

Augi eras, Fran ois (1925–71), French author. Augi eras was born in the US to a French mother of Polish origin and a French father. His parents had emigrated in 1922 to the US, where his father, a well-known pianist, had been teaching at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester. Just before their first and only child was born, the father died. Within a few months, his mother migrated back to Paris, where the young Augi eras passed his early youth and acquired his life-long loathing for the city. In 1933, mother and child moved to P erigueux in the Dordogne, where Augi eras felt much more at ease. At the age of 14, he left his mother, whom he found tyrannical. During the years of World War II and the German occupation, he lived a nomadic life. His first social activities were with the Vichy youth movement, which he liked for its pagan views but not for its Nazi ideology. He continued with road theatre and worked in a shelter for boys with learning disabilities. In 1944, he joined the French navy in the hope of getting to his uncle, a retired colonel who lived in the Saharan oasis of El Golea; meeting this uncle once in Paris had made a deep impression. The uncle lived in an old fortress that was transformed into a desert museum. After stays in a psychiatric asylum and in a monastery, the nephew finally arrived in El Golea.

The experience of El Golea transformed Augi eras from an erratic young man into a nomadic peripatetic author. His first book, *Le Vieillard et l'enfant* (*The Old Man and the Child*, 1949), is a romanticised version of his life at the 'bordj' of his uncle. Although he was 19 years of age when his relations with his uncle started, he imagined it as a pederastic union, his uncle taking him on the roof of the fortress

under a clear sky of stars. Sex is clearly present in most of his novels, including incest, homosexuality, sadism and bestiality, all described in a very decent way. The characteristics of the first book, male-bonding, homoeroticism, an overwhelming presence of nature, nomadism, paganism and a dreamy but vital style, set the tone for his life, writing and painting. Augi eras loathed women, whom he regarded as living only to procreate, while men lived to create art. The worlds of men and women are antagonistic, and he made a radical choice for a world of men. Women were largely absent in most of his books. He himself entered, however, an unhappy marriage with a woman.

The first novel was self-published by the author and sent to the luminaries of French literature of the time. Gide responded in a very positive way to the first book, as did others. The novel was published two years later in a shorter version by Minuit. *Le Voyage des morts* (1959) continues the story of his life in the Maghreb. He roamed through North Africa and went to Greece, but always returned to the Dordogne. From this vantage point he would tell similar stories to the earlier ones from the Sahara: *L'Apprenti sorcier* (1964), *Domme, ou l'Essai d'occupation* (1981) and *Les Barbares d'Occident* (1990). Another novel is set on the renowned Greek peninsula where only monks live, *Un voyage au Mont Athos* (1970). *Une Adolescence au temps du mar chal, et de multiples aventures* (1968) is a kind of autobiography, and meanders through all the locations of his life. Augi eras spent his last years in his beloved Dordogne and died in a local hospital, exhausted by the strains of a nomadic life. A small stream of biographical material continues to appear, drawing attention to his work and life. Only *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* has been translated into English.

Philippe Berthier, *Fran ois Augi eras, l'apprenti sorcier* (Seysse, 1994); Jean Chalon et al., *Fran ois Augi eras ou Le Th atre des Esprits*

(Poitiers, 1998); *Masques*, no.13 (Spring 1982), special issue on Fran ois Augi eras; Paul Placet, *Fran ois Augi eras: un barbare en Occident* (P erigueux, 1988); Paul Placet and Pascal Sigoda (eds), *Augi eras, une trajectoire rimbaldivienne* (Charleville-M ezi eres, 1996); Christian Rodier and Georges Monti (eds), *Fran ois Augi eras* (Cognac, 1984).

Gert Hekma