Plato provides a distinctive account about the creation of woman and her sexual desire in \textit{Timaeus} 91a-d. He links woman's desire for sexual intercourse with her womb's desire for child-bearing (91c2-3). Furthermore, he relates that if the womb is deprived of its desire, it will roam around the woman's body like an animal and block the passges of respiration (91c1-7). In a rather more vivid fashion than the authors of the Hippocratic gynecological treatises \textit{Diseases of Women II, Nature of Women, Diseases of Women I}, and \textit{Barren Women} (Hanson 1991), Plato gives us the aetiology for the affliction uterine suffocation. Previous treatments of this passage from \textit{Timaeus} have been mostly concerned with questions of whether this passage should be taken literally or whether it was influenced by the Hippocratic Corpus (Krell 1975; Turbayne 1976; Dean-Jones 1991; Adair 1996; King 1998). This paper, however, will explore the reception of \textit{Timaeus}' description of uterine suffocation in classical Islamic medicine, specifically in ar-Rāzī's \textit{al-Ḥāwī}, and Galen's role in its transmission into Arabic.

Twice in the section on uterine suffocation in the book on diseases of the womb in \textit{al-Ḥāwī}, ar-Rāzī cites the "Medical Timaeus" and "Timaeus" as an authority on uterine suffocation (Hyderabad 9.67; 9.75). He quotes both as saying that uterine suffocation is recognizable by peculiar symptoms, but the latter adds that sneezing is an encouraging sign. This paper will demonstrate that ar-Rāzī's \textit{Timaeus} advocates more sober advice than its namesake's account because his \textit{Timaeus} is more indebted to Galen than to Plato. Like the few other Platonic dialogues which were translated into Arabic, \textit{Timaeus} was transmitted into the East through Arabic and Syriac translations of Galen's commentaries on and epitomes of Plato's works (Sezgin 1988; Ullmann 1970). Consequently, Galen has indirectly shaped how and what of Plato was read in classical Islam.

My argument will highlight that Galen has adapted \textit{Timaeus}' conception of uterine suffocation because he is emphatically opposed to Plato's description of the womb as an irrational, roaming animal (\textit{On the Affected Parts} 6.5; \textit{Therapeutics to Glaucon} 1.15). He offers instead that uterine suffocation happens not because of the womb's desire for procreation but rather because of retention of the menses or female seed (Flemming 2000). Galen's strong reaction to this passage of \textit{Timaeus} and his subsequent re-writing of it in his \textit{Compendium of the Timaeus} (Kraus and Walzer 1954) and now fragmentary commentary \textit{On the Medical Aspects of the Timaeus} (Schröder 1928) has therefore affected how ar-Rāzī read \textit{Timaeus}. Thus, the overall aim for this paper is to track the ways Galen has shaped the Arabic reception of this passage of \textit{Timaeus} in order to understand how ar-Rāzī's Timaeus can relate what Plato's Timaeus never did.
Bibliography:

Primary Texts:


Secondary Texts:


