An Archive of Sins: Experimenting with the Body and Building a Knowledge of the ‘Low’ in José Ignacio Eyzaguirre’s *General Confession* (1799-1804)

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**Abstract:**
In this paper I will analyze an unpublished document from the late eighteenth century, currently held in Chile’s National Archives. In it, its author, José Ignacio Eyzaguirre, an educated man in his twenties, tries to analyze himself and his actions using confessional discourse. The result is an archive of bodily sins, intended to help Eyzaguirre’s memory in the process of confessing all his bad deeds. It will be shown how he recounts his actions and desires in relation to sexuality and how the document reflects the ways in which Eyzaguirre built his own knowledge of the body.

**Introduction**

Between 1799 and 1804, José Ignacio Eyzaguirre Arechavala, a young member of the Chilean elite, kept a notebook where he wrote down all of his sins in order to make a complete general confession. This unpublished manuscript is conserved at Chile’s National Archives\(^1\) in the collection left by the historian Jaime Eyzaguirre (1908-1968) after his death, and donated in 1970 to the institution by his widow\(^2\). The document is exceptional in several ways. On the one hand, it is one of the rare remaining examples of a confession written down without any literary intentions; and on the other, it allows us to see how a Catholic

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\(^1\) *Archivo Nacional de Chile. Fondo Jaime Eyzaguirre [ANJE],* vol. IV, f. 360-413v. The document has a modern title in the institutional catalogue, “Diario íntimo de Miguel de Eyzaguirre”. After a few years of researching this diary, I have come to discover that the real author is José Ignacio Eyzaguirre and not Miguel. Also, it is definitely not a journal or personal diary. These claims are more fully developed in a book I am preparing on this manuscript, from which this article is an extract.

individual organized, catalogued, and analyzed his own practices. Among these practices, those related to the body and to what we call “sexuality” are especially important. Through them we can study how a child and a young boy in a Catholic context built his own knowledge of “the low” by experimenting with his own and with others' bodies.

José Ignacio Eyzaguirre was born in 1779 in Santiago de Chile. He was the son of Domingo Eyzaguirre Escutusolo, a merchant who arrived from Vizcaya in 1757, and Rosa de Arechavala y Alday, a rich aristocrat with connections to the elite of Concepción, south of Santiago. José Ignacio had four brothers and five sisters. In this male-dominated society, the personal trajectories of José Ignacio’s brothers enlighten us as to what was expected of a male member of the elite. Miguel, the eldest brother, as President of the Real Universidad de San Felipe, Santiago de Chile’s University, and fiscal of Lima’s Real Audiencia, was a man of political importance for the Spanish Empire. Agustín was head of the Government on three occasions and a prominent political figure in the early years of the Chilean Republic. Domingo was renowned for his philanthropic work and is considered the founder of the village of San Bernardo, south of Santiago. José Alejo, José Ignacio’s only younger brother, was an important priest who came to be Santiago de Chile’s bishop for a short period of time. From the 1820s onwards, all the brothers, with the exception of Miguel (who died in 1821), were members of the first National Congresses of the recently declared independent State of Chile, including José Ignacio.

During his adult years, José Ignacio came to be an important member of the Chilean elite. According to his son, José Ignacio Víctor Eyzaguirre Portales, José Ignacio was “one of the founding fathers” of the Chilean nation,

which he served as deputy or senator in almost all of its legislative bodies, as secretary of the Finance and War Departments, and also [...] as director of Santiago de Chile’s Mint, as general administrator of the National Customs Service, and as General Inspector of the Estanco. He was a member of the State

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4 The Audiencias were the highest Courts in the Spanish Americas. The Audiencia of Lima was one of the most important in the continent.
5 The estanco was an important tax on tobacco, liquors and other products, whose administration became a major political issue in Chile’s first decades as an independent nation. On its history, see S. Villalobos and R. Sagredo, Los estancos en Chile, Santiago, Centro de Investigaciones Diego Barros Arana, 2004.
Council from its creation by the 1833 Constitution until his death. His devotion was unswerving, his integrity unstained, and his charity to the poor incomparable. He died in Santiago on 11 June 1848 [...] 6.

A knowledge of the social status of the Eyzaguirre family helps us understand some of the young José Ignacio’s actions and appreciate more fully the process of personal development that the manuscript depicts. As we shall see, the doubts and fears that accompany Eyzaguirre’s exploration of the body show the fragilities and obsessions of a young member of the Spanish American ruling class. Those fragilities, fears and doubts are the result of a Catholic education and of confession as a devotional practice.

Writing down the Sins: Eyzaguirre’s Manuscript and Ecclesiastical Discourse

José Ignacio Eyzaguirre’s manuscript is not a homogeneous corpus of writing. It can be divided into at least three parts. The first is a small notebook with generally short annotations, which are always dated (see ill. 1).

The first date to appear in this part of the document is 26 August 1799 and the last is 22 July 1804. This would mean that José Ignacio kept this notebook for about five years, writing down his sins in it and indicating specific dates. These dates can be confusing as, rather than representing the day on which each sin was committed, they indicate the day the comment was written. For example, on 6 February 1803, he writes “Angry with father, I called him a bloody old man, I disobeyed his call to pray the Rosary” 7.

6 “á la cual sirvió de diputado ó senador en casi todos sus Congresos, de ministro de Estado en los departamentos de Hacienda y de Marina y [...]: de ensayador mayor de la casa de Moneda: administrador general de aduanas: inspector general y factor de Estanco. Ocupó una silla en el Consejo de Estado desde la creación de este cuerpo por la Constitución de 1833 hasta su fallecimiento. Su piedad fué eminentes: su integridad á toda prueba, y su caridad con los pobres incomparable. Murió en Santiago el 11 de junio de 1848 [...].” J. I. V. Eyzaguirre, Historia eclesiástica, política y literaria de Chile, volume 2, Valparaíso, Imprenta Europea, 1850, p. 249-250.

7 “Rabia contra padre, decir viejo de mierda, no ir a su llamado para rezar el Rosario”. All quotes from José Ignacio’s manuscript have been modernized.
As we know that his father died in 1800⁸, it is impossible for this fragment to be a note on what happened on 6 February 1803. Another fragment, which deals with a political conflict, is dated 1804, when we know from José Ignacio’s letters that the episode occurred in 1803⁹.

