

**“My Canada is Yet Unborn”:  
Settler Identity & Ideology in the Life & Works of  
A.M. Stephen**

by  
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## **Abstract**

A.M. Stephen (1882-1942) was a prominent poet, writer, and activist, working principally in British Columbia. This thesis uses his life and works—chiefly published artistic and political writings, contemporary newspapers, and archival materials collected by his wife—to explore Settler Canadian identity and ideology as he articulated it. His portrayal of Canada, its past, and Indigenous people, his work as an activist and educator, and his attitudes towards class, socialism, and imperialism, were united by an ongoing commitment to the Settler population and nation of Canada. An evolving hegemony can thus be partially reconnoitred as it was conceived and promoted by one successful figure. By placing Stephen under examination in a settler order framework, the unique value of this focus and its exploratory potential is further revealed.

**Keywords:** Settler colonialism; Settler identity; Canadian poetry; Alexander Maitland Stephen;

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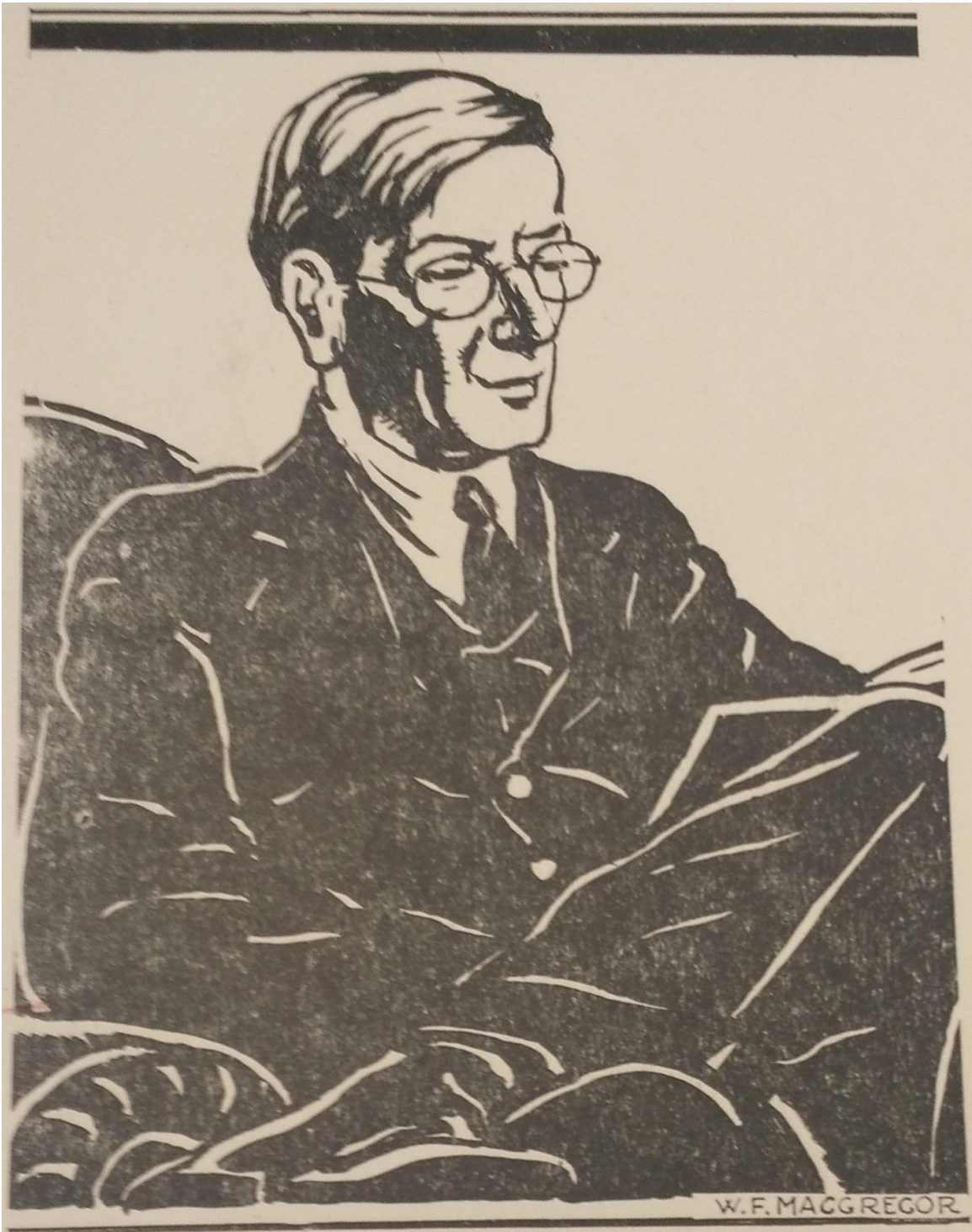
This thesis was completed on the Burnaby campus of, and with resources and support from, Simon Fraser University, which respectfully acknowledges the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), səliłwətaʔt (Tsleil-Waututh), ǰíćəy̓ (Katzie), kʷikʷəł̓əm (Kwikwetlem), Qayqayt, Kwantlen, Semiahmoo and Tsawwassen peoples on whose unceded traditional territories our three campuses reside. I include this official recognition with the comment that any truly respectful acknowledgement implies a vast and thoroughgoing social and economic revolution which such rhetorical gestures cannot bring about. Inadequately contextualized, land acknowledgements can serve to reinforce Settler identity and ideology, elements at the very core of the historical project that has so consistently dispossessed Indigenous peoples throughout the Americas.

# Table of Contents

Declaration of Committee .....	ii
Abstract .....	iii
Acknowledgements .....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
List of Acronyms.....	vi
Image .....	vii
<b>Chapter 1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 2. Biography and Historiography .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Chapter 3. Canada, Colonialism, and First Nations.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Chapter 4. Advocacy, Reform, and Education .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Chapter 5. Settler Society and Social Change .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Chapter 6. Settler Identity, Ideology, and Framework.....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Chapter 7. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Appendix Poems by A.M. Stephen .....</b>	<b>78</b>

## List of Acronyms

A.M. Stephen	Alexander Maitland Stephen
CWA	Child Welfare Association
CCF	Cooperative Commonwealth Federation
SPC	Socialist Party of Canada
CPC	Communist Party of Canada
LAWF	League Against War & Fascism
BC	British Columbia



*Illustration of A.M. Stephen, seated, by W.F. MacGregor, n.d.; Inside cover of scrapbook 2-2, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can. Illustration by William Firth MacGregor (1896-1979). Copyright owner unknown*

# Chapter 1.

## Introduction

Alexander Maitland Stephen died on Dominion Day, 1 July 1942, at the age of 60. The timing is appropriate, as he was widely acclaimed as among Canada's foremost poets in the tributes that followed. A.M. Stephen was a prominent and successful poet and writer, a renowned public speaker and lecturer, a progressive reformer and, for a time, socialist activist, and a fierce patriot and promoter of his native country. What united these projects was his vision of and commitment to a Settler Canadian identity and ideology. *Full Tide*, the Vancouver Poetry Society's newsletter, eulogized him thusly:

He loved Canada with passionate abiding devotion and threw himself heart and soul into any movement which he thought was for her good. His vision of "the Canada to be" far transcended that of most of his compatriots...he lives on through the inspiration he kindled in the hearts of youth no less than in his dynamic poetry and his stately prose.<sup>1</sup>

Stephen's life coincides nearly perfectly with the "foundational interstitial" of 1880-1940, which saw major shifts in Canadian culture and institutions, ushering in:

[the] transition from early forms of settlement and imperial economics towards private property régimes and the engineering of Settler-Indigenous separation. It is no coincidence that many of the foundational myths and narratives of Canadian nationalism and identity emerged during this time.<sup>2</sup>

This period is crucial for an understanding of the continuity of settler colonial relations, as it "represented a change and refinement of settler colonial tactics in Canada rather than a shift away from the broad strategy of settler colonial elimination and disavowal."<sup>3</sup> Stephen, for his part, did not merely partake in the "myths and narratives of

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<sup>1</sup> Copy of *Full Tide* Vol. 7 No. 1, Oct 1942, AM56, Alexander Maitland Stephen Collection, City of Vancouver Archives, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada (hereafter A.M.S.C., CVA, Vancouver, BC, Can.)

<sup>2</sup> Barker, Rollo and Battell Lowman, "Settler colonialism and the consolidation of Canada in the twentieth century," in *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Settler Colonialism*, ed. Cavanagh and Veracini (New York: Routledge, 2017), 154

<sup>3</sup> Barker, Rollo and Battell Lowman, "Settler colonialism and the consolidation of Canada in the twentieth century," 165



Canadian nationalism”—he helped to craft, spread, and enshrine them in Canadian identity and culture, and adopted them as central to his own life and vision for the future. Stephen’s works represent the articulation of one conception of this shifting hegemony which found some measure of success. The construction and glorification of a Settler identity and accompanying ideology is the essential throughline in all his projects.

The title of this thesis is derived from “My Canada,” a poem from Stephen’s second published collection (see Appendix). Beginning with a natural metaphor, a “hint of greatness” in the land is rendered clear by poetry, while in a historical sense English civilisation found the “vivid gleam” of potential in Canada and, though it still “binds” with old mythologies, secured “Liberty” for the “Empire of the Sea.” The poem ends with a message of Canada’s great potential legitimated through the bloodshed of the First World War. Stephen’s vision of “an Age to be” involves great social transformation and was eventually tied directly into his interest in socialism and Marxism—yet Canada remains, its true form somehow “unborn.”<sup>4</sup> This representation of Canada and its past encapsulates Stephen’s consistent allegiance to and promotion of Settler identity and ideology, and the centrality of these commitments to his life and works.

Throughout his life, A.M. Stephen articulated and advanced his own vision of Settler Canadian identity and ideology, both of which served to justify Settler presence on and domination of the land and reinforce the legitimacy and power of the nation-state. By examining Stephen’s depiction of the colonial past and First Nations peoples, his various efforts to improve and reform Canada and Canadians, and his positions on contemporary social issues like class, socialism, and imperialism, we can conduct a careful reconnaissance of the evolving, solidifying national hegemony which he self-consciously contributed to as a prominent artist and activist. A study of Stephen within a settler order framework reveals the commonality of Settler identity as a tool of recognition and legitimation, and the significance of the hegemonic vision of Canada Stephen also advanced.

Throughout I draw upon three main bodies of primary sources. Stephen’s numerous published artistic works and political pamphlets provide important insight into both his perceptions and the messages he sought to publicize, and Canada and its

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<sup>4</sup> A.M. Stephen, *The Land of Singing Waters* (Toronto: JM Dent & Sons Ltd., 1927), 102-103  
Stephen also included the first and last verses as the text of his ‘41/42 season’s greetings card, the last he would issue during his lifetime

Settler population are constant subjects in both. Articles and editorials in *The Federationist*, *The Amoeba*, and the *BC Clarion* provide key insights into Stephen's brief time with the CCF, and the dispute which ended in his expulsion. Most significant are several boxes of archival material donated to the City of Vancouver and the University of British Columbia by A.M.'s wife Irene after his death.

This thesis is organized into four main chapters, before which I present a brief biography and historiography of A.M. Stephen. In Chapter Three I move on to examine his portrayal of Canada, the nation's colonial history, and the First Nations people who only occasionally entered this picture. In Chapter Four I to examine the progressive political causes Stephen contributed to, advocacy related to his art, and his work as a teacher, educational writer, and child welfare reformer. Chapter Five focuses on ideas about society and social change in Stephen's works, specifically his attitude over time towards class, socialism, and imperialism. Chapter Six then seeks to make explicit the purposes of using a settler order framework, elaborate on the significance of Settler identity within Stephen's life and Canadian history. and of the idea of a "Canadian Consensus" as a specific part of hegemony. Following the conclusion there is an Appendix which reproduces in full several of Stephen's poems which I draw upon in the text for the sake of context.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Short poetic quotations appear with lines separated by slashes (/). A single verse of poetry appears as a block quote. If a complete verse from a piece is quoted. the full poem appears in the Appendix. Original spacing has otherwise been preserved where possible

## Chapter 2.

### Biography and Historiography

Alexander Maitland Stephen was born in the “very small town” of Paisley, in Bentinck Township, Grey County, Ontario, on 8 May 1882.<sup>6</sup> A.M. and his brother Gordon (25 Aug 1888-30 Nov 1961) grew up in nearby Hanover, where A.M.’s father had invested in a library of over two thousand books and tutored his sons extensively.<sup>7</sup> Finishing high school at 14, the family lacked the funds to continue A.M.’s education, and he departed for Kamloops, British Columbia, where a prosperous uncle worked as a lawyer and would apprentice him. This proved unsatisfying, and in 1899, when Stephen’s father died in Ontario, A.M. was in Seattle, working in restaurants, on the docks, in the fields, upon the stage, and even aboard a hospital ship. Stephen’s widowed mother and his brother moved to Victoria and circa 1905 A.M. was working in insurance there.<sup>8</sup> He turned down a promotion to assume his father’s profession, working as a teacher in remote parts of BC, and thereafter was a rancher and miner, eventually moving to the USA. He studied in the Applied Arts and Sciences Department of Chicago University, graduating 1913, and made a successful career as an architect. Marrying Irene Stephen, née Spores (1 Jul 1894-1 Aug 1981) on 18 Sep 1910,<sup>9</sup> moving to Calgary, and by 1914 raising two children, Donald Stuart and Charles Leslie, “war fever” would take him next to Europe.<sup>10</sup>

Stephen travelled to England and attempted to join a Scottish regiment in tribute to his father’s birthplace but ended up in the 10th Royal Fusiliers. Deployed in a support role and then stationed at the front, in the unit’s first attack “a splinter of a bursting shell

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<sup>6</sup> Copy of “A.M. Stephen” by W. Gordon Stephen, *Educational Record*, pg. 148, 4-2, Alexander Maitland Stephen fonds, University of British Columbia Rare Books & Special Collections, Vancouver, BC, Can. (hereafter accession number, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.)

<sup>7</sup> His father, Alexander Stephen (1835-1899), was a Scottish immigrant farmer who had become a teacher; he married a former student, Margaret Stephen née Whiteford

<sup>8</sup> Copy of “A.M. Stephen” by W. Gordon Stephen, *Educational Record*, pg. 149-150, 4-2, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

<sup>9</sup> Typewritten note entitled War 1, 1967?, 2-4, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can. The note concerns a copy of *The Pentland Rising* purchased for the couple’s fifth wedding anniversary.

<sup>10</sup> Letter to Gordon Stephen by A.M. Stephen, 1916, 4-2, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

tore [Stephen's] right arm up" and he was evacuated back to Canada.<sup>11</sup> His young family relocated to Vancouver and for several years he was a teacher and well-known reformer, working in prominent child advocacy groups and advancing progressive social causes. He also began writing poetry and became a member of the Vancouver Poetry Society and other literary groups. Stephen was also active in establishing the Julian Lodge of the Theosophical Society and a branch of the American Birth Control League in Vancouver, though neither lasted very long. He was eventually criticized for his educational advocacy and lost his job as a city teacher.<sup>12</sup>

Stephen's first published work of poetry, *The Rosary of Pan*, appeared in 1923, followed by *The Land of Singing Waters*, 1927, and *Brown Earth and Bunch Grass*, 1931. In between each publication Stephen embarked upon speaking tours, including one nationwide in 1927 and several in the Northwestern United States, performing Canadian poetry. These public appearances were almost always accompanied by remarks or a full lecture on some aspect of Stephen's patriotic interests, widely reported in local newspapers. In 1926 Stephen published his first anthology, *The Voice of Canada*, followed by *The Golden Treasury of Canadian Verse*, 1928. Both were successful; the former adopted by local elementary schools and the latter by high schools. Stephen also published two books of schoolroom plays for a younger audience, *Class Room Plays from Canadian History* and *Class Room Plays from Canadian Industry*, both in 1929. He also wrote two novels in the 1923-1931 period that represents his greatest artistic productivity; *The Kingdom of the Sun: A Romance of the Far West Coast* appeared in 1927, and the political and autobiographical *The Gleaming Archway* in 1929.

By the time of a flattering 1931 *Macleans* article entitled "A Poet of the West," which praised Stephen's reform efforts, wartime service, and artistic contributions to the nation, he was working as associate editor for the *Western Tribune*, a left-wing Vancouver newspaper.<sup>13</sup> It shut down in the midst of the worsening Depression, and Stephen embarked on a new venture: party politics, first as a member of the Independent Labour Party (ILP), and then among the socialists of the Cooperative

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<sup>11</sup> Letter to Gordon Stephen by A.M. Stephen, 1916, 4-2, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can. His arm would never fully heal, and Stephen had to train his other hand to write: he ends the letter: "Excuse my writing, I am not very proficient with my left as yet."

<sup>12</sup> Arthur P. Woollacott, "A Poet of the West," *Macleans*, 15 Apr 1931, 87-88

<sup>13</sup> Woollacott, "A Poet of the West," 87-88

Commonwealth Federation (CCF).<sup>14</sup> In 1933 he authored *Marxism: The Basis for a New Social Order*, published through the *BC Clarion*, official paper of the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC). *Fascism: The Black International* appeared in 1934, and a year later Stephen expanded it into *Hitlerism in Canada*, now published by the Canadian League Against War and Fascism (LAWF). Stephen was President of the BC LAWF, which positioned itself as a broad, coalition-based organisation chiefly devoted to collecting aid money for Spain and China, working in cooperation with a wide variety of parties and groups under the Popular Front strategy championed by the Communist Party of Canada (CPC). Working with the CCF as a radio presenter and educator, his commitment to the League proved controversial, and was the impetus behind his expulsion from the party. On 2 Dec 1936, Stephen's first defensive editorial on the matter was published in *The Federationist*; by 7 Jan 1937, editors were compelled to cease publishing letters on the issue. Following a suspension Stephen continued his activism, and after standing in the 1937 Nanaimo-Alberni election, was expelled at the party's summer convention after a two-hour debate.<sup>15</sup>

Stephen had returned to teaching during the Depression, lecturing on literature and social studies at the BC School of Pharmacy, where he worked until a few months before his death.<sup>16</sup> *Verendrye*, an epic poem, appeared in 1935, though it was not accompanied by his usual tours. In the same year, Stephen's younger son Charles Leslie was gravely injured during the so-called Regina Riot and left with permanent brain injuries, though he does not appear to have had political connections.<sup>17</sup> In 1940, Stephen published and sold *Lords of the Air*, a pamphlet of wartime poetry, for the relief of London. He was forced to stop teaching due to an attack of pneumonia in 1941, which worsened up until his death, though Stephen was able to finish *Dark Days Ending* for the Ryerson Novel Contest, earning an Honourable Mention.<sup>18</sup> He died on Dominion Day, 1

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<sup>14</sup> Walter Young, "Ideology, Personality and the Origin of the CCF in British Columbia," *BC Studies* No. 32 (Winter 1976-77): 143-145. I disagree with much of the analysis of this early article, but it does contain valuable details about the transformation of the ILP into the SPC.

<sup>15</sup> James Naylor, *The Fate of Labour Socialism: The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation and the Dream of a Working-Class Future* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 251

<sup>16</sup> Copy of "A.M. Stephen" by W. Gordon Stephen, *Educational Record*, pg. 151, 4-2, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

<sup>17</sup> Typewritten note attached to photos, 2-1, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

<sup>18</sup> Ryerson Fiction Award Certificate of Honorable Mention, 1942, 2-2, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

July 1942. After donating his archival material, Stephen's wife Irene<sup>19</sup> fulfilled a final promise in publishing a last collection of poetry entitled *Songs for a New Nation* in 1963.

A.M. Stephen has appeared in several works of history, chiefly with reference to his time in the CCF. Most recent is James Naylor's *The Fate of Labour Socialism*, which uses Stephen to explore the Popular Front dispute as an example of "Class War in the CCF," as the relevant chapter is entitled. Naylor describes the party, particularly its BC branch, as "labour-socialist"—distinct from revolutionary communists, but definitively socialist and firmly interested in a working-class perspective and membership, and analyses Stephen's expulsion as the result of "a labour-socialist campaign against him and the Popular Front."<sup>20</sup> Benjamin Isitt's *Militant Minority* interprets Stephen instead as a left-wing activist sidelined by the doctrinaire, anti-CPC Marxism of the party leaders, especially the Winch family.<sup>21</sup> The two works have an almost oppositional reading: Naylor sees Stephen as being isolated by a party of self-conceived working class socialists, while Isitt argues he was in fact too left-wing for the narrow party elite.

"The Early Birth Controllers of B.C." by Mary Bishop contains valuable information regarding Stephen's work establishing a Vancouver branch of the American Birth Control League. This source is especially notable as the author indicates communicating with Stephen's widow, who denied the Vancouver branch of the organisation ever existed.<sup>22</sup> Robert Lecker's *Keepers of the Code* covers Stephen's anthologies and their ambitions, while A.R. Kizuk's "The Vernacular in Early Twentieth-

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<sup>19</sup> Especially given her role in assembling archival material on Stephen, the dearth of information on Irene is disappointing. She is listed under the name "Wealtha Irene Stephen Manthey" in the copyright notes for *Songs for a New Nation*, and though never referred to as "Wealtha" in any Stephen material, it appears to have been her first name, and Irene a middle name. Wealtha Irene Spores, listed as brother to James Spores in an Oregon newspaper, was born 1 Jul 1894. Her mother Catherine Isabell Barrett Spores (28 Apr 1867-26 Jul 1949) and her father James Franklin Spores (18 Jan 1868-22 Feb 1936) lived for many years in the Mohawk Valley in Oregon—she was probably not the daughter of a Chicago lawyer, and her maiden name was not "Thomas," as A.M. had told Gordon in a 1916 letter. An obituary for her mother in 1949 lists her daughter as "Mrs. Wealtha Manthey of San Francisco," implying she had remarried and relocated after A.M.'s death. A "People Search" list including Social Security Numbers lists her birthdate, two addresses in San Francisco, and the date of her death: 1 Aug 1981

<sup>20</sup> Naylor, *The Fate of Labour Socialism*, 250

<sup>21</sup> Benjamin Isitt, *Militant Minority: British Columbia Workers and the Rise of a New Left, 1948-1972* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 87

<sup>22</sup> Mary F. Bishop, "The Early Birth Controllers of BC," *BC Studies* 61 (Spring 1984): 73n34: "Interviewed in 1978, his widow stated that the organization never existed." There is ample textual evidence in the pages of the *Birth Control Review* for at least a period of Vancouver activity, though there is no significant coverage in Stephen's archival collections.

