

**THE QUESTION OF  
IDENTITY AND THE  
PERCEPTION OF THE SELF  
IN *TIMBUKTU*. A NOVEL BY  
PAUL AUSTER**

Emilio Cañadas Rodríguez  
*Universidad Complutense*

**ABSTRACT**

*Timbuktu* (2000) is the last narrative experiment written by the post-modernist writer Paul Auster (Newark, 1947). The experiment consists on providing a dog with all the intelligence and the language of a human being. At the same time, the novel is a quest for a "personal" identity. It is a trip to freedom, a trip to *Timbuktu*. Even though Auster's *Timbuktu* has something of mythological or illusory, it is definitely not the real geographical place in Africa, as the reader may have suspected. The outcome is more symbolic. The purpose of this article is to analyse, through a thorough textual analysis, those symbols, those symbols, that trip to *Timbuktu* and how the question of identity and the self is treated by the author.

Our aim is to deal with those symbols, with the identity and the self, aspects which give *Timbuktu* whole meaning, altogether with autobiography and magic realism: Symbols which will take us to the house of Edgar Allan Poe or to the land of the Pre-Socratic philosophers. A search for identity through the senses of a dog with the name of a man, with a soul, with intelligence and whose knowledge goes further than the knowledge any ordinary dog could have, including, cultural and philosophical learning. And the self when the own dog is able to choose "his" own destiny. Everything connected and linked by the autobiography of the author and the whole set of features from the Jewish tradition in literature.

Paul Auster (Newark, 1947) is said to be "a prime example for the discussion of post-modern literature". The mixture of features from traditional and modern styles - as one of the main aspects of that postmodernism - is a reference in Auster's narrative. His works frame a cobweb that unites tendencies, statements and ideas from the Greek Pre-Socratic philosophy through the 19<sup>th</sup> century American writers

(1) Bradbury (253) when discussing Auster's *The New York Trilogy*.

such as Nathaniel Hawthorne or Poe up to the Nobel Prize winner Saul Bellow in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. And it is that Paul Auster has always thought that “everything is connected with something else” (L51)<sup>2</sup>. This aspect is not exclusive for any of Paul Auster’s disciplines and, therefore, he cannot solely be considered to be a novelist but also a scripter, film-maker or a columnist. In his stories, he reminds us that “every story overlaps with every other story” (L51). This means that Auster’s readers must draw and complete the writer’s universe book by book and that any new story is required and needed as the key to questions which may still be unanswered.

*Timbuktu* (2000) is the last novel written by this North American writer<sup>3</sup>. Any reader could beforehand expect a story on a trip to that African city as in Bruce Chatwick’s or a story about women living there, their lives and feelings, etc... as the books by Manuel Villar Raso or, otherwise, a mythical or mythological story. Due to the fact that in Auster everything is connected with something else, the novel, indeed, is a trip to Timbuktu. However, this time is different. Even though Auster’s *Timbuktu* has something of mythological or illusory, it is definitely not the real geographical place in Africa, as the reader may have suspected. The outcome is more symbolic. Our purpose is to analyse those symbols, that trip to Timbuktu and how the question of identity and the self is treated by the author.

The symbols, the identity and the self are the features which give *Timbuktu* whole meaning. Meanwhile, autobiography (as it happens with other American writers like, for example, Truman Capote, his autobiography is hidden, masked, or spread all over his works. Auster says “I am the place where everything begins” (L51). Most of his characters like in a “bildungs-roman” are writers; when they are not, they are people living in New York or people who, somehow, resembles the writer.) and magic realism (the appearance of a magic moment which frames his narrative around and which, simultaneously, determines and changes the development of the story and characters as in *Lulu on the Bridge* or *Timbuktu*.) are the basis which complete and fulfil the idea of the author. Both features are, as everything else, linked for a double aspect: first, randomness and fortune, which have always played an important role in Paul Auster’s life and, second, philosophy.

