

In 1994, my father, then a commercial filmmaker, produced a short, fundraising feature for the Big Apple Circus, as well as documentation of that year's circus in its entirety. As usual, the much-loved clown, "Grandma", would lead the show. The '94 show would also include a collaboration with Mummenschanz, a Swiss theater troupe, known for their surrealist masks, and for animating quotidian materials in their performances.

A few months ago, immediately following a session with my psychoanalyst, I found a bobble-head figurine of "Grandma" at a thrift store. I recognized her immediately from my youth. However at that moment, I was overcome more by the figurine's strange likeness to what I remember of my own grandmother: short-cropped curls, long nightie, and a string of pearls. This was a disturbing synthesis, to say the least, and I was afraid that I might never be able to disentangle the association. We all know how the mind can make its shortcuts.

Through the long, narrowing view towards the past, the images naturally distort. Their degradations speak to what? Entitlement to their meaning? Credence to their supposed malleability? Besides the more finite duality of remembering and forgetting, there are more subtle distortions: subjugation and perversion, or sentimentality and nostalgia. Does your past serve you? Or is one "haunted" by it? And by whom or what is it determined?

"Grandma" retired in 2012. His 2018 comeback to the circus was abruptly cancelled after he admitted to having pressured a 16 year-old performer into posing for pornographic photos.

Amidst the superficiality of the present, we tend to have to wait to find out what's lying beneath.

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