Century Canadian Poetry: Arthur Stringer and A. M. Stephen“ takes Stephen’s art as one of its two main subjects. James Doyle’s *Progressive Heritage* includes similar analysis of Stephen’s political and artistic publications. Though Doyle and Lecker devote some attention to the interrelationship between Stephen’s political and artistic ambitions, none offer a full picture of his life or commitments.

Naylor’s examination of the CCF as labour-socialist is indebted to the works of Ian McKay, specifically the influential “liberal order thesis” derived from a 2000 article in *Canadian Historical Review*. McKay argued, in the midst of a larger controversy regarding the increasing prominence of more localised works of social history in comparison to the apparent decline of narrative political and economic histories, that progress might be made by examining “Canada-as-project” and the “implantation and expansion over a heterogeneous terrain of a certain politico-economic logic—to wit, liberalism.”<sup>23</sup> The liberal order “is one that encourages and seeks to extend across time and space a belief in the epistemological and ontological primacy of the category ‘individual,’” and McKay recommends a strategy of reconnaissance focused on “those at the core of this project who articulated its values and those ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ who resisted and, to some extent at least, reshaped it.”<sup>24</sup>

The impact of McKay’s liberal order thesis is not yet entirely clear, and though it is at the heart of his own explorations of the Canadian left, as a general method it has not come into widespread use. Despite this, the term “liberal order” has become a frequently-deployed shorthand for the organizing power of the framework; Bruce Curtis, in a piece responding to the thesis, suspects “the popularity of the proposed framework streams from the fact that it allows for a leftist Canadian ‘history as usual.’”<sup>25</sup> Other critics of the thesis have focused on McKay’s definition of liberal order and the applicability of the concept to all eras and peoples of Canada.

An alternative was offered by Fred Burrill in 2019 with his own article, “The Settler Order Framework: Rethinking Canadian Working-Class History,” in *Labour / Le Travail*. Burrill laments the lack of analysis “pertaining to the impact of settler colonialism

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<sup>23</sup> Ian McKay, “The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History,” *Canadian Historical Review* 81 (Winter 2000), 621

<sup>24</sup> McKay, “The Liberal Order Framework,” 623, 621

<sup>25</sup> Bruce Curtis, “After ‘Canada’: Liberalisms, Social Theory, and Historical Analysis,” in *Liberalism & Hegemony*, edited by Constant and Ducharme (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 177

on class and identity formation amongst white settler workers, and the relevance of this phenomena as an explanatory framework for the absence of revolutionary class struggle in Canada.”<sup>26</sup> Burrill cites Vowel’s definition of settler colonialism in *Indigenous Writes*—“deliberate physical occupation of land as method of asserting ownership over land and resources”<sup>27</sup>—and also sketches the outline of a settler order framework aiming to improve upon aspects of its liberal counterpart. Arguing that McKay underestimates “the apartheid-like structures of the Canadian project,” Burrill seeks to reassert:

The central problem—that on this territory, one of the fundamental sociopolitical-historical organizing principles is that of Indigenous people and trespassers, and that every action of the latter retains a fundamentally non-consensual and exploitative character, warping class formation and relations—[the central problem] is thus submerged within this narrative of progress.<sup>28</sup>

Burrill argues that the liberal order framework results in a certain “flattening out of the cleavages between different collective refusals of this liberal imperialism, placing on similar theoretical footing, say, Québécois nationalism, queer liberation struggles, the Socialist Party of Canada, and First Nations opposition.”<sup>29</sup> In a piece published in *Labour / Le Travail*, Fall 2000, exploring the application of the strategy of “reconnaissance” to Canadian political history, McKay noted in reference to the left’s overall project:

“Nothing has worked” in one limited sense, then—the ‘revolution’ hoped for by Communists and CCFers did not happen... and yet, in another way, ‘everything worked.’ A ‘socialist good sense,’ which neoliberals quite rightly see as a formidable obstacle, did attain and still retains a fair measure of popular acceptance in Canada.<sup>30</sup>

This prompts Burrill to ask, “for whom did ‘everything work’?” Drawing on the antiracist “whiteness” scholarship of figures like David Roediger and J. Sakai, and the critical interrogation of historical materialism in Dene scholar Glen Sean Coulthard’s *Red Skin, White Masks*, the framework seeks to understand

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<sup>26</sup> Fred Burrill, “The Settler Order Framework: Rethinking Canadian Working-Class History,” *Labour / Le Travail* 83 (Spring 2019), 175.

<sup>27</sup> Burrill, “The Settler Order Framework,” quoted 175

<sup>28</sup> Burrill, “The Settler Order Framework,” 187

<sup>29</sup> Burrill, “The Settler Order Framework,” 186-187

<sup>30</sup> Ian McKay, “For a New Kind of History: a Reconnaissance of 100 Years of Canadian Socialism,” *Labour / Le Travail* 46 (Fall 2000), 125



white settler decision-makers and discourse creators not as inadvertent enforcers of different cultural understandings of work but as integrally tied to a system of power and economic production; in turn, poor and working-class whites cannot be considered solely as the beneficiaries of this miscommunication but must be approached as a collective subject making choices about its alignment within the settler historical bloc.<sup>31</sup>

The settler order framework specifically investigates the relationship between colonial and class exploitations, in order to explore “settlerism, with its baggage of white supremacist patriarchal entitlement, [and how it] influenced the development, or lack thereof, of a revolutionary workers’ movement in Canada,” and indeed class formation in general.<sup>32</sup> This thesis seeks to use this framework, and the strategy of reconnaissance which Burrill praises when adequately refocused on the apartheid structures of the nation, in order to pursue a particular historical line of inquiry: the creation, consolidation, and extension of hegemony in Canada, as rendered in Settler identity, ideology, and conceptions of nation.

Study of the ongoing and historical reality and relevance of specifically settler-colonial conditions, and the investigation (and capitalisation) of Settler identity itself, is a relatively new project, at least in academia. Coulthard seeks to emphasize, in challenging the liberal “politics of recognition” which he sees as dominating Canadian discourse regarding Indigenous people since the 1969 White Paper, that “settler-colonialism should not be seen as deriving its reproductive force solely from its repressive or violent features, but rather from its ability to produce *forms of life* that make settler-colonialism’s constitutive hierarchies seem natural.”<sup>33</sup> The “foundational interstitial” contains a decisive (though not thoroughgoing) shift from earlier, more overtly violent means of dispossession, and towards the hegemony that would produce the liberal “politics of recognition.” Stephen existed in the midst of this transformation, a forward-looking reformer and “discourse creator” of some note, who provides an opportunity to “both anticipate and interrogate practices of settler-state dispossession

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<sup>31</sup> Burrill, “The Settler Order Framework,” 184

<sup>32</sup> Burrill, “The Settler Order Framework,” 192

<sup>33</sup> Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014, 152

justified under otherwise egalitarian principles and espoused with so called 'progressive' political agendas in mind."<sup>34</sup>

Battel Lowman and Barker, in *Settler: Identity and Colonialism in 21st Century Canada*, argue the Settler identity is "situated, process-based, and pervasive in Canada but also in the United States, Australia, and other settler societies worldwide."

Highlighting this identity very practically "shift[s] how we [Settlers] think about ourselves and our relationships with the wider world," and it remains an often-unexamined part of the unfolding of Canadian history.<sup>35</sup> Settler identity is based only partially on qualifiers like whiteness or time of arrival to the land known as Canada, and,

when claimed, fore-grounded, and interrogated, can bring to light the effects of the relationships that Canadians forge with the territories on which we live and the Indigenous peoples who hold prior and continuing claims to (and relationships with) those lands. Settler Canadian identity...is reliant on the ongoing exercise of colonial power to provide attachment to and legitimacy on the land; however...while most Settler people in Canada participate in colonial domination, their involvement is not guaranteed...ways of being [a Settler] are often foreclosed by powerful structures and systems, whether officially recognized powers of the capitalist state or more diffuse structures like whiteness and individualism.<sup>36</sup>

Thus, Settler identity and ideology serve and seek to perpetuate settler colonial relationships with the land and Indigenous peoples, even as the symbols and realities of Settler power remain out of reach for many. Settlers, just like Indigenous people, are not a homogenous population; there are vast differences in wealth and power, not to mention various other important identities, in the Settler population. Thus the category must be carefully historicized to examine the divides within and without it, as peoples with various levels of power and a vast diversity of beliefs sought to define and shape their common Settler identity, and as its public presence produced further differentiations and dilemmas. From the beginning,

The original settlers were of various European origins, and they brought with them their laws and customs, which they then applied to Indigenous people and later to all peoples who have come to Canada from a non-settler background. This does not refer only to

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<sup>34</sup> Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 12

<sup>35</sup> Barker and Battell Lowman, *Settler: Identity & Colonialism in 21st Century Canada* (Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2015), 13

<sup>36</sup> Barker & Battell Lowman, *Settler*, 15, 16

those European people with sociopolitical power, but also to those of lower classes who settled here to seek economic opportunities.<sup>37</sup>

For all their diversities, Indigenous and Settler identities do “coalesce around an observable general, and crucial difference: relationship to the land.”<sup>38</sup> Land is thus tied in a significant way to how and why Settler identity is realized and replicated, and there is an important specificity in Settler Canadian identity and ideology as relating to this nation—and its land—particularly. I take a broad view of ideology, accepting it as the universe of claims, assumptions, and aspirations which are implied and made directly in relation, most commonly, to identity and nation. Important early work on settler colonialism by Lorenzo Veracini emphasized the “recurrent need to disavow” the presence of the Indigenous and the founding violence required to dispossess them by settler colonial states, concealing settler colonial practices behind other phenomena, as “settler colonialism obscures the conditions of its own production.”<sup>39</sup> Settler societies continue to evolve while under the influence of a pervasive racial hierarchy such that “national mythologies” retain and reconceptualize as needed an overall vision in which “white people came first and it is they that have principally developed the land; Aboriginal peoples are presumed to be mostly dead or assimilated. European settlers thus *become* the original inhabitants and the group most entitled to the fruits of citizenship.”<sup>40</sup> Settler ideology serves to give substance to this image through a variety of claims about the past, present, and future, including colonial narratives like the notion of *terra nullius* or the doctrine of discovery. Just as with identity, ideology constitutes reality in such a way that alternatives and challenges are unthinkable. Canadian-ness comes to reproduce Settler power and prestige even as it becomes a seemingly normal and neutral political condition.

Mark Rifkin’s notion of “settler common sense” is here significant: he argues the premises guaranteeing the continuation of Settler dominance “over Indigenous peoples, governance, and territoriality” in a social “structure of feeling” serve to “*saturate* quotidian life but are not necessarily present[ed] to settlers as a set of political propositions or as a

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<sup>37</sup> Burrill, “The Settler Order Framework,” 184

<sup>38</sup> Barker & Battell Lowman, *Settler*, 18

<sup>39</sup> Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Great Britain: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 14

<sup>40</sup> Sherene H. Razack, “Introduction,” in *Race, Space, and the Law: Unmapping a White Settler Society* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2002), 1-2

specifically imperial project of dispossession.”<sup>41</sup> A.M. Stephen would follow this sense of common sense almost instinctively, his own projects comprehensively steeped in importantly political notions about history, society, and legitimacy, which he presented and saw as natural, inevitable truth. The narratives he drew upon were “embedded in the logic of settler colonialism and national identity,” serving to further “civilisation progress, Indigenous erasure, and the Indigenization of the settler,” though they often appeared as pragmatic, apparently uncontroversial calls for Canadian advancement.<sup>42</sup> Through settler colonialism’s drive to disavow and obfuscate, appeals to Canadian national greatness come to mean, in fact, the continuation of a very particular, unquestionable order.

I refer to Settlerism as the combined and mutually supporting projects of identity and ideology throughout; both are crucial parts of Canadian hegemony which Stephen promoted and adhered to in all his projects. A.M. Stephen, as a lifelong, overtly patriotic artist and activist, consistently articulated a Settler identity, and elaborated on an accompanying ideology. More than that, he deliberately spread and promoted both, speaking explicitly about Canada’s glorious colonial past and the irrelevance of its original inhabitants, arguing in favor of reforms to create better citizens and a stronger nation, and articulating a Settler position on major social issues like class and imperialism. Through Stephen we can observe the refining of major aspects of Settler identity and ideology in the “foundational interstitial.”

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<sup>41</sup> Mark Rifkin, “Settler Common Sense,” *Settler Colonial Studies* Vol. 3, 3-4 (2013), 323

<sup>42</sup> Jason Chalmers, “Settler Memories on Stolen Land: Settler Mythology at Canada’s National Holocaust Memorial,” *American Indian Quarterly* Vol 43, 4 (Fall 2019). 380

## Chapter 3.

### Canada, Colonialism, and First Nations

Canada, its past, and its future were significant as both themes and subjects throughout Stephen's art. He portrayed the nation with remarkable consistency: the land itself is beautiful and bountiful, the natural home of a new people and their dynamic virtues, freed from the sins of the past, and embarked on a progressive historical path. The past would serve to inspire this growth by furnishing tales of the heroism, bravery, and skill of those who had initially conquered the land. Stephen saw potential for such stories in both iconic Settler figures, and more everyday pioneers. Throughout it all, the absence of First Nations people is striking, and their appearances serve to legitimate Settler racial and political norms at every turn. The artistic vision of Canada promulgated by Stephen served to sketch out and provide content for developing Settler identities and ideologies, furnishing a narrative of the past, heroic figures and aspirational goals, inspirational imagery and metaphor, and delegitimizing alternative claims even as they continued to exist and offer resistance.

In a typewritten note included among notices of his death, one of Stephen's poems, "Canada O Canada," made it clear how central Canada was to him artistically and personally:

I heard them sing of roses and violets pale and sweet  
Where, in a dim and ancient land, the spring and summer meet  
They sang of blue-bells in a glen of lilies' white desire—  
But only crimson maples can set my heart afire.<sup>43</sup>

Stephen's patriotism was the most central and consistent motivator of his artistic career. Responding to criticism that his epic poem *Verendrye* was overly romantic, Stephen defended his style in the foreword: "if I have seen it [Canada] in an 'ethereal light' of romanticism, it is because I am a poet to whom his native land is a religion and an inspiration."<sup>44</sup> Stephen's sense of "religion and...inspiration" was an explicit influence on his portrayal of Canada. Other issues were important to him, but at the base of his projects was always Canada, which remained the essential, intended beneficiary of and

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<sup>43</sup> Typewritten copy of poem "Canada O Canada," 2-4, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

<sup>44</sup> A.M. Stephen, *Verendrye* (Toronto: JM Dent & Sons Ltd., 1935), ix

reference point for all his efforts. Stephen did consider other subjects—love, beauty, truth, and a general sense of the “New Age” are common, and across his life he wrote poems exploring imaginary, exemplary experiences, the nature of men and women, impressions of the past, and much more. Nonetheless, Canada remained his deepest inspiration, and one of his most frequent subjects.

Three poems titled with reference to Canada appear in *The Land of Singing Waters*; Book 2 of the collection is composed of poetic meditations on locales and themes from across the nation and its past. In *Brown Earth & Bunch Grass*, Stephen moved decisively towards a freer verse style, and examined more specific topics, producing poems in tribute to the Calgary Stampede, Kitsilano, Regina—described as “one of the loveliest cities of the Canadian plains” in the prelude to “Wascana” —and, naturally, Vancouver, which concludes with “the sounds of a wave / breaking on the shores of the future.”<sup>45</sup> A shortened version of “My Canada” appears as the penultimate poem in *Lords of the Air*; in *Songs for a New Nation*, “The Maple Tree,” ends, in clear reference to Canada, “Fairest and youngest of them all, / My scarlet banners gleam / I guard a land more beautiful / Than all the fields of dreams.”<sup>46</sup> Stephen was never shy about depicting the nation metaphorically or literally, and thus there is ample evidence of how he thought about Canada, and more particularly, what he wanted others to think.

There are several significant trends within Stephen’s portrayal of Canada, but the most apparent, and most obviously Settlerist, is his fondness for natural metaphor and imagery. Canadian symbols such as maple trees and leaves appeared alongside vast mountain ranges, great lakes, and never-ending forests as a way of linking the nation to the land it occupies, both literally and in Settler imagination. In “Canadian” (see Appendix), Stephen rhapsodizes in the second-last verse, “Canadian! The scarlet maples stand / In matchless beauty, strong and undismayed, / They face the tempest’s wrath and cling / Fast to the soil wherein their seed was laid.”<sup>47</sup> The maple stands in for the resilient nation, clinging to the spot where it was laid down by noble founders. Stephen even gently parodied his own reliance on these comparisons in “How to Write a Canadian Poem,” eventually published in *Songs for a New Nation*, beginning “Hang a

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<sup>45</sup> A.M. Stephen, *Brown Earth & Bunch Grass* (Toronto: JM Dent & Sons Ltd., 1931), Stampede (12-15; also see Appendix), Kitsilano (66-67), Wascana (87-88), Vancouver (44-48)

<sup>46</sup> A.M. Stephen, *Songs for a New Nation* (New York: Vantage Press, 1963), 76-77

<sup>47</sup> Stephen, *The Land of Singing Waters*, 106

wreath of wilted maple / On the framework of your lyre, / Splash a dash of Autumn's scarlet, / Snatch a whiff of brushwood fire." The poem also criticizes those who fail to move beyond nature and into the realm of human activity, however, the penultimate verse reading, "Let your rhyme be chaste and harmless, / Soothing to the spinster soul. / Nature (but not human nature) / Is the cure will make us whole."<sup>48</sup> Thus a pure appreciation or representation of nature was not Stephen's project—he saw a social conscience, a higher connection to the nation, as necessary to a poet authentically serving Canada.

The untamed nature Stephen associates with Canada is also the home of virtue and human achievement, a safe refuge from the evils of the old civilisations—chiefly, war and religion. In "The Homesteaders," Stephen describes the B.C. coast as "The last, thin edge of Empire—to a place / Of unrecorded war and surer peace / Than that where nations leagued have built / A threshold to another slaughter-house." Though the poem implies two sons of the eponymous homestead must go to war in any case, it ends with a further stirring call to the future, justified by the sacrifices of the young: "O, sons of England, whose red blood enriched / The soil from which a finer age is born, / This is your recompense! Your peace is here / Within her arms-your homestead in her heart!"<sup>49</sup> Beginning with British Columbia as a place without war and with surer peace than the world of the old "leagued" nations, it concludes with Canada secured for the next generation by noble sacrifice.

Criticisms of religion come up frequently in Stephen's writing, often linked directly to the threat of war and Europe itself. *The Rosary of Pan* contains a number of references to the evils of organised religion; in "A Song of Swords," he issues a condemnation of the current age: "When cravens yield a facile pen / And cowards hide behind the law / Where weakness struts in sight of men" and detects "The virus in a cleric's soul / May taint the hidden springs of life. / Words are but fragments of the whole / Truth lost amid the pious strife."<sup>50</sup> "The Face" (see Appendix), also from his first collection, contains a particularly bitter condemnation of Christianity as Stephen saw it:

This man-made image of the Son in Heaven  
Was Death incarnate, not the radiant Life

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<sup>48</sup> Stephen, *Songs for a New Nation*, 113

<sup>49</sup> Stephen, *The Land of Singing Waters*, 166-167

<sup>50</sup> A.M. Stephen, *The Rosary of Pan* (Canada: McClelland & Stewart, Limited), 127-128

That pulses in the stars thro' endless aeons,  
Rising triumphant over pain and strife

Small wonder that with pangs of hell re-born,  
Earth pays the debt and with its withering breath  
Red war doth cleanse the nations, heavy laden,  
With Calvary's cross—the harbinger of Death<sup>51</sup>

Throughout Stephen's poetry, the old age of Europe, with its oppressive faiths and bloody warfare, was passed, and the "New Age" could be developed in bountiful Canada. "The Cenotaph" in *The Land of Singing Waters* makes sacrifice even more central: beginning with a dedication to BC soldiers killed in WW1, the sonnet reads:

O, young proud mother of the mountain-born,  
Weep not for these ! Beside thy western sea,  
Their souls were tempered by the winds which, free  
And dauntless, storm the shining gates of morn.  
No funeral dirges or plaintive strains forlorn  
Should sound the passing of their chivalry.  
Joyous, they gave their radiant youth to be  
A light transcendent o'er an age outworn.  
Weep not but, o'er thy dead, thy sword anew  
Unsheathe for greater conflicts. On their dust,  
Raise nobler temples to the Good and True,  
Creeds holier, laws fashioned by the just.  
A path unerring to the utmost goal  
In wisdom set—a highway for thy soul.<sup>52</sup>

Over the dead, it was the duty of Canadians to build greater, nobler institutions; sacrifice would propel the next generation's progress. Many of these themes came together in Stephen's portrayal of Canada's great destiny and future as a leader of nations. Natural metaphors combine with invocations of Canada's inherent virtue and the progress of its Settler inhabitants to depict Canada's future in "Canadian" (see Appendix). The natural strength of Canada here provides to Settlers the vision of Canada's future, unrestrained by the "moated keeps" or "cobwebbed banners" of the old world. Stephen praises Canada as unique, criticizing the "alien air" of the past, and scolds those who "falter, break our faith, and stare" amid progress. It ends as Canada faces the world, "Youth, exultant" with "fear cast aside."<sup>53</sup> The greatness of Canada is laid out again in the final verses of "Canada (see Appendix):"

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<sup>51</sup> Stephen, *The Rosary of Pan*, 15

<sup>52</sup> Stephen, *The Land of Singing Waters*, 124

<sup>53</sup> Stephen, *The Land of Singing Waters*, 106



Silent Beauty of our Northland,  
When the plains lie white and bare,  
We have seen auroral rainbows  
Fling thy banners to the air.

Maiden, Queen and mate of Valour,  
Born of love beyond our ways,  
We would hold thee to a vision  
Met to light our greater days!

