

(2025 January 29) Cicero, the Triumvirate (and our Quadrumvirate?)

<https://www.hachettebookgroup.com/titles/josiah-osgood/lawless-republic/9781541604254/>

I'm not sending this Basic Books blurb to sell copies of the book, but because it's showing up in my incoming mail is a kind of odd coincidence (serendipity?) in that I've been reading Anthony Everitt's *Cicero: The Life and Times of Rome's Greatest Politician* (NY: Random House, 2001), which I picked up at the Bisbee library bookstore a couple of weeks ago, with special attention to the years of the triumvirate leading up to Caesar's "populist" overthrow of the Republic (and era I never knew in the detail I should have when I was teaching an undergrad course in Western Civ).

As is well-known (or used to be, when our schools taught history and civics), the US government was to considerable extent modeled not on Athenian democracy, but on the pre-empire Roman Republic. But they're not usually thought of as comparable in terms of their demise.

Tracking the agitation, rioting, lies, double crosses, storming of government buildings, big bucks horsetrading and outright murders right up to the Ides of March 44 BC is like reading a screenplay for the Trump era, with the Caesar-Crassus-Pompey triumvirate forecasting what looks a whole lot like a quadrumvirate of Trump, Musk, Zuckerberg and Bezos - but no Cicero in sight and maybe the nonagenarian Chomsky in the role of the diehard Cato insisting on the dying Republic's rule of law.

First as tragedy then as farce?