Un desorden de marineros: 
Change, Conflict, and Context in Nineteenth-Century Valparaiso

by

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To Edith and Javiera
CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ................................................................. v
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS ...................................................... vi
INTRODUCTION ................................................................. 1

CHAPTERS

1. The Physical Port ............................................................. .19
2. A Local History of Valparaiso ........................................... 38
3. Maritime Identities in Valparaiso ....................................... 71
4. The Incidents: Memorable Days in Valparaiso’s History ......... 105

CONCLUSION ................................................................. 146

BIBLIOGRAPHY ................................................................. 152
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ILLUSTRATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td><em>Plano de Valparaíso, 1895</em></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Survey by the Chilean Navy, <em>Valparaíso Bay, 1877</em></td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td><em>El Mercurio, Bombardeo de Valparaíso</em>, 1866</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION: UN DESORDEN DE MARINEROS

Is it possible somehow to convey simultaneously both that conspicuous history which holds our attention by its continual and dramatic changes—and that other, submerged history, almost silent and always discreet, virtually unsuspected either by its observers or its participants, which is little touched by the obstinate erosion of time?

- Fernand Braudel

Disorder is the lens through which to observe the history of Valparaiso. The concepts that this word represents concisely demonstrate the distinction between a history of events, and the inconspicuous, constant history that lies under the surface. In Spanish, a desorden is defined as “un estado de confusión y alteración del orden” or “un disturbio que altera la tranquilidad pública.” Thus, a disorder is a specific event or disturbance that upsets the status quo of daily life. However, disorder can also be a general state of confusion, a prolonged ambiance of irregularity that characterizes a time or place. It is the latter disorder that beset Valparaiso in the nineteenth century, a state of being that inevitably produced disorderly incidents of the former definition. The state of disorder at the port constitutes the submerged history of Valparaiso to which Braudel referred, conscious of the conspicuous history of battles and brawls but containing volumes more history than just those events.

The phrase “un desorden de marineros” appeared in my research as the title of an article in the Chilean newspaper El Mercurio, describing an altercation between Chilean and United States sailors on the streets of Valparaiso. After investigating this USS

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2 Real Lengua Española, Diccionario de la lengua española, “a state of confusion or alteration of order,” “disturbance that alters public tranquility.”
“Baltimore” incident, the alternate, more general definition of “disorder” seemed more appropriate because it describes the panoramic conditions of the neighborhood that led to such a conflict, and not just the single incident. Indeed, it was the habitual atmosphere of the port neighborhood that was “disordered.” If a “disorder” is defined as an “irregularity” (as it is in cases of physical or mental disorder), then the brawl between North American and Chilean sailors was not a disorder at all since it was not irregular; fights between sailors of different nationalities happened frequently at the cosmopolitan port. Nineteenth-century Valparaiso existed in a constant state of disorder, and it was in this context that historically canonized incidents occurred.

My thesis will argue that this context is the fundamental basis for the study of history, that without Braudel’s “submerged” history, an account of events that are mysteriously deemed “historical” will be disembodied and out of context. This study of Valparaiso will provide the context for those incidents and history, but more importantly recount the local, quotidian history of the city that reveals the human stories of adaptation in a rapidly changing time and place. I make prominent use of the Greg Dening’s concept of “history’s theatre” to frame the importance of Valparaiso as a physical place and context for history.\(^3\) Dening posits the idea of the “theatricality of history-making,” an apt metaphor for the performance inherent in the telling and living of history that he applies to varied subject matter. Dening’s theatre emphasizes the significance of the actors, the setting, and the background in influencing history: “Everyday life, like life on the stage, is talk and signs and significant action.”\(^4\) The understanding of this performative history requires that the observer see the quotidian rhythms of a place in order to grasp the full

\(^4\) Dening, xv.
meaning of events that take place in that environment. Dening’s framework allows for uniqueness in history, the creation of a narrative that is specific to a local place and establishes a meaningful context for incidents there when the international spotlight falls on that site. The theatre analogy is most useful when it proves that the background context for these events was often, for the denizens of Valparaiso, the play itself.

Throughout the nineteenth century, Valparaiso was a cosmopolitan site, a major entrepot for ships traveling the Pacific Ocean. Vessels journeyed from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific, rounded the treacherous Cape Horn and checked in at Valparaiso, the first major port north of the Cape. Despite its unassuming size during the colonial period, Valparaiso’s location and public warehouses attracted foreign merchants (especially British) after Chile finally achieved independence from Spain between 1810-1818. As a commercial center and a naval base for the nation, “the post office of the Pacific” contained much of Chile’s national identity, in addition to the major role it played in global commerce. Following the Gold Rush (from about 1848-1855), San Francisco became increasingly essential in the Pacific maritime world until it surpassed Valparaiso by 1871. Then in 1914, the new Panama Canal provided a shortcut for ships traveling between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, and greatly diminished Valparaiso’s global importance. Valparaiso was an eminent city in the global context for less than one hundred years. The opening of the Panama Canal did not lead to economic decline in

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5 Dening, 82.
Valparaiso, however, as it remained the essential port within Chile, and a major port in the South American context.7

My thesis will examine the rapid economic growth of Valparaiso during the nineteenth century, and the corresponding social impact of that expansion. More specifically, it will focus on the local history of the place, and the consequences that cosmopolitanism and high trade activity had on the social fabric of the port. I treat Valparaiso as an imperial “contact zone,” Mary Louise Pratt’s term for “the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects… whose trajectories now intersect.”8 Valparaiso was a site for economic imperialism, especially by the British who controlled a large part of the Chilean economy in the mining sector and in temperate agricultural products. By the end of the nineteenth century, the United States was vying for control of Chilean commerce against European rivals. The contact zone in Valparaiso witnessed the interaction of sailors from all over the world, unwitting representatives of their respective nations and perhaps even carriers of those respective power relationships. The social spaces they occupied at the port (such as saloons, taverns and dance halls) were central to their encounters and “copresence” during the brief time they spent in Valparaiso.

The transience of the many sailors in Valparaiso influenced the ambiance of the port neighborhood, where petty crime was common, and sanitation and maintenance often neglected. The local history of the port neighborhood will also examine the poor urban communities there, illuminating the underbelly of a commercially thriving city through the lives of permanent residents, not just those who passed through for economic ends. The social history of these decrepit neighborhoods reveals the sense of disorder,

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7 Schmutzer, 97.
and the dynamic role of Chilean authority, since the Municipality was responsible for controlling an environment with many fleeting, non-Chilean inhabitants. As in many cities, 19th-century modernization in Valparaiso had negative effects such as overpopulation, overcrowding, disease and intensified class stratification. The physical disrepair at the port exacerbated the state of disorder.

INTELLECTUAL BIOGRAPHY

This project began as a study of the USS Baltimore incident that took place in 1891 in Valparaiso. This saloon brawl between sailors, and the subsequent riot, constitute an incident that is a case study in the diplomatic as well as maritime history of Chile, and earns brief mention in most survey texts on these subjects. As an historical event, it raises questions about the tense diplomatic relations between Chile and the United States in 1891, and the increasingly conspicuous U.S. economic imperialism under the guise of the Monroe Doctrine. When the deaths of two North American sailors provoked the United States to demand reparations from Chile and eventually threaten military action, the U.S. was attempting to reassert diplomatic dominance that this skirmish had threatened. The U.S. press coverage of the event villanized Chile and Chilean authorities, and claimed that police forces in Valparaiso failed to protect the North American sailors or aided the rioters. Thus, this small incident took on historical eminence in history texts through the United States’ exaggerated reaction.

Contrary to these initial findings in United States history books, the story of the Baltimore played a different role in Chilean history, and was often not even featured in narratives about Valparaiso. When Chilean historians mentioned the Baltimore, they

characterized it as a United States issue, or mere happenstance that the U.S. used for political means. A look at Chilean newspaper coverage (in *El Mercurio*, *La Unión*, and *El Ferrocarril*) proved the de-emphasis of the conflict in the Chilean popular imagination. In Chile the fight of the *Baltimore* sailors was not necessarily an “event,” it did not belong in the canon of influential historical moments. This discovery made me consider basic historiographical questions about *who writes history*. Why do historians consider certain occurrences to be “events”? Who determines which days were historically memorable, and which are unenduring? Events happen every day, how do we choose which events will become historic? Moreover, how are these specific qualifications for historic events different from one country to another?

The United States’ historical narrative about relations with Chile served American imperialist objectives, just as the Chilean narrative benefited Chilean political interests. In Chilean newspapers, the *Baltimore* fight appeared as a commonplace saloon brawl, symptomatic of a rough neighborhood. The Chilean articles emphasized the sense of disorder and lack of control near the port, and used the incident in conjunction with others as proof that municipal authorities should better regulate the region. Moreover, the writers blamed the physical disrepair of the neighborhood for the disorders, not the actors involved. The *Baltimore* incident was larger than most bar brawls: many smaller brawls did not even appear in the newspapers because the actors were from the transient maritime community or the urban poor, both marginalized groups in Valparaiso. The Chilean newspapers strategically conveyed a deep separation between the seamy neighborhood where the incident took place, and the elite politician class who had to assume the consequences.
Analysis of the news coverage of the event is the final step in this investigation. First, this study works backwards in search of the contextualized meaning of the event in its specific historical moment. The context is essential to understanding the local meaning of events within Valparaiso. The physical environment that people inhabit directly influences their behavior, power relationships, and movements. If the Baltimore incident were a product of the location where it occurred, then a local history of Valparaiso would further illuminate the tensions of that environment and reveal the root causes of such common incidents. My investigation into nineteenth-century Valparaiso revealed a city in flux; rapidly experiencing commercial success, urban expansion, municipal bureaucratization, and social stratification.

This thesis studies the identity of a place, a setting for history. The identity of Valparaiso changed dramatically during the nineteenth centuries as its commercial self expanded and a new city grew up around the port. The port’s identity depended upon its role within Chile and within the global economy, as well as on the identities of its residents and the hybridized culture that materialized there. The cosmopolitan nature of the port created that new culture, as well as the transformation of urban municipal structures there. The presence of foreigners was always felt. As the port became more cosmopolitan and its neighborhoods more international, questions arose about what it meant to be Valparaisian, and whether those from Valparaiso were in fact Chilean, whether they possessed a distinct, hybridized identity. Municipal authorities often traded national identity for commercial gain; with such a large presence of foreigners,
authorities were not willing to cut the port’s profits in order to maintain control and autonomy over the city.

**HISTORIOGRAPHY**

In order to challenge the foreign perspective on events in Chile that I initially encountered, my thesis questions the political performances of historians. Examining the historiography of these events is central to this project, as Valparaiso was imbued with international economic agendas that clouded its national identity and historical narratives. Dening’s “history’s theatre” raises questions about the role of the historian in this theatre, conceding that the concept of “theatricality of history-making” is threatening to the historical profession. Dening appeals to historians not to assign one-dimensional, clear-cut meaning to events: “The best theatre in historical writing is that in which the Death of the Author is an exchange for the Birth of the Reader.” The performance of historians when writing history is apparent in the biased accounts of diplomatic conflicts, when national honor and developing identities were at stake. Thus, a new perspective on old sources is necessary to uncover deeper layers of meanings in these texts.

Social historian Natalie Zemon Davis supported a new frame for the treatment of sources, which also acknowledges the role of the historian in ‘molding’ a historical narrative:

“I want to let the ‘fictional’ aspects of these documents be the center of analysis. By ‘fictional’ I do not mean their feigned elements, but rather, using the other and broader sense of the root word *fingere*, their forming, shaping, and molding elements: the crafting of a narrative. In the current debate about the relation of the ‘real’ and the ‘historical’ to the ‘fictional,’ I think we can agree with Hayden White that the world does not just ‘present itself to

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10 Dening, 110.
11 Dening, xv.
perception in the form of well-made stories, with central subjects, proper beginnings, middles and ends.’… the shaping choices of language, detail, and order are needed to present an account that seems to both writer and reader true, real, meaningful, and/or explanatory”  

Intrinsic in shaping the historical narratives of incidents that took place in Valparaiso is the full investigation of the setting, place, time, and actors that occupied that space. Zemon Davis asserts that the telling of any history involves the voice of the narrator, who pulls out subjects and themes in order to make sense of often chaotic, conflicting accounts. Her suggestions inspired me to look more closely at the accepted reports about the Baltimore incident, and I found that there were many other narratives underneath and running parallel to that story.

Travelers’ accounts appear often in this study because they are so common during the nineteenth century, especially those that describe the physical attributes of Valparaiso. In fact, most Chilean historians cite the diaries and travel logs of British, North American, Argentine, French and other visitors to Valparaiso when crafting a description of the port. These firsthand accounts come from foreign voices, however, and their prominent role in Chilean historiography could negatively impact the perspectives in the nation’s history. Although it may seem inappropriate to accept outsiders’ definitions of Valparaiso, Chilean historian Guillermo Feliu Cruz emphasized the value of these accounts: Andrés Bello, (intellectual, educator, and founder of the Universidad de Chile), among others, “insistió en el mérito del testimonio de los viajeros para ilustrar el espíritu de la sociedad de un pueblo…”  

Travelers noticed subtle cultural eccentricities in Valparaiso, perhaps by comparing the city to their home. Often their

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13 Guillermo Feliu Cruz, *Notas para una Bibliografía sobre Viajeros relativos a Chile* (Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 1965), 23. “He insisted on the merit of travelers’ testimonies to illustrate the spirit of the society of people…”
accounts captured the “spirit” of the community, as Feliu Cruz suggests, since they write personal narratives that describe the emotions evoked by Valparaiso. Perhaps the disembodied (though never objective) perspectives of outsiders even presented fresh points-of-view on Valparaiso. Studied in conjunction with Chilean texts and periodicals, as well as foreign histories, the travelers’ accounts are useful and provide anecdotal material that helps us approach a more local, social history.

In an effort to capture a Chilean point of view on historic incidents in Chile (though never a generalized ‘Chilean perspective,’ which cannot exist), I examined current secondary monographs by Chilean historians as well as 19th-century Chilean periodicals, especially the newspaper *El Mercurio*. As Zemon Davis asserts, however, such primary sources contain voices and molded narratives as well, so it was necessary to investigate the ideologies of *El Mercurio* and its political ideologies within nineteenth-century Chile.

*El Mercurio* has played a role in Chilean political history since its establishment in 1827.\(^{14}\) Now the oldest, continuously published Spanish language newspaper in the world, the political leanings of *El Mercurio* have shifted over the years. The Chilean press developed a close connection with politics in the early 19th century through the *Mercurio de Valparaiso* and later *El Mercurio*.\(^{15}\) Beginning almost at its inception, *El Mercurio* was allied with the powerful commercial bourgeois of Valparaiso, the elite merchant class that overlapped with the intellectual elite community who wrote *El*

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\(^{14}\) I have consulted histories of *El Mercurio* written in the early 20th century. These narratives are in fact primary sources since they reflect the role *El Mercurio* played in 1920s Chile. Supplemented by modern articles, however, they explain the origins of the newspaper and its early development.

\(^{15}\) Margaret Campbell, “The Chilean Press, 1823-1842,” *Journal of Inter-American Studies* 4, no. 4 (October 1962): 545. The name change reflected a shift from local to national, in topic interests and readership.
Mercurio’s pages. However, El Mercurio’s loyalties were complex, and proved to be dynamic over the course of the century.

Founded by Pedro Félix Vicuña in 1827, Mercurio de Valparaíso was a predecessor of El Mercurio and Chile’s first daily newspaper starting in 1829. The Mercurio de Valparaíso changed ownership frequently in the early years, including to Argentine and Spanish owners in the 1830s. These changes led to accusations that the paper was not solely Chilean, but reflected the cosmopolitanism of its city of origin. Camilo Henríquez, a priest, writer and journalist who edited the first Chilean newspaper (the Aurora de Chile), highlighted the constant struggle of comparisons with the British; “hace mucha falta un periódico mensual de suficiente extensión como las revistas inglesas: trabajarámos en ello.” Henríquez contrasted the lack of widely distributed periodicals in Chile to the contemporary English standard. While Valparaiso’s international prestige as a modernizing industrial city emerged, the corresponding institutions of a modern city became necessary; the commercial development of Valparaiso has been linked to the establishment of El Mercurio de Valparaíso. The original printer and business manager was Thomas Wells, a North American student of Benjamin Franklin whose foreign identity began a long history of foreign influence over El Mercurio.

17 Campbell, 551.
18 From an 1822 letter from Camilo Henríquez to Manuel Salas, as cited in Ricardo Donoso, Veinte años de la historia de El Mercurio (Santiago: Imprenta Cervantes, 1927), 27. “There is much need for a monthly periodical of sufficient extension like the English magazines, we will work for this.”
The genre of the *El Mercurio* transformed dramatically over the 19th century. It began as a “periódico mercantil, político y literario,” though the early editions focused mostly on commercial maritime activity, and the “literario” was removed from this slogan after the 14th issue.\(^{19}\) Unlike many contemporary newspapers that appeared after independence, *El Mercurio* was intended for “servicio público” and did not initially enter into “personal y agresivo” polemic debates about over politics.\(^{20}\) The initial plans for the newspaper strictly targeted local and national civic issues: “Don Pedro Félix se cuidó de que *El Mercurio* se preocupara con preferencia del fomento mercantil de Valparaiso y del adelanto local y nacional en cuestiones educativas y urbanas que no de política…”\(^{21}\) *El Mercurio*’s exclusive concern with commercial news concealed political leanings, though it did not eliminate them completely.

Although the content of *El Mercurio* articles did not illuminate political biases, the political parties of the newspapers’ readership did. The government’s subscription to *El Mercurio* under President Francisco Antonio Pinto in 1828-1829, for example, indicates political affiliations with the Liberal party (or Pipiolos), or at least official approbation from that group of which Pedro Félix Vicuña was a member. Historian J. Pelaez Tapia asserted that *El Mercurio* was fundamentally liberal, in his centennial history of the paper.\(^{22}\) However, “Es asimismo difícil apreciar la filiación política y la

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\(^{19}\) Donoso, 59-63. “mercantile, political and literary periodical”
\(^*\) Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Spanish are mine. Please note, deviations from modern Spanish grammatical or spelling conventions in the primary texts reflect contemporary nineteenth-century norms.
\(^{21}\) Pelaez Tapia, 53. “Pedro Felix took care that *El Mercurio* would be concerned preferentially about the mercantile promotion of Valparaiso and the local and national progress in urban matters of education, not politics.”
\(^{22}\) Pelaez Tapia, 55.
orientación ideológica del *Mercurio* en sus primeros años, pues sus comentarios sobre los asuntos de actualidad son rarísimos.” Most notably in this era, *El Mercurio* did not comment on the controversial Constitution of 1828, a deep ideological conflict that would lead to the Chilean revolution of 1829. In 1829, with the conservative power shift in Santiago, the new government cancelled the state subscription to *El Mercurio*, and illuminated the liberal categorization of the newspaper.

Depending on the contemporary political control in Chile and the sitting editor-in-chief of *El Mercurio*, the newspaper’s alliances varied widely: “así como ayer era decidido partidario del gobierno del general Pinto y de los pipiolos, hoy quemaba incienso y prestaba incondicional acatamiento a la Administración pelucona.” Political alliances were fleeting and subject to change. One editor-in-chief, Don Ladislao Ochoa, agreed to support Chilean Minister Diego Portales in the newspaper in exchange for payment.

From the leadership of Argentine editor Domingo Faustino Sarmiento in 1841 to Chilean historian Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna in 1863 (and others), *El Mercurio* oscillated between a strictly commercial emphasis, and more obvious political rhetoric.

When Vicuña Mackenna accepted the position as editor, he did so only under the condition that he could maintain, “absoluta independencia en la redacción política del diario.” Years later, in 1863, editor Isidoro Errázuriz reaffirmed that the newspaper was

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23 Donoso, 62. “It is also difficult to appreciate the political affiliation and the ideological orientation of *El Mercurio* in its first years, since its commentaries about present times are very rare.”

24 Donoso, 83. “as yesterday [*El Mercurio*] was decided to be in favor of General Pinto’s government and the [liberal] pipiolos, today it burned incense and paid unconditional respect to the [conservative] wig administration.”

25 Donoso, 105.

26 Donoso, 90-95.

27 Donoso, 174. “absolute independence in the political editorials of the newspaper.”
a “publicación sin compromisos con gobiernos o partidos disciplinados…”28 The commitment to commercial information and the lack of political affiliation were still universal objectives of El Mercurio even as its leadership changed.

For Thomas Wells, the financial success of the newspaper was most important.29 Perhaps due to his foreign identity, Wells was not as concerned with political affiliations within Chile as with the prosperity of his business and monitoring the commerce of Valparaíso: “Es la parte económica, la conquista de las codiciadas onzas, la única que le interesaba.”30 Wells mostly left the political negotiations to the changing lineage of Chilean writers. El Mercurio listed the maritime movements of the port and the municipal legislation that would affect residents.31 Articles also reported local news such as the movement in and out of Valparaíso jails, always supporting police initiatives and “justifica[ba] sus providencias.”32 However, in 1832 the editors began to emphasize opinion articles or editorials that appeared regularly and treated topics of public interest, whether local or international. Local administrative issues arose on Mercurio’s pages alongside international ones, and this led to more discussion of contemporary political situations in Chile.33

In 1833, Wells sold El Mercurio to Chilean José Luis Calle, who changed its typographic format and increased the bond with political government agendas.34 However, the foreign influence in the Chilean press did not end with El Mercurio. The

28 Donoso, 156. “publication without commitment to governments or disciplined political parties …”
29 Donoso, 80.
30 Donoso, 83. “The only thing that interested him was the economic part, the conquest of the coveted ounces.”
31 Donoso, 85.
32 Donoso, 85. “justified their decisions.”
33 Donoso, 165.
34 Donoso, 87.
Chilean Times developed in the English colony in Valparaiso, and serves as an historical testament to the influence of this group. A strong alliance with the English appears in El Mercurio in routine commentary, as well as the many articles from English newspapers that the Crónica Estranjera section features. This alliance highlights the elite affiliations of El Mercurio as well as the large commercial influence that the English exercised in Valparaiso. In response to an article in the Chilean Times that praised El Mercurio, the editors of the latter thanked them amiably, “por su cariñoso y fraternal saludo a la prensa de Valparaíso que había amordazado el tirano.” The good feeling between El Mercurio and the Chilean Times is apparent, and exemplifies the continual alliance between El Mercurio and the British commercial elite in Valparaiso, although its political affiliations varied throughout the century. Thus, El Mercurio overwhelmingly supported the liberals, albeit very quietly. From a methodology point of view, the most important attribute of El Mercurio was its alliance with the port’s bourgeois.

Structure of a Thesis

This study of the local history of Valparaiso begins with a study of the physical attributes of the port. The narrative will progressively widen its scope from a detailed local history, until it reaches the “incidents,” the historically canonized events where many historical studies begin. Without the context, the multiple nuanced meanings of these incidents are lost. The physical structure in the first chapter, for example, formed the shape of an amphitheater, with houses that rose up on semi-circular hills surrounding

35 El Mercurio, 7 September 1891. “for their affectionate and fraternal salutation to the press of Valparaiso that the tyrant had silenced.” This passage implicates President Balmaceda (occasionally referred to as the “tyrant”) in censorship of the press, and sets the English in opposition to his regime.
the harbor. This amphitheater image (evoked by many writers and historians) supports the theater metaphor of Valparaiso with the port as the main stage for performances. The disrepair often became disorder on the unkempt streets close to the docks, and the physical set-up of these local neighborhoods led to international events.

In the second chapter, I examine the relationship between the local history of the port, and the broader incidents it witnessed. Poverty and crowded tenements, symptoms of the rapid overpopulation of the city, created an atmosphere of disrepair and distrust. The heavy British influence in Valparaiso manifested itself in the leisure activities and culture of the port, as did the transience of many of its inhabitants. The central social spaces at the port often served as venues for sailors’ negotiations, and intersected with the maritime world.

In the third chapter, the focus expands to include the naval world of Valparaiso, both commercial and military functions, and the impact that trends of enlistment and desertion had on the social fabric of Valparaiso. The reasons for the city’s national and global eminence emerge here, and the international overlaps with the local history elaborated in earlier chapters. Valparaiso was the naval center of Chile and thus an increasingly important seat of developing Chilean nationalism. Moreover, the heavy commercial traffic throughout the port explained the constant presence of British merchants and their consequent impact on Valparaiso’s society. Interaction with foreigners is most important in the fourth and final chapter, about the canonized historical incidents that fill the 19th-century history books on Valparaiso. A battle between the British and the U.S., the Spanish bombardment of the port, and the *Baltimore* incident between the U.S. and Chile all employed Valparaiso as a site for international disputes,
with varying levels of Chilean involvement. Nonetheless, after the fully developed context that the prior chapters establish, the stories of the incidents engage with the local setting of Valparaíso, its residents, its budding nationalism, and civil authorities. By ending with the canonized incidents, I hope to show that they are useful case studies but only after proper contextualization of the historical moment in which they took place.

In the Fernand Braudel’s progressive framework (based in the Annales School of historical writing), there are three levels of history: the physical or geographic environment, the social and political structures, and the events, people and specific stories that fit into these broader structures.36 As Braudel posited, it is necessary to develop all three levels simultaneously in order to fully describe history. In Valparaíso, the physical port, local systems of authority, social customs, and exterior economic interests all ran parallel to the history of the Spanish bombardment or the Baltimore incident. By moving from the broad structures towards the specific incidents, this narrative will attempt to shift their positions in the history of Valparaíso and contextualize their historical meaning.

CHAPTER 1
THE PHYSICAL PORT: DRAMA IN AN AMPHITHEATER

The city of Valparaiso rests in a natural bay on the coast of Chile, seventy miles northwest of Santiago. Because the city was an important commercial center in the Pacific Ocean in the 19th century, the port’s utilitarian attributes as a venue for shipping and unloading merchandise were integral to the city’s identity. The physical landscape of Valparaiso changed frequently during the 19th century to accommodate the rising volume of ships and material goods that came into the harbor. Indeed the 19th century witnessed major expansion and changes in the city, as what was once a small town broadened horizontally and vertically. The amphitheater-like shape of Valparaiso’s hills above the bay created an apt setting for the theatrical history that took place there. The physical setting is essential to local history: Valparaiso’s haphazard, hilled neighborhoods separated sailors from merchant elites, reifying the hierarchical social strata and forming a chaotic physical structure that lacked regulation and control. Its vulnerable location, open to the rough Pacific Ocean, left the port open to destructive storms and exemplified the lack of control and volatility that characterized the city. The physical environment even provoked disorder, since the disrepair of some neighborhoods fostered a sense of danger and distrust.

