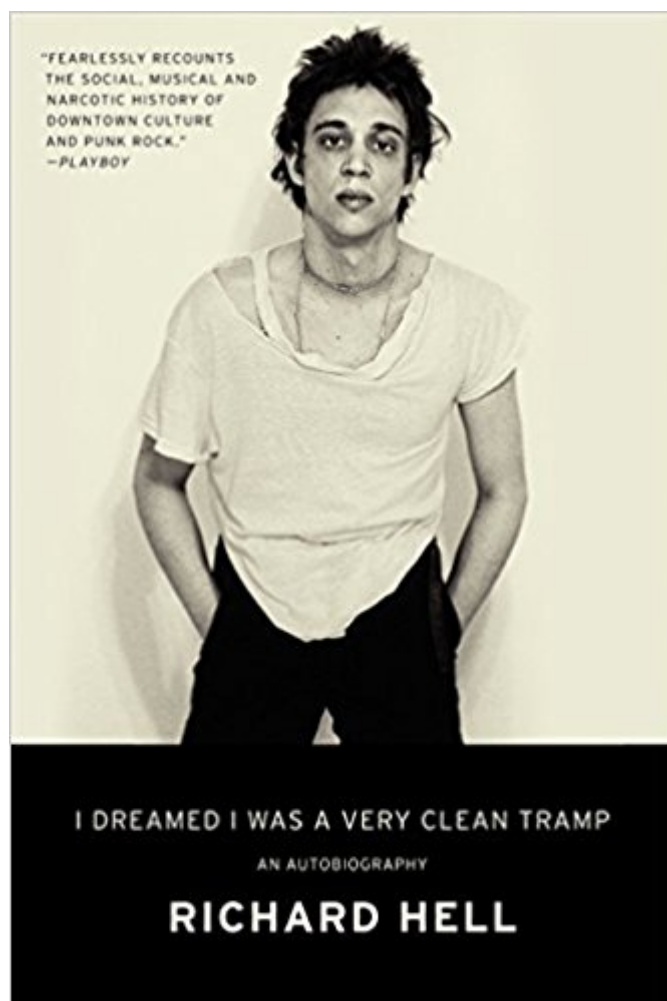


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# I Dreamed I Was A Very Clean Tramp: An Autobiography



## Synopsis

From an early age, Richard Hell dreamed of running away. He arrived penniless in New York City at seventeen; ten years later he was a pivotal voice of the age of punk, cofounding such seminal bands as Television, The Heartbreakers, and Richard Hell and the Voidoids—whose song "Blank Generation" remains the defining anthem of the era, an era that would forever alter popular culture in all its forms. How this legendary downtown artist went from a bucolic childhood in the idyllic Kentucky foothills to igniting a movement that would take over New York and London's restless youth culture—cementing CBGB as the ground zero of punk and spawning the careers of not only Hell himself, but a cohort of friends such as Tom Verlaine, Patti Smith, the Ramones, and Debby Harry—is a mesmerizing chronicle of self-invention, and of Hell's yearning for redemption through poetry, music, and art. An acutely rendered, unforgettable coming-of-age story, *I Dreamed I Was a Very Clean Tramp* evokes with feeling, lyricism, and piercing intelligence both the world that shaped him and the world he shaped.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Richard Hell (born Richard Meyers in Lexington, Kentucky), the punk-rock musician with the seminal punk bands Television and the Voidoids, presents an autobiography that ends in the early 1980s, when Hell stopped playing music and became a full-time writer. From an early age, Hell knew what he wanted: a "life of adventure." He remembers growing up in suburban America in the 1950s and feeling like an outsider. He was bored with school, got into small scrapes with the law, and generally wished he were somewhere else. He eventually made his way to New York. He

writes about the jobs he had (including stints in such iconic bookstores as Gotham Book Mart and the Strand) and the musicians he met, from Debbie Harry to Patti Smith. Hell is a fine writer and full of self-knowledge, and part of the pleasure of this randy, drug-addled memoir are his descriptions of New York during the bad old days when crime was rampant and the streets filthy. A compelling and entertaining memoir by a punk-rock pioneer. --June Sawyers --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

