

Richard Hell book reading and talk at Strand Bookstore

Use your key for the next article



Play

Richard Hell @ the Strand Bookstore 3/20/14 - reading a short chapter from "I Dreamed I Was A Very Clean Tramp"

Leslie Feffer

Last night, [Richard Hell](#) celebrated the paperback release of his autobiography [I Dreamed I Was A Very Clean Tramp](#) in the Rare Book Room at the [Strand Bookstore](#) in the East Village.



Richard Hell reading a chapter from his autobiography ("I Dreamed I Was A Very Clean Tramp") at the Strand Bookstore (NYC), then interviewed by NYU professor and cultural historian Bryan Waterman.

Leslie Feffer

The founder and lead singer of iconic punk bands [Television](#) and Voidoids read a short chapter from the book, then spoke with NYU professor and cultural historian [Bryan Waterman](#), before taking questions from the audience.

Hell (born Richard Meyers) explained that he chose to read that particular chapter because it came from a piece he was asked to write for [VICE](#) magazine. It was mostly about his teen crushes and first sexual experiences, humorously told through the prism of youthful innocence.

He and Waterman, author of the [33 1/3](#) volume on [Television's Marquee Moon](#), had a wide-ranging discussion – from the singer/author's childhood to his role in the beginnings of [punk rock](#) to his exit from performing.

Despite Hell and Waterman never having met in person until the day before the event – when they got together for breakfast in the East Village – they had an easy rapport. "I corresponded with him briefly [in the past] about the materials in the [NYU] [archives](#)," the professor said in a telephone interview earlier yesterday. Although aware of the punk pioneer's legendary status in New York rock history, Waterman spent so much time in the archives that he "felt very comfortable, as if I re-encountered an old friend after a long separation," he said of their first meeting.

"If there's anything that the bands at CBGBs had in common – and there wasn't a lot – it's that they were trying to bring real life back to rock and roll," Hell said during a discussion about the origins of punk as a reaction to pop music. "It takes a lot of heart to describe what it's like to be alive. Pop music doesn't do that. It was just love songs, it was just comfort and sentiment."

Hell retired from music in 1984 and became a prolific [writer](#) – two novels, volumes of essays and poems, and contributions to books about the era in music that he helped to create.

"The book ends at a point when I was in my worst condition," he said. "I did my best to keep it [sex and drugs] as brief as possible, because it was monotonous. I tried to give it the same weight it had in my life – the drugs part – but it was pretty dull."