain Approved Destination Status that would permit Chinese citizens to travel to Canada for leisure. Historical manipulation is, however, at work in Microbix Biosystems Inc.'s proposal of 2008 to construct a replica of the Bethune

Memorial House in China on the grounds of the Toronto-based company's new influenza vaccine facility.²⁷ Jointly owned by Microbix and the Hunan government, the \$200 million facility would be one of the world's largest flu vaccine plants. According to Mark Cochran, the principal director and acting chairman of the board, Microbix decided to use Bethune as he best symbolized Canada for most Chinese people: "The idea is to build a precise replica, a board-by-board reconstruction," and that it is not "just the building, but the contents as well. We're going to look at what's in Gravenhurst and see if we can find antique pieces that match.... We want to make this house available to Chinese who can't otherwise come to Canada to see it. It's simply for the people." It is also, most pointedly, the business of heritage.

Bethune Statue, Place Norman Bethune

Connecting Bethune's image with governmental, commercial or related enterprises is another means of capitalizing on his memory. This is exemplified by the various uses of a statue of Bethune that was given to Montreal by China in 1976 and placed in a small downtown park known as Place Norman Bethune, near Concordia University, in 1978. In the spring of 2006, representatives from Concordia and Montreal mayor Gérald Tremblay travelled to China as part of an urban development mission to sign a memorandum with the Chinese architectural firm Werkhart International, to create an annual graduate scholarship in urban studies at Concordia.²⁸ The delegates also attended the opening of the Jardin de Montréal Pavilion in Pudong Century Park, Shanghai; an accompanying display included plans by the architectural firm Groupe Cardinal Hardy to upgrade Quartier Concordia by widening the sidewalks, creating bike paths and improving the landscaping, signage and lighting.²⁹ The centerpiece of this project was the sculpture of Bethune. Place Norman Bethune was intended to provide a strong visual identity for the University, one that was described in the original planning competition, as "the university's tradition of social justice and artistic innovation." According to a City of Montreal press release in 2008, the square is "across the street from Concordia University, a popular choice for Chinese international students."

Quartier Concordia was formally opened on 14 October 2008 with the reinstallation of the statue, newly restored and cleaned by the City of Montreal. The ceremony concluded Phase 1 of the \$22 million invested in the project, of which \$3 million was spent on the revitalization of the square. The rededication ceremony, which took place in front of the monument that had been first installed 30 years earlier, was attended by His Excellency Lan Lijun, the People's Republic of China's ambassador to Canada, Concordia's president Judith Woodsworth, the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, former Governor-General of Canada, and mayor Gérald Tremblay. The event

