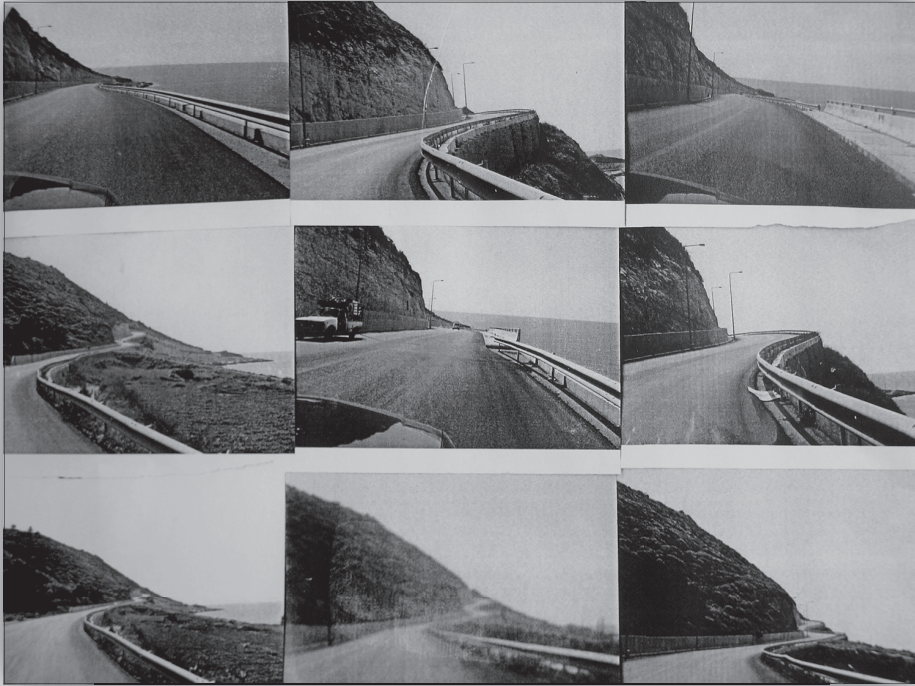


**From the needle and
thread, all the way up
to the hat**

Steven Chodoriwsky



If we consider taking stock of a day's working hours, and if we believe that a majority of those hours should be designated to tasks at hand, to an investigation of the thing itself, then during the time the two of us shared in Lebanon, our prime object of study is the road. Our observations might then be used to sketch a working thesis on topics of driving, being driven, social status, national psyche, and a worldview on waiting. One drives, one rides shotgun. We sigh at traffic, examine the makes and details of cars, assess license plates, and curse the questionable driving habits of companion motorists. We observe a Mediterranean horizon to my right, and a slanted, slashed landscape to his left; we pull the two together toward us. En route, time holds a catatonic weight.

Between driver and driven is one glove compartment, one stick shift; we share a windshield. The video I shoot often catches, at the base of its frame, the wipers at rest, since it never seems to rain here. Sometimes it also catches Farid's hands: a flick of the ignition, a turning over of the steering wheel, a quick gesture that coincides with the punchline of a joke. We get there a bit faster that way—his talking, my filming.¹ Our port of call, the border village of Naqoura, and especially its market, is still much further on: the dot on a wobbly *i* pointing south. We're told there isn't all that much to see, past the checkpoints, at this place they call *Les Chaouis*, or "Mingey" Street. *Two architects looking for a market* describes the scenario well enough; fieldwork like this always seems a bit mercenary.

Perhaps some background is in order in what is a rather complex geopolitical situation. Naqoura is a southern village on Lebanon's Mediterranean coast. For nearly 35 years, this corner of the country has been the centre of operations for the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (Unifil), a force established in 1978 following Israel's invasion northward, itself a response to a commando attack days earlier, whose responsibility the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) had claimed. This mandate, Security Council Resolution 425,² was thus a result of a protest by the Lebanese government against the incursion, as well as a distancing from the PLO attack that provoked it. It called for the immediate withdrawal of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), a restoration of territorial integrity, and the arrival of Unifil peacekeepers. The 1982 invasion of Lebanon by the IDF reached as far north as Jounieh, the coastal city past Beirut, in just three days. By 1985, they had begun to scale back their position, just occupying southern Lebanon up to the Litani River. Through this time, and until the IDF's complete withdrawal in 2000, Unifil's responsibilities were limited to allocating aid and protection to those who remained in the south.

