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Bernini's *Blessed Ludovica Albertoni*: Drapery and the Permeability of the Body

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Abstract

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Gianlorenzo Bernini's *Blessed Ludovica Albertoni* has remained a footnote at the end of the artist's long life, with scholarly treatment conveying a deep-seated discomfort with the sculpture and its possible meanings. Scholars' inability to adequately identify the narrative moment has been compounded by a lack of direct engagement with the *Ludovica*'s turbulent drapery, particularly in areas which raise questions of sensuality and the body. The present examination returns to the sculptural work itself, seeking to interpret the *Ludovica*'s drapery with the same intensity offered to treatments of the body, and to demonstrate the centrality of permeability to Bernini's representation of the *Ludovica*. Through a series of folds in the center of the sculpture which create a "cavernous opening" between the *beata*'s legs, Bernini engages with concerns of interior and exterior, death, dissection, wounding, and gender. Connected to the side wound of Christ and vaginal imagery, the "cavernous opening" becomes a site of Eucharistic significance

through Bernini's deeply drilled and intentionally executed drapery folds. Rather than simply providing an acknowledgement of the Eucharistic rite taking place before it, Bernini's altarpiece can be recognized as a visual enactment of permeability, suggesting the penetration of Christ's body and the resulting outpouring of salvation. Careful attention to the drapery enables a reinterpretation of the *Ludovica* in keeping with Bernini's artistic skill and masterful execution, presenting the sculptor's pinched folds as a crucial component of the work rather than a mere reflection of Bernini's "style."

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Bernini's *Blessed Ludovica Albertoni*: Drapery and the Permeability of the Body

“...the Beata Lodovica Albertoni, which was carved when [Bernini] was almost eighty, is treated with a mellowness and a disdain of ostentation that would have been unthinkable at any earlier time. It is on this sublime figure rather than on the St. Teresa that his claim to be accepted as the peer of the very greatest Italian artists must ultimately rest.”

— John Pope-Hennessy¹

The *Blessed Ludovica Albertoni* is frequently identified as evidence of Bernini's artistic genius and unparalleled skill as a carver, as John Pope-Hennessy's assessment makes clear, and is recognized as one of Bernini's “most dramatic and moving works,” demonstrating his “almost magical powers” (Fig. 1).² Nevertheless, the *Ludovica* remains a footnote at the end of Bernini's long life, with scholarly treatment conveying a deep-seated discomfort with the sculpture and its possible meanings. In part, this discomfort is born from the ambiguity of the narrative moment, with scholars unable to determine the exact nature of Ludovica's experience, caught somewhere between a death agony and an ecstatic, spiritual union with the divine. More limiting than this, however, is an inability to adequately address the primary communicative element of the sculpture: Ludovica's intensely folded drapery. While widely acknowledged and given various descriptive terms, such as “agitated garments,” the imaginative fabric covering Ludovica's form is treated summarily and as secondary to the expression of the body.³ Scholarship has effectively adhered to Renaissance interpretations of drapery, maintaining it as a site of artistic display or stylistic expression, an approach that does not adequately account for the demands of the Counter-Reformation or Bernini's intervention.⁴ Just as drapery's role in early modern art theory was to adhere to and be governed by the body, scholarship aims to “read” bodily gestures while drapery is understood in general terms as an emotional signifier, “supporting the emotional impact of the work” or operating as an “agent of [Bernini's] feelings.”⁵ To be fair, Bernini's drapery has been consistently controversial, having been criticized in his own time and directly

contributing to the downfall of his reputation following his death.⁶ Yet in rehabilitating the artist, scholars have yet to fully address the most fundamental component of his art beyond the rather inadequate identification with his “style.”

Following the Council of Trent, the nude, which had served in the Renaissance as the primary site of artistic expression, was newly problematic in relation to Catholic concepts of decorum and the decoration of religious spaces. In *Mochi's Edge and Bernini's Baroque*, Estelle Lingo has clearly articulated Bernini's break with the Renaissance reliance on the body and his disruptive but fruitful turn to drapery to enliven and add expressive quality to sacred sculpture.⁷ Accurately perceiving the body as a “scarce resource” within the reformed Church and that sculptural figures dominated by large quantities of “modest, naturalistic drapery would inevitably lack the emotive force the church now sought,” Bernini turned to irrational folds and voluminous drapery as a replacement for the body.⁸ While long recognized as a site of artistic display, Bernini's use and development of drapery is an example of the creative and innovative manipulation of form which was sparked by the limitations of post-Tridentine propriety, an example of the “creative ingenuity [which] was borne from within the prison walls of censorship.”⁹ Drapery, however, is not treated as equal to the body within Baroque scholarship, interpreted summarily rather than being allowed the specificity of “gesture” which is assigned to the body. The body is often read in terms of specific limbs whose actions not only communicate an overall effect, but which each hold a specific and intentional meaning, a means of interpretation which will here be extended to drapery. Within the following examination, a specific passage of drapery will be read as an intentional and communicative aspect of the larger sculpture, whose centrality and religious significance supersedes, or rather overshadows, the

body itself. By “reading” drapery as one reads the body, Bernini’s sculptures can be reconnected with their artistic intent and interpreted in their entirety.

This is not to say that the *Blessed Ludovica Albertoni* is exclusively a representation of drapery, as the *beata*’s personal history directly colored the circumstances of the work’s production and its specific form. Indeed, the *Ludovica* is a nexus of political motivations, familial pride, artistic expression, religious contemplation, and the artist’s meditation on death and salvation. In 1667, Laura Caterina Altieri, the sole heir of the Altieri family, married Gaspare Albertoni, the last member of his branch of the Albertoni, an impoverished family of the Roman nobility.¹⁰ While seemingly insignificant, this union would redefine both families’ histories, witness a meteoric rise to power, and provide the framework for Bernini’s final years. Laura and Gaspare’s marriage was the basis for Laura’s uncle, Emilio Altieri, to adopt three Albertoni, Gaspare himself, his uncle Cardinal Paluzzo Paluzzi degli Albertoni (known as Cardinal Altieri following his adoption), and later his father Angelo, in order to continue the Altieri family line. The monetary advantage for the Albertoni (now Altieri) was reinforced with unprecedented political power following the election of Emilio Altieri to the papal throne on 29 April 1670 and, taking the name Clement X, Emilio’s immediate appointment of Cardinal Paluzzo as *cardinale nipote*.¹¹ Later that same year, the hearings for the beatification of Ludovica Albertoni were opened before the Congregation of Rites, initiating the process of official recognition for Clement’s newly adopted ancestor.¹²

Born in 1473, Ludovica was deeply devout from an early age, but it wasn’t until 1506, after the death of her husband, fellow Roman noble Giacomo Della Cetera, that Ludovica became a member of the tertiary order of the Franciscans at San Francesco a Ripa, located in the Trastevere district of Rome. Within her lifetime, Ludovica was referred to as the “mother of the

poor” and was known specifically for her charity, giving bread to those in need with gold and silver coins hidden inside, aspects emphasized by the frescos in the Altieri Chapel.¹³ At the age of sixty, Ludovica came down with a fever, which she bore with acceptance and patience before dying peacefully on 31 January 1533. Ludovica’s death is noted not just for its inclusion of the elements of a saintly death, but due to a vision Ludovica experienced the day before. According to her biographers, on the day preceding her death Ludovica received the Viaticum before asking to be left alone in her room; when a servant returned hours later, they found Ludovica flushed and full of joy, as if she had just “returned from paradise.”¹⁴ Taken to be Ludovica’s mystical union with the divine, this event has featured heavily in interpretations of Bernini’s *Ludovica*, yet did not play a defining role in her beatification. Ludovica’s cult was sanctioned by Clement X on 28 January 1671, conferring the title of *beata* and authorizing devotion to Ludovica, effectively commemorating the pope’s adopted ancestor and further elevating the spiritual status of the Altieri family.

While the circumstances surrounding the sculpture’s commission are murky, Bernini’s representation of Ludovica is masterfully executed, leading many to assert that the work was completed almost entirely by Bernini’s hand.¹⁵ The exact narrative moment and devotional significance of the altarpiece, however, has not been as universally accepted as the artist’s skill. Indeed, interpretations of the *Ludovica* have tended to rely on iconographic readings based on devotional literature or the chapel’s decorative elements rather than being rooted in an analysis of the statue itself. Such interpretive strategies have directly impacted and limited further engagement with the *Ludovica*, a situation exacerbated by the sculpture’s complex visual language which precludes immediate recognition by contemporary viewers. This is not to say that Bernini was not deeply involved in creating immersive experiences or to downplay the

contributions made by the emblems or other elements of the Altieri Chapel, but rather to return our focus to the sculpture itself. The lack of direct engagement with the *Ludovica* is likely the result of its appearance; shown reclining on a bed, the rumpled sheets draw attention to a sensuality which has often alarmed scholars (Fig. 1). Ludovica presses her splayed fingers to her chest, the angle of her tilted head made more extreme by the inexplicable contraction of her upper body, lifting her chest upwards and creating tension in her bent knees and flexed toes. Bernini has swathed all of this in detailed, looping folds of voluminous drapery, generating a provocative interplay between body and drapery, internal and external. While Walter Weibel claims that any “lasciviousness” is automatically excluded by the lack of a secondary figure, the exact cause of such an intense emotional or physical response (for the viewer is unsure which) remains ambiguous, caught between an agonized death and an ecstatic union.¹⁶ Interestingly, a comparison with Bernini’s earlier *Ecstasy of St. Teresa* does not immediately clarify Ludovica’s experience (Fig. 2). In the *St. Teresa*, the saint’s body is consumed by her drapery, a shifting mass of angular pleats from which head, delicate hands, and flexing toes emerge along the edges. In part, such a comparison serves to demonstrate the unique quality of Ludovica’s drapery, which is more fluid than the planar composition of Teresa’s habit and is characterized by the deeply carved, heavily shadowed, looping folds that became characteristic of Bernini’s late style.

Perhaps prompted by its apparent similarity to the *St. Teresa*, scholars have sought to identify a singular narrative moment to explain the *Ludovica*’s unusual composition. While the *St. Teresa* has a clear textual source in her autobiography, namely the transverberation which Bernini took as the basis of his composition, a source for the *Ludovica* is less readily apparent. Like St. Teresa, Ludovica experienced miraculous occurrences during her life, events which are often placed in direct relation to reception of the Eucharist, such as Ludovica’s levitation

following communion.¹⁷ While the *beata*'s biographers record these events, they place greater emphasis on her charitable works and her similarity to (or imitation of) other religious women, such as St. Francesca Romana. The intentional alignment of Ludovica with sanctified women, both by her biographers and within the Altieri Chapel itself, was likely motivated by the Albertoni/Altieri hopes for canonization.¹⁸ Such imitation of previous saints does not, however, lend clarity to the narrative moment depicted, an issue that has divided scholars into two primary camps: those who argue Ludovica is in the throes of death (painful or otherwise), and those who see her as undergoing a mystical or ecstatic experience of the divine. Both of Bernini's period biographers, Domenico Bernini and Filippo Baldinucci, specifically refer to Ludovica as being in the "throes of death," phrasing which is likely a holdover from the shared manuscript used by both authors as the basis of their accounts.¹⁹ Many of the preeminent Bernini scholars, including Howard Hibbard and Rudolf Wittkower, follow the lead of these biographers yet offer extensive treatment of the *Ludovica* in comparison to the limited lines included in the period texts.²⁰ Their focus on death is reasonably based on the function and decoration of the chapel, which is first and foremost a funerary monument: the sculpture rests above the sarcophagus-shaped altar containing Ludovica's remains, while reliefs of torches, flaming hearts, and pomegranates (all emblems of death) frame Giovanni Battista Gaulli's altar painting, *Virgin and Child with St. Anne*. The jasper drapery, which separates and elevates the *Ludovica* over the altar, has even been interpreted as a funerary shroud and is recognized by many scholars as replicating the form of Ludovica in its heavy, undulating folds.²¹

Even those scholars who believe Ludovica to be experiencing the moment of death, however, use descriptive language equally appropriate for visions. Hibbard, for instance, refers to a "hallucinatory experience," while Wittkower notes the "passionate spirituality of the figure,"

and Weibel describes her half-open eyes as seeing the “blessedness of Paradise.”²² It is the figure of Ludovica herself that has prompted the frequent claims of both death and ecstasy, with scholars citing the backward thrust of her head, the tension apparent in her torso (evident even through the drapery) which causes her chest to lift from the pillows, her clutching gesture, and the intensely folded, irrational drapery. Some scholars have made such visionary interpretations explicit, stating that Ludovica is undergoing some kind of intimate contact with the divine, with different authors articulating the exact nature of this contact in disparate ways. Giovanni Careri, in particular, pushes against a clear identification with death, finding that there is “no intrinsic element in Ludovica’s pose” for such an assertion and sees the *Ludovica* as a “portrayal of mystic ecstasy.”²³ Similarly, Anthony Blunt is unconvinced that this is the moment of death, stating that Ludovica is “clearly in a state of ecstasy rather than in the death agony,” a sentiment echoed by Robert Petersson, Patricia Simons, and Steven Ostrow.²⁴ Perhaps the most famous ecstatic interpretation of the *Ludovica* is that of Frank Sommer, who claims Ludovica suffers from an “attack” of *incendium amoris*, reading the undulating jasper drapery as a blanket which Ludovica has cast off in the midst of her “religious ecstasy.”²⁵ This interpretation is partially based in Sommer’s observation that “no one, even in the seventeenth century, ‘went to bed’ fully clothed and wearing shoes,” providing one of the most cited observations on the *beata*.²⁶ In contrast, scholars such as Christopher Black have directly related Ludovica’s ecstatic experience to her reception of the last rites, namely the Viaticum.²⁷

There are also those who do not create a strong distinction between death and ecstasy, either in an attempt to avoid falling into the established dichotomy, or by recognizing the close connection between death and divine contact. Such scholars include Charles Scribner III, who considers the question of narrative moment to be “moot” as the *Ludovica* coalesces death and

mysticism into a “single image,” and Francesco Quinterio, who unites death and divine love through the Song of Songs.²⁸ In Shelley Perlove’s multilayered reading, Ludovica is taken as experiencing the “culmination of an ideal religious life” of a “mystical union in death,” thereby fusing death and intimate contact with the divine.²⁹ The conflation of death and mystical union does, however, introduce a means of addressing the *Ludovica*’s appearance by emphasizing the similarity between the two experiences. Both death and ecstatic visions are, at their core, moments of transition in which the relationship between the body and soul is altered or fundamentally redefined. The more common occurrence, death, is characterized by the separation of the soul from the body—death, in fact, truly refers only to the body, as it is the physical form which ceases to be animated and then gives way to decay. Descriptions of the narrative moment such as when the “soul leaves her body” or which see Ludovica as experiencing the “ecstatic release of a virtuous death” refer to the end of life but imply a variety of spiritual experiences.³⁰ Within the Catholic tradition, death is recognized as the gateway to heaven, with death itself simply a glorified transition in the continued life of the soul.³¹ Understood as an enduring entity, there is no death or terminus of the soul but rather its effective freedom: no longer bound to a body, the soul is able to progress along its spiritual journey, ostensibly bringing it in closer contact with the divine through its ascension. Particularly the deaths of saints, to which Ludovica is closely related, are understood as a triumph over mortality.³²

This separation of the soul in death entails a permeability of the body which, as a tabernacle for the soul during life, must be porous enough to allow the soul passage beyond itself upon one’s bodily death. Operating across the boundary between the interior and the exterior, death necessitates a separation of the (interior) soul from the (exterior) body. As a point of

transition, death was of great importance to Bernini, becoming a central focus of his devotion, religious practice, and artistic production towards the end of his life. Critical work has already been done to consider Bernini and death; Irving Lavin's aptly named articles "Bernini's Death" and "The *Ars Moriendi* and the *Sangue di Cristo*" address some of the last works produced by Bernini and relate them directly to the artist's preparation for, and eventual, death.³³ Lavin connects Bernini's preoccupation and preparation for death to his final artistic productions, seeing the *Sangue di Cristo* and the bust of the Savior as "not simply pious works by an old man of genius and faith," but as intentional illustrations of "Bernini's art of dying."³⁴ While effectively connecting Bernini's late works to his religious investments and understanding of death, Lavin overlooks the *Ludovica*, which plays a crucial role in this development. Begun in 1671 and completed in 1674, the *Blessed Ludovica Albertoni* was executed between the *Sangue di Cristo* of 1670 and Bernini's final work, the bust of the Savior, begun in 1679.³⁵ The *Ludovica* is thus directly relevant to the arguments made by Lavin, and, it will be argued, expands our understanding of the specificity of the visual language Bernini developed in this context.