Valparaiso began as a sister city to Santiago, since its nearby location made it an ideal commercial and naval entrance point into the capital.¹ As such, the port was the site

of Chile’s interactions with other nations, especially as relationships with nations like Great Britain increased after independence. The historian Greg Dening attributes great importance to the location of historical encounters, and the geographic construction of the encounter site:

Everywhere where space and action are limited by boundaries which screen comings and goings there is an island and a beach… In crossing the beach every voyager has brought something old and made something new. The old is written in the forms and habits and needs each newcomer brings. The new is the changed world, the adjusted balance every coming makes. On islands each new intruder finds a freedom it never had in its old environment.²

Valparaiso was the “beach” of Chile; the entrance point for foreign citizens and goods into the developing Chilean economy. Valparaiso was also an “island” however; it was a site for international culture clashes, and developed a unique community in its own rite. On such “islands,” encounters produced mixtures of diverse cultural, military, and commercial backgrounds to create something new. Valparaiso was a hybridized city, composed of encounters between captains and sailors, Chileans and foreigners, elites and merchants. Newcomers brought their home culture and languages, only to redefine them at the port. With every new arrival, the city expanded to accommodate commercial demand and cultural change. The freedom that Dening describes on the “island” resulted from untested systems of authority and lack of accountability by the many transient residents. As an “island,” Valparaiso was also a theater; a local setting for global encounters. Valparaiso’s physical structure affected and reflected the society it contained, and set the scene for several international conflicts during its rapid urban development.

SOCIAL HIERARCHIES WITHIN URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE

The amphitheater of Valparaíso is composed two major sections: the port environs near the wharfs, and the upper hills. (See Figure 1) These hills have been accessible for the last one hundred years by mechanical outdoor elevators (funiculars) that transport residents diagonally upwards and inland. The separated hills of Valparaíso have often represented distinct socio-economic groups; elite English merchants inhabited the isolated Cerro Alegre (Cheerful Hill), for example, which was physically divided and inaccessible from poor urban neighborhoods. The inherent separation of these hills precluded development of community among them and encouraged the isolation of small sections of the civil society.3 William Ruschenberger, a doctor for the United States Navy, noted that on Cerro Alegre “habitan los residentes ingleses y americanos, que viven allí casi enteramente aparte de los del país, cual si formasen una especie de colonia extranjera.”4 The British colony was utterly physically divided from the rest of Valparaíso.

Although these hills were the natural physical boundaries, these distinctive neighborhoods also resulted from intentional separation efforts: “los comerciantes

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4 William Ruschenberg, Valparaíso en 1831 in Alfonso Calderón, Memorial de Valparaíso (Santiago: RIL editors, 2001), 137. “the English and American inhabit them, who live there almost entirely apart from those of the country, which forms a kind of foreign colony.”
Fig 1. “Plano de Valparaíso 1895” topographically shows the many individual hills that rise up around the bay, creating separate neighborhoods. Marquez Street is located adjacent to the white L-shaped muelle fiscal, southwest coast of the bay. Reprinted from Nelson Vasquez L. et al, Cartografía histórica de Valparaiso.

ingleses llegados a Chile desde los principios de la Independencia, quienes por su mentalidad segregacionista quisieron constituir una comunidad aparte de los nativos, y por la falta de espacio en el estrecho y sucio pueblo que era el Valparaiso de entonces, se instalaron en el cerro Alegre.”

Small colonies, most notably that of the English, developed on the hill, far above the gritty port and apart from the neighborhoods where

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5 Salinas, 12. “The English merchants who arrived in Chile since the beginnings of Independence and who, because of their segregationist mentality, wanted to set up a community apart from the “natives,” and, because of a lack of space in the narrow and dirty town that Vaparaiso was then, settled down on the Alegre hill.”
Chileans resided. Within this community, the British maintained ex-patriot nationalism, preserved their customs, and created British institutions within Valparaíso. In spite of this separation, immigration had a strong cultural influence on Valparaíso, especially notable in the European-style architecture of many of the city’s 19th-century buildings.\(^6\) The isolation of such neighborhoods demonstrates the power relationships in Valparaíso, often typified by European immigrants holding positions of authority or economic control over Chilean workers. Plainly called the “parte baja” (low part) and the “parte alta” (high part) respectively, the flat part of town and the hills above embodied distinct economic strata of the Chilean population.\(^7\) Many of the merchant elite benefited from the commerce of the port but lived high above it.

All of the hills of Valparaíso were not like Cerro Alegre, however. There were also tenement communities on the hills, built on precarious slopes because there was no more space in the flat lower port neighborhoods.\(^8\) Chilean painter Ramon Subercaseaux traveled to Valparaíso between 1854 and 1864, and in his memoirs he described his recollections of the hills: “Los cerros de Valparaíso me parecían feísimos; áridos, de tierra roja, sin más construcciones que las casuchas de tablas donde se abrigaban del viento las familias pobres…”\(^9\) Thus, the hierarchical structure of Valparaíso’s amphitheater did not necessarily mirror the hierarchy of the social strata: tenement

\(^7\) Salinas, 5. “the low part” and “the high part.”
\(^8\) Urbina Carrasco, 68.
\(^9\)Ramón Vicuña Subercaseaux, Memorias de ochenta años: Recuerdos personales, críticas, reminiscencias históricas, viajes, anécdotas. Tomo I (Santiago: Editorial Nascimento, 1936), 37. “The hills of Valparaíso seemed very ugly to me: arid, with red earth, without any construction more than the small houses made of planks where the poor families shelter themselves from the wind…”
neighborhoods were prevalent throughout the hills, often very close to elite foreign colonies, but always isolated on the small islands of each hill.

The lower port area contained what was originally el Puerto, the protective cove for the occasional ship that passed through Valparaiso during the Colonial Period.\textsuperscript{10} Before the expansion into the hills and the spread to the wider, flat, residential neighborhood known as El Almendral, the small port region contained all the essential elements of the city such as churches, public plazas, residences, and the wharf. During the nineteenth century, Valparaiso grew up around the port, creating a commercial center with residential areas surrounding it. The port remained the economic focus of the city, however, where ships docked and there never seemed to be enough space to accommodate them. It was here, on the stage of the amphitheater, that the first encounters took place when people arrived in Valparaiso, and several global incidents were acted out.

\textbf{TRAVELERS’ ACCOUNTS}

Observadores foráneos e historiadores contemporaneos concuerdan en que no hubo lugar menos a propósito para levantar una ciudad como el sitio que ocupa.\textsuperscript{11}

María Urbina Carrasco, \textit{Los conventillos de Valparaíso}

Apart from artists’ visual renderings of the port, the primary sources of descriptions of Valparaiso’s physical structure are foreign travelers’ accounts of their first impressions. Travel literature about 19\textsuperscript{th}-century Valparaiso is ample, and ranges from military accounts to journalistic or literary diaries. Because it was the main port-of-call in

\textsuperscript{10} Salinas, 5. “shelter to the scarce port movements of the small ships of the Colonial Era.”
\textsuperscript{11} Urbina Carrasco, 49.
the Pacific, and the first major port on the journey north from Cape Horn, travelers’
arrivals at the port were often intensified by personal desperation after the long voyage.
The journey around the Cape from Buenos Aires took at least two months alone; thus
most travelers had been at sea for at least that long when they arrived at Valparaiso. As
visiting British captain Basil Hall wrote, “After a perilous and protracted voyage, seamen
are ready to consider any coast delightful…” However, the relief of arrival often mixed
with disappointment and disenchantment. Doctor Ruschenberger recorded his patients’
initial reactions to the port: “No tengo la menor gana de bajar a tierra en un sitio de un tal
aspecto,” they said. This immediate distaste for the sight of Valparaiso highlights prior
expectations that North American sailors had for South America.

Exotified perceptions of South America still permeated the European and United
States intellectual elite, especially after the voyages of Darwin (and most of all, in a city
named the ‘Valley of Paradise’). The coast of Valparaiso, as Ruschenberger described it,
was “rocosa, pendiente, escabrosa y desierta… Llegándose aún más cerca, acentúase su
aridez, y son pocos los que no sienten un desengaño cuando descubren que, a medio
verano, está la vegetación seca y marchita.” This disenchantment stemmed from false
expectations of lush vegetation in South America, when in fact Valparaiso is located in a
dry region of Chile and boasted a rapidly industrializing urban area, not beautiful natural

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14 Ruschenberger, 136. “I do not have the smallest desire to land in a site with such an appearance.”
15 Ruschenberger, 136. “rocky, sloped, rough and desert… Arriving even closer, the coast accentuates its aridity, and there are few who do not feel disenchantment when they discover that, in the middle of summer, the vegetation is dry and shriveled.”
sites. Nevertheless, “decepción ante el cuadro de miseria que les ofrecía la ‘ciudad’”\(^\text{16}\) was a common reaction among those who arrived at the port. The disenchantment not only resulted from the lack of natural beauty in Valparaiso, but also from the poverty, filth, and utterly commercial character of the city. By describing these disenchanting realities, travelers’ accounts revealed the underbelly of Valparaiso that government reports and newspapers often neglected to illuminate.\(^\text{17}\)

A semicircle of hills framed Valparaiso, forming an amphitheater shape that surrounds the harbor. As the Swiss visitor C.E. Bladh described it: “Valparaiso forms a great amphitheater above a long and low beach, surrounded by numerous high hills.”\(^\text{18}\) The semi-circular shape of the bay extends up to the hills, creating an amphitheater image with the very port as the main stage. The problem with this haphazard structure of houses on the hills, at least from an architectural point of view, is its spontaneity and lack of planning.\(^\text{19}\) It appears that the city “consistía en una aglomeración de edificaciones sin orden, porque Valparaiso no fue regulado por la norma…”\(^\text{20}\)

The progressive layers and extensions of the city are plainly visible because it continuously expanded to accommodate the rising population. The physical urban growth of the city was haphazard because of it lacked zoning requirements, or an articulated long-term plan.

\(^{16}\) Urbina Carrasco, 51-52. “deception before the scene of misery/poverty that ‘the city’ offered them…”

\(^{17}\) Urbina Carrasco, 52.


\(^{19}\) Ponce and Kapstein, 71.

\(^{20}\) Urbina Carrasco, 50. “it consisted of a crowd of constructions lacking order, because Valparaiso was not regulated by the rules.”
Fig. 2. “Valparaiso Bay,” from a Survey by the Chilean Navy, 1877. The larger view of Valparaiso in this map emphasizes the enclosed form of the port, which was guarded by land in the south but vulnerable to the north.

The natural protection that Valparaiso’s harbor provided from the south left the north end of the bay vulnerable to northwest winds off the Pacific.21 (See Figure 2) As Captain Hall wrote, “[Valparaiso] during winter, especially in June and July, is subject to occasional hard storms, blowing from the north, in which direction it is open to the sea.”22 Sharp winds off the ocean plagued the city, as did destructive hurricanes whose impact necessitated rebuilding of the lower port environs on several occasions. As Chilean sailor Luis Uribe Orrego reported, “Así, en los primeros días de junio experimentóse [sic] en nuestra bahía un furioso temporal que ocasionó la pérdida de dieziseis [sic] buques

21 Salinas, 7.
22 Hall, 7.
The physical location of the port was risky, and fostered uncertainty and lack of control. Storms and harsh weather destroyed ships in port, as there were few systems in place to protect anchored vessels. Above all in the Almendral neighborhood, “su costa ha sido siempre un cementerio de barcos,” as the physical structure of the harbor and port undermined its commercial and naval activities and acted as an obstacle to their success. The physical vulnerability of the port contributed to a lack or order and control on its shores.

Although the amphitheater shape of Valparaiso is the subject of romanticized descriptions (and provides a perfect metaphor for the theater of history), the urban planning of this city “descuida totalmente el objetivo estético.” Perhaps the randomness of the hodge-podge arrangement of houses gives Valparaiso its historic charm in the modern day. Argentine Domingo Faustino Sarmiento wrote that the city where he would later become a major intellectual force (and an editor of El Mercurio) was “una ciudad sin plan y sin formas, es un verdadero camarón echado patas y antenas en todas direcciones.” The city is an unfortunate example of urban planning, or lack thereof, because structures on the hills developed rapidly and accidentally through commercial necessity and were not premeditated. The rapid expansion of commerce and the influx of immigrants necessitated these hurried structural alterations of the city. The jumbled collection of buildings that made up Valparaiso comprised the setting for local history.

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23 Luis Uribe Orrego, Los orígenes de nuestra marina militar (Santiago: Imprenta Nacional, 1894), 53. “In the first days of June our bay experienced a furious storm that caused the loss of sixteen merchant ships, out of sixty-one that had been in the anchorage…”
24 Salinas, 7. “Her coast has always been a cemetery of ships.”
25 Ponce and Kapstein, 73. “totally neglects aesthetic objectives.”
26 El Mercurio, September 1841, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento. As cited in Donoso, 123. “a city without plan and without forms, it is a true prawn with feet and antennas thrown out in all directions…”
there, and social disorder was manifested in the haphazard structures. The physical
history of Valparaiso is especially relevant when its layout impinged upon the social
atmosphere and local history of the port

DISREPAIR AND DISORDER: LA CALLE MÁRQUEZ

As commerce expanded at the harbor, the neighborhoods near the port developed
a leisure scene of drinking and gambling similar to that of other contemporary ports.
Transient sailors frequented saloons, gambling houses, and dance halls within a ten-block
radius of the wharf; the neighborhood was defined as an area that reached the Victoria
Plaza. In addition to the maritime culture that permeated the neighborhood, these blocks
also contained the permanent homes of many working class citizens of Valparaiso.
Unfortunately, it was also a dangerous and volatile section of the city, situated right on
the border of maritime commerce and the urban society.

Marquez Street, a small one-block strip running perpendicular to the shore, was
home to several saloons and frequently appeared in newspaper and police records as a
site of disorder and conflict. (See Figure 1) Marquez Street first appeared in my research
as the site of the True Blue Saloon, where the Baltimore incident began and escalated into
a riot. Indeed, sailors were often the protagonists of these newsworthy incidents, as
“desertores que los buques estranjeros [sic] dejan sobre estas playas, y que hallándose sin
estado, se convierten necesariamente en vagabundos peligrosos.”

The problem of foreign sailors haunting the port neighborhood was constant throughout the nineteenth
century, as their detachment from their native civil society often meant they initiated

27 Ministry of Foreign Relations, (Santiago, National Archive: 26 December 1827) as cited in
Harris Bucher, 21. “deserters that the foreign ships leave on our beaches, and finding themselves
without state, necessarily convert themselves into dangerous vagabonds.”
conflicts or destroyed property during a short stay in Chile. Above all, those sailors “vagos,” not currently enlisted with any company or navy, remained outside of maritime systems of authority and occupied a liminal space between Valparaiso and the sea.  

The name of Marquez Street often appeared in accounts of lower port incidents that described a particularly seamy spot where brawls were nightly occurrences, and thus were not ‘eventful’ but rather commonplace. Construction and public work projects on and around Marquez Street were frequent. Local authorities seemed to believe that the physical disrepair of the street exacerbated the crime and disorder and, judging from the abundance of incidents on that block, they may have been right. The habits of this street and those who frequented it show the correlation between the volatile culture of this neighborhood and the physical manifestations of that culture.

Marquez Street is a good example of the condition of surrounding streets and the social culture of the port neighborhood, and the editors of El Mercurio often used it as an example of a broader sanitation and safety problem. The ongoing conflict between authority and disorder on Marquez Street and its environs was clearly articulated in urban issues of sanitation, maintenance, and “betterment” of the streets, since these factors demonstrate the visible control that authorities had over the neighborhood. The following short article from El Mercurio represents such anxieties about garbage accumulation and general lack of sanitation on Marquez Street:

Por manera que mientras mas se procura el mejoramiento de las calles, mientras más esfuerzo hace la autoridad por mantenerlas aseadas y separar todos aquellos defectos que las afean, parece que los vecinos de algunos de ellas cifrasen su bienestar en presentarlas inmundas e intransitables. La de la calle de Márquez, por ejemplo; borró de su frente esa faja pestifera que la cortaba, pero no ha evitado por ello el acopio de basuras que se está haciendo.

28 Harris Bucher, 21. “strays/layabouts” Harris Bucher uses the word vago, a term often used to describe stray dogs.
According to this article, municipal authorities worked diligently against uncooperative residents of Marquez Street. This article contentiously blamed the sanitation problems on the residents, even referring to them as “bad neighbors.” In spite of the continued efforts of local authorities, the residents supposedly persisted in perpetuating the filthy condition of the street. This point of view exemplifies a common perspective in Valparaíso (especially among the liberal elites of El Mercurio), which blamed residents for the lack of sanitation and hygiene in their neighborhood when, in reality, the lack of adequate municipal maintenance systems created the problem. As sanitation worsened throughout the nineteenth century, and disease spread as a result, such arguments continued to misplace the responsibility for urban sanitation. However, the consequences of the pestilence on Marquez Street were even more significant when they contributed to the ambiance of disrepair that led to disorder.

The following public complaint from El Mercurio, almost fifty years later, connected the disrepair of the street with the danger of lurking criminals:

Sitio peligroso—A la policía damos traslado de las siguientes líneas:
‘Señor cronista: hace meses se vinieron al suelo unos cuartos de la calle de Márquez numero 112, sin que la policía haya tomado medida alguna para obligar al propietario a retirar los escombros y cerrar el sitio. Por esta causa

29 El Mercurio, 3 May 1847. “In this way, while the more one attempts to better the streets, the more force the authority uses to maintain them clean and separate from all those defects that spoil them, it seems that the neighbors of some of them complicate their well-being by presenting them as filthy and impassable. Marquez Street, for example, erased the pestilent strip that cut it off, but has not avoided the stockpile of garbage that is piling up in the same spot where the putrefaction ran before. Still less the filthy water that profusely pours out of the houses above, over the public walkway, with damage for the people who frequent it… In this way we would make a report of many detestable and bad neighbors, but for now we leave it for another occasion.”
Marquez Street was a place of neglect and disrepair, according to this complaint, with normalized crime and little accountability to the police force. The writers drew a distinction here between the “honorable citizen” and the “other” who stood in the way of a clean and safe environment. The use of language like “pillos” (rascals) reflects the writers’ disdain for other residents of the street, and marked fear and tension between neighbors. There were also conflicts of interest between port residents, especially working families, and sailors merely passing through who were less vulnerable to consequences because of their short stays in Valparaiso. Although the writers of El Mercurio often belonged to the elite, intellectual circles of Chilean politics, the submitting writers of this request did not likely fit that description. As concerned citizens, and residents of Marquez Streets, these people wrote on behalf of the working residents of the port neighborhood. The intellectual elites who usually wrote for El Mercurio resided in separate neighborhoods, often disconnected by a hill, and far from the disrepair and danger on Marquez Street. The neighbors of Marquez Street drew a clear connection between the rubble and the muggings on their block. They directly asked the police to take appropriate measures to improve maintenance and safety on the street. Almost fifty

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30 El Mercurio (Valparaiso), 10 September 1891. “Dangerous Site—We submit the following lines transmitted to the police: ‘Mr. Chronicler: Months ago some rooms of 112 Marquez Street fell to the floor, without the police having taken some method to obligate the owner to remove the rubble and close the site. For this reason, the very rubble is admirably serving rascals to hide themselves… up to the point that a night does not pass without us having to regret robberies or muggings... Now that the era in which the police did not have another mission except to persecute and pressure the honorable citizens has happily past, please ask of your new and dignified bosses that they free us from the hide-outs of rascals… THE NEIGHBORS OF MARQUEZ STREET.’”
years after the 1847 article, residents were identifying the responsibility of municipal authorities for maintenance of the environment. The community effort evident in this article demonstrates the interests of the permanent port residents, who often suffered the consequences of the transient maritime population that passed through Valparaiso.

The culture of petty violence on Marquez Street continued into the early twentieth century. As a complement to the newspaper articles that recounted incidents, the accounts of visitors described the neighborhood and captured the social atmosphere. For example, a North American typographer Samuel Johnston wrote in his letters: “He observado que todos los hombres del pueblo en Chile siempre cargan cuchillo: responde a todas las necesidades domésticas y es, generalmente hablando, su sola arma de ataque o de defensa.”

Johnston’s observation about the weapons that residents carried reveal the violent atmosphere of the port, and the inherent lawlessness that the official reports did not reveal. If every man carried a knife to be prepared for daily interactions, perhaps there was a marked potential for violence (although the main purpose for carrying the knives was likely practical and job-related). This need for protection demonstrates the lack of order and violent volatility that characterized the port atmosphere.

Newspaper reports on skirmishes near the port often cite Marquez Street as the scene for violent incidents. In 1891, for example, shortly before the **USS Baltimore** incident on the same street, *El Mercurio* reported the following skirmish:

Herido—El marinero José A Baeza bebía anoche en el negocio de licores de Carmen Levia, calle de Márquez acompañado de varios amigos y amigas. De

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31 Samuel Burr Johnston, *Cartas escritas durante una residencia de tres años en Chile*, trans. J. T. Medina (Santiago: Imprenta Barcelona, 1917), 28. “I have observed that all the common men in Chile always carry knives: this responds to all the domestic necessities and it is, generally speaking, their only weapon of attack or defense.” Starting upon his arrival in 1811, Johnston wrote letters describing his experience in Valparaiso, and all over Chile, as he worked for and traveled with a major printer.
repente, no sabemos por qué disgustillo de poca monta, Manuel J. Rodríguez tomó una piedra y se la arrojó a Baeza, hiriéndolo en una oreja. Este ofendido con la agresión, insultó a sus compañeros, uno de los cuales, Juan Ruiz, sacó un cortaplumas e hirió con él a Baeza en una nalga. El herido fue llevado al hospital y los culpables puestos a disposición de la justicia. A la dueña del negocio se le aplicó una multa por haber tenido lugar un desorden en su casa.  

The *El Mercurio* report narrated the event as if the reporter was present at the scene; it cited personal insults and motivations to explain the seemingly unprovoked problem. The short length of the article and the nonchalance with which the incident is treated indicate the frequency of such conflicts, especially among sailors in that neighborhood. It seems that it was not unusual to send five men to jail each night, and then ticket the bar owners who had (perhaps inadvertently) provided a setting for this violence. Small incidents such as the conflict with José Baeza often led to larger fights, involving more sailors and passersby. The cosmopolitanism of the port neighborhood and the transience of visitors increased tensions when brawls broke out. In 1891 when the sailors of *USS Baltimore* walked into the True Blue Saloon on Marquez Street, for example, international power relationships entered a small saloon and were manifested in an interpersonal conflict between a few individuals.

Both the incident of the *Baltimore* sailors and the José Baeza incident detailed above were precipitated by alcohol. Saloons, bars and other establishments that sold liquor were in ample supply in Valparaiso, especially on Marquez Street close to the sailors’ entrance point into the city. Despite prohibition laws, according to Edwards

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32*El Mercurio*, 16 September 1891. “HURT—The sailor José A. Baeza was drinking last night in the liquor business of Carmen Leiva, Marquez Street, accompanied by various friends. Suddenly, we do not know for what petty unpleasantness, Manuel J. Rodriguez took a rock and flung it at Baeza, injuring one of his ears. He, offended by the aggression, insulted his compatriots, one of which, Juan Ruiz, took out a penknife and injured Baeza on his buttocks. The injured was carried to the hospital and the guilty parties put at the disposal of justice. A ticket was issued to the owner of the business for having a disorder take place in her house.”
Edwards Bello defined drinking as a major part of Chilean social culture, regardless of socioeconomic level or neighborhood. A saloon in the port neighborhood did not just host Chileans but also witnessed encounters between foreign sailors and Chileans and often became the setting for fights: “en proporción al número de marineros ociosos, depravados, irresponsables y generalmente ebrios, sueltos en una comunidad, satisfaciendo inclinaciones ociosas y pasiones desenfrenadas, es posible que ocurran disturbios y tumultos que exigen la interposición de las autoridades municipales y su consiguiente riesgo de colisiones y complicaciones internacionales”

Foreign sailors were often held responsible for constant disorder in saloons of the port neighborhood.

Although saloon brawls were not unique to Valparaiso (and were indeed common in port cities throughout the world), the Chilean government enacted drinking laws to prevent drinking and its often-violent consequences. The prohibition laws, “como especial para ser burlada,” were mostly ignored by Chileans and international visitors alike. In fact, these laws ironically elucidated the persistent lack of control, enforcement, and authority that the Chilean government exercised in the port neighborhood.

The physical layout of this port city accentuated the separation of neighborhoods along socioeconomic class lines, and demonstrated the lack of control by authorities in a

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33 Edwards Bello, 76. “The habit of drinking is typical of all the Chilean people; in this habit there is no difference of locations or quality of liquor…”
34 J. Bagley to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores, 26 April 1861, National Archive. As cited in Harris Bucher, 19. “in proportion to the numbers of idle, irresponsible and generally inebriated sailors loose in the community, satisfying idle inclinations and unbridled passions, it is possible that disturbances and tumults will occur that demand the intervention of the municipal authorities and the consequent risk of international collisions and complications.”
35 Edwards Bello, 76. “as if specially to be evaded”
haphazard urban environment. The detailed study of one particular street, *la calle Marquez*, which appears in many local reports, shows the strong causal link between physical disrepair and social disorder. Travelers’ accounts observed the atmosphere of the port, both social and physical, that set the scene for skirmishes between sailors and conflicts with permanent residents. Violence and petty crime characterized the atmosphere of Marquez Street, which was a main stage in the consequent global conflict in Valparaiso, such as the *Baltimore* incident. Moreover, the lack of control and order in Valparaiso are obvious attributes of vulnerable physical structures of the port, as well as its transforming social fabric. As we attempt to situate the local history of Valparaiso in the context of its amphitheater, the physical setting illuminates the social organization of the city and the maintenance problems that will be important factors in the global events that occur there.
The port-of-call of the Pacific was an important place on a global scale; it hosted ships from all over the world, international merchants companies, and a cosmopolitan demographic. However, Valparaiso had a local side as well; it was the home to thousands of permanent Chilean and immigrant residents and it possessed a unique hybridized social culture than reflected its international role as well as national Chilean affiliations. Throughout the nineteenth century, the local city of Valparaiso struggled to keep pace with the rapid economic and industrial changes that took place at the port. In many ways, the existing municipal systems of the city could not sufficiently integrate the needs of the quadrupled population.

