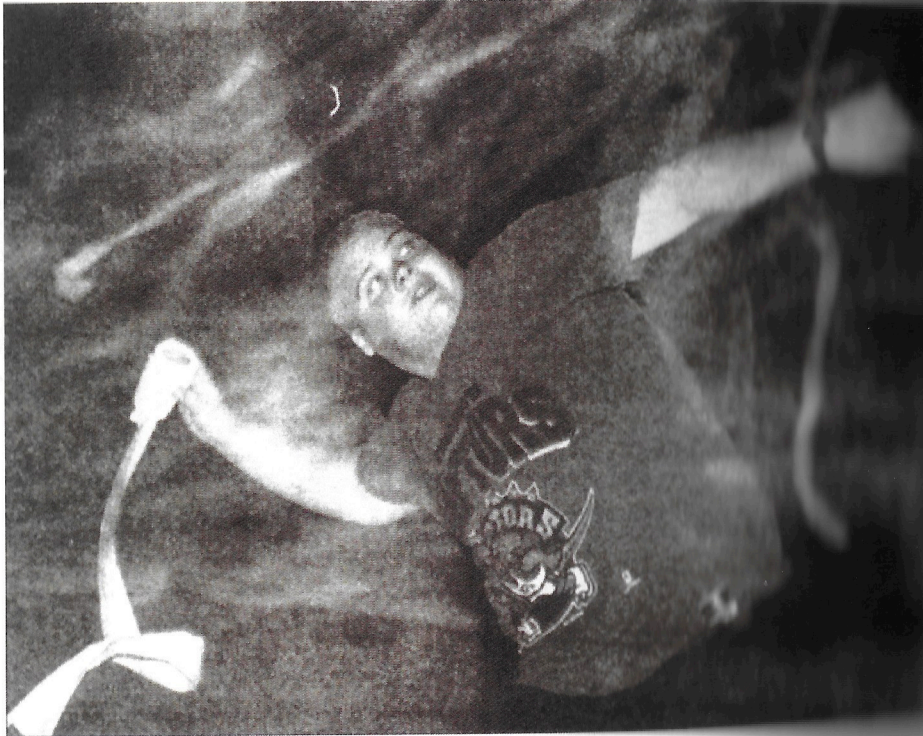




greg jenkins 2022







## THE HAPHAZARD SELF

solid social anchor

Without a script, there is no choice for many men except to improvise. Improvising a successful life is a very difficult task. "A model of stable masculinity," writes David Morgan, "would include a relatively high degree of congruence between public discourses about masculinity and the public and private practices of masculinity. For individual men, there would be a sense of ontological security."<sup>39</sup> This is not a great request. "What do we want? Ontological security! When do we want it? Now!" But this is in fact *exactly* what many men are seeking; a more solid social anchor, more certainty about how to be in the world.

Over the course of 13 years, a team of qualitative researchers led by Matthew Edin conducted in-depth interviews with men in four American cities. In the resulting 2019 paper, "The Tenuous Attachments of Working-Class Men," they chart the erosion of key institutional frameworks for mature masculinity, especially work, family, and religion. These core institutions, Edin and her coauthors write, "created the attachments, investments, involvements, and beliefs that guided and gave meaning to human activity in specific social domains." They also "organized social activity into common patterns of behavior, [and] supplied norms, beliefs, and rituals that legitimated such patterns."<sup>40</sup>

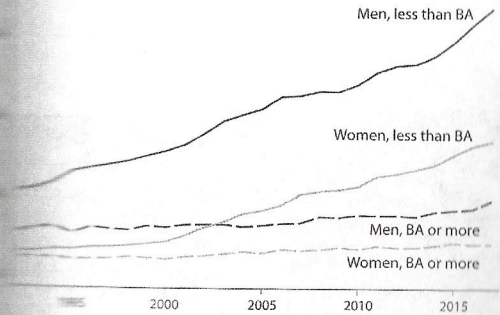
As the title of their paper implies, many working class men are now only tenuously attached to these institutions of work, faith, and family. In these circumstances, "a few may craft lives that are more rewarding than those of prior generations, but the majority will struggle."<sup>41</sup> The result is an increased number of men with what the team labels "a haphazard self," oscillating between different plans and priorities, struggling to stay on any particular track, and often slipping backward.

In Coal Brook, anthropologist Jennifer Silva's label for a town in the outstate region of Pennsylvania, "massive transformations in gender, work and family . . . have ripped open men's lives and left them scrambling to put them back together." Here, in the run up to the 2016 election, Silva reports that Donald Trump was viewed positively as a "man's man." She shows how some of the men in Coal Brook are attempting, against the odds, to "sustain the masculine legacy of provision, protection, and







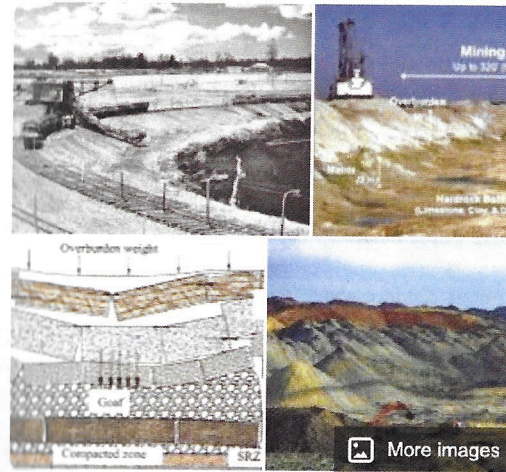


...ing alcohol and suicide mortality, white non-Hispanics ages 45-54. Authors' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data. Data are adjusted for increases in average age within the age-group.

... contribute to the rapid widening of the mortality gap ... with and without a bachelor's degree that we are witness- ... Taken as a whole, white mortality in the age-group forty-five ... has held constant since the early 1990s. But this masks the ... those with less than a bachelor's degree, death rates rose by ... while for those with a bachelor's degree, mortality dropped ... In 2017, those with a bachelor's degree or more earned ... as those without, which speaks to the advantage of the ... in life. That their risk of dying in midlife is only a quarter ... for those without a bachelor's degree speaks to their advan-

... increases in mortality gaps for heart disease and cancer both ... the growing gap in mortality between education groups, ... in deaths of despair among those with less than a bachelor's ... largely accounts for the widening of the all-cause mortality ... as shows the numbers for the US as a whole, separately for ... women.

## Overburden :



[More images](#)

In mining, overburden is the material that lies above an area that lends itself to economical exploitation, such as the rock, soil, and ecosystem that lies above a coal seam or ore body. [Wikipedia](#)

[Feedback](#)



ILLUMINATIONS

v

Let them rent me this whitewashed tomb, at  
last, with cement lines in relief,—far down under  
ground.

I lean my elbows on the table, the lamp shines  
brightly on these newspapers I am fool enough to  
read again, these stupid books.

At an enormous distance above my subterranean  
parlor, houses take root, fogs gather. The mud is red  
or black. Monstrous city, night without end!

Less high are the sewers. At the sides, nothing  
but the thickness of the globe. Chasms of azure,  
wells of fire perhaps. Perhaps it is on these levels  
that moons and comets meet, fables and seas.

In hours of bitterness, I imagine balls of sapphire,  
of metal. I am master of silence. Why should the  
semblance of an opening pale under one corner of  
the vault?

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arranged on the occasion of *motor motor blue*  
show at calarts  
from october 26-30, 2022