Lavin specifically considers Bernini's engagement with the *Ars Moriendi* tradition, convincingly demonstrating that it provided the basis for the artist's approach to his own death as well as his final works. Concerned with the preparation for death, the *Ars Moriendi* is a "complete and intelligible guide to the business of dying" for "use in that all-important and inescapable hour."³⁶ Particularly popular during the late fifteenth century, the influence of literature dedicated to the art of dying stretched into the eighteenth century.³⁷ Lavin specifically points to a revival of the *Ars Moriendi* in the beginning of the seventeenth century centered around the Jesuit order in Rome.³⁸ An example of this renewed interest can be seen in the Jesuit theologian Robert Bellarmino's publication of *De Arte Bene Moriendi* in 1620, which closely

follows the *Ars Moriendi* tradition. Rather than focusing on the moment of death, however, Bellarmino's preparations are extended to include the individual's whole life, adopting the perspective that "he who would die well, should live well," and placing a greater emphasis on the Eucharist.³⁹ In direct relation to Bellarmino's publication was the foundation of the Confraternity of the Good Death in 1648 by Vincenzo Caraffa of the Society of Jesus.⁴⁰ This confraternity participated in regular Friday devotions focused on the Eucharist and Christ's crucifixion and wounds, seeking the attainment of a good death for its members.⁴¹ Bernini participated in these devotions for forty years, indicating his personal and sustained involvement in the preparation for death.⁴² Furthermore, Bernini can be understood as personally involved in the revival of the *Ars Moriendi* through his close ties to his nephew, Father Marchese, who contributed to the literature on the *Ars Moriendi* through works such as the *Preparamento a ben morire*, published posthumously but of which Bernini was almost certainly aware.⁴³

More than participating in a religious confraternity, it is clear from the historical record that Bernini personally thought deeply about death and the process of a good death, considerations which contributed to and nuanced his conception of the *Ludovica*. Bernini has long been recognized for critically considering religious matters, with the Jesuit General, Father Giovanni Paolo Oliva, recorded to have equated the discussion of spiritual matters with Bernini to a doctoral thesis defense.⁴⁴ Domenico describes his father as "not satisfied with mere common notions," instead adhering to "those more sublime ones," an indication of Bernini's careful intellectual investigation of religious beliefs.⁴⁵ This same critical study can be seen in Bernini's extensive preparations for death. While Bernini died on 28 November 1680, just nine days before his eighty-second birthday, both Baldinucci and Domenico emphasize his contemplation of death from a much earlier date, using descriptive terms which suggest a passionate and extreme focus.

Indeed, Baldinucci states that Bernini turned his “most intense thoughts to attaining eternal repose,” keeping fixed in his mind “an intense awareness of death,” with Domenico stressing that Bernini “concentrated on nothing but that passage, and of nothing else did he talk.”⁴⁶ Domenico further recounts that Bernini considered death to be a difficult transit “for all because for all it was an entirely new experience” and thus spent a considerable amount of time “imagining for himself what it would be like” in order to “become more accustomed to it and thus better prepared to do battle with the real thing.”⁴⁷ This intense mental focus is seen in his meticulous preparation for death, the expression of which was likely heavily influenced by Father Marchese, who dedicated four full chapters to exercises of this kind in his *Preparamento a ben morire*.⁴⁸ Described by Lavin as a lifelong process, the time Bernini dedicated to the practice of preparing for death is evidenced by his development of a sign language with Father Marchese which allowed Bernini to communicate without the use of speech.⁴⁹ Such preparation is directly tied to the *Ars Moriendi* tradition, with a series of interrogative questions posed to the dying and whose answers are of “paramount importance” as they impact the fate of their soul.⁵⁰ Bernini’s development of a sign language was thus both practical and served an important salvific purpose in ensuring his ability to respond at the crucial time. Due to its close paralleling of the *Ars Moriendi*, Bernini’s death has been interpreted by Lavin as a literal enactment of the tradition, a kind of “artwork, diligently prepared and carefully executed.”⁵¹ Bernini’s “good death” was the ultimate goal of the artist, and reflected his deep devotion and effective implementation of the tools at his disposal, including the *Ars Moriendi* tradition.

Guided by the *Ars Moriendi*, Bernini consistently contemplated death as a crucial moment in one’s spiritual life. As a religiously sanctioned and natural breaching of the body, death places considerations of the internal and external at the fore. As the previous scholarly

descriptions have demonstrated, this exchange is also deeply tied to ecstatic visions. Indeed, the same permeability necessitated by death is characteristic of visionary or ecstatic contact with the divine, alternatively understood as the divine's penetration of the body in order to act upon the soul or as the soul leaving the body to interact with the divine on an elevated spiritual plane. The exact boundaries of the body and spirit are blurred by such experiences, adding the element of unknowability which complicates the discussion of such events. Petersson explicitly connects ecstasy and death when discussing the *St. Teresa*, viewing her frequent visions as a "series of 'little deaths'" which helped to prepare her for the "extraordinary spiritual conditions she would experience later," effectively training the body to be subject to the soul.⁵² As in death, divine ecstasy requires an acknowledgement of the fluid boundary between the body and soul, such that each could participate in the mystical experience. Both death and ecstasy are, at their core, experiences of intimate contact with the divine, distinguished by the duration of this contact, with visions offering a fleeting intimacy with God while death is, ostensibly, the start of perpetual unity. Described as the final union, death is presented as the ultimate mystical experience, extended into the eternity of celestial time. This alignment helps to clarify the narrative confusion and ambiguous placement of the *Ludovica*, explaining the prominence of contrasting interpretations of death or unity since the event is inherently both. What is missing in the scholarly debate over narrative moment is consideration of the parallel nature and the complex play of internal and external which such events require. Rather than participate in the protracted debate over the narrative moment Bernini sought to represent, the present study will seek to delineate the centrality of period concepts of permeability to the work's sculptural language.

Concepts of permeability are reinforced by gendered readings of the *Ludovica*, and while it seems unnecessary to state that Ludovica herself is gendered female, this identification bore great consequence within the period. By design, the female body is intended to be opened and entered for the perpetuation of humanity, making permeability a central tenant of the female form. Deeply tied to this natural penetrability is the belief that women possess a special predilection for mystical union or visions, experiences typically “described, framed, written and represented in and by a discursive tradition” based in allegories of love, marriage, and union.⁵³ These allegories are rendered in terms of a mystic, female soul; the soul becomes woman or bride, with male mystics adopting female gendering in order to enact a reversal of status or explore spirituality through metaphors of sexual union.⁵⁴ Even the *Ars Moriendi* includes prayers which gender the soul as female.⁵⁵ It is women’s supposedly porous nature that allows for their greater spiritual contact, a predisposition seen repeatedly in the literature.⁵⁶ As a female mystic, Ludovica’s gendering is only heightened by the most communicative component of the sculpture: its drapery. Both in terms of form and period thought, Ludovica’s drapery invites gendered readings, with drapery understood and defined as occupying a “subordinate and feminized position” in relation to the inherently “primary and masculine” body.⁵⁷ Lingo has considered the early modern insistence that drapery “yield, adapt, and adhere to the body,” thereby conforming to period requirements of modesty and decorum.⁵⁸ This feminization of drapery can be seen within Leon Battista Alberti’s *On Painting* and extended into the nineteenth century, situating Bernini’s concentration on drapery within established gendered terms.⁵⁹ Seen in its proper context, Bernini’s prioritization of drapery over the (historically) dominant and masculine body can be recognized as “profoundly transgressive,” making its insistent usage in the *Ludovica* particularly striking.⁶⁰ Through Bernini’s manipulation of the feminized drapery,

including deeply drilled and opened folds, the *Ludovica* can be understood to enact a series of gendered spiritual and bodily associations that cohere around period concepts of permeability.

The very carving of the sculpture demonstrates the work's permeability and engagement with internal and external exchange. The *Ludovica* is largely composed of deeply carved drapery folds, a presentation which is only minimally interrupted by the exposure of Ludovica's face and hands. Hibbard has identified this dominance of the drapery over the body within Bernini's late style, finding that his "drapery becomes a *chiaroscuro* pattern" which "overpowers the potentialities of the face and body alone."⁶¹ Bernini's draperies communicate more, however, than the intensification of emotional expression seen by Hibbard, engaging directly with permeability. Elongated teardrops of deep shadow where a complete reversal of direction creates a fold, slightly pinched at one end, are used relentlessly in the rendering of Ludovica's habit and in Bernini's late drapery style more generally. This oblong opening literally enacts the permeability of the body: the hard marble is penetrated by drilling, breaking into the defined form of the figure and creating openings which complicate the perception of internal and external. Take, for instance, Ludovica's right arm, where the sleeve is collapsed into repeated folds at her elbow in accordance to the contraction of her limb (Fig. 3). While these folds are justified by a directional reversal of fabric and the action of the body beneath, Bernini has chosen to excavate these folds, removing material to emphasize the depth and shape of these creases at the expense of the body beneath. When considering the volume of the upper arm just below the fabric, it becomes clear that Bernini has pierced the body in order to create this particular effect. As such, the boundaries of the body are probed, broken, and redefined by Bernini's intentional handling of the drapery.

The privileging of drapery's "expressive potential" over the description of the body is not bound exclusively to Bernini's late style, although it did become more pronounced in the *Ludovica*.⁶² Rather, Bernini's adoption of this pinched drapery fold can be seen within his first religious figure, the *St. Bibiana*, which, fittingly, is also Bernini's first instance of a draped figure (Fig. 4). As Wittkower has remarked, the folds of Bibiana's mantle are "freed from the law of gravity," a break with traditional, rational representations of drapery.⁶³ Bernini enacts this break through a looping fold and resulting oblong opening, located just to the left and above Bibiana's left hand, which presses her mantle and martyr's palm to her thigh. This loop of drapery parallels the angle of the metal frond, reinforced by a similar fold which meets the column below Bibiana's right hip. This figure-eight of drapery, which Wittkower sees as participating in the excitement of Bibiana's silent communion with God, in this study is read to mark the emergence of Bernini's signature drapery style.⁶⁴ While the *St. Bibiana* can be seen as the first instance in which drapery participates, as Wittkower puts it, in the "mental attitude of the figure," it was not until the *St. Longinus* for the crossing of St. Peter's, as Lingo argues, that the last vestige of rational drapery gave way to undulating patterns of folds which obscure, rather than explain, the body beneath (Fig. 5).⁶⁵ Longinus' garments are striking not just for their disruption of the Renaissance body but for Bernini's use of the pinched, oblong opening, creating pockets of dark shadow across the work which activate and pierce the form.⁶⁶ The same looping fold of the *St. Bibiana* is clearly seen in the radiating fabric of Longinus' robe, which presents numerous deeply carved openings across his torso as a means of managing the great swath of fabric. Almost without sculptural precedent, these pinched folds became characteristic of Bernini's work. Before Bernini's intervention, there was not sufficient volume or agency to the draperies for them to fold back, let alone create cavernous openings in the manner seen in the *St. Longinus*

and later works. As has been widely noted, the *St. Longinus* did not remain an isolated instance for long, and is instead recognizable as the origin point of Bernini's mature style.

It is specifically Bernini's drapery which most clearly demonstrates the development of his mature style, with these oblong openings becoming increasingly prevalent. Wittkower sees Bernini's late style as beginning in the early 1660s, wherein his treatment of garments becomes "increasingly impetuous, turbulent, and sophisticated," losing their character as real material and instead becoming "abstract patterns capable of conveying...passionate spirituality."⁶⁷ It is clear from any consideration of Bernini's late works that his drapery became more expressive as it came to rely less on the body, now riddled with twisting undulations and ever deepening crevices and furrows. This development culminates in the drapery of the *Blessed Ludovica Albertoni*, its originality emphasized by comparison to the *Ecstasy of St. Teresa* produced twenty years earlier (Fig. 2). Interestingly, the *St. Teresa* contains only one instance of a truly cavernous fold such as those seen in the *Ludovica*, and it is far removed from the body, seen to the extreme left of St. Teresa as the drapery curls over the cloud ledge on the far side of the angel. Indeed, very few folds have the complete reversal of direction which characterizes Bernini's oblong openings, with the limited instances in the *St. Teresa* appearing flat rather than deeply carved. This is not to position the *Ludovica* as merely the most extreme instance of the artist's style, as is typical in the treatment of artists' late works, but rather to remain attentive to the uniqueness of his artistic process and acknowledge its progression. Rather than a continuation of an idiosyncratic folding pattern, Bernini pushed the oblong opening to its representational limits, actualizing the stylistic motif's latent potential to produce rich and specific meanings.

