

In this paper I would like to ask why Thucydides is not mentioned in Lucretius' account of the plague at Athens in 429 BCE (*drn* 6.1138-6.1286). Lucretius is normally unafraid to announce the original author of his material. His "translations" of Epicurus, whom he proclaims as divine (*drn* 5.8, cf.3.15), form the center of his philosophical enterprise. Furthermore, he mentions Homer, Ennius (*drn* 1.117-1.126, cf. 3.1037-38) and other authors (e.g. Heraclitus, Empedocles, Anaxagoras: *drn* 1.635-879, Democritus, *drn* 3. 1039) whose language, images, and arguments he deploys throughout the poem.

Thucydides, however, is never mentioned. This is doubly strange, since Thucydides was not only the author, but also an important actor in his plague story. Thucydides tells us (Ts. 2.48.3) that he became ill with the plague: his experience is the basis for the famously vivid account Lucretius read and used. We may remark that Thucydides' progress through illness to understanding strongly resembles the progress to the *vera ratio* Lucretius requires of his readers. Considered from this point of view, Thucydides surely would have qualified for inclusion in Lucretius' narrative, and even for praise. As it is, he is mentioned neither as author nor as sufferer of the plague.

I would like to address this question in two ways. First, I will describe the comparative context: how does this elision compare, for example, to the fact that Vergil never mentions Homer, or to Horace's translations of Alceus or Sappho, in which the original author frequently also goes unmentioned? Second, I will argue from the text itself.

I will show that Lucretius' treatment of Athens and the Athenians as a whole differs from Thucydides' treatment. Lucretius adds instances of madness and foolish irrationality to Thucydides' depiction of the plague stricken Athenians. Lucretius includes no stories of recovery from the plague, and condemns to death the few Athenians who show some sign of psychological strength (cf. the deaths of *optimus quisque* at *drn* 6.1246). These are changes from the original Thucydidean narrative. Thucydides had written up stories of physical survival (e.g. Ts. 2.49.8, 2.51.6) and psychological recovery from the plague (Ts. 2.51.6), as well as stories of death, depression, and madness.

I will conclude by suggesting that Lucretius elides both Thucydides and the stories of Athenian recovery in order to obscure the fact that progress such as Thucydides displays was possible before Epicurus. The reason for doing this would be not just philosophical, but political: In this way Lucretius could bring what seemed to be Thucydides' account as a witness against the Athens idealized by the Stoics, deploying the historian's prestige with the Stoics against the Stoics themselves. The paper will marshal the evidence for this argument.