

I belong to a certain family of writers. Four of us form a mathematical proportion that comprehends three consecutive centuries, the emergence of wildfire technology and, probably, the force of genetics.

If we really are a mathematical proportion, the product of the extremes should equal the product of the means. Abraham Warshaw and my granddaughter are the extremes. He was my first father-in-law. She is my first grandchild. My daughter and I, Marvin Green, are the means.

If we were really a mathematical proportion, simple arithmetic would enable us to figure out my granddaughter's ultimate vocation, because, with regard to vocation, she's the one undetermined term out of four. Abraham Warshaw was a house painter. Marvin Green is a lawyer. My daughter is a mother.

Probably vocation isn't sufficient to account for or to describe this family. Abraham Warshaw was an intellectual house painter, a chess champion, a man who perhaps lived more in the world of his literary characters than in the reality world. Whether by genetics or otherwise, the reality world for my daughter is the world of her family, with commerce and technology tending to encroach on her world. The reality world absorbs most of Marvin Green's energy, but his ultimate concern is the human perception of the reality world, from biblical times and from ancient Athens to the world as it is perceived by computers and as it will be perceived by human beings, whatever they become in the next hundreds of years. The reality world of the student, my granddaughter, seems to include highly-developed fantasies that are not limited by the reality world; also it seems to include as a presently-dominant force her continuing incipient discovery of herself.

My daughter and Marvin Green are writing novels and exchanging chapters by e-mail. Abraham Warshaw feared that Yiddish was a dead language and that, therefore, his stories, too, and the civilization of Antipolier, Poland, as well, would soon be dead. Family and friends took up a collection to preserve and publish his Yiddish short stories--the English title would be "Years of Fire and Blood." Nowadays "Years of Fire and Blood" would readily and inexpensively be preserved and published on the internet. My granddaughter is a superb writer. She more or less dazzles the likes of Marvin Green with her virtuosity on the internet, and her stories take advantage of everything that technology makes possible. Perhaps, when she is farther along in her self-discovery, she will write of her world with the same force and affection with which Abraham Warshaw recounted the lives and fate of Antipolier and with which my daughter is presently vesting the survivors of the Holocaust.

Marvin Green fears that he is not writing with affection. When he thinks of his whole life, he always reminds himself of these lines from The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock:

Would it have been worth while, . . .
To have squeezed the universe into a ball, . . .
If one, settling a pillow by her head,
Should say, "That is not what I meant at all.
That is not it at all."