This chapter will attempt to uncover the local history of Valparaiso, to foreground what has been considered the “background” for theatrical diplomatic incidents that took place in the amphitheater. In particular, local history involves the submerged social history of Valparaiso’s residents, through the lens of disorder in municipal institutions. The disordered functioning of civil systems caused major maintenance, sanitation, and public health problems that affected the non-transient inhabitants of Valparaiso in particular. The local history of this city will reveal destructive effects that intense commercialism had on the residents of the port neighborhoods, as the city transformed into a place where most people were just passing through.
COMMERCIAL EXPANSION OF THE PORT

Valparaiso experienced a sudden economic boom following Chile’s official independence from Spain in 1818. Its strategic geographical situation, as well as legislature from the government in Santiago, allowed it to realize a commercial potential as the main port of call in the Pacific Ocean. “Mientras el progreso se paralizó en el país entero a consecuencia de los quebrantos de la revolución, el Puerto… cuadriplica su población en menos de veinte años.”¹ Valparaiso experienced expansion, represented here by the corresponding population increase, as well as a new role in the international maritime world. Meanwhile the remainder of Chile suffered from the inherited issues of independence movements. Because of its sudden potential and prominence, Valparaiso rapidly became central to Chilean economics, politics, and exterior relations. For example, the telegraph and running water systems arrived in Valparaiso before Santiago, demonstrating its prominence as a Chilean metropolis.²

Growth in Valparaiso often resulted from physical changes to the port. The addition of infrastructure such as the railroad between Santiago and Valparaiso opened up transportation to the port and facilitated movement of goods to and from the capitol. The railroad built between 1852 and 1863, for example, changed Valparaiso’s previously isolated position within Chile and “permitió a Valparaíso romper su encierro.”³ Increased transportation brought Valparaiso symbolically closer and more accessible to Santiago, as

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¹ Juan Bernal Ponce and Glenda Kapstein, “Valparaíso: La arquitectura de una ciudad anfiteatro” Boletín de la Universidad de Chile 73 (April 1967), 69. “While progress was paralyzed in the entire country because of the violations of the revolution, the port… quadrupled its population in twenty years.”
² Ponce and Kapstein, 69.
well as increasing local mobility within the Aconcagua Valley where Valparaiso is located. Once the Spanish commercial monopoly vanished after independence, new structures allowed Chileans and foreigners alike to exploit the commercial potential of Valparaiso, making rapid growth inevitable.⁴

Another factor directly correlated with Valparaiso rapid commercial expansion was the sharp rise in population during the nineteenth century. In 1810, on the eve of Independence, the port claimed only 5,500 inhabitants. By 1822, it had jumped to the second largest city in Chile with 16,000 residents, not including the 3,000 transient sailors who made up a large part of the lower port neighborhood’s inhabitants. Population was growing exponentially then, as only five years later Valparaiso reached 20,000.⁵ The end of the century showed a population of 122,447 in 1895.⁶ Such population growth explains the physical expansion of the city outwards and up into the hills. Increased commercial opportunities resulting from better transportation and infrastructure encouraged immigration. According to the Central Office of Statistics, reported in the newspaper *El Diario Comercial*, the foreign population in Chile went from 26,635 to 87,077 in the decade between 1875 and 1885.⁷ According to the cited article, entitled “The Foreign Population in Chile,” immigration from the exterior not only had an impact upon Chilean demographics, but also on the imagination of Chilean identity.

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⁴ Salinas, 8.
⁵ Salinas, 8-10.
⁶ Salinas, 11.
⁷ *El Diario Comercial*, 7 December 1891, Page 2. This large increase includes many Peruvians and Bolivians who, after Chile’s acquisition of the northern territories of Antofagasta, Tarapacá and Tacna, technically resided in Chilean territory but remained citizens of their original nations. Accounting for these people, the real increase during that period was 8,562, which is still a considerable percentage jump.
Changes in demographics and commercial success brought cultural changes as well. As the port became more cosmopolitan and business-oriented, values shifted and rapid development to keep up with economic demands eclipsed the traditional ambience of the past. The Chilean writer, historian, and journalist Joaquín Edwards Bello (1887-1968) was born and raised in Valparaiso. In his chronicles, Edwards Bello described his disappointment in the drastic changes he noticed in Valparaiso, with, “gente apresurada por ganar y huir, gente extraña a la tierra, gente triste y ambiciosa.”

The hurried entrance (and exit) of foreigners produced a new social atmosphere in Valparaiso, as people capitalized on the rich commercial opportunities there, but quickly left for other shores. The constant movement of transient people characterized Valparaiso’s urban identity.

To Edwards Bello, however, these changes were symptomatic of the industrialization and capitalism that Valparaiso welcomed with open arms in the nineteenth century. As he described, “Allá nadie quiere recuerdos. Les basta la fiebre del momento, el ajetreo, la vorágine diaria con sus cambios vertiginosos...No importa que no haya libros ni antigüedades, con tal que haya agua corriente y electricidad.”

Edwards Bello described the changes of massive urbanization: the fast pace of city life and the focus on future gains, not the preservation of antiquities. However, his commentaries reflect his privilege: Edwards Bello came from the influential Edwards family in Valparaiso, and was also descended from the illustrious Chilean intellectual Andrés Bello, founder of the University of Chile. As a writer and a member of the intellectual community, Edwards Bello prioritized books over running water, rejecting modernity to

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8 Joaquín Edwards Bello, Crónicas (Santiago: Talleres, 1924), 90. “people pressured to win and flee, people who are strangers to the land, sad and ambitious people…”
9 Edwards Bello, 93. “There no one wants memories/keepsakes. The fever of the moment is enough for them, the bustle, the daily whirlpool with its dizzy changes... It does not matter that there are no books or antiques, as long as there is running water and electricity.”
instead honor the tradition and history of Chile. However, he certainly never lacked electricity or running water during his upbringing, nor did he inhabit a tenement.\textsuperscript{10} Despite his privileged, perhaps narrow, outlook, Edwards Bello’s complaints illuminate the rapid cultural changes and shifting values that accompanied economic growth in Valparaiso.

The social practices in Valparaiso formed a backdrop for international encounters and disorder. The cosmopolitanism of the port affected local customs, just as local habits influenced the opinions of foreign visitors. Such stark changes in the civil society (including those described by Edwards Bello) often challenged existed systems of authority or rendered them ineffective. Social spaces intersected with disorder by providing an opportunity for masses of people to gather. Violence and confusion characterized leisure activities at the port, at least according to the police, and thus they sought to eliminate the physical social space in order to remove the threat of disorder.

The following study of social and leisure spaces will seek to uncover the local setting for international encounters and disorder in Valparaiso, and how it transformed as a result of foreign influence.

DANCE AND THE PUBLIC SOCIAL SPHERE IN VALPARAISO

Blocks from the wharf, sailors and strangers passed the evenings with a variety of leisure activities; from gambling to bowling, dance to theater; cock fights to bull fights. Entertainment practices often upheld class distinctions; the working classes who inhabited the port region, for examples, put on weekly dances at their residences, very

\textsuperscript{10} Edwards Bello’s comments are common in the school of intellectuals who appraise nature and condemn modernization although they reap the benefits of the latter. Moreover, Edwards Bello composed his \textit{Crónicas} in 1964 during the dismal eight years he spent bedridden before his suicide in 1968. His comments shed light on the increasingly urbanized, capitalistic nature of Valparaiso, and its effect on the culture and atmosphere, in spite of his biases.
separate from the leisure activities of the privileged class that took place in more formalized, publicly established settings. Class and national identity distinctions within the sphere of leisure shed light on the impact of social hierarchies on the interpersonal realm. The groundbreaking Victoria Theater opened in 1844 close to the wharf, for example, but exclusively served the English and Creole populations who only filled a fraction of the theater’s capacity. Although the Victoria Theater often appears as an example of an early cultural advancement in Valparaiso, the attendees were “principally all the foreigners in passage to Lima”.  

While the elites and politicians cited the Victoria Theater as evidence of a social renaissance in Valparaiso, this establishment catered only to small, albeit economically powerful, group of people. Rowdy dance halls, rough saloons, and cock fights integrated members of the working class communities into the lower port social scene.

The concept of dance as a universalizing force between people of differing nationalities and social positions appears in imperial histories as a theoretical framework for mutual understanding. As Inga Clendinnen posits, the first contact between the British and the Australians she studies involved an “impromptu dance party” and set a positive precedent for interactions between the Australians and British generals who would arrive later. Although “we don’t readily think of dancing as a phase of the imperial process,” Clendinnen argues that this initial shared activity prompted subsequent peacefulness and agreement between those two groups.  

Clendinnen finds history in these dances by pinpointing their unique effects on perceptions of the British in the imagination of the Australian “strangers.” Thus, the social space and practice of dance, especially that

11 Bladh, 23.
12 Inga Clendinnen, Dancing with Strangers (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2005), 8.
13 Clendinnen, 8.
between transnational subjects, comprise an important developmental stage in political or
diplomatic relations. The economic imperialism of the nineteenth century appeared in
saloons and dance halls as well, as European visitors to Valparaiso visited dance halls
and took part in the festivities.

Dance halls were major contact sites for the local people of Valparaiso. During
his 1828 trip, Swiss traveler C.E. Bladh described the dances he attended (though he did
not participate) and emphasized the participation he observed of both men and women, in
contrast with the gendered separation in upper class leisure activity: “People of both
sexes of the lower classes got together here in groups. A young man accompanied on a
‘guitar’ or a ‘vihuela’ [guitar-like instrument] with a happy but immodest song, during
which one or various pairs executed the singular and quite equivocal dances of the
country.”\(^\text{14}\) As is true of many travelers’ accounts, Bladh’s description of these often-
outdoor *Chingana* dances, using evaluative words such as “immodest,” illuminates the
lens of his own society more than that of Chile.

Captain Basil Hall added more detail to the observations of dance events and their
role in the social interactions of the port neighborhood. Through detailed descriptions of
the steps of this *chingana*, as well as a European comparison, he achieves a clear picture
of the social scene for an intended British reader:

“One of the most favourite figures begins in a manner not unlike our minuet,
with slow and apparently unpremeditated movements, the parties approaching
and receding from each other, occasionally joining hands, swinging
themselves round, and sometimes stooping, so as to pass under each other’s
arms. These figures, while they admit of the display of much ease and grace,
inevitably betray any awkwardness of manner…the measure suddenly
changes from a dull monotonous tune to a quick and varied air, loudly
accompanied by the drum and a full chorus of shrill voices… The dancers

\(^{14}\) Bladh, 24.
then dart forward towards each other, waving their handkerchiefs affectedly before them.”  

To dance the *chingana* was a necessary social skill for many residents of Valparaiso, as most people danced at these weekly gatherings. Social mores broke down as the hours drew on and this accepted public dance converted into something of “a more savage character, and the songs to become licentious,” according to Hall’s observations. These gatherings were meeting places for residents of Valparaiso, and also welcomed European visitors like Hall and Bladh.

The disparity in the populations of the port emerges through Hall’s observation: young women and men who danced in the evening in a neighbor’s backyard were markedly different from those dancing at a “drinking-house” (where Hall claimed that women were not permitted to dance in public). The lower socioeconomic status of people who attended these dances is fundamental; they were mostly sailors or port workers, and these nighttime leisure spaces carried associations of danger, crime or unrest. Thus dancing in the private and public sphere were very distinct customs: the public sphere of Valparaiso was composed of men. However, women’s participation in dances, albeit in private residences’ yards and spaces, represented a much more public role than they often inhabited in Europe, as Bladh noted.

Dancing at social events was common in the port neighborhood of Valparaiso, especially around holidays and festivals. Hall described the ambiance of the port at Christmastime: “Groups of merry dancers were seen at every turn, — and crowds of

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16 Hall, 14.
people listening to singers… gay parties sauntered along, laughing and talking at the full stretch of their voices… there was one uninterrupted scene of noise and revelry.”

The public street culture in Valparaiso was very active—leisure and socialization were not confined to barrooms or houses, but rather spilled out into public areas and infiltrated the urban environment. As so many inhabitants of Valparaiso were not residents, much of the social fabric existed in public spaces: sailors walked around the streets only to return to the ship later that day. Vendors, laborers, visitors and residents filled the port area, observed by travelers like Bladh and Basil, and contributed to a perception of the ample of public spaces in Valparaiso.

**GAMES AND FIGHTS: COMPETITIVE SOCIAL REALMS**

Another major social meeting point was at the bullfight or cockfight staged on the streets near the bay. Especially popular among young men, cockfights gained utmost important in the public competitive imagination, as they were featured in *El Mercurio* and involved considerable preparation and planning in advance: “the press would publish advertisements inviting aficionados to attend the pompously named ‘coliseum of cockfights.’”

From 1791 to 1796, Valparaiso boasted its own cockfighting coliseum, charging one peso for admission and including “little steps for the seats, a skylight for light, and a drum for the gladiators…” When the Governor auctioned it off in 1796 the coliseum ceased to provide a publicly sanctioned location for cockfighting, though the fights continued to take place well into the nineteenth century. Cockfighting was a highly

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18 Hall, 8.
19 Lorenzo et al, 52.
developed and organized pastime, often threatened on moral ground by disapproving neighbors, but never quite abolished during the nineteenth century. As moral protestations against cockfighting mounted, the fights moved into clandestine territory, often closer to the port where the most elite moralists were unlikely to venture. However, the fights also provided a venue for mixing between socioeconomic classes and different neighborhoods’ residents. As Bladh describes the scene: “They execute the fights in an open place between the port and the Almendral (suburb), where for this occasion they construct a great booth, that is visited by all the social classes of both sexes.”21 The location and environment of the cockfight provided a rare mixing of social classes and exchange of money through betting that served as an underpinning of the Valparaiso social fabric.

Cockfighting challenged upcoming moralistic values in Valparaiso, as it embodied the violent culture of the port region. In the larger world context, cockfighting had long represented a lower class activity, as in Bali where elites saw: “cockfighting as ‘primitive,’ ‘backward,’ ‘unprogressive,’” and generally unbecoming an ambitious nation.”22 Cockfighting was not simply threatening because of the danger, violence and gambling, but for its symbolic social value; it was not an approved pastime for the increasingly Europeanized elite of Valparaiso. In addition, the inherent masculinity in cockfighting catered to sailors whose social culture dominated the port neighborhoods. The aggression and bloody violence expressed in these fights illuminate manifestations of masculinity in a public space, “For it is only apparently cocks that are fighting there.

21 Bladh, 24.
Actually, it is men.”

Cockfighting allowed men to communicate and socialize through a common pastime that reflected the social structure of the neighborhood. Betting against a certain cock reflected or determined the bettor’s relationship with the owner. Thus, social alliances developed around the important social institution of cockfighting.

Spectator fights, sports, and games created common public spaces adjacent to the port, where people experienced an atmosphere of camaraderie. The bullfights, similarly violent though distinct from cockfights in their social structure, occurred in public places near the wharf and drew a large crowd. As Captain Hall observed, “The bull-fights, which took place about four o’clock in the day, resembled any thing rather than fights; but they made the people laugh, which was the principal object; and by bringing a crowd together in a merry mood, certainly contributed quite as much to the general happiness…” Whether or not the happiness was as prevalent as Hall suggested, bullfights presented an opportunity for common ground and, at the very least, copresence of a variety of nationalities and socioeconomic levels. They were sites for encounters. The afternoon hour of the fights also contributed to a more jovial atmosphere, contrasted with the tense nighttime interactions that often involved more alcohol and petty violence. The presence of women and families during these daylight events may have added to the congenial atmosphere that Hall experienced, although it did not affect the decried cruelty against animals involved in these activities.

Authorities had other than moralistic reasons to discontinue games near the port. Exacerbated by a rising population and emerging social status hierarchies,

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23 Geertz, 60.
24 Hall, 8.
“Entertainment provoked disturbances and competition of authority in the port…”25 The passionate atmosphere of the games undermined municipal order and drew crowds that police could not always control. Playing fields or courts, (canchas de bolos) hosted ball-rolling games similar to bowling, bacci or croquet. In Valparaiso, there were four well-known fields at the start of the 19th century; and two near the San Francisco Plaza, only blocks from the water. Popularized in the mid-18th century, this bowling was futilely outlawed by President Francisco de Morales in 1770 when he determined that the very popular game had become a site throughout Chile for “public and consensual gambling dens” and should only be practiced on holidays and special occasions.26 Leisure activities transformed into illegal and sinful problems in the eyes of the Chilean government, since gambling played a major role in games. The canchas were also scapegoats for the social problems of Valparaiso, since authorities believed eliminating the site of gambling would eliminate the problems that accompanied it: “I found that the destruction of the bowling fields was convenient in many places because these tend to be houses and places where ordinarily these sins (and others that I omit) reign because only there do this class of people easily have the capacity and no godly or human fear…27 Authorities blamed the physical site of the games for the disorder they caused, and attempted to eliminate the environment in order to theoretically remove the conflicts.

Throughout Chile, the canchas sparked controversy between the Church and government who disliked the unruly culture of these matches, especially the economic benefits collected through managing coliseums for these events. Many who managed canchas were excommunicated and faced further social ejections from this highly

25 Pereira Salas, 157.
26 Pereira Salas, 150.
27 As cited in Pereira Salas, 157-158.
Catholic society. As is obvious from the government functionary’s comment, and similar decrees from members of the church, the gambling at these games threatened peace and order from the perspective of authorities. However, the disorder these games caused may have been a result of the mass congregation of many young men, and the organizing possibilities this crowded atmosphere created. Disorder often meant deviance from the will of the authorities; even confusion or any alteration of the normal routine could constitute disorderly conduct.

The cultures of leisure and violence in Valparaiso were closely tied, as bullfights and cockfights provided a backdrop for fights between men. Bladh presented a less than auspicious version of the huasos, Chilean cowboys or bullfighters, involved in these fights: “los huasos gambled their money, got themselves drunk with eau-de-vie and wine and often entered in fights.” As sites of crime and other debauchery, social spaces were as highly tense and volatile as they were festive. Moreover, the illicit happenings of neighborhoods around Marquez Street further alienated the working social classes from the elites, who complained about the state of the port and how it reflected upon Chile’s nationhood and its appearance to visitors and international onlookers.

**Municipal Authorities**

Crime in the Valparaiso became an increasing concern for the municipal government in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The vast number of bars and dance halls in the blocks nearest to the water created a tense environment, ideal for drunken conflicts and petty robberies: Los cerros de Valparaíso tenían fama de peligrosos

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28 Bladh, 24.
Public records about crime survive primarily in the form of correspondence between the Intendencia, the municipal maintenance administration, (or police), and various branches of local government. Through letters from the chief of police, naval officers, international diplomats and representatives, directors of hospitals, and criminal judges, this administrator (or ‘district administrator’) kept track of occurrences within the jurisdiction of the port.

Given the centralization of this municipality, the Administrator or Intendente had the final word on diverse issues ranging from international disputes to local maintenance. The archival books of the Intendencia include daily summaries of all occurrences from all departments in very polite form letters, even when nothing had happened, as was often the case. The Intendent acknowledged his receipt of each message, and advised his employee on how to handle the situation. On one commonplace day, for example, the Intendent handled a bill for maintenance in the port neighborhood:

Today I decree what follows: Below is the note that precedes the decree:
Mrs. Gesmeria Fiscal of Valparaiso will charge the sum of 598 pesos 80 centavos to the Fiscal Works department of the province, to which price they ascend according to the bill compared to the charges of installation and maintenance of electric light for the tidiness of the wharf of this city. Please charge the amount to the Intendencia of the Army… It has been written to you for your information. May God bless you all. The Intendent of Valparaiso.

In this example, a routine maintenance request for the wharf passed through the Intendencia for his approval and information. Letters dominated the correspondence between officials; they served as notification of developments, incidents, or monetary charges as above. The many jurisdictions of the Intendencia each managed their own

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29 Rubén Darío, as cited in Edwards Bello, *Crónicas*, 94. “The hills of Valparaiso were famous for being dangerous during nocturnal hours.”
30 Intendencia de Valparaiso, Ministro de Guerra y Marina, (Santiago, Chile: Archivo Nacional: 21 May 1891), 673.
specialized section of the urban world. In this letter, the Army Administrator had to pay for the maintenance of the wharf (including electric lighting), indicating military jurisdiction over the port and responsibility especially for the wharf.

The municipal government system in Valparaiso brought the daily conflicts and maintenance problems to the attention of higher authorities. Municipal records of the intendencia left an official record of quotidian incidents that would otherwise be invisible to the state government. Many of these daily letters tell the history of days when “nothing happened,” or when a small incident affected local residents but not the larger city. Thus, municipal records aid a study of local conflicts and common events that comprised the social fabric of the port.

Systems of authority in Valparaiso struggled with conflicts over the identity of the port city. Given that the city’s main attraction was commercial, and it was to the merchant marine that Valparaiso owed its rapid growth, municipal authorities often made concessions in order to support commercial systems or benefit foreign players who exercised influence there. These conflicts established a delicate balance, however, that was under constant examination: “Pero las contradicciones entre el interés municipal y el mercantil ablandaron una vez mas la ofensiva contra los regatones. Ya en 1834 la Municipalidad de Valparaíso había racionalizado la tarifa aplicada a los regatones…”

Free commerce on the wharf drew too many mobile vendors who crowded the limited space. This scenario exemplified the choices that the Municipality had to make in order to impose order on the masses of people around the port. The powerful elites supported

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31 Gabriel Salazar Vergara, Labradores, peones y proletarios: formacion y crisis de la sociedad popular chilena del siglo XIX (Santiago: Ediciones Sur Coleccion Estudios Historicos, 1989), 247. “But the contradictions between the municipal and mercantile interests softened once again the offensive against the food vendors. Already in 1834 the Municipality of Valparaíso had rationalized the fee applied to the food vendors…”
commercial ends, which began to dominate the identity of the city, in contrast with its neighboring Chilean cities. Municipal authorities frequently succumbed to commercial incentives, and even decreased the penalties for those vendors who broke municipal legislation (as with the food vendors above). Street commerce was an intrinsic part of local Valparaiso; “un comercio permitido y generalizado en las calles de Valparaiso.”

The municipality of Valparaiso developed new bazaars and outdoor markets in the plaza and near the dock to facilitate mobile vendors.

The main problem with concessions to mobile vendors was the increased propensity for disorder at the markets when authorities did not enforce control. Even the seemingly innocuous atmosphere of food vendors potentially caused disorder, chaos, and mass gatherings of people. As citizens complained in 1844, the masses of vendors at the main plaza caused “perjuicios, inmundicias, bullas y desordenes que acarrean.” Subsequently, authorities exercised control over vendors’ habits to prevent the potential conflicts that crowds were apt to bring. Bargaining was limited in the plaza from four to seven o’clock in the afternoons, under penalty of arrest by the police.

The Municipality notably limited selling hours to satisfy neighbors’ complaints, but never took action that would abolish or threaten local commerce because they were “demasiado atadas a los intereses mercantiles…” Local authority came into conflict with commercial interests at the port.

An effort to strengthen municipal authority provoked a reorganization of the police force for the festivities of Dieciocho, the Chilean Independence celebration on

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32 Archivo Juzgado del Crimen de Valparaíso (Archivo Nacional: 8, Tomo 6 1846), f. 229. As cited in Salazar, 248. “a permitted and generalized commerce in the streets of Valparaiso.”
33 As cited in Salazar, 247. “prejudices, filth, mobs, and the disorders that they entail.”
34 Salazar, 247.
35 Salazar, 247. “Too tied to mercantile interests…”
September 18. To ensure the security of residents of Valparaiso, the 300 best members of the police force were chosen to serve on newly designed night shifts and patrols. The announcement of the new plan from the police department is as follows:

Los cuerpos de infantería darán dos patrullas nocturnas cada uno...La primera patrulla entrará al servicio a las 8 PM y la segunda a las 12 PM retirándose a las cuatro de la mañana... Se ve, pues, que la situación ha cambiado radicalmente y se ha alejado todo peligro de desordenes serios.  

The diligent patrols mandated by this new system not only eliminate most opportunity for conflict, but also acknowledge the need for such constant supervision. By asserting that the police preparation had changed so radically, the article acknowledged the safety problems and the disorder that authorities anticipated would occur during the independence celebration. The intendencia gradually admitted the problems of disorder at markets and on the wharfs, but did not take full responsibility for correcting these problems. It was a tense balance to maintain between the commercial interests of the influential elite, and the popular needs of maintenance and control near the port.

SANITATION AND PUBLIC HEALTH

As the population of the port neighborhoods increased, concerns about maintenance, cleanliness and public health arose. The packed tenements of Valparaiso housed hundreds of families in very small quarters. One survey noted 700 people living in a one-block area of tenements in 1865.  

The incentives for the movement from rural areas to the city are unclear: “las grandes ciudades constituían la peor alternative

36 El Mercurio, 11 September 1891. “the infantry corps will each do two nocturnal patrols... the first patrol will enter service at 8 PM and the second a 12PM, retiring at four in the morning. You can see, then, that the situation has changed radically and all danger of serious disorders has gone away.”

Although cities like Valparaiso offered a crowded, unsanitary lifestyle for the working class, the fraternity and commercial markets that developed as more people moved to urban areas attracted even more migrants yet. The populations who lived in tenements were often mobile, and floated to different regions of the city in search of housing, through hotel rooms, guesthouses, pensions, and rented single rooms for entire families.

Public maintenance services near the crowded port and throughout the city were scarce; hygiene in public spaces was insufficient and the ambiance of the neighborhood suffered. The dirty state of the lower port, often accompanied with a terrible smell of “humo de industria,” contrasted sharply with the upper hills of Cerro Alegre and Cerro Concepción, as “they were true microclimates inside the contaminated environment of Valparaiso.”

The authorities as well as the elite population worried about the problem of public hygiene, although it did not directly affect them, since the issue appeared in political discourse, periodicals, and municipal records. However, the problems of waste also contributed to distaste for the port area, condescension, and further socioeconomic separation. The odors associated with fuel and industry emissions caused privileged citizens to question the environmental effects of the chimineos of Valparaiso’s rapidly growing industry, and whether they were willing to trade health for commerce.

However (as is the case with many modern day ecological problems), those people in power were not immediately affected by the pollution: public sanitation is an example of how the interests of the elite were not concerned with major problems of sanitation and

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38 Salazar, 254. “the large cities constituted the worst ecological and lifestyle alternative that Chile could offer the traveling laborer population.”
39 Lorenzo et al, 62.
40 Lorenzo et al, 66.
41 Lorenzo et al, 65. “chimneys”
disease issues that impacted the urban poor. Newspaper articles in *El Mercurio* suggested “lecciones de aseo” for the tenement populations, implying a lack of hygiene within these groups, and denying the deficiencies in the public maintenance of the city.\(^{42}\) Inadequate municipal services had grave effects on public health and population demographic changes, especially due to the rising prevalence of tenement residences (or *conventillos*) and overpopulation in tenement neighborhoods.

Close quarters and poor waste disposal contributed to outbreaks of infectious disease in the mid-nineteenth century in tenement neighborhoods. Without public services like garbage collection these residences were particularly vulnerable to diseases such as cholera, dysentery and typhoid fever. Garbage was piled in the streets and *quebradas* (ravines, gutters) of the hills. Open waste and sewage in the streets contained fish heads, animal bodies, rotting food and human waste, among other components.\(^{43}\) Valparaiso continued to function on cesspits, which frequently overflowed; the city lacked a proper sewer system until very late in the nineteenth century.\(^ {44}\) This egregious inadequacy represents another incident in which Valparaiso’s infrastructure did not grow fast enough to manage the hurried growth of commerce and population on its shores. In this case, these inadequacies had drastic consequences for the working population.

