THOMAS BARTHOLIN (1616-1680), PHYSICIAN AND SCIENTIST. Most famous today as the discoverer and describer of the lymphatic system, Thomas Bartholin came from a family of anatomists and physicians. His compendium of anatomical and physiological knowledge, *Bartholinus Anatomy*, was partly based on the observations of his father, Caspar Bartholin the Elder, as well as those of other contemporary scientists.

**From Bartholinus Anatomy (1663)**

**Book 1, Chapter 34: Of the Clitoris.**

Fallopius\(^1\) arrogates unto himself the invention or first observation of this part. And Columbus gloriously, as in other things he is wont, attributes it to himself,\(^2\) whereas, nevertheless, Avicenna, Albucasis, Ruffus, Pollux,\(^3\) and others, have made mention hereof in their writings.

Some call it the *nymph*, as Aetius and Aegineta.\(^4\) Columbus terms it *dulcedo amoris*, ‘the sweetness of love’ and ‘the sting of Venus,’ because this part is the chief seat of delight in carnal copulation, which if it be gently touched in such as have long abstained from carnal embraces, and are desirous thereof, seed easily comes away. The Greeks called it *clitoris*, others name it *tentigo*,\(^5\) others the woman’s yard or prick—both because it resembles a man’s yard in situation, substance, composition, repletion, with spirits and erection, and also because it hath somewhat like the nut and foreskin of a man’s yard, and in some women it grows as big as the yard of a man; so that some women abuse the same, and make use thereof in place of a man’s yard, exercising carnal copulation one with another, and they are termed *confricatrices*,\(^6\) ‘rubsters.’ Which lascivious practice is said to have been invented by one Philaenis, and Sappho the Greek poetess is reported to have practiced the same. And of these I conceive the Apostle Paul speaks in 1 Romans 26. And therefore this part is called *contemptus virorum*, ‘the contempt of mankind.’

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\(^1\) Gabriele Falloppio (*Fallopius*) [1523-1562], Italian anatomist and physician.

\(^2\) *And Columbus ... himself* Matteo Realdo Columbo (*Columbus*) [1516-1559], Italian anatomist and physician. His claim that he had discovered the clitoris was widely reported in various medical and anatomy texts and was just as widely derided. The clitoris as the seat of female sexual pleasure had been known since antiquity. Cf. Crooke, ‘Microcosmographia,’ *Online Companion*, n26. gloriously arrogantly. wont accustomed to; does as a matter of course.

\(^3\) *Avicenna* Ibn Sina (d. 1037 CE), influential Persian physician and philosopher, who combined Aristotelian and Galenic ideas in his *Canon of Medicine*. *Albucasis* (Zahrawi, fl. 940 CE), Islamic physician and surgeon, author of the important medical compendium, *Al-Tasrif*. *Ruffus* Rufus of Ephesus (fl. late 1\(^{st}\) c. CE), Greek physician and writer on anatomy. *Pollux* perhaps, Pollux of Naucratis, 2\(^{nd}\) c. CE grammarian and rhetorician, whose *Pollucis Onomasticon* mentions the pleasure involved in clitoral stimulation.

\(^4\) *nymph* here, the clitoris. Cf. Crooke, ‘Microcosmographia,’ *Online Companion*, n42. *Aetius* Aetius of Amida [Aetius Amidenus], Greek physician (c. 502-575), author of *Sixteen Books on Medicine*. *Aegineta* Paul of Aegina (fl. 640 CE), a Greek, a Galenist, and the author of many medical treatises, of which only his encyclopaedic *Seven Books of Medicine* survives.


\(^6\) *confricatrices* Latin, ‘con’ (with) + ‘frico’ (to rub sexually), referring here to women who engage in same-sex sexual intercourse.