While almost entirely comprised of deeply drilled, oblong drapery folds, the most striking passage is seen in the very center of the *Ludovica* (Fig. 1). Placed over the apex of the *beata's*

legs, a cavernous opening dominates the sculptural form. Zig zag folds, which complete a full three turns between Ludovica's left hand and corresponding bent knee, signal the presence of the deep spiral at the center of the sculpture. The gaze is led down the slope of Ludovica's extended veil, through the tight turns of these stacked folds, and deposited at a heavily shadowed opening. The overall form of this folding pattern is most apparent in black and white images, where the protruding lip immediately below the zig zags moves counter-clockwise in a pinched spiral, with the upper lip extending into the twisted cord of drapery running between the *beata's* legs (Fig. 6). When less starkly lit, internal folds are visible within this cavity, defining the end of the spiral on the left, while Ludovica's tensed right knee compresses the opening to a point on the right (Fig. 7). Another pleat of drapery creates the inner spiral; its shell-like form is a more open and thin-edged looping fold of the type seen throughout Bernini's work. For ease of reference, it is this deeply shadowed oblong opening of drapery which will be referred to as the "cavernous opening" and carefully considered in the present examination. While not precisely related to caves or caverns based on the internal folds, which interrupt its shadowed interior and remind the viewer of its limited space, the term "cavernous" emphasizes the deep drilling necessary to produce this passage and its inherent opening up (or out) of the sculptural body. Indicative of Bernini's drapery style, the cavernous opening is unique not just for its size and intensity but also for its placement and insistent visibility. By considering Bernini's conceptual process when designing the *Ludovica* and the religious significance of such an inclusion, this drapery fold can be recognized as an integral component of the sculpture, visualizing and physically enacting the permeability of the body, and underscoring gendered readings through its bodily form.

The cavernous opening has not gone unnoticed by scholars, but the descriptive terms used and the lack of sustained consideration indicates a discomfort or hesitancy over engagement

which is characteristic of scholarly treatments of drapery more generally. The sexual overtones inherent in the ovoid opening's location and evocative shape have likely further deterred detailed study. Aldous Huxley describes the drapery as "tripe-like" and sees the *Ludovica* as evidence that the "physiology" of an ecstatic is "as disquietingly private as anyone else's," a description which suggests walking in on a sexual moment.⁶⁸ While not specifically addressing the cavernous opening, Huxley's comments convey the discomfort which viewers experience when considering the drapery of the *Ludovica*. Wittkower also acknowledges the expressive potential of the drapery, but remains focused just above the cavernous opening, pointing instead to the "deeply undercut parallel folds," referring to the zig zag pleats just over Ludovica's left hip, and the cord of drapery which runs between her legs.⁶⁹ Wittkower considers the expression of Bernini's late drapery style in the *Ludovica* in terms of verticals and horizontals, emphasizing the "violence" with which these two directions come together, yet only identifies horizontal passages.⁷⁰ Other scholars are not quite so tentative, although they remain reticent in their descriptions. Hibbard, for example, considers the "unusual turbulence of drapery that loops above and bunches below her vitals" as indicating the "focal point" of Ludovica's suffering.⁷¹ While not offering a precise location, Hibbard's use of "vitals" serves as a tactful acknowledgement. In comparing the *Ludovica* and the *St. Teresa*, Andrea Bolland points to a "shallow concavity at mid-torso" in both figures yet does not offer further consideration, focusing on the body rather than the drapery.⁷² For Weibel the "psychic excitement" of the *Ludovica* is "exploited in the drapery which winds and twists in wild folds... particularly over the lap of the saint."⁷³ Even this description, which includes a direct reference to the cavernous opening, is unwilling to offer more precise description or an extended treatment. As the most direct acknowledgement of the cavernous opening, these examples nonetheless demonstrate the

summary treatment of drapery's expressive function, offering veiled reference in place of explicit engagement and shying away from interpretation that is generally accorded to the gestural significance of the body.

Part of what is offered by the cavernous opening is a persistent emphasis on internal viewing. Implying a bodily opening, this drapery passage becomes an intentional site of entry and display for interior gazing. Such penetration of the body, whether that of Jesus Christ or a criminal, engenders considerations of internal and external which, in the early modern period, were closely tied to practices of dissection. A growing interest in anatomical knowledge of the body can clearly be seen from the late Middle Ages into the seventeenth century; this interest was so widespread that by the sixteenth century in Padua the admission fees for anatomical theatres were waived with the intent of making such demonstrations available to all.⁷⁴ By the seventeenth century in Italy, the audiences of the anatomy theatres were “truly public in their composition” and were considered by some professionals to simply be “spectacles for the masses.”⁷⁵ Rather than the purview of a select few, anatomical dissection was a widespread cultural phenomenon which prioritized individual experience and the attainment of knowledge by looking into the opened body. Beyond the cavernous opening, the *Ludovica*, as a sculptural representation of an internal, spiritual experience, inherently participates in the translation from interior to exterior. Bernini's challenge, like that of any artist representing the inherently non-visual in visual terms, is to communicate through outward signs that which is not physically shown. In this way, the figure—or rather the drapery—becomes the site of artistic translation from one realm to another since visual art, as the name suggests, can only communicate optically.⁷⁶ What human dissection made abundantly clear was the exact disconnect between the exterior qualities of the body and its internal operations, with the consistently (visibly) accessible

exterior concealing complex internal systems of muscles, nerves, and organs.⁷⁷ This new understanding of the human body resulted in a “reawakening of interest in the body’s *penetrable* nature,” with the body now recognized as a space to be “peered into, opened out, ‘displayed,’” an interest also conveyed by the *Ludovica*’s drapery.⁷⁸

In both art and dissection, this tension between the interior and exterior in the early modern period resulted in a culture in which internal viewing was a crucial means of attaining knowledge. Anatomical dissection generated interest in the body’s interior, but presented such opening as a site of truth, perceiving “male and female bodies as places of entry, where the exterior might be penetrated to reveal knowledge of the interior.”⁷⁹ The correlation of bodily knowing with fact was such that wounds or openings were thought to allow the “truth inside the body to usher forth.”⁸⁰ While most of the bodies available for dissection were the corpses of criminals, this did not diminish the perception that to open and look into such bodies was to trace the “‘pattern’ of the divine” in its “physical reality,” offering an “exploration into the central mystery of God’s operation in the world.”⁸¹ Particularly relevant to the *Ludovica* was the tendency for anatomical publications to place the uterus as the corporeal center, further binding the sculpture’s unusual drapery to considerations of bodily opening as a site of exploration and gendered readings.⁸² While of great interest, the female body was less accessible to the anatomist than that of males, meaning that the female reproductive system remained largely misunderstood.⁸³ This interest in women’s bodies extended even to the Virgin Mary, with some theologians made uncomfortable by what they felt to be an “odd interest in the interior of the Virgin’s body.”⁸⁴ Such period perceptions underscore the mysterious nature of the cavernous opening in the *Ludovica*, which invites visual investigation for the attainment of knowledge but

which does not readily offer (or, to some anatomists, intentionally conceals) exactly this understanding.

Looking into the body became a means of producing knowledge and attaining truth, engagement which bears salvific and Eucharistic connotations, furnishing the *Ludovica*'s cavernous opening with additional valences. Christ's partitioning of his own body during the last supper has been read by Jonathan Sawday as a form of self-dissection, and while the viewing of Christ's body was ostensibly to establish truth (that of his resurrection and thus human redemption), it was equated more generally with the "scientific scrutiny of the human interior."⁸⁵ Such articulations make the link between Christ, dissection, and Eucharistic considerations of the body clear, a connection reinforced and effectively bridged by the popularity of Doubting Thomas imagery in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁸⁶ Erin Benay and Lisa Rafanelli identify Thomas' penetration of Christ's side wound as "analogous to the ingestion of the sacrament during Mass," a connection made by artists and theologians from the late medieval period and which continued to be articulated throughout the late sixteenth century.⁸⁷ Like the *Ludovica*, Doubting Thomas imagery addressed period concerns of interior and exterior through a complex visual language of bodily opening and penetration. It was through the investigation of the body's interior that knowledge was able to be produced, including knowledge of the Eucharist and its salvific effect. The *Ludovica* participates directly in these cultural considerations through Bernini's handling of drapery, which opens the body for viewing and theological consideration.

The possibility of interior viewing is not limited to the finished sculpture, but is present in its preparatory works as well. Scholars have more consistently and willingly identified the centrality of the cavernous opening within a preparatory sketch, held by the Museum der

Bildenden Künste in Leipzig, than within the *Ludovica* itself (Fig. 8). The pen and ink Leipzig drawing is one of only three known preparatory works on paper by Bernini for the Altieri Chapel, with the second considering the architectural framing of the chapel and the third, held in a private collection, considering the triangular fold of drapery which extends past Ludovica's right knee and onto the mattress below.⁸⁸ When addressing Bernini's use of preparatory drawings and models, Ian Wardropper cites Bernini's consistent turn to paper when working out details for a sculptural project and specifically when studying drapery.⁸⁹ This emphasis can be seen in the Leipzig drawing, which bears an even more intensive focus on the drapery than other sketches by Bernini, with the body of Ludovica only summarily indicated beneath the swaths of fabric.⁹⁰ Originating early in Bernini's design process, the folds' level of finish demonstrates their prioritization over the body, suggesting the primacy of drapery within Bernini's initial conception. On the same sheet Bernini produced two sketches of the *Ludovica*'s drapery, stacked one on top of the other, which consider Ludovica independent of the mattress, pillows, and architectural framing. Bruce Boucher, Wardropper, Ostrow, and Perlove, among others, all readily identify Bernini's early preoccupation with drapery in the Leipzig drawing, specifically pointing to the large loop over the *beata*'s left hip which falls in a flattened fold over her right knee. Perlove identifies this as being of "major concern," while Ostrow proposes this as being a "key fold" and the likely site at which Bernini began his sketch.⁹¹ Bernini is, as these scholars have already noted, deeply concerned with the treatment of Ludovica's drapery, both during its conception and in the finished sculpture.

The beginnings of the cavernous opening can be seen in both iterations of the Leipzig drawing, a passage of drapery emphasized by the artist's handling. In the top sketch, Bernini repeatedly reinforced the outline and shaded the interior of the cavernous loop starting over

Ludovica's left hip. Pinched together by an internal fold which collapses inward to touch the inside of her upper left thigh, these folds create an inverted teardrop of shadow before condensing into the strong diagonal which terminates in the flat pleat over the *beata's* right knee. Interestingly, these instances of heavy, flat folds (which are repeated in the parallel triangular folds connecting the figure of Ludovica to the mattress) are highly reminiscent of the *St. Teresa*. The significance of this area of drapery is reinforced by its repetition and development in the lower sketch, foregrounding this loop which now appears as a twisted hourglass with internal, parallel folds. Only a handful of light marks are offered to imply the presence of Ludovica's knees and torso in contrast to the strong hourglass of drapery which dominates this second iteration. In both renditions, Bernini has reinforced the lines of the cavernous opening while leaving the *beata's* hands and feet hastily delineated by a singular outline. Ludovica's face is not even included on the sheet, an effect which may be due to later trimming along the left vertical edge and potentially across the top horizontal edge as well.⁹² Even before such changes, however, the emphasis of the Leipzig drawing remained on the central passage of drapery, the level of detail diminishing near Ludovica's head to become a mere suggestion of form. Furthermore, assuming additional width and height of the sheet simply places the darkened pleat of drapery more assuredly in its center, and thus as a visual (and compositional) focus.

Both this passage of drapery and the arc of Ludovica's veil over her left elbow are redefined within the later *bozzetto* and finished sculpture, yet their presence in the Leipzig drawing and continued development indicate their centrality within Bernini's conception. It is Ludovica's drapery, or more specifically the cavernous opening, with which Bernini's first iteration of the *Ludovica* began. Retaining the deeply shadowed opening, Bernini has shifted its orientation and placement within the finished sculpture, moving from a vertical to a horizontal

alignment and from outside the figure (breaking past her left hip) to centered between the *beata*'s legs. Rather than decreasing its erotic resonance, Bernini's continued consideration and adaptation of this passage of drapery has increased the potentiality of layered meanings, some more bodily than others. Perhaps it is for this reason that scholars have willingly acknowledged Bernini's intense focus on this area of drapery within the Leipzig sketch but do not then consider its role in the finished sculpture. Of the scholars already mentioned, only Ostrow tracks this fold to its culmination within the *Ludovica*, acknowledging that while the loop is now reduced in size it remains a "dominant feature of the design."⁹³ Furthermore, Ostrow is the only scholar, to my knowledge, who mentions Bernini's addition of the "series of small folds and a deeply carved spiral of drapery at the center of the torso."⁹⁴

A more advanced stage of Bernini's preparatory process for the *Blessed Ludovica Albertoni* can be seen in a terracotta *bozzetto* held at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (Fig. 9).⁹⁵ This *bozzetto* is closely related to the finished form of the *Ludovica*, replicating the figural composition with only slight variation to the drapery folds, namely in the depth of their excavation, and the omission of detailing of the pillow. While other clay models have previously been associated with the *Ludovica*, the Victoria and Albert *bozzetto* is the only one currently attributed to Bernini and consistent with his overall style. More finished than the Leipzig drawing, Bernini has resolved the folds at the center of the sculpture, with the ovoid opening now apparent at the base of the zig zag folds and the earlier gap between the upper and lower body now bridged by a vertical loop of Ludovica's veil. Within the *bozzetto*, the upper lip of the cavernous opening already bears the slight tented peak and small internal folds which mark the finished sculpture. The lower edge of this passage of drapery is, however, not yet fully formed, paralleling the angular arch of the upper lip before falling off in a vertical pleat across the outer

edge of Ludovica's right thigh. As a result, the *bozzetto* does not bear the clear spiral pattern of the final cavernous opening, whose internal twist is produced in the finished sculpture by the more rounded cup of drapery, rather than paralleling the upper edge, on Ludovica's right thigh. Within the Victoria and Albert *bozzetto*, Bernini has already reoriented the vertical loop over Ludovica's left hip into an oblong opening whose horizontality is further emphasized by its pointed ends. The shallower treatment of all folds within the *bozzetto* is replaced in the finished sculpture by deep carving, creating rich shadowing and emphasizing the central position and pinched ends of the cavernous opening.

