THOMAS GIBSON (1648/9-1722), PHYSICIAN. A graduate of St John’s College (Cambridge) and Leiden University, Gibson had a successful medical career; he was an honourary fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and physician-general to the army (appointed, 1719). His *Anatomy of Human Bodies* (1682; six editions by 1703) is largely a compilation of the works of others, particularly Helkiah Crooke, by way of the physician and surgeon, Alexander Reid (c. 1570-1641).

From *The Anatomy of Human Bodies Epitomized* (1682)¹

**The Clitoris²**

Above, betwixt the *nymphae*, in the upper part of the *pudendum* does a part jet out a little that is called *clitoris*, from [the Greek] that signifies lasciviously to grope the *pudendum*. It is otherwise called *virga*,³ for it answers to a man’s *yard⁴* in shape, situation, substance, repletion with spirits and erection, and differs from it only in length and bigness. In some it grows to that length as to hang out from betwixt the lips of the privity.⁵ Yea, there are many stories of such as have had it so long and big as to be able to accompany with other women like unto men, and such are called *fricatrices*,⁶ or otherwise, *hermaphrodites*; who it is not probable are truly of both sexes, but only the *testes* fall down into the *labia*, and this *clitoris* is preternaturally extended. But in most it jets out so little as that it does not appear but by drawing aside the *labia*.

[…]

Its use may be known from what has already been discoursed. And we will note further that in some Eastern countries it uses to be⁷ so large, that for its deformity and the hindrance it gives to copulation, they use⁸ to cut it quite out, or hinder its growth by searing it, which they improperly call circumcision.

¹ The title page claims that work’s succinct descriptions of the body are “according to the newest doctrine of the most accurate and learned modern anatomists.”
² p. 159.
³ *virga* Latin, ‘branch or rod,’ a common euphemism for the penis.
⁴ *answers to a man’s yard* i.e., corresponds to a man’s penis.
⁵ *lips of the privity* the labia or lips of the vulva.
⁶ *fricatrices* See Bartholin, ‘Bartholinus Anatomy,’ *Online Companion*, n6; and Crooke, ‘Microcosmographia,’ *Online Companion*, n64.
⁷ *it uses to be* i.e., it is usually.
⁸ *use* are accustomed.