Indeed, what began as a six-month "interim" arrangement has been repeatedly extended, due to evolving circumstances, by the Security Council at Lebanon's request, in the efforts of

carrying out its original goals of reinstating regional stability. International battalions in assigned sectors cooperate closely with the Lebanese Armed Forces, with the eventual intention to transfer to them full control over the zone. Their mission also includes infrastructural improvements, aid, and community programs, alongside constant monitoring to ensure the area remains clear of prohibited weapons and holdings.

Unifil's northern operational boundary largely follows the course of the Litani River. Naqoura sits just north of its southern boundary, the so-called "Blue Line" established in 2000 for the purposes of determining the extent of IDF withdrawal with respect to Resolution 425. While not a formal border demarcation, it is a line monitored by the UN, and respected by the countries as identified. An alternate look at Naqoura, from ground level, might start with who began to gather around the fringes. On the heels of Unifil's 1978 arrival came merchants, unsurprisingly. Escalated hostilities and a new international clientele meant promising business, and they set up shop outside the headquarters' chain link fences. Ever since, it has been a gathering point between contingents of soldiers, civilian employees, visiting liaisons, and enterprising locals—could there be a more elegant design type for a market than this? Find a stranded clientele, and camp out on their doorstep. Excited by the prospects of exploring such a site, the mind wanders to all the big questions: How does an informal marketplace such as this influence or become influenced by its adjacent conditions? What is salient about its social or commercial role, and how has it evolved? How might its architectural configuration play a part in the exchange of goods and services? How can we describe this knot where social, spatial, and economic interests intertwine?

Though only two hours south of Beirut, this area of the country is not frequented by many of its citizens. Aside from local towns and villages, civilian access is restricted, with the process to request entry unclear and laden with assumptions. A foreigner requires some kind of additional permit to visit

the southern areas, and so as a result, we find ourselves at the dusty regional headquarters of the Lebanese Army in Saïda, a city midway between Beirut and the Unifil zone. Here we are sent to a building, drab as they come, with room after room full of irritable soldiers, conducting business of some kind but deferring ours, until finally we are pointed back outdoors, back onto the building's doorstep, to a shipping container outfitted as a reception office. The head secretary clearly has the touch of an interior decorator. Flowery drapes frame the window, and pictures of Swiss cottages adorn the wall. Papers stack neatly alongside family photographs, and the phone rings rather pleasantly. In Arabic, Farid pays his compliments to what he's done with the place, but the answer is curt. "I just couldn't stand it in *there*"—he gestures to the building—"any more." We give him the name of a general who can vouch for us, a friend of a family friend located high in a bureaucratic chain of command. "It's good to know a general," I tell Farid as we wait, as if I could state anything more platitudinous. "Everyone here knows one," he says, "and knowing one moves things forward."

I am reminded of the old line he told me the Lebanese had inherited from the Italians, something like "one soldier, fifty generals." If knowing generals moves things forward, you would think the country ran like a Swiss watch. Eventually, the secretary procures for us a single document: a yellow post-it note. It is three inches square, with "311" written on it with blue pen. He tells us this is good for ten days' access, and we are sent on our way. An hour later we approach a Lebanese army checkpoint, the first of several, and I assume it's curtains for us. Farid, unfazed by a mere post-it note, is a smoother operator. He rolls the window down to greet the sentinel. We idle. I make a quick tally of the items on view, from bottom to top, seen from the passenger seat: Glove compartment, driver's seat, driver's side door, door handle, door window frame, door window glass (2mm), oil drum, sandbag, asphalt, curb, terraced limestone retaining wall, vegetation, red flowers, terraced limestone retaining wall, picket fence (red and white alternating pickets),

concrete bollard with Lebanon cedar painted or stencilled on in green, concrete checkpoint kiosk with "T" painted in red, hill crest, sky, cloud, sky, camouflage mesh, corrugated steel roof, door window frame, car ceiling.

