

Classical Antiquity and its Heritage  
Klassiske Studiers Seminarække 2024

# Counterfactual Thinking in Roman Imperial Historiography

“Cleopatra’s nose: had it been shorter, the whole aspect of the world would have been altered” (Blaise Pascal). The idea that a nose job could have prevented the fall of the Roman Republic may strike us as preposterous, but the use of “what-if” scenarios has in fact been a part of the historical discipline as far back as Herodotus, and probably even farther. My research project takes such counterfactual thinking as an object of study rather than a methodology. It explores the counterfactual thinking undertaken by the Romans themselves as they sought to come to terms with the transformation of their state into an autocracy at the end of the first century BCE: Did they imagine that things could have gone differently? And how are alternatives to the actual course of events suggested and/or shut down in their texts?

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**MORE INFO**

**USE THE QR CODE**

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Friday  
**September 6**  
15.30-16.45  
Antikmuseet



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