*Timbuktu* is the story of a dog named Mr. Bones. He is a clever dog who will have to make his own decisions and take his own chances in life. He is companion

---

(2) We will use in this essay the letters L in order to refer to *Leviathan* and T to refer to *Timbuktu*..

(3) In year 2001, Paul Auster has collected 180 stories from radio programme and published them like a book with the title *I thought that my father was God.*, and also known as *True tales in American life*.

to Willy G. Christmas, formerly Willy Gurovitch, a Jewish writer who at the beginning of the story is dying of a severe illness. Mr. Bones then will have to decide what to do with his life when his owner, Willy, dies. Moreover, the novel also deals with a set of human relationships and with the ability of any human being to sense and feel through reality and imagination.

Formally, the story is divided into five large chapters which we could group in two well-defined parts. In the first one, the most important, Mr. Bones and Willy travel to Baltimore remembering lives. In the second, containing the last three chapters of the story and written in a faster tension, Mr. Bones looks for new horizons, for a new life. The story is told by a narrator who, in some moments, seems to camouflage with Mr. Bones, giving the idea that the dog, at the same time, is witness and narrator. Nevertheless, Auster is clearly behind dogs and owners using their minds to articulate his own thoughts.

Thematically, all major aspects of Auster's books are also found in *Timbuktu*. Jim Shepard enumerates these permanent Auster's subjects as "the nature of solitude and memory; the lost father and the abandoned son; the power of contingency; the confrontation between the individual and the void". Apart from that, one of the major aspects of the book is Mr. Bones's perception of the world. As we mentioned before, there is a deep philosophical level of ideas and Auster uses that level in order to show that the construction of the world by Mr. Bones follows an empirical pose and that his knowledge of the world is build up through a process of sensory perception. So, the writer follows the idea when he gives the dog the ability to know the world by the senses. Mr. Bones, alike all dogs, is "next to be blind" (T37) and to acknowledge reality, as Auster says "only the nose was of any value" (T37). Mr. Bones is a clever dog, more intelligent and more human than other dogs, and then, he is a passive receiver of intelligence in three different ways: first, through the pseudo-intellectual education that he receives from Willy, his owner, the second, through his own experiences which take him to make conclusions in such an unbelievable way for humans. And third, and mostly, by his perception from smell.

Auster affirms that everything Mr. Bones knows of the world, anything he has discovered, either ideas or passion, is a result of a smelling process. Both, Auster and Willy, his character, are really interested in the relationship between smell and

(4) Jim Shepard in the New York Times on the web (Late edition, 20 June 1999)

(5) Even the title of his book *Leviathan*, reminds of the homonym written by the philosopher Hobbes in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The theories of Hobbes can also be studied under the heading of the empirist pose. Among other interesting points in Hobbes's theories in *Leviathan*, set through a kind of social contract, establish HARMONY for the ANARCHY of the world

reality. Then, they insist on the point saying that “when Mr. Bones finds an exciting scent the rest of the world cease to exist.” (T37) It is Patrick Suskind, in his narrative *The Perfume* who also established that association in which scent and life have strong and outrageous connexions. Willy wants to know, in this sense, to what extent Mr. Bones’s sensory perception is active in the construction of the world and what the difference between men and animals is in this respect.

“How not to be fascinated by all this? A dog had roughly two hundred and twenty million scent receptors, whereas a man had but five million, and with a disparity as great as that, it was logical to assure that the world perceived by a dog was quite different from the one perceived by a man. Logic had never been Willy’s strength but in this case he was driven by love as much as by intellectual curiosity, and therefore he stuck with the question with more persistence than usual”. (T37-38)

Auster’s irony, mixed with that philosophical sub-level all his stories contain, led Willy to wonder what Mr. Bones feels when he smells something. To get a definite answer Willy spends a long time observing the dog and that close observation “...had led him to conclude that there were essentially three categories of interest to Mr. Bones food, sex, and information about other dogs” (T38). This idea of close observation of the elements of nature, follows the basis of the empirical approach. Pre-socratic philosophers as, for example, Thales of Mileto, wondered about deep concerns of that nature and anyone can picture the image of Willy (and also Thales) sitting on a chair or a stone staring at the dog or a cow and trying to reach a conclusion for their search. Later, other philosophers such as Locke, Hume or Hobbes would carry and, somehow, enlarge this vision of life.

