

James N. Green

EXILE WITHIN EXILES

Herbert Daniel

Gay Brazilian
Revolutionary



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FRONTIS Herbert Daniel in Paris, c. 1979. COURTESY OF GENY BRUNELLI DE CARVALHO.

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JAMES N. GREEN

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FOR MOSHÉ SLUHOVSKY, SONYA KRAHULIK ALLEE,

AND MARYCAROLYN G. FRANCE

The time has not yet arrived for autobiographies;
we are preparing hypotheses for self-criticisms,
above all else, avoiding writing artificial memoirs
in which one proves, even without wanting to,
that one was right.

I don't want to be right.

I want to conserve clarity.

—HERBERT DANIEL

Passagem para o próximo sonho (1982)

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Finally, I am especially indebted to Herbert's family for allowing me to write this biography of their beloved son and brother, Bete.

ABBREVIATIONS

ABIA	Associação Brasileira Interdisciplinar de AIDS / Brazilian Interdisciplinary AIDS Association
AI-5	Ato Institucional Número 5 / Institutional Act No. 5
ALN	Ação Libertadora Nacional / National Liberating Action
AP	Ação Popular / Popular Action
ARENA	Aliança Renovadora Nacional / National Renovating Alliance
CBA	Comitê Brasileiro de Anistia / Brazilian Amnesty Committee
CEM	Centro de Estudos de Medicina / Center for the Study of Medicine
COLINA	Comandos de Libertação Nacional / National Liberation Commandos
COSEC	Comando de Estudantes Secundaristas / High School Students' Command
DCE	Diretório Central de Estudantes / Central Student Directorate

DDD	Dissidência da Dissidência / Dissidence of the Dissidence
DVP	Dissidência de VAR-Palmares / VAR-Palmares Dissidence
FHAR	Front Homosexuel d'Action Révolutionnaire / Homosexual Front for Revolutionary Action
GAPA	Grupo de Apoio à Prevenção à AIDS / Support Group for AIDS Prevention
GGB	Grupo Gay da Bahia / Gay Group of Bahia
GLH—P&Q	Groupe de Libération Homosexuelle—Politique et Quotidien / Homosexual Liberation Group—Politics and Daily Life
GPV	Grupo Pela VIDDA (Valorização, Integração, e Dignidade do Doente de AIDS) / Pela VIDDA Group (The Valuing, Integration, and Dignity of Those Sick with AIDS)
MDB	Movimento Democrático Brasileiro / Brazilian Democratic Movement
MFA	Movimento das Forças Armadas / Movement of the Armed Forces
MNR	Movimento Nacional Revolucionário / National Revolutionary Movement
MR-8	Movimento Revolucionário 8 de Outubro / October 8th Revolutionary Movement
MRP	Movimento de Resistencia Popular / Movement of Popular Resistance
MRT	Movimento Revolucionário Tiradentes / Tiradentes Revolutionary Movement

PCB	Partido Comunista Brasileira / Brazilian Communist Party
PDS	Partido Democrático Social / Social Democratic Party
PDT	Partido Democrático Trabalhista / Democratic Labor Party
PMDB	Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro / Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement
POLOP	Organização Revolucionária Marxista—Política Operária / Revolutionary Marxist Organization—Workers' Politics
PT	Partido dos Trabalhadores / Workers' Party
PTB	Partido Trabalhista Brasileira / Brazilian Labor Party
PV	Partido Verde / Green Party
REDE	Resistência Democrática / Democratic Resistance
SOMOS	Somos: Grupo de Afirmação Homossexual / We Are: Group of Homosexual Affirmation
UFMG	Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais / Federal University of Minas Gerais
UNE	União Nacional de Estudantes / National Union of Students
VAR-Palmares	Vanguarda Armada Revolucionária—Palmares / Revolutionary Armed Vanguard—Palmares
VPR	Vanguarda Popular Revolucionária / People's Revolutionary Vanguard

INTRODUCTION

I am very proud of my generation and that we fought and participated fully in the fight to build a better Brazil. We learned a lot. We did much that was foolish, but that is not what characterizes us. What characterizes us is to have been bold enough to want a better country.