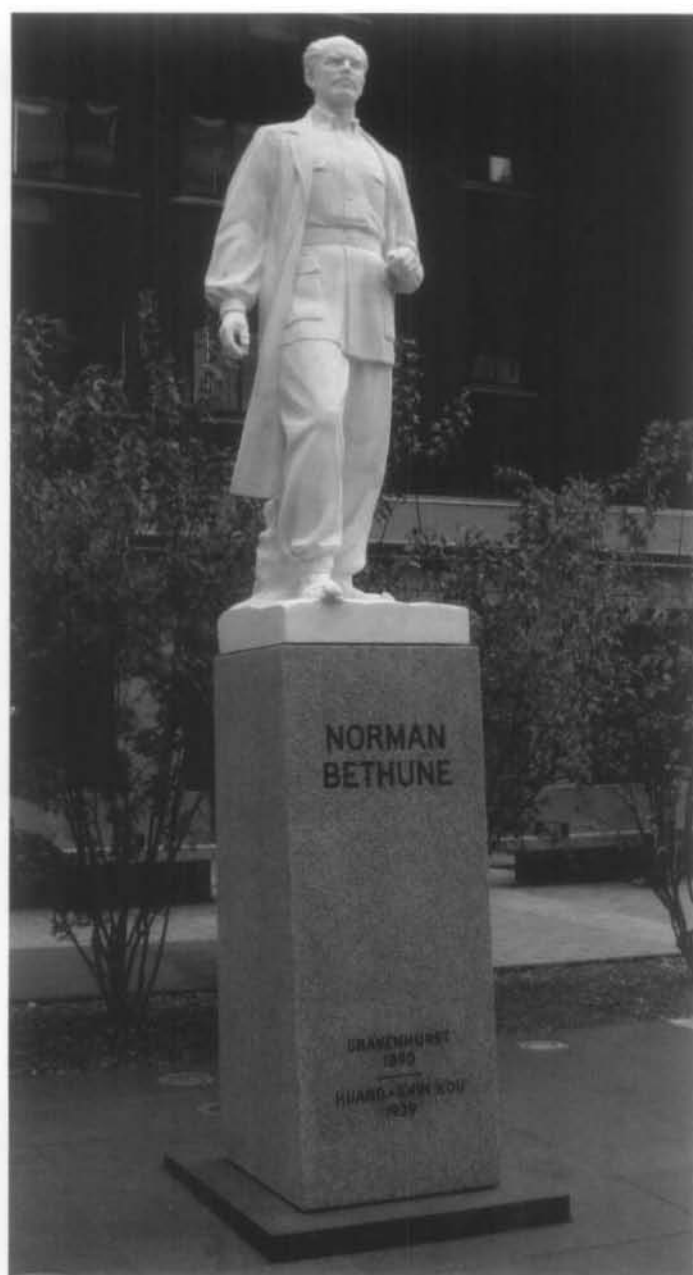


fig. 7 Place Norman Bethune, at the intersection of Guy Street and Boulevard de Maisonneuve, Montreal. (Photo: Brenda Dionne)

launched a year of events to mark the eightieth anniversary of Bethune's arrival in Montreal and the seventieth anniversary of his departure for China.

Bethune lived in Montreal from 1928 to 1936, longer than in any other place, and his profound commitment to social causes took root during those years. However, the role of Montreal's Bethune Foundation in the creation of Place Bethune (fig.7) has been poorly acknowledged. In the chronology posted by Concordia's Media Relations in 2009, no mention is made of the fact that the minutes of the Foundation's annual meetings and various correspondence show that the members believed that they had initiated the project. The quest for a monument to Bethune began on 23 January 1974 when Hazen Sise wrote to City Councillor John Lynch-Staunton,³⁰ stating that the redesigning of Beaver Hall Square near Place Ville Marie offered an ideal opportunity: "For years it has become an increasing embarrassment that there is nowhere in Montreal a statute or a monument or even a plaque to memorialize Norman Bethune in the city where he did his significant work – apart from Spain and China." Sise emphasized that Beaver Hall Square is a highly appropriate site: "In the [nearby] studio, with a few friends (notably Fritz Brandtner and Marian Scott) Bethune had pioneered in Montreal a new method of teaching art to children. In that studio were held some of the meetings of the Montreal Group for the Security of the Peoples' Health, which, in 1935, produced a manifesto which anticipated medicare."

Sise's proposal was rejected, but a year later Montreal's Executive Council designated the de Maisonneuve Boulevard site as Place Norman Bethune; Sise and several members of the Foundation were in full agreement.³¹ On 12 April 1976, Foundation members Abraham Cohen and Mary Rosamond Weil accompanied the City of Montreal's Jean Dupire to the Ottawa embassy of the People's Republic of China to discuss the possibility that a statue of Bethune would be produced in China and presented to Montreal. Later that same year, a full-length standing sculpture produced in a Beijing factory by Situ Chieh, Hsieh Chie-sheng, We Chang and Tsui Wu-chin, arrived in Montreal. It was first exhibited at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, then in the Chinese Pavilion at the former Expo '67 site and in downtown Place Desjardins. Leaflets outlining Bethune's life and a photography exhibition prepared by the Foundation accompanied these presentations.³² The statue was finally installed in Place Norman Bethune in 1978. Although many members of the Foundation felt the figure should be looking eastward towards China instead of southward towards an office building, Weil insisted she was in favour of its position because it was highly visible from passing traffic. Little did she realize that the pigeons she described in her report of the opening ceremony as providing "a dramatic flight picture for TV Peking and sound effects for Radio Peking"³³

would be the statue's undoing. Nor could she or the other members of the Foundation, many of them faculty and associates of McGill University, have anticipated that thirty years later, Concordia would claim a strong affiliation with Bethune while ignoring his long-standing relationship with McGill and its hospitals.

