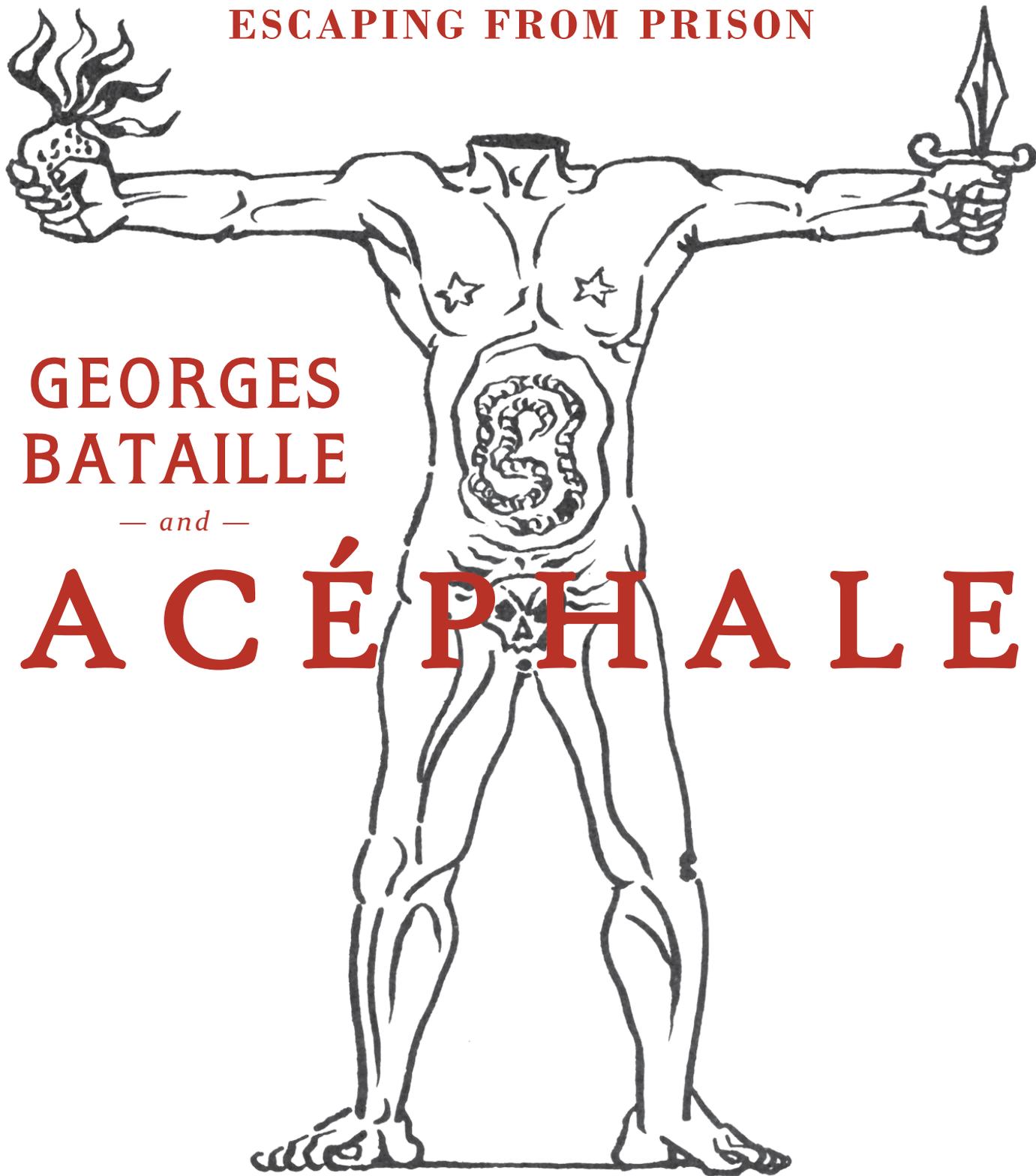


**MAN WILL ESCAPE HIS HEAD
LIKE A CONDEMNED MAN
ESCAPING FROM PRISON**



**GEORGES
BATAILLE**

— and —

A C É P H A L E

**MAN IS FREE TO LOVE NOTHING,
BECAUSE THE CAUSELESS AND AIMLESS UNIVERSE THAT GAVE HIM LIFE
HAS NOT NECESSARILY GRANTED HIM AN ACCEPTABLE DESTINY.**

