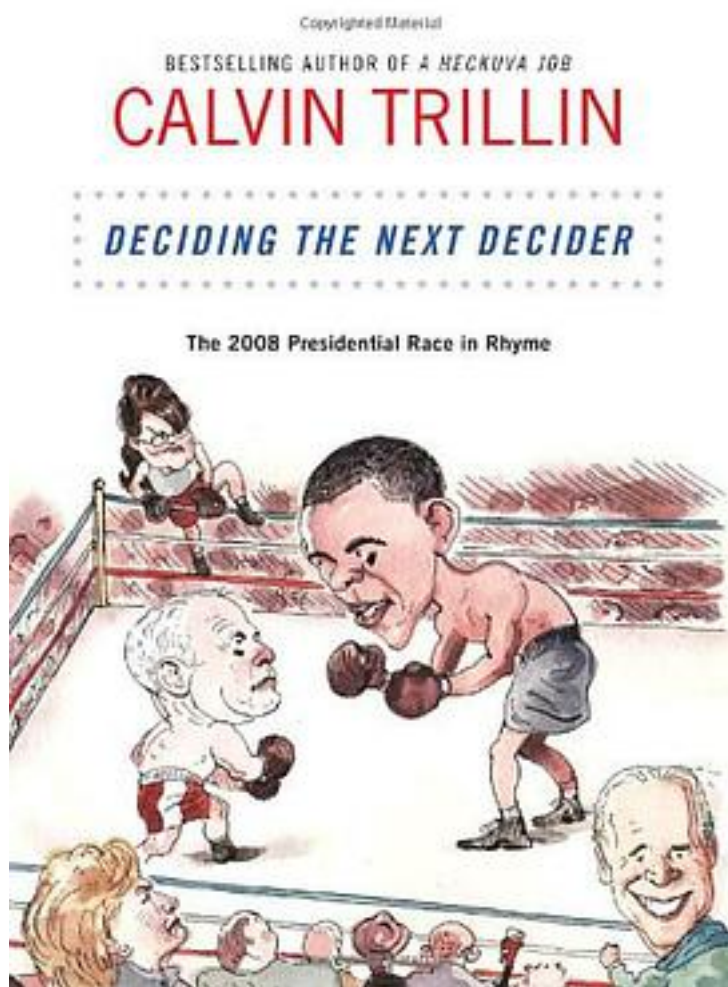


Deciding the Next Decider



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著者:Trillin, Calvin

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Displaying the form that made bestsellers of *Obliviously On He Sails* and *A Heckuva Job*, tales of the Bush Administration in rhyme, Calvin Trillin trains his verse on the

2008 race for the presidency.

Deciding the Next Decider is an ongoing campaign narrative in verse interrupted regularly by other poems, such as a country tune about John Edwards called “Yes, I Know He’s a Mill Worker’s Son, But There’s Hollywood in That Hair” and a Sarah Palin song about her foreign policy credentials: “On a Clear Day, I See Vladivostok.” It covers Mitt Romney’s transformation (“Mitt Romney’s saying now he should have known / A stem cell’s just a human, not quite grown”), the speculation about whether Al Gore was trimming down to run (“Presumably, they looked for photo ops / To see what Gore was stuffing in his chops”), the slow-motion implosion of Hillary Clinton’s drive to the White House (“Some pundits wrote that Hil’s campaign might fare / A little better if Bill wasn’t there”), and the differing responses of Barack Obama and John McCain to the financial crisis (“Though coolness has its limitations, it’ll / Prevent comparisons with Chicken Little”).

Beginning at the 2006 midterms, Deciding the Next Decider resurrects the nonstarters like George Allen (“He fit what’s often valued by the Right: / Quite cheerful, Reaganesque, and not too bright”) and the low-energy Fred Thompson (“The pros said, ‘That’s a state he has to take, / And he just might, if he can stay awake’ ”). And it carries through to the vote that made Barack Obama the forty-fourth president of the United States.

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