We would hold thee in our dreaming  
'Till thy face, from sea to sea,  
Is a star of promise flashing  
With the pride of liberty!<sup>54</sup>

Just as important to A.M. Stephen as the nation's future was its past, and he covered it just as often. He argued in the foreword to *Verendrye* that "the time has arrived in Canadian history when there is need for romantic poets to enshrine the story of our heroes in memorable verse." Stephen was not merely an artist interested in the past; he sought concretely to spread knowledge of it in the context of romantic, Settler Canadian heroism. He claimed: "Young as we are, we have a record teeming with deeds unsurpassed in the annals of older nations. In the rush of this materialistic age, we may overlook the epic character of our achievements if there be not those whose love can express itself through the medium of literature."<sup>55</sup> Stephen saw himself as filling a crucial gap in informing Canadians of their heroic heritage, and *Verendrye* was a quite explicit attempt to use the novelty of epic poetry to attract interest in the actions of La Verendrye himself, certainly the Settler figure who received the most extensive tribute from Stephen. Reviewers reacted strongly to *Verendrye* and Stephen's goals: an unsourced clipping in Stephen's scrapbooks notes it "is so completely the sort of writing Canada needs at the moment" in taking up the "great lives and deeds" of Canada's heroic past.<sup>56</sup>

*Verendrye* depicts manly Settler adventurers happily at work in exploring the future nation: "'Gai lou la, gai la rosier,' sang the men / Whose rippling muscles strained with merry will / Along the portage."<sup>57</sup> Throughout the poem Stephen focuses on the bravery, skill and courage of French voyageurs venturing into the wilderness:

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<sup>54</sup> Stephen, *The Land of Singing Waters*, 106

<sup>55</sup> Stephen, *Verendrye*, ix

<sup>56</sup> Unsourced clipping entitled "First on Prairie," 9 Nov 1935, 2-1, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

<sup>57</sup> Stephen, *Verendrye*, 34

Portage, and then once more the moving glades,  
The panorama of the flowing shores  
Interminable, flash of paddle-blades—  
All hints of heaven to the voyageur  
Whose rich, red blood was tuned by life to stress  
And luring silence of the wilderness.<sup>58</sup>

Verendrye himself was portrayed as a tragic hero, unsupported by the French who failed to see the obvious value of his explorations but who ultimately showered him with honours in the last years of his life; his actions were unambiguously heroic to Stephen, and essentially Canadian. In an early chapter, Verendrye and his voyageurs sing a song which incorporates elements of Stephen's own "Canada O Canada"

*I heard them sing of roses,  
And violets pale and sweet,  
Where, in a dim and ancient land,  
The spring and summer meet.  
They sang of bluebells in a glen,  
Of lilies' white desire -  
But only crimson maples  
Can set my heart afire*

Hidden in a ruddy flame, merry voices ring,  
'Canada! O Canada!' Hear the robins sing!

'Soon the yellow leaf will lie, sodden in the rain,  
When Earth's little children wake, we shall come again –

'Come again to Canada, piping through the hills,  
Swinging all the silver bells frozen in the rills!

Wings upon the maple bough glimmer in the sun,  
Silken webs of gossamer, sails of beauty spun.

Hear the wand'ring echoes call, hear the rivers shout,  
'Canada! O Canada! Fling your banners out!<sup>59</sup>

Stephen continued to combine his vision of the past with his sense of natural legitimization in "The Maple Tree," which recounts the story of Canada as the life and "accomplishments" of a single maple: "I leaned above the cross to touch / Jacques Cartier's shining blade. / Champlain has known my swift caress, / and Radisson my shade."<sup>60</sup> The "martyrs' blood," Lalemont, Verendrye, Mackenzie, and Fraser all receive

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<sup>58</sup> Stephen, *Verendrye*, 36-37

<sup>59</sup> Stephen, *Verendrye*, 35-36. Three more short verses appear before the chorus repeats.

<sup>60</sup> Stephen, *Songs for a New Nation*, 76-77

later mentions in the same piece, as Canada-as-nature gives blessings to these icons of the colonial process. Stephen also penned tributes to everyday Settlers, like the fictional homesteader in “There’s a Wild Rose Tangled in the Prairie Wool.” The vitality and energy of Canadian colonialism is emphasized, with “Olaf the Icelander” specifically contrasted with his Viking ancestors; the poem ends, “his eyes are on far horizons.” It begins with the land unclaimed:

There’s a wild rose tangled in the prairie’s wool  
Years without number, the tall grass withered.  
There were no hands to harvest it.  
Now a soft carpet,  
decorated with futuristic design of wild roses,  
Is spread like a tawny fleece  
Over the prairie land.

But Olaf rescues the land, for “to-day his plow will card the prairie’s wool, / and break the pattern of the wild rose.”<sup>61</sup> With Canada cast as the destined use of the land’s potential, Settlers restore it to productivity from a state of supposed neglect. Stephen has several poems which mourn the passing of the frontier and the wilderness—but, in legitimating Settler presence upon the land and Canadian continuity, he portrayed this as necessary growth for the nation. In “Stampede.” Stephen portrays “Young Canada / in armor of buckskin and chapperos, / is spurring to the rodeo,” and celebrates the frontier spirit with references to Camelot, but also to its inevitable end (see Appendix):

On the frontiers of Broceliande,  
On the road to Camelot,  
Men pushed back the horizon  
To make way for youth and freedom.  
They made highways  
For the feet of the unborn years.

Forward again!  
History is in the making  
The frontiers of Canada resound  
With the singing voices,  
The clang of steel,  
The trampling of horses,  
The mad cavalcade riding to a tournament  
In the last Great West

Look again!  
They will soon be gone.  
The Riders of the Plain will soon be a memory.

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<sup>61</sup> Stephen, *Brown Earth & Bunch Grass*, 37-38

The Machine is on their trail.  
The stream-tractor is digging their graves.  
The Age of Iron has thrown barbed wire barricades  
Across the road that leads back to the golden days<sup>62</sup>

Tributes to the rough-and-tumble figures of the frontier like fur traders, explorers, and other masculine Settler icons also proliferated in Stephen's works, and *Land of Singing Waters* begins its second part with an "Introduction," a tribute to these figures of a Canadian past whose loss was tragic, but inevitable. The "vanguard to a nation's hopes" has laid down a path which their descendants build upon, but it concludes with that new generation heedless of the call to adventure:

Tenuous as the tangled shades  
Clinging to the pine-clad slopes,  
Come these tales of men and women,  
Vanguard to a nation's hopes,  
Comrades, rough without, as nuggets  
From the rivers' swirling sands.  
But their dross was on the surface,  
Gold their hearts and strong their hands  
Blazed the way for us who follow  
In the narrow path of gain,  
Heedless of the call which lured them  
Westward over hill and plain.<sup>63</sup>

Stephen's particular rendering of the frontier emphasizes the virtues of those who conquered it, and he gives the loss of their environment a tragic air, but his desire to popularise Settler historical figures was not restricted to creating mythmaking art. At the fifth annual League of Western Writers Conference in 1931, A.M. led a group of attending authors from "14 western states and provinces between Alaska to the Panama Canal zone" in witnessing the dedication of a plaque to Simon Fraser. Thereafter the delegation visited Captain George Vancouver's memorial; both men classic icons of settlement.<sup>64</sup> Stephen also sought to eulogize "'The Father of British Columbia,' Sir James Douglas," as well as the Hudson's Bay Company: "the great Company of Gentlemen Adventurers who did so much to build our nation...It was a splendid school—this same company—in the old days, and from it many of the heroes of our early history

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<sup>62</sup> Stephen, *Brown Earth & Bunch Grass*, 12-15

<sup>63</sup> Stephen, *The Land of Singing Waters*, 133

<sup>64</sup> Unsourced clipping in scrapbook entitled "Writers Plan Meeting Here," unsourced clipping entitled "Writers Unveil Fraser Memorial Here," and unsourced clipping entitled "Plaque Unveiled," 2-1, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

had their training."<sup>65</sup> The value Stephen saw in these Settler figures is explicit in the plaque he witnessed being dedicated to Simon Fraser. When originally placed, it read:

Near this place in July, 1808, Simon Fraser of the North West Company ended his dangerous exploration of the Fraser River from Fort George. The hostility of the Indians prevented him from proceeding farther [*sic*]. His object was to find a trade route to the Pacific from the Interior Forts and thereby avoid the long journey across the Continent.<sup>66</sup>

Here the progress of “trade route[s]” is impeded by “the hostility of the Indians,” unappreciative of the virtue displayed by Simon Fraser in his dangerous explorations in pursuit of national and civilizational progress. Figures like explorers were the leading edge of Settler advancement, carving civilisation out of the wilderness, facing danger, and their memorialisation would serve to inform and more importantly, inspire, greatness in new generations of Canadians. Explorers were not the only ones engaged in this process, however, and Stephen also paid tribute to unknown Settlers who similarly contributed to Canadian progress. This interest in a more generalized kind of Settler hero also indicates Stephen’s awareness that the boundaries of the settler colonial project were not only national, or pursued solely in heroic, world-historical terms. Stephen acknowledged that the Settler nation of Canada was part of a larger continental project; even his own literary output took place in a larger Settler context, despite its overwhelmingly Canadian content and focus. In *The Lariat*, an Oregon literary newsletter where Stephen was listed as “Staff Editor for Canadian Provinces” and which ran from 1923-1929, he wrote:

In the deepest and truest sense of the world we, in Canada, are Americans quite as much as those born south of the 49th parallel. When it is distinctive and truly of the soil, our literature is North American and not European. We have the same problems to meet, the same difficulties to overcome and, to a very great extent, have to meet and contend with the same tendencies towards commercialization, mediocrity and disintegration which confront those battling for ‘the true, the good, and the beautiful’ in the great republic.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Copy of unsourced article by A.M. Stephen entitled “The Father of British Columbia,” 2-1, A.M.S., UBC&B&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

<sup>66</sup> Personal communication with Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada via email. The text provided differs slightly from that reported in contemporary newspapers.

<sup>67</sup> Article in *The Lariat* by A.M. Stephen in series “From a Canadian Viewpoint,” Apr 1926, 4-2, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

A review of *Brown Earth & Bunch Grass* by Helen Maring, editor of *Muse and Mirror* and *Northwest Poetry Magazine* and a long-time Seattle-based poet, took this further. She described Stephen's poetry as "American in its broadest sense, it belongs to this continent; and it is particularly flavoured with the plains and mountains of the great West...here is a work breathing beauty from contact with this soil, and its people—and pulsing with a strength of life itself." She praises how Stephen's "own varied and colourful life burns through his writings like a white flame; cowpuncher and scholar, soldier and philosopher, business man and reformer, editor and professor, he writes with a flare for humanity, with his hand firmly on the pulse of beauty." Indeed, she begins the review with a direct statement of the way in which Stephen transcended Canada:

one is forcibly reminded in his case that we do not [*sic*] longer say "Vancouver Poet", "Western Poet", or "Pacific Coast Poet": we say "American Poet" with the greatest of pride...Poets who have achieved do not belong to a city, a province, or a country,—they belong to a continent, —nay, to a world.<sup>68</sup>

Of course, the world to which Stephen's art belonged was deeply bound by notions of civilisation and fundamentally Settler. In advancing artistic projects even he recognised as transcending the category of Canada, at least on some level, Stephen understood the essential bonds of Settler identity and ideology as beyond the nation that was the particular focus of his efforts. Nonetheless, in his attempts to popularize and valorise Settler figures and archetypes Stephen drew most of all on the Canadian past and sought to promote that nation specifically. Stephen's consistent interest in Settler heroes, and the popularization of their deeds in his openly romantic, nationalist projects, stands in direct contrast to his attitude towards First Nations people, who are largely removed from the story of their own lands.

In the first verse of "The Magic Coast" (see Appendix), Stephen's personal beliefs about the histories of Indigenous people serve to exonerate and bolster Settler civilisation. Stephen sees the "seven mighty nations" which dominated the West Coast "[b]efore the white man" as only "red fragments / of a lost continent," and prior to the

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"Aggressive Regionalism." Center for the Study of the Pacific Northwest. University of Washington. <https://www.washington.edu/uwired/outreach/cspn/Website/Classroom%20Materials/Reading%20the%20Region/Aggressive%20Regionalism/Aggressive%20Regionalism%20Main.html>

<sup>68</sup> Copy of "Book Review of: *Brown Earth & Bunch Grass*" by Helen Maring, 2-4, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

arrival of Captain Cook, they “[vanished] / Into the night.”<sup>69</sup> It would be hard to come up with a backstory that more totally exonerated Canada and its Settlers, as the First Nations who had to be exterminated for the settler order to be established were already only a minor fragment of a greater race, now irrelevant in the grand sweep of history. Stephen’s references to a “lost continent” here are part of an interest, shared by some other Theosophists, in a theory of racial origins and history in which American Indigenous people were the remnant of a greater, now-lost race. Stephen elaborated upon this idea, and the related concept of blond and blue-eyed First Nations on the Pacific coast, in the introduction to *Kingdom of the Sun*, arguing:

In appearance, the Haidas are distinctly superior to the Salish and the Kwakiutls who inhabit the adjacent shores, while their language differs radically from that of their neighbours. To a student of comparative mythology they present interesting problems. Their cosmogony links them with the Aztecs, the Mayas and Quiches of Central America and, consequently, with the Egyptian, Etruscan and Pelasgian Greek civilisations [*sic*], which flourished in prehistoric ages beside the Mediterranean. However, the "fair-haired" Haidas give rise to speculations upon more recent events than the beginnings of their mythology or religion. It seems highly improbable that the British Columbia Coast remained unvisited by Europeans previous to the voyages of Cook, Meares and Vancouver or to the recorded explorations of the later Spanish adventurers.<sup>70</sup>

Clearly, Stephen’s beliefs about First Nations people are eclectic, and as they were primarily portrayed through art, his exact thoughts are not totally clear. A brief response to an editorial from 1934 provides another useful reference point. Stephen defends the existence of “Indian princesses” as a real phenomena backed by “all reliable authorities”, and objects to the "tone of contempt in which [the original editorial’s author] referred to our native Coast people...without justification." Stephen defends the honour of Indigenous people as follows:

If there is a tragic remnant of these people who are poor and wretched, let us remember that we despoiled them of their territory, exploited them, and debauched them with our whiskey and our diseases.

Shall we now add insult to injury?

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<sup>69</sup>Unsources copy of “The Magic Coast” by A.M. Stephen, 2-1, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

<sup>70</sup> A.M. Stephen, *The Kingdom of the Sun* (Toronto: JM Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1927), Introduction

Let us not forget that many men of these same native peoples served King and country with distinguished gallantry in the first Great War and numbers are now in uniform.<sup>71</sup>

This common narrative, though it expresses a kind of sympathy for First Nations people, leaves the blame, and benefits accrued, unclear, and essentially relegates living First Nations to the status of a doomed, “tragic remnant.” Indeed, they were doubly remnants: leftovers from a previous great race, and now, apparently, not worth considering as a political or cultural group. Stephen also praises patriotic Indigenous service to the Settler nation. Stephen’s remarks are comparatively tolerant for their time, acknowledging some bad acts by Settlers and arguing for some kind of respect for “Indians,” but are well within the bounds of his Settler project, where the genocide of First Nations peoples implied by the existence of the Settler Canadian nation was recast as the natural and inevitable passing of an already-lost race.

In an article entitled “Captain Cook Sets Sail from England for Nootka,” Stephen conjured a rendering of the first contact between western White Settlers and Indigenous people. Though he notes “It seems hardly fair that the ignorant Coast people should have been cheated as they were in this game of bargaining,” he also insists that “we must remember that the bits of metal and other trifles which they received were very new and wonderful to them, as well as of great use in the making of weapons and tools.”<sup>72</sup> “The Passing of the Red Man” from *Class Room Plays from Canadian History* is another strong example of Stephen’s attitude towards the “costs” of colonialism. In it, students take on the roles of a Cree Chief and his sons, who bemoan their people coming home with “sorrow in their hearts.” The Chief informs his sons that they have chosen peace and given up their weapons, that it is “bad to be a Cree,” and it is their duty to be as the white men. This tragic framing, still very much in the model of the noble savage, avoids any real condemnation: the Chief concludes “The white man comes. We go. We shall only have a memory of the time when we were free—when the world was ours...Put away your bow. You will not need it, my son.”<sup>73</sup> Though Stephen’s anthologies were adopted in the Vancouver school system, this does not appear to have been the case

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<sup>71</sup> Clipping of unsourced editorial by A.M. Stephen entitled “Our Indians,” 8 Jan 1918, 2-1, A.M.S, UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

<sup>72</sup> Clipping of undated article with unclear source (potentially *Vancouver Province*) entitled “Captain Cook Sets Sail from England for Nootka,” 2-1, A.M.S, UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

<sup>73</sup> A.M. Stephen, *Class Room Plays from Canadian History* (Toronto: JM Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1929), 139-142



with either *Class Room Plays* book. 100 copies of each were, however, ordered for BC Indian schools in 1932 from JM Dent & Sons Limited, Stephen's regular publisher and Gordon Stephen's employer.<sup>74</sup> That this work may have been utilized in institutions dedicated to the erasure of First Nations people is a disturbing possibility. Through the *Class Room Plays* series, Stephen can be directly tied to the ongoing project of genocide at Canada's core—much of his work could have served this purpose, though only these comparatively minor pieces were used in so striking a capacity.

*The Kingdom of the Sun*, Stephen's first novel, contains a sustained and distinctly ugly portrayal of American Indigenous people. Throughout, Indigenous people are shown to be simple, savage, and "overawed by the sight of the white [man] and disposed to worship rather than attack them."<sup>75</sup> Indeed, they appear to be totally culturally undifferentiated, as exemplified in their attitudes towards the "Indian princess" Auria: referred to as "an initiate into the mysteries of Yucatan,"<sup>76</sup> she is said to have both Mayan and Aztec religious descent, and she and the protagonist Anson travel to the coast of British Columbia after he rescues her from rapacious Spanish Papists, off the coast of Mexico. When they arrive, Auria—who is, explicitly, white—is immediately taken as an item of worship, just as she was in her home, and there is no allusion to any kind of culture shock or indication of national, religious, or ethnic differentiation. This essential lack of interest in most Indigenous people across the continent—the main Indigenous characters, other than the essentially white Auria, are an evil sorcerer ruling the Haida who is the primary villain, and his warrior lieutenant—is only reinforced by the only cultural difference that does appear: the Haida are extremely violent and warlike, "vikings of the North Pacific" in "corsair fleets," and repeatedly victimize the passive Salish, though both accept Auria immediately as an item of worship.<sup>77</sup>

When she first appears, Auria is described as a "white nereid," and "most marvellous to the sight of the [crew] was the fact that her skin was fair, the masses of her abundant hair of a true golden colour." The captain thereafter remarks that she is "white...she may be of our kin."<sup>78</sup> Anson, after their escape from ships of the British

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<sup>74</sup> Brendan Frederick R. Edwards, *Paper Talk: A History of Libraries, Print Culture, and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada Before 1960* (Toronto: The Scarecrow Press, 2005), 173

<sup>75</sup> Stephen, *Kingdom of the Sun*, Ch. 4

<sup>76</sup> Stephen, *Kingdom of the Sun*, Ch. 6

<sup>77</sup> Stephen, *Kingdom of the Sun*, Ch. 13

<sup>78</sup> Stephen, *Kingdom of the Sun*, Ch. 2

Navy, repeatedly pleads with her to go with him to England, her true home, and refers to the English as “your people” to Auria, though she refuses to go.<sup>79</sup> The princess is not merely white-looking, she is fundamentally white, even specifically Anglo-Saxon, and though this is not what leads to her being worshipped necessarily, that her English blood makes Auria special and significant is made abundantly clear. Her child with Anson, himself killed in a heroic sacrifice while battling the sorcerer Tik-atl’s Haida warriors, represents a new hope for the future, and the novel ends:

Then, down through the black straits to northward, there came a strange rumour which set all tongues talking. The Haidas boasted of a white chief, a "Child of the Sun." They had found him, so the tale had been told, in a war canoe beached at a landing below one of their villages. With all due reverence and appropriate ceremony, they had hailed his advent as a sign from the Great Raven that they were to have, once more, a mighty magician to restore their supremacy and to make them perpetual Lords of the Sea and Air.<sup>80</sup>

Stephen notes in passing that “it was characteristic of the England of that day that religious exaltation should go hand in hand with a passionate faith in the greatness of their own blood. It was upon this foundation that the future empire was builded [sic] in the hearts of a people,”<sup>81</sup> and he is plainly continuing this work. Despite this consistent portrayal of simple, doomed, racially inferior, essentially irrelevant First Nations people, Stephen still sought to use what legacy he perceived them as leaving for the benefit of his beloved nation. Stephen buttressed his own legitimacy in the introduction to *Kingdom of the Sun*, claiming:

The author has had the privilege of many years of residence in British Columbia, close acquaintance with the life of the natives, personal friendships with members of the tribes, and is firmly convinced that the historian, the anthropologist and the creative artist have still much to do on the Far West Coast. Picturesque in themselves, possessed of a mythology quite as interesting as that of any European people, living in surroundings of matchless beauty and grandeur, the British Columbia Indians should furnish a background for a distinctive Canadian literature. *The Kingdom of the Sun* merely embodies a suggestion of the romantic interest attached to these strange peoples who are evidently the perishing fragments of a very ancient civilization.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Stephen, *Kingdom of the Sun*, Ch. 10

<sup>80</sup> Stephen, *Kingdom of the Sun*, Ch. 21

<sup>81</sup> Stephen, *Kingdom of the Sun*, Ch. 7

<sup>82</sup> Stephen, *Kingdom of the Sun*, Introduction

Thus, though they were extinct or disappearing, First Nations people might be of use to the nation which had displaced them. Stephen expanded on this idea in a prospectus on “The Indian Passion Play” as an accompaniment to an unproduced play, “Kanikilak, the Wanderer,” which usefully clarifies the role of First Nations culture (and, by extension, people) in contributing to Canada:

British Columbia has a wealth of native Indian folk-lore, myth, and legend which has not been exploited so far by its dramatists, poets, novelists, painters and musicians. Scientists have hinted that the Coast Indians are not primitive savages but rather the remnants of a once-mighty civilization [*sic*] antedating our own. It is part of our heritage which we have annexed in the process of history. Why should it not be used to make our province a centre of attraction to all the world, a place known to the ends of the earth as the home of a distinctive art and culture unique and different from that to be found in any other place on the globe?<sup>83</sup>

Stephen’s depiction of, and desire to use, First Nations peoples and their cultures served to reinforce an identity which could not be challenged by Indigenous land claims or even existence, an ideology which saw them as disposable relics, and a Canada to which they were, at best, neutral patriotic contributors. Just as some of his works may have appeared in Residential Schools, actively helping to destroy Indigenous culture, *Kingdom of the Sun* presented vanishing races to the public, providing a narrative for Settlers to identify with in their campaign of ongoing Indigenous dispossession.