— DILMA ROUSSEFF

I never met Herbert Daniel, but our paths almost crossed in late 1981. He had returned from seven years of European exile in October and was living in Rio de Janeiro. I was preparing to leave Brazil after a six-month visit that had turned into a six-year stay. I thought of traveling from São Paulo, where I lived, to Rio to say goodbye to friends. I imagined trying to meet him. Somehow my trip never happened.

I had first heard of Herbert Daniel a year and a half earlier. One of the thousands of Brazilians who engaged in the armed resistance to the military dictatorship (1964–1985), he was convicted *in absentia* for having violated the National Security Act and was sentenced to several lifetimes in prison for abducting the German and Swiss ambassadors and demanding freedom for 110 political prisoners in exchange for the diplomats' release. Never arrested, he slipped out of the country in September 1974 and had been living in European exile.

In October 1979, Daniel wrote an open letter to the Brazilian Left about the Amnesty Law, passed the previous month, that pardoned most political prisoners and allowed almost all exiles to return to Brazil, but it didn't

include those involved in violent acts in which someone had died. Defiantly he declared: “The dictatorship has nothing to pardon or grant me. Being granted amnesty does not mean repenting to the dictatorship; rather it allows [the dictatorship] to recognize some of its errors. It is not we, those exiled and imprisoned, who should criticize ourselves to the dictatorship, rather it is the current popular democratic movement that has forced the government to make amends for its abuses.”¹ Daniel lingered abroad, unable to get a passport and fearful of incarceration when and if he were to step off a plane in Brazil.

Daniel’s intransigent attitude toward the military regime was not the only reason he remained a castaway. By late 1979, it was widely known among the Brazilian revolutionary Left that Herbert Daniel was gay. In fact, the former leader of the (by-then dismantled) guerrilla group People’s Revolutionary Vanguard (VPR) was unabashedly living in Paris with his partner, Cláudio Mesquita. His announced homosexuality had created anxiety and revulsion among some of the exiled Left, while others tranquilly accepted his sexual orientation.

Daniel’s open letter was an appeal to antidictatorship forces to support his attempts to return home. In Brazil, the emergent Homosexual Movement, as it called itself at the time, came to Daniel’s aid. The alternative newspaper *Lampião da Esquina* published his appeal in its entirety. The tabloid-sized monthly first came out in April 1978, as the political climate in Brazil opened up and the ruling generals initiated a gradual liberalization. This new political space offered opportunities for circulating innovative ways of thinking, and *Lampião* advocated for the defense of homosexuals, blacks, women, Indians, and the environment, which was quite a novelty in Brazil at the time.

According to a comment penned by Aguinaldo Silva, a leading member of the journal’s editorial board, Daniel’s letter had not been read at a national meeting of the Brazilian Amnesty Committee (CBA) the previous year because Daniel was gay. “We homosexuals of *Lampião*,” Silva wrote, “are in solidarity with him, as we would be—pay attention, those in the CBA—with any heterosexual in the same situation.”² Reprimanding the amnesty movement over its alleged mistreatment of Herbert Daniel also represented a larger critique about homophobia within the Brazilian Left.

Living in Brazil at the time and being involved in gay and lesbian activism, I wanted to know more about this figure, who seemed to have lived a life similar to my own. I thought a conversation with him might help me sort out my own ambivalences about participating in the Left while observing and experiencing its homophobia. Although Herbert Daniel was a few years older, we had both embraced the revolutionary wave that swept Latin Amer-

ica in the 1960s. Almost simultaneously, we had also become critical of the lingering prejudice against homosexuality within the international Marxist movement. In different ways and in different places, but at about the same time, we had challenged its conservative notions of morality and propriety.

Herbert Daniel's story, however, was certainly much more dramatic than my own. As a medical student in the mid-1960s, he was a founding member of the National Liberation Commandos (COLINA). In early 1970, he engaged in rural guerrilla training, escaping imprisonment when several thousand soldiers surrounded the area. A few months later, he participated first in the abduction of the German ambassador and then, at the end of the year, the sequestering of the Swiss ambassador to gain the release of a total of 110 political prisoners who lingered in Brazilian jails. While in exile in the late 1970s, Daniel openly announced his homosexuality and stubbornly questioned the revolutionary Left's reluctance to address issues related to sexuality and the body.