The small triangular square and its sculpture were also ignored by the City of Montreal. Although located in one of the busier downtown intersections, near bus stops, the Guy-Concordia metro station, shops, restaurants and apartment towers, the square fell into serious disrepair and the statue was scarred by bird droppings. Nonetheless, the area became a site for protests against politicians, corporations, the military and perceived domestic and international injustices.³⁴ It has been a rallying point for numerous activist organizations, including the South Asia Center, L'Association des Jeunes Libanais Musulman-Montréal, the Centre for Philippine Concerns, Le Collectif opposé la brutalité policière, the Grass Roots Association for Student Power, the International Solidarity Movement, the Quebec Public Interest Research Group and Solidarité sans frontières/Solidarity Without Borders and so on. An article published by the student-run newspaper, *The McGill Daily*, in October 2007 exemplified the square's continued political identity; it called for a march in solidarity with protesters in Burma, culminating with a gathering at "the Bethune Monument of International Solidarity."³⁵

Coinciding with a surge of local interest in China-Canada relations, the monument has been further re-appropriated and its meaning codified in an interlocking network of cultural, social, economic and political ideologies. Without question, the City of Montreal in partnership with Concordia University, has orchestrated the re-configuration of the Bethune monument to serve and justify the policies and actions of its corporate allies. Inevitably, distortions and misrepresentations of Bethune's memory have occurred. This may be due to the City's failure to affix an historical plaque to the monument that would identify Bethune with more than just the dates and places of his birth and death.³⁶ Most public sculptures dedicate space, often on the pedestal, for recording aspects of the subject's life and the reasons for his or her commemoration. Why has Montreal not attached an explanatory plaque to the Bethune statue? One wonders if City Hall still considers Bethune, who became a communist in 1935, to be a controversial figure or simply, do they know him only as a symbol of Canadian-Chinese business relations?

The McGill connection has all but disappeared from the discourse on the Bethune statue, but ironically, Norman Bethune's contributions have been more accurately commemorated at McGill University. The Osler Library of the History of Medicine holds a rich archival collection on his life and work amassed in the 1960s and 1970s.³⁷ This unusual and eclectic assortment of

materials and artifacts, known as Bethuniana, arose from the generosity of Bethune's friends, colleagues and admirers, as well as authors of biographies on Bethune: Roderick Stewart, Ted Allan and Eugene Perry Link. Over the years various exhibitions of Bethuniana have been mounted at the entrance to the library; they have succeeded in acknowledging Bethune's medical innovations, his pioneering techniques as a thoracic surgeon and his significance as an advocate of socialized medicine – the very same contributions the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada had originally refused to recognize as sufficiently significant for official commemoration.

Norman Bethune is now remembered through an astonishing variety of testimonials: the Bethune Memorial Museum, the Bethune Statue at Place Norman Bethune, monuments and exhibitions, artifacts objects, paintings, sculptures, photographs, prints and texts are all devoted to his memory. In recent years, the way in which he is remembered is also changing. When the Bethune Foundation helped organize a symposium at McGill in 1979 to mark the fortieth anniversary of his death, it approached his times and achievements through biography. Most of the speakers at that conference and whose talks were subsequently published in *Norman Bethune: His Times and His Legacy*, had known Bethune personally and spoke about his accomplishments. Almost a decade later, a different perspective was evident at the symposium organized by Dr. Catherine MacKenzie of Concordia University to accompany the exhibition, *Crossing Cultures: Images of Norman Bethune in China*, which was held at Concordia's FOFA Gallery in conjunction with the re-installation of the Bethune statue in October 2008. The presentations were less about Bethune and more about the role of art-making and imagery in capturing his memory.³⁸ The talks focused on objects produced in Bethune's lifetime, including paintings by his artist friends in Montreal, photographs taken by Sise during the Spanish Civil War and Sha Fei's photographs of Bethune in China. The various ways Bethune has been portrayed – in woodcuts, posters and woven tapestries after his death and during the Cultural Revolution, and in films, exhibitions and museum displays in Canada and China from the 1970s to today – were also presented. How Bethune will be remembered in the future remains to be seen. At the intersection of personal significance, political correctness and civic interpretations, the visual and conceptual manifestations of Bethune will surely take on new meanings as the twenty-first century progresses.