Throughout his artistic career, Stephen consistently reproduced and disseminated a distinctly Settlerist view of the nation, its past, and its future. Settler identity was to be shaped by descent from intrepid men and their extraordinary times; the ideology by claims about the role and presence of Indigenous people in the land now known as Canada. Stephen articulated his Settler views through the lens of patriotism and the nation specifically, but this is not an abstraction or a departure, merely a specification of his perspective.

This is most apparent in his overwhelming lack of interest in Indigenous people, except when they—or their culture—could serve Canada. First Nations are undifferentiated and primitive in his artistic works, mostly notable as the reduced descendants of a greater, lost civilization. This narrative of (fictional) ancient racial origins contributed to the sense Stephen had that the cultures of Indigenous people

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<sup>83</sup> Prospectus for an Indian Passion Play, 1-4, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

might prove a unique and attractive boon to the artistic life of the nation. To the extent Stephen acknowledged Indigenous people had been dispossessed, this was unfortunate, but largely irrelevant, and ought to furnish no reason for Native people to fail to love "their" new country.

Those who had often directly participated in this dispossession, whether through violence or exploration—Settler icons like Simon Fraser, George Vancouver, and La Verendrye himself—were objects of admiration for Stephen, and he sought to spread this appreciation. The period characterized by much of the extreme and most formative violence of colonialism was instead a time of heroic adventure and virtue displayed. Stephen even recognized himself that Canada was part of a larger Settler project of colonization, of a kind with America, and was likewise recognized by Americans for his contributions to it. Canada in the "foundational interstitial" made some moves away from the most overt manifestations of colonial violence, but continued to embrace comforting stories about it—sometimes written by Stephen himself.

His poetic depictions of the nation are dominated by natural metaphors and imagery, which serve to tie the nation ever closer to the land it occupies. Canada is the proper home for virile, expanding Settler civilization, having outgrown Europe's stifling old faiths, though this implies the passing of noble spirits like the early explorers. Nevertheless, progress towards the "New Age" remains both worthwhile and inevitable; apparent tragedies like the First World War were further opportunities to glorify the nation. All these premises served to entrench Canada and its Settlers population as dominant, and this was clearly, often explicitly, the foremost goal of Stephen's artistic labours. Stephen's optimistic vision of a heroic colonial past leading to formidable present potential and future greatness served to legitimate the unalterable continuity and centrality of Canada, and its attendant settler-colonial norms and methods.

## Chapter 4.

### Advocacy, Reform, and Education

In addition to his literary work, Stephen used a variety of platforms to specifically articulate his desires for the future of the Canadian nation and its Settler population. In the process he crafted and refined his own image as a "practical idealist" involved in patriotic reform work, which would come to be a key part of his persona. As an activist with the Child Welfare Association (CWA), teacher, and educational writer, Stephen also sought to actualize, and popularize, his ideas for raising good Settler citizens. And as an artist, frequently delivering widely praised public lectures, he expressed his sense of the place of art in Canada's future, and his desires for the nation's development alongside it. In a variety of roles Stephen acted as an advocate for his own, and his desires for, Settler identity and ideology.

The first clipping in A.M. Stephen's first archival scrapbook focuses entirely on his teaching work, education, and career in Chicago, and ends the profile, and its byline, by claiming that "as a lecturer, writer, and social worker, he has proved himself a practical idealist."<sup>84</sup> This dates from his earliest CWA vice-presidency in 1919, and would be a label he embraced throughout his life, with just one period as a prominent exception. The reform work which Stephen engaged in was particularly emphasized, years later, in "A Poet of the West," which began by recounting:

the western poet, A.M. Stephen, once told a group of intimate friends that when he was president of an influential welfare organization in Vancouver and was nightly addressing thousands of people in crowded meetings in the course of a campaign of social reform, he had frequently to walk home because he lacked the price of a car fare to ride.<sup>85</sup>

This profile strongly reasserts the "practical idealist" characterisation, in which Stephen's varied life experience, artistic work, high principles, progressive activism, and everyday reformism created an importantly unique mixture. Stephen was portrayed as more reasonable than other members of the artistic professions, but fundamentally "the

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<sup>84</sup> Clipping of unsourced article and photography titled "Convention Convenor is Practical Ideal[cut off]," 1919?, 2-1, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

<sup>85</sup> Woollacott, "A Poet of the West," 87-88

enthusiastic idealist had all the innocence of the traditional reformer.” “A Poet of the West” further differentiates him from other poets:

So long as the ordinary poet remains a playboy of the world of romance he is in his proper element, but the moment he descends his beanstalk he is recognized for what he is, a pathetically impractical person whom the world can only pass by, not with contempt or with indifference but rather with a feeling of inadequacy.

It is decidedly refreshing, however, to find in A. M. Stephen not only a personality that justifies our idealism but one capable of translating his dreams into present day realities.

Seeing clearly with his poet’s vision how mothers, wives, children and wageearners [*sic*] out in British Columbia could be benefitted, and knowing no reason why they should not be, A. M. Stephen threw himself into the fight for Mothers’ Pensions, A Minimum Wage Act, amendments to the divorce laws, radical reforms in school policies, and juvenile reformatory administration. It is largely to his zeal and ability as a reformer and organizer that British Columbia today enjoys the fruits of these social betterments.<sup>86</sup>

Though it overstates Stephen’s role in these particular accomplishments, his mix of virtues and experiences supposedly combined to produce someone truly able to help worthy common Settlers, “mothers, wives, children and wageearners.” In this way elements of Stephen’s Settler identity could be used to render him an appropriate vehicle for social change, even before he was an acclaimed poet. Many of the accomplishments alluded to in his *Macleans* profile came even before his artistic career and gave a strong indication of where his personal priorities lay.

Stephen was crucial in arranging two visits by Margaret Sanger to Vancouver in 1922, and subsequently at the core of a group forming a branch of her Birth Control Society. Though it appears to have flickered out of existence a few years later, Stephen was enthusiastic enough to propose hosting a convention through the Vancouver organisation.<sup>87</sup> He also wrote several editorials for the *Birth Control Review*, and saw the liberation of women as fundamentally good for the nation. In a letter to the periodical in 1923 Stephen celebrated how birth control would lead to better children, “the types we are seeking for the improvement of the race, strong and beautiful as the love which gave

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<sup>86</sup> Woollacott, "A Poet of the West," 87-88

<sup>87</sup> Mary F. Bishop, "The Early Birth Controllers of BC," *BC Studies* 61 (Spring 1984): 72

them birth.”<sup>88</sup> Stephen presented birth control, and other feminist proposals, as important to the creation of Canadian greatness, first and foremost.

*Western Women's Weekly* regularly published short articles and editorials by Stephen in the late 1910s and early 1920s where he expounded on his earliest convictions. He wrote in favor of mother's pensions as a patriotic measure to ensure mothers could adequately care for their children. Those in the care of local orphanages and schools were not necessarily “degenerate or defective” but were only the inevitable social consequence of mothers “toiling for a pittance.” Stephen's goal was to “make no appeal to the humane interests of our readers, nor ask justice in the name of morality or ethics. We shall merely show that as a plain business proposition the institutional system and...separation [sic]...does not pay in dollars and cents.” The money is specifically not charity but “a salary she [the mother] is granted by her Province...It is a salary granted for services rendered,” which Stephen further argued is likely to reduce taxes overall.<sup>89</sup> He also sought to broaden cultural access by joining an organisation calling for a public auditorium, so that “the greatest singers and lecturers can be heard at a reasonable price within the reach of the ordinary individual.”<sup>90</sup> Stephen's reforming energies went to the improvement of Canada and its “ordinary” Settlers, and were deployed as pragmatic, even efficient, guidance from a “practical idealist.”

Even his artistic work produced unprompted reforming ideas: a short editorial from “A.M. Pound” appeared in the *Sunday Province*, undated but from approximately 1930, arguing for the adoption of Stephen's poem “Vancouver” (see Appendix) by the city. The author claimed that on a trip to Eastern Canada where he first heard of Stephen, “I learned...more than one of our local writers is thought to have added authentically to permanent literature. They are more esteemed abroad than in their home town.” There he had heard those “whose judgement is sound in these matters” praise Stephen's poem “Vancouver,” and argued “substantial appreciation [for it] should be shown by Vancouver citizens.” A.M. Pound recommended thousands of cards be printed with the poem and used as “a fine bit of practical publicity. The poet, for the use

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<sup>88</sup> *Birth Control Review* 7:1 (1 Jan 1923) : 50-51. Editorials were under the name A.M.S.

<sup>89</sup> Copy of pamphlet by A.M. Stephen entitled “Child Conservation,” 2-1, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

<sup>90</sup> Clipping of unsourced article entitled “An Auditorium for Vancouver,” Nov 1919, 2-1, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

of his poem in this connection, should be given a substantial cheque. He deserves it."<sup>91</sup> Stephen's artistic work was not always received on grand, national terms: sometimes, it was a pragmatic bit of promotional material, in service of the public good. At least two versions of "Vancouver" appeared during Stephen's lifetime, but both begin comparing the city to Rome and Venice; one concluded: "The wheel of change resolving / The way of gods and men / On this lone rim of Empire / Hath set their star again."<sup>92</sup>

Advocacy connected to his art also came from Stephen himself, and his patriotic sense of artistic and national progress coming together was rapturously received. A general indication of Stephen's themes and goals was presented by the *Regina Post*, during his 1928 speaking tour. In an article entitled "Canadianism Central Theme of Address," the *Post* reported that "Methods were talked over by which the greatness of the Dominion's resources and attractiveness might be impressed upon the hearts and minds of the native born and of the incomers who have chosen to take up residence here."<sup>93</sup> Inadvertently, the article provides a solid description of Stephen's own project, at least when it came to artistic presentation of Canada, and his contributions to it: legitimating the nation and population, and popularising knowledge of and pride regarding its essential characteristics, chiefly embodied by natural resources. Stephen bemoaned the supposedly embarrassing state of American poetry, and wondered "just what message that conduces to the better conduct of life, private or communal, is continued in the work of America's poets to-day? How many of them have anything to say that is of permanent value in building our national life?"<sup>94</sup>

Stephen saw his own artistic endeavors, including writing and advocacy, as in service to national goals, and poetry which failed to reach these heights was fundamentally a failure, even worthless. He was quite willing to state his own goals: "all academic arguments and aesthetic hair-splitting must give way before the immediate

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<sup>91</sup> Clipping of editorial credited to A.M. Pound entitled "Stephen Sings Song of Vancouver," 2-1, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can. The editorial refers to the Vancouver conference of the League of Western Writers which was to be held the next year; I believe this refers to the 1931 convention at which Stephen was present for the dedication of a plaque to Simon Fraser.

<sup>92</sup> Stephen, *The Land of Singing Waters*, 43-44

<sup>93</sup> Undated clipping from *Regina Post* entitled "Canadianism Central Theme of Address" 2-4, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

<sup>94</sup> Article in *The Lariat* by A.M. Stephen, Aug 1926, 171, 4-2, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.



necessity of developing a flaming and even aggressive patriotism in Canadians.”<sup>95</sup> The development of this feeling was necessarily the job of poets and artists, and he argued that without a sense of national literature, Canada could not become a great nation. In a 1928 speech in Edmonton he claimed:

There is yet no clear and exultant national spirit in Canada, nor can there be until Canadians thrill responsively to the call of their own native poets, like as did the Scots to their own Burns. To establish a true national spirit is the task of the Canadian people, a task handed down to them by the Fathers of Confederation, a task which was by no means completed when last year the status of Canada was recognized as a nation within the empire. Rather was it then only just begun.<sup>96</sup>

The introduction for *The Golden Treasury of Canadian Verse*, adopted for high schools but also widely distributed by Stephen during tours, argues that in fact Canada already has such a poetic heritage, but must become aware of it. His anthology was an explicit attempt to foster this understanding:

We have a just cause for pride in the fact that Canada, to an extent not always appreciated, has carried forward the great traditions of English literature and has produced poets to rank with those who are the glory of Britain. By familiarising [*sic*] ourselves with the work of the writers who have contributed to the building of our Dominion, we may develop a citizenship based upon lasting ideals of truth and beauty...To the end that Canadians may learn to know and to love their native literature has been compiled.<sup>97</sup>

Just as national literature already existed and needed recognition, Stephen claimed that Canadians “have not, economically, reached the happy day when ‘East is West’ in spite of the fact that we have the greatest railway system in the world to bind together our far-flung provinces and cities.” His beliefs about national literature paralleled at least some of his beliefs about the nation itself: Stephen saw Canada as in some ways already great and unique. This idea of Canada’s unique character led Stephen to consider the need for new forms alongside his praise of poetry for national glorification. Film, Stephen thought, would serve to broadcast Canada’s greatness to the world,

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<sup>95</sup> Copy of unsourced article entitled “Canadian Literature as a Nation-BUILDER” by A.M. Stephen, 2-4, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

<sup>96</sup> Article in *Edmonton Post* entitled “National Spirit Needed in Canada,” 30 Mar 1928, 2-4, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

<sup>97</sup> A.M. Stephen, *The Golden Treasury of Canadian Verse* (Toronto: JM Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1928), viii

uniquely suited to portraying its extraordinary natural character and to proselytizing the nation's virtues. He claimed:

Yet no country in the world presents such unique opportunities for the development of a native film industry. No country possesses more to inspire creative work designed to visualize the beauty of our natural scenery and the cultural, social, and economic life of our people. No country so much stands in need of introduction to the outside world through the medium of the silver screen. No country needs so much the education for national ends that can be imparted through this supremely effective type of propaganda.<sup>98</sup>

Though Stephen defended, in a regular column for *The Lariat*, more traditional forms of poetry against a perceived attack being mounted by the new theorists of free verse, he certainly favored the development of new forms when he saw them as specifically beneficial to Canada. He was also willing to focus on specific Canadian issues which he recognized other artists as contributing to. Bliss Carman and Charles G.D. Roberts both earned his admiration, and all corresponded regularly, with Stephen penning several tributes to Carman.<sup>99</sup> He praised a Saskatchewan branch of the Canadian Authors' Association for including French poetry in its collection, arguing for national artistic unity because, as quoted in the article,

To weld together the two elements making up the Canadian people is a fine purpose and to hold in high esteem the culture brought to this continent by the members of the finest families of France will make our national life the richer...The French-speaking people in the west are ready and waiting to let their greatest currents of thought and artistic endeavor flow with the general national stream.<sup>100</sup>

Despite the relentless Anglocentrism of his Settlerism, Stephen criticized English-Canadians who ignored the "splendid virtues" of the French-Canadians, who have ultimately "a more firmly-rooted sense of Canadian nationality than any other people in our Dominion."<sup>101</sup> He paid tribute to poet Marie Sylva (the acknowledged pseudonym of

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<sup>98</sup> Clipping of unsourced article entitled "Vancouver Sees World in Foreign Films," 14 Jul 1940, 2-1, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

<sup>99</sup> Roberts and Carman both received poems dedicated to them in *The Land of Singing Waters*; Stephen helped arrange several poetic readings by Carman in Vancouver before his death in 1929.

<sup>100</sup> Clipping from *Regina Post* entitled "French Culture is Enriching Canada," 2-4, A.M.S., UCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

<sup>101</sup> Copy of unsourced article entitled "Canadian Literature as a Nation-Builder" by A.M. Stephen, 2-4, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

a Québec nun) and particularly praised her book's value for "those interested in the development of understanding and appreciation between the two great races which combine to make Canada."<sup>102</sup> Though not a prominent issue in his writings, Stephen reiterated this need for "understanding and appreciation" between French and English during his speaking tours and recitals, and even explored the virtues of the French culture in contrast to the English—though he would come to criticize Québec and Catholicism in later political writings. In a speaking tour, Stephen argued that "To bind our young men and women so closely to Canada, the land we love, that they will not go far from home to reside in other lands except for very urgent reasons, is a purpose that should have our thought." The solution, Stephen argued, as usual, was the development of national literature, "the one imperishable element in a country's life."<sup>103</sup>

The advocacy that stemmed from and included Stephen's artistic work, then, tended to emphasize strongly the creation of a powerful patriotism backed by a similarly established and well-known body of Canadian literature: a Settler identity that was elementally patriotic and dedicated to national progress. In seeking to legitimate Settler Canadians and their commitment to nation through his own work, Stephen found a ready audience. In his speaking tours, A.M. Stephen was frequently portrayed as a nearly "Christlike figure" by local newspapers, presenting masterfully delivered lectures and beautifully rendered (Canadian) poetry.<sup>104</sup> In an article entitled "Canada's Poet of the New Age," Stephen's patriotic rhetorical skill was described: "Those who have seen this Canadian poet will not easily forget the slim, lithe figure and the grey-blue eyes which hold the hint of tragedy and sorrow in them but are, nevertheless, lighted by unflinching courage and great tenderness." Quoting the *Victoria Times*, the author echoes the description of Stephen's voice as "[possessing] a rich, deep tone, flexible and sympathetic, which imparts to his work the essential qualities of an interpretive reader of outstanding genius."<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Clipping of unsourced review entitled "A French-Canadian Poetess" by A.M. Stephen, 2-1, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

<sup>103</sup> Undated clipping from *Regina Post* entitled "Urges Bonds that will Keep Canadians in Homeland," 2-4, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

<sup>104</sup> Robert Lecker, *Keepers of the Code: English-Canadian Literary Anthologies and the Representation of Nation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 123

<sup>105</sup> Unsourced clipping of article entitled "Canada's Poet of the New Age," 2-4, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

Upon his death, newspapers across the country reported on the passing of one of the country's "foremost," "premiere" poets; he was "Poet, Writer, Crusader." The *Toronto Daily Star* noted in its headline that "No Ivory Tower Held Stephen, Cowpuncher, Educator, Poet."<sup>106</sup> Special attention was paid in the *Regina Leader Post*; under the title "The Passing of a Poet," it paid tribute to A.M. and his works, quoting several poems including "My Canada," and beginning:

Last week there died in Vancouver a great Canadian. His name will not be scribed in the rolls of our illustrious statesmen, nor did he die a soldier's glorious death in armed defense of his country's honor. But he will live with Canada's immortals. At the age of 60, A.M. Stephen, one of this nation's eminent authors died, completing his lifelong mission as an outstanding interpreter of the Canadian scene in the realm of letters.

The main section of the article concluded noting "his first love was and remained Canada, in her great multitude of moods. The beauty of its countryside never failed to inspire him and his dream of her future greatness continually moved him to rapturous exultation."<sup>107</sup> Recognition of this kind was extremely forthcoming at the time of his death, and the *Leader Post's* invocation of Stephen's dedication to Canada was a common theme. The public reception to Stephen's ideas indicated at least some resonance, and presumably some effect, upon contemporary audiences. His efforts at Settler and national legitimation were well-received, and though his exact level of success cannot be determined, were a significant part of Stephen's contribution to evolving hegemony, towards a consolidated, progressive Canadian identity.

Stephen's hegemonic contributions have their clearest expression in his educational work as reformer, author, and teacher, where he had an opportunity to directly shape identities in practice, promote desirable beliefs, and prepare the education system for its vital task. Stephen summarized his reform achievements to *Macleans*:

The reforms I advocated and fought for then are now incorporated in the educational system of British Columbia. I refer to the platoon system, technical schools and vocational training, the psychological clinic, the abolition of written examinations and the substitution of promotion by recommendation, music and eurythmics, and a more

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<sup>106</sup> Page of obituaries in 2-4, 1942, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

<sup>107</sup> Clipping of *Regina Leader Post* article entitled "The Passing of a Poet," 2 Jul 1942, A.M.S.C., CVA, Vancouver, BC, Can.

extensive teaching of art, Canadian literature, Canadian history and handicrafts in the schools—these are the things I urged.<sup>108</sup>

The CWA's slogan was "What is worth more, a child or a dollar?" and in a pamphlet authored by Stephen, argued those coming to recognize the value of children in a hostile social climate "believe that the children of this province, who will form the citizens of the next generation and replace those who have fallen for freedom in Europe, are the most important asset we possess...Can we afford to waste this, the greatest national asset?"<sup>109</sup> In a later editorial, Stephen argued "the greater Canada to come can only be secured by a rising stream of strong, healthy and happy children."<sup>110</sup>

The Child Welfare Association in February 1919 sought to bring attention to the "large percentage of the inmates of such institutions as boys' and girls' reformatories, asylums, orphanages, and penitentiaries" who were "Feeble-Minded," and encouraged the government to deter the "criminality, prostitution, vice, pauperism, and kindred evils entailing unnecessary expense upon individuals and State" which these unfortunates would cause unless a new system was adopted.<sup>111</sup> In October of the same year, Stephen detailed how post-unification Germany had inculcated a militarist spirit through education, creating "the requisite millions of soulless machines which they required for their armies intended for world conquest." Though he condemned Germany's "base and unworthy ends," he insisted Canada could "accomplish...noble and worthy ends" by a similar effort. He lamented the ways in which the government would build rail or encourage commerce, but refused to invest in a more significant resource, "the training of future citizens."<sup>112</sup> Stephen's child welfare advocacy was filled with Settler aspirations and models centering on the progress of Canada's national destiny.