However, the interests of Mr. Bones are deeper than predicted: the dog was keen on living the best possible life accepting the given quality of being more intelligent than most of the dogs. Once more, following his philosophical knowledge, in a certain moment of the book, Auster reminds or rephrases Plato’s famous statement “the form of the forms” when he says that Mr. Bones was “the dog of dogs” (T40). There is a kind of humanism always present and lurked in every line. In this sense, Willy wonders whether dogs, and particularly Mr. Bones, would be able to perceive and taste Art. This question is difficult to be answered, however, Willy, (admitting and accepting the fact of Mr. Bones’s good soul and despite the fact that Art is a human activity which seeks to reach that soul), says that

“And if, as all philosophers on the subject have noticed, art is a human activity that relies on the senses to reach that soul, did it not also stand to reason that dogs-at least dogs of Mr. Bones cali-

would have it in them to feel similar aesthetic impulse? Would not in other words be able to appreciate art, Art based in the sense of smell?" (T39)

That mentioned humanism appears in the dog's answer to the question when he says that "for a dog, all aspects of life are a symphony of smells and that life is a complete physical and spiritual experience." (T42)

The opening line of the book "Mr. Bones knew that Willy wasn't long for this world" (T1) reflects all the aspects we discussed before. From the very beginning Auster is a master-God who provides Mr. Bones with the gift of knowledge, being that knowledge the result of an empirical process based upon smell, according to the biological predominant process of constructing experience in dogs. Mr. Bones's construction of reality is not a simple intuition or approximation to experience but full-awareness and an intelligent control of the process. In this sense, he realized that Willy's illness was severe and that bleeding was the next step and that death awaits as the end of everything. Moreover, the reader learns that the dog is clever enough to force and control the steps of illnesses. Therefore, the knowledge of Mr. Bones could be described as human in the sense of being able to guess the turn of the events as any other human being would have done it.

Willy and Mr. Bones head to Baltimore in order to find an old Willy's friend and give her the key which opens the locker where the are some manuscripts written by Willy in the past. This is a reference to Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (where finally, Ernest was found in a locker in Victoria Station). Mr. Bones is aware of the situation in these last moments.

These trips up and down the United States show, as Michiko Kakutani mentions, a similar kind of relationship to that intimate, personal, and conflictive affinity of Don Quijote and Sancho Panza "Mr. Bones would play to Sancho Panza to Willy's Don Quixote. He will accompany Willy on his shuffling peregrinations around America"<sup>107</sup>. Nevertheless, Baltimore is the end: the end of the trip, the end of Willy, the end of his world, and the end to the first part of the story (according to the division we previously set), and, in addition, it is a definite symbol for Auster, for Willy. Baltimore is the only place to go and, unconsciously, the right place to die. Fate decided to make Willy die at the entrance of Edgar Allan Poe's residence in that

(6) Michiko Kakutani in *My Life as a Dog: In his Master's death a dog feels vagaries*. In *The New York Times* late edition, 25 June 1999. Section E, page 35.  
 (7) Somehow Jack Kerouac and his novel *On the Road* is present on this never-ending travel.

city. Baltimore is also the symbol for the dramatic moment of recognition both characters experience when Willy dies.

Meanwhile, the scents of *The Perfume* come to us again when Mr. Bones discovers he dislikes the city just because of the smell, it does not smell as good as other cities he has travelled before. In this contrast we find encapsulated much of the symbolism of the story, which simultaneously is recurrent in Auster's works: the question of identity and the search for it as a clash between the never-ending dialogue of the rational and the empirical, the human and the animal inside us.

