My recommendation for “Staring Back: The Rhetorical Fitness and Self-fashioning of Ann E. Leak and Lavinia Warren, Nineteenth Century Side Show Performers” is to **accept with revisions**. This is a well written essay with a strong conclusion and nicely framed account of howdisability can function as a generative category for analysis within a rhetorical (and feminist) framework.

My main suggestion for revision has to do with the notion of agency that the author (only sometimes) relies on in the discussions of Leak and Warren. There is an insistence on “self-fashioning” and autonomous subjectivity that seems at odds with the more sophisticated textual agency that the author actually uses in his/her analyses. What the paper needs, I think, is a paragraph early on that explains the notion of agency that’s implied in the analysis—one that recognizes that “Anne E. Leak” and “Lavinia Warren” as we know them have come from layered historical texts, sometimes self authored, sometimes not.

Related to this issue is a too-seamless a movement from “speaking back” (see page 9; first full paragraph), to the actual written documents the author analyzes. The idea of “speaking back” implies a unity and self presence that the actual analyses of written texts do not. Perhaps here is where the author can spell out precisely what is at stake in terms of the rhetorical subjectivities of Leak and Warren. This would work especially well given the analysis of plagiarism in Warren’s work, which begins to speak towards the complicated textual agency I’m thinking of.

There are a couple of small clarifications I’ve asked for in the MS Word Comment feature, and some very small sentence level suggestions. Please see attached.

One note for the editor: Have the appropriate permissions been received for the images in the document? If not, I think piece could run without them.