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<sup>108</sup> Woollacott, "A Poet of the West," 87-88

<sup>109</sup> Copy of "Child Conservation" pamphlet, 2-1, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

<sup>110</sup> Clipping of article by A.M. Stephen entitled "Child Welfare and Recon[cut off]" in *Western Women's Weekly*, 2-1, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

<sup>111</sup> Clipping of article by A.M. Stephen in *Western Women's Weekly* entitled "Child Welfare Association Meets," 8 Feb 1919, 2-1, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

This was the "cottage system" by which an order of "differential custody" was increasingly exerted regarding those deemed "Feeble-Minded." James W. Trent, *Inventing the Feeble Mind: A History of Mental Retardation in the United States* (University of California Press, 1994), 65

<sup>112</sup> Clipping of article by A.M. Stephen in *Western Women's Weekly* entitled "Child Welfare National Issue," 18 Oct 1919, 2-1, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

Further, Stephen sought to instill patriotism and in particular an appreciation for Canada's artistic heritage through his own successful educational anthologies. *The Voice of Canada* was revised and reprinted in 1946, with new editor J.F. Swayze noting "the late Mr. A.M. Stephen designed his text so carefully that many of the selections have stood the test of twenty years."<sup>113</sup> Stephen stated the objectives of his first anthology in its introduction: "This book is also designed to develop in Canadian children a patriotism based upon noble ideas of life and conduct and upon a just appreciation of beauty and truth."<sup>114</sup> Creating Settler youth who were adequately informed of their nation's greatness was thus an explicit goal of Stephen's educational work. Likewise, ensuring they had a proper relationship with "Nature" was similarly key: Stephen argued that "Nature Study, properly taught...will form the best foundation for active, helpful living," in a revised school system aimed at the "production of a perfect child—a creator in a world of actions."<sup>115</sup> Stephen sought to ingrain patriotic commitment to nation as well as land through Canadian content and a more progressive educational system.

Stephen embraced an understanding in which Canada was now the land of Settlers, where an appreciation of its distinctiveness and the training of a superior generation was the natural next step in its path to greatness. In addition to "The Passing of the Red Man"—showing that the world was fully given over to the Settlers—Stephen's *Class Room Plays*, though not as successful as his anthologies, also represented a tangible attempt to have his Settler priorities and perceptions encoded into the education of young citizens. Both books end with larger performances designed to unify the subjects of previous plays; *Canadian History's* final script is for "Canada—A Pageant" and is representative of the elements of Canadian pride Stephen sought to encode and of the unity of interests he perceived. The nine provinces then existing are all characters who speak on their virtues to the Queen, Canada: somewhat comically so, as several brag about their coal production, and Prince Edward Island its many schools. Queen Canada is served by two pages representing English and French, who fetch representatives of Canada's industries—farmer, miner, fisherman, lumberman, furtrader, and manufacturer—followed by modern elements of society—science, literature, art,

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<sup>113</sup> A.M. Stephen, *The Voice of Canada*. Expanded and Revised Edition by JF Swayze (Vancouver: JM Dent & Sons Ltd., 1946), iii

<sup>114</sup> A.M. Stephen, *The Voice of Canada* (Toronto: JM Dent & Sons, 1927), v

<sup>115</sup> Clipping of unsourced article by A.M. Stephen entitled "Some Aspects of the Alexandrian Charter School System," 2-1, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

music, education, and religion—and of transportation, including an engineer, a sailor, and an aviator. This somewhat on-the-nose procession drives home the vision of a unified, historically progressive nation Stephen presented in education.

The pageant's finale begins when Mother Earth, Neptune, and Jupiter<sup>116</sup> bless Canada, “Queen of the Earth,” before Time itself endorses the vision of the Fathers of Confederation: “Makers of Canada! Men of vision and action who laid the foundation of a mighty nation! How well they built, how sound were their plans! Macdonald, Brown, Cartier, Mowat, Tupper, Galt, Tilley, Gray, Tache—names to thrill every proud Canadian!” The play ends with Time presenting Canada “the Key to the Future” and a Herald, with a message from “your Majesty” Canada, reading:

Awake, my country, the hour of dreams is done!  
Doubt not, nor dread the greatness of thy fate,  
Tho' faint souls fear the keen confronting sun,  
And fain would bid the morn of splendourous wait;  
Tho' dreamers, rapt in starry visions, cry  
'Lo, you thy future, you thy faith, thy fame!  
And stretch vain hands to stars, thy fame is nigh,  
Here in Canadian hearth, and home, and name;  
This name which yet shall grow,  
Till all the nations know  
Us for a patriot people, heart and hand  
Loyal to our native earth—our own Canadian land!<sup>117</sup>

As a work for children, the *Class Room Plays* books cannot be faulted for presenting a simplistic vision. However, they retained all of Stephen's own biases and interests, and as educational products were intended to be used, and probably were used, in the training of Settler citizens with his own sense of loyalty to the nation and its population. Just as his reform and artistic advocacy met with success and acclaim, Stephen's contribution to education were also praised: the *Macleans* article presents his firing as a city teacher as the result of a “customary vow of silence,” “the unsympathetic attitude of the one individual,” and the inaction of “those who should have” known better, with Stephen once again the brave, idealistic reformer thwarted by a cynical system.

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<sup>116</sup> More familiarly known as Poseidon and Zeus, identified as Kings of the Sea and Air respectively.

<sup>117</sup> Stephen, *Class Room Plays from Canadian History*, 151-161

In his educational reform efforts, publishing, and his work as a teacher,<sup>118</sup> Stephen argued that children were a vital national resource which deserved greater investment and attention from the public. His goal was to produce youth who were adequately informed of their nation's greatness and its natural foundations, and he saw this as a cultural necessity, backed by the sacrifices of a previous generation, in order to guarantee the glorious future he envisaged. Stephen presented a vision of Canada as a natural, coherent Settler homeland, a land secured by past struggle and now to be propelled forth by a newly educated and self-conscious Settler youth. That his optimistically Settlerist anthologies served as curriculum texts in some Vancouver classrooms, while his *Class Room Plays* appear to have been adopted in provincial Indian Schools, is a grim contrast within Stephen's record.

In his artistic advocacy, Stephen argued for the unique place of literature in the growth of Canada, and the necessity of its appreciation. Further, he claimed Canada already had a distinctive body of art, and indeed a distinctive culture, which needed to be further respected. Stephen used his status as a well-known poet to advocate for the valorisation of Canada in all things and praised the efforts of others he saw as engaged in the same tasks. He found a ready public audience for these projects, and himself the subject of glowing tributes and eulogies overflowing with praise for his commitment to Settler Canada and Canadians. Ultimately Stephen's commitment and energy in serving the nation came to define his advocacy as well as his personal image.

Also significant to Stephen's persona was the sense of him as a "practical idealist," whose wide life experience and many marks of Settler distinction enabled him to transcend the supposed limits of both artists and reformers and become a truly praiseworthy progressive. Stephen's dedication to pragmatic appeals and the common national good, as well as his personal character, contributed to the sense of him as a legitimate voice for reform. Even when thwarted or frustrated, he was said to remain hopeful, understanding that the good would eventually triumph in the Settler nation.

In a variety of public roles, Stephen sought to assert a view of Settler ideology, and especially a sense of Settler Canadian identity, which would further the progress of the nation and create a better, more patriotic population. Various involved with

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<sup>118</sup> Though there is no direct testimony or specific evidence characterising Stephen's teaching, it seems reasonable to suppose he carried his enthusiasm for the nation and its norms into the classroom as well as the public sphere.



educational, artistic, and progressive reform causes, Stephen's public image would strongly complement these objectives, presenting him as well-travelled yet patriotic, idealistic but practical, and overall, the kind of Settler who might plausibly advance social reform and national progress without undue upset. The public acclaim which he came to earn elevated him on these terms, and he was ultimately eulogized as "a great Canadian," directly compared in his efforts to promote Settler identity and ideology to statesmen and soldiers.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Clipping of *Regina Leader Post* article entitled "The Passing of a Poet," Jul 1942, A.M.S.C., CVA, Vancouver, BC, Can.

## Chapter 5.

### Settler Society and Social Change

Several pieces of political writing provide more specific examples of Stephen's Settler ideological claims and beliefs. Even before his artistic career, Stephen was criticizing socialism as spiritually inadequate, lacking the individual basis for change he favored. This sense of spiritual change would be furthered in *The Gleaming Archway*, where the autobiographical protagonist interacts with a multitude of representatives of various political ideologies, all ultimately abandoned for further Settler adventuring. Stephen's brief immersion in Marxism and party politics, represented by his pamphlets, time with the CCF, and the Popular Front dispute which ended this relationship, would ultimately serve to deepen his Settlerist convictions. His final pieces provided direct renunciations of his socialist period and returned to Stephen's Settlerist commitments.

In a 1919 article for *Western Women's Weekly*, Stephen sought to explain "The Great War and After," discussing the social changes which seemed to be in progress or on the horizon. He was pessimistic about the future of the conflict between "Labour and Capital," arguing that life was, at the present moment, uniquely cheap, and that "more wounds and deaths can be laid at the door of our modern industrialism than have occurred during the whole of the great war." He saw state ownership as a significant remedy, serving to "subserve the common need," and trusts, which he assumed would be shortly broken up, as assisting in "the economic evolution of the age." Stephen bemoaned the death and destruction but saw positive developments in the way that "eugenics was a widely discussed subject," and the basic "reorganization of Europe on racial lines"—Teuton, Slav, Anglo-Saxon; but also Czech and Polish—along the path of a "new birth or Renaissance of the Spirit." He wrote excitedly about how the "Anglo-Saxons are untied and fighting side-by-side...the British Empire [would] emerge from the re-construction period with some form of Imperial Federation and be stronger and more united than ever." The connections fostered by imperial federation, however, Stephen found distinctly lacking in socialism:

I assure you that no materialistic scheme of re-organization will affect the permanent cure of the conditions we are suffering from...There must be a spiritual basis to the new civilization or it is doomed to be as complete a failure as the one no[w] passing. We

must awaken a new consciousness in the various sections of the community—a consciousness that men are essentially brothers.<sup>120</sup>

This emphasis on “community” and the realization of the fundamental spiritual oneness of man is characteristic of not a liberal rejection of socialism, but a Settler one with a greater emphasis on culture, nation, and the sense of organic community, rather than atomic individualism, or even the cultural values which lead to it. Stephen embraced individual spiritual transformation leading to collective progress, writing in *The Lariat* that “It is...splendid, common people who are doing the world's work and who are carrying forward our race to higher levels”<sup>121</sup>

*The Gleaming Archway* is an overtly romantic novel that nonetheless wrestles with political questions and ideas throughout. It begins with protagonist Craig Maitland, journalist, attempting to find relaxation in the Squamish Valley, proceeds to his commitment to the socialist cause, and concludes with a disastrous strike by the working class Maitland sought to aid. Throughout Maitland meets characters representing a variety of political ideologies, including a former British Labour MP, an old English conservative, a reforming socialist, and the exiled Russian revolutionary Kolazoff. Bud Powers, the first character Maitland meets and the charismatic leader of a rough faction of the local socialists, stands directly for “in essence, the terrific strength of stubborn earth, dark and passionate, which had always opposed the upward flight of the spirit.”<sup>122</sup> He represents all the worst impulses of “the submerged classes [which] were a rising wave, fraught with the silent sufferings of countless generations and dimly, like half-awakened Titans, they were beginning to feel their own strength.”<sup>123</sup> However, he is exposed as a police spy, and thus Powers cannot be seen uncomplicatedly as an indictment of the actual working class—though he is the main impetus behind the strike at the novel’s climax. The main thing Stephen portrays as threatening about Powers is his empowerment by the labour movement, his personal brutality being representative of the crudity and blind desire for change of an oppressed class. A more uncomplicatedly negative picture is presented of Powers’ sole ally in the strike council:

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<sup>120</sup> Copy of article by A.M. Stephen in *Western Women's Weekly* entitled “The Great War and After,” Sep 1919, 2-1, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

<sup>121</sup> Article in *The Lariat* by A.M. Stephen, Jun 1926, 263, 4-2, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

<sup>122</sup> A.M. Stephen, *The Gleaming Archway* (Toronto: JM Dent & Sons, 1929), 175

<sup>123</sup> Stephen, *The Gleaming Archway*, 194

Paul Kirchner, IWW agitator, was—in the newspaper man's estimation—only less to be feared than Powers. His narrow, projecting brows shadowed eyes which were shifty, dark, and cruel as those of a drunken savage. His tongue was glib, his speech a jargon of the pet shibboleths of the class-conscious Marxians.<sup>124</sup>

The sinister Kirchner, though only a minor character, is again a mere thug ennobled by the dangerous working-class movement. Stephen's negative view of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) hinges on his perception of the organisation as serving to enable violence and disorder, rather than real progress—indeed, Stephen's reference to the “drunken savage” places him within a tradition of dismissing the IWW as racially suspect and threatening to society.<sup>125</sup> Stephen repeatedly portrays Powers, and less frequently Kirchner and radical labour organisations, as symbolic of the dangers of not merely the working class but of class struggle as a strategy itself.

The strike which is the background of the novel's plot is depicted as an ignorant and dangerous attack on property and civility encouraged by foreign ideologues: “The idea of industrial action—the ‘massen’ [mass] strike— pounded into them by the disciples of the German Socialists of the Bebel school had done its work...Even ‘sabotage,’ the wilful destruction of property, seemed justice to minds inflamed by the slogans of a class warfare.” The Laird Graham, introduced in the novel's middle and increasingly significant in the last act, is a political cynic who shares the doubts of both A.M. Stephen and Craig Maitland, asking, about the strike, “Sabotage...when it's the capitalist's property. What do you call it when it's the worker's property?”<sup>126</sup> The adventurous Graham is the only physical equal of the brutish Bud Powers, granted practical experience and power through his Settler lifestyle as a big game hunter. Graham, at the end of the novel, offers Stephen a chance, following his disillusionment with the labour movement, to continue his life's adventure through a long trek in the wilderness or a voyage in search of Atlantis. Graham stands in for some of Stephen's most revered imperialist tropes—and against his most feared working-class stereotypes.

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<sup>124</sup> Stephen, *The Gleaming Archway*, 227

<sup>125</sup> A strikingly similar characterization is put forth by Agnes Laut, in *Am I My Brother's Keeper? A 1913 journalistic report on the “Labor and Oriental Problems” in BC*, it might have been written by Craig Maitland himself, bemoaning the entrance of unassimilable Hindus who would drive down wages, supported by the feckless, anarchistic IWW. For more on the role of racial anxiety in delegitimizing the IWW in Canada, see Barbara Roberts, *Whence They Came: Deportation from Canada, 1900-1935* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1988), 73-83

<sup>126</sup> Stephen, *The Gleaming Archway*, 264

In his first meeting with the exiled Russian Kolazoff, Craig admits he “believe[s] in evolution but not in revolution.” Thereafter the Russian tells an evocative story about the plight of the Russian proletariat and the murder of his fiancée—references made here indicate the story takes place sometime after “Bloody Sunday” in Russia, 1905—and Craig sees that “the man who had loved Marie Lansky was dead. Another being, relentless, indifferent to life or death, animated by desire for a day of vengeance, was [sitting there].”<sup>127</sup> This idea of revolutionaries as having been brutalized and become brutal haunted Stephen’s depiction of social change. Craig Maitland gives other specific reasons for rejecting Marxism at the conclusion of *The Gleaming Archway*, listening to the justifications of an old labour journalist disheartened by the strike’s failure:

Looking beyond the man who, like a gramophone, repeated the catchwords of his creed—the confession of faith subscribed to by the scientific Socialists—evolution, revolution, the Movement, the Party, class-consciousness, the class struggle, capitalist, proletariat! All were definitions, forms, symbols, watertight compartments for thought—labels for the bottles which would vainly try to hold the wine of life while it was fermenting.

The salvation of the race by man-made institutions—by the grace of economics? It had seemed possible. Yes—but then, so had all Utopias to all the starry-eyed dreamers since the morning of time. All of these ancient visionaries had overlooked the first essential for the building of heaven upon earth in their failure to understand and to develop individuals. The beast in *Everyman* was his own problem: not to be solved by anything outside of himself.<sup>128</sup>

Once again Stephen portrays socialism as an out-of-touch, doctrinaire belief, doomed to failure by its refusal to seek to change individuals. *The Gleaming Archway* appeared just a few months before the onset of the Great Depression, which ended Stephen’s own journalistic career and triggered his entry into socialist party politics. Stephen was elected as chairman of the CCF committee on radio and speakers, wrote regularly in the *BC Clarion* and less frequently in other publications, and, as President of the BC LAWF, was simultaneously involved in significant aid work directed to Spain and China.<sup>129</sup> He appears to have had some trouble balancing his commitments to the two organizations, with a “President’s Corner” column after the Popular Front dispute

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<sup>127</sup> Stephen, *The Gleaming Archway*, 43

<sup>128</sup> Stephen, *The Gleaming Archway*, 267-268

<sup>129</sup> This activism continued after Stephen’s expulsion from the CCF and also involved Irene; a China Aid Council pamphlet details the transport of medical supplies to China, “under the leadership of Mrs. A.M. Stephen.” 2 Sep 1939, 2-1, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

claiming Stephen "should long ago have resigned from one or the other," and that "I myself [President J.L. Telford] have had to bear practically the whole load of the radio work."<sup>130</sup> That dispute was preceded by several notable pamphlets and other pieces of writing which further elucidate Stephen's attitudes on political subjects.

In *Marxism: the Basis for a New Social Order*, Stephen places a great deal of emphasis on the traditions of the past which rest "like a mountain" on the mind, and argues that with class consciousness "the real task of emancipation—the making of a free man—a militant worker in the emancipation of the enslaved workers of the world has only begun. He has still to remove a mountain from his brain!" Though Stephen pays atypical attention to class and militancy in the pamphlet, he also reiterates the importance of a sort of transcendence enabled by Marxism.<sup>131</sup> Though language of this kind was not unknown in the 1930s socialist milieu, it is hard to not see this as a reference to Stephen's own sense of the "New World" as gained through spiritual growth and education. Nonetheless, it certainly represents the most strident statement of his interest in Marxism, and his faith in it as a political strategy.

In *Hitlerism in Canada*, Stephen sought to explore the fascism he saw within the Liberal Patullo government of BC, and declared:

The Fascist tendencies displayed by his administration are certainly not British. Can it be that the Liberal heelers who hand over the votes of the Italian colony or the German brewers who supply a large portion of [Patullo's] campaign funds have infected him with the virus of foreign ideas that have been developed in the Nazi and Fascist régimes of central and southern Europe?<sup>132</sup>

Similarly worried about the "Liberal government at Ottawa, [which] is solidly based upon the Québec vote," and preceding a section entitled "Québec: Citadel of Reaction," A.M. quotes an article of "Current History" from June 1934 which supports his position that fascism in Canada fundamentally emerges from archetypal Settler Canadian disruptors, this time the Roman Catholic:

The emergence into political power of the party officially attached to Roman Catholicism was perhaps the most significant change, for, apparently, from what we have seen in Germany and Austria the

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<sup>130</sup> *Federationist* (Vancouver) 1:32 (25 Mar 1937): "The President's Corner" 4

<sup>131</sup> A.M. Stephen, *Marxism: The Basis for a New Social Order* (Vancouver: *BC Clarion*, 1933), 8-9

<sup>132</sup> A.M. Stephen, *Hitlerism in Canada* (Vancouver: The Commonwealth Press, 1934), 19

change to Roman Catholic in political voting is in Europe almost invariably the prelude to political dictatorship.<sup>133</sup>

The threat to society A.M. found most pressing, then, was a danger from populations historically, and then contemporaneously, perceived as at least somewhat outside the mainstream of the Settler project-though not necessarily in opposition to it. Stephen was also at pains to note how the middle class was in fact being tricked by fascism, which would not serve its interests by enslaving the working class. He saw the middle classes as either continuing “Economic Imperialism,” under which “inevitably the competitive system has worked for the annihilation of profits and profiteers” outside of an increasingly small minority, or “permit[ting] a working-class revolution, [under which] its privileges will disappear and its few remaining private profits will vanish.” Though Stephen acknowledged class struggle was “key to the understanding of history,” a LAWF pamphlet appealing front-and-center to all classes was likely to alarm those taking a labour-socialist stance, including much of the BC CCF.

Stephen preferred to think in terms of society as bound by the nation, rather than classes. Inequality was not denied, nor were the evils of capitalism, but those oppressed were potentially too violent or ignorant to successfully pursue change. Instead, Stephen emphasized dispassionate, often professional, and implicitly middle-class progress and reform, for the benefit of all of Settler civilization:

By peaceful and constitutional means we must restore to the people the natural resources of this glorious province which have been stolen from them by the barons of industry and finance. We must do this or face the fate of European countries that are torn by fear of war and ground beneath the heel of military dictatorships.<sup>134</sup>

This perspective embraces the idea of redistribution in the context of the great natural bounty of Canada, wherein Settlers who are suffering under capitalism are principally being denied their proper place within the whole. This concern with a Settler common people was further illustrated in an alarming article in the *BC Clarion* by Stephen, seeking to demonstrate the plight of the young men “enslaved” at work camps:

this stupid capitalist government is spending thousands of dollars on idiots, monstrosities, and utterly useless human material in our Mental Hospitals...absolutely useless little creatures (they can

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<sup>133</sup> Stephen, *Hitlerism in Canada*, 20-21

<sup>134</sup> Copy of brochure advertising A.M. Stephen as 1937 Nanaimo-Alberni CCF candidate, 2-1, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

scarcely be called humans)...Can you imagine a more stupid disregard of human values? The unfit are clothed, given medical care and treatment. The fit and normal youth are thrown into the garbage heap.<sup>135</sup>

Stephen's righteous anger at the "stupid disregard of human values" represented by care for those in "Mental Hospitals" is obvious: the prime of the nation's youth were neglected by the cruel capitalist government. The sympathetic group are the young Settler men of the relief camps, whom Stephen wrote in support of frequently, willing and able to work for their nation, yet unable to do so for "stupid" reasons. Stephen often ended up appealing to the interest of the 'average' Settler and the good of the nation as a whole, while refusing to tolerate class-based analysis or strategy.