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⁸ See [Anon.], Relacion de los meritos y servicios de don Josef Ignacio de Eyzaguirre, Abogado de la Real Audiencia de Santiago, y Ensayador de la Real Casa de Moneda de este Reyno, [¿Madrid?], n.d., [¿1804?]. This Relacion was certainly published in Madrid by the efforts of José Ignacio’s older brother, Miguel, who was at the time visiting the Court. It was made in order to obtain a job in Santiago de Chile’s Mint. It closely follows the instructions given by Miguel to another brother, Agustín, in a letter of 8 June 1803, in J. Eyzaguirre, Archivo Epistolar de la familia Eyzaguirre, op. cit., p. 54.

⁹ The episode is in f. 381 of the manuscript, while the letter is in J. Eyzaguirre, Archivo Epistolar de la familia Eyzaguirre, op. cit., p. 55.
In other words, these fragments are in fact memories, written down to establish an account of past events that needed to be confessed.

The second part of the manuscript (as it can be found in the archives) is written in a larger format than the previous part, and has a title: “General Confession”\textsuperscript{10} (see ill. 2).

\textsuperscript{10} “Confesión generalísima”. 

Illustration 2
In contrast with the first manuscript, where the sins are written down confusingly and without any order, in this second part they are organized and classified according to eight kinds of sin. This classification seems to be taken from one of the many authors who published books to guide and instruct both confessors and penitents during the Early Modern era. Paolo Segneri, a very influential Italian Jesuit, classified the ten precepts of the Church in eight items to be confessed by merging the sixth and ninth, and the seventh and tenth precepts. This part of the document is better organized, and easier to understand than the first, but cannot be considered a coherent document as it conserves the fragmented nature of the first part of the manuscript. This document also has dates, but they only cover June and July 1804. It is followed by a short fragment of writing that also has a title: “Confession from Passion Sunday to Holy Saturday” (see ill. 3).

After this, another “General Confession” begins (see ill. 4), where he states the same sins we can see in the first, but it is interrupted by two pages of sins written mostly in Latin. Finally, the document as it is conserved today ends with pages filled with fragmentary writings on Eyzaguirre’s sins.

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12 P. Señeri, *El confesor instruido. Y el penitente instruido*, Madrid, Gabriel Ramírez, 1743, p. 229-237. On the importance of Paolo Segneri in Spanish America, A. Araya, “El discurso sofocado: el epistolario confesional de una monja del siglo XVIII”, *Mapocho*, 53, 2003, p. 169. We know that Miguel Eyzaguirre, José Ignacio’s older brother, had a copy of this book. “Nota de dos caxones de Libros”, n. d., ANJE, vol. IV, f. 416. In this article, I will be using Segneri’s work as a key to understanding Eyzaguirre’s manuscript, as I have found striking coincidences between the theologian’s advice and Eyzaguirre’s confession.
13 “Confesión desde el Domingo de Pasión hasta el Sábado Santo”.
14 “Confesión generalísima”.

The apparent disorder of the document is one of its most interesting features, distinguishing it from the standard confessional discourse of early modern Spanish America. The manuscript is not autobiographical writing with literary intentions, nor is it an intimate account of a rich internal life.¹⁵

¹⁵ I am referring here to works like those of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651-1695) or Sor Úrsula Suárez (1666-1749).
It is interesting precisely because it differs from what Alain Corbin defined as the “autobiographical narration” of general confessions, an account which, according to the obsessions of the period, constituted a “sexual autobiography” of the sinner. On the contrary, it is an example of the use of writing as a cognitive tool to comply with the precept to confess all sins. Its confusing nature is the result of the difficulties that this obligation posed to Catholics. It is, for this reason, a non-mediated testimony on the problems of

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memory and confession in the modern period. These pieces of writing are Eyzaguirre’s personal archive of sins, his own way of resolving the difficulties imposed by confession as a religious practice.

Since the imposition of annual confession\(^{17}\), it was mandatory for every Catholic to remember and confess all his sins. Paolo Segneri stated that a confession had to satisfy certain conditions before being considered a “successful” confession. Among those conditions, one of the most important was “to be complete”. This meant that both the penitent - by examining his bad deeds - and the confessor - by posing the right questions - had to achieve the fullest possible account of the penitent’s bad actions and thoughts\(^{18}\). It was sacrilege not to confess all one’s sins, one of the worst sins for Catholics. According to Jean Delumeau, the efforts of early modern Catholic thought to build a complete knowledge of all possible sins and to establish a list of their corresponding punishments or penances was a result of the anxieties and fears of being condemned because of some unnoticed sacrilege\(^{19}\). It was necessary to know all the weaknesses of human nature and all the tricks of the Devil so as to save oneself from Hell. Paolo Segneri highlighted this fact to his readers, writing “Saint Teresa used to say that because of sacrilegious confessions, Hell was constantly fed; and, writing to a Preacher, she warned: Father, preach many times against wrong Confessions, because the Devil has no other snare as effective as this to hunt souls”\(^{20}\).

Two things were at stake in the problem of sacrilegious confessions: first, the cognitive process that would help the penitent and the confessor to identify and classify any bad action or deed in a proper way; and, secondly, the penitent’s memory, as he was called to remember all of his sins. This was even more important in the case of general confessions. A general confession, according to the Diccionario de Autoridades published in 1729, was “that of the whole past life, from the age when the penitent was able to sin and to receive the Sacrament of Penance, to the day of the confession; or that where particular confessions

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\(^{17}\) The obligation for Catholics to confess their sins annually was first established by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, and in the seventeenth century it was a firmly established institution in Catholics’ lives.

\(^{18}\) P. Señeri, El confessor instruido, op. cit., p. 192.

\(^{19}\) J. Delumeau, Le péché et la peur, op. cit., p. 220-221.