The rising death toll and astronomical infant mortality rates in the urban population provoked public alarm starting around 1870, when doctors such as Tomas Armstrong conducted studies on the causes of epidemics: “Valparaiso paid a high price for its lack of cleanliness and hygiene, in sicknesses such as cholera, diarrhea, dysentery,

\[^{42}\] Lorenzo et al, 64. “cleanliness lessons”
\[^{43}\] Lorenzo et al, 63.
\[^{44}\] Lorenzo et al, 65.
smallpox, liver disease, typhoid fever, etc.” Though studies found that lack of public sanitation caused the outbreaks of disease. Demographic consequences of the epidemics appeared in *El Mercurio*:

The diverse epidemics and sicknesses that have beat the population during this period [one month] caused 623 demises, that is to say 20 per day, while the births only reached 445 according to the registrations... difference of 178, which gives a decrease of almost six inhabitants per day.46

The geographic separation of Valparaiso’s hilled neighborhoods exacerbated the class separations, since the specific location of their homes made people sick. The constant flow of foreign bodies in and out of the city also increased the spread of disease, as sailors brought infections transmitted on long journeys to the local stores, dance halls and bars.

Public health problems provoked intense fear about contagion, as most residents of Valparaiso were very aware of the problem but could not remedy it. The following advertisement for “Holloway” ointment and pills that appeared in *El Mercurio* provides hints about the public sentiments regarding contagious diseases during this period: “El ungüento penetra el cutis, reduce la inflamación, y sana las ulceraciones. Se toman las píldoras Holloway al mismo tiempo, este tratamiento cura todas las afecciones de la garganta… las píldora Holloway dan inmediato alivio, y obtienen una cura permanente.”47 This optimistic advertisement offered an easy solution for relatively minor throat conditions or sores. Its appearance in *El Mercurio*
helps to emphasize the contemporary health concerns in Valparaiso, especially about upper respiratory ailments caused by smog or other contaminants in the air.

Public awareness developed as public sanitation issues entered political discussions and public forums on the civil society. During the independence celebrations of 1870, an editor of El Mercurio wrote: “en lugar de cañonazos, banderas y música, la ciudad debería presentarse con las galas de aseo, porque es hacer una ofensa a la patria enarbolar tricolor nacional en medio de la porquería, de esas inmundicias que afectan a los barrios enteros, de esos ratones, gatos y perros muertos que vician la atmósfera y dañan los pulmones de los vecinos.”48 The article highlights the hypocrisy of independence celebrations in the presence of such egregious living conditions and poor sanitation. As officials celebrated Chile’s maritime military prowess (and the commercial success), they demonstrated underlying societal priorities in which foreign relations were more important than local maintenance and public health.

Cleanliness and order intersected around the port when the Intendencia regulated maintenance rules for merchants and vendors. As the spread of disease increased, public concern prompted the municipal authorities to impose rules, although they were not always effective. The fishermen who sold their products near the wharfs, for example, fell under criticism in 1891 for the uncleanliness of their operations and the mess the fish left in the area. Perhaps more systemic than sanitation issues in Valparaíso were problems of accountability to authority. The intendencia tried with difficulty to regiment the vendors’ placement in markets in order to hold them responsible for disorder their

48 El Mercurio, 29 September 1870, as cited in Lorenzo et al, 67. “instead of cannon shots, flags and music, the city should present itself with a show of cleanliness, because to hoist the national three-color [flag] is to offend the fatherland in the middle of this rubbish, from that filth that affects entire neighborhoods, from those dead mice, cats and dogs that cloud the atmosphere and damage the lungs of neighbors.”
products left in public spaces. A letter in *El Mercurio* from the new Intendent Joaquin Villarino stated:

> En una población que necesita de la asidua limpieza para evitar el desarrollo de las epidemias… Estando en el interés jeneral [sic] conservar esos lugares en perfecto estado de aseo y a fin de que la acción de la Guardia Municipal pueda ser mas eficaz, convendría que usted ordenase a los dueños de pescantes que en el termino de tres días procediesen a numerarlos para que así se sepa positivamente quienes cumplen o no con sus obligaciones, pues el comandante de policía me ha manifestado no encuentra a quienes notificar cuando incurren en las infracciones de policía.\(^49\)

Villarino attempted to impose structural accountability in the marketplace, and granted the police the power to apprehend those who do not comply with regulations. This letter and the following analysis in *El Mercurio* show that sanitation was fundamentally a local issue of municipal authority in Valparaiso.\(^50\) The issue fell under the authority of the city of Valparaiso, since the fishermen sell on land. When the article asked, “¿Que jurisdicción tiene esa autoridad marítima sobre los pescantes que están en tierra?”\(^51\) it highlighted the issue of the separate jurisdictions between the maritime world and the city on land. The liminal blocks between the piers and the center of Valparaiso were often lost between maritime and municipal authorities. The high numbers of foreigners who fill the neighborhood added to the lack of accountability because of their inherently transient status. Thus, developing systems of authority and control was crucial in the port environs of Valparaiso, especially when it faced egregious threats to public health.

In spite of clear socioeconomic distinctions in the battle against disease, philanthropic societies appeared in the late nineteenth century to support the affected

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\(^{49}\) *El Mercurio*, 3 January 1891.  
\(^{50}\) *El Mercurio*, 3 January 1891. The bureaucratic municipal structures of Valparaiso did not grant the Intendent the authority to make this order, as it is under the jurisdiction of the mayor. The commentary in *El Mercurio* about Villarino’s letter clarifies his error in jurisdiction.  
\(^{51}\) *El Mercurio*, 3 January 1891.
populations. The Junta de Beneficencia y Salud Pública was the first to develop a philanthropic institution to directly address the specific problems of Valparaíso, in 1832. The Sociedad Beneficencia de Señoras (founded 1860) took care of the sick and distributed remedies, as well as managing the orphan population that such widespread disease produced. It was one of many private organizations or, in this case, institutions managed by sisters of the Church. Juana Ross de Edwards is just one example of an elite woman who dedicated funds to the charitable causes of orphaned children and rampant disease in Valparaíso.

**LOS CONVENTILLOS DE VALPARAISO: TENEMENTS AND TENEMENT COMMUNITIES**

The epidemic health problems that plagued Valparaíso during the 19th century resulted directly from the densely populated urban environment and the lack of proper sanitation. These problems coalesced in the residential dwelling of Valparaíso’s poorest communities. *Conventillos*, or tenements, accounted for 9,828 of the 21,249 dwellings reported in Valparaíso’s 1885 census. The extremely crowded living conditions in tenements, as well as their lack of waste disposal and sanitation for the high number of people they housed, made these dwellings major public health problems in Valparaíso communities. Spread throughout the city, tenements existed in the hills as well as the flat neighborhoods closest to the ports. Although little in written about the history of these populations, (government reports often omitted descriptions of such communities) Social historian María Ximena Urbina Carrasco asserts that travelers’ observations are good

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52 Lorenzo et al, 72.
53 Lorenzo et al, 73.
sources for the history of the urban poor. The notes of such foreigners in diaries and letters often compare the urban environment in Valparaiso to that of their home, and do not censor their comments about the dismal state of tenement neighborhoods or the many unemployed men they encountered around the wharfs.

Rapid urban growth and immigration in Valparaiso led to a rise in tenements, as population movements towards cities produced similar effects all over the world. In addition to international immigrants from Europe, the United States, and neighboring South American countries such as Argentina and Peru, Valparaiso experienced massive immigration from rural areas in Chile. The movement from the country to the city reflected 19th-century trends the world over. Industrialization created more jobs in the urban sector, inviting people away from traditional agricultural work in the rest of Latin America as well: “Since the sixteenth century, never had so many new urban settlements been founded in Latin America.” In Valparaiso, many factory and workshop jobs became available and offered incentive for workers to move into the city. Starting in 1852, for example, the construction of the railroad connecting Valparaiso to Santiago created many manual labor jobs. The city ran out of living space for workers early, however, since much of the sloped land on the hills was too dangerous for stable building. It was here where many tenement communities developed once the flat lower

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55 Urbina Carrasco, 52.
56 Urbina Carrasco, 85.
58 Urbina Carrasco, 74.
port was full, although transporting running water up the hills posed logistical problems.  

Work incentives brought people to Valparaiso, but the urban infrastructure could not support their residences, even as the city continued to expand further out and upwards on the hills. Thus, tenement enclaves developed; where, due to overpopulation, the sanitation problems were dismal, and garbage covered the streets and filled the ravines.

“comenzaron a hacerse cotidianas las denuncias sobre la suciedad en las quebradas de los cerros, consecuencia de su rápida y densa colonización.”

In addition to sanitation problems, police complained that they could not properly supervise the high volume of people in these ever-expanding neighborhoods. Systems of order in Valparaiso were not prepared for the population increase, and “la municipalidad era negligente en la limpieza, aseo y ornato de la ciudad.”

Tenement communities posed a sharp physical contrast with the physical of neighboring elites, although they were economically linked. Elite gentleman often owned tenement buildings and controlled their rents. The Catholic Church and private banks also appeared as owners on some tenement contracts. Thus, tenement communities had strong financial connections (or obligations) to elites and the port commerce. The number of tenements increased in direct correlation with the commercial success of the port, often merely blocks away.

According to historians of Valparaiso, tenements were one step above the quality of living in smaller dwellings called ranchos. These “ranches” were often small huts or

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59 Urbina Carrasco, 54.
60 Urbina Carrasco, 79. “the denouncements about the dirtiness of the hills’ slopes became daily, as a consequence of their rapid and dense colonization.”
61 Urbina Carrasco, 82. “the municipality was negligent of the cleanliness, tidiness and beautification of the city.”
62 Urbina Carrasco, 78.
kiosks, built by the residents out of precarious tin and wooden boards. There was very little space for each family in these shacks, which the government tried in vain to outlaw in 1876. The “Ley de transformaciones” prohibited, “construcción de ranchos o galpones de madera o de otro material combustible y techos cubiertos con esta clase de material.” In addition to being highly vulnerable to fire, these dwellings were liable collapse after heavy rain or other inclement weather. Shoddy materials also made them extremely vulnerable to the frequent neighborhood fires, as “el incendio es la fiesta de Valparaíso; en ninguna ciudad del mundo ocurren incendios con más frecuencia.” The close proximity of tenements, and their positions on the steep slope of the hills augmented the potential danger of fires and/or collapse in these dwellings.

Rain brought about major public health issues, as it “convertían las laderas en verdaderos ríos de barro…” The city was simply not equipped with the infrastructure to properly dispose of waste water, garbage, or excess rainfall. Valparaiso’s ravines (quebradas or barrancos) facilitated water flow through the uneven terrain of the city, but also collected water waste and became filthy open cesspools as garbage flowed through the streets: “Quebrada no solo era el camino, al mismo tiempo que el patio de juegos y lugar de encuentro de la vecindad, sino también el basurero.” These citywide drains overflowed during the rainy season and augmented the problems of disease by

63 Urbina Carrasco, 85.
64 Recopilación de leyes, ordenanzas, reglamentos y demas disposiciones vigentes en el territorio municipal de y sobre la administración local (Valparaíso: Babra y Ca. Impresores, 1902) as cited in Urbina Carrasco, 68. “construction of ranches of wood or other combustible material and roofs covered with this kind of material.”
65 Urbina Carrasco, 55.
66 Edwards Bello, 103. “The fire is the party of Valparaiso; in no city in the world do fires occur more frequently.”
67 Urbina Carrasco, 54. “converted the slopes into real rivers of mud.”
68 Urbina Carrasco, 56. “The ravine was not only a pathway, at the same time as a playground and meeting place of the neighborhood, but rather it was also a garbage dump.”
openly exposing the population to contamination and waste. Joaquín Edwards Bello describes the “verdadera catarata” that descended on the lower city through the ravines during rainfall. Disease spread through falling water and crossed neighborhood boundaries, especially as it fell from the hills down to the lower port.

The problem of garbage and waste in the streets persisted throughout the 19th century, especially in densely populated sections of the city. There were few alternative living situations other than tenements for the urban poor, thus “pobreza e insalubridad eran sinónimos.”

Cuartos redondos (single rented rooms) and communal tenements normally occupied old buildings with stable structures, which at least provided reliable shelter from the rain unlike the decrepit ranchos.

The construction of tenements was not safe either, however. These precarious two-story dwellings normally had walls built from a mixture of stucco, clay and tile, or clay and straw. They rested on the slopes of the hills, almost precipices, without stable foundations, as though impermanent, “arquitectura efímera de la ladera.” Families lived in very close quarters, often in one room, but enjoyed common space that cuartos redondos did not offer. In the inner patio of the tenements, which were often built in the Spanish style with the patio in the center, women washed clothes in a communal space with the other residents. The tenement communities in Valparaíso were visibly identifiable and marked in many areas throughout the city, although they maintained a separate existence from the remainder of the city, and contained specific social world within the communal spaces of each tenement.

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69 Edwards Bello, 95. “true waterfalls.”
70 Urbina Carrasco, 63. “Poverty and unhealthiness were synonymous.”
71 Urbina Carrasco, 65.
72 Urbina Carrasco, 68. “ephemeral architecture of the slope.”
73 Urbina Carrasco, 80.
Perhaps complementary to a study of the physical structure of the tenements is the description of life within them. The following story, which appeared in *El Mercurio*, highlighted the extreme poverty and contagious diseases that permeated these communities: “allí dormía la apestada y sus seis hijos en la misma inmunda cobija… el mayorcito solía conseguir pan en la calle del que comían todos.” Smallpox was rampant in tenement communities, and close living conditions made it very difficult to prevent contagion within families. The struggles of the urban labor force were manifold. Neglected by municipal systems, they suffered from disease and an unclean environment from a lack of sanitation, and often shouldered the blame for such social problems from the point of view of Valparaiso’s elite.

The same residents who lived under such conditions were also essential to the commercial workings that allowed Valparaiso to flourish. For most of the nineteenth century, workers remained in disconnected groups, often underpaid, non-contracted, and compensating for the insufficiencies of Valparaiso’s inadequate merchant infrastructure. However, at the turn of the century, laborers organized into a well-documented labor movement, one historically canonized event in Chilean social history narratives that involved local actors and local issues of Valparaiso.

**LABOR MOVEMENTS IN AND AROUND THE PORT**

Public work projects and domestic work provided the major job opportunities for the working class population in Chile. Paid exclusively in rations and cash, these workers

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74 *La Unión*, Valparaiso, 14 July 1905. As cited in Urbina Carrasco, 66. “There slept the [smallpox] infected woman and her six children on the same filthy blanket, the oldest little one would usually get bread in the streets from which they all ate.”

75 Urbina Carrasco, 67.
helped to construct churches, jails, bridges, forts, and wharfs (most important in Valparaiso). Labor movements had little or no history before the twentieth century in Chile, despite an enormous working class that labored in the copper and nitrate mines, railways, urban infrastructure, as well as ports. Strikers threatened systems of authority when the stevedores approached their employer, Compañía Inglesa de Vapores, and the local Director of Maritime Territory.\textsuperscript{76} When the Steam Company refused to negotiate with striking workers, its representatives criticized the Maritime Director’s willingness to communicate with strikers, thereby exposing a rift between shipping companies and systems of authority at the port.\textsuperscript{77} Although the impetus for the strike was stevedores’ demands for higher wages, the immediate awakening of similar concerns among other workers on the fiscal wharf, the launch, and the military pontoon indicated a wide need for reform. Lightermen maintained a separate cause from the majority of strikers because of their specific expectations of wage increases.\textsuperscript{78} As crewmembers jumped ship to join the strikers upon arrival in Valparaiso, the city became a strike zone and experienced a complete work stoppage.

The strike turned into a violent demonstration on May 13, 1903, what would be the first mass organization of workers in a city whose extreme commercial success depended on their labor.\textsuperscript{79} The violent attack on the headquarters building of \textit{El Mercurio} reflects the elite political voice of this periodical, whose writers had criticized the strikers while the conflict developed.\textsuperscript{80} In addition to widespread destruction, the rioters

\textsuperscript{76}Vicente Espinoza, \textit{Para una historia de los pobres de la ciudad} (Santiago: Ediciones SUR, 1988), 23. Translation: English Company of Steamships.
\textsuperscript{77} Espinoza, 23.
\textsuperscript{78} De Shazo, 149.
\textsuperscript{79} De Shazo, 153.
\textsuperscript{80} Espinoza, 24.
especially targeted the offices of the Compañía Sudamericana de Vapores, as well as the merchant stands near the water. Edwards Bello remembered the scene in his chronicles: “Recuerdo una huelga de la levantisca gente de mar. Fue sangrienta e incendiaria. Durante dos días los huelguistas dominaron al Intendente… La Compañía Sud-Americana de Vapores fue incendiada.”

Edwards Bello accentuated the power and control that the strikers exercised, despite their subsequent defeat. Many strikers were shot (50 dead and 200 wounded) once local authorities confronted them at the El Mercurio building. The failing strike lost morale, though it served to provoke fear of further demonstrations and violence in the imagination of the elite porteños, a revolutionary concept as yet unexplored in Chile.

Historians pinpoint the 1903 strike as the beginning of an era of labor movements in Chile, though the strike also represented the end of a fruitful maritime period in Valparaiso and closely coincided with beginning of construction of the Panama Canal in 1904: “The events in Valparaiso of 1903 constituted for many the first threatening manifestation of ‘the social matter’… the first that had a major impact, in its massiveness and consequences.” The 1903 strikes represent a turning point in Chilean social history, and the beginning of the activism and manifestations of the twentieth century. The demands for higher wages (eventually conceded with up to 10-20% raises) showed the long-standing need for reform in the labor community of Valparaiso, where the

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81 Edwards Bello, Crónicas, 101. “I remember the strike of the most uprising people of the sea. It was bloody and incendiary. During two days the strikers dominated the Intendent… the South American Steamship Company was set on fire.”

82 Edwards Bello’s commentary also reveals his elite position in Valparaiso society as he disdains the protestors and refers to them as rotos, a derogatory term used in Chile to indicate someone of the urban poor population.

83 Espinoza, 24.

84 Espinoza, 23.
objectives rapid growth had precluded just treatment of workers. It was not until commercial success began to wane that workers organized against civil authorities and elite beneficiaries noticed the dismal living conditions in poor neighborhoods. Renewed concern with the “social question” sparked newspaper articles and missionary crusades among the urban poor, but little real change in working conditions. The prolonged control of Valparaiso’s working poor by elite merchants did not come into question until 1903, but the radical disruption the strike caused proves the unquestioned hegemony of the previous century. The strike of 1903 was a direct protest against authority in Valparaiso; not only municipal authority but also the very influential merchant companies who had power over the economy and the workers.

The disorder and lack of control exercised by authorities in Valparaiso negatively affected port residents, both as laborers and as citizens in unsanitary neighborhoods. Local history that reveals the social world of this population also illuminates the harmful effects of rapid urban growth on this marginalized population. Outside of the imposing stone building in Santiago that holds the National Archive and National Library, I once noticed some handwritten words on a wall near the entrance. Below the bronze Archivo Nacional plaque, someone had written in marker, “Y los pueblos… su historia cuando?” There was a spray-painted line through the word “Nacional” on the plaque. This demand for broader definitions of history implies that it cannot be the archive of the entire nation until it acknowledges the history of the pueblo, and investigates voices that are not from the political elite.

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85 De Shazo, 155. According to De Shazo, the establishment of a Sunday day of rest for all laborers represented one of the few documented changes, and employers were able evaded this rule as it was not properly enforced.

86 “And the people… their history when?”
There has been a recent movement towards social history in Chilean historiography (and historiography throughout the world) in the last twenty years. However, the sentiment expressed on the archive’s wall reflects a sharp divide within the profession of history, and a continued perception that official institutions like the archive are not open to new perspectives on history. Nevertheless, the local history of the pueblos is essential for a complete understanding of Chilean history, especially in Valparaiso where the pueblo, or Chilean residents, were most affected by foreign influences. The clash between local needs and commercial opportunities typified the port city, since it served as a host for international naval and merchant marines. Conflicts between national residents of Valparaiso and transient members of the military and merchant sectors would provoke identity crises for the city and its inhabitants, and lead to diplomatic incidents between these actors on the wharfs.
CHAPTER 3: MARITIME IDENTITIES IN VALPARAISO:
THE INTERNATIONAL AND LOCAL WORLDS OF SAILORS

On the Valparaiso wharf, the close proximity of social spaces to work sites represented the intersections between these two realms in the lives of sailors and port workers. As in many ports, the professional designation of “sailor” in Valparaiso also included a specific position in the social strata, as well as a lifestyle that the temporary port stays of marine culture necessitated. Dance halls and saloons were sites for recruitment, enlistment, and even conflicts such as that of the USS Baltimore seamen, whose impact would be felt outside of Valparaiso itself. Boundaries between the professional and the social were ambiguous, as officers and sailors often negotiated verbal work agreements over drinks or on a street corner.

The developing maritime world of Valparaiso hosted sailors with fluid national identities, causing the port’s identity to sway between a specifically Chilean city, and a global city. The large British influence at the port, both economic and cultural, was inherent in the identity of the city that had to contain diverse nationalisms. In a movement away from the Spanish economic legacies, Chile strategically positioned Valparaiso as a convenient port, in the hopes that it would fill a niche in South America for the British and other foreign merchants. However, as maritime commerce augmented Valparaiso’s prestige in the Pacific world, Chileans frequently chose between loyalty to local authority and cooperation with foreigners on whose commerce they depended. New infrastructure and developing port systems such as the Customs House materialized as a result of
nationalistic expansion of Chilean autonomy, as well as financial support from foreign parties with commercial interests in the port. The constant presence of foreign officials protecting their own citizens threatened to undermine Chilean authority. Similarly, the economic incentives that foreign captains offered undermined Chilean sailors’ loyalty to national captains and shipping companies within Chile.

The geographical advantages of Valparaíso alone could not have triggered its dominance as a maritime center: “it was also necessary to dictate mercantile legislation that would be attractive to foreigners… it is convenient to remember this fact in order to disavow a very generalized idea that it would have been enough for Valparaíso to use the availability of a privileged geographic situation to concentrate the commerce of the Pacific.”¹ In addition to the convenient geographic position of the bay, Chilean policy deliberately shaped Valparaíso’s commercial expansion and cosmopolitanism by encouraging foreign merchants to pass through the port.²

Following independence, the ports and economic system used by the Spanish had to be redistributed as South American nations asserted economic, as well as political, autonomy. Once trade became independent, Chile looked to its natural assets for economic advantages that would benefit the nation, abandoning pan-South American trade routes that had benefited Spain. One of Spain’s most remote colonies (second only to the Philippines), Chile was inaccessible and not central to Spanish commerce. In the colonial period, the Chilean economy was focused on ranching, which earned Chile a

² Lorenzo et al, 13.
position of inferior economic importance compared to the Viceroyalty of Peru in Lima. Chilean ranching estates, or haciendas, were the principal actors in the economy and established hierarchical systems of serfs and landowners, described by Darwin as “feudal-like.” As Chile approached independence, mining developed into what would be the most profitable enterprise in the nation’s history (especially copper, Chile’s most coveted product). The movement to realize the potential of Chile’s natural resources, instead of paying homage to Spanish agricultural systems, led to the rise in maritime activity on the uniquely long Pacific coastline. Maritime merchant ventures increased after independence, though there is evidence that clandestine as well as legitimate maritime trade occurred even under colonial rule.

In 1820, the Chilean Government declared Valparaiso to be a General Port, an accessible entrepot for merchant ships passing through the Pacific Ocean, asserting Valparaiso’s prominent role in international commerce. In the 1830s, the government regulated public warehouses (almacenes fiscales) in Valparaiso, where merchants could store their wares at little cost, providing incentive for merchants to stop at the port while navigating Pacific trade routes. These advances intentionally created an ideal theatre for maritime trade in Valparaiso, and began the rapid commercial and demographic growth that would characterize the next one hundred years.

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4 As cited in Collier and Sater, 11.
5 Collier and Sater, 17.
6 Lorenzo et al, 14.
7 Collier and Sater, 61.
The Valparaiso wharf was an ideal location for merchant companies and naval captains to enlist sailors, since unattached sailors roamed the port. *Enganche*, or enlistment, was a competitive business in which free *enganchedores* (enlisters) crowded the wharfs attempting to “hook” sailors, and collecting an enlistment fee for their services. In order to entice sailors, enlisters frequently offered high salaries to already-contracted sailors. Unfortunately, this competition put Chilean companies at a disadvantage in their own port, since when sailor’s accepted an offer he often terminated an existing contract with a Chilean company: “our own [sailors] were seduced by salaries that had no comparison with the pay in our commercial or military navies.”

The competition in salary was normally insurmountable for the Chilean navy, thus sailors faced a difficult choice between national identity and financial gain. Enlistment of non-contracted port laborers was similar in that foreign companies offered Chilean workers high pay than local Chilean companies: “Until the end of the nineteenth century, foreigners invariably maintained their positive judgment about the labor capacity of the Chilean laborer.”

Foreigners had more faith in Chilean labor than did Creole merchants, as internal perceptions and prejudices within the Valparaiso social strata undermined Chilean economic self-sufficiency. Gaining a higher salary often meant shifting national identities and nationalisms. This “*expatriación*,” or expulsion of oneself from the patria,

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had political significance as well as personal when many Chilean sailors joined the armed forces of enemies such as Bolivia and Peru, or British merchant companies. Enlistment through press gangs had a long history of using bars and other social spaces to hook vulnerable potential sailors, especially within the British Empire. In Valparaiso, however, forced enlistment was not as prevalent as enlistment via financial temptation that exploited sailors’ with weakly enforced (or non-existent) labor contracts. Such verbal deals often took place in taverns and other social spaces, capitalizing on the inebriated state of the sailors. These informal enlistment agreements not only lured sailors away from Chilean ships by offering them higher wages, but also tendered unreliable employment without an explicit contract. Thus, sailors could be “abandoned, defenseless, and lacking any possibility of help after being deserted in other latitudes, given that they were enlisted without any formalities that referred to the obligation to be reintegrated in the port they left from.” Without the promise that they could return to their home port, sailors were left vulnerable in ports across the globe, at the mercy of other nations’ charity. These individual cases of abandonment coalesced into a systemic problem for Chile, since Chilean consulates had to finance repatriation sailors from Liverpool to Mendoza in order to avoid dependence on foreign charity. Enlistment in Valparaiso on the local level had wider consequences for the nation; Chilean sailors chose to work for foreign merchant companies, only to be abandoned and subsequently become a burden for the Chilean state. The immediate individual benefits of higher wages transformed into a long-term dilemma for the collective nation. Chilean authorities attempted to reverse the trends of losing workers and sailors to foreign employers.

10 Harris Bucher, 48.
11 Harris Bucher, 40.
12 Harris Bucher, 59.
There was a sharp contrast between the Municipality’s theoretical position on enlistment in Valparaiso, and the enforced policies that they put into practice. Perhaps this is because “the law of the convenience of men is stronger than governmental limitations.”\textsuperscript{13} To ameliorate problems of wage competition, the government passed a law that required a minimum of 25% Chilean sailors on each Chilean ship in port.\textsuperscript{14} This legislation appeared as a reaction to overwhelming immigration and an effort to combat tough competition for unemployed Chilean sailors and laborers. In 1857, the Municipality attempted to regiment enlistment offices, and ordered local authorities “to keep watch on taverns, brothels, places of recreation and residences which the sailors frequented and spent the night in.”\textsuperscript{15} This order indicates that enlistment in social spaces was central to how it functioned, and these places were apt locations to attempt to control enlistment. Chilean officers had to compete harder than ever for the loyalty of their own nation’s sailors, just as Chilean sailors had to compete for employment. To enforce these regulations, Chilean authorities employed vigilantes to oversee enlistment practices that placed demands on officers and encouraged the use of proper labor contracts in an effort to legitimize the previously clandestine employment process.