Attacks had been launched upon Stephen as President of the BC LAWF and representative of the Popular Front strategy as early as 1935 in *The Amoeba*, the CCF Youth newspaper, where Stephen's own writing appeared occasionally.<sup>136</sup> The dispute began the week after Stephen's first defensive editorial, appearing 3 Dec 1936 in *The Federationist*, official weekly of the BC CCF, where he described the LAWF as a "non-political organization," insofar as it did not seek to create or be part of a competitor to the CCF. Stephen argued that the CCF, "if it is true to its mission, can be the basis of a people's movement, a federation of all working class groups and parties and all progressive sections of the common people," and disagreed with those who sought "to keep it crystallized along the lines of a capitalist party or the ancient and orthodox British labor party."<sup>137</sup> He encouraged flexibility in tactics and argued against the impractical "principles" he saw others clinging to. Gerald Van's response in the following issue argued "The Socialists oppose the "Popular Front" policy that Mr. Stephen promotes because it would swing our movement away from its revolutionary basis to the petty-bourgeois attempt of maintaining the status quo."<sup>138</sup>

Stephen argued the next week that the criticism was characteristic of the "Trotskyite" Workers Party of Canada, and further charged that Van's attitude would "alienate [the party] from the broad masses of the workers and the progressive middle-

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<sup>135</sup> *BC Clarion* (Vancouver) 3:8 (Apr 1935): 1, 7

<sup>136</sup> A series entitled "The Materialistic Conception of History" appeared in both *The Amoeba* and the *BC Clarion*, wherein Stephen applied historical materialism in the characterisation of Rome

<sup>137</sup> *Federationist* (Vancouver) 1:16 (3 Dec 1936): "What Do You Think," 8-9

<sup>138</sup> *Federationist* (Vancouver) 1:17 (10 Dec 1936): "What Do You Think," 8-9



class...[and] reduce the CCF to the size of the 666 Homer street crowd."<sup>139</sup> Stephen refused Van's challenge to debate, and ended claiming his critic would "prefer to permit the triumph of fascism in Canada rather than to collaborate with the progressive middle class when it is in revolt against invasions of our civil rights and liberties."<sup>140</sup>

The following week Van's reply appeared alongside those of three other Popular Front opponents: CCF stalwarts Mary E. James and W.W. Lefeaux, and Rodney J. Young, editor of *The Amoeba*.<sup>141</sup> James thought Stephen's reply "characteristic of tactics practised on the working-class by self-haloed petty bourgeois 'intellectuals,'" while Young offered to debate Stephen. Van continued his attack: "This self-styled revolutionist of only a few moons ago, who clambered into the political limelight as an enemy of capitalism, has now turned a complete somersault and comes out as the champion of bourgeois democracy." He claimed Stephen "is prepared to unite the CCF with Liberals, Conservatives, Social Creditors, Father Divine, even sections of the bourgeoisie itself, but never, never will he include the Socialists in this 'unity.'" Van even refers to Stephen as "the man who has his head in Moscow and his feet in Canada," for his reference to Trotskyism; a somewhat incongruous characterisation, but one which illustrates the perceived distasteful link between the Popular Front and the CPC.<sup>142</sup>

Following another week of replies, including Stephen's, the CCF executive felt compelled to issue a statement clarifying the party's position regarding the Popular Front, which marked the end of the editorial battle, though "almost a score" of further letters had been received.<sup>143</sup> Shortly thereafter, Stephen and Rod Young were both suspended, following further remarks on the subject at events, but Stephen continued to advocate for a policy that, for the labour-socialist party mainstays, represented a betrayal of class struggle in pursuit of the middle class. After standing in the Nanaimo-Alberni elections with the support of local CCF Clubs, ultimately receiving 3,129 votes to the Liberal candidate's 3,616,<sup>144</sup> Stephen's expulsion was finalized at the party's 1937 summer convention. Naylor's analysis of the Popular Front dispute in *The Fate of Labour*

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<sup>139</sup> An isolated splinter party of the SPC made 666 Homer Street its headquarters.

<sup>140</sup> *Federationist* (Vancouver) 1:18 (17 Dec 1936): "What Do You Think," 8-9

<sup>141</sup> *Federationist* (Vancouver) 1:19 (23 Dec 1936): "What Do You Think," 8-9

<sup>142</sup> *Federationist* (Vancouver) 1:19 (23 Dec 1936): "What Do You Think," 8-9

<sup>143</sup> *Federationist* (Vancouver) 1:21 (7 Jan 1937): "What Do You Think," 8-9

<sup>144</sup> British Columbia, Statement of Votes, 1937, in Isitt, *Militant Minority*, 280n17

*Socialism* is accurate: Stephen was a symbol of the Popular Front strategy, attacked by those “critical from a labour-socialist stance, [who] sought to maintain a working-class politic.”<sup>145</sup> His sense of the party as collaborative and appealing in an important way to the middle class came under specific assault, as did his socialist credentials.

After his expulsion, three pieces give a window into a perspective a Vancouver newspaper described as “bitter.”<sup>146</sup> *Lords of the Air* was filled with patriotic and Anglophilic paeans to the nobility of England, empire, and the defense of freedom, as well as poetry on important events of the later 1930s. Two articles provided more extensive coverage of the rejection of socialism and Marxism Stephen had undertaken in the last years of his life. Neither was published, but both were completed, and the more striking, “Canadian Poets and the War,” even bears a short introduction dedicating it:

To all who have endured and suffered in the work of shaping the soul of the Canadian people, to the artists who have known the Golgotha of frustration, to the writers who have cast their bread upon black and bitter waters, to the reformers who have bruised flesh and spirit against the stone walls of indifference and reaction, to all men who have lived and died to make “our true North strong and free.”<sup>147</sup>

Thus, Stephen saw in Marxism a force which misled artists, like him, into materialism and futile struggle. He disapproved of those like T.S. Eliot who surrendered and withdrew into reaction in an age wherein revolutionaries sought to “undermin[e] and [shatter] the basis of everything”, but criticized “[those] writers who have fallen under the spell of the totalitarian concept [and are] incapable of understanding the process of social evolution.” Stephen saw “Poetry in a concentration camp!” led into irrelevance and “tangled in a web of economic theory...Poetry is strangled in order that the propagandist may adhere to the orthodox party line.” Ultimately, he condemned socialism in harsh terms, and returned to art as a major reference point: “Thus do they isolate themselves, in their so-called proletarian literature, from the significant movements that are working to create a new and better social order. Their poetry, for this reason, is reactionary and not progressive.”<sup>148</sup> In the other unpublished final article he wrote, “Poets and the New

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<sup>145</sup> Naylor, *The Fate of Labour Socialism*, 219

<sup>146</sup> Clipping of *Vancouver Province Daily* article entitled “A.M. Stephen, Poet, is Dead,” 2 Jul 1942, A.M.S.C., CVA, Vancouver, BC, Can.

<sup>147</sup> Manuscript of “Canadian Poets and the War,” 4-1, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

<sup>148</sup> Manuscript of “Canadian Poets and the War,” 4-1, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

Age,” Stephen expounded on a matured vision of his concept of social change and his own place within it as a poet. It concludes, after arguing for the importance of quality poetry in ennobling those who seek the “New Age,” with a tribute to:

The religion of art—the credo of the New Race and the Age which is already taking its first uncertain steps towards a greater intellectual and spiritual freedom! Not while the spectres of Property—the Church and State—haunt our waking hours, shall we breathe freely. But—with the ultimate result we have no concern. It is the next step forward that matters for us. Unlike the ‘free verse’ Bolsheviks we are not desirous of attaining chaos in one mad leap beyond the limits of form. Harmony and order are basic facts in nature. “God geometrizes”, said the ancient sage and we believe that only the skilled craftsman—the Master—is worthy to weave garments of beauty for the New Age will surpass that of all the golden periods which have been immortalized in song and story.<sup>149</sup>

This article is more abstract than Stephen ever has been before, but the “geometries” which he paid tribute to remain the same. *Lords of the Air* represents a retreat into Settler imagery and aspirations, with Stephen paying loving tribute to imperialism and Britishness itself. A national vision of the future appears in “The Answer,” where Canada itself responds to earnest questions with a message of hope:

"What are we fighting for? What is the end  
For him who has but one young life to spend,  
Who loves the pulse that thrills through every vein  
In swift response to sun or wind or rain?"

From hills Canadian, prairie, lake, and stream,  
From forests where the scarlet maples gleam,  
An echo thunders its quick reply:  
"What profit is there if you live and die  
Should freedom perish or the truth be slain?  
Not for the Past, old errors, truths outworn,  
Not that we fear the stinging lash of scorn,  
Not for old slogans, hollow trumpetings,  
But for a Truth beyond all mortal things,  
Eternal truth that made the spirit free,  
The thread of truth that binds humanity  
In the essential brotherhood of man—  
For this we fight, nor shall the Brute prevail  
Nor all the powers of darkness that assail  
Our Motherland beside her ancient sea.  
We fight, my son, that all men may be free!"<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Manuscript of “Poets and the New Age,” 4-1, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

<sup>150</sup> A.M. Stephen, *Lords of the Air* (Vancouver: Self-Published, 1940), 11-12

*Lords of the Air* also contains clear references in “A Study in Values” (see Appendix) to Stephen’s perception of Marxism as out of step with human progress:

To shatter a world,  
for an idea;  
to wade through blood  
for a theory;  
to replace some tyranny  
by another;  
to assist one Will-to-Power  
to vanquish another Will:  
to dream that a thousand years  
of evolution  
may be compressed into a decade;  
that is to play with shadows  
on the walls of Plato's cave.<sup>151</sup>

In “Red Destiny,” Stephen presents several verses on the betrayal of those for whom “Red is the flag of your new day”:

You that, with monstrous lies, beguiled  
Earth's millions to accept your chain,  
How shall you face the innocent betrayed  
Or shall they count their dead as gain?

You who dared prate of comrades, say,  
What is this red on Finland's snow?  
What mean these children trembling in the night,  
These mothers' tears that rise and flow?

Red were the steppes that Ivan lashed  
With terror of his conquering hordes;  
Red was the corded knout that fell  
And red the blade of spear and sword

Red was the dawn of Peter's might,  
An empire cut from sea to sea;  
Red steamed the bloody walls that heard  
The death-cry of the brave and free.

Red is the flag of your new day  
Above new tyrannies of fear and hate;  
Red is the harvest in your hand,  
And red shall be your wind of fate.

Fate? I can hear its footsteps fall  
In the blind alleys of your Plan

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<sup>151</sup> Stephen, *Lords of the Air*, 7-8

Its voice has cried "Red death awaits  
Those who betray the soul of man!"<sup>152</sup>

Particularly notable here is the recasting of the "red" Soviet Union as only the latest manifestation of bloody-minded Russia as inaugurated by Ivan (presumably the Terrible) and Peter (presumably the Great). Furthermore, the dissatisfaction Stephen felt was not merely personal or ideological, but far deeper, reaching to his sense of communism as a "betray[al of] the souls of man." His preferred sort of change is alluded to in the highly metaphorical "The Gardener's Story." Here human progress is an ever-growing rose stretching through history, strewn with false and discarded idols in the form of pots which were meant to hold the fire of the rose. Preferable was rapture with that spirit, a positive, individual alternative to facile categorization: "Last night, when a blue moon glimmered drear [sic] / And a weird wind sighed o'er a haggard mere, / The soul of the Rose with mine took flight. / We followed the wild wind through the night."<sup>153</sup> Stephen saw imperialism as the system to foster this development:

The gradual development of a federal system of free and self-governing nations in the British Commonwealth seems to be without significance for them [Marxists]. The progress of events is, to a great extent, the result of factors conveniently ignored in the formulation of their theory of economic determinism. How, then, can they expect to appreciate the spiritual bond between the component parts of the British system which is dependent upon common traditions, a common culture, and a common ethical concept? They look past and beyond the 'parliament of nations and federation of the world' prefigured by our democracies to a totalitarian régime imposed upon the world by the will of an armed minority.<sup>154</sup>

"Christmas—1938," in contrast, ends with a promise to defend the liberty of the new Settler world: "So Shall I hold the promise of the West; / Behind its banner, when the darkness comes, / Shall hear the myriad feet of men oppressed / And Freedom marching to the roll of drums."<sup>155</sup> "Britain" is a simple, single-verse tribute to the land of "Burns and Shelley" as the last and constant refuge of the free:

There is a beauty time cannot destroy;  
There is a Truth that make war impotent;  
There is a name which Truth and beauty spells--  
Britain, the home and refuge of the free,

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<sup>152</sup> Stephen, *Lords of the Air*, 6-7

<sup>153</sup> Stephen, *Lords of the Air*, 8-9

<sup>154</sup> Manuscript of "Canadian Poets and the War," 4-1, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

<sup>155</sup> Stephen, *Lords of the Air*, 5

And all that Burns and Shelley held so dear  
And made immortal. This is Britain now  
As it was Britain in its golden age.  
For this men die, a smile upon their lips,  
Nor can the hosts of darkness quench its light.  
Eternal as the sea that guards it well  
It stands, a beacon, till the storm be passed.<sup>156</sup>

With Marxism exiled from legitimacy as an “imposition” by an “armed minority,” and the progress of the democracies of the world tied to the “spiritual bond” between the component parts of the British Empire, Stephen’s final political shift was complete. However, this reverence for empire had run through much of his political work, only intensifying with his final rejection of Marxism, and throwing further clarifying light on his fundamental commitment to Settlerist ideals. From his earliest political expressions, Stephen thought of national advancement through individual transcendence and enlightenment as the key to progress. He bemoaned socialism as overly theoretical and lacking in the “spiritual basis” which he saw as necessary for social growth. *The Gleaming Archway* bolsters this impression, with the adventures of Craig Maitland serving up a neat narrative about the futility of mass action, the crudity of the working class, and the necessity of Settler-inflected adventure and excitement for individual growth. Stephen pit his Settler convictions against socialist strawmen in his novel, and though he would come to moderate these positions, so too would he return to them.

Stephen fit Marxism within his personal cosmology, placing a great deal of emphasis on its role as liberator from capitalist ideas, and de-emphasizing class struggle and solidarity. These issues would explode into public view during the Popular Front dispute, with Stephen’s arguments about the positioning of the CCF proving to be his undoing. His desire to include the middle class stood in stark contrast to the labour-socialist CCF. After his expulsion, Stephen would sharpen and make his Settler ideology even more explicit. Paying tribute to the necessary, progressive spiritual base of imperialism, he praised the Empire, disavowed the Soviet Union and Marxism, and retreated to his earlier views of social change as individual and socialism as dangerous, overly scientific, and indeed a betrayal of humanity itself. *Lords of the Air* presented glowing tributes to British liberty while recasting the Soviet Union as a grasping leviathan, nearly as dangerous as the Nazis. Thus did A.M. Stephen throw off those

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<sup>156</sup> Stephen, *Lords of the Air*, 10

elements of socialist thought which had penetrated his Settler ideological shell, spending his last years, once again, cheering on artistic development and patriotic progress.

In his most political pieces, A.M. Stephen maintained a Settler ideology that would prove to be the most durable element of his beliefs. As reformer, political dilettante, party member, and then disenchanted poet, Stephen asserted a view in which Settler citizens had the right to expect a fair share of Canada's natural bounty, and where injustice and inequality was severe, but only individual spiritual and personal change was the answer. Class struggles, and those engaged in them, were dangerous, and Marxism a violent and inhumane ideology, contrasted with Stephen's own emphasis on the progress of the nation and its population.

## Chapter 6.

### Settler Identity, Ideology, and Framework

What conclusions can we draw from this lifetime of writing and activism? A.M. Stephen's Settlerist commitments were more than consistent, they were at the core of his projects. Examining him under a settler order framework allows us to perceive the significance of Settler identity as an organising element in Stephen's life and works. A careful look at Stephen's views on Canada, in the context of the exercise of ongoing colonial power, can elucidate the importance of continuity and Settler preconceptions in situating the nation as a referent for social and political change. These elements require a careful understanding and contextualisation of the settler order to comprehend—and can reveal the significance of such a framework in writing Canadian history.

An examination of three profiles of Stephen reveals the way in which the Settler identity he advocated for, possessed himself, and used as part of his persona, could unify seemingly opposed—or, at least, very divergent—conceptions of the man and his work. The 1931 *Macleans* profile "A Poet of the West" covers A.M.'s poetry, reform efforts, and present endeavors, where he "devot[ed] a wide range of sympathies and abilities in constructive editorial efforts which will certainly be of service to the community."<sup>157</sup> Barry Mather's "Pertinent Portraits" series in the *BC Clarion* concluded regarding Stephen in 1934: "Whether as a poet he is a Socialist, or as a Socialist he is a poet, doesn't matter. We like him as either or both."<sup>158</sup> In "Pen Sketches of Canadian Poets," 1932, John M. Elson saw Stephen principally as an artist in the light of high Settler ideals and experience of nature. All three are united by a devotion to Settler signifiers and to Canada itself.

Woollacott's "A Poet of the West" is subtitled "Cowboy, schoolteacher, soldier, guide, reformer, trapper, editor—A. M. Stephen has been all these—which probably explains why the pulse of life is in his poetry." Beginning with the anecdote where Stephen the reformer is unable to afford cab fare, it emphasizes the breadth of his experiences and contributions to his community and nation. The author takes particular interest in Stephen's educational reforms and portrays his eventual firing as the near-

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<sup>157</sup> Woollacott, "A Poet of the West," 87-88

<sup>158</sup> Mather and Wilson, *Pertinent Portraits* (Vancouver: The Boag Foundation, 1978), 40-41



tragic loss of a good-hearted reformer and a representation of the staid conservatism of the teachers. The profile strongly reinforces the “practical idealist” framing:

But the enthusiastic idealist had all the innocence of the traditional reformer. He was fearless and outspoken. He did not understand that from the point of view of the System he was a mere hireling, a subordinate whose duty it was to saw wood and say nothing. He did not realize that ideas are anathema within the System. He simply went to his doom like a lamb to the slaughter, while a thousand teachers who had grown wise in the art of holding their jobs looked on with grim and fearful interest.

...

But neither hardship nor malice could discourage this man. He remains unwarped and lovable in spite of it all, with a passionate faith in humanity, and a saving sense of humor which enables him to find amusement in life’s little ironies.<sup>159</sup>

Too innocent of the circumstances to know the resistance of the system, Stephen was also too good-hearted to become cynical or extreme. “Proletarian Poet” takes a dramatically different view, asserting that “as to the Stephen we know, both his verse and poetry bear the impress of his passionate devotion to the Socialist cause. For years he has written and lectured, a voice in the capitalist wilderness, crying out at the brutality and injustice of the system.” This recasts Stephen as a lifelong, or at least long-term, socialist, with both his writing and poetry cast as far more critical than they were. Despite Stephen’s relentless patriotism and reformism, he could be coherently seen as a serious socialist. The profile also details Stephen’s long and varied work experience, and it is notable that the socialist newspaper does not shy away from his University education or work as an architect and engineer. It even disclaims any problems based on Stephen’s family history, and the “British aristocracy” to which it was allegedly connected: his ancestry “should in no means lessen the esteem in which he was universally held nowadays—there were some real nice people in the British aristocracy.”<sup>160</sup> Among the CCF, at least for a time, Stephen was indeed the “Proletarian Poet,” his life and work perceivable in a clearly socialist light.

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<sup>159</sup> Woollacott, “A Poet of the West,” 87-88

<sup>160</sup> Mather and Wilson, *Pertinent Portraits*, 40-41

Far from socialist or even community reformer, “Pen Sketches of Canadian Poets,” in *Onward*, sought to define Stephen as a patriotic poet first. Nature as he had experienced it was allegedly the greatest element of his poetry and life:

Those who wish to get easily into the spirit of his own poetry would do well to remember the factors that have gone into the shaping of his thought, and to bear in mind, likewise, that the lofty firs and pines of British Columbia, the forest-clad mountain ranges, the awesome glaciers, the sweeping Pacific and the almost limitless open spaces of the Prairie Provinces have become a part of his very bone and sinew...It is obvious that the simple, though vigorous, pioneer life of the far West has become a pronounced substances in his lyrics.

The piece concludes the bulk of the text noting "he now enjoys at home, as well as elsewhere, the distinction of being the best known living poet of the Western group...pre-eminently an interpreter of the Great West and a companion of Nature." This profile prioritizes Settler perceptions of nature even more than of nation, though Stephen's patriotism was not forgotten: during his speaking tour Stephen became aware "that the Canadian public knew of him, appreciated his poetry and honored the loyalty he had shown, in his writings, to native subjects," and Elson briefly praises the significance of *Verendrye*.<sup>161</sup> "Pen Sketches" goes even further in establishing Stephen as a Settler figure, noting that his birthplace was in "that period still when there were a good many evidences still of stern pioneer life."<sup>162</sup> Elson saw Stephen in terms of Settler identity, nature and nation—and consequently, his portrait of Stephen is probably the closest to Stephen's own perception of his identity and objectives.

One anecdote that was repeated enough to be at least plausibly true reveals some of the ways Stephen's experiences could serve to legitimate his identity to different audiences. The *Maclean's* profile approvingly discussed Stephen's work in nature, noting "The wilderness had no terrors for him. He went trapping in British Columbia...the kid had been communing with nature, and, like the Indian, was perfectly at home wherever night might find him." Stephen did not just become one with the wilderness, however: the article relates an anecdote about Stephen meeting "a titled English lady and her party" while working as a guide, and whiling away time reading her copy of Euripides' *Medea*:

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<sup>161</sup> Clipping from *Onward* of regular series "Pen Sketches of Canadian Poets" entitled "A.M. Stephen," 2-1, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

<sup>162</sup> Clipping from *Onward* of regular series "Pen Sketches of Canadian Poets" entitled "A.M. Stephen," 2-1, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

That a Rocky Mountain guide, a mere boy in his 'teens picturesquely attired in chaps and sombrero, should occupy his idle moments reading and enjoying Euripides was a revelation to the lady. It was also a revelation to the Canadian youngster that a butterfly of rank and fashion should find anything to interest her in the Greek dramatists.<sup>163</sup>

Here Stephen crosses class boundaries in his erudition, astonishing the upper-class lady. "Pen Sketches of Canadian Poets" relates the story with slight differences, making Stephen a young poet finding new inspiration amongst beautiful nature:

One day he acted as a guide to a titled English woman and her party, leading them into the beautiful valley of the Ten Peaks. He wanted something new to read. She had with her a copy of *Medea* and he made such interested use of it that she was surprised. It was scarcely to be expected that a mere boy, not yet out of his teens, and wearing the rough chaps and broad hat of the trails, should find pleasure in anything so classical as Euripedes. But he did, and she presented it to him as a souvenir. Its noble language soon became a part of himself.<sup>164</sup>

The reappearance of so specific an anecdote reveals its importance as a signal to an implicitly Settler audience. Perhaps it is unsurprising the *BC Clarion* did not include this story, though in recasting Stephen as "Proletarian" it still sought to shift his class identity. Stephen's encounter is a fantasy of Settler transcendence of class, unifying a love for Greek and Roman classical literature, frequently referenced in his own poetry, with his adventurous spirit and connection to nature. In spite of their differences—*Macleans* a national, mainstream publication, "Pen Sketches" a small review of Canadian poets, and "Pertinent Portraits" dedicated to figures in a labour-socialist party—all provided complimentary portraits of the man himself, reaching vastly different conclusions about his significance despite covering many of the same elements.