GEORGES BATAILLE

THE SACRED CONSPIRACY

THE INTERNAL PAPERS OF THE SECRET SOCIETY OF ACÉPHALE
AND LECTURES TO THE COLLEGE OF SOCIOLOGY

TEXTS BY GEORGES BATAILLE, ROGER CAILLOIS, PIERRE KLOSSOWSKI, MICHEL LEIRIS
AND BY GEORGES AMBROSINO, PIERRE ANDLER, MICHEL CARROUGES, JACQUES CHAVY,
JEAN DAUTRY, HENRI DUBIEF, HENRI DUSSAT, IMRE KELEMEN, JEAN ROLLIN AND PATRICK WALDBERG
ILLUSTRATIONS BY ANDRÉ MASSON

EDITED AND INTRODUCED BY MARINA GALLETTI & ALASTAIR BROTCHE
TRANSLATIONS BY JOHN HARMAN & NATASHA LEHRER
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“What we are starting is a war.”

This book recounts what must be one of the most unusual intellectual journeys of modern times, in which Georges Bataille — still best known outside of France as a highly wrought pornographer (*The Story of the Eye* etc.) — having spent the early Thirties in far-left groups opposing the rise of Fascism, abandoned that approach in order to transfer the struggle on to “the mythological plane”.

In 1937, he founded two groups in order to explore the combinations of power and the “sacred” at work in society (Bataille associated the sacred with expenditure, eroticism and death). The first group, the College of Sociology, gave lectures that were intended to reveal the hidden undercurrents within a society on the verge of catastrophe. Bataille and Roger Caillois produced some of their finest texts for these sessions, in which many of the most celebrated intellectuals of the period participated. The second group was Acéphale, a genuine secret society whose emblem was a headless figure that in part represented the death of God. This “ferocious” anti-religion enacted torch-lit rituals in a forest at night beneath an oak tree that had been struck by lightning. Until the discovery a few years ago of the group’s internal papers (which include theoretical texts, meditations, minutes of meetings, rules and prohibitions and even a membership list), almost nothing was known of its activities. Here is the story of what must be among the strangest associations in political, literary or occult history.

This book is the first to collect a representative selection of the writings of Bataille, and of those close to him, in the years leading up to the war. They judged that the time was right to confront the most intractable problems of the human condition head-on: how to live an integrated existence in a universe that is ruthless, absurd and indifferent? And how to oppose repressive and unequal social structures given the obvious impotence of the democracies and the political left when faced with far-right ideology? Such themes have a renewed resonance today.

The texts published here comprise lectures given to the College of Sociology by Bataille, Caillois and Michel Leiris, essays from the *Acéphale* journal and a large cache of the internal papers from the secret society. A desperate narrative unfolds, and Bataille risked all in this wholly unreasonable quest. With a few fellow travellers, he undertook what he later described as a “journey out of this world”.

— ADVANCE ORDERS —

Orders received in January/February 2018: £20 post free in UK, + £5 Europe (inc. Scandinavia, and Russia) + £10 elsewhere. Orders received in March 2018: £20 + full postage, UK £6, Europe £10, the rest £15. *The Sacred Conspiracy* will be available at Bookartbookshop for personal collection at £20 until the end of May (see website for opening times). Orders and payments to PayPal at <editor@atlaspress.co.uk> (please ensure we do not pay the fees). If you do not have a PayPal account we can send an invoice payable by credit or debit card. Please supply your full name and postal address and put “The Sacred Conspiracy” in the email title line.