In practice, new legislation rarely changed the enlistment trends. Because of the consistently cosmopolitan makeup of Valparaiso, “in 1837, in spite of the vigilance of norms that ordered that the commercial navy be manned by at least one fourth part Chileans, their captains retorted that the lack of native hands obligated them to necessarily equip the crafts with all types of foreigners.”\textsuperscript{16} The overabundance of foreign

\textsuperscript{13} Harris Bucher, 51.
\textsuperscript{14} Harris Bucher, 49.
\textsuperscript{15} Harris Bucher, 49.
\textsuperscript{16} Harris Bucher, 41.
sailors at the port complicated Chilean captains’ choices when hiring, since “the presence of national sailors in our merchant navy was insignificant…”\textsuperscript{17} Futile efforts to document labor contracts and keep official records began in the 1850-60s, perhaps in reaction to the chaotic open system of free enlistment and its negative effects on the Chilean merchant navy. However, this regimentation of sailors’ contracts was unsuccessful: “the legislation that ordered the obligation that the seamen could only embark by means of a contract endorsed by authority was, once again, \textit{letra muerta} [dead letter].”\textsuperscript{18} Written contracts still could not surpass the convenience and prevalence of the informal, verbal agreements.

The movement to legislate port employment practices exemplified a broader shift towards bureaucratization in Valparaiso, as well as growing urban centers across Latin America (and all over the world) in the nineteenth century: “El Estado moderno ha sido caracterizado, en general, por la preponderancia que en él tiene la burocracia.”\textsuperscript{19} Along with this written bureaucratization, the formation of official headquarters for enlistment as part of the Ministry of Marine and War attempted to expedite the enforcement of new legislation. However, “given that at various points in the country there rarely existed a perfect correspondence between those onboard and those on land…”\textsuperscript{20} the local offices could not always achieve their goals of standardizing processes of enlistment.

Unfortunately, the continued freedom enjoyed by enlisters and foreign captains allowed them to exploit unemployed sailors, “inciten a los contingentes a desertar para

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\item[17] Harris Bucher, 41.
\item[18] Harris Bucher, 51.
\item[20] Harris Bucher, 54.
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luego nuevamente colocarlos y ganar el premio del enganche.”21 Professional enlisters were able to use the habits of Valparaiso, and take advantage of desertion trends to collect more enlistment fees. Chile’s efforts to exert national autonomy failed due to the local economic control of other nations, especially Great Britain. Informal agreements continued to dominate the economy since they benefited foreign companies, and enlisters made their business from “disloyal” sailors who roamed the port in search of higher salaries. This scenario is one of many examples where in capitalistic objectives superceded Chilean authority at the port.

**DEsertion**

Valparaiso’s 19th-century maritime economy was characterized by a marked lack of civil control and control over labor. Desertion is a prime example of the fluidity of employment agreements and nationalisms at the port, as it was so common for both Chilean and international sailors: “En verdad, el desertor, sea nacional o foráneo, será un importante actor en la vida cotidiana del puerto.”22 Not only did desertion undermine ships’ labor structures and necessitate *enganche* at the port, but the phenomenon created a transient population in Valparaiso, unattached to a ship or even a nation. In 1841, the Ministry of Exterior Relations committed to protecting this significant group of foreign deserters on their shores, and granted them asylum.23 However, the bribery involved in the “trafficking” of seamen made such legislation impossible. The free economic system of enlisters created an atmosphere in which there was “una clase de traficantes que

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21 Harris Bucher, 17. “they incite the contingents to desert in order to then locate them again and collect the prize for enlistment.”
22 Harris Bucher, 14. “Truly, the deserter, whether national or foreign, will be an important actor in the daily life of the port.”
23 Harris Bucher, 16.
derivan grandes provechos de la deserción." Desertion was not a rare accident, then, but a strategic phenomenon that benefited these professional enlists by allowing them to collect enlistment fees. Moreover, capturing a deserter brought an even higher prize to the enlistment office that found him. Desertion forced captains to restore their crew by enlisting again, thereby cyclically supporting enlists and even raising wages to entice new sailors aboard.

Sailors had many reasons for deserting their posts, most of them financial. Particularly those who held military positions found better financial offers on merchant ships. Military posts did not necessarily offer sailors security: “Dado que el servicio militar no tenía carácter profesional sino mas bien de dedicación ocasional, marginal o compulsiva, no llegó a ser un oficio del cual se pudiera vivir satisfactoriamente, a menos que se tratara de un alto oficial.” The majority of sailors held low-rank positions in the military hierarchy, and did not earn a sustainable income. Contrary to the lifelong military identity that high-ranking officials carried, sailors were not “professionals,” nor were they irreplaceable. This job insecurity created a propensity for sailors to desert their positions, in search of higher wages: “El peonaje militar comenzó a recibir un prest (salario) considerablemente inferior al del peón libre.” There was little incentive to contract with the military when the free commerce of Valparaiso offered competitive salaries and more economic freedom. Moreover, because it left an international, transient

24 Información en Memoria del Ministro de Marina (1857), cited in Harris Bucher, 16.
25 Harris Bucher, 16.
26 Salazar, 240. “Given that military service did not have a professional character, rather more of an occasional, marginal or compulsive dedication, it did not become an office on which one could live satisfactorily, unless it was a high official.”
27 Salazar, 241. “The military laborer population began to receive a salary considerably lower than that of the free laborer.”
population of sailors in Valparaiso, desertion had social effects on the identity of the city as well.

Sailors exchanged ships, loyalties, and even national identities, as their roles became more fluid in the amphitheater of Valparaiso. Upon arrival at the port, sailors gained new identities in the local context of Valparaiso. This city was an island of identities: “On islands each new intruder finds a freedom it never had in its old environment.”\(^\text{28}\) The moment of arrival at the port was the encounter, the crossing of the beach, and the creation of a new hybridized culture on an island. Identity was fluid at this crossing, and sailors often exploited the ambiguity and confusion to trade in old loyalties for new opportunities. Deserters were the ultimate transient characters of Valparaiso; they deserted not only their ship but also their national identity or affiliation with a certain company, as they were likely to be enlisted on foreign ships subsequently. As separate from the civil society of Chile, deserters challenged systems of authority and increased friction between foreign diplomats and Chilean authorities, since they defied standard definitions of jurisdiction.

Valparaiso was a site for desertion by foreign sailors, as were other Chilean ports such as Iquique, Talcahuano and Ancud. The high economic and logistical costs of this phenomenon damaged many foreign expeditions, and earned Valparaiso a cosmopolitan reputation with captains for being a port of temptation that lured foreign sailors to stay. The blame for desertion fell on Chilean authorities, as British and North American captains in particular expected Chile to make more efforts to discourage desertion: “In 1850, the French Consul in Chile retorted that he obtained the arrest of the fugitive Frenchmen in barely one occasion out of ten; he provided the example that the ships La\(^\text{28}\) Dening, *Islands and Beaches*, 31-2.
Rochen, La Henriette y La Elisa had lost all their teams in Valparaiso and blamed the authorities for not demanding any type of papers from the deserters, who then enlisted themselves on Chilean ships under the supposed names of Pedro or Pablo. While Chilean authorities tried in vain to exert more control over the workings of the port, the lack of organization persisted. According to foreign officers like the French Consul, the lack of strict supervision by port authorities differentiated Valparaiso from other ports, although the authorities did propose laws that simply did not trickle down, or were not properly enforced. Such complaints bare similarity to complaints by Chileans captains, who claimed that Chilean sailors switched to foreign ships because of high wage offers. It appears that there was intense anxiety on all sides about losing sailors to other nations’ marines. Sailors’ identity and loyalty in Valparaiso were extremely tenuous since desertion constantly shifted alliances and cut ties. Chilean authorities were held responsible for desertion, although they were granted full power to prevent it by the large foreign presence at the port.

Foreign consuls expected that Chilean police forces would arrest deserters and enforce laws to prevent defection, despite the fact that foreign deserters could only be tried by their own nation’s consulate justice system: “Foreign diplomats had the ability to solicit the help of the local authorities for the detention and custody of those who ‘defected’: those who were arrested had to then be put at the disposition of the foreign representatives…” This inconsistent system manipulated Chilean local authority and utilized its infrastructure for the benefit of foreign consuls, without granting it full authority over the port. The French consul, for example, expected to employ the existing

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29 Harris Bucher, 84.
30 Harris Bucher, 85.
31 Harris Bucher, 89.
Chilean authority to find deserters, but would not comply with Chilean judicial proceedings to prosecute them. Such conflicts between Chilean local authority and international law of foreign inhabitants created tension in Valparaiso’s urban identity. It was simultaneously a cosmopolitan city within the global economy, and a Chilean city with national loyalties. These identity questions plagued Chilean academics and citizens, as they struggled to rationalize the rapid modernization and industrialization of Chile that led to increased use of their nation’s resources by foreigners, especially in Valparaiso.

**THE BRITISH COMMUNITY IN VALPARAISO: INGRAINED FOREIGN INFLUENCES**

Where does a poor provincial go who’s used to walking down the streets of his town without the risk of being crushed under a load of freight, without having to stand aside for some cart, without some gringo giving him a shove this way, a second gringo pushing him that way, a third elbowing him, a fourth knocking him down, and a fifth and a sixth trampling him underfoot?\(^\text{32}\)

As Valparaisians confronted the benefits and costs of the foreign presence in their city and economy, the British seemed to be the largest economic and social influence. A detailed study of the British population in Valparaiso is essential to understanding the hybridized identity of the port city, since they played a major role in the commerce that was central to the city’s identity. Although the foreign population only accounted for 7% of Valparaiso’s residents at its height, the presence of British and other foreign inhabitants was crucial to the commercial workings of the city.\(^\text{33}\) Valparaiso possessed the highest concentration of foreigners in all of Chile: seven-eighths of the European population in Chile lived in Valparaiso. In 1875, this large British population numbered


\(^{33}\) Lorenzo et al, 39.
The British demographic in Valparaiso was not evenly distributed among socioeconomic groups; a large percentage of landowners and elites were British, and the community was linked to the commercialism and busy atmosphere of the port, as is evident in the writer Jotabeche’s narration. However, despite the economic and political power that the British exercised in Valparaiso, the legal requirements of foreigners in Chile were like those of national citizens.

Extra-territoriality laws, which predominated in most of the British Empire, allowed the British in foreign countries to avoid that nation’s legislation. Since the British practiced economic imperialism in Chile but not political hegemony, the extra-territoriality laws for British citizens in some Southeast Asian colonies did not apply in Chile (at least according to the official record). In fact, legal equality for British citizens in Chile carried economic benefits for the British by allowing them to conduct business without economic restrictions: “They [Chileans] treated foreigners in the same way as themselves: subject to the same laws, the same taxes, and with equal opportunities for their enterprises.”

This equal-opportunity treatment shows Chilean dependence upon British commerce; it benefited the Chilean economy when British merchants could operate freely. Along with economic rights came fiscal and social responsibility, since these foreigners had to abide by Chilean law and contribute to the civil society by paying taxes. Moreover, by denying extra-territoriality rights for the British, Chile asserted authority in Valparaiso.

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36 Mayo, 19.
In spite of theoretical legal equality of British citizens, however, British merchants enjoyed privileges that other foreigners did not. Although coasting was forbidden for all foreign merchants (including the British), the British enjoyed the “most-favored-nation status in matters in which Chile did not discriminate against foreigners.”

Consuls carefully guarded the interests of Britons within the inclusive British nationalistic community or “colony” in Valparaíso. Special protection not granted by extra-territoriality laws often emerged from the legal influence of consuls in their negotiation with the Chilean intendencia or Minister of Exterior Relations. Because of “the dominant position held by Britain in Chile’s maritime trade,” British consuls exercised influence over local authorities. With the additional burden of “protecting British interests,” the occupation of consuls was increasingly political, since they had to balance their duties without overstepping the boundaries of Chilean jurisdiction.

Tensions between foreign sailors and Chileans often erupted near the port, as it was a meeting place for sailors from all over the world. In these instances, the conflict of interest between foreign consuls and Chilean authorities became visible: “en 1857 el Cónsul de Gran Bretaña en Valparaíso comunicaba el sentimiento del Comandante en Jefe de las fuerzas navales de SMB al saber los desórdenes que habían ocasionado en tierra algunos de sus compatriotas enrolados en naves de combate…” British sailors were often involved in conflicts around the port, incidents which the British consul was responsible for negotiating with Chilean authorities. Thus, the British in Valparaíso

37 Mayo, 63.
38 Mayo, 51.
39 Mayo, 52.
40 Harris Bucher, 21. “in 1857 the Consul of Great Britain in Valparaíso communicated the sentiment of the Chief Commander of the naval forces of SMB upon finding out about the disorders that some of his compatriots, enrolled in the combat ships, had caused while on land.”
agreed to adhere to Chilean authority, with the knowledge that their own nation’s consuls and military exercised influence over Chilean military forces.

Most British immigrants traveled to Valparaiso for social mobility; to take advantage of the economic benefits and better standard of living they could achieve. One employment contract stated that these visitors gave up their “right as a British Subject whilst… in the service of Chili.” The trip was risky for lower-middle class Britons who renounced their rights at home in the hopes of increased economic possibilities in Chile, although they did have the protection of a British consul and community (such as the colony on Cerro Alegre). Charitable organizations, English-language schools and newspapers such as the Chilean Times, for example, perpetuated the cultural separation of the British in Valparaiso. By renouncing British law, British immigrants pledged obedience to Chilean legal systems and authorities. However, since the problems of distressed British subjects were paramount on Cerro Alegre, Britons were often separated from Valparaiso’s civil problems of poverty, sanitation, and crime.

The British influence on Valparaiso expanded beyond the economy, as British culture was exalted and symbolic of the elite merchant lifestyle of Valparaiso. Many people spoke English because it was almost required for negotiations with North American and British captains and sailors who entered the port. There was a marked fascination with British culture as well; the fiction folletín section of El Mercurio featured a multi-part story entitled “Misterios de Londres,” for example, which exalted the urban environment of London and demonstrated an admiration for British culture.

The habits that developed in Valparaiso mimicked British customs, such as the afternoon

41 Mayo, 16.
42 Lorenzo et al, 43.
43 El Mercurio, 28 November 1844, “Mysteries of London.”
tea that gradually replaced the *yerba mate* that was popular throughout rural South America.\(^{44}\) People went so far as to describe Valparaiso as Anglo-Saxon, or “la mas inglesa de las ciudades sudamericanas, la Liverpool del Pacífico.”\(^{45}\) An article entitled “Comparémonos con los ingleses” in *El Mercurio* exemplifies the British standards that existed in Valparaiso’s society (especially that of the elite), and the comparison between the city and England, made by denizens and visitors alike\(^{46}\).

In spite of these connections with British culture in Valparaiso, the changing social customs also reflected its rapid urban growth and modernization. Although they coincided with British tendencies, these habits may also have resulted from the industrialization movements. For example, people described their elite neighbors as “reserved,” a phenomenon that perhaps reflected the cold relations of capitalism more than the stereotyped tendencies of the English.\(^{47}\) Nevertheless, this “reservation” towards neighbors added to the isolation of Valparaiso within Chile, and mistrust by other Chileans towards Valparaiso residents.\(^{48}\) If Valparaiso was the Liverpool of the Pacific, the British presence strained the connection Valparaiso’s already tenuous link with the rest of Chile and with Chilean nationalistic identity.

Mistrust characterized the setting of Valparaiso as well, since many actors there did not share a common identity. Suspicions about the British community arose when they first asserted their influence at the port, shortly after independence. In 1828, an amendment to the Law of Commerce excluded foreigners from coasting and retail trade,

\(^{44}\) Lorenzo et al, 44.  
\(^{45}\) Charles Domville-Fife as cited in Lorenzo et al, 42. “the most English of the South American cities, the Liverpool of the Pacific.”  
\(^{46}\) *El Mercurio*, 27 July 1844, “Compare us with the English.”  
\(^{47}\) Lorenzo et al, 44.  
\(^{48}\) Lorenzo et al, 45.
likely because of suspicions that foreigners were largely responsible for contraband operations.\textsuperscript{49} Diego Portales, the conservative Minister of Interior and Foreign Affairs of Chile in the 1830s, opposed foreign involvement in the economy of Valparaiso and sought to exclude them through legislation. However, Portales engaged in a debate with other Chilean political leaders, many of whom acknowledged the growing dependence on foreign participation: “en asuntos económicos no se debía discriminar por nacionalidad, porque la actividad empresarial era cosmopolita…”\textsuperscript{50} Proponents of this philosophy wanted to attract foreign commerce in order to stimulate the economy.\textsuperscript{51} From the beginning of its commercial expansion, the trade in Valparaiso was cosmopolitan: without the influence and presence of foreign merchants, these successes would not have occurred.

Portales did not want jobs at the port to go to foreigners, leaving Chilean workers unemployed.\textsuperscript{52} Portales was concerned about the economic impacts of such high British participation, and his nationalistic impulses also disapproved of the cultural politics that resulted from the economic relationship. Although Portales was largely overruled in the debate over foreign economic participation, anxiety about the large British presence in Valparaiso persisted throughout the nineteenth century. Others agreed with Portales’ rejection of foreigners, albeit for different reasons. Historian and writer Joaquín Edwards Bello, for example, expressed his point of view on the British cultural influence through their commercial expertise. He described “esas casas de comercio extranjeras que dan una apariencia de progreso, pero que son las sanguijuelas del país. Es cierto que han

\textsuperscript{49} Lorenzo et al, 32.
\textsuperscript{50} Lorenzo et al, 33. “in economic matters one must not discriminate on nationality, because the business activity was cosmopolitan…”
\textsuperscript{51} Lorenzo et al, 33.
\textsuperscript{52} Lorenzo et al, 33.
educado considerablemente al chileno; esa educación cuesta millones de libras.” The idea that the British had educated Chileans in commercial practices highlights the tense hierarchical power relationship between these two groups, and Edwards Bello pointed out the costs of this long-term dependency relationship. Edwards Bello also decried the freedoms that Chile granted the British in the name of progress, and liberties that prioritized financial gain over Chilean national identity. El Mercurio, in contrast, maintained its commercial focus through rhetorical support for the British colony in Valparaiso. The newspaper consistently encouraged “positive attitudes” about foreigners in Valparaiso by accentuating their crucial commercial role at the port.  

The European influences in Valparaiso were internal, as well as external from the imported European trends. Valparaiso sought to imitate European systems of authority, organization, and education in order to maximize potential profits. As it imitated European standards, Valparaiso maintained a separate identity from the remainder of Chile, and was even disdained by residents of Santiago and other regions for its difference. While a moneyed aristocratic class still ruled Santiago both politically and culturally, Valparaiso developed a commercial elite, or “burguesía porteña” whose priority was financial gain (or “time is money”), not necessarily class status. As these new commercial elites gained power during the nineteenth century, they demanded changes within the civil society of Valparaiso that would further distinguish it from Santiago and emphasize its port characteristics. Education, for example, would be more

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53 Edwards Bello, Crónicas, 94. “those foreign commercial firms that give the appearance of progress, but are the bloodsuckers of the country. It is certain that they have educated the Chilean considerably; that education costs millions of pounds.”  
54 Lorenzo et al, 38.  
55 Lorenzo et al, 111.  
56 Lorenzo et al, 76 and 112. “Bourgeois of the port.”
practical and commercially focused under the porteños: it would prepare students to work at the port and produce a class of skilled workers who could manage and organize commerce. By teaching the necessary economic skills to Chilean students, porteños argued, the country “iría logrando la verdadera independencia de la influencia extranjera.” A nationalistic desire for Chile to control the commerce of Valparaiso was central in the founding of new schools starting in the mid-1800s.

In these schools of commercial education, students learned about political economy, global topography, world religions, maritime technology, and customs laws. In 1853, the first such institution opened in Valparaiso, La Escuela Normal Mercantil. Trade schools were part of increasing specialization in education in 19th-century Latin America. Liberal elites believed in education as a route to social mobility. Liberals used new specialized universities to attempt to integrate social mobility into an increasingly hierarchical class system. In 1844, municipal funds supported elementary education in Valparaiso, and El Mercurio published a list of requirements, regulations and duties of students and teachers at these institutions: “la policía del local no solo contribuye a formar en los niños maneras sociales y una educación cumplida, sino a conservarlos robustos y sanos. Cuidando así mismo que aunque asistan pobremente vestidos no pobre so tengan roturas en la ropa, pues este desaliño los acostumbre a la desidia y abandono.” The article suggested that, in spite of some students’ difficult financial circumstances, the school could teach them to take care of themselves. Moreover, by

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57 Lorenzo et al, 77. “would achieve true independence from foreign influence.”
58 Lorenzo et al, 83.
59 El Mercurio, 8 August 1844. “the police of the premises not only contribute to forming social manners and a complete education in the children, but also to keep them robust and healthy. Looking after, in this way, that, although they may attend school poorly dressed, they do not have tears in their clothing, since this carelessness puts them in the habit of to neglect and abandonment.”
learning properly maintenance of their clothing and appearance, these students would extract larger values from this experience and avoid the trap of negligence in their lives. This commentary, characteristic of an idealistic elite who wrote, edited and read *El Mercurio*, exemplifies contemporary ideas about social mobility through education. It does not matter if the student is poorly dressed initially (disadvantaged at their birth), according to the author, since education will steer them away from tendencies of negligence and equalize their opportunities.

The merchant schools in Valparaiso were no exception to ideas about the equalization of education; although most students were the offspring of established merchants, port workers could also send their children to these schools, such as el Liceo de Valparaíso, founded using state funding in 1878. At the Liceo de Valparaíso from 1895-97, for example, forty percent of the students were children of merchants, while the next highest percentage came from families involved in private business, industry, or public administration. The public funding for the Liceo (high school) allowed children of customs officials, port office workers, and even the unemployed to enroll. Training opportunity often appealed to the “dispossessed” of the city because of the possibility of social mobility. The main proposal of such institutions was not to equalize Chilean society, however, but to help Chilean merchants compete with European merchants and regain some local economic power. The schools represented nationalistic objectives, although they paradoxically imitated European schools.

The Colegio Inglés-Aleman, Colegio and Instituto Aleman, and the Mackay School (1857) all catered to the children of European residents (in these cases English

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60 Lorenzo et al, 104.
61 Lorenzo et al, 104.
62 Lorenzo et al, 102.
and German). However, the Colegio Mercantil (1860) and Colegio de Valparaiso (1865) soon followed, opening opportunities for Chilean students to learn the trade of their native city.\textsuperscript{63} The training at these institutions found its inspiration in merchant schools in Europe, as well as the European schools already existing in Valparaiso.\textsuperscript{64} As Valparaiso developed an educational system tailored to its economy and civil society, the national government of Chile launched a general program of national education throughout the entire country, which “terminó por bajar el perfil a las experiencias regionales, como las de Valparaíso…”\textsuperscript{65} These schools that were tailored to the rest of Chile may not have fit in Valparaiso, due to its unique commercial character. As Valparaiso built schools that were specialized to fit its identity as a port, the city became further isolated from the rest of Chile. The porteños generally encouraged policies of individualism, private institutions and commercial gain with little government intervention.\textsuperscript{66} Valparaiso stood out as distinct from the rest of Chile, since the national education program would not maximize the skills that Valparaiso merchants wanted their children to acquire.

It is undeniable that the British socio-cultural influence infiltrated Valparaiso’s education system, in addition to more visible influences in the economy and navy. The most central identifying factors of the city and the nation, especially the military forces, were imbued with British influence.

**THE CHILEAN NAVY IN VALPARAISO: A SOURCE OF NATIONALISM**

\textsuperscript{63} Lorenzo et al, 90-91.
\textsuperscript{64} Lorenzo et al, 91.
\textsuperscript{65} Lorenzo et al, 92. “ended in lowering the profile of regional experiences, like those in Valparaíso…”
\textsuperscript{66} Lorenzo et al, 116.
Valparaiso was the naval center of Chile as well as its commercial hub, and boasted a large military presence. Today the major tourist attractions and monuments of the city pay homage to its naval history and the memories of military heroes and battleships. The rise of Valparaiso as an important commercial site coincided with increased military influence through the navy: due to the Naval Headquarters and training available there, “younger naval leaders mingled socially with the porteño upper classes, who were involved in business and foreign trade.”\(^{67}\) An alliance developed between high-ranking naval officials and the merchant elite, both influential groups in Chile’s nationalistic sentiments and the sea-faring identity of the nation. Because naval training often took place in Valparaiso, it developed a proud identification with naval culture, and became the seat of Chilean nationalisms in which the strong navy was a central attribute.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Chile owed its diplomatic strength, and the rapid tripling of its geographic size to its strong military.\(^{68}\) Military successes carried nationalism in the nineteenth century, since they either involved border conflicts or independence movements. In Chile, this “highly developed sense of nationalism, bordering on chauvinism and xenophobia, shared by the civilian and military sectors,”\(^{69}\) created a shared Chilean identity, and eliminated distinctions between military and civil interests. Compliance with military authority as widespread, even among farm laborers who often worked within a “feudal” agricultural labor system.\(^{70}\) Although the military counted on working class support, it did not represent the demographic it protected and


\(^{68}\) Nunn, 78.

\(^{69}\) Nunn, 8.

\(^{70}\) Nunn, 17.
was often homogeneous, of an elite political class, and highly educated. The nationalistic sentiments of many Chileans, though not all, were founded in the military, especially the navy.

The military presence in Valparaiso was naval, and the city’s identity rested on this force. The navy emerged as a key part of Chilean nationalism after the victorious battle at Yungay, Peru in 1839 during the war of “Second Independence,” which was made possible by advanced sea communications. The Chilean navy gained strength and influence after in the War of the Pacific, when maritime skills had been in high demand and “maritime supremacy so urgently needed.” Since Chile was a “país destinado a ser grande en y por el mar, se halla en el caso de fortificar la propensión de la carrera enlazando todas sus glorias y venerando religiosamente [sic] sus tradiciones marítimas.”

Maritime traditions and naval history have a long legacy in Chilean national consciousness, and ‘heroic history’ of naval battles fills the nation’s museums. The geography of Chile partly contributes to the concept of its “destiny for the sea” because of its long Pacific coastline.

In spite of strong nationalistic associations with the Chilean navy, there was a significant foreign influence on this body during independence movements, throughout the nineteenth century, and arguably through the twentieth century under the military dictatorship. The British navy heavily impacted the Chilean military development with heroes such as Lord Cochrane, a disgruntled British naval captain who led independence

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71 Nunn, 42.
72 Nunn, 48.
73 Collier and Sater, 131.
74 El Mercurio, 5 July 1847. “A country destined to be grand in and for the sea, she finds herself in a position to fortify the tendency to the race, linking all of its glories and religiously venerating her maritime traditions.”
movements in 1819, capturing Valdivia and leading the squadron against the Spanish.\textsuperscript{75} Cochrane and other British figures were inherent in Chilean identity because they helped facilitate independence from Spain, albeit for economic reasons in many cases.