Auster gives dogs as well as men memory, sense of history and the fact of sentimentalising the past among other features and so Mr. Bones thinks, knows, understands, remembers, communicates, expects, dreams, panics, etc...as if he were a human being. This process of identity is taken upside down when we can read that "His master was a man with the heart of a dog". Doubtless, identity and its combinations are one of the most important aspects not only in Paul Auster's narrative but also in all Jewish literary tradition and, for example, in the case of Saul Bellow's *Herzog*. In Auster, apart from *Timbuktu*, this happens clearly in *The New York Trilogy* and specially in "*City of Glass*" where, as an example, the writer, Quinn, is mixed up with Paul Auster who is not a writer but a detective. Quinn acts like Paul Auster's detective to discover later that the only Paul Auster in New York is a writer which is the author itself and, at the same time, we discovered that the detective protagonist of Quinn's books is dressed with the clothes of the most definite case of identity problems, "William Wilson".

The perception of the world invades the story bit by bit at this point. And Mr. Bones makes his own conclusions about Mrs. Gurovitch, his son and in a wider sense, the world.

"As Mr. Bones discovered the differences between Mrs. Gurovitch and were much smaller than he had first supposed and it was true that their smells had nothing in common" (T30)

Auster, the narrator, masked sometimes as Mr. Bones, shows the development of the dog's identity. In a new and clear example of the odd system of identities created by Auster in his narrative, the reader learns that Mr. Bones has inherited, as sons from parents, attributes from Willy: his irony, his humour, his metaphysical view of the world, etc... And even, from Mrs. Gurovitch (Willy's mother) "the benefits of an occasional good cry"

Nineteen century writers such as Hawthorne or Melville, Thoreau or Emerson and, above all, Edgar Allan Poe are, apart from Saul Bellow, the major influences that

the reader can identify in Auster's. This way, Auster not only refer to Poe's William Wilson but also, as previously mentioned, carry Willy to die at 203 Armit Street in Baltimore' and to reinforce that is the author who, ironically, says that "This Poe fella was my grandpa, the great forebear and daddy of all of us Yankee scribes. Without him, there wouldn't have been no me, no them, no nobody... We've wound up in Poe-land" (T45). The humorous element appears when Willy tells Mr. Bones the destination of the trip and he misunderstands his master by taking for granted that is Poland, the country where Willy's ancestors came from, instead of POE-land.

In this moment, the language, one of the major aspects and concerns of the Jewish literary tradition is introduced here. As Michiko Kakutani says "The limits of language and free will". Auster gives Mr. Bones the ability to speak, although, there is biological impediment that the author solves dreaming. We learn about Mr. Bones's dreams where he can perform this ability, and so hear his words in his 'visions'. Language implies communication and understanding. A process which Mr. Bones completes in another excellent example

"Mr. Bones understood. He always understood what Willy said to him. This had been the case for as long as he could remember and by now his grasp of Ingloosh was as good as any immigrant who had spent seven years in America.... It was his second language, and quite different from the one his mother had taught him, but even though his pronunciation left something to be desired, he had thoroughly mastered the ins and outs of its syntax and grammar. None of this should be as strange or unusual for an animal of Mr. Bones intelligence." (T6)

Mr. Bones considers himself capable of understanding English and he equally considers that there is nothing wrong or strange about it. So, Paul Auster, always so fond of Magic Realism in his writings, makes his dog speak (even if it happens in dreams or showing the deep and complete concept of speaking the dog has) and

(8) Georges Walter in his book about Poe tells the reader about that house. The next quotation comes from the Spanish edition due to the impossibility to get the English version. "En el último año se habían mudado con la abuela gravemente enferma para vivir en la pequeña casa de dos pisos de Armit Street en el número 3. Comprendía dos habitaciones y una cocina al nivel del suelo y dos alcobas en la planta superior. Convertida en museo hoy lleva el número 203 en una calle en que el artefacto, al atardecer, en las esquinas, puede conseguir crack." (191)

