

A is for Accidence: Juvenal 14.214

Juvenal on sons who surpass their fathers (14.213-14):

vinceris, ut Ajax
praeteriit Telamonem, ut Pelea vicit Achilles.

This is clearly modeled on – partly quoted from – Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 15.855-56:

sic magnus cedit titulis Agamemnonis Atreus, 855
Aegea sic Theseus, sic Pelea vicit Achilles;

The fact that commentators on Juvenal betray no misgivings about the text suggests that perhaps I should hesitate before disagreeing with them. Nevertheless, I have long suspected that Juvenal wrote *Telamona* in 214. That is the form Statius used in his *Thebaid* (2.473, 5.379, paired with *Pelea*, and 9.68, paired with *Thesea*) and *Silvae* (5.2.50), while *Telamonem* seems to be attested only for this passage of Juvenal, plus Cicero's *Tusculans* III (39, 43, 71), Granius Licinianus, Servius, and Dares Phrygius. Similarly, the accusative of *Orion* is always *Oriona* in verse (*Aeneid*, Manilius, Germanicus, *Ciris*, and Ovid's *Fasti*), sometimes *Oriona* but usually *Orionem* in prose, including Cicero again (*D.N.D.* 3.26).¹

Although the context is sordid, and Juvenal often plunges into the stylistic depths with little or no warning, it seems unlikely that he is uglifying and prosifying his verse for comic effect in this particular line. As Courtney puts it, “the elevation of the comparison accentuates the ignominy of its setting.”² I believe it does so more effectively with a matched pair of Greek accusatives:

vinceris, ut Ajax
praeteriit Telamona, ut Pelea vicit Achilles.

¹ I have combined the references found on the PHI website (<http://latin.packhum.org/>) and the Latin Library (<http://thelatinlibrary.com/>), but even if a few have escaped and the situation turns out to be more complicated, the overall pattern is clear: Greek endings for verse, Latin for prose.

² E. Courtney, *A Commentary on the Satires of Juvenal* (London, 1980), *ad loc.*