\(^{20}\) “Santa Theresa solía decir, que por las Confessiones sacrilegas se llenaba perpetuamente el Infierno; y escribiendo a un Predicador, le dió esta advertencia: Padre, predique muchas veces contra las Confessiones mal hechas, porque el demonio no tiene otro lazo con que caze tantas Almas, como este solo.” P. Señeri, El confessor instruido, op. cit., p. 136.
of a certain time are repeated, out of necessity or devotion”\textsuperscript{21}. Thus a general confession was the practice of remembering all past sins, or sins from other specific confessions. For the Diccionario de la Academia de 1780, it was only about confessing “sins of all past life, or those of an important part of it”\textsuperscript{22}. Sometimes, a general confession was considered an obligation: this was the case when a penitent had not confessed all his sins in previous confessions\textsuperscript{23}. But it was also recommended when the penitent felt that his ordinary confessions were insufficient for him; or as part of the celebration of particular religious festivities or events\textsuperscript{24}.

Eyzaguirre seems to follow these precepts. At the beginning of the first fragment entitled “General Confession”, the most coherent piece of writing in the whole manuscript, he states some of his transgressions of the first commandment:

In a confession, the confessor asked me if I had invoked the Devil, I said no, because I didn’t remember; but later I remembered having invoked him, and I had not told him while still in the confession, because I feared the confessor might think that I had lied to him [...] In another confession, I did not confess a thought [...], but I doubted greatly whether I should confess it, I did not do it because I was ashamed, [because it was about] the confessor, whose genuflexions at Mass I had thought looked like a lewd act [...]. I was 10 or 12 years old, I accuse myself of all this\textsuperscript{25}.

Later, he mentions other general confessions, made perhaps as a result of some devotional practices: on one occasion he wrote that he wondered whether “in making a general

\textsuperscript{21} “que se hace de toda la vida pasada, desde la edad en que estuvo en capacidad el penitente de pecar y de recibir el Sacramento de la Penitencia, hasta el dia en que se confiesa; ó aquella en que se repiten confesiones particulares de cierto tiempo determinado, yá se haga por necesidad, ó por devoción”, in Diccionario de la lengua castellana, en que se explica el verdadero sentido de las voces, su naturaleza y calidad [...], volume 2, Madrid, Imprenta de Francisco del Hierro, 1729, p. 497.

\textsuperscript{22} “pecados de toda la vida pasada, ó de una gran parte de ella” cit. in Diccionario de la Lengua Castellana compuesto por la Real Academia Española, Madrid, Joaquín Ibarra, 1780, p. 256.


\textsuperscript{25} “En una confesión preguntame el confesor si había nombrado al diablo, dijele no, porque no me acordé, mas luego me acordé haverlo nombrado, y no lo dixi estando todavía en la confesión por temor de que pensase el confesor que le había engañado [...]. En otra confesión callé un pensamiento que no había consentido, pero dudaba con mucho temor si lo debía confesar, no lo confesé por vergüenza del confesor, que era el mismo de quien había pensado que sus genuflexiones en la misa se parecían al acto torpe [...]. Tendría 10 o 12 años, acuséome de todo.” All additions between bracket signs are mine.
confession I should have confessed all sins already confessed\(^{26}\), while on another occasion he briefly mentioned some sins “from the last general confession”\(^{27}\).

As we can see, Eyzaguirre is remembering old sins, some of them committed when he was ten or twelve, and, at the same time, he is correcting old confessions that were incomplete. This confirms that Eyzaguirre’s writings obey the terms of a general confession, and that what guides his writing is the obligation to remember all his unconfessed or wrongly confessed bad thoughts and actions. For this reason, it seems quite possible that these writings are not a full account of his sins, but only an account of those that fall into the latter category.

The act of writing is not meant to be art for Eyzaguirre, but a tool. Writing is what makes it possible for him to give an account of his sins. In fact, some early modern authors saw writing as a useful tool for penitents willing to make a general confession, as long as they kept to a concise style in their writings\(^{28}\). Writing a confession down was not an unusual practice. By the end of the eighteenth century, in Valdivia (a city south of Santiago de Chile), the merchant José Lopetegui Villar “made a general confession each month, and took pleasure in writing these down, carefully keeping the manuscripts” for himself\(^{29}\). At the end of the nineteenth century ordinary people could also write down their confessions, like the criminal Jean Bladier, whose papers were studied by the historian Philippe Artières\(^{30}\).

However, the difference between this archive of sins and those finished versions of personal confessions is that in this case we do not have the final result of the Catholic devotee’s introspection, but a fragment of the process of remembering, of constructing the confession. This is particularly clear in one area: the number of faults Eyzaguirre committed.

In the Modern period, a general confession was not only an account of bad actions and deeds: the Catholic devotee had to state the exact number of times he had committed each sin in order to give a measurable dimension to his faults and, consequently, give himself the possibility of redemption by an equivalent penance\(^{31}\). As Segneri put it, the

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\(^{26}\) “haver hecho confesión general debería confesar todos los pecados confesados”.

\(^{27}\) “en la confesión general pasada.”


\(^{29}\) “cada mes hacía una confesión general y se daba el gusto de escribirlas, guardando cuidadosamente esos apuntes”, according to the memoirs of his grandson, Antonio Barrena Lopetegui, reproduced in J. Molina, *Vida de un soldado. Desde la Toma de Valdivia (1820) a la Victoria de Yungay (1839)*, Santiago, RIL, 2009, p. 16.


\(^{31}\) On penitential regimes and the equivalences between sins and penances (often numerical), see J. Delumeau, *Le péché et la peur*, op. cit., p. 218-221.
“completeness” of a general confession consisted “not only in a manifestation of all mortal sins remembered after a diligent examination of oneself, but also of their number”. And he added that if the penitent could not remember the exact number of times he had committed each fault, he should state “the most probable number that comes to [his] memory”\textsuperscript{32}. This imposed on sinners the obligation to remember all of their sins exactly. Alain Corbin, in his study of confessors’ manuals, called this relationship between confession and numbers “the arithmetic of faults”: God had an account of the sins of each human being, and this account was numerically exact\textsuperscript{33}. In fact, numbers were widely present in the Modern period’s interpretations of Christian salvation, as we can conclude from Lucia Dacome’s study on the arithmetic of salvation in eighteenth-century England\textsuperscript{34}.