As with the Leipzig drawing, the *bozzetto* demonstrates Bernini's consistent attention to the specific form of the drapery, a meditation evidenced by the time invested in such preparatory works. Recent scholarship has pushed against and complicated the previous identification of Bernini's *bozzetti* with speed or rapid execution. Anthony Sigel, whose close technical studies of Bernini's clay works have contributed considerably to the field, articulates that while some *bozzetti* were finished in a number of hours while the clay remained a consistent texture, most were worked on for extended periods of time.⁹⁶ Commenting specifically on the rendering of Ludovica's face in the Victoria and Albert *bozzetto*, Sigel states that the level of detail demonstrates its execution in clay which had been left to harden after its initial working, evidenced by the lack of raised edges, tool marks on the surface, or clay "crumbs" which would otherwise be present.⁹⁷ The drapery was also given further refinement at this later stage, being thinned and more clearly articulated with the help of a rounded carving tool approximately three millimeters wide after its initial modeling with oval-tip tools and fingers.⁹⁸ The cloth impressions on the left arm attest to the model having been draped with a damp cloth in order to control the drying process, which allowed Bernini to repeatedly return to the model and continue working,

indicating the extended time period of its production.⁹⁹ This sustained working and consideration of the *bozzetto*'s overall effect is further seen in the late addition of a thick strip of clay along the back edge, effectively tipping the figure of Ludovica towards the viewer, inviting interior viewing by allowing for greater visibility of the *beata*'s inner drapery folds.¹⁰⁰

What is made clear by this consideration of Bernini's drawing and modeling process is the intentionality behind Bernini's execution. Rather than a singular, momentary conception of a possible iteration of Ludovica's pose produced in a matter of hours, the Victoria and Albert *bozzetto* is a sustained, intentional execution of a composition which Bernini returned to and continued to develop with care, a composition in which drapery played a crucial role. Ostrow reinforces the artistic investment behind Bernini's *bozzetti*, describing them as "produced in a deliberate, studied, and even laborious way, in a process involving many steps, each requiring careful consideration."¹⁰¹ It has even been suggested, and seems fairly likely, that Bernini's use of clay in place of wax for modeling was based in the former's ability to render additive aspects like drapery, while wax lent itself more to the manipulation of tubular forms for the modeling of the body.¹⁰² Seen by Michael Cole as "no longer being an art of the figure" but the "layering of a composition," Bernini's modeling process makes full use of the additive nature of clay, allowing him to place sheets of material over a wedged form and pinch or press it into the desired series of folds.¹⁰³ The cavernous opening can thus be understood not as an incidental passage of drapery, included to add interest or cover the figure, but rather as a meditated and deeply intentional articulation of Bernini's artistic vision for the *Ludovica*.

Bernini's choice in designing the cavernous opening to be consistently, or even insistently, visible further demonstrates the centrality of this drapery passage within the overall composition. In redesigning the Altieri Chapel, Bernini pushed back the altar wall, creating a

recessed space over and behind the altar. Widely recognized for producing immersive experiences through installations, Bernini acknowledged that a work's finished appearance is conditioned by its surrounding environment, including elements such as lighting.¹⁰⁴ In keeping with Bernini's other architectural projects, such as the Raimondi Chapel of S. Pietro of Montorio or, more famously, the Cornaro Chapel in S. Maria della Vittoria, Bernini included a concealed light source in the Altieri Chapel. Hidden from view by the framing chapel walls, two concealed windows dominate the side walls of the recess, stretching from the height of Ludovica's veil to the ceiling vaults. This chapel demonstrates Bernini's proficiency in utilizing light effects, experience he gained from previous installations and applied to the *Ludovica*. In its original conception, windows on both sides of the recess illuminated the *Ludovica*, with the left window casting raking light across Ludovica's face and pressing hands, while the right window shone over her bent knees and flexing feet. Even with the right window now covered over, the result is a brightly lit marble sculpture which seems to emerge with bodily force from the predominant darkness of the church, a phenomenon frequently described in visionary terms.¹⁰⁵ Wittkower, for instance, sees directed heavenly light as producing a "convincing impression of miracle and vision," intensifying the "experience of the supra-natural" for the viewer.¹⁰⁶ Understood by Sommer, among others, as "flooded by the Divine Light," the *Ludovica* is inherently tied to seventeenth-century concepts of light, which make a distinction between uncreated, spiritual light (*lux*) and visible light (*lumen*).¹⁰⁷ Perceived as floating or levitating above the altar, Ludovica's form resolves out of the shadows through the (seemingly) divine light streaming in through the windows.

Bernini's careful handling of the light effects in the *Ludovica* is further seen in the emphasis offered by the lighting, or rather shadowing, of the sculpted figure. By bathing

Ludovica with light from two concealed windows, Bernini intentionally cast the cavernous opening in shadow, its darkened presentation making its form clearly legible even before entering the chapel. The windows' illumination does not reach the cavernous opening, as the pinched loop of drapery defining the opening's left side protrudes beyond Ludovica's body and the rest of her drapery. The effective sheltering of this area from the falling light is further enacted by the thin lip of marble which comprises the cavernous opening's top edge, ensuring that its depth is kept in shadow. The right-side window, now covered over, would originally have cast light across the lower half of Ludovica's body. However, Ludovica's drawn up knees block such illumination from reaching the passage of drapery between her legs. Kept in perpetual shadow, the cavernous opening becomes a site of unknowing, implying the inherent mysteries of Catholicism. An oblong opening over the altar shrouded in mystery, simultaneously seen and unseen, takes on tabernacle-like significance, pointing the work towards Eucharistic connections while remaining fruitfully suspended between identifications of internal and external.

Beyond making the cavernous opening persistently visible, Bernini's use of light engages directly with the permeability of the body through the sculptural material. As previously seen, Bernini's intentional lighting effects serve to reinforce visionary interpretations of the *Ludovica*, further indicating an unmediated contact (both literal and figurative) with the divine. In accordance with understandings of *lux* as sanctifying those it touches as "recipients of divine Grace," Bernini's *Ludovica* becomes infused with the spirit of the divine and the viewer is thus made aware of this distant yet intimate contact.¹⁰⁸ Although no physical touch is represented, Ludovica experiences contact through light, a representation of spiritual unity borne by the inherent permeability of the sculptural material itself. The natural luminosity of marble is made to fully participate in this embodiment of the divine; the surface of the marble is entered into and

enlivened by the light, revealing a penetrable depth and enacting the fluidity of the body's borders. Light's ability to enter and pass through marble can be seen in Bernini's early sculptures, such as the *Apollo and Daphne*, where the marble laurel leaves have been thinned to the point of astonishing translucency, or within the *St. Teresa*, where the concealed light gives the sculpture a warmer (and more life-like) hue. As one of Bernini's final works, the *Ludovica* merges Bernini's experience of light effects and knowledge of the material, utilizing marble's natural luminosity to its full effect. Thus, Ludovica's body is understood not so much as caressed by the divine light of God, but as entered and internally touched by the divine. Tellingly, God, typically gendered male, enters into a female body, enlivening the body through this contact. The lighting of the Altieri Chapel can thus be seen to play with the visibility of a mystical event, enacting the permeability inherent to the *Ludovica*'s form and material.

Already emphasized by the lighting effects, the cavernous opening's placement at the mid-point of Ludovica's body centralizes it over the altar, presenting the cavernous opening as the natural focal point of the chapel (Fig. 10). The centrality of this passage of drapery becomes particularly significant when considering the Eucharistic rite performed in front of the altar. Bernini's choice to set the *Ludovica* not just over the altar, but raised above it, a transition bridged by the jasper drapery, causes the celebrant of the mass to stand directly before, rather than over, the sculpture. As a result, the elevation of the Eucharist places it directly in line with the cavernous opening, framing the elevation of the body and blood of Christ for both celebrant and viewer. More than a backdrop for this ritual display, Ludovica's drapery is directly implicated by, and indeed activated by, this action. Marking the moment of consecration, the elevation of the Eucharist in both species offered important visual access to the host and chalice, a necessary component of Catholic ritual which would fluctuate in importance depending on the

physical accessibility of the sacrament to the populace.¹⁰⁹ The emphasis placed on the moment of elevation, and its spiritual benefits, was so great that this “sacramental viewing” became a substitute for physical communion when frequent reception of the Eucharist was denied to the laity.¹¹⁰ The visibility of the Eucharist was of such importance that parish priests were reminded in the fourteenth century that “without light, celebration should not take place,” and additional lighting was required during the elevation as this marked the most important moment of the mass.¹¹¹ Intended to cast light across the *Ludovica* from both sides, Bernini’s hidden windows offered illumination for the celebration of mass and for the crucial moment of elevation in which visibility was key. As a means of honoring the Eucharist, the natural side lighting from the windows would help to unify the effect of the chapel, with the *Ludovica* and the Eucharist cast in the same divine light, imparting each with divine grace.

The cavernous opening’s centralized placement emphasizes and visualizes the Eucharistic connotations inherent to the *Ludovica* as an altarpiece, directly engaging with issues of permeability. In ways not clearly articulated within Catholic theology, the Eucharist underscores the complex relation between the body and soul. The nature of the Eucharist, whose accidents/appearance are bread and wine but whose substance is the body and blood of Christ, already demonstrates the transformation and fluidity of bodily forms (both literal and figurative). Beyond this, the Eucharist enters the body physically and is consumed bodily, yet its true impact is believed to be upon the soul, offering salvation and spiritual unity with the divine to the faithful. Described by religious as “strictly food for the soul” and “not bodily food but food of the soul; not of the flesh but of the heart,” the implication is of an exchange between the body and soul through which physical food becomes spiritual sustenance.¹¹² However, the Eucharist did not just act upon the spirit, as it is typically understood, but could also serve as bodily

nourishment. This can be seen in the numerous accounts of female mystics who subsisted on the tiny amount of bread and wine they received at communion, including Ludovica herself. This miraculous effect of the Eucharist is recorded among Ludovica's other saintly qualities by her seventeenth-century biographers, further binding her to the category of female mystic.¹¹³ Such accounts demonstrate the blurred distinction between internal and external with which the Eucharist inherently engages, relying on the permeability of body and soul for its crucial spiritual, and sometimes physical, work.

Even though the accounts of Ludovica's life remain largely focused on her charity and good works, miraculous events are nonetheless associated with the *beata*. Ludovica is not unique in such experiences, but rather participates in a broader history of female mystics and miraculous events. Food, both in the form of the Eucharist and through its absence, is one of the most common ways women sought to attain God, and is associated with miraculous events such as Ludovica's levitation during mass after reception of the Host.¹¹⁴ Caroline Bynum has gone as far as to claim that, at least within the thirteenth century, Eucharistic miracles were almost an entirely female genre, with devotion to the Eucharist a characteristically female concern regardless of order, region, or type of religious life.¹¹⁵ Indeed, within late medieval spirituality the majority of stigmatics were women, an event of bodily marking which was frequently the result of communion.¹¹⁶ Known specifically for her devotion to the Eucharist, St. Teresa was "often moved to ecstasy" and levitation during communion, an event which Lavin has proposed Bernini intentionally represented in the Cornaro Chapel, thereby making "visible the power of the Eucharist."¹¹⁷ While such examples are typically read in terms of unity or the natural result of devotion, they demonstrate the Eucharist's impact upon the body and tie the Eucharist to female gendering. Tropes of female mysticism undermine articulations that the Eucharist acts upon the

soul exclusively, instead presenting a more dynamic and convoluted relation between Eucharist, body, and soul, a complex exchange which persisted into the seventeenth century.

Beyond considerations of Ludovica as a female mystic, several scholars have put forward Eucharistic readings of the Altieri Chapel as part of a larger claim. Careri, for example, states that the Eucharist “represents a sort of doorway” to Ludovica’s experience which nonetheless remains “inimitable” for reasons which Careri does not clarify.¹¹⁸ In a similar vein, Perlove states that Bernini’s “unusual disposition... effectively relates the figure of the *beata* to the Eucharistic Rite celebrated before the recess” and, while acknowledging that the ceremonial elevation of the Host reaches the “height of the sculpture,” sees this “visual relationship with the Mass” as implying a “symbolic/spiritual connection as well” whose nature is not fully considered.¹¹⁹ Perlove takes the proximity of the Eucharist and the *beata* as a means of relating “Ludovica’s death ‘in the Cross’” to Christ’s sacrifice, as seen in the Eucharist, further connecting Ludovica to the Virgin Mary and the “Mystical Body” of Christ in order to conclude that Ludovica serves an intercessory role in the work of salvation.¹²⁰ Such summarization makes evident Perlove’s frequent layering of connections which tends to obscure the conclusion she seeks to present. This argumentation is coupled with a penchant for overgeneralization and a tendency to overlook the role of a saint (or *beata*) as an intercessor without requiring direct recourse to the Virgin, St. Anne, or a mirroring of Christ’s death on Calvary (among other claims). Both Perlove and Careri have connected the Eucharist to the Altieri Chapel more convincingly through Gaulli’s altar painting, where St. Anne reaches out to receive the infant Christ.¹²¹ Within the painting, the body of Christ, in the form of the Christ Child, is offered and accepted willingly, strongly paralleling the reception of the Eucharist which takes place at the altar below. Other paintings within the chapel, such as the frescoes of St. Clare and Ludovica, have also been recognized for their

Eucharistic connotations. Both female figures hold attributes which make such a connection explicit: St. Clare is shown holding a monstrance while Ludovica is represented with a loaf of bread, known from her biography to be studded with coins and intended to be given to the poor. Within her own lifetime and certainly within the cult which sprang up immediately after her death, Ludovica was closely associated with the Eucharist through her acts of charity. Interestingly, Ludovica's distribution of bread reenacts the same interplay of giving and receiving which is necessitated by the Eucharist itself, and offers multiple forms of sustenance (bread as bodily, coins as monetary). The Eucharistic connotations of the chapel, however, have yet to be fully developed in relation to the sculpture or in terms of permeability.

The Eucharistic significance of the *Ludovica* includes the technical carving of the sculptural form, whose deep drilling enacts entry, returning our consideration to the permeability of the body. Bernini's carving of the *Ludovica* has already been associated with bodily opening and internal viewing, engaging with issues of the internal and external which are also inherent to the Eucharist. While Bernini perceived his treatment of drapery to be a "special indication of his skill," his voluminous folds were censured by some period viewers.¹²² Specifically, Baldinucci notes that they were criticized as "too folded and pierced (*trafitti*)," diction identified by Lingo as bearing strong associations with wounding.¹²³ This connection becomes clearer when considering Baldinucci's entry on drapery in the dictionary of art terminology published in 1681, where he defines drapery as a principle component of painting and sculpture, stressing that it should be gracefully adapted to the figure and not obscure the form beneath.¹²⁴ In particular, Baldinucci states that the folds should not "be so deep that they appear 'to break or truncate the members of the body.'"¹²⁵ As Lingo articulates, for period viewers, Bernini's deep drilling of his drapery implied wounding or active injury to the sculpted body beneath.¹²⁶ Such penetration of

the marble demonstrated a “displacement of the body by drapery” which was “implicitly an act of barbarism” and a “return to the Gothic,” phrasing which indicates the intensity of its appearance and implications to period viewers.¹²⁷ Such interest in the disruptive entry of the body is also found slightly later, in 1729, when the sculptor Lambert-Sigisbert Adam comments on Bernini’s skill as a marble carver and tendency to create “‘eyes’ and ‘holes’ to good effect” within his sculptures.¹²⁸ The “eyes” and “holes” to which Adam refers are the deeply drilled folds within Bernini’s drapery, such as those found throughout the *Ludovica*. Interestingly, Adam specifically points to the greater translucency of marble which makes these “eyes” less dark and “crude” than similar areas of excavation found in Bernini’s clay models.¹²⁹ Significantly, Baldinucci and Adam, albeit with different primary aims, both identify Bernini’s drapery as pierced or penetrated, forms of entry which possess bodily significance.