(9) The writer Bernard Malamud, in the chapter titled *The Jewbird*, in his narrative *Idiot's First*, gives a bird the ability to speak and a way to use the language as a communicator of the persecution that these people feel? This persecution is particularly hard and obvious in the narrative we just mentioned despite of the fact that is also present in the rest of his literary production.

constructs a language called Ingloosh. Therefore, he gives Mr. Bones the skills not only to speak it but also to understand human language. This irony and sense of humour reminds us of Bellow's *Henderson and The Rain King*. Anyway, soon after, the same writer limits the idea.

“It wasn't for the lack of earnest effort but biology was against him and what with the configuration of muzzle, teeth and tongue that fate had saddle him with, the best he could do was emit a series of yaps and yawns and yowls, a moaning, muddled sort of discourse” (T7)

In Baltimore, Willy is about to die. There, Mr. Bones remembers their life together. This moment, filled up with memories, brings the reader to another major aspect: the sense of History. And incredibly enough, Mr. Bones has it. And he recalls how Willy's family comes from Poland, and that they came to live to New York and that, Willy, from an early age, became a drunkard and later a drug-addict, and that sometimes he was homeless and that Mr. Bones and that Mr. Bones was for Willy an angel, a salvation, or better, part of it. Like in the Jewish culture and the Jewish tradition, Willy acts like “the one chosen” not only in a clear reference to the individual but also to the whole community. In this sense, Auster creates the magical moment that we talked about in the introduction and that changes his stories and that will choose Willy as the centre. This time, that moment clearly resembles Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. Something odd, something unusual, difficult to explain makes the lives of the characters change: If in Dickens' Mr. Scrooge is visited by three spirits in Auster's Willy Gurovitch receives the unexpected and magical visit of Santa Claus when he was watching TV. Both characters learnt the lesson and changed. In this case, he changes his name, his life and turns alcohol and drugs into piety and charity.

The end of the first part of the book is the end of Willy. Mr. Bones after having been dreaming of what will happen, realized that Willy still is not dead. So, he tells the reader that Willy will go to Timbuktu. The process of humanisation that had started with the senses comes to a higher point when the reader finds that

“there was no doubt in the dogs mind that the next world was a real place. It was called Timbuktu, and for everything Mr. Bones could gather, it was located in the middle of a desert somewhere, far from New York or Baltimore, far from Poland or any other city they had visited in the course of their travels.” (T48)

That is the “other” “leiv-motiv” of the book. To Mr. Bones the afterlife and the fate of humans is a real place called Timbuktu. It is a trip that the dog presumed and



imagined "most difficult and unpleasant". And, moreover, it was difficult for him to imagine "what life would be like in such a place". Nothing else than an existential survey for a dog. "By now even the sound of the word was enough to make him happy". What we have here is the existential worries of a person for whom death is a tragedy but paradise is the end of the way. But, for Mr. Bones is not only a place for men but also a place for dogs, the place where they are alike and dogs can talk. It is essential to note that the reader can find another remarkable topic for the Jewish writers: the difference between heaven and hell. Alfred Kazin applies for Bellow what we can apply to Auster.

"In book after book Bellow went about the business of ordering life, seeing it through, working it out. He was intimate with the heights-and-abysss experience of so many intellectual Jews, the alternating experience of humiliation and the paradise of intellectual illumination. And it was this depiction of life as an incessant mental struggle, of heaven and hell in the same Jewish head, that made Bellow's readers recognize a world the reverse of the provincial, a quality of thought somber, tonic, bracing, that was now actual to American experience yet lent itself to Bellow fascinatingly personal sense of things." (130-131)

Mr. Bones dreams and dreams into dreams and realizes that he is dreaming and, in fact, he utterly discovers that he has come back to reality like coming out of a tunnel. But, moreover, he, once in reality, realizes of the great similarity between dream and reality and, therefore, he decides to change the curse of events and to start a new life. He chooses to reinvent himself and gets involved in a trip to eternity, a never-ending trip through different owners to find the right way. Like Benjamin Sachs had to do in *Leviathan*.