Eyzaguirre’s manuscript is a privileged window onto a Catholic devotee’s attempt to deal with this obligation as well as an insight into the cognitive processes working in the practice of confession. Sometimes, Eyzaguirre seems to be enumerating his faults, such as when he writes:

\begin{quote}
I saw Fraga’s member four or six [times], Xavier’s once or twice, Alexo’s once or twice, Olivo’s once. [...] I grabbed Fraga’s [member] three or six [times], Benites’s once, Xavier’s once or twice, Alexo’s once or twice, Fantóbal’s once. How long did it last? Mine was grabbed by Fraga two or three [times], by Xavier I don’t know, by Benites once\textsuperscript{35}. (See ill. 5)
\end{quote}

In this fragment, as in almost the whole document, Eyzaguirre is remembering his bad actions, not taking any time to analyze his feelings or experiences. In this sense, he is creating a catalogue of his actions.

\textsuperscript{32} “su entereza consiste, no solo en manifestar todos los pecados mortales, que vienen á la memoria, después de el diligente examen, mas tambien su numero [...]. Mas si despues de haverlo pensado bien, no le podemos hallar, debemos decir, con poca diferencia, el numero mas probable, que se nos representa à la memoria”. P. Señeri, El penitente instruido, op. cit., p. 192.

\textsuperscript{33} A. Corbin, L’Harmonie des plaisirs, op. cit., p. 412-413.


\textsuperscript{35} “Ver el miembro a Fraga cuatro o seis, a Xavier una o dos, a Alexo una o dos, a Olivos una. [...] Agarrar a Fraga tres o seis, a Benites una, a Xavier una o dos, a Alexo una o dos, a Fantóbal una. Quanto tiempo duró. Agarrar a mi Fraga dos o tres, Xavier no sé, Benites una.”
There is no doubt that Eyzaguirre is trying to establish a definitive (or at least probable) number of his sins before confessing. This becomes clearer when he writes down additions to his sins:

Illustration 5
I saw my member during the night once in the room; in Don Juan’s room once; in the corner where the stocks were once. I also saw it four times when I peeled it at school, four or five [times], and twice I saw it when I peeled it in the Dormitory [...]. Ten or twelve incidents 36.

Sometimes Eyzaguirre seems unable to remember the exact number of times he committed a sin. In those moments of his manuscript, he again shows that he is aware of the theological exigencies of the practice of confession, as he writes down the amount of time instead of the number of times he committed a sin. This was the solution recommended by theologians like the already quoted Paolo Segneri, who recommended to confessors:

for the confessor, the most common difficulty is the number of faults. [...] When it is impossible to establish an exact number, or even a probable one, ask the penitent how long the sin lasted, the frequency with which it was committed each month or each week 37.

Eyzaguirre follows this kind of advice when he writes, for example, that he had had bad thoughts about a “single” woman “for a month and a half” 38.

In this sense, Eyzaguirre is constructing an archive of his sins, trying to stabilize his memory and to duplicate honestly, at least, if not exactly, God's own great archive of his sins. Writing is the tool that allows him to translate his bodily experiences and their imprint on his personal memory into another form of data storage that is different in nature from memory 39. Eyzaguirre’s manuscript is not an expression of his bodily experiences, but the result of a cognitive process that consists in remembering, counting, and cataloguing each sin according to the exigencies of ecclesiastical discourse. As we have seen, the way

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36 “Me vi el miembro a la noche en la quadra una; en el quarto de Don Juan una; en la caballeriza una; en el rincón del sepo una. También cuatro veces lo vi cuando lo mondé en el colegio cuatro o cinco, y dos veces lo vi cuando lo mondé en el dormitorio [...]. Son vistas diez o doce.” Note, in this case, the vocabulary Eyzaguirre is using to confess his sins. What I have translated here as “peel” is the verb “mondar”, which Eyzaguirre always uses when referring to his penis. “Mondar” was a verb that signified “to clean, or to purify something, removing from it what is superflous or strange in it” (“limpiar, ó purificar alguna cosa, quitándola lo superfluo, ó extraño que tiene”), in Diccionario de la Lengua Castellana compuesto por la Real Academia Española, 1780, p. 631. It is interesting to note how Eyzaguirre perverts, in a way, a verb unrelated to anything sexual. The importance of the ways of naming sex has been analyzed by L. Sigel, “Name Your Pleasure: The Transformation of Sexual Language in Nineteenth-Century British Pornography”, Journal of the History of Sexuality, 9/4, 2000.

37 “Aquello, pues, que comúnmente halla con mas dificultad el que oye las confessiones, es el numero de las culpas. [...] Quando no se puede saber el numero cierto, ó a lo menos el probable, preguntad por mayor el tiempo que duró el mal, la frecuencia con que se bolvia à cometer cada mes, ó cada semana”. Señeri, El penitente instruido, op. cit., p. 12.

38 “con la de Lara, soltera, de fornicación un mes y medio”.

Eyzaguirre analyzes his bodily experiences in his writing is dictated by the necessities of confession. Confession and the need to save his soul is what forces him to pay attention to all his bad deeds and all the weaknesses of his flesh. But confession was not the only way to understand or to know his body. By describing his bodily practices, Eyzaguirre lets us see how he, as a child and a young man, built another kind of archive of his body.

**Building a Knowledge of the ‘Low’**

Most of the sins confessed by Eyzaguirre are related to sexuality. This may be the result of the obsession with lust - as a sin - that was developed by Catholic theologians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Eyzaguirre follows very closely the instructions and precepts of the ecclesiastical discourse on confession, which may have influenced his approach to the subject. But this may also be the result of Eyzaguirre’s age, given that he is a young man confessing the sins of his childhood. According to Segneri, one reason for making a general confession was to confess the unconfessed sins of childhood, as some penitents “do not confess some faults committed by them when they were little boys; even if they remember them, because until then they were ashamed of them”.

Be that as it may, this preeminence of sexuality in Eyzaguirre’s manuscript allows us to analyze both the nature of the manuscript as an archive of bodily experiences and the significance of the practices confessed, as related to a history of the knowledge of the body.

