

Jonathan Tropper

It's Not Lad Lit

Jonathan Tropper rejects the idea that his writing can be pigeonholed as lad lit, even though in his third novel, *How to Talk to a Widower*, due out from Delacorte Press in July, he's created the archetypal lad lit protagonist. Doug Parker, a 29-year-old slacker-type magazine writer, avoids commitment in both his professional and personal lives by indulging in regular pizza runs, heavy drinking and sex with his neighbor's wife, while at the same time evading his agent, who's trying to get him to agree to a lucrative book deal. But this isn't simply another novel about men behaving badly: Parker is mourning the unexpected death of his 37-year-old wife of two years, leaving him with a house in an affluent New York City suburb, an equally grief-stricken 16-year-old stepson, and a lot of memories.



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Call it post-lad lit?

No, Tropper insists in response to *Show Daily's* query, it's not even that. What he's doing, he says, is writing what is for him age-appropriate literature reflecting his own life experiences.

"I'm a married man with three kids," Tropper, 37, explains, having spent five years experiencing the urban lifestyle in Manhattan before heading to Westchester County with his growing family. Like countless others before him fleeing the cramped spaces, constant noise and other hassles inherent in big-city life, Tropper now lives in the stereotypical Tudor-style house, complete with front lawn and minivan parked in the driveway.

"I'm the prototypical suburban husband and father," Tropper claims, "but every once in a while, I look around me. Everyone here seems to work for a hedge fund or own a hedge fund. Or they're lawyers and doctors. They're real professionals. I'm the lowly writer. It's like I blinked and landed in outer space.

"I relate to the character—not to his grief, I've never experienced a loss like that—but his wondering just how he got to suburbia," Tropper explains, describing his dedication to creating authentic characters who "think the way 30-something-year-old men really think, feel the way they really feel, the true nature of their sexuality.

"In my head, I think, I'm going to write literary fiction. But what comes out of me is commercial fiction," he admits. Just don't dare call it lad lit. Tropper signs today, 9:30–10:30 a.m., at Table 13.

—Claire Kirch