The pronounced civil-military connection in Chile began with the independence army, but survived throughout several territorial conflicts with Argentina, Peru and Bolivia throughout the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{76} As C.E. Bladh observed in 1828, “The garrison of Valparaiso consisted of 200 regular infantry men and an artillery company. The governor used to be as much the civil chief as the military one.”\textsuperscript{77} Here the coalescence of military and civil forces was evident to a foreign observer. Civil-military connections developed predominantly in the elite populations of Valparaiso, where sons learned and perpetuated the naval careers of their fathers. The Civil War of 1891 revealed civil-military alliances in the elite class when the navy supported the Congress, yielding to promises of expansion, and upheld their “ties to civilians.”\textsuperscript{78} Although President Jose Manuel Balmaceda supported the Chilean navy and encouraged modernization of the military early in his presidency, its power would undermine him during the Civil War when the civil-military alliance rose against him.\textsuperscript{79} This bond was particularly significant as Civil War tension built and the elite’s alliance with the military became strong enough to forcibly remove the sitting executive government. This connection was often forged in Valparaiso, where the military closely intersected with the elite \textit{porteño} class and many military officers did their training.

\textsuperscript{75} Collier and Sater, 38-9.  
\textsuperscript{76} Nunn, 77.  
\textsuperscript{77} Bladh, 23.  
\textsuperscript{78} Nunn, 77.  
\textsuperscript{79} Collier and Sater, 151-5.
The naval training in Valparaiso happened primarily at the Naval School of Chile, which provided an entrance into a naval career. This Escuela Naval de Chile, offered competitive admittance to teenage boys, often resulting in a highly educated, elite group of admitted students. According to an advertisement in El Mercurio entitled “Conditions of Admission,” both discipline and high academic performance were among the high standards for admission:

The candidate must present certification of good conduct and must not have been expelled from any elementary school;
The age to enter the program may not be lower than 12 or exceed 14 years…;
To have a physical condition compatible with the onboard service;
To have been vaccinated;
To have completed all of the courses that constitute the first year…

Successful completion of some education by the age of 12-14 excluded a large majority of the residents of the port neighborhoods. The age stipulations signified an early commitment to the navy, a privilege that would not be available to boys whose families needed them to work, for example. The vaccination requirement signals the immaculate demographics that most candidates came from, far from the tenements with no sanitation and rampant disease. Sailors and maritime laborers did not experience an application process like that of aspiring naval officers, although they were actors in the dynamic sea-going culture of Valparaiso.

SAILORS IN PORT

80 El Mercurio, 6 January 1891.
81 Urbina Carrasco, 213.
Valparaiso was a welcome respite from the hard work sailors performed onboard, much like other contemporary ports during this period of high sea-faring activity worldwide. The international reputation of sailors was often based on their personality in port: “sailors… were viewed as exemplars of vice and deviance... Mariners, who were undeniably given to whoring, drinking and drifting about in sailortown…” Sailors developed a culture of leisure in port cities such as Valparaiso that influenced the social atmosphere of the city. Aboard ships, sailors performed initiation rituals (such as the baptism by ‘Old Neptune’) and developed a camaraderie that they were required to maintain upon arrival in port. Older sailors simultaneously shaved and advised new, young men on their ship, whose initiation as a sailor signified an expression and proof of masculinity. This bonding between sailors created a strong group that maintained loyalties during shore leave, and even collectively challenged sailors from other latitudes.

The culture of sailors’ camaraderie and loyalties was an integral part of the social fabric of Valparaiso. During their life at sea in different ports around the world, sailors pledged informal allegiance to their fellows, participating in a system of casual authority and collective judicial systems when one of their men transgressed. Perceived betrayals between sailors in port started many a brawl in common meeting spots such as saloons, billiard halls, and dance halls. Sailors who refused to frequent a bar with the others, in favor of visiting civic-minded sailors’ home or religious organizations, were chastised

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82 Margaret S. Creighton, “Fraternity in the American Forecastle, 1830-1870.” *The New England Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (Dec 1990): 531, 531-557. Creighton’s study of North American sailors also applies to Valparaiso’s sailor, not only because so many U.S. sailors moved through this port, but also because the attributes of this demographic are specific to the nineteenth century, not to nationality which many sailors did not claim. 83 Creighton, 535. 84 Creighton, 535.
since group membership was essential to their social structure. Lifestyle choices were not personal but rather communal; sailors drank and danced in close-knit packs, and separating oneself from this social scene could jeopardize their safety or position on the ship. Ports were “not necessarily safe havens:” violence between shipmates arose from allegiance disputes, although encounters with foreign sailors alone provided enough opportunity for brawls. Shore leave was often a tenuous and dangerous event (as exemplified in the Baltimore incident), since leisure activities and spaces replaced work duties. For the laborers at the port, however, it was not a social space but rather the location where they performed most of their responsibilities.

FUNCTIONS OF THE PORT: LABORERS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Once sailors arrived ashore, they sought leisure, relaxation, social spaces, and communication with their home port. They were no longer working; port laborers took over the movement of cargo. Before 1865, there were only two wharfs in Valparaiso. This inadequacy left the port unprepared for the large volume of shipments, and necessitated many more launch workers than contemporary ports to compensate for the lack of infrastructure. Natural and wartime disasters destroyed the wharfs and required a major rebuilding workforce on several occasions during the nineteenth century. In the winter of 1822, for example, a destructive storm disrupted operations for months, destroying major naval vessels as well as docks. Chilean Lieutenant Luis Uribe Orrego recounted the building in his military history:

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85 Creighton, 555.
86 Creighton, 554.
87 Lorenzo et al, 58.
Meanwhile the workers of Valparaiso continued the reconstruction of the Squadron with the consequent slowness and difficulties from the shortage of operators and resources of all types, combined also with the bad conditions of the bay, in an epoch of winter as it was then... Then, in the first days of June there was experienced in our bay a furious storm that occasioned the loss of sixteen merchant ships, of sixty-one that there were...

The lack of necessary infrastructure was one of Orrego’s major complaints, even before the storm arrived. Storms provided an impetus for reconstruction, although it was needed long before. In 1883, the muelle fiscal (fiscal dock) was finally constructed. This new infrastructure increased the port’s capacity for larger boats, although it still did not provide enough space or support for the tonnage that normally entered Valparaiso. Although it was a much-needed advancement in the maritime facilities of Valparaiso, the muelle fiscal was not immune to bad weather and still suffered under the limitations of harsh winds and water off the Pacific.

In addition to the lack of adequate wharfs and infrastructure during most of the nineteenth century, the organization of labor on the wharf was haphazard. Many laborers and sailors lingered around the port seeking work, although there was a marked insufficiency of capable operators and supervisors. During large-scale municipal projects that demanded many unskilled laborers, systems of labor were reorganized, but only to fill a necessity. Just as the storms provoked needed rebuilding, the necessary arrangement of workers never happened until it was essential to complete a significant project.

Congestion was a constant problem at the port, which hosted 300 lancheros and 500

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88 Luis Uribe Orrego, Los Orígenes de Nuestra Marina Militar (Santiago de Chile: Imprenta Nacional, 1894), 52-53.
90 Schmutzer, 127.
sailors, according to a count in 1860.\textsuperscript{91} These numbers do not include the supervising port officials and merchants who roamed the wharfs, or the *enganchedores* and vendors at the nearby markets. The physical space of the port was extremely crowded then, and the atmosphere chaotic. Particularly before the construction of the *muelle fiscal*, the jobs of the *servidores* and lightermen on the landing barges were physical and organizationally difficult.

Shortly after anchoring, the primary role of sailors dissolved and responsibility shifted to the port workers: stevedores, laborers, warehouse workers, and customs house officials. First, stevedores unloaded cargo and merchandise from ships onto smaller boats (or *lanchas*), and transported tons to shore. Merchants depended on the strength of the launch boats and their *lancheros* to compensate for the inadequate docks. Complaints about the slow speed of loading and unloading cargo were very common in Valparaiso (as in Uribe Orrego’s commentary); this phase of shipment was frustrating and required patience from supervisors.\textsuperscript{92} Moreover, the movement of launch boats posed real dangers for *lancheros* since they worked with heavy cargo, but little support infrastructure. Accidents were common since port workers risked their physical safety on the *lanchas*.

Once shipments arrived on shore, customs house workers (or *aduaneros*) registered all incoming cargo and inspected materials. As the nineteenth century progressed, these processes were expedited and salaried work increased. The first Customs House in Valparaiso, founded in 1831, symbolized the rapid development of commerce at the port and limited smuggling by locating the institution physically close to

\textsuperscript{91} Lorenzo et al, 59.
\textsuperscript{92} Schmutzer, 117.
the actual commercial activity. The physical move of the Customs house from Santiago to Valparaiso signified more autonomy and independence for the port city. With the move a screening system began for incoming products that was self-sustained within the port area, and did not depend on approval from officials in the capital. Between 1854 and 1855, the first official Customs building was constructed just a block from the wharf. The Chilean government depended on the profits from customs duties, so there was ample incentive to expedite the process for collection of such taxes. In 1865, commercial authorities at the port reestablished the rights of customs to collect taxes on deposited goods; a decision that provoked mixed reactions, since for some “los costos de desembarque y conducción son insignificantes, comparativamente a su valor, para otros son de alta importancia…” Changes in customs policies such as this one affected merchants in varying proportions, but nonetheless the Valparaiso commercial officials needed the income from customs fees in order to maintain the functioning of the port.

Upon anchoring at the port, ships complied with a municipal process that granted permission and required notarized merchant agreements in order for them to legitimately remain in Valparaiso. After providing a notice of their arrival, the ships requested permission to enter from the governor, having previously made arrangements with the treasurer and reported the merchandise they were carrying. This process gave the municipal authorities of Valparaiso more control over commercial influx and forced

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94 Schmutzer, 34.
95 Collier, 12.
96 *El Mercurio*, 27 December 1865, Page 1. “the costs of unloading and driving are insignificant, comparatively with their value, for others they are of much importance…”
97 Schmutzer, 34.
foreign merchants to negotiate Chilean regulations. Valparaiso municipal authorities were constantly negotiating their jurisdiction to balance encouragement of foreign trade and Chilean control over the port.

Projects became more privatized and efficient due to merchants’ capital investments in Valparaiso, and their increasing insistence on contracts and steady salaries for workers. Large projects, such as the building of the railroads, fell under the leadership of private companies, often managed by the British or other foreign powers. Especially during port reconstruction projects, the daily workings of the port depended directly on bonds from abroad.\(^99\) The large presence of foreign merchants at the port meant that foreign powers had financial interests in Valparaiso, and it benefited them to ease operations by updating infrastructure there.

The mechanization of port processes may have benefited the workers in terms of efficiency, but disparate goals caused conflicts. During the first maritime strike in 1903, for example, unemployment was rampant (although mostly temporary) as many workers had no contracts but waited at the port for daily assignments. “Even in 1850 the authorities continued to lurk in places where unemployed laborers used to congregate, just to know: in Valparaiso ‘from the front of the Victoria Plaza until the Caleta, on the side of the beach, that in these places the vagabonds took asylum, practicing all kinds of excesses and immoralities…”\(^{100}\) Unemployment and its habitual vagrancy around Plaza Victoria and the surrounding streets encouraged the police to patrol those areas filled with idle lingerers. Unification of all port workers, or even a majority, was never

\(^{99}\) Schmutzer, 95.

\(^{100}\) Salazar, 239. Quoting a document from the Valparaiso Municipal Archive.
achieved because each group had different expectations of wage increases, and believed they would have more success in their specific individual cause than in a larger mass.\textsuperscript{101}

A lack of common identity characterized the port laborers as well as the sailors at the wharfs in Valparaiso. The idea of a group of workers united under a single interest was difficult, in part because of the disparate agendas and shifting identities of all the actors at the port. Sailors, above all, traded their national identities for higher pay when they deserted ships, and the enlistment professionals at the docks encouraged such actions. Indeed, these defections fit in with the trend of prioritizing commercial interests over national loyalties in Valparaiso, just as local authorities made similar choices to appeal to foreign merchants while inadvertently harming port residents. The fluid maritime identities discussed in this chapter paradoxically typified the military leadership of Valparaiso that was so central to nationalism; British officers occupied many of the military posts and often served as hero figures for nationalistic historical narratives. This investigation of shifting identities forms another layer above the local history of Valparaiso, connecting port workers with merchants and Chilean citizens with the international forces that occupied the port. Together, these layers form the context for the canonized incidents that took place at the port.

CHAPTER 4

THE INCIDENTS: MEMORABLE DAYS IN VALPARAISO’S HISTORY

The cosmopolitan makeup of Valparaiso meant that events at the port had broad effects on an international scale. Similarly, the most well documented incidents in Valparaiso’s historical memory involve other nations and their representatives. There was a constant exchange between the city’s international and local identities. Valparaiso appears in the history books of the United States, Great Britain, Spain and other nations as a location for specific incidents that influenced their own histories. The previous chapters of this thesis have examined the history of Valparaiso as a unique city, often deliberately isolating its story from the international context in order to eliminate the construction Valparaiso as a site for global politics. This fourth and final chapter, however, will discuss several incidents that were part of not only Valparaiso’s historical lineage, but also that of Britain, the U.S. and Spain. Using the context developed in previous chapters, this chapter will reveal the local and global significance of each event, and why that day was memorable in both Chilean history and the histories of the other nations.

The amphitheater of Valparaiso hosted several international naval incidents during the nineteenth century, and even witnessed some conflicts that did not involve Chile. The Battle of Valparaiso in 1814, for instance, was an episode in the War of 1812, performed thousands of miles south of the nations involved. The HMS Phoebe and the USS Essex met by chance in Valparaiso’s harbor and fought over their disparate
ideologies about sailors’ rights, nationalism, and enlistment, as Chileans watched neutrally from the hills. Still in the midst of its own independence wars, Chile appropriately served as the setting for a conflict about United States national sovereignty and liberty from British law. Both of these global powers would develop a commercial stronghold in Valparaiso later in the nineteenth century, and would possess vested interests in the port during the Spanish bombardment in 1866. The bombardment manifested economic competition between Spain, the United States, and Great Britain, using Valparaiso as a commercial prize where each nation wanted to exercise control. The symbolic act of destruction by the Spanish demonstrated Spain’s lingering desire to recapture imperial hegemony. Such a demonstrative assertion of power occurred again when the United States asserted its commercial and naval presence in Valparaiso by demanding reparations for the saloon brawl between Chileans and sailors of the USS Baltimore. When this fight broke out in 1891, the local characteristics of the port neighborhood suddenly had global consequences for Chile and created dangerous tensions with the increasingly powerful United States.

Only after a full examination of the local environment in Valparaiso can we fully appreciate the significance of battles, attacks, and conflicts that took place there. The enlistment issues that were central to the War of 1812, for example, were relevant in Valparaiso’s fluid maritime culture where sailors were hooked onto merchant ships. In addition, the residual colonial association between the U.S. and Great Britain in this conflict reflected Chile’s tenuous relationship with Spain. In 1866, as the naval base of Chile, Valparaiso was a meaningful target for the Spanish to bombard during their efforts to reclaim economic prominence in the Pacific. Additionally, the cosmopolitanism of the
port and the sharp tension between sailors of different nations provide context for the
*Baltimore* fight and explain its local significance, before it became an international affair. These background stories elucidate the local meaning of each of these three international events. The context this investigation provides serves to dismantle the notion of the port as merely a site for international events, disembodied from Chile and South America, and shows how large diplomatic events fit into local history of Valparaiso.

**The Battle of Valparaiso, *Phoebe and Essex*: March 28, 1814**

In March of 1814, Valparaiso served as the venue for a global conflict of other nations. The port was once again a stage, as North Americans and Britons “set the stage for a play”¹ in their risky game of battles for ideals. The conflict between Great Britain and the United States during the War of 1812 arrived on Chile’s Pacific shore when vessels from these nations encountered each other by chance, very far from home. It was fitting that Valparaiso hosted their battle whose central issues was the controversial British impressment of U.S. sailors during the war, and the defense of universal rights in the expanding maritime world. Confusion resulted from ambiguity between British and U.S. identities: because only a few years had passed since independence, many sailors could claim citizenship to either nation. Both Lieutenant Porter of the USS *Essex* and Captain Hillyer of the HMS *Phoebe* maintained the different tenets that made this war possible. This clash over identities and sailors’ rights occurred in a venue that would experience similar struggles only several years later.

Valparaiso was an appropriate setting for the battle. It too struggled with enlistment issues, as merchants, captains and enlists vied for sailors’ loyalties on the

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wharf. Valparaiso was about to enter the maritime world when these two central maritime powers clashed on its shores. As Chilean politician and historian Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna recounted, the naval battle of March 28, 1814 became legendary in Valparaiso because the two involved naval powers would exercise heavy influence in the city in the coming century. Vicuña Mackenna’s legendary telling of the conflict referenced the enthusiastic performances of the national anthems by both nations, shouted from the highest point of their ships: “The Yankees sang the Yankee-Doodle every night, from the topsail or crow’s nest, and the English responded with God Save the King!”2 The anthems exemplified the contrast of honoring the King or following the newer American spirit, both demonstrating strong nationalism and allegiance to the ideologies behind the war. Displays of nationalism in foreign waters typified what would become the cosmopolitan demographic of Valparaiso.

During the stalemate before the battle, both the U.S. and British sailors challenged each other on the ideological questions of sailor rights and personal freedoms. Sailors on each ship represented the interests of their respective nations, flying mottos from their topsails:

The Essex flew the motto: ‘Free trade and rights for the sailors!’
While the Phoebe responded with: ‘God and the Fatherland are the best rights of a sailor: the traitors offend these rights!’

Essex: ‘God, our Fatherland and freedom! The tyrants offend them!’3

The ‘freedom’ claimed by the North Americans, and the contrasting unconditional patriotism of the British sailors exemplified the larger conflict between the two nations. Sailors repeated the taglines for their respective sides of the argument, still conscious of

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3 Vicuña Mackenna, 49.
these root ideologies even thousands of miles south of home. As sailors, they occupied a
crucial position in the War of 1812, as well as a personal investment in its root
disagreements. A debate between loyalty to a Fatherland and freedom of the individual
took place in Valparaiso’s harbor, first verbally through national anthems and flag flying,
and eventually violently through a short battle in which the HMS *Phoebe* finished
victorious.

The Battle of Valparaiso occurred at the beginning of Valparaiso’s period of rapid
growth. As Chileans heard the national anthems and watched the tension unfold in
Valparaiso’s harbor, the disagreements between U.S. demands for freedom and Britain’s
continuing control must have sparked familiar connections in this former Spanish colony.
Chile’s independence from Spain was still in progress while Chilean citizens witnessed a
post-colonial battle in their port. Spain still exercised military influence in Chile and
maintained a constant presence, especially in the south. The issues of freedoms for
individuals were not as relevant between Chile and Spain, though the colonial power
relationship was similar, as were the naval dignity and imperial honor that were at stake.

The Battle of Valparaiso was an attempt to establish a “new social reality”\(^4\) and
enforce the ideological convictions of each side, set in the amphitheater of Valparaiso. As
the USS *Essex* defended concepts of free seas, free sailors and free trade, the men of the
HMS *Phoebe* carelessly threw deceased prisoners’ bodies overboard, disrespecting the
rights even of the *Essex*’s own sailors.\(^5\) Both Porter and Hillyer, long acquainted from
prior incidents, were preoccupied with gentlemanly behavior and laws of neutrality
during this battle. National honor and dignity were at stake, the only explanation for why

\(^4\) Dening, 84.
\(^5\) Dening, 95.
Porter played this dangerous game in neutral territory that he would almost surely lose. Dening connects these risks of battle to “deep play” in cock fighting, Clifford Geertz’s term for the honor men find in perilous chance. A risk-taking culture, whether in cockfights or naval battles, overwhelmed Valparaiso during this battle, and in its subsequent maritime culture.

This hour-long battle in the peripheral waters of Valparaiso affected not only the Chilean witnesses, but also the sixty-five casualties and more than fifty injured sailors and prisoners of the Essex and Phoebe. A small battle can have grave consequences, though it may not be historical canonized or hailed as a turning point in the larger war: “By world standards, therefore, past wars in Latin America may not seem important or serious, but by the standards of those involved they are major historical confrontations which sealed destinies.”

Especially in a naval center such as Valparaiso, the global context of each battle is often not its most pertinent attribute. Many battles have deep local meanings, whether it is for their ideological quarrel, demonstration of prowess, or contextual meaning for the participants.

The battle of the Phoebe and the Essex is an example of local significance in a globally minor battle, since the incident developed legendary status in Valparaiso. Vicuña Mackenna refers to the Chilean leyenda about the British and North American vessels that fought in Valparaiso’s harbor, since the battle was an oft-remembered spectacle. Indeed, a crowd of Valparaisians grew to watch the foreign battle waged in their own port: “The Essex was anchored under the bluffs of a high hill on which thousands of

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6 Nunn, 7.
7 Vicuña Mackenna, 49.
Valparaisans began to collect to see a battle."\(^8\) The battle of the *Phoebe* and *Essex* gained local meaning in Valparaiso as a nearby battle that Chileans watched without consequences. In the United States newspapers as well, “There was a public memory of the Battle of Valparaiso created in the instant legends that were made of it.”\(^9\) However, the public memory differed from the legends that developed aboard the ships, since “on ships there was no outside world.”\(^10\) The final words of sailors who jumped overboard became legend in diaries and newspaper accounts. Sacrifices for country and ideologies took place on both sides and “sealed destinies”\(^11\) for those involved: the Battle of Valparaiso was the central focus of Lieutenant Porter’s life, for example as he recounted his memories to his son for official and personal written accounts of the event.\(^12\)

Although it was a relatively small battle on a global scale, the Battle of Valparaiso had a tremendous impact in the lives of the people involved. The battle bears the name of the city that hosted it, though Valparaisians were not involved in the conflict. Nevertheless, the quarrel between an independent nation and its former colonial mother country previewed future events in Valparaiso, when Chile would be the protagonist of a clash with Spain. In 1814 Valparaiso was a theatre for the history of guests, but as both the United States and Great Britain would continue to increase their economic presence at the port their influences would become intertwined with the identity of Valparaiso.

**THE BOMBARDMENT OF VALPARAISO: MARCH 31, 1866**

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\(^8\) Dening, 90.
\(^9\) Dening, 96.
\(^10\) Dening, 98.
\(^11\) Nunn, 7.
\(^12\) Dening, 94-95.
In March 1863, a Spanish fleet arrived in Valparaiso as part of an expedition to South America, sponsored by the Spanish monarchy. This squadron sent to the Pacific was intended to salvage Spain’s dismal financial situation and protect Spanish “moral and material interests” in former colonies such as Argentina, Chile and Peru.\textsuperscript{13} Queen Isabel II assigned a “Scientific Commission” to gather information on the natural attributes of the continent, although the heavily armed ships that accompanied this commission indicated that it was not an exclusively educational voyage.\textsuperscript{14} Nonetheless, the four Spanish vessels (carrying several scientists) journeyed around South America and first arrived in Valparaiso in March 1863. In spite of an initially friendly greeting, after the squadron seized Peruvian territory in the Chincha Islands the citizens of Valparaiso became alarmed about the possibility of a similar attempt on Chilean territory.\textsuperscript{15} Nearly three years later, after many battles, threats, and failed negotiations, the tension erupted as a pre-planned bombardment by the Spanish that would destroy property and precious merchandise at the port.

Starting from the first arrival of the Spanish squadron, Spain intended to reap economic benefits in Chile. Although it was tentatively labeled a “re-conquest” campaign, the Spanish voyage to South America attempted to recapture rights to Chile’s rich resources; the movement did not propose a return to the colonial arrangement as the term “re-conquest” implies.\textsuperscript{16} Competition with Great Britain and the United States was

\textsuperscript{13} William Columbus Davis, \textit{The Last Conquistadores: The Spanish Intervention in Peru and Chile, 1863-1866} (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1950), 9.
\textsuperscript{14} Davis, 9.
\textsuperscript{15} Davis, 70.
\textsuperscript{16} When Spain’s fleet also targeted Peru and other Latin American nations, it evoked an unusual unity on the continent. A \textit{Boletín in El Mercurio} explained the newfound amnesty between Chile and Peru, as they faced similar threats: “las repúblicas americana—las del Pacífico por ahora—se preparan a renovar la antigua lucha de la independencia.” The new alliance with Peru resulted
more important to Queen Isabel II than the physical or environmental details of Valparaiso or other Chilean territories, for example, with which she was not even familiar. According to Chilean historian and journalist, Joaquín Edwards Bello, “Cuando los espadones y politicastros decidieron provocar a las repúblicas sudamericanas en vías de una posible restauración del régimen colonial o reconquista, Isabel II era tan ignorante que no sabía dónde se encontraba Valparaíso: sería la isla del coral, de las ranas gigantes y de los piratas románticos…”17 Isabel II’s ignorance regarding Valparaíso on the eve of the “re-conquest” effort illuminates the monarchy’s disconnection from its former colonies in South America. Queen Isabel imagined Valparaíso as an island paradise, an exotification of South America and its natural resources that reveals the underlying economic goals of the expedition, although it was said to have purely scientific objectives. Valparaíso was a strategic site in the European economic battle between Spain and the increasingly powerful Britain.

In January 1866, as the conflict with Spain gained momentum in Chile, *El Mercurio* published a British article, originally published in the London paper the *Weekly Dispatch*, outlining British views on the intentions of Spain’s Pacific Campaign. This article and others in the *Crónica Estranjera* section of *El Mercurio* often featured news and opinion pieces from English and other foreign newspapers. According to this article, from a perceived threat to the autonomy of both nations, and an anticipated need to defend their independence. Whether the campaign was intended as a “re-conquest” or not, Spain’s naval action did invoke anxieties in Chile and Peru about their relatively new (and perhaps still vulnerable) independence.

*El Mercurio*, 28 January 1866, Page 2. “the American republics—the Pacific ones for now—prepare themselves to renew the old fight for Independence.”

17 Joaquín Edwards Bello, *El bombardeo de Valparaíso y su época* (Santiago: Zig-Zag, 1965), 18. “When the military officials and sleazy politicians decided to provoke the South American republics, on track to a possible restoration of the colonial regime or re-conquest, Isabel II was so ignorant that she did not know where to find Valparaíso: it could be a coral island, with gigantic frogs and romantic pirates…”
Spain was engaged in a “lucha para volver a ser de importancia”\textsuperscript{18} Spain’s power and influence on the European continent were weak; it had recently lost economic standing relative to England, and the English writer of this article thought the fleet in South America was sent with the intention to win that prestige back. The article described the economic state in Spain that may have contributed to these competitive attempts: “Ha pretendido ser readmitida entre las grandes potencias de Europa, mientras que sus pretendidos proyectos de empréstitos son excluidos de todos los mercados bajo la convicción de la mala fe nacional. Sus finanzas subsisten únicamente con el auxilio traedor de algunas casas de Londres…”\textsuperscript{19} The article highlighted the economic isolation that Spain experienced within Europe, and how the developing theater of South America could be the ideal venue in which to reclaim economic status. A renewed hegemonic relationship with lucrative former colonies had the potential to improve Spain’s relative power position among its European neighbors. This English journalist plainly distrusted Spanish intentions, and perhaps with good reason, since Spanish intervention in Chile could disrupt the strong British commercial influence there. \textit{El Mercurio} printed this article with the title “Piratería española,”\textsuperscript{20} which indicates that the Chilean editors agreed to some degree with the British perspective on Spain’s advances.