Many bodily experiences confessed by Eyzaguirre are “experimental” in nature. At least in the way Eyzaguirre writes of them, they seem to be dictated by his will to explore and understand his body and its pleasures. He writes, for example, “I put a cigar on my member once or twice”, or “Pollution, I was awake, I left my excited member against my thigh, in order to see if it peeled itself”. Those examples show that Eyzaguirre is not just accusing himself of having some kind of sexual intercourse with other humans, or of having sexual desires related to them, he is also attesting to some practices of exploration (the cigar

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40 Cf. A. Corbin, *L’Harmonie des plaisirs*, op. cit. According to Jean Delumeau, in the early modern period, lust, while not the most important sin, was already subject to theologians’ warnings and debates. J. Delumeau, *Le péché et la peur*, op. cit., p. 238-246.
41 “no se confiesan de ciertas fealdades, en que cayeron siendo niños; aunque se acuerdan, que hasta entonces tenían rubor de ellas”. P. Señeri, *El penitente instruido*, op. cit., p. 226.
42 “Puse cigarro en el miembro una o dos”.
43 “pollution despierto, el miembro alterado dexarlo contra el muslo a ver si se mondaba”.

on his penis) that are guided by curiosity (in the second case, he wanted to see what happened to his excited penis). At this point, Eyzaguirre’s archive takes on several layers of meaning, as it not only reproduces the ecclesiastical discourse on the body that made it possible but also reproduces an alternative “archive”, formed by a series of practices and discourses that the penitent experienced as a sin, but which constructed his own knowledge of the body.

Eyzaguirre’s research on his own body seems to have been guided by ignorance. Whether this is because he was raised in a very Catholic and pious family or because it was normal at the time, the fact is that many of Eyzaguirre’s confessions are the result of his aim to understand not only his body but also the mysteries of sex. On April 9 1800, he writes “I wished to know the way to sin with a woman one or three [times]. I tried it out from behind with my finger”. This means that he did not know exactly how to have sex, and that he tried to find out by experimenting with himself, introducing his finger into his anus. He seems to be accusing himself of the same sin when he writes: “I used my finger [to find out] if it could be done in the ass two or four [times], with excitement”. The fact that he did not know exactly how things worked when having sex is confirmed when he writes that, at the age of 13 or 14, he was afraid “of being stuck in the act, and not being absolved afterwards”.

Eyzaguirre’s will to understand his body and the mysteries of sex and to experience its pleasures are revealed not only in confessions regarding experiments with himself, but also in his interactions with other people. We know that when he was a small boy he tried to obtain information about this sin in his own household. In these confessions, we can see the different children that shared the same space in a classic hispanic-american domestic unit: the sisters and brothers of the owner’s family, the slave-born children and the free servants. The kind of interaction they could have is very interestingly reflected in Eyzaguirre’s notes. He writes

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44 According to the historian J. Eyzaguirre, “El Doctor don Miguel de Eyzaguirre”, op. cit., p. 79. In fact, all Eyzaguirre’s brothers who participated in politics between 1810 and 1830 were conservatives.
45 “deseé de saver por dónde se peca con mulier una o tres. Hacer la prueba por atrás con el dedo”.
46 “Hize con el dedo si se podría por el culo dos o cuatro con alteración”.
47 “temor que me quedase unido en el acto y que no me absolviesen después”.
48 On these different members of the Spanish American elite households and their conflicts, see A. Araya, “Sirvientes contra amos: Las heridas en lo íntimo propio”, in R. Sagredo y C. Gazmuri (dirs.), Historia de la vida privada en Chile. Tomo I. El Chile tradicional: de la Conquista a 1840, Santiago de Chile, Taurus, 2005.
Having heard from Dolores, a slave, that Antonia had told of what women did with men, I asked her what she had said, [and] a sister of mine, who had heard it, rejected it, saying to her that she should not tell it, that it was wrong, and I urged the slave to tell me, and even though I think she did not tell me when my sister was there, she did so later, I do not know if I insisted again. I heard attentively, I do not know whether with pleasure, that women fondle the man’s member. [...] I was 9 or 10 years old, and the one who told it was 8 [years old].

This text presents José Ignacio Eyzaguirre’s strong desire to know. Being a nine- or ten-year-old boy, he pushes an eight-year-old slave to tell him what women and men do, even after facing the resistance of one of his sisters. The manuscript shows us how the first learning about sexuality happened within the domestic unit (at least in the list of faults that were confessed in it). It also shows us how this knowledge was built not only by means of the spoken word. José Ignacio, one of his brothers (Alejo), three slaves (a boy and two girls, one of them the aforementioned Dolores), and other servants also practised a sort of polymorphous sexuality:

I touched a four- or five-year-old brother, like he who gels a bull, I saw his member [...] and I touched him [later]. I invited four girls to do the same, one four or five years old, a sister of hers, six- or seven-year-old daughters [sic]; The slave Dolores five or seven years old and another slave aged eight or ten, the first two were daughters of a free servant. I saw and touched their members, all of them, eight or twelve times [...]; I also once saw and touched the member of Xavier, an eight- or nine-year-old slave [...]. It seems to me that Xavier once said this could be a sin, and I denied it once or twice. We hid. Xavier, the slave, once asked why he didn’t do the same thing to me, I agreed, I lay down for him to touch me [...].

49 “Habiendo oído á la Dolores esclava que la Antonia había contado de cosas que hacían las mujeres con los hombres. Pregúntele qué había dicho, repugnó una hermana mía que lo había sabido, diciendo a la esclava que no lo dijese, que era malo, y yo insté a la dicha Esclava que me lo contase, y aunque me parece no lo dixo estando mi hermana allí, después lo dixo, no sé si a instancias nuevas mías. Oí con atención, no sé si con agrado, que las mujeres sobaban el miembro al hombre. [...] era yo de nueve a diez años, y la que lo contó de ocho.”

50 “Hize con un hermano de cuatro o cinco años como quién capa toros, le vi el miembro [...] , y le toqué lo mismo. Convidé para lo mismo cuatro mugeres, una de cuatro o cinco años, y otra hermana de ella, hijas de seis o siete años; Dolores esclava de cinco o siete años y un esclava de ocho o diez años, hijas las dos primeras de una sirviente libre. Vi y toqué el miembro por todo, y a todas ellas ocho o doce veces [...]; también Xavier, esclavo de ocho o nueve, le vi á éste una y toqué lo mismo [...]. Me parece decir una vez Xavier sería pecado, y dixo yo que no una o dos veces. Nos ocultábamos. Dixo Xavier esclavo que por qué él no hacía lo mismo conmigo, se lo facilité, me puse voca abajo para que me tocase [...].”
We can see here how different individuals from the household - all of lower status than José Ignacio, as he touched his younger brother, slaves and servants - practised some sort of early sexuality. It should not surprise us that Eyzaguirre accuses himself of these childhood practices. For early modern Catholicism, childhood was not exactly an innocent age, free of sins. Moreover, Eyzaguirre is aware of having shown signs of doing wrong, by hiding with the other children, a manifestation of personal guilt according to Paolo Segneri.

