

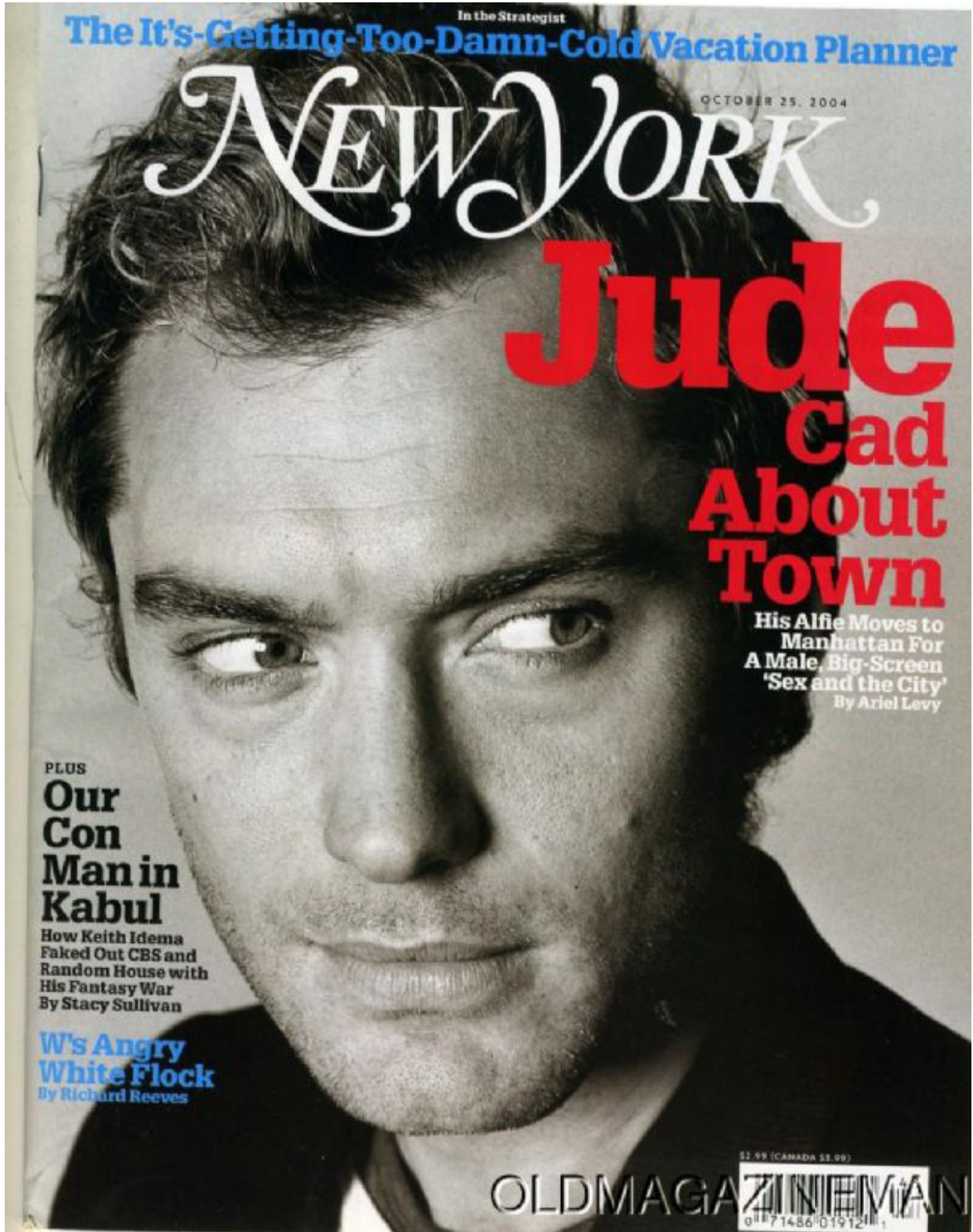
Michael McCarty

Advanced Photography

Project 2 | Portraits

October 5, 2011

Magazine Cover | *inspiration*





**People HEROES AMONG US**

He likes the sound of the word "mom." Laleña, 37, says of Pandu (walking with dad Jason on a nature path near Tompkins Lake, Colo., in August).

