

Performing Cultural Crossroads: The Subject-Making Functions of I am Declarations in Daniel David Moses's *Almighty Voice and His Wife*.

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Performing Cultural Crossroads: The Subject-Making Functions of “I am” Declarations in Daniel David Moses’s *Almighty Voice and His Wife*

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Abstract

Daniel David Moses's *Almighty Voice and His Wife* tells the legend of a Cree man who lived in Saskatchewan during the end of the nineteenth century. After being arrested for killing a cow, he escaped prison and died in a shootout with over one hundred Mounted police. This essay explores the performed transmission of “I am” declarations in encounters between historical Indigenous figures and perceived white colonial audiences in Moses’s play. In a work that seeks to reshape earlier versions of the Almighty Voice myth, performative utterances are a key strategy for speaking back to colonial legends and a history of enforced Christianity in Canada. *Almighty Voice* features a series of “I am” statements, such as “I’m no

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ghost" and "I am the wife of Almighty Voice;" yet, the final attempt at self-assertion—"Who am I?"—does not leave the audience with truth claims but with questions. Integrating J. L. Austin's concept of speech acts with Judith Butler's performative identity theory and Miri Albahari's theory of possessive subjecthood, this paper outlines four main functions of "I am" statements: 1) to constitute the self; 2) to perform belongingness; 3) to assert ownership over identificatory categories; and 4) to emphasize individuality. The conclusion returns to the larger questions of the subject-making capacities of self-narration in Canadian drama.

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