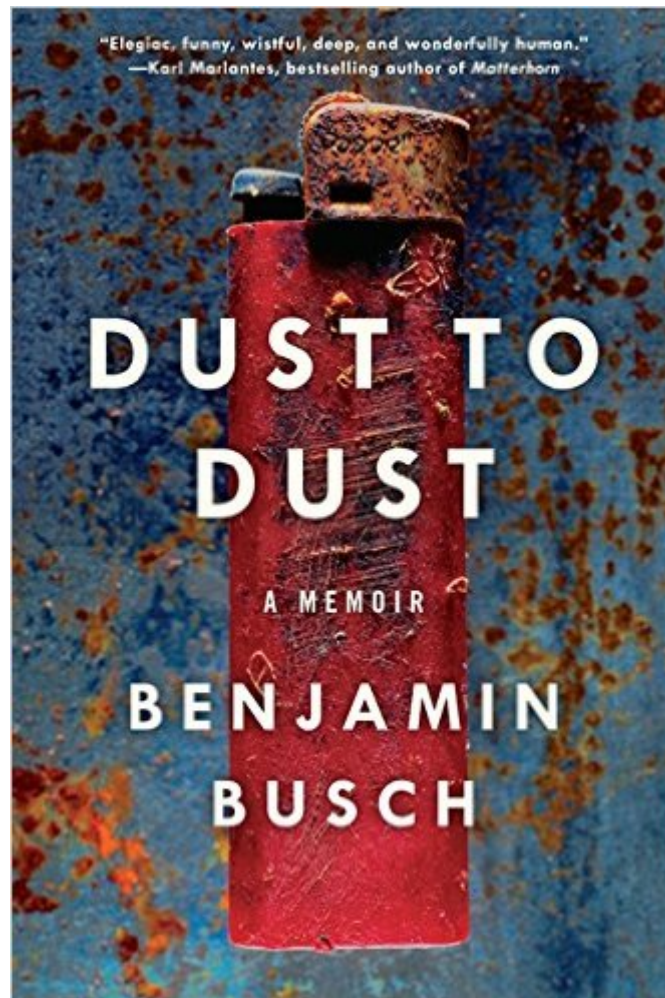


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# Dust To Dust: A Memoir



## Synopsis

Tim O'Brien meets Annie Dillard in this remarkable memoir by debut author Benjamin Busch. Much more than a war memoir, *Dust to Dust* brilliantly explores the passage through a lifetime—a moving meditation on life and death, the adventures of childhood and revelations of adulthood. Seemingly ordinary things take on a breathtaking radiance when examined by this decorated Marine officer—a veteran of two combat tours in Iraq—an actor on the hit HBO series *The Wire*, and son of acclaimed novelist Frederick Busch. Above all, Benjamin Busch is a truly extraordinary new literary talent as evidenced by his exemplary debut, *Dust to Dust*—an original, emotionally powerful, and surprisingly refreshing take on an American soldier's story.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Benjamin Busch's memoir, *DUST TO DUST*, is a piece of work that is at once puzzling and moving. Puzzling because I wondered how a Vassar graduate who had majored in studio art could seem so easily conversant about things like soil and stone, metal and water, ash and bone - things one would normally associate with earth sciences, geology or archaeology. And moving because, by using these elements as primary symbols and vehicles for telling his life story, he touches too on the pain of extended family separations, injuries and wounds, loss of comrades-in-arms and loved ones, and the grief and hard-won wisdom that follow. Busch tells his tale in a spiraling, circular narrative, which jumps from his solitary childhood enterprises and adventures to his war-time service as a Marine officer in Iraq, then back to that childhood in upstate New York and Maine. He tells too of his

college years, interspersed with more tales of his military training in Virginia, North Carolina and California, his deployments to Ukraine and Korea, and trips as a child and young man to England. What emerges is a portrait of a boy and a man with a boundless curiosity about the world he inhabits and how he fits into it. His whole life Busch has struggled against rules and expectations, endlessly experimenting and daring to be different. The son of a novelist (Frederick Busch) father and librarian mother, Busch grew up with a healthy respect for books, but was drawn more to exploring the forests, fields and streams that surrounded their rural home, building walls, forts and bridges in a childhood marked by an extraordinary unstructured freedom foreign to today's children.

There are memoirs and there are Memoirs - usually those relating life experiences come toward the end of life, providing a sage exploration of what has made existence of the reporter on the planet unique, just before finally closing the eyes in a terminal sleep. Some are written as confessions or as leaving clues for the obituary writer whose concern it is to sum up a life soon completely spent. Benjamin Busch in *DUST TO DUST* writes more about life as it is currently molding his psyche, admixing moments of childhood memories with adult confrontations with such ominous beasts as wars and the threat of annihilation, yet in the end his book settles into the rank of great literature - a book so thoughtfully unique, so eloquently written, that instead of a Memoir (and one deserving the capital M) Benjamin Busch has written an extended poem that embraces all the interstices of life as it is being remembered and experienced in as completely involved a fashion as a learned sage of much older years. One of the many facets of this book is Busch's decision to divide his book into chapters that are based on the themes of elements - Arms, Water, Metal, Soil, Bone, Wood, Stones, Blood, Ash - a wise technique of traveling from childhood to adulthood in each chapter, ingeniously focusing each level of memory regression based on an aspect of his young years that became part of his direction toward revealing reality as it feels at the present. Childhood preoccupation with fighting and creating battleships and airplanes and the other accoutrements of a young (very bright) boy's mind slowly emerge toward his life as a soldier.

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