The strange currency of "311" eventually gets us past the checkpoint and on our way. After a while, Farid recaps the exchange with the sentinel. "They don't have any problems granting a citizen like me into the area—it's *you* tagging along that unnerves him. He said, 'Why did you bring him, it is more trouble for you—you should have left him at home!'"

On the road, we size up ourselves and our perimeters, gliding around other cars. If we are cut off, if we feel wronged, our instincts say: accelerate. The custom is less to yield position than to assert a right to any temporary tract of asphalt ahead, the future location of our vehicle. Deceleration privileges the past, and defers space to the trailing drivers and cars, which we can scarcely see, in any case, without wrenching our necks. Ignore the rear-view mirror. Drivers behind us simply must not exist. Eyes forward: look, what a landscape, what a remote corner! And that car up there is inching into our lane.

On one of the most scenic stretches of Lebanese coastline, we drive around a promontory, down a slope, around a bend, into what we think is a town. A single file of small, ramshackle bunga-



lows, leaning on one another, runs some 500 metres along one side of the north-south road. Across from this entire settlement, relentlessly, stands a sixteen-foot-tall concrete wall, topped with a skein of barbed wire. Unifil trucks in white and Lebanese army trucks in green speed in both directions. Probably our slower pace is conspicuous as the road starts to slope back upward, and then, all of a sudden, it's finished. Or rather, we reach the last checkpoint before the Blue Line itself. Nothing signposted, just an uneasy approach, and a manned barricade 200 metres ahead. So that's it? That's the thing?

We double back quickly and park. Perhaps "market" is too generous, after all; it's time to jettison some of the preconceptions we carry. These are *shops*, curt and stout, but who—and in some cases, where—are these shopkeepers? Those clearly occupied sported hand-painted signs, plastic chairs, plastic curtains, concrete stoops, and corrugated steel awnings that lean out toward the asphalt. Others have been reduced to their concrete shell or piles of rubble. Were they bombed? Tough shrubs have quickly moved in. The ruins create frames for the backyards rising up the slope, toward the border zone and the surveillance towers along the ridge, denoting Israeli positions beyond the Blue Line. Abandoned electrical poles dot the landscape. We note the new, gigantic military complex sitting higher up on the slope. Another question: who owns this land?

Window displays contain inventory past its prime: packaging for souvenirs, electronics, hard drives, routers, keyboards and the like, advertisements for cigarettes and soft drinks, calendars, postcards. Images exposed for so long to direct sunlight are vintage blue, spectral. No one in town seems in much of a rush to swap them for fresh items.

We are recommended to speak to Ali Youssef, restaurant proprietor and Unifil neighbour of 35 years. We hope to get from him a sense of the evolving interactions between the local population and the international contingents. Within seconds of walking in, he seats us promptly with a smile and offers us coffee. Customers are customers. Around his table-desk in the

centre of the establishment are what appear to be shop regulars, six Portuguese *casques bleues*, taking a midday break.

“What the UN asks for, what they want, like, anything they want, we bring it for them.” He points around: over there are souvenirs and sundry items for sale, over there wine and beer, and here, a small restaurant. “It’s more a relationship, not with the commuters! More face-to-face. You see?” He checks Facebook, puffs on a cigarette, and laughs with a peacekeeper simultaneously. “The people here ask for beer, I sell them beer, they pay, and they go.” His opening hours are from ten to three, then again from five to nine. He also makes deliveries. “We have passes to go inside. For example, if the Austrians ask, *Ali, we want some pizza*, I bring it for them straight to their room.” Business is personal, which is what he prefers. A few minutes later, a blond serviceman, looking almost slightly lost, wanders in and orders a shwarma. “One chicken sandwich for Austria!” Ali bellows and makes a gesture towards the window to the kitchen. A woman pops up. “My wife!” he pronounces, grinning at us.