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Notes

1 Hilary RUSSELL, "The Bethune Memorial House, 235 John Street, Gravenhurst. Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada," Agenda Paper, Historical Services Branch, 1996-29, 909.

2 Ibid., Appendix: HSMBC Recommendations, 1967-1972, "The Bethune Memorial House," 934-35 and Brett THOMPSON, "The Bethune Effect: Why Canada's Department of External Affairs bought a house in Muskoka," unpublished manuscript, 1 July 2008. The HSMBC considered Bethune's national significance in 1967 and May 1971. After the October 1971 meeting at which the Board stated that Bethune was not of national significance, Mitchell Sharp, Secretary of State for External Affairs conveyed his disappointment to Jean Chrétien, then Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Chrétien called an emergency meeting of the Board on 10 Aug. 1972 and the Board revised and accepted the new criterion concerning individuals. This has been the Board's most controversial and most publicized recommendation to date.

3 For Bethune studies, see: Norman BETHUNE, *The Politics of Passion: Norman Bethune's Writing and Art*, ed. and intro. Larry Hannant (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998); A.E. SHEPARD and Andrée LÉVESQUE, eds., *Norman Bethune: His Times and His Legacy/ Son époque et son message* (Ottawa: Canadian Public Health Association / L'Association canadienne d'Hygiène publique, 1982); Wendell MACLEOD, Libbie PARK and Stanley RYERSON, *Bethune. The Montreal Years: An Informal Portrait* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1978); Roderick STEWART, *Bethune* (Toronto: New Press, 1973) and *The Mind of Norman Bethune* (Toronto: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1977); Ted ALLAN and Sydney GORDON, *The Scalpel, The Sword: The Story of Dr. Norman Bethune* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1952, rev. ed. 1971). Archival collections on Bethune are located at the Osler Library of the History of Medicine, McGill University, Montreal, and the National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

4 RUSSELL, "The Bethune Memorial House," 907. The Federal Government acquired the manse in 1973 on behalf of the Department of External Affairs and although ownership and preservation of the property immediately passed to Parks Canada, this is an anomaly in the system of the HSMBC. See also, Fern GRAHAM, "Bethune Memorial House, 235 John Street, Gravenhurst, Ontario," Architectural Analysis Division, Federal Heritage Buildings Review Office, Building Reports 90-210, 1990.

5 *Muskoka Sun*, 1975, quoted in Alwyn J. AUSTIN, "Interpretation Plan for the Dr. Henry Norman Bethune Memorial House, Gravenhurst, Ontario," *Parks Canada Report* (August 1976): 22.

6 See: Bethune Foundation Fonds (BFF), P132, Osler Library Archives Collection, Osler Library of the History of Medicine, McGill University. Among this group were Hazen Sise, an architect who served with Bethune in Spain, Dr. Wilder Penfield of the Montreal Neurological Institute, Dr. Gérard Rolland, surgeon and Bethune's colleague at the Clinique Jeanne-Mance, Mrs. Mary Weil, Public Relations Director at Royal Victoria Hospital, Dr. Hans Selye of the Institute de Médecine et Chirurgie Experimentales at the Université de Montréal, and Ted Allan, playwright and co-author of *The Scalpel, The Sword: A Biography of Norman Bethune* along with Dr. Donald Bates, Chairman of the Department of the History of Medicine, Professor K.A.C. Elliott, Department of Biochemistry and Professor T.K. Lin of the Centre for Asian Studies, all of McGill University

7 "In Memory of Norman Bethune," address by Hazen Sise, BFF, P132, Folder 12, Box 376, unpagged; Bethune Memorial Committee, BFF, P132, Folder 23, Box 379.

8 Letter from Hazen Sise to Peter H. Bennett, 4 Feb. 1971, BFF, P132, Folder 20, box 376 and letter from Bennett to Sise, 18 Nov. 1971, BFF, P132, Folder 54, Box 379.

9 "In Memory of Norman Bethune," BFF, P132, Folder 12, Box 379,

10 "President's Report, 1979," BFF, P132, Folder 25, Box 380: "The black and white exhibit of photographs of the life of Dr. Bethune put together originally under the Chairmanship of Hazen Sise and first exhibited at the Canadian Medical Association meeting at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Montreal has been widely shown in Universities and CEGEPs as well as at conferences across Canada."

