More To Be Done Here: Martial 1.79.2

Like most of Martial's epigrams, 1.79 is easier to quote than to excerpt (my text is the modern vulgate):

> Semper agis causas et res agis, Attale, semper:
>   est, non est quod agas, Attale, semper agis.
> si res et causae desunt, agis, Attale, mulas.
>   Attale, ne quod agas desit, agas animam.

Howell translates line 2 'whether there's anything for you to busy yourself with or not, you're always busy', that is he takes *est, non est quod agas* as the protasis of an implied condition with the disjunctive conjunctions omitted, equivalent to *<sive> est, <sive> non est <quid> quod agas*. Citroni quotes seven parallels from Hofmann, *Lateinische Um-gangssprachen* 109-10, 199, plus one of his own from Martial: 'Plaut. *Asin.* 465 *sit non sit*; *Rud.* 1068 *habeo non habeo*; Ter. *Haut.* 643 *prosit obsit*; Phaedr. II 2, 2 *ament amentur*; Sen. *epist.* 88, 15 *scias ista nescias*; Petron. 71, 11 *velit nolit* (e si aggiunga Mart. VIII 44, 16 *velis nolis*).'

I can't help noticing that all but one of the parallels, including all of the Imperial ones, are subjunctive, and that subjunctives would scan here at very small palaeo-graphical cost. It seems to me more than likely that Martial wrote **sit, non sit**, as Plautus did in the first parallel. For what it's worth, my not-always-reliable Stilgefühl finds *sit, non sit quod agas* much easier to understand. If I haven't read the transmitted text in a while, I always have to check a commentary or translation, since it seems unintelligible at first sight.

If I am right, the subjunctives have been assimilated to the surrounding indicatives – all the other verbs in 1-3 except *agas* – just as manuscript E (see Citroni's apparatus) corrupts *agas* in the same line to match *agis* above, below, and to the right of it.