**BLIND DAD,**

**BLIND SON, NEW**

# WORLD

Born sightless in India, Pandu was a child no one wanted. Now Jason Fayre and his wife, Laleña, are showing the 6-year-old they brought home to Colorado that life—and love—have no boundaries

BY YICKIE BANE PHOTOGRAPHS BY MATT McCLAIN

INSIDE POETRY BY JENNI RUSSELL

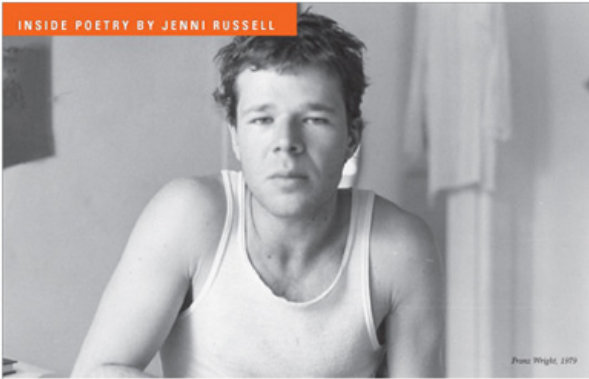


Photo: Wright, 1979

## Franz Wright

Franz Wright's most recent book, *Earlier Poems* (Knopf 2007), is his first four books collected. The gentle yet troubled voice that is peculiarly his own is recognizable in the first poem in the book and keeps a continuity throughout.

Wright, to judge from this collection, had found his voice, or it had found him, right from the start. In his younger years his life had much of the abysmal hard knocks of the American underground, yet the effect of it was to enhance and not degrade his sensitivity. Unnamable psychological states, total mastery, and an inventive style make these poems beautiful, haunting, and memorable. I recently asked Mr. Wright a series of questions, some of them about the poems found in this book.

Your most recent book, *Earlier Poems*, is your first four books collected. While writing "The One Whose Eyes Open When You Close Your Eyes," where did you live? Did you have a job, friends, favorite hangout, high hopes for the future? What was your life like as a young poet?

The poems in that first collection I wrote between the ages of 18 and, I guess, 27, something like that. It was finished not long after my dad's final illness and death in New York in 1980.

After I graduated from high school in 1971, I traveled around Europe for a few months, returned and spent some time with my dad in New York, returned to California (where I'd gone to high school) and worked at a gas station on Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley, then started at Oberlin College in northern Ohio in January 1972. I graduated from Oberlin in 1977 and tried grad school for a few months but it very quickly became apparent to me that I was not cut out for the MFA

route, so I left and a period of years of wandering began—I lived all over the country, though mainly in New York and New England. I was very serious about writing. That always came first, and frankly, when I look back, I am not sure how I survived. It was a different time, there was a more optimistic spirit in the country, and financially it was easier, I guess. I was always broke, but I didn't feel poor. I had wonderful friends who helped me survive. And I had more lives than a cat.

One of my favorites in *Earlier Poems* is "Asking for My Younger Brother." Can you tell me a little about how this poem came to be?

My brother had a much harder time than I did growing up. When my father left my mother (and, incidentally, my brother and me), he was only three, while I was a fairly independent and rowdy eight-year-old. My mother drove the three of us across country from Minneapolis to San Francisco in 1961. Later my mother remarried a guy who turned out to be incredibly brutal toward us, and my brother was always running away. So this was one time I went looking for him in Reno, Nevada. I left "home" when I was eighteen and never really went back.

I find some of your poems to be tragic, but they're always resonating and entertaining. In other words, your poems are enjoyable to read. How important is it to entertain a reader?

I'm not especially interested in trying to entertain anyone. I was just trying to make poems that were simple and clear and mysterious, to some degree—spontaneous-seeming but with depth. Poems that were, I used to say completely concrete and completely unparaphrasable, like reality.

Your poem "My Brother Takes a Hammer to the Mirror" is dedicated to the memory of Thomas James. Who is Thomas James and what kind of influence did he have on you?

Thomas James published one very beautiful collection of poems in the mid-seventies and not long after apparently took his own life, as people sometimes do. I don't know anything about him, though I recall rumors of conflicted sexual identity, maybe some drugs were involved, nothing terribly unusual—I sensed in the title poem of his book, *Letters to a Stranger*, that he was drawn to or felt an ambivalent love for the Catholic Church, and I identified with that.

Some poets feel uncomfortable writing so personally, and others have subjects that they feel are untouchable: family, work, or eroticism. Is there any subject you avoid? If not, which subject do you find most challenging?