As we said, without Willy, Mr. Bones has to reinvent his story. Auster's characters are always taken somehow to the extreme and they, with great similarity to the Jewish people, seem to be destined to suffer and Mr. Bones is not an exception. Nevertheless, there is a small option for a change, a change to adapt to the new world. Particularly, Mr. Bones's transformation is produced as he is learning to survive like happens in Jack London's *White Fang*. Mr. Bones has the sense or the habit of hunting or providing for himself and had to achieve if his aim was survival. There is a resemblance of the savage in Huxley's *Brave New World* or the savage in Rousseau's. It was like to start from zero all over again.

In this "brave new world" that Mr. Bones "would have to unlearn", he keeps on being human although it is true that it becomes part of the "wild world" where the most intellectual part of his existence gives path and field to the most natural and

animal ways of perception through the nasal and the visual. His North, his South is not mind anymore but matter. He had never had contact with children and the first experience had a kind of bitter taste for him. Anyway, from this first experience he found a new human to love

“By then, the speaker had poked his head in far enough for Mr. Bones to get a clear view of his features, and at last he understood that he wasn’t looking at his tormentor. The face belonged to a Chinese boy of ten or eleven, and in that first indelible instant, Mr. Bones felt that it was one of the loveliest human faces he had ever had the pleasure to gaze upon.” (T98)

Right here is when Mr. Bones meets his new owner, after a surviving experience with aggressive children. Henry, a boy, is the one who would take care of the dog now despite the fact his parents did not know the existence of Mr. Bones. This “meeting”, this first stop in this trip of no return, this new owner means that after everything he had been through, this visualization does not avoid the beast to have an artistic concept of beauty and even of pleasure. But not only that but to have a gradation and evaluation of that beauty and it is by his thoughts that we find he’s got a sense of beauty almost romantic.

After having met him he takes another important decision that is to stay with him although clandestinely. The important fact here is that to stay with Henry means to break sharply with the past and to leave Willy’s teachings behind and this time is forever “And so it was that Mr. Bones went against his master’s teachings and wound up living by the gates of hell”.

New master, new theories, new hopes, new topics that he couldn’t really understand as for example, why two types of births, the Orioles and the Blue Jays play a game called Baseball, etc... Everything kept on going up to the moment Mr. Chow, Henry’s father discovers that his son had had Mr. Bones hidden. Just for the noise, for the eyes of Mr. Chow, the dog knew that everything was lost. The world that Mr. Bones learnt to live after Willy’s death was starting to tumble down and Mr. Bones perceived it. Equally, that sensory perception made him aware of danger once more and his life again needs to make a new decision which, once more, is to run away and to continue his way. It is the fight for survival.

The last part is the meeting with the last family, the last owners and the last moments... The dream factor, so important in Auster determines this part and its beginning. He dreams over Willy again and again and in the dreams they converse as two friends, father and son or better like two souls. Conversation which had curative results in Mr. Bones. He was alone, he was sad, he was tired, he was old, he had



Through the influence of the great writers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Auster takes the reader also for some of the main aspects of the Jewish tradition including that search for identity or the sense of history, among others. The whole of them, once more, carried out through Mr. Bones' sensory perception of the world: a world full of scents

As a conclusion we can say that *Timbuktu* follows the thematic patterns established by Auster in the last fifteen years. In this original story, his world, like a cobweb, spans further establishing interconnections with the rest of his narrative on the structure of a strong philosophical building. In such a context of philosophy and deeper connections is where the identification of Man and Beast is almost complete: they are not only friends but souls they cannot do without each other. The search for identity, a major theme in Auster's narrative, is one of the main features which link those two souls. An identity which is, on one hand, personal and individual as human beings and, on the other, a search for the identity of a race or religion.