But it is within the all-male institution of the Santiago de Chile Seminary that Eyzaguirre will take his bodily experimentations to the next stage. It is almost certain that José Ignacio studied in that institution. As far as we know, all his brothers, including José Alejo, the only one younger than him, studied there. José Ignacio’s Relación de méritos states that he studied in Santiago de Chile’s “Colegio”, which could mean the Seminary, as at the time it was called Colegio Azul [Blue School] because of the blue clothes worn by seminarians. Even more conclusive, if we match the names cited by José Ignacio in his confession with a list of the Seminary students conserved at Chile’s National Archives, we can see that more than ten of the people named in Eyzaguirre’s manuscript were seminarians between the years 1789 and 1795. Almost all his sins of lust or sexuality are related to these names.

One of those seminarians was Manuel José Fraga. He was some five years older than José Ignacio, as he entered the Seminar in 1790, aged sixteen. Fraga tells Eyzaguirre of his sexual adventures: “I heard from him that he woke up to search for a woman. I heard from

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52 P. Segneri, El confessor instruido, op. cit., p. 226.
53 According to J. Eyzaguirre, José Ignacio’s father chose the Santiago de Chile Seminary for the education of “his two older sons, Agustín and Miguel.” J. Eyzaguirre, “El Doctor don Miguel de Eyzaguirre”, op. cit., p. 79. We know that Domingo, the third oldest son, also studied in the same institution. Homenaje a la memoria de don Domingo Eyzaguirre (9 de febrero de 1884), Santiago, Imprenta Nacional, 1884, p. 5. Alejo, according to his biographers, also studied in the Seminary. F. Taforó, “Don José Alejo Eyzaguirre”, in N. Desmadryl (dir.), Galería Nacional, o colección de biografías y retratos de hombres célebres de Chile, volume 2, Santiago, Imprenta Chilena, 1854, p. 102, and V. Chaparro, “Elojio fúnebre del señor Dr. Don José Alejo Eizaguirre”, in P. G. de la Fuente, Oratorio sagrado, o colección escogida de sermones de oradores sagrados americanos, volume 1, Santiago, Imprenta del Independiente, 1866, p. 439.
54 Relación de los méritos y servicios de don Josef Ignacio de Eyzaguirre, op. cit.
55 Libro de Constitución y entrada de colegiales de este Seminario de la Iglesia Catedral de Santiago de Chile bajo la advocación del Santo Ángel de la Guarda, in Archivo Nacional de Chile. Fondo Varios, vol. 235. This is an incomplete list of the Seminary’s students, as it only indicates the students who paid for their studies. No Eyzaguirre is ever mentioned, even though we know for sure that all José Ignacio’s brothers studied there. Indications on its author can be found in A. Fuenzalida, Historia del desarrollo intelectual en Chile (1541-1810) (Enseñanza pública i cultura intelectual), Santiago, Imprenta Universitaria, 1903.
56 Libro de Constitución y entrada de colegiales de este Seminario de la Iglesia Catedral de Santiago de Chile bajo la advocación del Santo Ángel de la Guarda, op. cit., f. 41v.
him of fornications, etc.”. Eyzaguirre seems to be learning about sex from him. For example, he writes “I asked him how it was, and I heard from him, attentively and with pleasure, that when he was a young boy, a woman made him fornicate, and of the pleasure he had; I don’t know if I wished to do the same”. The pedagogical role of this older student is more clearly revealed in other fragments, such as “I wanted to know how one fornicates with women twice or four [times]. I asked Fraga once, I heard his explanation once or twice”. Fraga not only tells Eyzaguirre how to have sex; he also proposes practical experience, as Eyzaguirre indicates that “he offered to take me to his women to fornicate”.60

But the relationship with Fraga went a little further, showing us how eroticism and exploration of the body were closely related. Eyzaguirre writes “I saw Fraga’s member four or six [times], I touched it three or six, I measured it two or three [times]”. Another fragment of the manuscript is more explicit:

Fraga asked me if I wanted him to pollute. I said do as you wish, I was alone in my bedroom, I was twelve or thirteen years old. Fraga did it. I watched how he did it two or three [times] and its spilling once. I consented to the same thing in my room two or three [times]. I was probably excited. I listened to what he was saying.

Eyzaguirre also writes, about Fraga, “I let him rub my member, it wasn’t my initiative, but I laughed and I didn’t do anything to avoid him or to escape”.63

Eyzaguirre's confessions reflect some of the most common moral issues of the traditional discourse on masturbation and sex.64 At the same time, these practices seem to have been quite common. The sins committed by Eyzaguirre with other men at the Santiago

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57 “Oíle que se havia levantado á buscar una muger. Oíle de fornicasiones &.”
58 “pregunté cómo así y le oí con atension y agrado, que pequeño una muger lo havia hecho fornicar y del gusto que havia tenido, no sé si tuve deseo de lo mismo”.
59 “Pensé de saber por dónde se fornicara con muger dos o cuatro. Pregunté a Fraga una, oír su explicación una o dos”.
60 “me convidó para llevarme a sus mugeres para fornicar”.
61 “vi a Fraga el miembro cuatro o seis, toqué tres o seis, medí dos o tres”
62 “Preguntome Fraga si quería que hiciera polución. Le dixe haz si quieres, estaba yo solo en mi quarto, tendría doce o trece años. La procuró Fraga. Miré cómo lo hacía dos o tres y su derramamiento una. Consentí aquello en mi quarto lo mismo dos o tres. Tendría alteración. Oíle lo que decía.”
63 “dexe me fricar de él el miembro aunque no de mi voluntad, pero con risa y sin hacer lo necesario para evitarlo ni huir”.
64 For example, his preoccupation with the spilling of semen. On the traditional discourse about masturbation, T. W. Laqueur, Solitary Sex. A Cultural History of Masturbation, New York, Zone Books, 2003, chapter III “Masturbation before Onania”.


de Chile Seminary are the same sins that Leonardo da Porto Maurizio, a Franciscan friar, mentioned in a sort of “standard confession”, written by him to guide penitents. Only the “perfect sodomy” (sodomy with another man) seems to be absent from Eyzaguirre’s manuscript. This is not surprising when we consider, as Anne-Marie Sohn has demonstrated in the case of nineteenth-century France, that such practices were common among the students of educational institutions.