These different perspectives represented the priorities and outlooks of the publications in question, but the commonality of their evidence reveals the unquestioned significance of Settler identity, and its signifiers, in establishing and promoting Stephen amongst different audiences. His work history touched upon ideas of ruggedly individual Settler masculinity; indeed, the whole pre-WW1 story of Stephen's life was something of an aspirational tale. Going West as a young man, he left stultifying schooling behind for

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<sup>163</sup> Woollacott, "A Poet of the West," 87-88

<sup>164</sup> Clipping from *Onward* of regular series "Pen Sketches of Canadian Poets" entitled "A.M. Stephen," 2-1, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

adventurous fortune-seeking, advanced into legitimate education, and found a solid, professional career, which would provide security for the poet and his family as he pursued reform and national greatness.<sup>165</sup> All three profiles include this story in one way or another, favorably referencing his time amongst the wilderness of Canada, and generally presenting Stephen as an accomplished Settler man, someone whose identity would have in most cases mirrored that of each publication's intended audience. As Stephen embraced and advanced a Settler identity, it is also significant that he found a variety of publications and audiences ready to embrace him.

An explicit examination of the role of Settler identity and signifiers under a settler order framework is the only way to adequately explore its significance as a bridging element between classes, social formations, individual people, and even nations. In occupying Settler space himself, and by deploying the signifiers he had earned through labour and activism, Stephen could be made not merely palatable, but accomplished and commendable to a diverse range of audiences. By treating Settler identity as a space of contention, articulation, and hegemony, we can more fully grasp its role. By analyzing Canada itself, and conceptions of it, in a similar way, we can further explore the possibilities of a settler order framework.

At the time of Stephen's death, fascism was threatening world democracy, and though glad he could still say "'Good-evening, Canada!' with a smile of hope upon my lips and assurance in my heart," he understood the war as a world struggle against tyranny and sought to contribute to it as best he could. Stephen's faith in the nation's triumph was endless, even if he was disappointed by the relative lack of war poetry composed by Canadians' at a time when "liberty was fighting with its back against the wall." Stephen worried this indicated a lack of engagement with an apparently "European" conflict, really about "human rights and decency." The article also elaborates

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<sup>165</sup> This particular strand of identity is importantly related to both the mythology, and the reality, of social mobility within Canada, as addressed by Battell Lowman and Barker: "Mobility...is part of what allows individuals to pursue greatness and success, to rise in terms of wealth and happiness by relocating to pursue education, employment, or the best possible environment for one's hopes and dreams. Further, while Settler peoples generally seek to connect to the land through structures such as the political and legal systems that allow individuals to claim discrete packets of property, the expansive and pervasive Settler Canadian nation and state mean that Settler Canadians can move around over huge territories and still assume they belong wherever they go." Battell Lowman and Barker, *Settler*, 87

upon Stephen's feelings about socialism and imperialism, restating his commitment to nation in atypically pragmatic terms.

He blamed the deficiency in patriotic war poetry at least partly on Canadian's lack of knowledge of their own literature, but also on the fact that "Canada is still a loosely united aggregation of communities imbued with a parochialism that prevents the growth of a healthy national character." The "sense of one-ness" Stephen attributed to Americans might be developed by "poets and other writers...forging that sense of unity that could give us the strength we need to face the common dangers of war and the common responsibility of reconstruction after war is ended."<sup>166</sup> The reconstruction of Canada offers another chance to consummate the "New Age," where Stephen's work as a poet might tangibly unify an inadequately singular people.

Fundamentally, though his perspective was individually unique, Stephen's was a particular permutation of the broader terms of Settler hegemony in Canada, which he actively sought to contribute to and reinforce. These terms do, of course, change over time, and some of Stephen's particular commitments, such as his overt patriotism, erasure of First Nations people, deep interest in empire, and glorification of Settler heroes, identity, and ideology, are increasingly less palatable to many Canadians. Comfortable narratives Stephen embraced wholeheartedly are perceived with greater negativity and are less a part of present-day understandings of Canada as rendered, for example, by contemporary educators and writers. These changes can be observed in miniature: Stephen died on Dominion Day, explicitly linked to the larger imperial context, but in 1982 the holiday became the neutrally patriotic Canada Day instead.

Nonetheless, the existence and continuation of the nation is as unquestioned as ever, and progress in it towards Settler domination of the land of Canada remains historically inexorable. This narrative, which Stephen certainly believed, contributed to and often promoted, is reinforced through a variety of means: consider the plaque he and other Western authors witnessed being dedicated at the Simon Fraser monument in 1931, which furthered a narrative of Settler exploration of the land and progress towards its mastery, hindered by the Indigenous inhabitants, and deserving of veneration from Canadian patriots. The continuity of this forward movement of the Settler nation as inevitable priority, though not of some of the implications of the original wording and

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<sup>166</sup> Manuscript of "Canadian Poets and the War," 4-1, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

Stephen's ideas, is visible in the new plaque upon the Simon Fraser Memorial, entitled "Exploration of the Fraser River":

Although Spanish seamen had noted the Fraser estuary in 1791, when Alexander Mackenzie reached the upper Fraser in 1793 on his way to the Pacific, he thought he was on the Columbia. Simon Fraser and John Stuart of the North West company explored the river under same [sic] misapprehension in 1808, realizing only when they reached the sea that two great river systems drained the north Pacific slope. Although the Fraser was not throughout its course a practical canoe route, the Hudson's Bay company integrated it into a new supply system when forced in 1848 to abandon the Columbia.<sup>167</sup>

Stephen would surely find this an uninspiring, unheroic rendition of a Settler icon's deeds. But the continuity of some of his ideas is striking: the focus on land, nature, and the mastery thereof, the progress of the nation through exploration, the ongoing need to memorialize these events as national achievement. Perhaps most noticeable is that all mention of "hostile Indians" has disappeared—to be replaced with nothing, the "mighty nations of the coast...vanished" just as in A.M.'s poetry. This speaks to the ongoing relevance of a specific element of national hegemony, which I call "Canadian Consensus." This refers to the perception and ongoing rendering of the domination of part of northern North America classified as Canada, and the occupation of that land by the Settler population, as inevitable, necessary, and essentially final. A chief means by which this ideological structure is reproduced was practiced by Stephen throughout his life: the use of Canada as an unquestioned referent, wherein the nation comes to be the beneficiary of all social good and progress on any front. By reasserting the centrality of Canada, a nation defined by settler colonial occupation of land which actualizes the genocide of nations it has dispossessed, the reality of the nation is obfuscated. Canada is a particular construction of Settler identity and ideology, a label which unifies what is factually divided by material and social reality, not inevitable or everlasting, far from unquestionable. Stephen's own works provide obvious examples: his view of the "New Age" was frequently seen in the form of Canada, somehow reformed by greater and more virtuous citizens, and yet still essentially Canada, and this vision—best

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<sup>167</sup> "Early Monuments Commemorating Explorer Simon Fraser." Opposite the City. Wordpress. 8 Oct 2015. <https://oppositethecity.wordpress.com/2015/10/08/early-monuments-commemorating-explorer-simon-fraser/>

Also personal communication with Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada via email. The plaque was replaced and updated to conform with advancing bilingualism regulations concerning Canadian public spaces and monuments.

encapsulated by “My Canada”—was actively published, disseminated, and applauded. His own stories of vanished, racially inferior “Indians,” irrelevant in terms of civilizational progress, are another significant example, probably taught to schoolchildren, possibly in Residential Schools. As a socialist, Stephen would decry narrow nationalism and praise international solidarity, but Canada remained the unit of measurement in all things, its iconic citizens to be helped, its interests to be protected by absolute patriotism.

Stephen’s brief period as a CCF member and active political figure might be seen as a break with “Canadian Consensus” and his earlier perceptions, and certainly some passages in *Marxism: The Basis for a New Social Order* are far more radical than anything he would write before or after. Even then, however, Stephen could retain his Settler priorities and norms, and the centrality of Canada to his thought is clear in his focus upon antifascist popular unity and rejection of class analysis for imperialism and Settlerism. Stephen’s period as a socialist is simply not representative of his projects, and he penned explicit renunciations of socialism, materialism, and revolution after his expulsion. Where, then, might we locate A.M. Stephen politically? Stephen is, more than he is a socialist, even more than he is a liberal or a progressive, a Settler ideologue, advancing that social formation first and foremost—and, naturally, the nation to which it is attached. Stephen existed during a “foundational interstitial” in Canadian history, and directly participated in articulating a new vision of national hegemony, one increasingly (though perhaps not entirely) recognizable to contemporary Canadians.

The foreword to “Canadian Poets and the War” already looks forward to postwar reconstruction, though it does not ignore the threats to the nation:

I am nevertheless keenly conscious of the fact that Canada lies within the shadow of a great Darkness that is extending over the face of the world—a Darkness in which the betrayed and sadly diminished forces of light are engaged in a mortal combat with the evils that our apathy and blindness have helped to engender. Morning will come and, with it, will come the dawn of a Freedom that some of us have glimpsed at times but may not be predestined to enjoy.<sup>168</sup>

Here Stephen, in one of his final works, anticipates change following the Second World War which would bring “the dawn of a freedom” some have sought, but which has been previously inaccessible. During and after the war, Canada would develop welfare

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<sup>168</sup> Manuscript of “Canadian Poets and the War,” 4-1, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

institutions and intensify economic planning and state action in a way that can be seen as the realization of the kind of Settler-defined freedom Stephen sought. Interested in respectable national progress through prudent means, Stephen was nonetheless concerned with fairness and at least some level of social equality. He was interested in the construction of a unified, muscular Canadianism, and if his views on the First World War are any indication, the Second would have proved the ideal place to develop this. The kind of “socialist good sense” referred to as in ascent in Canada by Ian McKay does not seem so far from Stephen’s own conception of national good and advancement.

The paucity of sources from Stephen’s final years means he cannot be seen uncomplicatedly as a “prescient advocate of the welfare state,”<sup>169</sup> as was once said of the CCF—but a Canada which was strong enough to take care of its people and its future, united in pursuit of progress, and cognizant of its own national character would certainly please him greatly. I do not think A.M. Stephen is truly representative of the CCF, and I am reluctant to speculate on the degree to which they are guilty by association with him. Certainly there were anti-imperialists who perceived problems with Britain and imperialism among the party, and those whose vision of progress, class-based, was not innately dependent on the continuity of nation and land domination. There is a level to which even socialists and radicals are vulnerable to the “Canadian Consensus,” however, taking the present reality of the nation as a historical and future given, and certainly many Settler signifiers and norms remained unquestioned.

Ultimately, in the continuity of his works, and in the continuing relevance of elements of his legacy, A.M. Stephen allows us to see one element of Canadian hegemony, the “Canadian Consensus,” particularly clearly. The central relationship of Canada and its Settler population to the land remains non-negotiable, and “perceptions of *terra nullius* (empty land) and frontier mythologies, [have] all [led] toward a sense of finality or transcendence of the colonial form when the land has been developed beyond recognition as something that Indigenous peoples could claim.”<sup>170</sup> The centrality of Canada to perceptions of progress and social change is itself an element of hegemony,

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<sup>169</sup> Naylor, *The Fate of Labour Socialism*, 250

<sup>170</sup> Barker, Rollo and Battell Lowman, “Settler colonialism and the consolidation of Canada in the twentieth century,” 159



the encoding of a particular state, nation, and arrangement of population which become unquestionable and inevitable.<sup>171</sup>

The “Canadian Consensus” seeks to normalize, specifically, the Canadian state, nation, and Settler population by presenting all of these as the inevitable result of history and the natural shape of the country and its geography. Stephen clung to this conception his whole life, centering Canada consistently in a project which served to reinforce and reshape the unassailable nation. Stephen began to articulate an understanding of the state which did more to serve citizens so that both might become greater, a goal ultimately served by Canada’s post-war government expansion, speaking to a narrative of development and national progress which has outlasted other elements of his project.

In his own life, Settler motifs and ideas were frequently used and redeployed in different contexts to render A.M. a palatable figure to a variety of audiences. In so clearly attending to the advance of the nation and the perpetuation of the “Canadian Consensus” which preserves it, Stephen illuminates the importance of seeing Canada outside of this hegemony, acknowledging the project of dispossession and genocide which is implied even in the name, Canada. I argue these insights require a framework centring settler colonialism to most satisfyingly explore, but Ian McKay’s “Canada as a Long Liberal Revolution: On Writing the History of Actually Existing Canadian Liberalisms, 1840s-1940s,” includes a number of elaborations upon the liberal order thesis which might appear to satisfy the objections of one arguing for a settler order framework. Preceding works arguing for the capitalisation of “settler,” McKay nonetheless includes the word in a relevantly critical way:

Far from denigrating the achievements of subaltern groups in achieving important rights and freedoms under the liberal order, this immanent critique highlights the economic and social contradictions that have limited their extension and preservation. Canada as a project was aligned with other projects of Western colonialism. The extension of this political project from coast to coast...was an act of political will on the part of relatively few Europeans who as white

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<sup>171</sup> Barker and Battell Lowman stress a similar point in characterizing Canadian identity as underscored by a “dysconsciousness” which exists as an act of choice, of forgetting, “an intentional blindness to facts placed right in front of us. These myths [of Canadian civilization], as powerful as they are, exist in no small part because, generation after generation, day after day, Settler Canadians choose the comfort and glory of believing in the national culture and the national story of Canada” Battell Lowman and Barker, *Settler*, 46

settlers saw the project of Canada as fulfilling the individualistic ideals of British liberalism—liberty, equality, and property.<sup>172</sup>

What, then, is the liberal order framework missing, compared to a Settler framing? The essential problem is that McKay underestimates the degree to which erasure of and attacks upon Indigenous people are more than part of the Canadian project and are in fact a distinctly core element, constantly reaffirmed and reified alongside a legitimisation of Settler presence on the land. The story of Indigeneity in Canada is not defined by securing rights and freedoms despite constraints, it is defined by dispossession and disenfranchisement of land, culture, and far more, for the very purpose of creating and structuring Canada. The essential contradiction lies in the fact that (sometimes only partially) aliberal populations like “French Canadians, Catholics, Settler socialists, and first-wave feminists...were indeed coming up against a liberalism of the British imperial world that sought to consolidate its project of rule by ‘going beyond its immediate corporate interests,’” while “First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people were faced with a Settler formation oriented around genocidal attempts to physically, culturally, and legally erase their presence from the land.”<sup>173</sup> Aliberal Settler populations continued to assert their fundamental legitimacy and membership of the collective, while Indigenous people were resolutely excluded, even pre-emptively attacked. Just as Settlers are defined by relationship to the land, the chief a-Settler populations are First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people<sup>174</sup> whose continued existence and claims to land and consideration challenge basic Settler assumptions about possession and property.

Burrill’s settler order framework rejects a liberal order at the heart of Canadian hegemony but still embraces the relevance of Gramscian ideas to settler-colonial analysis. Stephen is particularly useful in examining what this change in hegemonic characterisation implies, as his distinctively Settler thought challenges a present-day viewer to recognize him as merely a particularly dynamic and forceful exponent of colonial norms—not unique in his allegiance to Canada, even for socialists and progressives. McKay admits that on the political left “the British tradition was widely

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<sup>172</sup> Ian McKay, “Canada as Long Liberal Revolution,” in *Liberalism & Hegemony*, edited by Constant and Ducharme (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 418

<sup>173</sup> Burrill, “The Settler Order Framework,” 184

<sup>174</sup> Even these labels—First Nations, Inuit, and Métis—are, to an extent, used as tools of hegemonic recognition and separation, classifying peoples within a framework that is part of the Canadian apparatus in order to sublimate and subdue manifestation by such groups that bring challenges to courts, media, public spaces, etc. and maintain an apartheid-like structure in which these populations are pre-emptively removed from popular life and history.

seen...as one that created more space for meaningful dissent than was found in the twentieth-century United States” and elsewhere, but this brief description gives the connection a short shrift.<sup>175</sup> An appreciation for the British Empire and the civilising process, and naturally for Canada the nation itself, even for those who criticized the particular appearances of these normalized elements, runs deep in Settler identity. Though it is beyond the scope of this paper to extensively interpret the attitudes of the CCF, certainly this socialist party, in BC particularly guided by class analysis and worker’s leadership, remained somewhat comfortable with and even sometimes complimentary towards Canada, Britain, and the Empire.

Ultimately, Burrill worries that “the liberal order framework ends up operating according to a teleology in which successive oppositions are subsumed into a centralized ‘liberal historic bloc,’ each positively shaping and remaking the project called ‘Canada.’” The problem with this framing is in its “underestimation of the apartheid-like structures of the Canadian project.”<sup>176</sup> For Canada to remain coherent, more than the destruction implied in the “shaping and remaking” of the polity by First Nations people is required. Canada as a national designation—and certainly as an object of patriotic love and valorization, as it was for Stephen—implies in its very essence the overawing attempt at total removal and erasure which is at the heart of Canada: genocide. Stephen’s perspective is a window into the transition from violent colonial conquest and redistribution, to a progressive, recognition-based order in which “Indigenous people pose a ‘problem’ for Canada, one to be managed, accounted for, and ultimately dealt with so that Canadians can get on with the business of being Canadian.”<sup>177</sup>

Stephen’s lifetime of works served overwhelmingly to validate Settler presence upon the land, erase First Nations claims and history, and ensure the continuation and glorification of the Canadian nation. He reinforced a particular Settler hegemony—but what does it mean for a hegemony to be Settler rather than liberal? Two elements I have explored here, Settler identity and “Canadian Consensus,” indicate the importance of a focus upon the conditions of identity and ideology formation among those who have come to dominate the North American continent. These identity and ideological links to

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<sup>175</sup> Ian McKay, “Canada as a Long Liberal Revolution: On Writing the History of Actually Existing Canadian Liberalisms, 1840s-1940s,” in *Liberalism & Hegemony*, edited by Constant and Ducharme (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 398

<sup>176</sup> Burrill, “The Settler Order Framework,” 187

<sup>177</sup> Barker & Battell Lowman, *Settler*, 6

the material dispossession constitutive of Canada serve to make alternatives more difficult to present and perceive, buttressing the Canadian edifice through widely encoded support for Settler norms.

Settler identity was constructed in relation to the land, and its symbols—extractive labour, explorers and colonists, nature itself—serve to create ever-stronger links. Stephen did this himself, but the use of these motifs can also be observed in many of the portrayals of him through his life. Stephen could be rendered acceptable, even praiseworthy, to progressives, artists, and socialists, by manipulation of his work life, reform experience, wartime service, and other signifiers. He centered Settlers in his own analysis, frequently decrying the ‘waste’ represented by the young men of the nation in slave-like work camps and unproductive, untutored children. And he sought to impress a “flaming and even aggressive patriotism” upon the youth, so that they might fully contribute to the development of the nation.<sup>178</sup> In all cases, Settler identity, in Stephen’s eyes, served to legitimize someone as a member of the nation, thereby deserving of support, inclusion, and the consideration of their interests. Here we can see how an identity within hegemony is constructed that can accommodate different interests with a fundamental core—connection to the land.

The unassailable continuity of that relationship with the land is represented within the “Canadian Consensus,” which dictates the centrality and invisibility of assumptions about occupancy of the land. The plaques commemorating Simon Fraser portray the change in the peripheral zones of this consensus, with Stephen’s open disregard for First Nations people and triumphant narrative framing lost, but the national progress exploration is taken to represent is maintained long after Stephen’s own death. His own works continue this focus, with Canada the home of virtue and progress, a place where the “New Age” might be born through patriotic effort. Though the attitudes of the CCF cannot be glimpsed solely through Stephen, his ability to maintain Canada as a point of focus even while adopting socialist rhetoric indicates how this “Consensus” can infiltrate even radical spaces. Stephen himself could or would not decenter the nation from his ideology, even as labour socialists came to expel him for his lack of faith in class struggle. Stephen was a devotee of the “Canadian Consensus,” a particularly stark

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<sup>178</sup> Copy of unsourced article entitled “Canadian Literature as a Nation-Builder” by A.M. Stephen, 2-4, A.M.S., UBCRB&SC, Vancouver, BC, Can.

representation of the way in which the nation comes to be seen as natural, inevitable, and unimpeachable—even for someone who saw his preferred Canada as yet “unborn.”

Both elements require a settler order framework to fully perceive and explore. Stephen was clearly a mainstream figure, advancing Canadian hegemony, but he is significantly not, centrally at least, a liberal. He values culture and nation far above atomic individualism, property, and the values leading thereto, and his development of a nationally-linked Settler identity and adherence to a “Canadian Consensus” centralizing the nation itself indicate a desire to develop a unified, culturally distinctive, progressive nation, and an acceptance and promotion of this nation’s domination of land and people. This is not an element that can be overlooked. Settler identity and ideology are, ultimately, both more central to Canada and to Stephen than liberalism; an important part of Settlerist domination, but not its core. Domination of the land and reproduction of Settler civilisation is the most core element of Canadian hegemony, and Stephen’s deep commitment to Settler identity, ideology, and nation illustrate how mainstream and adaptable these elements are. For Stephen, the better Canada— “My Canada”—was still unborn, despite his lifelong commitment to the nation as it stood. But reincarnated or not, there is absolutely no changing or denying the genocidal, settler colonial foundations of the nation. As Canadians, and especially as Settlers, we must ask: “can we exist in a way that doesn’t reproduce colonial dispossession and harm?”<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Barker & Battell Lowman, *Settler*, 19

## Chapter 7.

### Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis is not, as the expression goes, to “cancel” long-dead, largely-unknown Canadian poet A.M. Stephen—though a 2012 reprint of *The Gleaming Archway* indicates he is not utterly forgotten.<sup>180</sup> Many aspects of his work are now questionable or problematic, such as his depiction of First Nations people and overt imperialism, but to bring attention to these elements does not accomplish much in the present day. Instead an investigation of Stephen’s Settler premises and goals can be a way to gain insight regarding the peculiar influence of settler colonialism in Canada. What is most notable about A.M. Stephen is not that he was a constant patriot or even a builder of Settler identity, but that he was both of these things in the context of his other works—artistic, social, and political—and they structured how he carried out all his projects, and was subsequently received. Just as Canada as a label requires and more than implies the genocidal project which removes Indigenous social formations to make room for Settler ones, Stephen as a public figure required the context of this Settler society for his explication of such an identity and ideology to have relevance. A.M. Stephen cannot be extracted from his commitment to Canadian Settlerism, but a careful examination of him in his time and place can reveal important insights about the continuity of settler colonialism and the Settler identity in all eras of Canadian history.