My revolutionary credentials were much more modest.³ I had participated actively in the anti-Vietnam War movement while in college in the late 1960s. A summer sojourn in Mexico to learn the fundamentals of Spanish took me down an unexpected path. I became determined to understand the revolutionary upheavals taking place throughout the continent. Quite by chance, in early 1973, I became involved in a campaign against torture in Brazil. My political thinking was evolving rapidly, as was my personal life, for it was at this juncture that I openly declared myself gay, feeling great relief that I could finally accept my sexuality.

The overthrow of the socialist government of Chilean President Salvador Allende on September 11, 1973, and the ensuing repression led me and many others to engage in round-the-clock efforts to denounce the Nixon administration's support of the Pinochet dictatorship. In 1975, on the second anniversary of the coup, I organized an event, "Gay Solidarity with the Chilean Resistance," designed to educate members of the San Francisco gay and lesbian communities about the Chilean situation. In early 1976, I journeyed through Central America and Colombia to Brazil. There I joined a semi-underground revolutionary organization, while simultaneously participating as a left-wing activist in the emergent gay and lesbian movement.

As if we had managed to coordinate our timing, Daniel in Paris and I in São Paulo confronted the Brazilian Left's backward attitudes toward homosexuality, feminism, and comportment. He was moving away from the organized Left; I remained active for another decade.

Years later, Herbert Daniel reappeared in my life while I was writing an article on homosexuality and the Brazilian revolutionary Left.⁴ In seeking

firsthand testimonies, I read Daniel's memoir *Passagem para o próximo sonho* (Ticket to the next dream), which he had written during his European exile while working in a gay Parisian sauna. His reminiscences of his time as a revolutionary, fugitive on the run, and exile were published in March 1982, soon after his safe return to Brazil. Daniel's insights were self-critical and perceptive. They touched me profoundly, both intellectually and emotionally.

I wanted to know more about this complex figure. Periodically I considered writing his biography. Then, by chance, Denise Rollemberg, a Brazilian historian, mentioned that Daniel's mother was living in Belo Horizonte. She gave me Dona Geny's telephone number, and I called her from Rio.⁵ When I told her that I wanted to write a biography of her son, she immediately agreed to an interview.

Sitting in a modest living room in a tidy house, we spent several hours talking as she generously supplied me with coffee and cakes. She nostalgically showed me a photo album with pictures of Bete, as the family affectionately called him, as a baby, toddler, and young boy. Dona Geny also shared newspaper and magazine clippings and a few postcards that he had written from Paris, which she had saved as mementos of her beloved first-born child.

During our conversation, Hamilton, one of Daniel's younger brothers, called to find out how the interview with this curious U.S. historian was going. "What was the name of Bete's girlfriend?" she asked him, trying to dredge up memories of a distant past. "Laís," Hamilton responded. Her query surprised me, because Daniel's memoir had not mentioned a high school or college sweetheart. On the contrary, he had written about his frustrated love for a male member of the underground revolutionary organization that he had joined in 1967.

As we parted, I saw in her eyes a deep longing for her departed son. "Write the book," she insisted. "People have forgotten about him. He needs to be remembered."

With his childhood friend's name in hand, I tracked down Laís Pereira. We met in a bookstore café. "I only agreed to see you because you mentioned that you had spoken with Dona Geny," she confessed. Two hours, and many anecdotes later, I realized that I had enough material to start working on a book.

Never having written a biography, I was puzzled about how to proceed. There are few biographies of Brazilians in English, and those written for a Portuguese-language audience tend to focus on people who are famous, and the reader already has a general notion of the person's life trajectory. Historians have also produced biographies of obscure individuals from humble origins whose life histories are seen as emblematic representations of people

from a specific social sector. A third genre, the recuperative biography, focuses on a person who was important but has not been recognized as such or even known to many people.