Because of the vested commercial interests that England and the United States had developed in Valparaiso, as well as their rising immigrant populations there, Spain’s threat to bombard the port caused alarm in British and North American merchant

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{El Mercurio}, 23 January 1866, Page 1. “a fight to again be of importance.”

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{El Mercurio}, 23 January 1866, Page 1. “Spain has tried to be readmitted amongst the greatest potencies of Europe, meanwhile its attempted small business projects are excluded from all markets under the conviction of national bad faith. Its finances subsist only with the traitorous help of some firms in London…”

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{El Mercurio}, 23 January 1866, “Spanish Piracy.”
communities at the port. Suddenly, the conflict had potential consequences that were broader than the interests of Chile and Spain alone. As Edwards Bello confirmed in his narrative, “Valparaíso es una ciudad muy rica, de costumbres verdaderamente inglesas o yanquis, así es que una compañía española puede prometerse bien poco.”

21 Edwards Bello highlighted the heavy British and U.S. influences in Valparaiso as well as, perhaps more importantly, the relative weakness of Spanish commerce. Spain could not offer Valparaiso any incentives to increase trade, for example, because the domination by the other powers was already so complete. Perhaps its lack of economic enticements encouraged Spain to use force to gain commercial power in Valparaiso. Nevertheless, because Valparaiso was so cosmopolitan, it was a high priority for other nations with citizens and valuable property there. The large British presence in the merchant marines stationed in Valparaiso, for example, gave the British a reason to want to protect the city.

After over fifty years of independence, Spain returned to South America to find that Chile was a host other foreign powers: the atmosphere of Valparaiso had changed, with rising economic dependence on British control.

In his narrative of the history leading up to the bombardment, Edwards Bello set the scene with vivid descriptions of contemporary Valparaiso, especially its social fabric. Edwards Bello described the image of Valparaiso that the Spanish General Pareja and his men would have seen upon entering the port. When the Villa de Madrid arrived in September, “Valparaiso estaba alegre. ¡Al fin, si lo bombardeaban, perderían los gringos!”

22 This ironic comment on the predominance of British mariners in Valparaiso

21 Edwards Bello, Crónicas, 105. “Valparaiso is a very rich city, of very English and Yankee habits, so that a Spanish company can promise it very little.”

22 Edwards Bello, El bombardeo, 75. “Valparaiso was happy. Finally, if they bombarded it, they would lose the gringos!”
reflects the Spanish disdain for the British in South America, as well as Edwards Bello’s characterization of Chilean frustration with the control that the British exercised at the port. The cosmopolitanism of Valparaiso irked the Spanish, as other European nations benefited from their former colonial possession: “Lo que más irritaba al general Pareja era la estrecha concomitancia de los chilenos con el comercio extranjero y el cuerpo diplomático, que, sin excepciones, estaban de parte de Chile. La soledad de España era imponente.”23 For Spain, British economic dominance in Valparaiso was threatening, and posed an obstacle for Spain’s entrance in Chilean trade. As in the northern mining zones, the British came into Valparaiso almost exclusively as “patrons, not farm workers; minorities, not masses.”24 As discussed in earlier chapters, the heavy influence of the British also created resentment among Chileans, and in 1866 many hoped that the Spanish bombardment might unseat the commercial hegemony of British residents through the destruction of public warehouses. Such opinions frame the bombardment as a quarrel between Spain and Britain, fought on Chilean soil but not directly linked to Chile.

Following the progressive discouragement of Spanish forces, Captain Méndez-Núñez took over the fleet, which consisted of the *Numancia, Villa de Madrid, Resolución, Blanca, Berenguela,* and the *Vencedora.*25 Méndez-Núñez was entirely loyal to the Queen and unwilling to compromise the orders he received from Spain. The subsequent naval battles in the south of Chile proved Chilean naval dominance in the

23 Edwards Bello, *El bombardeo,* 76. “What most irritated Pareja was the close coexistence of Chileans with foreign trade and diplomacy that, without exception, were part of Chile. The loneliness of Spain was tremendous.”
25 Davis, 261. General Pareja committed suicide in Valparaiso after the capture of the *Covadonga* in November 1865. He faced the dissatisfaction of his crews, an inevitable potential alliance between Peru and Chile, and frustration of his military attempts (Davis, 251). Méndez-Núñez, captain of the *Numancia,* replaced him.
Pacific Ocean and exacerbated Spain’s troubles by further threatening Spanish dignity.

Although Spain intended to demonstrate its military prowess, Chilean naval expertise and familiarity with the treacherous waters near the island of Chiloe gave them a marked advantage. Ultimately, the capture of the Spanish Covadonga had upset Spain’s honor and was the primary impetus for the threat of bombardment.  

After the loss of the Covadonga, the Spanish demanded several concessions from Chile including a written apology, the return of Spain’s lost possessions, financial reparations, a 21-gun salute, and an agreement to conduct further negotiations in Santiago. El Mercurio posited, in an article from the British press defending Spain, “España no exijia otra cosa… que el gobierno de Chile le diera explicaciones satisfactorias… que no había tenido Chile la intención de ofender a España…” The primary request of the concessions, then, was that Chile repent for offending Spain’s national honor, and perform a public display of amnesty. The public nature of the indicated concessions demonstrates that the world was watching this exchange, especially the British.

Moreover, once Spain submitted the requests it could not retract them and, if Chile were to refuse to comply, Spain would have to perform another publicly visible demonstration of prowess to prove the gravity of the earlier threats. As Méndez-Núñez stated at the time, “Si no se recibiese del gobierno chileno la nota a que se refiere la primera condición, antes de las 8 de la mañana del día 27 del actual, daré un manifiesto al

26 Davis, 275.
27 Davis, 291.
28 El Mercurio, 2 February 1866, page 2. “Spain does not ask for anything more… than that the government of Chile give them satisfactory explanations… that Chile had not intended to offend Spain.”
cuerpo diplomático en que señalaré un plazo fatal para el bombardeo de Valparaíso.”

When the Chilean government refused to comply, the threat of bombardment became more tangible. The demonstrative, symbolic value of such a destructive act on Chile’s naval center could redeem the honor that Spain lost during the battles in the South and from the refused reparations.

Gradually, the Spanish became more politically isolated in Valparaiso, and British and US representatives approached Méndez-Núñez to express their disagreement with his plans. United States Captain Rodgers indicated the double-layered protests that the US had against the Spanish bombardment: “Yo no podría permanecer como espectador impasible de la destrucción de una ciudad indefensa y llena de extranjeros. Creo muy probable que lo mismo opine el jefe de las fuerzas británicas.” Rodgers created an image of an innocent and defenseless Valparaiso that the US must defend, an action that would conveniently fit with the mission of the Monroe Doctrine. Furthermore, Rodgers revealed the United States’ strategic reason for opposing the Spanish: he wished to protect the foreign (US and British) citizens and property at the port, although he would supposedly remain politically neutral in the conflict between Spain and Chile. The vulnerable almacenes fiscales held the merchandise, and interests, of North American and British merchants.

The Monroe Doctrine was central to relations between the United States, Latin America, and even Europe, because it privileged the United States control over Latin

29 Edwards Bello, El bombardeo, 124. “If I do not receive from the Chilean government the note that the first condition refers to, before 8 in the morning of the 27th, I will give a manifesto to the diplomatic body in which I will indicate a inevitable deadline for the bombardment of Valparaíso.”

30 Edwards Bello, El bombardeo, 124. “I could not remain as an impassive spectator of the destruction of a city that is defenseless and full of foreigners. I think it is very probable that the head of the British forces will have the same opinion.”
America. In its original version of 1823, the Monroe Doctrine declared that the United States would prevent any further intervention in Latin America by European powers.\footnote{Thomas H. Skidmore and Peter E. Smith, Modern Latin America (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 333.}

“To the average North American it means the divine right—as sacred and clear as was ever such right to any monarch—to act as the big brother to all other American nations.”\footnote{William Spence Robertson, “Hispanic American Appreciations of the Monroe Doctrine,” The Hispanic American Historical Review 3, vol. 1 (February 1920): 1.} This paternalistic declaration attempted to eliminate European economic and power competition in Latin America, yet never realized its protective promises to Latin American nations. In El Mercurio, an optimistic article from the London Saturday Review expressed concern about violations of the Monroe Doctrine, and how the United States would respond to Spain’s aggression: “Cuatro veces mas poderoso y con mayores derechos a la deferencia de las demás naciones, el gobierno americano no tolerará ninguna tentativa de la España para recobrar dominios en este continente.”\footnote{El Mercurio, 31 January 1866, Page 1. “Four times more powerful and with greater rights with respect to other nations, the American government will not tolerate any attempt by Spain to recover lands on this continent.”} This article asserted the United States’ rising global power, and portrayed the Monroe Doctrine as a policy of protection over Latin America against Spain’s imperial advances. Many Chileans even believed that the sudden aggressive action by Spain could be attributed to the busy state of the U.S. during the Civil War, and that once this distraction was removed the U.S. would defend Chile under its supposed ideology of “America for Americans.”\footnote{Davis, 71-2.} Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna, Chilean historian and statesman, traveled to New York during this conflict and attended a meeting about the Monroe Doctrine, where
he was a guest speaker. These Chilean optimists would soon discover the subtle intentions of the Monroe Doctrine, and how it would affect Chile.

In spite of the democratic rhetoric that insisted on “manos afuera” in Latin America, however, the Monroe Doctrine also benefited the United States by protecting free economies where the US could exercise commercial imperialism. The same article, entitled “Chile y la doctrina de Monroe” mentioned the United States’ failure to act during imperial incidents in Santo Domingo and Peru, but justified this omission by explaining that U.S. officials were fully engaged in the domestic affairs of the Civil War. Unlike these prior events, “el bloqueo de los puertos chilenos en una época mucho menos oportuna, traerá, si se lleva adelante, mui [sic] sérias consecuencias.” The commercial threat that the Spanish blockade posed to foreign merchants would ensure a swift reaction from the United States, according to this English journalist. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the Monroe Doctrine had morphed into a justification for U.S. intervention in Latin America’s political, military, and economic affairs. The Spanish bombardment of 1866 is an example that illuminates the ways in which the United States used both meanings of the doctrine, paternalism and protection of commercial interests, to oppose Spain’s aggression towards Chile. Great Britain used similar tactics, but exclusively in the latter interest of commerce, and economic holdings the British had in Valparaiso.

35 Davis, 285-6. Vicuña Mackenna was subsequently arrested for violating neutrality laws and plotting against Spain on U.S. territory. Following the debacle (once the charges were dropped), Vicuña Mackenna stated that, in the U.S., “arrest is a thing almost as customary as lunch” [Vicuña Mackenna, cited in Davis, 289]. This and other incidents slowly eroded Chile’s trust in the U.S. and the Doctrine.

36 El Mercurio, 31 January 1866, Page 1. “the blockade of the Chilean ports in a much less opportune period, will bring, if they carry it forward, very serious consequences.”

37 Skidmore and Smith, 333.
The British reacted to Méndez-Núñez’ threats in a manner similar to that of the North Americans. British general Lord Denman approached Méndez-Núñez to protest the bombardment: “Mi patria reprueba la destrucción de pueblos indefensos y tomaré medidas para evitarlo.”  

Denman used a rationale similar to that of his ally Rodgers when he declared that the English would fight to prevent the destruction of a “defenseless” town. The lack of defenses in Valparaiso was the primary rhetorical justification for British opposition, as it was for the United States. However, Britain’s vested economic interests in Chilean commerce were also incentives for their opposition to the plan. As Denman added, “Hay en Valparaíso una colonia ingles…”  

Protecting English citizens in Valparaiso was a priority for British leadership, more important than the ideological protest against targeting a defenseless port. Thus, these discouraging conversations with Méndez-Núñez fundamentally involved the property and citizens of Britain and the United States, not the safety of Valparaiso or its citizens.  

Not unlike the rhetoric of “protection” in the Monroe Doctrine, the British also couched their economic interests in a supposed altruistic defense of Valparaiso. The British “Piratería española” article in *El Mercurio* proposed democratic ideals, and identified Spain’s intentions in the trip to South America as to “humillar, saltar, y si posible fuese, arruinar esos Estados que antes fueron sus colonias y que rompieron el yugo de esa baja e intolerable tiranía que aniquilaba su riqueza y se oponía a su creación.”  

By invoking the image of the oppressive yoke of tyranny, the writer

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38 Edwards Bello, *El bombardeo*, 141. “My fatherland condemns the destruction of defenseless peoples and I will take measures to avoid it.”


40 *El Mercurio*, 23 January 1866, Page 1. “to humiliate, rob and, if possible, ruin those States that were before her colonies and that broke the yoke of that low and intolerable tyranny that annihilated their riches and opposed itself to their creation.”
highlighted Spain’s previous dominating role over Chile, and even suggested that the new conflicts could be an attempt to re-establish this power. Much of the writer’s argument was economic, especially the reference to Chilean riches that Spain previously annihilated and the suggestion that Spain’s financial trouble during that period prompted the decision to launch a squadron to South America.

Great Britain’s relationship to and interest in Chile was largely economic. While condemning Spain’s advances in Chile, the writer encouraged the economic relationship with Great Britain and portrayed it as natural: “Chile, sin embargo, como todo Estado Nuevo, tiene que prosperar con el ausilio del capital y recursos comerciales del estranjero. Inglaterra, Francia, los Estados Unidos, son dueños de sus almacenes y contenidos…”

The writer acknowledged the economic interests of England in Chile’s growing economy, though he framed this scenario as “normal” for such a young nation.

The article ends by identifying another major problem with Spain’s intervention: a blockade or bombardment would damage British commercial property. The government of Chile offered foreign merchants the opportunity to remove their merchandise from the almacenes fiscales, so that “they could not expect the British government to hold Chile responsible in the event of injury occurring from the operations of the Spanish fleet.”

Chile understood the economic risks for the British and would not be held responsible for such damages.

The discussions between imperial powers prior to the bombardment did not concern the site of Valparaiso, but rather involved the interests of foreigners that

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41 El Mercurio, 23 January 1866, Page 1. “Chile, however, like all new States, has to prosper with the aid of capital and commercial resources from foreigners. England, France and the United States are the owners of her warehouses and contents.”

42 Davis, 292.
happened to reside there. After both Rodgers’ and Denman’s unsuccessful pleas with Méndez-Núñez, the two representatives agreed to sink the Spanish fleet to prevent the impending bombardment.\textsuperscript{43} Despite their professed neutrality, the foreign ministers of both Great Britain and U.S. were heavily involved in desperate negotiations to prevent the bombardment, most notably in their efforts to convince Chile to accept the conditions of Spain’s peace agreements. Although Rodgers persuaded Méndez-Núñez to settle for a “mutual” salute, not the original 21-gun salute from Chile that Spain had demanded, Chilean Minister of Foreign Relations Alvaro Covarrubias refused to comply nonetheless.\textsuperscript{44} At that late point in the negotiations, Covarrubias may not have believed that Spain would actually realize the threats of bombardment.\textsuperscript{45}

As his threats lingered in an uncertain atmosphere at the port, Méndez-Núñez confronted discontent and isolation in Valparaiso. Mistrust filled the air: the Spanish guarded their ships diligently, surrounded by antagonism from both foreign sailors and captains. Edwards Bello quoted the painter Ramon Subercaseaux’s memoirs: “¡Pobres marinos! No estaban seguros ni de los ingleses ni de los norteamericanos, ni de nadie. Debían estar apercibidos día y noche para el caso de un abordaje o un ataque sorpresivo de cualquier índole.”\textsuperscript{46} Subercaseaux emphasized the tense lack of trust in the environment leading up to the bombardment, and the fear amongst Spanish sailors. However, Méndez-Núñez continued to stubbornly adhere to the orders from Spain; despite dissent from his crew and his own personal isolation, he was determined to follow

\textsuperscript{43} Edwards Bello, \textit{El bombardeo}, 142.
\textsuperscript{44} Davis, 293.
\textsuperscript{45} Davis, 293.
\textsuperscript{46} Edwards Bello, \textit{El bombardeo}, 95. “The poor sailors! They were not sure of the English or of the North Americans, or of anyone. They must have been wary day and night in case of a foul boarding or surprise attack from any character.”
through with the bombardment. Once the announcement was official, people finally accepted that the threats could become reality: “Many people abandoned their homes and fled from Valparaiso with whatever personal belongings they could carry, but by far the greater portion of the 80,000 inhabitants remained to witness the fate that should befall their city.” 

Although it was previously a hypothetical debate between international Ministers of Defense, the conflict with Spain was suddenly real and dangerous for Chilean citizens. Méndez-Núñez made preparatory arrangements to protect the lives of Valparaiso residents: he asked for white flags to be hoisted atop all hospitals and churches to avoid damaging them, and fired a warning shot an hour before the bombardment to signal the last chance for evacuation. Despite these preparations, the bombardment upset the routine at the port and had an extensive impact on civilians and their homes.

Spanish ships bombarded the lower port of Valparaiso from 9:15 AM to 12:00 PM on March 31, 1866. The Villa de Madrid, Vencedora, and Blanca fired against the public warehouses that contained all the precious British and North American merchandise. The formalized, deliberate, and planned act of bombardment evoked a ceremony, as if the bombardment were an obligatory performance to recapture Spain’s honor. The diagram image of the bombardment that appeared in El Mercurio emphasized the wide destruction of the port, as the Blanca and the Resolución spread out and fired upon the Almendral neighborhood, east of the central port that contained the warehouses. (See Figure 3) The Blanca began firing freely around the entire

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47 Davis, 302.
48 Davis, 302.
49 Edwards Bello, El bombardeo, 151.
50 Davis, 302, 305.
circumference of the bay, no longer limiting the destruction to commercial buildings and
often shooting with poor aim so as to destroy churches and hospitals that should have
been exempted. Because of the advanced warning and mass organization of citizens in
the days before the bombardment, the port had been evacuated and there were few
casualties. However, the destruction of merchandise in the warehouses was significant. A
map of the “Spanish Outrage at Valparaiso” from the New York Herald emphasized that
the port areas was the “burned portion of the city,” and also highlighted the wide
positioning of Spanish ships so that they covered the circumference of the bay. (See
Figure 4)
Fig. 3. Visual representation of the bombardment in *El Mercurio*. Reprinted from Nelson Vasquez L. et al, *Cartografía histórica de Valparaíso*, 90.
Fig. 4. Illustration of ships’ positions during the Spanish Bombardment, 1866. From the *New York Herald*, reprinted from Nelson Vasquez L. et al, *Cartografía histórica de Valparaíso*, 90.
Varying accounts measured the damages to warehouse merchandise from $10,000,000 to $20,000,000, while the damage to buildings totaled less than $2,000,000. Only two or three people were killed, and they were identified with difficulty. However, these numbers from the British and U.S. representatives (and even from El Mercurio) sought to emphasize the foreign loss of property and claimed that the bombardment had a minor impact on Chile. Historians have emphasized or de-emphasized the active role that Chile played in the bombardment history, depending on the level of autonomy they attribute to Chilean authorities in a vastly cosmopolitan city. The bombardment could be interpreted as Spain’s demonstration of power against the rising economic power of the United States and Great Britain, or as a warning for Chile to prove that despite independence it must still be wary of Spanish threats. In fact, the bombardment served both of these purposes, and all involved parties suffered financial consequences. While Chile did not suffer the same economic burden from loss of merchandise, as did British and U.S. merchant companies, the physical destruction of a major Chilean city certainly had an impact on municipal labor, clean-up efforts, firefighter participation, and general morale.

Despite the diverse international voices involved in negotiations before the bombardment, the act had an immediate physical impact on Valparaiso and the responsibility for reconstruction fell upon Chile alone. In particular, fire fighters of Santiago traveled to Valparaiso days in advance to support the Valparaiso volunteer fire brigade. The volunteer fire fighters throughout Chile, especially in Santiago, were unique for their efficiency and sense of civic consciousness and duty. According Edwards Bello’s Crónicas, “Los bomberos son voluntarios; cada colonia extranjera forma su

51 Davis, 304.
bomba que compite con las otras de una manera entusiasta. Casi todos los jóvenes elegantes son bomberos.”

The socioeconomic makeup of the volunteer fire brigades was unique, as was the competitive incentives between brigades. Fire fighters were frequently well educated; “En Chile hay literatos bomberos, cosa que sería inconcebible en Europa…” By comparing Chile to Europe, Edwards Bello emphasized the distinct concept of civic responsibility in Chile, and the trends of participation even within the educated elite that he belonged to. The comparison with Europe is particularly appropriate here because the destructive acts of the Spanish forced Chilean volunteer brigades to clean up after a fight that was, at least in part, a power competition between Spain, Great Britain, and the United States.

Thanks to the forewarning that the Spanish gave to Chilean authorities, volunteer fire brigades were able to organize and join forces, and were prepared to begin working immediately after the bombardment ended. As Don Ismael Valdés Vergara reported in his account of the Chilean fire brigades: “El caso es que los bomberos trabajaron sin descanso todo el día y la noche del 31 hasta las 10 de la mañana del día siguiente, en que terminó el peligro de propagación a toda la ciudad…” Pre-emptive measures against the fires prevented further damage to the city in the day following the bombardment. The physical ruination of the port in the aftermath of the bombardment shows the destructive consequences that this international dispute had on Valparaiso as a Chilean city,

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52 Edwards Bello, Crónicas, 103. “The firefighters are volunteers; each foreign colony forms its engine that competes with the other in an enthusiastic manner. Almost all of the elegant young men are firefighters.”

53 Edwards Bello, Crónicas, 103. “In Chile, there are literate firefighters, something that would be inconceivable in Europe.”

54 Ismael Valdés Vergara, “El cuerpo de bomberos de Santiago, 1863-1900,” as cited in Edwards Bello, 152. “The case is that the firefighters worked without rest the whole day and night of the 31st until 10 in the morning the next day, when the danger of spreading to the entire city ended.”
regardless of its foreign influences. British merchants lost millions of dollars worth of merchandise in the *almacenes fiscales*, but Chilean civil servants ultimately put out the fires. This national effort shows how foreign merchants used the city, its resources, and its infrastructure, but it was always maintained by Chile.

In the center of Santiago, Chileans reacted with horror to the news of the bombardment. Many had never quite believed that the Spanish would follow through on their threats. In Santiago, the personal impact of the bombardment on the Chile was quite evident. Masses of people clamored to communicate with their families in Valparaiso, demonstrating the wide effects that such a ceremonious act of destruction had on the civil society, even with so few identifiable casualties. Although Davis claimed that the Spanish “were not retaliating against Chile so much as against the neutral residents of Valparaiso, for the latter were the principal sufferers,” the displacement of Chilean families proves otherwise. Such an analysis of the event privileged the economic issues of Great Britain and the United States over matters of Chilean national identity and dignity. Apart from Spain’s commercial interests in the port, at its core the bombardment was a symbolic act of domination over a former colony. However, such a demonstration of strength loses its meaning when we consider the intentional lack of defenses that Chile prepared against the attack. Spain failed to prove its military prowess when Chile triumphed in naval battles, and the bombardment only served to symbolically punish the former colony for its disobedience of the conditions that Spain put forth.

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55 Davis, 306.
The political impact of the bombardment on Chile is particularly obvious in the newfound unity between Chile and Peru that followed the incidents they both suffered. The founders of the Santiago Society of American Union cited the bombardment as an “immediate cause” of their establishment, for example. Their mission proposed independence from United States imperial policies, like the Monroe Doctrine, after the disillusionment they experienced during the Spanish interventions of the 1860s. Despite the prior negotiations, many Chileans were shocked by the United States’ inaction during the bombardment as their cruisers sat idly in the Valparaiso port. This organization and others fall under the umbrella of Hispanic-American unity movements that developed in the late nineteenth century (and markedly excluded the United States). Cooperation among Latin American neighboring nations would discourage performances of international battles on Latin American soil over Latin American resources.

The amphitheater of Valparaiso hosted the commercial conflicts between Spain and Great Britain and the US, although Chile suffered considerably from the ensuing violence. The Spanish bombardment of Valparaiso illuminated the purely economic nature of Chile’s relationships with Great Britain and the United States, especially given that they would not risk using force to defend the port. This realization would affect the tense relationship with the United States that would materialize at the port in 1891. New Latin American identities united after the bombardment, and organizations formed as and Peru and Chile acknowledged common identities. Thus, the bombardment had a profound impact not only on the physical makeup of the port, but also on the ideologies and

56 Peru lost property in the Chincha Islands in 1863, and subsequently suffered a bombardment of the port city El Callao, the Spanish fleet’s next stop after it bombarded Valparaiso.
58 Pike, 28.
alliances of its inhabitants. Naval victories against Spain also boosted Chile’s naval confidence as an actor in the maritime world; the nation’s leaders would resist buckling under diplomatic pressure from an imperial power with the *Baltimore* incident some twenty-five years later.

**THE BALTIMORE INCIDENT: OCTOBER 16, 1891**

As Valparaiso hosted more international sailors, the local incidents in the streets near its dock carried increasing international significance. A scuffle between the *USS Baltimore* sailors and a group of Chilean sailors and civilians had little local impact initially, but filled the United States newspapers for months to follow. The riot known as the *Baltimore* Incident sparked a threats of force from the US after the death of two US sailors in Valparaiso. Chilean and U.S. accounts of the conflict varied widely, as do the modern history books on the subject. The United States viewed the event as a deliberate affront with diplomatic meaning, while Chile acknowledged the tense context of Valparaiso as a major impetus for this sailors’ brawl. The port had served as a theater for multinational conflicts on numerous occasions, but this conflict involved Chile as a principal actor. The local history of Valparaiso that has framed the social and professional lives of sailors throughout this paper aims to contextualize the *Baltimore* event and investigate its local meaning.

The seventy-seven years between the Battle of Valparaiso and the *USS Baltimore* in 1891 allowed Chile time to realize its geo-political prowess and exercise more control over the port. By 1891, the new Customs House was running with more stringent taxation norms, the port had been physically reconstructed to benefit the merchant navy, and Santiago was witnessing an ideological clash between executive and legislative
government powers through the Chilean Civil war. No longer unprepared for the high volume of boats and sailors in port, Valparaiso was reaching its zenith as an entrepot around 1891. Recent success in the War of the Pacific confirmed Chile’s naval abilities and relative dominance of the South American Pacific coast that it shared with Peru. Yet in this confident atmosphere, the presence and commercial dominance of foreigners from the United States and Great Britain persisted. Geopolitical disputes between nations trickled down to individual citizens who became representatives like the sailors involved in the *Baltimore* conflict. Similarly, the actions of such individuals transformed into offensive statements on behalf of their nation, as the government of Chile was held accountable for the behavior of anonymous Chilean citizens in the streets of Valparaiso.

