



Armistead Maupin

The Night Listener
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Q: You are known for producing complex plotlines full of unexpected twists. Does this require careful planning, or is the process more organic in nature?

A: I always let a storyline percolate for a while before I begin to write, but even then I have only a general road map of the territory. Many of the side trips arise unexpectedly, which is a source of delight to me. Sometimes, of course, it's necessary to rewrite in order to look like I'd always planned on taking that side trip. This requires engaging both sides of your brain simultaneously. That is, you have to maintain a kind of formal structure but go a little crazy at the same time. And, for me, that's never a speedy process. I usually write two pages a day at the very most. I wish I could let it spill out heedlessly, but I've grown more and more fussy over the years—thanks, in part, to the invention of the word processor.

Q: Did you know how *The Night Listener* would end when you began it?

A: No. That came to me very close to the end, when I was out walking the dog. But it arose from what I'd already learned about Gabriel—and about myself—in the course of writing the book. It was thrillingly obvious, too, as if I should have seen it all along.

Q: You seem to flirt a lot with autobiography. Is that a function of your self-exploration process, or are you taking details from your own life to flesh out a character that you think of as entirely separate from yourself?

A: Well—both, really. Sometimes I wish I could divorce myself from Gabriel, because he's not always the most appealing guy around, but I'm also clever enough to know that his flaws make him more real. And I have lots of those to mine. The truth is, I've always been writing about myself in one way or another. The central character of *Maybe the Moon* is very like me, though I'm disguised there as a heterosexual, Jewish, female dwarf. It was much easier to write, let me tell you. Gabriel was a killer, because there was nowhere to hide. Which is not to say that my vanity ever completely disappeared. Even when I'm being brutally honest about myself, I'm secretly hoping be to be admired for it. [Visit the author's website!](#)