These period descriptions have direct implications for the body beneath and engage explicitly with concerns of the interior and exterior. As Bernini’s late style developed, he turned more and more to repeatedly folded and heavily pierced drapery, an interest which seems to have culminated in the *Ludovica*, whose entire body is represented through passages of deep, penetrative drilling (Fig. 1). This technical drilling literally opens the body, transgressing prescribed barriers of interior and exterior by its breaking-through of the figure. The act of production itself becomes a consideration of how surface and form relate to one another, with the outer surface repeatedly excavated, breaking into the body beneath, thus simultaneously read as exterior surface and bodily interior. This exchange is further complicated by the physicality of the material, with the mass of the marble necessitating and reinforcing bodily considerations, a physicality simultaneously enforced and undermined by Bernini’s repeated penetrative drilling. As one of the largest and most detailed areas of drilling, the cavernous opening lies at the heart

of these considerations. Its form, in fact, directly evokes the wounding to which Baldinucci's criticism refers. Not simply opened, but pierced, this passage of drapery can be understood as deeply and (for some) troublingly related to Christ's side wound.

The gospel of John recounts how, after Christ's death on the cross, his side was pierced by a lance, creating a wound from which blood and water flowed.¹³⁰ Bernini had already considered this narrative moment with great success in his *St. Longinus*, showing the saint in the moment of miraculous conversion following his recognition of Christ as the son of God. The resulting outpouring from the side wound serves as the basis for the Eucharistic chalice containing a mixture of wine and water, miraculously becoming blood and water during the mass through transubstantiation. Crucifixion images which depict the blood from Christ's wounds being caught in a Eucharistic chalice make this connection explicit. More than the other wounds of Christ, the side wound bears a particularly strong association with the Eucharist and received special devotion.¹³¹ Upheld as the "essence of Christ's humanity," the side wound could act as a representational replacement for Christ's body, indicating its importance and ceremonial emphasis.¹³² The theological framing of Christ's side wound goes beyond injury and outpouring, however, and is frequently presented as a door or natural opening. Indeed, John 10:9 has been connected with this interpretation, stating that Christ is "the door" that "if any man enter in, he shall be saved." This interpretation shifts the focus away from the violence of the side wound's creation, complicating Christ's bodily opening and creating an oscillation between the emphasis and effacement of violence which is directly considered by Bynum.¹³³ With his side wound seen as a doorway or access, Christ's body has been associated with buildings and, perhaps more tellingly, a temple.¹³⁴ Presentations of the wound in Christ's side as a space to be entered and

inhabited by the faithful emphasizes the concept of movement from the exterior to the interior through a permeable, divine body.

As a natural bodily opening, Christ's side wound can be tied to vaginal openings, an association heavily reinforced by their appearance. Performing similar functions as generative and nurturing spaces, the visual connection between the side wound and vaginal imagery is most frequently seen in manuscript images from the Middle Ages onwards, which often show the side wound in isolation and with a vertical orientation.¹³⁵ Such images make this association clear, presenting a reddened, elliptical opening with pointed ends which can equally be read as a side wound or vaginal opening. By allowing himself to be penetrated by the lance and other instruments of the passion, Christ's very "woundedness and his submissiveness" could be read in "feminine, maternal, even erotic terms."¹³⁶ Tellingly, it is this purposeful wounding which demonstrates the permeability of Christ's body. Such positioning can be seen as part of a larger reconsideration of gender roles in the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a reorientation influenced by the interior viewing of anatomical dissection, resulting in the identification of Christ's side wound as a female opening which remained a site for male exploration.¹³⁷ By design, a vagina is an ideal metaphor for bodily opening and exchange since it acts as a mediator between the body's interior and exterior. Recognized as a point of both entry and exit, union/shelter and birth, the vagina is by necessity the doorway between the outside world and that of the body, mirroring perceptions of the side wound as natural opening. Typically seen as a component of "popular" religion, recent scholarship has instead argued that period viewers were able to recognize vaginal readings of side wound imagery.¹³⁸ Flora Lewis, Martha Easton, and Bynum have all pushed back against the notion that vaginal readings are simply a modern projection, furnishing examples in which the "sexual reference" was clear within the period.¹³⁹

This is not to efface the complicated and contested nature of such images, with female gendering of Christ often stressing gestation, birth, and lactation, observations which explicitly relate the female role of the side wound to food and underscore its relation to the Eucharist.¹⁴⁰ Nor is this to downplay contemporary or historical concerns over the description of union with Christ as a bodily, rather than spiritual, union.¹⁴¹ While typically discussed by scholars in relation to the medieval period, such concerns (and interpretations) persisted into the early modern era. For instance, the seventeenth-century French reformer Jean-Baptiste Thiers' rejection of vaginal side wound imagery demonstrates a resistance to, but awareness of, its powerful and enduring sexuality.¹⁴²

The identification of Christ's side wound with vaginal imagery can be extended to the *Ludovica's* cavernous opening, which offers support for both readings through its central positioning and striking appearance (Fig. 7). Describing the oblong opening with pinched ends framing a darkened, concealed interior, denotes their similarity: such a description could be equally applied to a vertically oriented side wound and the *Ludovica's* cavernous opening. The side wound itself has traditionally been associated with clefts or caverns, participating in a descriptive system which plays upon multiple readings of bodily opening, in keeping with the wounding and interior viewing already considered in the *Ludovica*.¹⁴³ Interestingly, vaginal readings of Christ's wound help to clarify the alarming sensuality of the sculpture, posing a visual and theological justification for its sensuous folds. The identification of the cavernous opening as a representation of Christ's side wound is perhaps most easily made through the guise of vaginal imagery; rather than looking at the "lap of the saint," the viewer looks into the delicate folds of a more intimate arrangement, inviting sexualized readings such as that given to the *St. Teresa*. The very placement and appearance of the deeply carved, mandorla-like opening

between the *beata*'s legs has resulted in the frustrated terminology of identification and description seen in previous scholarship and which also colors the present text.

In addition to the cavernous opening's centralized and insistent visibility, Bernini further considered the relation between such a vaginal form and Ludovica's body. Bernini has given the side wound/cavernous opening a horizontal axis in relation to the altar and viewer, a placement which makes it vertical in relation to the *beata*'s body, enforcing its vaginal meaning. This double orientation may be a means of distancing the symbol while retaining its multivalent meanings. Such reorientation as a means of bodily or material mitigation can be seen in such closely related examples as Stefano Maderno's *St. Cecilia*, where the saint's horizontal orientation helps distance the sculpture from concerns over the cult statue. By laying Ludovica down, Bernini was able to acknowledge and even emphasize vaginal readings while managing the sensuality of such a form, particularly necessary in a three-dimensional, figurative altarpiece. While an acknowledgement of the evocative placement and potential vaginal readings of the cavernous opening are imperative, it is the permeability of this space which has been emphasized, relating the sculpture to bodily considerations of the Eucharist in place of an overtly sexualized reading.

In keeping with its vaginal significance, the side wound bears the additional valence of birthing. In medieval visual contexts, vaginal side wounds were associated with obtaining indulgences and were most commonly connected to birthing, with the vertical side wound placed on birthing girdles as an amulet against difficult childbirth.¹⁴⁴ The cult of the Sacred Heart in particular saw the side wound as a womb, an "archetype of nurturing and sheltering space," and as a means of accessing the heart of Christ.¹⁴⁵ Such implied penetration of and entry into the body, could, through spousal imagery, be read in sensual or erotic tones, such as the opening of

the wound uncovering the “bedchamber of the heart.”¹⁴⁶ As much a site of birth as sensuality, the side wound has been recognized as the “birthplace of Christianity, from which the Church was born and through which true Christians were nursed with the blood of salvation.”¹⁴⁷ As such, the outpouring of Christ’s blood from the side wound is “analogous to the blood of birthing,” with the vaginal side wound bringing salvation into the world and offering a sheltering space for those souls who seek to “rest in the center of Christ.”¹⁴⁸ Such religious conceptions offer an image of Christ as mother and as deeply bound to salvation; the blood Christ shed on the cross is analogous to a mother giving birth, a selfless act which reflects Christ’s love for the soul as that of a mother for her child, while Christ’s offering of himself as nourishment in the form of the Eucharist is seen in terms of a nursing mother, feeding the soul with his own body and blood.¹⁴⁹ The previous association between the Eucharist and female mystics is here extended to imply a gendering of the Eucharist itself. As the female blood of birthing, the outpouring from Christ’s side is ritualistically created and consumed during each mass in the form of the Eucharistic wine and wafer. Bynum has specifically considered the gender-bending quality of Christ’s side wound within late medieval texts as a means of avoiding “implications of birth as departure or expulsion,” thereby mitigating the separation inherent to birthing.¹⁵⁰ As such, Christ is not singularly feminine but rather embodies (literally) a paradoxical nature in keeping with Catholicism’s central mysteries, seen as male and female, dead and alive, fully divine and fully human. The repeatedly reinforced concepts of Christ as male and female are reflected in the *Ludovica*’s layering of feminine forms, with this stacking of gendered aspects centered on the cavernous opening, whose vaginal appearance takes on salvific significance.

The *Ludovica*, with all of its layered readings, is not Bernini’s only artistic consideration of the side wound and Christ’s blood. Just four years before the completion of the *Ludovica*,

Bernini produced a design for the *Sangue di Cristo*, known through the engraving by Francois Spierre, which was intended to accompany Father Marchese's *Unica speranza del peccatore che consiste nel sangue del N. S. Giesù Cristo* (Fig. 11).¹⁵¹ As indicated by the title, the *Sangue di Cristo* centers on the blood of Christ as the primary avenue of salvation; overseen by God the Father and several angels, Christ hangs crucified on the cross suspended over the sea produced by the rivers of blood pouring forth from the wounds in his hands, feet, and side. The strong verticals created by these streams of blood are a central feature of the design, with the outpouring of the side wound given special consideration through the action of the Virgin, who catches Christ's blood and offers it to God the Father, enforcing her role as intercessor while emphasizing the Eucharistic connotations. It is the sea of blood, whose limitless expanse seeks to demonstrate the universality of redemption, which most directly speaks of Bernini's belief in salvation. Domenico records Bernini's assertion that "in this sea... all of his sins were drowned and could not otherwise be found by Divine Justice than amid the blood of Jesus Christ; Jesus' blood would have either caused these sins to change color or else, through its merit, would have obtained mercy for them."¹⁵² Bernini had long put stock in the efficacy of Christ's blood, considering it to be the "relic of relics," a dedication which is reflected in Marchese's *Unica speranza* in which the blood of Christ is taken as the sole remedy for a sinner and Christ is portrayed as actively desiring the sinner to partake in his blood.¹⁵³ The reasoning behind such emphasis is provided by Bernini himself, who would have been closely involved in the development of Father Marchese's ideas, stating that "God's goodness is infinite and infinite is the merit of the precious blood of His Son; and thus it is an offense to these attributes to doubt divine mercy."¹⁵⁴ Bernini articulates complete faith in the mercy of God and the universal salvation offered by Christ's blood; for the Catholic Church, to question or otherwise resist this

concept of salvation would be to reject Christ's sacrifice on the cross and God's forgiveness. This insistency of efficacy is followed by the assertion that the blood of Christ is easily communicated by the Holy Sacraments, namely acts of Penitence and reception of the Eucharist.¹⁵⁵ Since the blood of Christ is the "instrument of salvation," the Eucharist, as that very blood, becomes a primary avenue for the attainment of salvation.¹⁵⁶ This is not to say that Bernini intended to present a singular interpretation of (nor a direct pathway to) salvation, but rather that he thought deeply about this spiritual transition in universal terms, offering a visual meditation on the subject to the annals of history through his sculpture.

Through its Eucharistic significance, the *Sangue di Cristo* draws together meditations on death, salvation, and the blood of Christ. Lavin even identifies the "superimposition of the Eucharist as the dominant theme" and the "fundamental innovation" of the *Sangue di Cristo*.¹⁵⁷ Moreover, within the *Ars Moriendi* revival, the Eucharist was presented as the "key to redemption," with Lavin pushing this even further by stating that, for Father Marchese and Bernini, the Eucharist became the "only hope," making the attainment of a good death an act of extreme faith.¹⁵⁸ While clearly apparent in the *Sangue di Cristo*, the layering of Eucharistic meanings continues to build in Bernini's complex conception of the *Ludovica*, bringing the sculpture's significance into focus. More insistent than the engraving, the *Ludovica*'s cavernous opening—as the side wound of Christ—invokes the site of universal salvation, from which the redeeming blood of Christ flows. While Father Marchese wrote of the "universal efficacy of the Eucharist" through the infinite sea of Christ's blood, it is here argued that Bernini reiterated this concept visually in the *Blessed Ludovica Albertoni*.¹⁵⁹

The *Ludovica*'s cavernous opening draws together the theological relation between the side wound and the Eucharistic in visual terms, acting as a site of interior and exterior while

emphasizing its permeability and bodily exchange. This is not Bernini's first instance of vaginal side wound imagery related to a female mystic, but is rather his most developed expression. In the Cornaro Chapel, tellingly suspended between the altar and the ecstatic Teresa, is a banner of marble revetment whose pink book-matched "eyes" bear the vaginal and wounded connotations of *Ludovica's* cavernous opening (Fig. 12). In both the *Ludovica* and the *St. Teresa*, Bernini produced an architectural framing for his work, with the far more elaborate Cornaro Chapel including communicative elements which were incorporated directly into the sculptural group in the *Ludovica*. Placed over the altar in the Cornaro Chapel, the rosy-toned marble has been cut and matched lengthwise, creating three oblong openings with pinched ends, their light "eyes" emphasized by concentric rings of veining, reinforcing the openings even as it adds illustrative detail and dimension (Fig. 13). The appearance of these openings is in keeping with medieval vaginal imagery, an identification still clearly legible to early modern (and contemporary) viewers. Bernini has further centralized this revetment through its double framing, the white molding leading to a heavily speckled black marble which borders the pink cladding. While a narrow band across the top and bottom, the vertical edges of this black marble framing are each comprised of an isosceles triangle which breaks into the pink revetment, ensuring that only three "eyes" are present and pointing to their presence (Fig. 12). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the pink marble cladding of the Cornaro Chapel has received little treatment within the scholarly discourse, likely avoided due to its highly evocative appearance in conjunction with a sculpture which already struggles against sexualized readings. What is missed, however, is the continued layering of significance which Bernini imparts to his works, building from the *St. Teresa* to its unique conception in the *Ludovica*. The pink coloring of this marble revetment alone implies wounding and bodily openings, their vaginal form reinforcing such readings despite their

horizontal orientation. While the *Ludovica* lacks the revetment's fleshy coloring, the cavernous opening remains insistently physical and bodily due to its location and orientation. Perhaps most tellingly, the marble "eyes" are suspended over the altar, carefully positioned to be implicated by the elevation of the Eucharist during mass. Ritually activated, the marble revetment's vaginal connotations of bodily opening, inherently tied to the side wound of Christ, serves as a precedent for this cluster of associations in the *Ludovica*. Retaining the visual performance of elevation, Bernini has shifted the vaginal side wound from the architectural framing in the *St. Teresa* to the very heart of the sculptural altarpiece in the *Ludovica*. By placing the form within Ludovica's body, Bernini acknowledges and emphasizes its bodily meanings, engaging with Eucharistic and sensual readings as a means of foregrounding permeability as a guiding spiritual principle. Comparison to the Cornaro Chapel reveals the *Ludovica* as the intentional and highly considered culmination of Bernini's personal and artistic engagement with these themes.

