San Francisco has claimed an incredibly diverse Latin American population since the Gold Rush – from Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Central and South America – and thus a diverse set of politics. In *Latinos and the Liberal City*, Eduardo Contreras seeks to prove that San Francisco Latinos “were not consumed only with … Latino causes” but more broadly “preoccupied themselves with the workings, possibilities, and limitations of American liberalism” (3–4). Defining liberalism as a political philosophy operating on principles of activist government, freedom, progress, and social reform, Contreras argues that Latinos’ engagement with different liberalism “contributed to the construction – and eventually the fissures – of Latinidad, an ideology emphasizing unity, commonality, and affinity among Latinos” (8). Using liberalism as a connective thread from the 1930s through to the 1970s, Contreras identifies four variants – New Deal, civil rights, Great Society, and cultural – to overlay a timeline upon the book and structure his chapters’ progression.

Chapter 1 describes the evolution of San Francisco’s early twentieth-century Latino community. With more US investment in Central America and commercial and tourist traffic along the isthmus and western Mexican coast, many Latin Americans traveled to and settled in San Francisco. A landscape of social clubs, religious societies, and mutual-aid organizations took shape amidst a backdrop of World War I-era xenophobia, immigration restriction, and anticommunism. Though the census legally classified Latinos as white, they regularly encountered discrimination and hostility. Latino journalists played a key role in advocating for the community and advising their readers on how to avoid or address troubles with employers, governmental authorities, or neighbors. Segueing into the second chapter, Contreras discusses the Ship Scalers Union, the major maritime work stoppage of 1934, and cannery workers’ unions in Alaska and San Francisco to demonstrate how Latinas/os “developed and matured as political actors, and did so as proud members of the city’s labor movement” during the 1930s and 1940s (44).

Contrary to the belief that Latinos’ engagement with the Democratic Party began with 1960s Viva Kennedy clubs and War on Poverty programs, Contreras traces how Latinos engaged with mid-century civil rights liberalism and fought for things such as a municipal Fair Employment Practices ordinance. Though their efforts were quashed by Cold War constriction, Latinos continued to press San Francisco and California for resources, services, and attention. They did not do so as a homogeneous political bloc, however – they were Democrats and Republicans, middle- and lower-class, with varying levels of trust in the state. While some might suspect national-origin
differences to produce obstacles to political solidarity, Contreras argues instead that activists clashed over generation, ideology, and whether they viewed Great Society programs as promising or patronizing.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the Latino neighborhood of the Mission District was central to debates over government involvement and urban renewal. While some residents approved of programs like Model Cities if carried out on their terms, young Latino radicals did not believe that the government was an altruistic apparatus of racial and economic equality. To add another layer of complexity, Latinas were feeling silenced and pushed out of leadership positions by their male counterparts. This gendered tension pointed to larger existing cultural conflicts between policymakers, social workers, faith leaders, and the city’s LGBTQ community as the sexual revolution took hold of San Francisco. Differing views on gender roles, family structures, and sexual lifestyles created a “contest between tradition and liberation” that forced Latinos “to qualify … their connection to American liberalism vis-à-vis sexual politics” (179). Contreras demonstrates the importance of gendered analysis to understanding Latinas/os’ loyalties and voting choices during this period. Their decisions on propositions or supervisorial races were not always predictably “Latino” or “homophobic” or “gay,” but were made more holistically and with greater nuance.

Contreras ends by discussing the gentrification and dot-com boom of the late 1990s that displaced many Latinos from their homes and their sense of security and future in San Francisco. Rather than being hopeful, his concluding note is elegiac as he writes, “This book stands as a reminder of past prospects, ambitions, and possibilities – when Latinos and other ordinary residents believed equality, opportunity, and social mobility were within their reach” (256). Latinos and the Liberal City covers an array of political work and strategies, and treats Latinidad as something never quite settled or permanently actualized. Navigating a thick alphabet soup of organizational and programmatic acronyms, Contreras has produced a thoughtful and deep history of San Francisco labor, culture, and twentieth-century urban Latino politics.

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The Cambridge History of Latina/o American Literature is divided in four chronological parts that extend from the colonial archive (Part 1), to the republican interactions of the eighteenth century (Part 2), the modern period (Part 3), and (Part 4) contemporary developments. In representing a diverse historical Latinidad and its connections with its present expressions, John Morán González and Laura Lomas explore its struggles and its contradictions. The anthology includes essays on migration and colonization, music and culture, and post-identitarian aesthetics to provide an understanding of Latina/o literature marked by Spanish, English, and Portuguese, or by “untranslatable bilingualism,” and to a lesser extent by the suppressed or surviving indigenous Amerindian, African, and Asian languages and cultures.