



Charles Chadwick

It's All Right Now
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It's All Right Now is your first novel. How long did it take to write and what was your process? Do you feel your work would be less rich or different in some way if you had not maintained a full career?

Beginning in the early 70s, it was written over a period of about 30 years in four installments at about eight year intervals when I began wondering what might have happened to Ripple, what people he had met, how he might have changed. I had no choice but to follow a career. Unlike Ripple's, my life was mainly overseas. We have nothing in common in background or education, nor do any of the characters bear any resemblance to people I've known in real life. The connection between life and work is one I find it very difficult to make. Literature draws as much from literature itself as from life, I think.

The structure of the book is almost a non-structure — undisciplined but highly effective. Can you discuss how you put this book together? How did you create this informal structure — one with very little plot — that perfectly suits the tone and voice of the narrator?

My aim was, very simply, truth to life. Lives do not have structures or plots — these are mythic artifices. Ripple himself has thoughts about this. See page 671: fiction doesn't have to do justice to real people. He writes about his life as anyone might.

Have there been comparisons between Tom Ripple and other everyman characters? It would seem fair to compare Tom to Walter Mitty or Bartleby the scrivener. Were there any literary creations you looked to when forming Tom Ripple?

I began the book after reading Joseph Heller's *Something Happened*. The style and perspective of the book are apparent from that, though Ripple soon acquired a life of his own. I'd tried other (mainly third-person) approaches but it was Heller's book that set me off. There have been as many women as men who have liked the book, so I like to think Ripple speaks quite generally for all sorts of people. I tried to broaden his experience and the range of people he met to fill his life as much substance as possible.

Writing about his life is something Tom Ripple finds as a way to make sense of his life and other people's lives. How was your experience of writing this novel the same or different from Tom's?

This is a connection I find it hard to make. The book hasn't helped me to make sense of my life, but in doing it I might have discovered a little about how lives might develop and deepen and be made sense of (or not as the case may be).

You have written four other novels as well as short stories. Will we be seeing any of this work in the near future?

I have now just about finished a further part of the novel covering Ripple's last years. As before, I was curious to know what happened to him next and up to the end. Other work is being looked at.