The present examination has sought to demonstrate the centrality of permeability in Bernini's conception of and representation of the *Ludovica*. Within the pinched and looped drapery folds of the cavernous opening, Bernini has created a core of religious significance, whose implications extend far beyond emotional expression or the communication of an internal, mystical experience. Instead, Bernini offers permeability as a means of drawing together the various considerations of interior and exterior which define the relationship between humanity and the divine. The ritual elevation of the consecrated bread and wine has already been considered, but is now seen to take on even greater significance; raised by the celebrant, the Eucharist (in particular the chalice) is held up to the side wound, represented in drapery, from which the original blood and water of Christ flowed. A popular salutation during the elevation of the Eucharist makes the worshipper's investment in Christ's wound and its outpouring clear,

stating “O water from Christ’s side, bathe me,” implying baptism but more importantly pointing to the universal salvation of Christ’s blood.¹⁶⁰ As the site from which the Church was born, Christ’s side wound is a crucial component of Catholicism, further bearing significance as the source of salvation, with the sacrifice of Christ on the cross offered to the faithful in the form of the Eucharist. The recipient thus sees the chalice raised to the very wound from which the Eucharist springs, reminding them of the Passion of Christ and the true presence in the Eucharist at each mass, a presence reaffirmed by the Council of Trent.¹⁶¹ Medieval manuscripts evoke this same sense of true presence through the inclusion of precise measurements of the wound while Bernini’s representation evokes real presence through a literal enactment.¹⁶² Rather than leaving space for or providing an acknowledgment of the Eucharistic rite taking place before it, Bernini’s altarpiece visually presents the source of the Eucharistic wine—a rendering in immutable stone of the penetration of Christ’s body and the resulting outpouring of salvation. While this permeability is present in period understandings of death and visionary experiences, it is the Eucharist to which Bernini’s representation of permeability most directly and persistently points. Through the Eucharist, the close visual relationship between Christ’s side wound and vaginal imagery lends clarity and meaning to Ludovica’s deeply drilled and shadowed drapery folds. The *Ludovica* demonstrates not just the artist’s skill as a carver, but also the depth and intensity of thought Bernini directed to spiritual concerns, expressed through the gendered language of a female body, feminized drapery, and a vaginal cavernous opening. By reading the cavernous opening as carefully as scholars have read the body, the *Ludovica* comes into its own as a visually and spiritually powerfully sculpture. Mystical rather than sexual, deeply devotional rather than crudely subversive, Bernini’s *Blessed Ludovica Albertoni* draws together period

conceptions of the Eucharist, death, mystical ecstasy, and the permeability of the body and soul through the shocking folds of one of his last works.

¹ John Pope-Hennessy, *An Introduction to Italian Sculpture*, Vol. 3, *Italian High Renaissance and Baroque Sculpture*, (London and New York: Phaidon Publishers, 1970), 114.

² Spelled alternatively “Lodovica” or “Ludovica,” the *beata*’s name will appear as “Ludovica” within the present treatment, in keeping with more recent publications. For praise of the *Ludovica* as “dramatic” and “moving,” see Anthony Blunt, “Gianlorenzo Bernini: Illusionism and Mysticism,” in *Art History*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (March 1978): 79. For praise of the *Ludovica* as demonstrating Bernini’s “powers,” see Howard Hibbard, *Bernini*, (Middelsex, England: Penguin Books, 1965), 220.

³ Karen Shelley Perlove, *Bernini and the Idealization of Death: The Blessed Ludovica Albertoni and the Altieri Chapel*, (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), 15.

⁴ For consideration of drapery as artistic display, see Gen Doy, *Drapery: Classicism and Barbarism in Visual Culture*, (London and New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2002), 18; Anne Hollander, “The Fabric of Vision: The Role of Drapery in Art,” in *The Georgia Review*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Summer 1975): 435. Doy acknowledges the long history of drapery as connoting “art” which Hollander reinforces by referring to drapery as a “purely artistic basic element.” For discussion of shifting artistic expression following the Council of Trent and Bernini’s intervention, see Estelle Lingo, *Mochi’s Edge and Bernini’s Baroque*, (London and Turnhout: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2017), 63, 200-4.

⁵ Rudolf Wittkower, *Art and Architecture in Italy 1600-1750*, Vol. 2, *The High Baroque 1625-1675*, revised by Joseph Connors and Jennifer Montagu, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 8; Hibbard, *Bernini*, 203.

⁶ Filippo Baldinucci, *The Life of Bernini*, trans. Catherine Enggass with a foreword by Robert Enggass, (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1966), 75. Period criticism of Bernini’s drapery will be treated in detail subsequently. For consideration of Bernini’s reputation following his death, see Estelle Lingo, “Sculpture, Rupture, and the ‘Baroque,’” in *Art and Reform in the Late Renaissance: After Trent*, ed. Jesse M. Locker, (New York: Routledge, 2019), 41.

⁷ Lingo, *Mochi’s Edge and Bernini’s Baroque*, 149-208.

⁸ Lingo, *Mochi’s Edge and Bernini’s Baroque*, 206.

⁹ Maria H. Loh, “‘La Custodia Degli Occhi’: Disciplining Desire in Post-Tridentine Italian Art,” in *The Sensuous in the Counter-Reformation Church*, ed. Marcia B. Hall and Tracy E. Cooper, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 106.

¹⁰ Karen Jean Lloyd, “Adopted Papal Kin as Art Patrons in Early Modern Rome (1592-1676),” (PhD. Diss., Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2010), 259n4. Most sources date the wedding to 1669, however, as noted by Armando Schiavo in *Palazzo Altieri* and emphasized by Lloyd, a contract dated 1667 stipulates that the wedding must be celebrated within six months of the pacts, placing the nuptials between 11 and 15 November 1667.

¹¹ Rudolf Wittkower, *Bernini: The Sculptor of the Roman Baroque*, (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1997), 294.

¹² Perlove, *Bernini and the Idealization of Death*, 11.

¹³ The exact history of the Altieri Chapel’s appearance before Bernini’s intervention is unclear, with a decorative campaign carried out in 1571 and another in the early 1620s, typically dated to 1622. As part of the 1622 redecoration, frescoes were added to the dome and pendentives by Cristoforo Grippi. The frescoes directly flanking the altar, which depict St. Clare (holding a monstrance) and Ludovica (offering a loaf of bread with hidden coins), are generally dated to the sixteenth century, in keeping with Giovanni Battista Gaulli’s and Giovanni Pietro Bellori’s testimony from the period. It has been suggested that the frescoes of St. Clare and Ludovica were originally located elsewhere in the chapel or church and were relocated during a later renovation, such as that of 1622.

¹⁴ Perlove, *Bernini and the Idealization of Death*, 5. Perlove summarizes the account offered by Ludovica's biographers.

¹⁵ The commission for the *Blessed Ludovica Albertoni* has been consistently associated with scandal, seen as an active attempt by the artist to mitigate the ramifications of the actions of his brother, Luigi Bernini. On 20 December 1670, Luigi was caught sodomizing a young boy behind the statue of *Constantine the Great* in St. Peter's, causing Luigi to be publicly denounced in an *avviso*. While Luigi fled to Naples, Gianlorenzo Bernini was forced to pay 26,000 scudi to the public treasury and another 2,000 scudi to the boy's father. Gianlorenzo also began the arduous process of seeking a papal pardon, in which the *Ludovica* is often considered to have acted, as Wittkower puts it, as a kind of "bribe." Based on an *avviso* dated 17 February 1674, it is believed that Gianlorenzo completed the *Ludovica* free of charge to gain favor with Cardinal Altieri, the papal nephew. Wittkower translates the *avviso* as "When Cardinal Altieri wished to erect a statue in relief (*sic!*) in honour of the Beata Albertoni, a number of artists competed, but the Cavaliere Bernini was preferred because he offered to work without pay." Wittkower dismisses the possibility of this *avviso* helping to date the work, and instead suggests that the *avviso* was intended to debase Gianlorenzo since the sculpture was close to completion; see Wittkower, *Bernini*, 294-5. This possibility is echoed by Perlove, who considers the *avviso* to be "old news;" see Shelley Karen Perlove, "Gianlorenzo Bernini's '*Blessed Ludovica Albertoni*' and Baroque Devotion," (PhD. Diss., University of Michigan, 1984), 176-8. Even with this confusion in dating and lack of additional documentary evidence, the *Ludovica* is consistently read as a bargaining chip, with scholars such as Hibbard proposing that Gianlorenzo "may have done his work for nothing to hush up a sordid scandal" and Boucher stating that "Bernini did not ask any compensation for his work, perhaps in an attempt to win a pardon from the pope;" see Hibbard, *Bernini*, 220; Bruce Boucher, ed., "*The Blessed Ludovica Albertoni*," in *Earth and Fire: Italian Terracotta Sculpture from Donatello to Canova*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), Cat. 55, 218. It is unclear whether the production of the *Ludovica* actually impacted these events, but Luigi was eventually able to return to Rome. Francesco Quinterio recounts that Luigi's exile was lifted in January of 1671, just one month after the initial scandal, although he was still banned from work and denied access to the court; Francesco Quinterio, "Scala Regia and Statue of Constantine in the Vatican Palace," in *Bernini*, by Franco Borsi, trans. Robert Erich Wolf, (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1984), Cat. 57, 339. Perlove instead associates Luigi's release with the holy year of 1675, although no support is offered for this claim; Perlove, *Bernini and the Idealization of Death*, 14. These circumstances have frequently been foregrounded in discussions of the *Ludovica*, dominating the introduction and contextualization of the sculpture. The present examination has intentionally sought to distance the work from these events, returning the scholarly focus to the sculpture and its form. The events following Luigi's crime, however, indicate a context of conception and execution for the *Ludovica* removed from the salacious interpretations her tensed body has received. It seems highly unlikely that Gianlorenzo would produce an intentionally sexualized sculpture as a means of mitigating the overtly sexual scandal of his brother. As such, the *Ludovica*'s inclusion of a cavernous opening of drapery which is closely visually related to vaginal imagery (as will be discussed subsequently) bears religious, rather than sexual, connotations. For assertions that the *Ludovica* was completed by Bernini's hand, see Perlove, *Bernini and the Idealization of Death*, 1, 14; Charles Avery, *Bernini: Genius of the Baroque*, (Boston, New York, Toronto, and London: Little, Brown and Company, 1997), 151-2; Bruce Boucher, ed., "Study for the *Blessed Ludovica Albertoni*," in *Earth and Fire: Italian Terracotta Sculpture from Donatello to Canova*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), Cat. 54, 216.

¹⁶ For Weibel's claim of "lasciviousness," see Walter Weibel, "The Representation of Ecstasy," in *Bernini in Perspective*, ed. George C. Bauer, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1976), 89. Weibel's comment regarding a secondary figure is in reference to the *Ecstasy of St. Teresa*, which includes a youthful angel.

¹⁷ Irving Lavin, *Bernini and the Unity of the Visual Arts*, Vol. 1, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 120; Karen Jean Lloyd, "Baciccio's Beata Ludovica Albertoni Distributing Alms," in *Getty Research Journal*, No. 2 (2010): 6.

¹⁸ Lloyd, “Baciccio’s Beata Ludovica Albertoni,” 7-9. Lloyd considers biographical, presentational, and personal connections between Ludovica Albertoni and St. Francesca Romana, arguing that the Albertoni family saw Francesca as their best example of a female saint to imitate in their bid for canonization.

¹⁹ Domenico Bernini, *The Life of Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, trans. Franco Mormando, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011), 222; Baldinucci, *The Life of Bernini*, 64. For discussion of the common basis for Domenico and Baldinucci’s accounts, see Franco Mormando, “Introduction: The Anatomy of Baroque Biography: Domenico Bernini’s Life of Gian Lorenzo Bernini,” in *The Life of Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, by Domenico Bernini (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011), 21-2.

²⁰ Hibbard, *Bernini*, 220, 222; Wittkower, *Bernini*, 58.

²¹ For association of the jasper drapery with a funerary shroud, see Perlove, *Bernini and the Idealization of Death*, 22. The jasper drapery which separates the *Ludovica* from the altar was originally constructed of wood, according to a manuscript chronicling the church of San Francesco a Ripa by the friar Ludovico da Modena. Modena further records that the wooden cloth was replaced in 1702 by Don Angelo Paluzzo Altieri with the current jasper drapery, comprised of small rectangles of stone fitted to create the great swath of “fabric.” Interestingly, the jasper drapery is consistently presented as reflecting Bernini’s artistic intention and its particular folds are often offered more sustained consideration in the scholarly discourse than the drapery comprising the *Ludovica*.

²² Hibbard, *Bernini*, 220; Wittkower, *Bernini*, 58; Weibel, “The Representation of Ecstasy,” 89.

²³ Giovanni Careri, *Bernini: Flights of Love, the Art of Devotion*, trans. Linda Lappin, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 66, 52.

²⁴ Blunt, “Illusionism and Mysticism,” 80. Blunt specifically points to the fact that Ludovica was recorded to have died clutching a cross and takes its omission as evidence that a narrative moment other than death is represented. Robert T. Petersson, *The Art of Ecstasy: Teresa, Bernini, and Crashaw*, (New York: Atheneum, 1970), 40. Asserting that Ludovica is in the “grip of sublime ecstasy,” Petersson reads Ludovica’s “lower body” in be in a “spasm of spiritual bliss,” participating in a mystical union in which “nothing is withheld.” Patricia Simons, “‘Bodily Things’ and Brides of Christ: The Case of the Early Seventeenth-Century ‘Lesbian Nun’ Benedetta Carlini,” in *Sex, Gender and Sexuality in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Jacqueline Murray and Nicholas Terpstra, (New York: Routledge, 2019), 116; Steven Ostrow, “*Beata Lodovica Albertoni*,” in *Drawings by Gianlorenzo Bernini from the Museum der Bildenden Künste Leipzig, German Democratic Republic*, ed. Irving Lavin, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 305.