I write about whatever presents itself to me—I don't feel limited to any particular subject or mood. Language seems to dictate content, and whatever content there is seems to me fairly irrelevant until I am close to finishing a poem. I never know what I am going to write next until I find myself immersed in it.

While reading the books in *Earlier Poems*, I noticed the first two books were serious in tone, whereas the last two books have more moments of dark humor, which is characteristic of your recent work. Did you eventually start to see the comedy in tragic situations? And do you think humor can be related to coping or healing?

I don't know that there was anything deliberate about the appearance of a kind of dark humor—maybe it was just part of my personality that runs

Franz Wright was born in Vienna in 1933 and grew up in the Northwest, the Midwest, and Northern California. His most recent works include *The Believer*, *Ill Us Selected* and *New Poems: Writing to Martha's Vineyard*, for which he won the Pulitzer Prize in April 2004, and *God's Silence*. His latest collection is 2007's *Earlier Poems*.

He is the recipient of two National Endowments for the Arts grants, a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Whiting Fellowship, and the PEN/Voelcker Prize, among other honors. He works at the Fitzsimons Center for Mental Health and the Center for Caring Children and Teenagers. Wright lives in Waltham, Massachusetts with his wife, Elizabeth.



in my family), and I reached a point where I felt confident enough in my writing to allow it to enter in a bit.

You were recently the poet-in-residence at Brandeis University. You've also taught workshops in Provincetown and Emerson. Are there certain "tips" regarding craft or process that you always tell your students? Will you share one?

I haven't done that much teaching, and when I do, I prefer teaching literature courses. Workshops can be fun, or dreadful, depending on rapport with the students, and I don't have anything against them—I try to get students to read a lot of poetry and become familiar with English prosody—though I think a writing workshop is the wrong place for a young person who is actually serious about becoming a writer.

continued, next panel

Cover Shot | *without headers*



Cover Shot | *with headers*

In the Strategist

**The It's-Getting-Too-Dang-Cold Vacation Planner**

OCTOBER 5, 2011

# NEW YORK

## Josh Cad About Town

Moves to New York  
to Pursue a  
New Career on  
The Big Screen  
By Ariel Levy

PLUS

### **Our Con Man in Kabul**

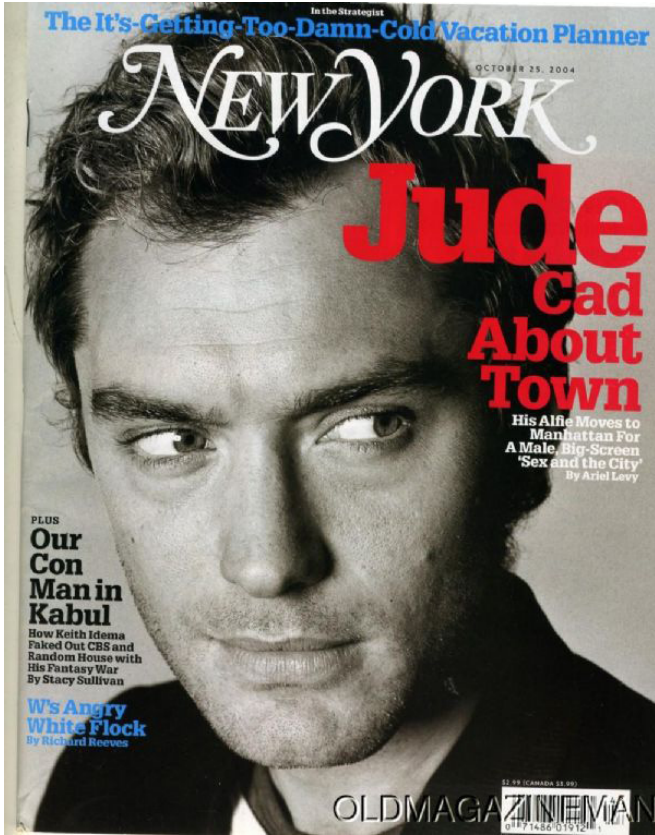
How Keith Idema  
Faked Out CBS and  
His Fantasy War  
By Stacy Sullivan

### **W's Angry White Flock**

By Richard Reeves



# Cover Shots | *side by side*



# Lifestyle Shots | 1



# Lifestyle Shots | 2







# Cad About Town

Joshua Archer | *Behind The Scenes*

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**“Lifes too short to not have fun...”**

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