

## Is a Half-Letter Conjecture Possible? Martial 3.46.4

Text and apparatus criticus are quoted from Shackleton Bailey's Teubner («post W. Heraeum», Stuttgart 1990):

**3.46.1-6** Exigis a nobis operam sine fine togatam:  
 non eo, libertum sed tibi mitto meum.  
 'non est' inquis 'idem'. multo plus esse probabo:  
 uix ego lecticam subsequar, ille feret.  
 in turbam incideris, cunctos umbone repellet: 5  
 inualidum est nobis ingenuumque latus.

5 cuneos *Heinsius*

The epigram continues with a long list of things that Martial's freedman can do better than himself. Line 4 presents us with two small problems. First, *subsequi* usually means 'follow behind' rather than 'keep up with'; we might have expected *consequar* (*OLD* s.v. 2) for the latter. Second, it is difficult to believe that Martial was so out of shape that he would have had trouble keeping up with an occupied *lectica* — heavy and more easily blocked by obstacles. The pedestrian among litters must have had the same advantages as the motorcyclist among traffic-jammed automobiles today in getting past obstacles such as oncoming litters.

Both problem can be solved by the change of a single letter in line 4, along with the punctuation:

*uis* ego lecticam subsequar? Ille feret.

You want me to follow the litter? He'll carry it.

There is also something to be said for an exclamation point in the second sentence: *Ille feret!* This adds up to two or three changes for the modern editor, but punctuation is fair game, so it is really the lightest possible emendation. Aurally, though not visually, it is a change of only half a letter, since the sound of S is just the second half of the sound of X. Martial most often uses *uis* in a question with a verb of saying or looking (*dicam* 2.7.8, 4.26.2, 6.30.6, 10.14.10, 12.22.2, *uocem* 4.56.2, *spectem* 10.98.5, *mirer* 11.56.2) but there are exceptions: *uis mittam puerum* (1.117.2), *uis te purpureum, Marce, sagatus amem?* (6.11.8), *uis imiter veteres, Chrestille, tuosque poetas?* (11.90.7), *uis scribam Thebas Troiamue malasue Mycenas?* (14.1.11).