Such is the case of Herbert Daniel. Today, few Brazilians have heard of him. He has been all but forgotten except by his family, friends, former comrades in arms, and those who remember how he had courageously declared that he had AIDS in 1989. His literary legacy has been mostly overlooked, except among a handful of scholars seeking examples of early “queer” authors or graduate students examining his literary or AIDS work.⁶ Some Brazilians confuse him with Herbert de Souza, another Brazilian revolutionary, who cofounded the AIDS organization where Herbert Daniel worked in the late 1980s.

Daniel’s first book, *Passagem*, a semiautobiographical account of his life as a revolutionary and exile, published a decade before his death from AIDS in 1992, did not have a large readership. As I will argue in later chapters, most written remembrances by survivors of the armed struggle are tales of heroic deeds accomplished by noble warriors. In contrast, Daniel’s story is a meditation on revolution, offering a critical assessment of the Left’s attempt to overthrow the dictatorship through guerrilla warfare. It is as original in its honesty as it is experimental in its literary style. His detailed descriptions of promiscuous gay sex in Paris no doubt puzzled his readers and perhaps distanced many from his text. Because he had written the work half a decade before the Brazilian generals relinquished state power, many people and events were purposely portrayed in obscure ways to protect the identity of comrades who had been involved in the underground. His memoir offers a vast array of clues about details of his life that beg to be unveiled, but it also wraps a shroud of mystery around others. In this work, I have filled in some lacunas. Other questions about Daniel’s life remain unanswered.

How then to tell the story of his life and times? As I dug up details of this story in dozens of interviews, scattered documents in diverse archives, numerous newspaper and magazine articles, and a cluster of video clips, I constantly confronted uncertainties and ambiguities in reconstructing Daniel’s life. Living underground for nearly six years and deceiving the repressive apparatus mounted to dismantle the revolutionary Left meant revealing as little as possible about his activities to others. Even the name Herbert Daniel is a composite construction of his given first name and an assumed patronymic, “Daniel.” It is one of more than a dozen noms de guerre he adopted casually and then as easily cast aside, as he moved in the shadows of urban centers and eluded police, acutely conscious of being on the generals’ most-wanted list.

Many people who shared those dangerous moments with him and have survived those times simply did not know about or remember details of his life underground. Others have died, leaving no letters, diaries, or other traces of their revolutionary activities. Some were hesitant to refer to certain events, perhaps as a lingering reflex against revealing information that might in some way harm others. One person confessed after a long conversation that she had been reluctant to grant an interview for fear that I would create an incomplete and partial portraiture of their organization and its activities. Some of those I interviewed shared Daniel's hindsight about the limitations of the revolutionary Left's attempts to overthrow the dictatorship, while others were less critical of their former militancy. Few regretted, however, their decision to engage in radical resistance to the military regime, and this obviously colors their own narratives and their recollections of Daniel. Often, I had no additional source to check a fact or a remembrance and had to rely on my own intuition and contextualization of events to determine the veracity of someone's memory. In attempting to complete this book, I came to know Herbert Eustáquio de Carvalho, as he was baptized, slowly and unevenly, in bits and pieces. Only gradually did he become a living being in my mind's eye, and I am conscious that the version of his life I am creating is inevitably partial and incomplete.

As I have suggested in a brief mention of my own political activities, I identify with the protagonist of this biography, a fact that no doubt influences the ways I have chosen to tell his story. By all accounts Herbert Daniel was an exceptional figure, but certainly not representative of his generation. Yet by examining a person at the margins, both because of his sexuality and due to his radical militancy against the dictatorship and in defense of those with HIV/AIDS, we can learn much about the complexities of Brazilian politics, society, and culture; the nature of the Brazilian Left as it changed over time; and the constraints and options of those with nonnormative sexuality who lived during the second half of the twentieth century. His confrontation with the Left's conservative attitudes toward homosexuality in the 1970s and 1980s helped lay the groundwork for the LGBT movement's interactions with progressive politicians and the government in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. His innovative and creative contributions to fighting discrimination against those with HIV/AIDS have been fundamental in shaping both official policies and grassroots activism. His life didn't just reflect the changes taking place in Brazil, but he himself was an agent in those changes. Daniel's biography, I argue, is not merely a rescue operation of a somewhat unique figure in the history of contemporary Brazil. It is also a vehicle for rethinking the entire narrative.⁷