11 Ibid., The report summarized the activities of the Foundation since its inception and records that it: "Encouraged the Government to purchase the birthplace of Bethune at Gravenhurst (this support was instituted in Peking by means of telegrams to the Prime Minister and our various individual members of Parliament)." The original idea as stipulated in the fundraising campaign launched on 12 April 1972 was to have a shrine in Gravenhurst and a museum in Montreal: "Let us make Dr. Norman Bethune's birthplace and work-place national shrines," suggested Mr. Hazen Sise, chairman of The Bethune Memorial Committee, announcing the launching of a national campaign to day to establish a Bethune shrine in Gravenhurst, Ontario, where Dr. Bethune was born in 1890, as well as a museum in Montreal where Dr. Bethune did most of his medical work before going to Spain and then to China, where he died, in 1939." "Bethune Memorial," *Montreal Star*, 14 Apr. 1972, BFF, P132, Folder 48, Box 379. See also, Sise to Mitchell Sharp, External Affairs, 17 Feb. 1973, BFF, P132, Folder 54, Box 382:

I understand from you that the government might be prepared to finance the purchase of the Manse, also its furnishing, but preferred to do this via the agency of a national, non-governmental organization.... The Committee was enthusiastic to its response to the main question, i.e. we would be glad to act as agents and assist in every way possible to further your objectives.... However we did not feel that it would be appropriate or wise for a committee based in Montreal to hold title to, and act in perpetuity for, a house in Gravenhurst, Ontario. It seemed to us more appropriate and practical that these functions should be carried out by the Municipality of Gravenhurst or by a select trustee committee of its citizens..

12 ALLAN and GORDON, *The Scalpel, The Sword*, 11-12.

13 Judith BROCKLEHURST, "Bethune mystique China's bridge to Canada," *Toronto Star*, 17 Sept. 1989; "Town gears up for Bethune anniversary," *Toronto Star*, 25 Feb. 1999.

14 See Christina CAMERON, "Commemoration: A Moving Target?" in *The Place of History: Commemorating Canada's Past*, ed. Thomas H.B. Symons (Ottawa: Royal Society of Canada, 1997), 27-34; Norman TYLER, *Historic Preservation: an Introduction to its History, Principles, and Practice* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000); William J. MURTAGH, *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in America* (Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley, 2006).

15 "Bethune Memorial House," Files, Gravenhurst, Memorandum, 26 Mar. 1975. Cited in THOMPSON, "The Bethune Effect," 27, n.94.

16 Loren LERNER, "When the Children Are Sick, So Is Society: Dr Norman Bethune and the Montreal Circle of Artists," in *Healing the World's Children: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Child Health in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Cynthia Comacchio, Janet Golden and George Weisz (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2008), 253-81.

17 See: Eugene P. LINK, *The T.B.'s Progress: Norman Bethune as Artist* (New York: Center for the Study of Canada, SUNY, 1991).

18 The oil on canvas is displayed in the Royal Victoria Hospital Library. According to HANNANT, *The Politics of Passion*, 75, Bethune painted it for the Spring 1935 exhibition at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. The painting was donated to the RVH by the scientist and “fellow-traveler,” Dr. Raymond Boyer.

19 Ibid., 87. Bethune sent the self-portrait to Marian Scott in November 1935. She presented it to McGill University in 1971 and they donated it to the People’s Republic of China. See also the Marion Scott Fonds, National Archives of Canada, 1924-1993, MG 30, D399 and 1995-115.

20 “The Life of Dr. Norman Bethune,” a video produced by Parks Canada in the 1980s consists of footage taken from the documentary *Bethune* by Donald Brittain, National Film Board of Canada, 1964. The video contains comments from Bethune’s writings and concludes with a speech written by Bethune’s Chinese translator and is available with English, French and Mandarin audio.

21 GRAHAM, “Bethune Memorial House,” 9. “There was initially some resistance within the community to honouring a communist, especially among older residents, and there are still some who are not pleased.” The emphasis on a bygone era may have resonated with local residents, for whom the house was probably less about Norman Bethune and more about the contribution of generations of Bethune’s to the Presbyterian Church in Canada. See also Richard ALLEN, “The Religious Setting of Norman Bethune’s Early Years,” in *Norman Bethune: His Times and His Legacy*, 22-31. The Bethune-Thompson House in Williamstown, Ontario, where his great-grandfather John Bethune lived from 1804 to 1815, perhaps not coincidentally opened the same year as the Memorial House.

