How should we react as readers and as critics when two passages in a literary work contradict one another? Classicists once assumed that all inconsistencies in ancient texts needed to be emended, explained away, or lamented. Building on recent work on both Greek and Roman authors, this book explores the possibility of interpreting inconsistencies in Roman epic. After a chapter surveying Greek background material including Homer, tragedy, Plato and the Alexandrians, five chapters argue that comparative study of the literary use of inconsistencies can shed light on major problems in Catullus’ *Peleus and Thetis*, Lucretius’ *De Rerum Natura*, Vergil’s *Aeneid*, Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, and Lucan’s *Bellum Civile*. Not all inconsistencies can or should be interpreted thematically, but numerous details in these poems, and some ancient and modern theorists, suggest that we can be better readers if we consider how inconsistencies may be functioning in Greek and Roman texts.

James J. O’Hara is George L. Paddison Professor of Latin at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. He is the author of *Death and the Optimistic Prophecy in Vergil’s Aeneid* (1990) and *True Names: Vergil and the Alexandrian Tradition of Etymological Wordplay* (1996), as well as numerous articles and reviews on Latin literature.
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Frontmatter
More information
For Marika
Contents

Acknowledgments  xii

Introduction  1

1 Greek versions  8

2 Catullus 64: Variants and the virtues of heroes  33

3 Death, inconsistency, and the Epicurean poet  55

4 Voices, variants, and inconsistency in the Aeneid  77

5 Inconsistency and authority in Ovid’s Metamorphoses  104

6 Postscript: Lucan’s Bellum Civile and the inconsistent Roman epic  131

Bibliography  143

Index of passages discussed  159

General index  163
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