Eyzaguirre’s manuscript, as argued here, does not only reveal these practices; it also shows how a Catholic built up a knowledge of his body, of sins. It is interesting to note that the scenes and practices that made it possible for Eyzaguirre to explore his body and to learn about sex, were kept in his memory for years in a sort of archive of his sins, inscribed (as memory is inscribed) on his body. In other words, all the practices that helped Eyzaguirre to understand sex were also understood as sins. In a way, Eyzaguirre’s notes confirm the analysis by Michel de Certeau, who thought of the body as a surface where the Law comes to be inscribed, and of paper as a substitute for human skin. We can say that Eyzaguirre had his transgressions written in his body, in the form of memory, before turning them into paper and ink.

As we can see, José Ignacio Eyzaguirre was still constructing his own knowledge of the body and sexuality while studying in the Seminary, even though that knowledge was considered a sin. Some other examples are quite clear: for instance, when Eyzaguirre writes about having asked Fraga “what is that sort of crown of the member” and also “what’s that sort of grain that he had on his member, and whether everyone had it” (both sentences may be asking the same question, expressed differently in each case). Eyzaguirre also accuses himself of wanting “to see Vilvado’s member [...]. Having heard from him that a women had asked him to fornicate, I wished to know if he had fornicated with her, and I tried to undo his trousers with my hand.”

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65 Cit. in A. Corbin, L’harmonie des plaisirs, op. cit., p. 410-411.
68 “qué significa aquella como corona del miembro”.
69 “qué significa aquél como grano que tenía en el miembro, y si todos tenían así”.
70 “deseé ver a Vilvado el miembro una. Haviendole oido que una muger lo havia llamado para forniciar, deseé saber si havia tenido con ella fornicacion, y hize por verle a Vilvao el miembro con las manos por la braguetá” The “Vilvado” he mentions here could be Bernardino Bilbao or Rafael Bilbao, both students at the Santiago de Chile Seminary. Libro de Constitución y entrada de colegiales de este Seminario de la Iglesia Catedral de Santiago de Chile bajo la advocación del Santo Ángel de la Guarda, op. cit., f. 42 and 71v.
In fact, the students in the Seminary told each other their sexual adventures. According to Eyzaguirre, one of them once recounted “that on having women, he found himself incapable [of having sex], and that he was angry at his member”\textsuperscript{71}. Eyzaguirre also accuses himself of having heard, from the same student, “two obscene tales of fornications”\textsuperscript{72}. Another student told him that, wanting to have sex with a reluctant peasant woman, he lifted her skirt up “and fornicated her”\textsuperscript{73}, that is, he raped her\textsuperscript{74}.

However, Eyzaguirre learned of the body not only from interpersonal relationships. We know that he was connected to some of the cultural manifestations that his contemporaries saw as dangerous for morality: novels and theatre. Eyzaguirre accuses himself of reading novels and attending theatre performances (which could be considered a sin in itself), and also of having been excited watching an actress on stage\textsuperscript{75}. But even in canonical books, a young man like Eyzaguirre could find pleasure: “I read González Téllez on how to determine a woman’s virginity. I got excited several times. I was studying the subject. I read with fear”\textsuperscript{76}. Here Eyzaguirre seems to be writing about Manuel González Téllez’s Commentaria perpetua in singulos textus quinque librorum Decretalium Gregorii IX, a book of canon law first published in the seventeenth century\textsuperscript{77}. As we can see, Eyzaguirre drew inspiration from different and sometimes suprising sources in order to understand and create his own knowledge of the body.

The High, the Low, and the Body

Eyzaguirre’s admissions enable us to understand how an individual of the modern period approached the forbidden knowledge of the body. Experimental practices, explorations on his own and on others’ bodies, questions addressed to those more

\textsuperscript{71} “teniendo mugeres se havia hallado inabil, y que se havia enojado con su miembro”.
\textsuperscript{72} “le oí dos cuentos obscenos de fornicaciones”.
\textsuperscript{73} “y la fornicó”.
\textsuperscript{74} The work of Georges Vigarello shows that violent stories of this kind, told in an all-male context, were not uncommon, nor were they necessarily criticized. G. Vigarello, Histoire du viol, XVIe-XXe siècle, París, Le Seuil, 1998.
\textsuperscript{75} We do not know the novel he was reading. For the theatre in Santiago de Chile and its conflicts with the religious authorities of the time, see E. Pereira, Historia del Teatro en Chile desde sus orígenes hasta la muerte de Juan Casacuberta, 1849, Santiago de Chile, Ediciones de la Universidad de Chile, 1974, p. 58-82.
\textsuperscript{76} “leí a González Téllez sobre el modo de conocer la virginidad en las mugeres. Tuve alteraciones. Estaba estudiando una pregunta sobre ello. Leí con temor me parece”.
\textsuperscript{77} The book seems to have run through several editions. See M. González Téllez, Commentaria perpetua in singulos textus quinque librorum Decretalium Gregorii IX, Lyon, Annison & Posuel, 1715.
experienced than him, stories heard from others, non-conventional ways of reading: all these situations reflect how an individual constructed his own knowledge of the "low". As Carlo Ginzburg has demonstrated, in the economy of knowledge of the Early Modern Era the “high” matters - the divine truths, the high political issues - were not open to everyone’s curiosity. They could even be conceived as forbidden knowledge for individuals. For example, José Ignacio’s brother Miguel, when finishing his studies in Theology at the Real Universidad de San Felipe of Santiago de Chile, was reminded “not to abuse the licence obtained to interpret the Sacred Scriptures because of the danger and harm that may ensue”78. It was against this prohibition that the motto sapere aude! - 'dare to know', which would become the Enlightenment’s leitmotiv - was used from the seventeenth century onwards 79. But what is often disregarded - or seen as a self-evident attribute of Early Modern societies - is that it was also forbidden for anyone to investigate or to learn about the “low”, the corporeal, the sinful parts of existence, and that this social prohibition affected the relationship between individuals and their bodies.