On October 16, 1891 several sailors from the *USS Baltimore* were socializing in the True Blue Saloon on Marquez Street, during their first day of shore leave in months. It is difficult to confirm the details of the fight’s origins, since nationalistic biases frame both sides’ narratives of the conflicts. Nonetheless, a discussion outside the saloon led to violent conflict between Boatswain’s Mate Charles W. Riggin of *USS Baltimore* crew, and a Chilean citizen, wherein “los americanos lanzaron algunas piedras al chileno el cual cayó al suelo.” The following chase, in which the Riggin and Seaman Apprentice John W. Talbot boarded a moving streetcar, gathered an expanding mob of Chileans who pursued the sailors through the streets. Riggin was injured in the chase and, perhaps to avoid further damage, “lo levantaron dos policías y un sargento,” drawing a crowd around him on the ground. Other U.S. sailors interpreted this scene as a malicious; James

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Johnson, for example, claimed that the police passively observed as Chilean citizens stabbed Riggin as he lay on the ground.\textsuperscript{61} 

At this moment in the narrative, the Chilean and U.S. accounts diverge dramatically; each side has created a narrative in which the other forced them to act in self-defense. An anonymous shot was fired, hitting Riggin in the neck and killing him almost instantly.\textsuperscript{62} “¿Quien hizo fuego?” asked the \textit{El Mercurio} article; a question that plagued all involved parties and sparked accusations against the Chilean police.\textsuperscript{63} From North American James Johnson’s point of view, Chilean police fired on Riggin and himself at point blank range.\textsuperscript{64} However, accounts from Chilean bystander describe the locations of all parties, and how it would have been impossible for a policeman to shoot Riggin from that position. Police Sergeant Miguel Vergara recounted how he ordered two policemen to carry the injured Riggin to a nearby drugstore; according to Vergara, Riggin was shot dead by an anonymous gunman from the obscure mob.\textsuperscript{65} Days later, Coalheaver Turnbull of the \textit{Baltimore} died from complications from stab wounds, taking the death toll to two.\textsuperscript{66} The participation of the police was a key difference in Chilean and U.S. accounts of this history.

Many Chileans and North Americans were detained following the confusion of the riot: “La policía comenzó a recojer \textit{sic} a cuanto marinero chileno y americano encontrara, tanto por si habían tomado parte en el desorden como para evitar que éste continuara… recojió \textit{sic} treinta marineros del \textit{Baltimore} y diez chilenos de diversos

\textsuperscript{61} Goldberg, 8.  
\textsuperscript{62} \textit{El Mercurio}, 17 October 1891, page 2. “two policemen and a sergeant lifted him”  
\textsuperscript{63} \textit{El Mercurio}, 17 October 1891, page 2. “Who fired?”  
\textsuperscript{64} Goldberg, 9.  
\textsuperscript{65} Goldberg, 11.  
\textsuperscript{66} Goldberg, 19.
The article claimed that the arrests were somewhat random, since the police gathered people from the scene in order to disperse the rioting mass. At this point, there was no apprehension of guilty participants or a sense of who had been directly involved. After the initial description of the incident, and a list of injured Chileans and U.S. sailors, the article assigned tentative blame to diverse parties involved. It noted, for example, that “Al ser rejistrados en la policía se encontraron a los marineros del Baltimore siete navajas y a uno de ellos un trozo de hierro mui a propósito para el bos. Ya se sabe que los marineros chilenos bajan a tierra completamente desarmados desde hace algunos años.”

According to this account, Chilean police discovered weapons on the U.S. sailors that the Chilean sailors were not permitted to carry. The description of the knife issue in this article shows El Mercurio’s early attempt to villainize the U.S. sailors, and remove anticipated blame for the event from Chileans.

As U.S. sailors continued to roam the wharfs, many of them armed, the article noted: “Si el comandante del Baltimore no suprime las licencias a sus marineros, nuestra autoridades deben prohibir su desembarco…”

There was a conflict of jurisdiction between the marine authority that controlled the sailors while on board the Baltimore, and the Chilean police authority that should have taken over once the sailors disembarked in Chile. An unwillingness to comply with Chilean regulations and judicial process while on Chilean soil would continue to characterize the aftermath of the Baltimore fight, not only

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67 El Mercurio, 17 October 1891, page 2. “The police began to collect as many Chilean and American sailors as they found, as much for if they had taken part in the disorder as to avoid that it would continue.”

68 El Mercurio, 17 October 1891, page 2. “Upon being registered by the police, they found on the Baltimore sailors seven pocketknives and a piece of iron very appropriate for a bullfight (?). It is already known that Chilean sailors arrive on land completely unarmed since some years ago.”

69 El Mercurio, 17 October 1891, page 2. “If the commander of the Baltimore does not eliminate the licenses of his sailors, our authorities must prohibit their disembarkation.”
with individual sailors but also the U.S. government officials who did not trust Chile’s internal investigation.

The United States’ primary complaint about the Baltimore conflict was the death of two North American sailors; they blamed these deaths on the Chilean police’s supposed negligence or outright aggression towards these foreigners. Again, questions surfaced about the sufficiency of municipal authority around the port, and the autonomous jurisdiction of Chilean authorities over Valparaiso even when it contained so many foreigners. Communication from the U.S. Minister in Chile, Patrick Egan, revealed his opinion that “the police of Valparaiso did nothing to avoid the combat, that they dauntlessly contemplated the quarrels until there were dead and injured on the floor.”

When Egan immediately blamed Chilean authorities for inaction and accused them of “frank hostility” towards the US, he initiated a chain of tense communications with Chilean officials and ultimately a threat of war on Chile.

Chilean Foreign Minister Manuel Matta replied that Chilean authorities were “the only ones that have full right and will have sufficient power to judge and punish the guilty.”

Matta confirmed the jurisdiction that Chilean authority had on Chilean soil, and emphasized the actions of guilty individuals, not the collective nation. The gunman in Valparaiso could never be identified, but Chile was still held responsible for his actions financially and militarily.

El Mercurio emphasized the control and efficiency of police peacekeeping activity after the incident, perhaps to counteract these accusations against the police: “At midday on Saturday one feared that the disorders would repeat themselves because on the

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70 Mario Barros, Historia Diplomática de Chile (1541-1938) (Barcelona: Ediciones Ariel, 1970), 488.
71 Barros, 489.
72 Egan to Blaine, October 31, 1891, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1891, pp. 210-11. As cited in Goldberg, 64.
wharf there was an altercation between some boys and an American sailor; but the police intervened and used force in supervising the wharf.”

According to this report, Chilean police valiantly prevented further incidents in a very tense environment at the port. The rhetoric of this article, especially the word “force,” emphasized the strength of the Chilean systems of authority. Most Chilean records of the Baltimore fight, though clearly biased towards Chile’s interests, argued that it was a random event, not uncommon in that neighborhood, and that Chilean systems of authority and justice should handle the appropriate repercussions. The initial El Mercurio article asserted a marked lack of surprise about the conflict, and cited precedents: “Ya lo habíamos predicho cuando hace algunos días tuvo lugar otro choque de menos proporciones y no de tan fatales resultados.”

The unique aspect of this particular encounter between sailors was its fatal end then, since similar events with less grave consequences had occurred recently.

The British in Valparaiso observed the conflict between the U.S. and Chile from a detached point of view. The Chilean Times featured an article the following day entitled “Serious Row” that stated: “We regret to say that a serious row occurred yesterday evening on the Esplanade between American and Chilian [sic] men-of-war’s men… The unfortunate occurrence has created much bad feeling.”

The announcements surrounding this description of the Baltimore “row” (which the writer did not identify by name) include the weather and the arrival of the British Consul-General’s spouse on a ship from England. The Chilean Times exemplified the separateness of the British colony in Valparaiso, as it reported news relevant to the British residents and did not initially lend

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73 El Mercurio. 19 October 1891.
74 El Mercurio, 17 October 1891, page 2. “We had already predicted it when some days ago another clash of lesser proportions and not so fatal results took place.”
75 Chilean Times, 17 October 1891, page 2.
much importance to the *Baltimore* “row.” However, in the *Chilean Times* the local was less interesting than the subsequent geopolitical disputes between the United States government and the officials in Santiago. The de-emphasis of the *Baltimore* brawl illuminates the lack of local identification with Valparaiso, as much as it reflected the routine nature of the event.

Several days later, the *Chilean Times* published a longer report translated from the Chilean *La Unión* that recounted in detail the progression of events that led up to the riot. “There has been much comment recently over the serious disorders which occurred on Friday evening,” the article stated, and demonstrated a newfound interest in the incident because it had infiltrated the popular discourse as a “major” event.\(^\text{76}\) There was a disparity between the initial short announcement, which dismissed the incident as a “row” with “bad feelings,” and the detailed subsequent article, published five days after the fight when the United States press had begun its analysis of the events. This marked change in the *Chilean Times*’ treatment of the *Baltimore* conflict indicates that the fight acquired political significance over time, but did not initially possess such importance. The political tensions between the United States and Chile came into clearer focus as the U.S. accused Chilean citizens of planning an attack on U.S. sailors.

As the United States’ global imperial influence grew, good relations with U.S. became increasingly crucial for diplomacy in South America, as well as economic survival: “the United States gained an opportunity in the *Baltimore* affair to display national strength.”*\(^\text{77}\) Chile’s pleasant cooperation with U.S. hegemony eroded following the United States’ intervention on the side of Peru in the War of the Pacific. As Jonathan

\(^{76}\) *Chilean Times*, 21 October 1891, page 2.  
\(^{77}\) Goldberg, 86.
Gelb recounted in his thesis on the *Baltimore*, “The United States supported Peru in the War of the Pacific in order to bolster American control of the hemisphere against Britain, which was economically entrenched in Chile.”78 Thus, economic rivalry with Britain provoked the U.S. to violate neutrality in the war between Chile and Peru. Great Britain’s overwhelming involvement in the Chilean economy, especially in Valparaiso, made Peru a more strategic ally for the U.S. since they could more easily infiltrate the Peruvian economy.

According to the United States’ imperial ideology and the new economic interpretations of the Monroe Doctrine, Chile was an apt site for trade opportunities. There was no unique ideological relationship between the United States and Chilean political issues, apart from strategic commercial maneuvering by the U.S. The popular perception in Chile that the U.S. supported President Balmaceda during the Civil War of 1891 provoked anger from Congressionalist Chileans although it reflected the opinion of merely one U.S. Minister, Patrick Egan, and his ongoing rivalry with Great Britain. A very anti-British Irish-American, Egan was a controversial U.S. Minister to Chile who opposed the Congressionalist alliance with the Chilean navy, which was fraught with British influence. Indeed imperialist wrangling between the United States and Great Britain greatly affected both of their respective relations with Chile. Given Valparaiso’s legacy as a site for international conflicts, the tensions that led up to the *Baltimore* riots demonstrate that U.S.-Britain rivalries were often more relevant than U.S.-Chile relations.

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To exacerbate the diplomatic tensions, the U.S. seized the Chilean vessel *Itata* in San Francisco in May 1891, because it carried arms and ammunition for the Congressionalists (albeit via a private deal, not connected to the Chilean government). This movement that claimed to preserve neutrality accomplished the opposite since, “The *Itata* incident confirmed the suspicions of duplicity that many Chileans held in regard to the United States.” The negotiations with Egan and the *Itata* arrest imbued U.S.-Chile relations with distrust and a sense of hypocrisy. When the United States, a rhetorical touchstone for democratic ideals, supported a Chilean president who many called the “dictator,” violated neutrality to support Peru, but captured the *Itata* under the pretenses of neutrality laws, Chileans noted contradictions in U.S. actions. The article reporting the *Baltimore* incident in *El Mercurio*, entitled “Gran desorden de marineros,” appeared directly adjacent to an article entitled “La caída de la dictadura de Balmaceda.” This visual coincidence of text on the pages of *El Mercurio* shows the contemporary political situation in Chile at the moment of the *Baltimore* quarrel. Shortly after Balmaceda’s suicide in September 1891, the aftermath of the Civil War occupied much of Chilean public’s popular imagination.

Apart from the Chilean government’s negative opinion towards the United States following Balmaceda’s defeat, the popular sentiments among Chilean citizens impacted U.S.-Chilean relations on the ground. The existing antagonism towards the U.S. influenced the actions of individuals at the port on October 16, 1891: “Without the energetic state of revolution, without the U.S. sympathy for Balmaceda, without the help they gave to the defunct president, without the persecution of the *Itata* and the violation of Chilean waters, and some supposed credits obtained by Lazcano [Prudencio Lazcano,

79 Gelb, 10.
President Balmaceda’s Minister in Washington, the case of the Baltimore never would have had the grave perspectives that we now know.’”\textsuperscript{80} Several diplomatic tensions between the US and Chile coincided in the fall of 1891, though these were not as responsible for the Baltimore incident as for its political consequences. According to an article in the Heraldo de Valparaiso, the incident “is not a matter of the Chilean people with the American people, it is a matter of Mr. Egan, friend of Balmaceda, with the constitutional party that pulled down the dictatorship.”\textsuperscript{81} The actions of local individuals who joined the angry mob (and one anonymous individual who shot Riggin) depended in some measure upon Chileans’ tensions with North Americans within their local space. However, this event was not inherently political, but rather became imbued with diplomatic significance because of its timing and convenience as a propaganda tool within the imperial rhetoric of the United States.

It is dangerously tenuous to propose a direct relationship between the actions of individuals and the intentions of their nation. As Manuel Matta, Foreign Minister of Chile, stated at the time of the incident, “the occurrence took place in a bad neighborhood of the city… among people who are not models of discretion and temperance.”\textsuperscript{82} According to Matta, the quarrel was commonplace in a neighborhood where petty violence was part of the daily reality. The people who populate the port were not representative of the Chilean nation, he explained, nor were their actions political statements. Moreover, the U.S. chose to cast the marginalized population of the port as a reflection of Chile in general. Such a generalization illuminates the condescending view

\textsuperscript{80} Barros, 489.
\textsuperscript{81} Heraldo de Valparaiso, 22 December 1891.
\textsuperscript{82} December 11, 1891, Diario oficial de la República de Chile, vol. 16, no. 4412 (Santiago: Oficina de la Imprenta Nacional, 1891), 2-3. As cited in Goldberg, 84.
the U.S. had of Chile during diplomatic negotiations, and assumptions about Chilean inferiority. The U.S. actors in the brawl were official representatives of the United States army, while the Chilean actors were anonymous civilians and sailors (perhaps some members of the Chilean army, some unemployed) who occupied a seamy neighborhood of the city. Thus, the assertion that the individuals on both sides represented their respective nations is fundamentally unjust and unequal, and diminishes Chile’s credibility in negotiations. During the heated correspondence between Matta, Egan, and U.S. President Harrison, Matta de-emphasized the actions of port-dwellers, often by noting their inferior social status within Chilean hierarchies.

In the history of the Baltimore’s stay in port, Valparaiso is both an international city and a local environment. The general state of disorder in the port neighborhoods, most notably Marquez Street where the riot began, provided the perfect environment for such a quarrel (and hosted similar, smaller scale conflicts frequently). The cosmopolitan demographic of Valparaiso created a propensity for nationalistic skirmishes, especially in neighborhoods near the wharfs where they were more foreigners. Moreover, the alcohol consumption at saloons such as the True Blue Saloon on Marquez Street made such a conflict even more likely. In this way, an understanding of the context of Valparaiso, the habits of its local residents, and the personality of its neighborhoods is essential to understanding the Baltimore fight. The death of two U.S. citizens abroad (members of the military no less) posed a threat to U.S. dignity, so a narrative about an intentional attack on U.S. men created a convenient justification to take military action in Chile. Similarly, the rhetorical de-emphasis of the fight benefited Chile by saving them from suffering
diplomatic consequences of the event, and letting them assert municipal authority in the port.

The creation of an historical ‘incident’ or ‘affair’ is complex because of the varied perspectives that contribute to the canonization of events. Because of our tradition of communicating nationalisms through history education, one event that involved two nations can serve a different narrative purpose in the classrooms and history books of each respective country. The “Baltimore Incident,” as United States history remembers it, is not a canonized incident in the Chilean historical record, aside from its diplomatic implications and threatening aftermath. Rather, in Chile it was a commonplace desorden de marineros that caused more excitement than expected and almost brought grave military consequences. Chilean newspaper accounts (though notably only a few small articles exist) deemphasized the gravity of the conflict while Chilean ministers investigated and sought to clarify the murky and biased details of the incident. This strategic de-emphasis by Chileans posited the relative normality of such skirmishes in Valparaiso, and asserted the separation between individual civilians at the port and the state.

The contextualized version of the Baltimore conflict (situated in the local environment of the Valparaiso port) does not appear in any historical narratives of U.S.-Chilean diplomatic relations published in the United States. Goldberg’s The Baltimore Affair, though unique in its comprehensive treatment of this obscure event, uses language that undermines fair treatment of the conflict and frames Chile as an infantile “other” that offended the dignified U.S. navy. When Chile asserted its right to conduct its own
investigation into the *Baltimore* event, for example, Goldberg writes, “It seemed as if the *sumario* [investigation] deliberately had been designed to annoy U.S. officials.”

Goldberg often highlights the inefficiency of Chilean bureaucracy and the difficulty that U.S. officials experienced in these “amateur” negotiations. However, many of the problems resulted from condescending U.S. intentions to investigate this incident although it fell under Chilean jurisdiction. Chile’s declaration that it would execute the *sumario* itself was prudent for an independent nation, concerned with the interests of its citizens’ and its developing global reputation. Goldberg’s exasperation with Chilean authorities reflects the bias of her study (as well as that of Gelb whose primary sources come almost exclusively from Goldberg’s footnotes). Her books treatment of the event as an “affair” in the book’s title betrayed the U.S. perspective immediately, since it was not an “incident,” “event,” or “affair” from the Chilean point of view.

The fight and subsequent riot involving the sailors of the *Baltimore* near the port was the ultimate example of history’s theatre in Valparaiso. The conflicting accounts of October 16, 1891 precisely reflect the two perspectives that identified the city; it was either a unique local setting or an international port-of-call with utilitarian purposes for commercial-minded visitors. The identity of Valparaiso included both of these characterizations, and each deeply affected the other to create a hybridized urban identity of cosmopolitanism and rare regionalism simultaneously. The local context in Valparaiso was permanently tied to its international role, and inextricably tied to commercial interests that drew its cosmopolitan population. When Chile ultimately agreed to pay reparations to the families of Riggin and Turnbull, Matta and other government officials intrinsically acknowledged the diplomatic power that the United States exercised over

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83 Goldberg, 66.
Chile and made a concession of dignity. Nonetheless, the local meaning of the *Baltimore* incident is still significant since it shows the eminence of Valparaiso during this era, when a small local incident could take on such far-reaching symbolic meaning.
CONCLUSION:
CHANGE, CONFLICT AND CONTEXT

When he left Valparaíso to try his luck in the gold country of California and
risk death in the venture, he never guessed that his nationality would be
divided and his personality diminished. He never once surmised that his
memory would be decapitated, like his body, by men who sought to demean
and abuse it.
But Joaquín Murieta was a Chilean.
I have proof. But these pages are not concerned with confirming history or
validating fantasy.

…and I rode herd behind them, verses and all, and struck gold, California gold
with Chileans panning the sand and schooners under a full load of canvas
sailing out of Valparaíso… the greed and the turbulence of men, fundamental
things… this vendetta and this Chilean avenger, wild-haired and talkative…
Then my wife, Matilde Urrutia, said: But this is sheer theater! … Theater? I
said to her. ¹

Pablo Neruda, *Splendor and Death of Joaquín Murieta*

Valparaíso was a theater for the history of Chile, and Chile’s relationship with
the rest of the world. It was at once the background for international encounters, and
the foreground for local ones. The telling of its history is a performative act by the
historian, who chooses which actors will be the protagonists and which will fade into
the crowded backdrop.

When Neruda wrote a play about Joaquin Murieta, the infamous Valparaisian
bandit in California, he attempted to recapture the personality and life of a legendary
man whose story had been seized and manipulated by many nations and people. Often
referred to as the “Robin Hood of El Dorado,” Murieta opposed U.S. economic

¹ Pablo Neruda, *Splendor and Death of Joaquín Murieta*, trans. Ben Belitt (New York:
domination and was frequently portrayed as a Mexican, although he was Chilean. Murieta was a symbolic figure, claimed by leftist social movements in Chile and romantically depicted on film, and Neruda could only represent him through theater. Neruda’s play about this “Chilean avenger” illustrates the theater of Murieta’s surroundings, pinpointing his identity: “I have written for Joaquín Murieta not only an insurrectionary cantata but a birth certificate.”

As a Valparaisian in the nineteenth century, Murieta’s story involves familiar themes: fluid national identity, tense economic dependence on the United States, and revision of history from a foreign perspective. Only among these contextual factors could Neruda render a meaningful performance of the Murieta legend. The history of Murieta’s native port similarly requires a contextualized history to separate it from the diverse international histories that have characterized its identity in the past.

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Valparaiso was the “post office of the Pacific” for almost one hundred years. As such, it was a channel to the modern world, located at the end of the earth; a place to check in after navigating hundreds of miles of ocean. The rising nineteenth-century port cities like Valparaiso were key links within globalization since they connected inhabitants to other modern cities through the press, infrastructure like the railroad and, most importantly, merchant trade. After the Panama Canal opened and the maritime traffic through the port decreased, Valparaiso once again became a local city and its international importance diminished. Nevertheless, the cosmopolitan makeup of the port and the international influence of foreigners were permanently etched in its urban

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2 Neruda, v.
identity. This foreign influence is still visible in European-style architecture, British military heroes in the naval history museum, the legacy of commercial schools, and other cultural indicators. Even after it was no longer a port-of-call for the Pacific, Valparaiso maintained commercial and naval eminence within Chile. However, the international spotlight was off Valparaiso forever; its twentieth-century does not include international conflicts, but rather local internal shifts.

Since that transformation in the early twentieth century, Valparaiso maintained a more local character. The maritime strike of 1903 began this turn inward, with increased awareness about social problems and the sacrifices the city had made to support the rapid growth of commerce. As discussed these chapters, authorities and residents of Valparaiso alike often prioritized global economic expansion over Chilean citizens or Chilean autonomy, demonstrating the “greed and turbulence of men.”3 The disorder that permeated the social, professional and physical realms of nineteenth-century Valparaiso stemmed from these conflicts between administrative independence and incoming economic forces. The local shift of Valparaiso by no means solved all the social problems or accomplished complete autonomy of Chilean authority. However, the subtle transformation into a local commercial identity (not a total economic decline) fostered a more controllable urban environment, where disorder would not be so constant.

The legacy of the nineteenth century is central to Valparaiso’s identity today. Much of Chilean nationalistic identity paradoxically rested in Valparaiso’s naval site, since socially and culturally the city was felt far from the rest of Chile. In recent years, the Chilean Congress was moved to Valparaiso in order to decentralize the government,

3 Neruda, 179.
which previously resided exclusively in Santiago. The monstrous building that now
houses the Congress (conceived of by Pinochet on the site of his childhood home) is
located only blocks from the bay, and echoes the Customs House, which moved to
Valparaiso to spread the capital’s responsibilities and integrate the port into Chilean state
processes. A walk down Marquez Street today reveals small hints of the prior disrepair;
buildings are boarded up and men still sway on street corner in the middle of the
afternoon. The Iglesia La Matriz is undergoing construction (in July 2006), and the
unfinished quality of the neighborhood evokes its nineteenth century counterpart. Today
the port attracts historic-minded tourists; monuments to naval heroes and launch boat
rides around the fiscal wharf epitomize the maritime culture that is still Valparaiso’s most
sellable attribute. Although the strong international presence began to decrease over one
hundred years ago, Valparaiso’s maritime identity is central to Chilean history.

History is a tremendously personal academic discipline; it helps us to construct
our present selves by telling the stories of our predecessors. Thus, history and nationalism
are inextricably linked, as narratives of historic moments link current political actors with
romanticized past heroes such as Joaquín Murieta. The performances of historical
narratives were very visible in Valparaiso, especially in the three demonstrative incidents
discussed, where nations publicly reasserted their honors or power. However, the
histories of Valparaiso (and indeed of most places) are more complex than a timeline of
incidents.

Beneath each event there were layers of contextual and local meaning. The
physical identity of the port, challenged by the Spanish bombardment, helped to create
the city’s strategic maritime position and reinforced stratified social hierarchies. Disrepair
and disregard for maintenance led to societal problems and a state of disorder, when the physical identity of the city intersected with inadequate authorities. The local environment of Valparaiso existed separately from the cosmopolitanism of the city, while simultaneously tied to this international presence, especially in the social spaces and urban communities. These intersections of local and international created hybrid identities, which impacted the professional lives of sailors in the port and their shifting nationalisms in a dynamic maritime world. These layers of local identity, development and meaning all contributed to, and reacted to, the military incidents that took place in Valparaiso.

Through the investigation of diverse primary source material it has been possible to reconstruct these layers of the civil society of Valparaiso, although these are only several of the many layers that existed and the many port inhabitants who are silent in the historical record. The personal narratives of members of the urban poor, port laborers, sailors, and street vendors are missing from this history, as they are from so many others. To construct a local history of Valparaiso we still depend on the subjective observations of outsiders, and the subtle underlying hints within the texts of elites or newspapers like El Mercurio. These sources leave enormous gaps in the history of Valparaiso, especially the nuanced local history.

The international events that took place in the theater of Valparaiso were imbued with local significance for the residents there, within the context of disorder and order, commerce and authority, outsiders and natives. The days recorded in history books of other nations were not the most important for Valparaiso’s inhabitants, or were important for different reasons. Having established the context of Valparaiso, the question remains:
which were the days that had local meaning in Valparaiso? In order to accurately reflect the local culture, what incidents should become part of the historical canon of events? Perhaps small scale incidents, brief moments of encounter that affected just a few inhabitants at a time, are the most apt examples to characterize the local history of Valparaiso.

If we return to Dening’s metaphor of “history’s theatre,” it illuminates not only the performative nature of the international conflicts but, perhaps more importantly, the daily theatrical workings of the port. The power relationships inherent in interactions between these social actors come into focus, as the interests of civil authorities were split between foreign merchants and Chilean sailors and laborers, for example. The people of Valparaiso occupied disparate social positions even while they were in physically close proximity, since the hills created isolated enclave neighborhoods. Social actors in the port city behaved according to the physical settings; the disrepair in the port neighborhood influenced a sailor’s actions, for example, and perhaps encouraged the tension he found there to erupt into a disorder. The port, above all, was the site of encounter for all the disparate social groups of the city, and thus the main stage for the action of Valparaiso. How and when the play was performed depended upon the submerged tendencies for conflict and change that lingered in the local social fabric, waiting to be realized.
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