In his art, Stephen venerated a naturalistic, virtuous Canada, and a population which, though yet to reach its full potential, was more than legitimate—it was destined for greatness. Stephen viewed Canada from the perspective of a deeply Settlerist poet, and he consistently sought to glorify heroes of the colonial past, as well as the everyday Settlers who were the key constituents of a growing nation. First Nations people were a curiosity, potentially useful in the novelty of their culture for the progress of Canada’s art, but otherwise largely unremarkable, their greatness banished into the distant past. In all these things, Stephen promoted a basic Settler viewpoint which found considerable acclaim. He directly contributed to the popularisation of narratives reinforcing “a

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<sup>180</sup> A.M. Stephen, *The Gleaming Archway* (Lexington, Kentucky: Iconoclastic Press, 2012)

protracted project of dispossession, elimination, and one of the largest land grabs in the history of humankind.”<sup>181</sup>

Stephen continued to express his ideas through a variety of public platforms, where the valorisation and development of Settler identity became a key goal. He found and perpetuated a sense of himself as a “practical idealist,” seeking the best for the whole of the nation in all things. In artistic advocacy, Stephen saw poetry (including his own) as a key ingredient in building a better Canada, and deliberately sought to spread knowledge of the nation’s rich literature and culture to produce better citizens. This commitment was most clear in Stephen’s educational work, where he detailed exactly the kind of immediately patriotic and noble Settler youths he sought to create.

In his most political works, Stephen’s Settler ideological beliefs came into conflict with, and ultimately vanquished, his brief interest in Marxism. In his earliest expressions he was already providing a critique of socialism he would return to: that it was inhumane and dictatorial, lacking an important spiritual element Stephen saw as key. *The Gleaming Archway* continued this trend, providing Stephen the chance to lay out a scenario in which class struggle is discredited and Settler adventurousness the final resolution. As he began working with the CCF, Stephen presented more radical material, but this did not last long: he was soon expelled for his focus on the middle class and a common Settler population he saw as endangered by fascism. By the time of his last works, Stephen was bitter, penning poems which dismissed socialism and party politics, and articles which returned to colonialism and imperialism as key to human growth.

In examining Stephen, the importance of examining Settler identity and its signifiers becomes obvious. For all the consistency of his Settlerism Stephen proved amenable (at least temporarily) to a wide range of audiences within the Canadian mainstream. Seeking to understand how elements of Stephen’s identity, and that which he espoused, translated the particulars of his message is key to understanding the ongoing impact of settler colonialism in Canada—especially in class formation. “Canadian Consensus” is an equally pernicious but unstudied element of hegemony which Stephen both adhered and contributed to, normalising the status of the nation as the beneficiary of social change and progress and as historically inevitable and legitimated. These two specific points, critical to understanding Stephen’s life, are

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<sup>181</sup> Barker & Battell Lowman, *Settler*, 47

likewise essential in understanding the settler order, and any framework that seeks to deconstruct it.

A.M. Stephen was a Settlerist: his principal devotion was to Canada, and the Settler population and idea of civilisation which backed it then, and still does to this day. This identification transcended liberalism and defeated socialism to become the guiding throughline in all his life and works. Living in a time when Canada was undergoing important consolidation, refining the methods which it used to perpetuate Settler relationships, Stephen's efforts to contribute to the nation were not in vain. Though not an essential figure in the history of modern Canada, Stephen nonetheless played a part in moving away from an era of settler colonial violence to one of Settler dominance and self-assurance. Hegemony has continued to shift towards a politics of recognition which would probably not be unrecognisable to Stephen, with First Nations integrated into Canadian identity as partners, or perhaps as resources, as he envisioned, in a continuously Settler society. Nonetheless, nothing has undermined Stephen's beloved nation in a deep sense, and though many of his ideas seem incongruously chauvinist from a modern perspective, many of his goals have come to fruition: Canada is stronger, more prosperous, and, arguably, more politically stable and coherent than ever.

Optimistic assessments about the nation of Canada, however, overlook the truth of the history. Canada is and remains a Settler as well as a settler colonial power, where fundamental challenges to present arrangements are ceaselessly hidden and mitigated, and where vast divisions between Settler and Native people, along consistent lines, are left as issues of low priority and limited scope. A.M. Stephen, in the overtness of his Settler commitments, demonstrates how deep the roots of these divisions can go—those who nurtured them were not all, or possibly not even generally, sinister purveyors of open genocide. They were ordinary, contemporary Canadians, who saw the furtherance of a Settler nation on specifically Settler terms as natural and inevitable progress. And just as ordinary Settler Canadians can come to entrench national norms founded on mass dispossession and genocide, the ordinary conception of Canada must be seen to rest on these foundations as well. The ugly conclusion that must be faced is that any continuation of Canada, on the terms which it has always existed on, continues these practices. To stop them requires not recognition or re-negotiation, but revolution.



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## Appendix      Poems by A.M. Stephen

### My Canada

Taken from *The Land of Singing Waters*.

My Canada is still unborn-  
A breath of springtime on the morning wind,  
A hint of greatness, bright but undefined,  
An undertone of some clear choral song  
The eager soul can sense at time  
In pages of our bards' prophetic rhymes

The lark that soared in English lanes  
Found light no stronger than the vivid gleam  
Which gilds the pinion of our singer's dream,  
And yet, the too-familiar strain has led  
Us like a scarlet hunter's horn  
By meadow and by hedges trimmed and shorn

We bind our children with the chains  
Of these old legends of a sainted past,  
Blind to the vision of a day more vast  
That that which dawned on Shakespeare's inner sight  
When, in the name of Liberty,  
Drake's guns made sure the Empire of the Sea

My Canada is yet unborn.  
Our child within the pregnant womb of years,  
Formed from the chastening soil of fire and tears  
Of Europe's battle mounds, of iron and flame,  
Her soul is pledged to mastery.  
She guards the message of an Age to be.

## Canadian

Taken from *The Land of Singing Waters*.

No prouder name has stirred a patriot's heart  
Replete with promise, clear as silver call  
Of bugles sounding where the sunbeams fall  
On green hills lifting to the azure skies,  
This name is magic to impart  
To men the vision that its strength implies

No moated keeps, no cobwebbed banners fold  
This world in legends where old glories shone  
Its fair form, standing on the verge of dawn,  
Beholds the future and its brow is covered  
With light of splendours still untold  
Within in, youth's triumphal ardours sound.

Too long our songs have borne an alien air.  
Our lips, half-fearfully, have breathed our love  
Now, when the sunrise gilds the heights above  
Our pathway to a nation's place and fame,  
We falter, break our faith, and stare  
Like children frightened by some sudden flame.

Oh, give it voice! This word like music ring,  
O'er all the wide expanse of sea and land-  
Canadian! The scarlet maples stand  
In matchless beauty, strong and undismayed,  
They face the tempest's wrath and cling  
Fast to the soil wherein their seed was laid.

No tyrant's frown, nor sneer of hoary pride,  
Shall dim the conquering might of Spring that knows  
A fire unquenched by Winter's falling snows  
Let Youth, exultant, hail the new-born day  
And face the world, fear cast aside  
And feet swift-winged to tread the sunlit day

## Canada

Taken from *The Land of Singing Waters*.

We have seen thee when green April,  
Starred with trilliums, danced adown  
Misty lanes where purple alders  
Cast aside their robes of brown

We have glimpsed thee in the gardens,  
Golden 'neath a rising moon,  
Stoop to gather roses heavy  
With the magic wealth of June.

We have caught thee on a hillside,  
Sleeping, splendrant in the glare-  
Saw the Noon, thy lover, weaving  
Summer sunlight in thy hair

When the silver frost has jewelled,  
Tangled lace of leaf and fern  
We have bowed before thy splendor  
Where the crimson maples burn

Silent Beauty of our Northland,  
When the plains lie white and bare,  
We have seen auroral rainbows  
Fling they banners to the air.

Maiden, Queen and mate of Valour,  
Born of love beyond our ways,  
We would hold thee to a vision  
Metemorphose to light our greater days !

We would hold thee in our dreaming  
'Till thy face, from sea to sea,  
Is a star of promise flashing  
With the pride of liberty!

## How to Write a Canadian Poem

Taken from *Songs for a New Nation*.

Hang a wreath of wilted maple  
On the framework of your lyre,  
Splash a dash of Autumn's scarlet,  
Snatch a whiff of brushwood fire

Dip a tuneful paddle softly  
In some dull Acadian stream;  
Set a whip-poor-will to singing  
In the valleys of your dreams

Let a "piny" or a pansy  
Lead your soul to mildly swoon  
While a straw hat shades your forehead  
From the drowsy heat of June.

Let the frogs, in booming chorus,  
Brag about their jug-o'-rum  
While, within a clump of grasses,  
Little bees and beetles hum.

Let your rhyme be chaste and harmless,  
Soothing to the spinster soul.  
Nature (but not human nature)  
Is the cure will make us whole

Tell the Child of Nations gently,  
"Bye-and-bye, dear boy, you'll grow.  
There are lots of things, my darling,  
Not for little ones to know!"



## Scarlet and Gold—The Maples

Taken from *The Rosary of Pan*.

Of poppies red our poet sang, from Arras to the sea,  
And gleaming  
Through our dreaming  
Their crimson hosts must flow.  
The violets pale on English lanes, the daisies on the lea,  
Have stirred in lyric chords  
And cast their glamour o'er us-  
Have bound us with the magic of their storied minstrelsy.  
The music of the motherland ,  
Although it haply stayed our hand,  
Our heart it cannot know.

There is a story written no art can ever name,  
And golden,  
As of olden  
The fiery heralds run.  
Across the fields of Canada we trace the path of flame.  
Within the dim, translucent haze,  
The mellow mood of autumn days,  
We catch the regal glory which outvies the elder fame  
Of all the flowers of fairyland-  
The gold and scarlet saraband,  
Of maples in the sun

To pagan eyes in Arcady, before the break of day,  
How fleetly  
And how sweetly,  
Like music in the wind.  
The footfalls of a dancing faun, as light as silver spray,  
Turned all to gold the living green.  
And yet, within our glades, is seen  
The writing of the exiled gods who came from far away  
To see, perchance, if there might be  
Where singing waters meet the sea,  
A country to their mind

In crimson robes and golden, here flits our forest queen  
And, winging  
Still is singing  
A rainbow in a dream  
Her smile is even sweeter where the firs, in sober green,  
Stand guard beside her flaming car.  
We once had sight of her afar

Beneath the blue, Aegean skies where, in the iridescent sheeM  
Of sunlit bays, her snowy doves  
Were driven by soft winged loves  
A down the sea-blue stream.

The laurels of the southland inspire the classic theme  
By clinging  
And by bringing  
The dead days back to birth  
A chaste and solemn pageantry to gild a fading dream.  
The maples stir a deeper tide  
For they in gold and scarlet ride.  
The vanguards of a greater race, their blood-red banners gleam  
As, in the white dawn of the world,  
The red gods from the sky were hurled  
To build a heaven on earth.

## The Face

Taken from *The Rosary of Pan*.

I reft my soul from out the strife of things,  
The self-forged fetters broken then set free  
That which the Ages fashioned, in the dark,  
And lo, a tired child's face looked forth at me

Curls tangled in a ghostly crown of thorns,  
Lip that knew not of laughter but of lies;  
'Neath lashes dim with unshed tears, there slept  
The shadow of Golgotha in his eyes.

This man-made image of the Son in Heaven  
Was Death incarnate, not the radiant Life  
That pulses in the stars thro' endless aeons,  
Rising triumphant over pain and strife

Small wonder that with pangs of hell re-born,  
Earth pays the debt and with its withering breath  
Red war doth cleanse the nations, heavy laden,  
With Calvary's cross—the harbinger of Death

Memories dim of times remote and golden  
Gleaming like fire thro' mists that veil the day,  
Gods manifold there are not forgotten.  
The flowerage of a fairer time were they.

To break the bondage barren faiths have builded,  
To show the splendour of the larger plan,  
These greater Gods shall bring the old, new message--  
One name for the Son of God and the child of Man.

## Vancouver

Taken from *The Land of Singing Waters*.

A far longer poem with the same title and some similar lines appears in *Brown Earth & Bunch Grass*.

Seven hills on the Tiber  
Held in the heart of Rome :  
Queen of the Sea was Venice,  
Rose from the white sea-foam.  
The wheel of change resolving  
The way of gods and men  
On this lone rim of Empire  
Hath set their star again.

Wind of the great blue spaces  
Betwixt the sea and sky,  
Breath of the burning glory,  
Where sunsets flare and die,  
Yours are the trumpets sounds,  
Yours is the word of dawn.  
Why should we seek for Beauty  
In ages far withdrawn?

Wine of the gods is brimming  
Rimmed by the crystal snows ;  
O'er opal seas at evening  
The face of Venus glows ;  
Glades in their jewelled shadows  
Hush low the call of Pan ;  
Pines to the firs have whispered  
Of lovers ere time began

On emerald slopes are gleaming  
Dream temples white as those  
Caressed by seas whose golden  
Light blossomed as a rose.  
Borne on a wind of memory  
Dim marbled glories shine,  
Towers of the hidden Aidenn  
Our weary hearts divine.

Seven hills on the Tiber  
Held in the heart of Rome :  
Queen of the Sea was Venice,  
Rose from the white sea-foam.  
But, here where singing waters  
Chant Death's dark threnody,  
Love, for His own, hath builded  
Our city by the sea

## Stampede

Taken from *Brown Earth & Bunch Grass*

Where the earth is a brown wave rolling  
against the cliffs of blue,  
and the wind is a voice calling  
from God-knows-where  
across a thousand miles of silence  
the Transcontinental Limited rumbles  
like a volcano on wheels

The sun is up.  
Life is shouting  
with the care-free abandon of unconquered youth.

Young Canada  
in armor of buckskin and chapperos,  
is spurring to the rodeo.

Bright spurs tinkle like the chink of coins,  
Bridle reins rattle like a stack of chips.  
An earl's son is racing with a dark-skinned breed.

Forgotten the fust in the whitewashed corrals,  
the smell of singed hair beneath the branding iron,  
the bellowing of the cows in weaning-time,  
the lonely camp and the lonelier stars,  
the brittle laughter of coyotes on frosty nights,  
the white wraith of the blizzard whirling across the plains,  
the mad stampede running before the lash of the hail.

Everything is forgotten  
but the rodeo.  
the dust-clouds, the glory, the cheers,  
the silver-mouthed saddle waiting down at Calgary.

*Ride 'em, cowboy, ride!*  
*Let 'er buck!*  
*If you see a star or two*  
*Go razzlin' through the blue,*  
*Ride 'em, cowboy, ride!*

Rainbow-colored kerchiefs streaming in the sun,  
bright eyes glinting 'neath a Stetson's brim,  
long quirts dangling from the sunburned wrists,  
saddle-leather creaking to the swinging lope,  
merry voices singing as the wind shoots past—

*"Oh, my darling Nellie Gray,*  
*They have taken you away....*

*"He's only a poor cowboy that nobody owns...."*

*"Oh, the moon shines bright to-night  
On pretty Red Wing...."*

*"Oh, you can't go to heaven when you die,  
If you don't wear a collar and a tie...."*

Come, let us turn back the pages of a book.  
You see the young sun god, Mithras,  
wrestling with a bull.  
You hear the stir in the amphitheatre  
when the wild ox lowers his horns  
and makes a gash in the blood-stained earth.  
You see the lance-heads, like stars,  
glimmering through the Dark Ages,  
when men fought with dragons  
that the rose of beauty might blossom  
in the ways of men

On the frontiers of Broceliande,  
On the road to Camelot,  
Men pushed back the horizon  
To make way for youth and freedom.  
They made highways  
For the feet of the unborn years.

Forward again!  
History is in the making  
The frontiers of Canada resound  
With the singing voices,  
The clang of steel,  
The trampling of horses,  
The mad cavalcade riding to a tournament  
In the last Great West

Look again!  
They will soon be gone.  
The Riders of the Plain will soon be a memory.  
The Machine is on their trail.  
The stream-tractor is digging their graves.  
The Age of Iron has thrown barbed wire barricades  
Across the road that leads back to the golden days

There's money in land,  
and there's money in wheat,  
and money is God.  
God said,  
"The cowboy must move on!"

Take a last look at them, stranger,  
from the cam-chair in the observation car.

They're not the same in motion pictures,  
when a dude-wrangler fakes their art at Hollywood.

Wave your hand.  
"So long, Canada,  
in armor of buckskin and chappers,  
red blood beating to the music of the wind,  
strong hearts and comrades on the lone frontier,  
buckaroos and riders of the last Great West!"

## A Study in Values

Taken from *Lords of the Air*

### *Dedication*

(A rebel lass, when her lover, killed in the Moscow rising of 1917, was lowered into a trench in a Red Mass Funeral, leaped into the grave beside him crying: "Bury me too! What do I care about the Revolution, now that he is dead!")

To shatter a world,  
for an idea;  
to wade through blood  
for a theory;  
to replace some tyranny  
by another;  
to assist one Will-to-Power  
to vanquish another Will:  
to dream that a thousand years  
of evolution  
may be compressed into a decade;  
that is to play with shadows  
on the walls of Plato's cave.

"Man is greater than the State!"

Lips,  
whispering this,  
were stilled by hemlock  
but --  
the truth lives on

Nineveh,  
Babylon, washed in blood,  
buried beneath the sand;  
Dnieperstroy,  
Belomar,  
washed in blood,  
buried beneath the snow --  
weighed in the balance  
against one broken, human heart?

"What do I care...  
now that Love is dead?"



## The Magic Coast

Published 1 Oct 1934 in the *Sunday Province*.

Let the bugles ring  
from the Evergreen Coast,  
over the Pacific,  
challenge to the setting sun.  
"Splendor without ceasing,  
dominion and glory!  
Splendor in a world  
where morning never ends!!"

Before the white man,  
the beauty of silence  
held the Coast of Dreams,  
In sinuous arms,  
shaggy with fir and cypress,  
lay the warm scented tides  
in loving embrace.  
Mountains leaned  
frozen against the blue cliffs  
of heaven.  
Seven mighty nations  
rested beneath the wings  
of the Raven god.  
Red fragments  
of a lost continent,  
they peopled the wilderness.

The throb of the war-drum,  
the sweep of their paddles,  
the croon of wind  
through the mountain cedars  
are buried in words.  
Tulameen, Illecillewaet, Chilcotin,  
Kitsilano, Nechaco, Lollooet  
whisper of the proud race-  
Salishan, Kwakiutl, Tsimpsonian,  
Bella Coola, Haida, Tinget, Nootka-  
seven that vanished  
into the night.

Anchors up in Nootka Bay,  
The ocean is a shimmering floor  
in the palace of the setting sun.  
A breath, warm and sinister,  
is blowing from the southern isles.  
Cook of the "Resolution"  
will not heed the wind of destiny.  
About his prow,  
paddles dripping gold,

swarm the long canoes.  
Dusky hands reach for iron,  
that can bite  
into the bone of a man or a tree.  
Pelts of the otter  
are heaped upon his deck.  
The chantey rings out,  
a parting gun rolls  
a tumbrel of sound  
over the forest.  
A flag whips out  
from the masthead.  
Cook, master seaman,  
is outward bound  
for the port of Death!

Now they pass in swift procession,  
navigators of the Western Sea.  
Meares, Don Martinez, Don Quadra,  
Captain George Vancouver.  
Time without end,  
men have followed the gleam  
westward over sunset trails.  
Westward, stirred by something  
they can not name,  
the dream ships drift  
to red horizons.

Overland,  
across the prairies,  
beneath the shining peaks,  
down tortuous mountain streams,  
through gorge and ravine,  
go the daring voyageurs,  
Mackenzie, Fraser,  
Thompson, Stuart,  
racing to the Pacific,  
hurtling waves on the tide  
bearing outward to the sun.

Dream ships,  
argonauts by land,  
they follow you-  
traders and trappers,  
prospectors, homesteaders,  
the virile breeds of Earth!  
Batteau, canoe, and raft  
move up to the golden sandbars,  
Pack-trains, covered wagons,  
colored rings and bells,  
tinkling on the long trail,  
wind through the valleys.

Land of the Sunset,  
no longer may you remain apart!  
Night in the Rockies.  
Above the song of many waters,  
the voice of Earth,  
and then the answer  
from a Mountain,  
veiled by moonlit clouds.

"What is this thing  
that you have seen, my child?"

"Yes. It was here they drove  
a golden spike  
Then came their iron horse,  
his nostrils wet with steam,  
and shook my Echoes from their sleep."  
"What can it mean?  
You heard them say?"

"I heard them speak of mighty deeds,  
I saw, in visions kindled by their words,  
the future that awaits my Sunset Land.  
This iron road has bound the East and West  
into a commonwealth of hearts and hands,  
and my fair slopes that face the western sea  
have entered in to share a destiny  
great as the stars may grant to nations born  
in hope and strength, in love and liberty."

"New hopes, new dreams,  
new paths without an end!  
These lure man's soul.  
The Western Trail  
is but the pattern of that other unseen way  
across the Great Divide towards a sea  
that stretches through the infinite.

Let the bugles ring  
from the Evergreen Coast,  
over the Pacific,  
challenge to the setting sun.  
"Splendor occasu!!  
Splendor, in a world  
where morning never ends!!"