²⁵ Frank H. Sommer, “The Iconography of Action: Bernini’s *Ludovica Albertone*,” in *Art Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 1, (1970): 35. Sommer’s description of the narrative moment is extensive: “The red marble ‘drapes’ cascade out from under the mattress. How can we explain them? If we read them as a blanket, the meaning of pedestal and action become clear. The reader will remember that the poem and commentary [referring to Jesuit Hermann Hugos’ *Pia desideria*, commenting on the *Song of Songs*] which we argue are the basis of this statue place particular emphasis on the heat experienced by the languishing and loving soul. Ludovica has been attacked by languor. Swooning, she has lain down to rest, pulling the blankets over herself. Suddenly, she experiences a sharp attack of the ‘Incendium amoris.’ She writhes in pain, grasping her side, twisting and turning on the bed. She wrinkles the sheets, throws the blanket to one side to hang in a cascade to the floor, still pinned to the bedframe on one side by the weight of the mattress and her body... yet her face is calm and peaceful, for she is flooded by the Divine Light symbolized by the physical light coming from the concealed window to the left, and she is consoled by the ‘apples’ [pomegranates] represented in the background.”

²⁶ Sommer, “The Iconography of Action,” 35.

²⁷ Christopher F. Black, “‘Exceeding Every Expression of Words’: Bernini’s Rome and the Religious Background,” in *Effigies & Ecstasies: Roman Baroque Sculpture and Design in the Age of Bernini*, ed. Aidan Weston-Lewis, (Edinburgh: National Galleries of Scotland, 1998), 21.

²⁸ Charles Scribner III, *Gianlorenzo Bernini*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1991), 118; Francesco Quinterio, “Statue of the Blessed Ludovica Albertoni in the Church of San Francesco a Ripa,” in *Bernini*,

by Franco Borsi, trans. Robert Erich Wolf, (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1984), Cat. 70, 347-8.

²⁹ Perlove, *Bernini and the Idealization of Death*, 29. The exact nature of Ludovica's experience is commented on frequently, with different conclusive statements offered throughout Perlove's treatment; see, for instance, 23, 25, 38.

³⁰ For description of the *Ludovica* as the soul leaving the body, see Pope-Hennessy, *An Introduction to Italian Sculpture*, 3:114. For "ecstatic release," see Desmond Shawe-Taylor, "The Blessed Ludovica Albertoni," in *Effigies & Ecstasies: Roman Baroque Sculpture and Design in the Age of Bernini*, ed. Aidan Weston-Lewis, (Edinburgh: National Galleries of Scotland, 1998), Cat. 124, 159.

³¹ Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion*, (New York: Zone Books, 2011), 185-6.

³² Perlove, *Bernini and the Idealization of Death*, 38.

³³ Irving Lavin, "Bernini's Death," in *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 54, No. 2 (June 1972): 158-86. Irving Lavin, "The *Ars Moriendi* and the *Sangue di Cristo*," in *Bernini in Perspective*, ed. George C. Bauer, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1976), 111-26.

³⁴ Lavin, "Bernini's Death," 159.

³⁵ For dating of the *Ludovica*, see Wittkower, *Bernini*, 294. For dating of the *Sangue di Cristo* and the bust of the Savior, see Lavin, "Bernini's Death," 159; D. Bernini, *The Life of Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, 225; Baldinucci, *The Life of Bernini*, 66. Both Domenico and Baldinucci place Bernini in his eightieth year at the start of the bust, an identification which Lavin reiterates. In "Bernini's Death," and particularly in the follow-up article "Afterthoughts on 'Bernini's Death,'" Lavin identifies the final work by Bernini with the *Bust of the Savior* held by the Chrysler Museum in Norfolk, Virginia. While the Chrysler Museum and several scholars support this connection, the attribution remains contested, with a bust in San Sebastiano fuori le mura in Rome now considered by some scholars a more likely candidate for Bernini's authorship.

³⁶ Sister Mary Catharine O'Connor, *The Art of Dying Well: The Development of the Ars Moriendi*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), 5. O'Connor is largely concerned with the development of the literature of the *Ars Moriendi*, its origins and later adaptations (including publications and related works), and includes a listing of various publications (both manuscripts and moveable type). For background information on and distinctions between the two main types of the *Ars Moriendi*, see 7-8. The longer version, referred to by O'Connor as the CP version, was the only one produced in Italy. Lavin takes this identification and the overarching history of the tradition from O'Connor.

³⁷ O'Connor, *The Art of Dying Well*, 2.

³⁸ Lavin, "Bernini's Death," 164.

³⁹ Lavin, "Bernini's Death," 164; Lavin, "The *Ars Moriendi* and the *Sangue di Cristo*," 113-4. Bernini carved a portrait for Roberto Bellarmino, whose tomb is in the Gesù, just two years later.

⁴⁰ Lavin, "Bernini's Death," 164; Lavin, "The *Ars Moriendi* and the *Sangue di Cristo*," 114. The confraternity's full name is the Congregazione del Nostro Signore Gesu Cristo moribondo sopra la Croce e della Santissima Vergine Maria sua Madre Addolorata, detta della Buona Morte.

⁴¹ Lavin, "Bernini's Death," 164; Lavin, "The *Ars Moriendi* and the *Sangue di Cristo*," 114.

⁴² D. Bernini, *The Life of Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, 229; Baldinucci, *The Life of Bernini*, 68-9.

⁴³ Lavin, "Bernini's Death," 166. The son of Beatrice Bernini, Gianlorenzo's sister, Father Francesco Marchese was born in 1623 and entered the congregation in 1643, becoming a priest of the Oratory of Saint Filippo Neri at the Chiesa Nuova in Rome. Noted for the seriousness of his studies, Father Marchese went on to become Superior General of the Oratorians and published a number of devotional works.

⁴⁴ D. Bernini, *The Life of Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, 229. For an additional example of Bernini thinking deeply about religious matters, see Paul Fréart Chantelou, *Diary of the Cavaliere Bernini's Visit to France*, ed. Anthony Blunt, trans. Margery Corbett, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 212.

⁴⁵ D. Bernini, *The Life of Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, 228.

⁴⁶ Baldinucci, *The Life of Bernini*, 66, 68; D. Bernini, *The Life of Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, 231.

⁴⁷ D. Bernini, *The Life of Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, 231. Domenico presents the concept of death being a “new experience” as a direct quote from Gianlorenzo, and while an unmediated recording seems unlikely, Domenico accurately conveys Gianlorenzo’s religious investments and intellectual engagements. The use of “battle” here directly relates to the older *Ars Moriendi* tradition in which the soul is tempted by demons, requiring the dying to actively resist or do “battle.”

⁴⁸ Lavin, “The *Ars Moriendi* and the *Sanguine di Cristo*,” 120; Lavin, “Bernini’s Death,” 168. Chapters 11 through 14 of Father Marchese’s work are dedicated to preparation for death.

⁴⁹ For identification of the preparation for death as a life-long process, see Lavin, “Bernini’s Death,” 164. For discussion of Bernini and sign language, see Baldinucci, *The Life of Bernini*, 70; D. Bernini, *The Life of Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, 231-2. Both biographers offer extended consideration of this development, in part because Bernini did, in fact, lose his ability to speak close to his death.

⁵⁰ Lavin, “Bernini’s Death,” 163. For consideration of interrogative questions, see O’Connor, *The Art of Dying Well*, 32. These concepts are further developed in Frances M. M. Comper, *The Book of the Craft of Dying and Other Early English Tracts Concerning Death*, (New York: Arno Press, 1917), 22. Adapted to modern spelling from the Old English, Comper’s text states “Now follow the interrogations of them that draw to the death, while they have reason with them and their speech,” a concept reiterated in the chapter title. In later passages, there is explicit reference of what to do in the case that the dying can no longer speak, which reinforces the concept that the responses to the interrogation questions were intended to be spoken.

⁵¹ Lavin, “Bernini’s Death,” 163, 159.

⁵² Petersson, *Art of Ecstasy*, 20-1.

⁵³ Shán Short, “Come Again? Bernini’s *St Teresa* as a Site/Sight for the Writing of Male Desire,” in *Australian Journal of Art*, Vol. 8, Issue 1., (1989): 81. Short’s original emphasis, being “*described, framed, written and represented*” has been removed for coherency.

⁵⁴ Short, “Come Again?,” 81. Short places the female soul in contrast to the masculine God, an opposition in keeping with visionary accounts but which does not fully address the frequent gender-fluidity identifiable in the divine, such as Christ nursing from his side wound or feeding through the Eucharist. For consideration of the soul as woman/bride and gender reversal, see Caroline Walker Bynum, “‘...And Woman His Humanity’: Female Imagery in the Religious Writing of the Later Middle Ages,” in *Gender and Religion: On the Complexity of Symbols*, ed. Caroline Walker Bynum, Steven Harrell, and Paula Richman, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), 268, 275. For union as sexual metaphor, see Flora Lewis, “The Wound in Christ’s Side and the Instruments of the Passion: Gendered Experience and Response,” in *Women and the Book: Assessing the Visual Evidence*, ed. Lesley Smith and Jane H. M. Taylor, (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 214.

⁵⁵ Comper, *The Book of the Craft of Dying*, 42-4.

⁵⁶ Barbara Newman, “The Visionary Texts and Visual Worlds of Religious Women,” in *Crown and Veil: Female Monasticism from the Fifth to the Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. Jeffrey F. Hamburger and Susan Marti, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 153-4. This concept will be returned to subsequently in relation to the Eucharist.

⁵⁷ Lingo, *Mochi’s Edge and Bernini’s Baroque*, 63; Estelle Lingo, “Drapery,” in *Textile Terms: A Glossary*, ed. Tristan Weddigen et. al., Textile Studies, Vol. 0. (Berlin: Edition Imorde, 2017), 81. The same phrasing appears in both works.

⁵⁸ Lingo, *Mochi’s Edge and Bernini’s Baroque*, 63.

⁵⁹ Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting: A New Translation and Critical Edition*, ed. and trans. Rocco Sinisgalli, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 66-7; Lingo, *Mochi’s Edge and Bernini’s Baroque*, 63.

⁶⁰ Lingo, *Mochi’s Edge and Bernini’s Baroque*, 204.

⁶¹ Hibbard, *Bernini*, 203.

⁶² Estelle Lingo, “The Greek Manner and a Christian Canon: Francois Duquesnoy’s *Saint Susanna*,” in *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 84, No. 1 (March 2002): 83. The “expressive potential” is specifically in reference to Bernini’s *St. Bibiana*.

⁶³ Wittkower, *Bernini*, 56. Wittkower specifically refers to the folds “above the left hand” as participating “in the excitement” and as “freed from the law of gravity.” Lingo reads this passage of drapery as still being rational, finding the “exquisite arrangement of rising and spiraling folds across the saint’s midsection” to be the “consequence of the implicit action of the left hand against the cloth and the right thigh rising beneath it;” see Lingo, *Mochi’s Edge and Bernini’s Baroque*, 170-1, 200. While the lifting of St. Bibiana’s thigh would assist the upward motion of her drapery, the present author finds the looping oblong opening to the left of the metal frond to have a buoyancy not fully explained by such action.

⁶⁴ Wittkower, *Bernini*, 56.

⁶⁵ Wittkower, *Art and Architecture in Italy*, 2:7; Lingo, *Mochi’s Edge and Bernini’s Baroque*, 200.

⁶⁶ For Longinus’ drapery as disrupting the Renaissance body, see Lingo, *Mochi’s Edge and Bernini’s Baroque*, 10, 149-208.

⁶⁷ Wittkower, *Art and Architecture in Italy*, 2:2, 2:9. The description of “abstract patterning” is further present in Wittkower, *Bernini*, 193. Hibbard also identifies Bernini’s late style as having emerged around these years, but relates this development more broadly to the pontificate of Alexander VII, which spanned from 1655 to 1667; see Hibbard, *Bernini*, 142.

⁶⁸ Aldous Huxley, *Themes and Variations*, (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1950), 178-9.

⁶⁹ Wittkower, *Bernini*, 58.

⁷⁰ Wittkower, *Bernini*, 58.

⁷¹ Hibbard, *Bernini*, 222.

⁷² Andrea Bolland, “*Alienata da ‘Sensi*: Reframing Bernini’s *S. Teresa*,” in *Open Arts Journal*, Issue 4, (Winter 2014-2015): 139.

⁷³ Weibel, “The Representation of Ecstasy,” 89. Weibel misidentifies the canonical status of the *beata* when referring to Ludovica as a “saint.”

⁷⁴ Allie Terry-Fritsch, “Proof in Pierced Flesh: Caravaggio’s *Doubting Thomas* and the Beholder of Wounds in Early Modern Italy,” in *Beholding Violence in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Allie Terry-Fritsch and Erin Felicia Labbie, (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2012), 27.

⁷⁵ Terry-Fritsch, “Proof in Pierced Flesh,” 27.

⁷⁶ While a work of sculpture, and thus dimensional, the *Ludovica* is placed over and behind the altar in a position which makes physical contact quite difficult. While not denying its materiality or sculptural nature, the *Ludovica* is largely inaccessible to tactile consideration, effectively but subtly emphasizing its visuality as its primary means of communication.

⁷⁷ Erin E. Benay and Lisa M. Rafanelli, *Faith, Gender and the Senses in Italian Renaissance and Baroque Art: Interpreting the Noli me tangere and Doubting Thomas*, (Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2015), 179; Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture*, (London: Routledge, 1995).

⁷⁸ For interest in the penetrability of the body in relation to dissection, see Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned*, 87.

⁷⁹ Benay and Rafanelli, *Faith, Gender and the Senses*, 179.

⁸⁰ Terry-Fritsch, “Proof in Pierced Flesh,” 20.

⁸¹ Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned*, 106.

⁸² For centralization of the uterus, see Benay and Rafanelli, *Faith, Gender and the Senses*, 179.

⁸³ The lack of anatomic knowledge of female reproductive systems centered on the uterus, which received a number of unusual interpretations. Benay and Rafanelli discuss the placement of the uterus as the anatomical center as a perspective tinged with male fear; see Benay and Rafanelli, *Faith, Gender and the Senses*, 179. Sawday emphasizes the early modern interest in the womb and uterus, describing it as being “sought after with an almost ferocious intensity” within the anatomical theater. Sawday goes on to state that the female body was held to be “monstrous and grotesque,” being a “region of erotic desire governed by the quasi-autonomous uterus,” referencing the belief that the uterus was a separate, animate creature housed within the woman’s body; see Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned*, 221-2.

⁸⁴ Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 200.

⁸⁵ Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned*, 117-8.

⁸⁶ Benay and Rafanelli, *Faith, Gender and the Senses*, 177, 207. Benay and Rafanelli's discussion of Doubting Thomas imagery emphasizes tactile penetration, an exploration which is related to empirical inquiry for the confirmation of truth. The interior viewing created by dissection is closely connected to these concepts through the form of investigation and its production of knowledge.

⁸⁷ Benay and Rafanelli, *Faith, Gender and the Senses*, 207.

⁸⁸ Ostrow, "Beata Lodovica Albertoni," 304. Ostrow notes the drawing held in a private collection, which includes two black chalk sketches of the triangular drapery fold below Ludovica's right knee, a passage of drapery also present in the Leipzig drawing, the Victoria and Albert *bozzetto*, and the finished sculpture.

⁸⁹ Ian Wardropper, "Sketching on Paper and in Clay: Bernini's Use of Preparatory Drawings and Models," in *Bernini: Sculpting in Clay*, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2012), 41, 44.