NOTES

ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Author's archives
ABIA	Associação Brasileira Interdisciplinar de AIDS
AEL	Arquivo Edgard Leuenroth, Universidade Estadual de Campinas
AERJ	Arquivo Público do Estado do Rio de Janeiro
AESI/UFMG	Assessoria Especial de Segurança e Informação, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais
AESP/DEOPS	Departamento Estadual de Ordem Político e Social, Arquivo Público do Estado de São Paulo
AN	National Archive, Rio de Janeiro
APM	Arquivo Público Mineiro, Belo Horizonte
BDIC	La Bibliothèq̃ue de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine, l'Université de Paris Oueſt Nanterre
BNM	Brasil Nunca Mais Digital Archives
DOPS/MG	Departamento de Ordem Política e Social, Minas Gerais
MAI	Ministério de Assuntos Internos, Torre de Tombo, Lisbon
TRC	Triânglo Rosa Collection, AEL
UNICAMP	Universidade Estadual de Campinas

INTRODUCTION

Epigraph: Rouseff, interview with Carvalho. Dilma Rouseff (the Brazilian president from 2011 to 2016) and Herbert Daniel were members of the same revolutionary organizations.

1. Daniel, "O que é isso, companheiros?," 10.
2. Daniel, "O que é isso, companheiros?," 10.
3. Green, "Desire and Revolution."

4. Green, “Who Is the Macho Who Wants to Kill Me?”
5. The term “Dona” shows respect for an older woman.
6. Borim, “Daniel, Herbert”; Fitch, “Life before Death”; Da Silva, *Os escritores da guerrilha urbana*; Pereira, “Herbert Daniel e suas escrituras de memória”; Martins, “AIDS, vida e morte no romance *Alegres e irresponsáveis abacaxis americanos*”; Dias, “A trajetória soropositiva de Herbert Daniel.”
7. I would like to thank Marycarolyn G. France, Moshé Sluhovskiy, and the anonymous readers from Duke University Press for their contributions in helping me reshape the final version of the introduction.

CHAPTER 1. DARE TO STRUGGLE, DARE TO WIN (1992)

Epigraph: “AIDS mata aos 45 o escritor Herbert Daniel,” *Folha de São Paulo*, March 31, 1992. José Stalin Pedrosa was an AIDS activist.

1. Geny Carvalho, interview no. 1.
2. “Enterro,” *O Globo*, April 1, 1992.
3. “Enterro,” *O Globo*, April 1, 1992.
4. “AIDS mata ao 45 o escritor Herbert Daniel”; “Escritor aos 45 anos more de AIDS,” *Folha da Tarde*, March 31, 1992; “Morre Herbert Eustáquio de Carvalho,” *Veja*; “Enterro”; Marcos Barros Pinto, “Morrer com todas as letras,” *O Globo*, April 8, 1992.
5. Geny Carvalho, interview no. 1.

CHAPTER 2. HE LOVED TO READ (1946–1964)

Epigraph: Geny Carvalho, interview no. 1. Other quotations are from this interview unless otherwise indicated.

1. Hamilton Carvalho, interview no. 1. Other quotations are from the same interview.
2. Santos, interview. Other quotations are from the same interview.
3. Daniel, *Passagem*, 25.
4. Hélder Carvalho, interview.
5. Herminio Prates, “Gê de Carvalho, o talento a serviço da emoção e do riso,” *Jornal Minas Gerais*, November 17, 1987.
6. Pereira, interview no. 1. Other quotations are from the same interview unless otherwise indicated.
7. Elaine Espíndola, interview. All other quotations are from the same interview.
8. Nilton Espíndola, interview.
9. Daniel, *Meu corpo*, 124.
10. Calvacanti, “Ele vive de bicos” *Veja* (July 1, 1980): 26.
11. Daniel, *Meu corpo*, 121.
12. Daniel, *Meu corpo*, 121
13. Daniel, *Meu corpo*, 119.
14. Daniel, *Meu corpo*, 156.
15. Pereira, interview no. 2.