22 Tourist brochures and newspapers are full of advertisements that hype the region’s opera house, fine restaurants, old churches and shops overflowing with Canadian quilts, decoys, furniture and antiques. For example, Eva BOWER, “Muskoka lakes region a tapestry in autumn,” *Toronto Star*, 6 Sept. 1986.

23 Other gifts received include models of buildings, paintings and drawings, tapestries, embroidered scarves, porcelain sculptures, coins, silk scrolls, fans, dolls, Chinese ornaments, plates, crystal, copper and enamel vases, engravings, plaques, coins, books and probably one of the largest collections of Great-Wall-of-China key chains in the Western world. Scott Davidson, interview with Lerner, 12 Feb. 2008. Davidson is Site Manager Parks Canada, “Bethune Memorial House.”

24 The Parks Canada Commemorative Integrity Statement, “Bethune Memorial House,” October 1998. Parks Canada categorizes the cultural resources at the site; gifts are designated as symbols or gestures rather than as artifacts.

25 Mao ZEDONG, “In Memory of Norman Bethune,” Yenan, 12 Dec. 1939. Printed in STEWART, *Bethune*, 196-97.

26 China Market Study, 2007, <http://www.tourismco.com/projects.htm>. See also Brian BANKS and David NORTH, “The man, the myth, the corporation,” *Canadian Business* 68 no.4 (April 1995), <http://www.canadianbusiness.com>: “Anxious to cash in on China’s economic miracle? Unsure where to start? On a recent visit to Canada, a delegation of 23 Chinese executives and academics had some startling advice: exploit your shared nationality with Norman Bethune, who is known and beloved by all in China.”

27 “Microbix Enters into Joint Venture in China to Build and Operate One of the Largest Influenza Vaccine Manufacturing Facilities in the World,” 23 June 2008, <http://www.newswire.ca/en/releases/archive>.

28 “Concordia and Shanghai cement a relationship,” *Concordia Journal* 1, no.12 (20 Apr. 2006). http://ejournal.concordia.ca/journalarchives/2005-06/apr_20/006771.shtml

- 29 "Cardinal Hardy to design Quartier Concordia," *Canadian Architect* 49, no.2 (February 2004): 7, and, Debbie HUM, "Concrete Campus No More: Quartier Concordia will make a strong institutional footprint in downtown Montreal and bring greenery and a renewed identity to the Sir George Williams Campus," *Concordia University Magazine* 29, no.4 (December 2005). <http://magazine.concordia.ca/2005/december/features/Quartier.shtml>
- 30 Sise to Councillor John Lynch-Staunton, 23 Jan. 1974, BFF, P132, Folder 39, Box 381. Sise attached a copy of a 1 June 1973 letter to the City's Toponymy Committee requesting that the northern half of the Beaver Hall Square should be renamed Place Bethune. The studio was at 1154 Beaver Hall Square but the building was demolished to accommodate an office building.
- 31 Mary WEIL, *The Bethune News* 1, no.1 (Winter 1977): 6, BFF, P132, Folder 5, Box 379.
- 32 "Minutes of the statutory meeting held in the Conference Room of the Montreal Neurological Institute..., Montreal, 12 Apr. 1978," BFF, P132, Folder 24, Box 380.
- 33 WEIL, *The Bethune News*, 4, BFF, P132, Folder 5, Box 379.
- 34 For discussion of this phenomenon see: Albert BOIME, *The Unveiling of the National Icons: A Plea for Patriotic Iconoclasm in a Nationalist Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), especially 9-10.
- 35 "Students march for Burma," *McGill Daily*, 4 Oct. 2007.
- 36 Claudie Boujaklian, Customer Service, Concordia University, to Lerner, 17 Aug. 2007: "The University is already thinking of suggesting a plaque but it will be the City's decision because they own the small triangular park and the statue."
- 37 Marilyn FRANSISZYN, "Norman Bethune and His Friends," *Osler Library Newsletter (OLN)* no.10 (June 1972): 1-3; "Bethuniana Exhibit," *OLN*, no.32 (October 1979): 3, 48; "General plan of program for 1982-83," *OLN*, no.43 (June 1983): 1. <http://www.mcgill.ca/library/library-using/branches/osler-library/oslernews/>
- 38 For information on the conference, see: <http://art-historyconcordia.ca/downloads/BETHUNEANDVISUALCULTURE.pdf>