Sapere aude! is a motto that could also qualify Eyzaguirre’s explorations. He dares to know what was supposed to be kept secret from him. He pushes other people to tell him what he does not know. He explores his body. Here, the double image of the Archive is complete: on the one hand, we have the ecclesiastical discourse and institution, which, wanting to punish the sins related to the low, developed a knowledge of it and encouraged individuals to talk about these forbidden things 80. Eyzaguirre’s own scrutinizing, as we have seen, is the result of this institutional obligation, and the translation of his experience into a written form, in the language of sins, is a direct result of it. But at the same time the sins of which he accuses himself allow us to see how he constructed his own knowledge of the “low”, how he got to know what was clearly kept secret from him. The obligation to talk about sex in the confession is mirrored here by the audacity and experimental practices of a Catholic individual. Eyzaguirre can write, for example, that he stared at a donkey and a mule

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that were copulating out of “curiosity”, the keyword for sins related to forbidden knowledge.\

Eyzaguirre’s confession shows that we should not assume that individuals have a clear and immediate knowledge of their bodies. Bodies, even one’s own, could be a difficult enigma to solve. The “low”, which is opposed to the “high” in modern theology, could also be an arcane matter and not necessarily due to prohibition. Let us take another example: the case of a friar from New Spain, Diego Núñez, abbot of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción Monastery. In 1737, he was a witness to the Inquisition in a case of witchcraft. He presented himself as victim of a woman’s sorcery. He knew something was wrong with him because of his faeces. According to his account, he urinated and defecated stones of variable sizes and colours, hairs from his own and from others’ bodies, pieces of wool and other strange elements. For this enigma, the official Christian culture did not offer him an answer. He therefore went to a local “witch”, expecting her to explain to him why he was suffering such a strange illness. And so he came to “discover” that he was being magically manipulated by one of his servants. Leaving aside the obvious gender and power issues of this case, what I found interesting here, and related to José Ignacio Eyzaguirre’s case, is how a man of God, a man who was supposed to dedicate his life to the “high” issues, was confronted with the enigma of the “low”. For, as he stated to the Inquisition, is it normal to defecate and urinate “eyebrows, eyelashes and all kinds of hair from my own body?” In order to solve this enigma, he referred to an alternative knowledge of the “low”, a knowledge that was prohibited by the Church because it dealt with forbidden matters: witchcraft. The image of an ecclesiastical individual closely examining his own faeces is an interesting example of how those at the height of knowledge in modern societies could still find unanswered questions in their own bodies.

The manuscript should also lead to a better understanding of the body as a social and political metaphor. It is well known that in the Middle Ages and in the Early Modern period, society was conceived as a body, and all social functions were thought of as those of a body.


This was still the case at the time Eyzaguirre was writing down his sins\textsuperscript{83}. But what Eyzaguirre’s manuscript also shows us is that the body was not just an obvious metaphor. If the body was the predominant image chosen to explain society, it was not simply because it functioned as a supposedly self-evident symbol. Furthermore, we can see from José Ignacio Eyzaguirre’s writings that the relationship between Modern individuals and their bodies was far from being transparent. As Thomas Laqueur has shown, even in those aspects where the body was expected to give clear and visible signs, like the sexual division between men and women, they could turn out to be difficult and confusing to read or to understand \textsuperscript{84}. In this sense, Eyzaguirre’s manuscript confirms that the body was both intimate and strange at the same time.

The difference between the “high” and the “low” worked as an anthropological structure for modern culture. The fact of being divided, of being conceived as two poles of human experience, paradoxically attracted them to each other and helped to develop a constant dialogue between them. This is made particularly clear in comic practices that mixed the low and the high, producing laughter as a result of this interaction \textsuperscript{85}. This kind of operation is also present in Eyzaguirre’s own manuscript when he accuses himself of comparing the appearance of a church’s sanctuary to the unholy “parts” of our Lord\textsuperscript{86}, and of having thought that a priest’s “genuflections” in mass were similar to a sexual position\textsuperscript{87}. Given the structural parallel between the “high” and the “low”, it is not surprising that Dolores Peña y Lillo, an eighteenth-century Chilean nun, also made the same comparisons\textsuperscript{88}. Historians, too, had realized this parallelism. In an inquisition case of the seventeenth century, where a Mexican woman declared that she had had some kind of sexual and mystical relationship with Jesus, the Virgin Mary and some saints, Zeb Tortorici identified a

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\item M. Bakhtine, \textit{L'œuvre de François Rabelais et la culture populaire au Moyen Âge et sous la Renaissance}, Paris, Gallimard Tel, 1982. The images of defecating people inside medieval churches seem to be one of these junctions of the “high” and the “low”. Cf. Welieda Muller, “The Iconography of Gothic Choir Stalls: An Enhancement of the Body in all its States in a Sacred Space”, presentation at Archives of the Body: From Medieval to Early Modern, Cambridge, Cambridge University, 7-9 September 2011.
\item “pensamiento comparando las rajaduras de un Sagrario estando oiendo misa en la Cathedral a las partes de N. S.” N. S. may be an abbreviation for Nuestra Señora (Our Lady) or Nuestro Señor (Our Lord).
\item “genuflexiones en la misa […] se parecían al acto torpe”.
\item Cf. D. Peña y Lillo, \textit{Epistolario de Sor Dolores Peña y Lillo (Chile, 1763-1769)}, Raissa Kordic (ed.), Madrid, Universidad de Navarra / Iberoamericana, 2008.
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“simultaneous sacralization and vulgarization” of religious devotion. And Niklaus Largier chose the religious practice of whipping oneself in his cultural history of arousal, suggestively titled *In Praise of the Whip*.

My purpose here has been to show how the sex-related sins of Eyzaguirre’s manuscript are intimately bound to confession-writing practices and to ecclesiastical discourse. The high and the low are two dimensions that must be studied together in any reading of the manuscript. Eyzaguirre writes this archive of his bodily sins because he wants to save his soul. And for this reason he is forced to remember the practices and occasions that allowed him to learn and to build his own knowledge about the body, in parallel to the “official” knowledge. Eyzaguirre’s manuscript, between these two intertwined sets of knowledge of the body, shows us, albeit in a fragmentary way, how bodily experiences could be inscribed in a modern Catholic individual’s subjectivity.

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