"Half of the beauty of rock and roll," Hell writes, "is that 'anyone can do it' in the sense that's it not about being a virtuoso but about just being plugged in in a certain way, just having an innocent instinct and a lot of luck." So much of Tramp is just a recounting of where that instinct took him. Mostly you read I Dreamed I Was A Very Clean Tramp for Hell's mind, which is weird and singular and superbly self-aware. He's a scumbag with an intimate, articulate understanding of scumbag psychology. "Being a rock and roll musician was like being a pimp," he writes, "It was about making young girls want to pay money to be near you." This isn't nice, but it's true—something you could say about most of this memoir. Hell's gift, then and now, is for finding a redemptive kind of ugly in otherwise blank, beautiful things, himself very much included. —Zach Baron --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

This is a somewhat odd book, but I really liked it. I wasn't a huge fan of punk but I have heard of most of the more popular punk bands. Richard Hell and The Voidoids seemed to be more at the fringes. Before buying this book, I did a little research and decided to buy this. If you remember the time when punk emerged and you are interested in learning more, this is a good place to either start or continue. I read this after reading Patti Smith's Just Kids which also covers that period. Many of the bands from that movement came across as obnoxious idiots--for example, the Sex Pistols. It was interesting to learn that Hell started as a poet and a fan of literature and poetry, who expanded into music. He was truly a pioneer, and yet, he too was simply morphing music and style from other artists like the New York Dolls. There are gaps in the story. Yes, he does begin with his life with his family. His father dies when he is a child and we know so little of how or why. Once he leaves home, it is as if his family ceases to exist. But, Hell gives us a clear view into his life of Rock and Roll. We see how the industry exploits artists, how dull and demeaning touring can be and how tedious it is to be addicted to drugs. Punk mocks the glamour of the idols that came before and Hell helps to answer the question: if being a Rock star is so great, why do so many die so young? While Hell does provide some lurid details about his many couplings, he never does let us in to the most intimate

details of those relationships. The same can also be said of what Hell chooses to share about himself. He holds back enough so that we never really know who he is. He remains a bit cool and detached. We miss the highs and lows that come with intense passion. For all his faults, I admire him for walking away from music and for surviving when so many others could not. He's an interesting guy with an even more interesting story.

It seems that heroin ruins a lot of lives yet so many rock icons have used it to fuel their rise to the top. Almost all of them make it a cautionary tale but it seems like you may need it to succeed! This book tells the same story of drugs and rock but not enough sex. It's a must read to understand how punk rock came about. It's hard to believe some people think punk started in England. Being a fan of Hell's music I could not help but like it. Having said that, someone needs to tell all rock biographers and others to stop beginning their books with the childhood memories and what led them to the parts we really want to read about. That stuff belongs in the book but not in that order. I've read a whole bunch of these now and the best so far is Duff McKagan's "It's so easy and other lies". It's way better than Slash's book which read like a high school diary.

Interesting piece on 70s NY. Not enough on Television and Marquee Moon and their importance. Color on the later punk scene. Animosity towards Verlaine led Hell to leave a lot out. Significant focus on his addiction which was clearly serious. But his descriptions of drug fueled sex w women that aren't otherwise relevant was too much. Read quickly for its cultural content. Biographically it is wanting.

Seeing Richard Hell back in 1977 or so got me to start my own band. While groups like the Ramones, the Clash, and the Pistols get endless attention, a real pioneer like Hell continues, to my mind, to be overlooked. I was curious about Hell's take on the genesis of punk rock. Having already read *Please Kill Me* there was not really much that was new. But Hell's writing is good, albeit quirky at times. There's not a whole lot more to say about this book. It offers some first-hand accounts of an interesting time in 20C art and music presented in an interesting style.

love the book

GREAT SELLER, GREAT PRODUCT, SUPER FAST SHIPPING!!! A+++++

I really liked this book a lot. Hell knows how to write a sentence, and he doesn't try to make himself look good. It's not a redemption story -- he ends it at the point when he gives up his music career, and he's still in the throes of drug addiction. We don't get to read about his recovery. But certainly anyone who has any interest in Television of the Voidoids would find this book worth a read.

I learned a lot about the New York punk rock scene from Hell. He's a good writer. It was a really nice read for anyone interested in this stuff.

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