⁹⁰ Boucher, ed., "Study for the *Blessed Ludovica Albertoni*," Cat. 54, 216. Boucher specifically compares the Leipzig drawing for the *Ludovica* to the sketches for the *Angels* of the Ponte Sant'Angelo, where the figural form was established before moving on to the drapery. Boucher proposes that this shift in priority from the body to the drapery may be due to the intended executant of the work, with the *Angels* largely carved by Bernini's assistants while the *Ludovica* was carved almost entirely by Bernini, allowed him to focus on the drapery while leaving the figure's anatomy to his later modelling in clay.

⁹¹ Perlove, *Bernini and the Idealization of Death*, 16-7; Ostrow, "Beata Lodovica Albertoni," 302.

⁹² Ostrow, "Beata Lodovica Albertoni," 302; Perlove, *Bernini and the Idealization of Death*, 72n7.

Perlove does not offer a consideration or justification of her assertion that the top edge has been trimmed, simply stating that the "top horizontal edge is apparently also cropped."

⁹³ Ostrow, "Beata Lodovica Albertoni," 302-3.

⁹⁴ Ostrow, "Beata Lodovica Albertoni," 303.

⁹⁵ While most refer to the Victoria and Albert model as a *bozzetto*, some scholars, including Anthony Sigel, have identified it as a *modello* due to its high level of finish. The exact purpose of the model is difficult to determine, and the categorization as *bozzetto* or *modello* does not impact its interpretation in the present examination. Furthermore, the distinction between these categories is less precise than is often understood, with our ability to meaningfully interpret clay models lagging behind that of preparatory drawings.

⁹⁶ Anthony Sigel, "Visual Glossary," in *Bernini: Sculpting in Clay*, ed. C. D. Dickerson III, Anthony Sigel, and Ian Wardropper, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2012), 92.

⁹⁷ Sigel, "Visual Glossary," 92.

⁹⁸ C. D. Dickerson III and Anthony Sigel, "The *Blessed Ludovica Albertoni*," in *Bernini: Sculpting in Clay*, ed. C. D. Dickerson III, Anthony Sigel, and Ian Wardropper, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2012), Cat. 20, 209. This 3mm tool was used consistently in the execution of the *Ludovica bozzetto*, and obviously lent itself quite well to the treatment of drapery, but is not a tool commonly associated with Bernini's *bozzetti*.

⁹⁹ Dickerson and Sigel, "The *Blessed Ludovica Albertoni*," Cat. 20, 211.

¹⁰⁰ For identification of this added strip, see Dickerson and Sigel, "The *Blessed Ludovica Albertoni*," Cat. 20, 211; Sigel, "Visual Glossary," 102.

¹⁰¹ Steven F. Ostrow, "Bernini's *Bozzetti* and the Trope of Fire," in *Material Bernini*, ed. Evonne Levy and Caroline Mangone, (New York: Routledge, 2016), 156.

¹⁰² Michael Cole, "What is a *Bozzetto*?" in *Material Bernini*, ed. Evonne Levy and Caroline Mangone, (New York: Routledge, 2016), 136, 133.

¹⁰³ Cole, "What is a *Bozzetto*?" 141-2.

¹⁰⁴ Wittkower, *Bernini*, 195.

¹⁰⁵ Wittkower, *Bernini*, 295. Wittkower's description of the viewing experience of the *Ludovica* emphasizes its visionary quality: "Since the chapel itself is fairly dark, the visitor standing in the nave of the church is looking through darkness into light: above the altar he finds lit, as by magic, the mirage of the dying Blessed."

¹⁰⁶ Wittkower, *Art and Architecture in Italy*, 2:14.

¹⁰⁷ Sommer, “The Iconography of Action,” 35. For seventeenth-century concepts of light, see Fabio Barry, “Im/material Bernini,” in *Material Bernini*, ed. Evonne Levy and Caroline Mangone, (New York: Routledge, 2016), 49.

¹⁰⁸ For comment regarding light as conveying divine grace, see Wittkower, *Art and Architecture in Italy*, 2:14.

¹⁰⁹ Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 55, 5. Rubin offers additional detail on this subject, stating that “the teaching on concomitance really meant that by gazing at one species one was in fact viewing the whole body, veiled under the accidents of the host. Yet the impulse towards ritual symmetry meant that at least those designing the mass insisted on the parity of elevations, even if the parity of consecrations had been relinquished. The chalice was to be elevated though its contents could not be seen, and despite the fact that this was dangerous and open to spilling and accidental loss.” During the mass, the consecrated bread and wine were raised separately, with the wine elevated second and for ceremonial reasons rather than for the purpose of consecration. It is interesting to note that the chalice was raised despite concerns over spillage, which indicates the importance of the act of elevation itself. An exception was made to the elevation of the chalice if the celebrant was old or unstable.

¹¹⁰ Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 63.

¹¹¹ Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 62, 60-1. In 1672, it was documented that a cross and four brass candlesticks were placed on the altar of the Altieri Chapel; with the cross centralized, the candles would be placed on either side, providing angled illumination of the cavernous opening. As such, even in the event that additional candles were placed on the altar to increase the lighting during mass, the cavernous opening would remain in shadow, as previously considered. For discussion of period altar items, see Perlove, “Gianlorenzo Bernini’s ‘*Blessed Ludovica Albertoni*,’” 161n75.

¹¹² Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 37-8. Rubin is quoting John Andrea and James of Vitry, respectively.

¹¹³ Lloyd, “Baciccio’s Beata,” 6.

¹¹⁴ Bynum, “...And Woman His Humanity,” 275. Bynum identifies food (both its presence in the Eucharist and its absence in fasting) and suffering (both self-inflicted and involuntary such as sickness) as women’s “most characteristic ways of attaining God.” For Ludovica’s levitation in response to the Eucharist, see Lloyd, “Baciccio’s Beata,” 6.

¹¹⁵ Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion*, (New York: Zone Books, 1992), 121-2. The close association between women and Eucharistic miracles is particularly striking when considering the fact that women made up less than one quarter of thirteenth-century saints.

¹¹⁶ Bynum, “...And Woman His Humanity,” 275.

¹¹⁷ Lavin, *Bernini and the Unity of the Visual Arts*, 120-1.

¹¹⁸ Careri, *Flights of Love*, 85.

¹¹⁹ Perlove, “Gianlorenzo Bernini’s ‘*Blessed Ludovica Albertoni*,’” 176-8. It should be noted that Perlove’s statement that the *Ludovica* (spelled *Lodovica* in the dissertation) is related to the Eucharistic rite includes an endnote which cites Lavin, *Bernini and the Unity of the Visual Arts*, 85-103, 118-21, and 125-6. The page numbers cited by Perlove, however, refer to Lavin’s interpretation of the *Ecstasy of St. Teresa*, a distinction which Perlove does not address and makes no attempt to bridge.

¹²⁰ Perlove, “Gianlorenzo Bernini’s ‘*Blessed Ludovica Albertoni*,’” 177-8.

¹²¹ Perlove, *Bernini and the Idealization of Death*, 46; Perlove, “Gianlorenzo Bernini’s ‘*Blessed Ludovica Albertoni*,’” 181; Careri, *Flights of Love*, 84, 64-5.

¹²² Baldinucci, *The Life of Bernini*, 75.

¹²³ Lingo, “Drapery,” 83.

¹²⁴ Background information on this publication is offered by Robert Enggass: “Baldinucci’s fascination not only with art but also with language is demonstrated by his dictionary of art terms, the *Vocabolario toscano dell’arte del disegno*, which he published in Florence in 1681. A work of impressive scope, it deals with the major arts as well as with artisan-work and trades. It clarifies the language of the studio and defines the terminology of artists’ handbooks. It is the first book of its type and was absolutely definitive

in its day.” Robert Enggass, foreword to *The Life of Bernini*, by Filippo Baldinucci, trans. Catherine Enggass, (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1966), x.

¹²⁵ Lingo, *Mochi’s Edge and Bernini’s Baroque*, 205.

¹²⁶ Lingo, *Mochi’s Edge and Bernini’s Baroque*, 205; Lingo, “Drapery,” 83.

¹²⁷ Lingo, “Drapery,” 83.

¹²⁸ Tomaso Montanari, “Creating an Eye for Models: The Role of Bernini,” in *Bernini: Sculpting in Clay*, ed. C. D. Dickerson III, Anthony Sigel, and Ian Wardropper, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2012), 62. Montanari recounts an entry in the French political philosopher Montesquieu’s travel diary, in which Montesquieu recorded the conversation he and sculptor Lambert-Sigisbert Adam had when viewing Bernini’s statue of *St. Bibiana* in 1729.

¹²⁹ Montanari, “Creating an Eye for Models,” 62-3. Montesquieu also includes Adam’s comparison of Bernini’s drapery to that of Duquesnoy and Algardi, with Adam citing clay’s lack of translucency, particularly in passages of deep drilling or perforation, as resulting in Bernini’s models being mistaken as those by a lesser artist.

¹³⁰ John 19:34 makes it clear that Christ was already dead before the moment of wounding. As such, the fact that blood and water flowed from the wound was taken to be a miraculous event in and of itself, since bodily fluids typically coagulate after death. Bynum has detailed the various scientific justifications which purported to explain such an event, including Christ’s love keeping his blood warm and fluid even after his death; see Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 256.

¹³¹ Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 196.

¹³² For relation of the side wound to Christ’s humanity, see Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 303. For side wound as bodily replacement, see Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 196.

¹³³ Caroline Walker Bynum, “Violence Occluded: The Wound in Christ’s Side in Late Medieval Devotion,” in *Feud, Violence and Practice: Essays in Medieval Studies in Honor of Stephen D. White*, ed. Belle S. Tuten and Tracey L. Billado, (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2010), 98. In this essay, Bynum considers the way violence is obscured, to avoid demonstrations of violence against God, and also emphasized, strengthening social and spiritual ties through othering of aggressors.

¹³⁴ Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*, 14; Bynum, “Violence Occluded,” 106.

¹³⁵ Martha Easton, “The Wound of Christ, the Mouth of Hell: Appropriations and Inversions of Female Anatomy in the Later Middle Ages,” in *Tributes to Jonathan J. G. Alexander: The Making and Meaning of Illuminated Medieval & Renaissance Manuscripts, Art & Architecture*, ed. Susan L’Engle and Gerald B. Guest, (London and Turnhout: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2006), 408.

¹³⁶ Benay and Rafanelli, *Faith, Gender and the Senses*, 179-80.

¹³⁷ For reconsideration of gender roles, see Benay and Rafanelli, *Faith, Gender and the Senses*, 177. For distinctions between male and female exploration, see Lewis, “The Wound in Christ’s Side,” 204.

¹³⁸ Lewis, “The Wound in Christ’s Side,” 215. Lewis specifically identifies the “modern distaste” for such images as impacting their scholarly treatment and reception.

¹³⁹ Lewis, “The Wound in Christ’s Side,” 215; Easton, “The Wound of Christ,” 408-9; Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 197, 200; Bynum “Violence Occluded,” 108-9. For “sexual reference,” see Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 197.

¹⁴⁰ Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 197; Easton, “The Wound of Christ,” 409.

¹⁴¹ Lewis, “The Wound in Christ’s Side,” 215. Lewis offers a clear reminder that “the description of union with Christ in the vocabulary associated with bodily union and sexuality caused some contemporary and a great deal of later anxiety, and this distrust and distaste of sexuality—dangerous as a metaphor and unacceptable when religious union was experienced by the body as a sexual phenomenon—is also part of the history of the imagery of the life-size wound.”

¹⁴² Lewis, “The Wound in Christ’s Side,” 215.

¹⁴³ For association of the side wound with clefts or caverns, see Bynum, “Violence Occluded,” 106.

¹⁴⁴ Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 200, 197.

¹⁴⁵ For side wound as womb, see Newman, “The Visionary Texts,” 161. For side wound as access to Christ’s heart, see Easton, “The Wound of Christ,” 408. This shift in emphasis was accompanied by a reorientation of the wound, presenting it as a horizontal, rather than vertical, opening.

¹⁴⁶ Lewis, “The Wound in Christ’s Side,” 215.

¹⁴⁷ Easton, “The Wound of Christ,” 409.

¹⁴⁸ Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 197, 199. Some devotional writers perceived the “saving stream from the side of Christ” as being more the “flow of birthing than as the flow of wounding;” see Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*, 256.

¹⁴⁹ Bynum, “...And Woman His Humanity,” 263.

¹⁵⁰ Bynum, “Violence Occluded,” 108-9.

¹⁵¹ Lavin, “Bernini’s Death,” 166-7.

¹⁵² D. Bernini, *The Life of Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, 228-9. Baldinucci includes a similar comment, stating that Bernini “became absorbed at times in the thoughts and in the expression of the profound reverence and understanding that he always had of the efficacy of the Blood of Christ the Redeemer, in which, he was wont to say, he hoped to drown his sins;” see Baldinucci, *The Life of Bernini*, 69.

¹⁵³ Chantelou, *Dairy of the Cavaliere*, 202. Chantelou recounts Bernini’s visit to the treasury of the Valois Chapel of Saint-Denis, where they “looked at the reliquary which holds some drops of the Blood of Our Lord. The Cavaliere was shown the other relics, but he said that the Blood was the relic of relics.” Lavin, “Bernini’s Death,” 167. Marchese’s work is divided into fifteen truths, of which the reliance on Christ’s blood is the fourth, and Christ’s desire for the participation in his blood is the fifth truth.

¹⁵⁴ D. Bernini, *The Life of Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, 228.

¹⁵⁵ Lavin, “Bernini’s Death,” 167.

¹⁵⁶ For the identification of Christ’s blood with salvation, see Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*, 189. Bynum presents sacrifice as the crucial function of Christ’s outpouring of blood, but nonetheless recognizes blood as the central tenant of salvation.

¹⁵⁷ Lavin, “The *Ars Moriendi* and the *Sangue di Cristo*,” 123.

¹⁵⁸ Lavin, “Bernini’s Death,” 183-4.

¹⁵⁹ Lavin, “Bernini’s Death,” 167. Father Marchese’s reference to the Eucharist’s “universal efficacy” is drawn from his *Unica speranza del peccatore che consiste nel sangue del N. S. Giesù Cristo*.

¹⁶⁰ Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 303. This is a component of the *Anima Christi* prayer.

¹⁶¹ Benay and Rafanelli, *Faith, Gender and the Senses*, 180.

¹⁶² For discussion of measurements as true presence, see Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 153. Indulgences were particularly associated with images which included a measure, such as of Christ, the cross, or his wound, likely because their physical connection to the size of the divine was believed to give them greater efficacy. Such measures could also be taken as a true presence, discussed by Bynum as follows: “Lengths of linen or string brought back from the Holy Land and held to be the measure of Christ’s body were not so much images as presences—relics that made the absent body tactile and visible. What modern historians call ‘images’ of Christ’s side wound, especially when they included such measures, were presences, too.”

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