In Mr. Bones lonely trip searching for freedom and therefore for *Timbuktu* he meets a final family which will give him care, attention and also, pain and solitude. They would love him but, at the same time, they would circumcise him, they would provide for him but they would live him in a dog-house. Solitude came to his end, to dream in panic again with a very strange Willy this time and he would announce Mr. Bones that he had been admitted in *Timbuktu*. Mr. Bones left the hospital for dogs, run and run never looking back like possessed till the end of the way, till the point where life ends, to the place where the border to paradise is, a Highway, *Timbuktu*.....Happiness.

"Mr. Bones was ill-equipped to parse the subtleties of dreams, visions, and other mental phenomena, but he did know for certain that Willy was in *Timbuktu*, and if he himself had just been with Willy, perhaps that meant the dream had taken him to *Timbuktu* as well. That would explain, perhaps, why he had suddenly found himself able to speak after so many years of struggle and failure" (T120-121)

Anyway, the outcome situation makes Mr. Bones wonder for the order of the world, for what there is after life, if *Timbuktu* is really the answer and, if it is, if Willy would be there and if dogs would be allowed and if they are allowed, if he would be able to speak like humans. Mr. Bones, again, facing that difficult situation has existential doubts as any human may have.

suffer so many deceptions, he was hungry, he was frightened, he didn't know where to go and the conversation with Willy made him aware that Willy was always guiding him and "He no longer felt afraid".

where Mr. Bones body is the ideal communication system to the outside world and where the senses act from the world to the knowledge, conscience and reason.

The language, the search for perfection or the trip to eternity are aspects that affects Mr. Bones as much as affects the Jewish writings and through his senses Mr. Bones is able to seize, to measure, to understand not only love, but necessary concepts as those of happiness, hate, beauty, pleasure or art.

Mr. Bones world is a world almost entirely perceived by the smell and learnt by experience, his life, and through his HOMOSAPIENSNESS. So this perception is real enough, human, and even, intellectual and existential. Even animal, according to Auster, wonders if there's life after death, which the limit between good and evil is or why a dog cannot be an angel or a god if the only thing, as Willy and Auster maintains that you have to do, is "to read the word *dog* the other way around".

## References

- Auster, P. *The New York Trilogy*. London: Faber and Faber (1987)
- *Leviathan*. London: Faber and Faber (1993)
  - *The Sound of Solitude*. London: Faber and Faber (1992)
  - *Timbuktu*. New York: Picador (2000)
  - *The Red Notebook*. London: Faber And Faber (1994)
  - (ed.), *I thought that my father was God: And Other TrueTales from NPR's National Story Project*. New York: Henry Holt and Company (2001)
- Bellow, S *Herzog*. London: Penguin (1975)
- *Henderson and the Rain King*. London: Penguin (1965)
- Bradbury, M. *The Modern American Novel*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Chaplin Hills, P (ed); *How we Live: Contemporary Live in Contemporary Fiction*. New York: MacMillan (1968).
- Dickens, C; *One Christmas*. London: Penguin (1994)
- Goldstein, Bl; "Paul Auster: An Interview". *The New York Times on the Web*, May 5, 1999.

- Kakutani, M; "My Life as a Dog: In His Master's Death, a Dog Feels Life's Vagaries", *The New York Times*. Late Edition. June 25, 1999. Section E, p.35.
- Kazin, A; *Bright Book of Life*. London: Secker and Warburg (1974)
- Kerouac, J. *On the Road*. London: Penguin, 1972.
- London, J; *White Fang*. London: Penguin (1994)
- Malamud, B; *Idiot's First*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux (1963)
- Plato; *The Republic*. Translation by Desmond Lee. New York: Penguin (1996)
- Shepard, J "This Dog's Life". *The New York Times*. Late Edition. June 20, 1999;
- Walter, G; *Poe*. Madrid: Anaya (1995)