LE DR NORMAN BETHUNE DÉMASQUE

Le rôle de la Commission des lieux et monuments historiques du Canada est de désigner d'importance nationale une réalisation spéciale, un événement marquant de l'histoire du Canada ou une contribution particulièrement remarquable au Canada. Lorsque, en 1972, la Commission adopta un nouveau critère et que « les Canadiens qui ont fait une contribution exceptionnelle à l'extérieur du Canada pourront être l'objet d'un avis favorable de la Commission », le Dr Norman Bethune (1890-1939) fut immédiatement recommandé comme personne d'importance historique nationale. Cette recommandation coïncidait avec la reconnaissance officielle par le Canada de la République populaire de Chine, en 1970, et le fait que le premier ministre Pierre-Elliott Trudeau considérait que le Canada ne pouvait plus ignorer les réalisations héroïques de Bethune à l'extérieur du pays. Le présent article examine l'association de Bethune avec des valeurs, significations et attraits divers à travers deux lieux commémoratifs.

Le premier est le Bethune Memorial Museum à Gravenhurst, Ontario, le presbytère protestant où Bethune est né. La résidence a été achetée par le gouvernement fédéral en 1973 et restaurée dans l'état où elle était à la fin du XIX^e siècle, afin de rappeler l'époque où elle était habitée par la famille Bethune, en prenant quelques libertés avec l'exactitude historique. Le musée, inauguré en 1976, comprend un centre pour les visiteurs adjacent à la maison, où l'on présente un film et une exposition sur les activités de la vie de Bethune, y compris son engagement social, ses innovations médicales et sa mort en Chine, quoique laissant à peine soupçonner son mépris pour la profession médicale au Canada. En dépit des efforts pour attirer des touristes canadiens à Gravenhurst, la majorité des visiteurs viennent de Chine ou sont des Canadiens d'origine chinoise en vacances. Ils ont apporté une énorme quantité de présents en hommage à Bethune, des objets de toute sorte, petites statues, objets d'art et photographies. En conséquence, la Maison-Commémorative-Bethune tire maintenant une grande partie de sa signification à travers son identité symbolique avec la Chine.

Le second lieu est la Place Norman-Bethune, petit parc près de l'Université Concordia, dont le centre d'intérêt est une statue en pied grandeur nature de Bethune, fabriquée à Beijing et donnée à la ville de Montréal par la Chine en 1976. Après des années d'incurie, le site a été refait et amélioré

pour devenir le centre d'attraction du quartier Concordia. Le parc a été officiellement rouvert le 14 octobre 2008 par la réinstallation de la statue, restaurée et nettoyée aux frais de la ville mais dépourvue d'une plaque rappelant ses réalisations. Bien que la fonction de la Place Norman-Bethune ait été de donner une identité à l'université, elle est devenue un point de ralliement social et politique pour de nombreuses organisations activistes locales.

La manière dont diverses agences, particulièrement la Fondation Bethune, active à Montréal dans les années 1970, ont caractérisé la mémoire de Bethune est d'importance cruciale pour l'étude de ces deux lieux commémoratifs. Le président de la Fondation était Hazen Sise, architecte qui a servi avec Bethune en Espagne. Depuis 1967, Sise avait entretenu une correspondance avec la Commission des lieux et monuments historiques du Canada pour que Bethune soit reconnu. Les procès-verbaux des assemblées annuelles de la Fondation ainsi que diverses correspondances révèlent qu'elle avait eu l'idée d'acquérir la Maison-Commemorative-Bethune et que le développement de la Place Norman-Bethune était leur propre initiative. Le croisement des sentiments personnels, de la rectitude politique et des interprétations civiques, a fait que la mémoire de Bethune, au Canada, a été manipulée à des fins contemporaines, qu'elles soient d'ordre économique, culturel, politique ou social.

Traduction : Élise Bonnette