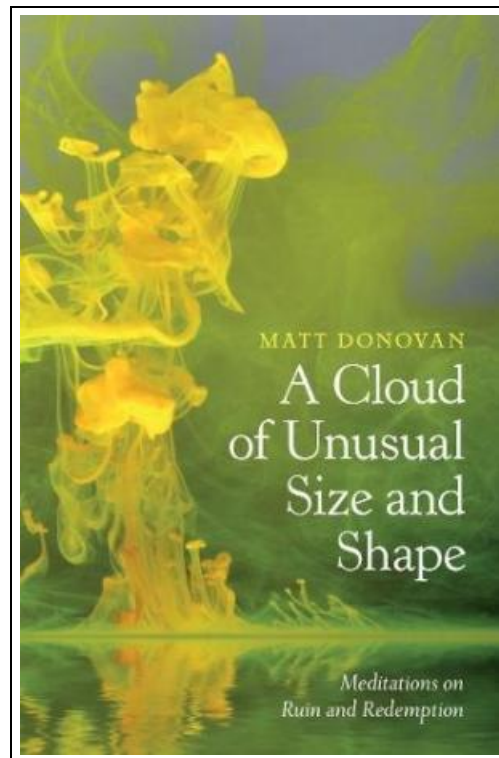


## A Cloud of Unusual Size and Shape: Meditations on Ruin and Redemption



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## A CLOUD OF UNUSUAL SIZE AND SHAPE: MEDITATIONS ON RUIN AND REDEMPTION



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Trinity University Press. Paperback. Condition: New. 224 pages. The title cloud of Matt Donavans extraordinary nonfiction debut, *A Cloud of Unusual Size and Shape*, refers to the volcanic eruption of Mount Vesuvius that in 79 AD buried the city of Pompeii under twenty feet of ash. Today a remarkable 2.5 million people a year visit the ruins of the Italian city. Its no surprise, then, that Donovan found the sacred place a site of inspiration and power, devoting six pieces to exploring the homes and villas that have been preserved. Donovan takes off from various points in the Roman ruins to explore the inconstancy of any given moment alongside the processes used to make casts of the vacancies left by the citys dead to create positive monuments to their last gestures. Donovan pursues the image of the cloud throughout his spell-binding meditations on ruin and redemption. He explores the cloud of the original atomic bomb test at the Trinity site. From there, he inevitably touches on the same cloud rising above Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He uses the occasion of the provocative film *The Day After*, aired in 1983, starring JoBeth Williams, Steve Guttenberg, John Cullum, Jason Robards, and John Lithgow, to explore a fictional account of a nuclear attack on the U. S. Though his mother objected to Donovans seeing the film, it was shown in his school, giving him another cascading image of the mushroom cloud, which was viewed by 100 million people, making it the most-watched TV broadcast in history. In his signature style, Donovan takes off from the literal event to explore how our imaginations are shaped by the popular images of nuclear destruction. Moving from atomic devastation to the beauty of the cherry blossoms in Washington, DC, Donovan finds the sort of uncanny connections that...



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