Ali Youssef is an entrepreneur turned international ambassador. Even his son, chip off the old block, has his own shop down the road. Unifil has grown up around them and anchored their livelihood. Ali’s shop stands as a testament to this, its interior decorated floor to ceiling by the troops themselves, rotation after yearly rotation, with a mix of group portraiture, national paraphernalia, soccer squad allegiances, trophies, flags. Many of them carry effusive, sharpie-scribbled messages of thanks to their host, companion, cook, concierge, *maître d’*. “Before, you know, it was *packed*! And you knew *everyone*, he sells food, he sells lingerie, he sells fridges, he sells alcohol, soft drinks—you had a big supermarket here, you know! You could find everything you liked. Also, at one time, you know, you also get women!” A laugh caps the recollection of each inventory item. “It was everything—from the needle and thread, all the way up to the hat! Here, *mingey*, duplicates, not real, you have it here! CD, DVD, video, glasses, Lacoste shirts”—he notices he himself is wearing one, pinches the alligator logo, pulls it taut and snaps



it back—"Lacoste! You can find everything you want!"³

By position and operation alike, the shop lies in the shadow cast by the base. Proximity, convenience, a relaxed atmosphere and a steady turnover of soldiers all promise a sure profit. Ali's shop squats, as they all do, in single file, from the army checkpoint down to the mayor's house. The atmosphere is informal by design and by desire. "They come here, they ask for us, if you can do that, then, you know, okay, then we go to the market in Beirut or some other place, to bring it here to sell for them, and we make our commission." He brushes off mention of large vending contracts through Dubai, Beirut, Paris—not his business, not his scale. He is a staunch proponent of personal camaraderie and minge capital.

In the face of evolving peacekeeping strategies and the suspended tensions of regional politics, the informal marketplace emerged as a plucky underdog. However, signs abound that we are witnessing the twilight of this particular version of Minge Street. As it stands, all shops will cease to exist as of July 31, 2012—the remaining squatter merchants are to be evacuated and replaced by new, law-abiding vendors. One type of economy is to be traded in for another; I wonder if its moniker will hold.

The land, it turns out, is private, though hard facts at this point dissolve into rumour. The owner, a "Christian businessman" from Beirut—everyone we speak to makes a point of mentioning his religion—is or was connected to government and must have purchased it long before the United Nations arrived, as locals fled during regional disruptions in the lead-up to the civil war. His territory is sizeable, encompassing a great sloping swath toward the Blue Line ridge, where Camp Green Hill, Unifil's massive 2006 extension, now sits—not to mention the whole of Minge Street.

The rumour, likely not far-fetched, is that he will develop the street into a more orderly, tailored strip-mall, attracting a new generation of entrepreneurs. Many have already left; out of the 150 or 200 families here in 1978, Ali figures that maybe only 10 or 20 remain. This explains the "bombed out" proper-

ties we saw earlier, as shops are simply bulldozed when merchants leave, though not before they strip anything of value: copper piping, electrical wiring, doors, windows, wood finishes, light fixtures, plumbing fixtures, every reusable building material for their new place down the road, or for profit. Ali is matter-of-fact: "Sure, we have a good relationship with Unifil. If they are not really here, perhaps we are not here. Perhaps we travel the whole world, like other Lebanese refugees, to Canada, to Switzerland, to France, to other countries. Unifil economically supports the population here. The population stays because they have some business to do with them, to support their family. If you don't have that, you can go." But while it is no longer profitable for Ali Youssef to stay on Minge Street, conditions could not be riper for the landowner. He will take advantage of a heightened Unifil presence, the increase in land value, and the fact that the civil war's end has brought an air of relative calm. Ali's defiance does not quite add up: Unifil is here, more than ever, but it's not the one he grew up with.

2006 is the year that divides old from new. Following Israel's withdrawal in 2000, the situation in Southern Lebanon greatly improved.⁴ The Lebanese Armed Forces, gendarmerie, and the police maintained order, establishing checkpoints in the vacated areas to control movement. Unifil monitored both the positions of the Israeli and Lebanese Forces daily and continued to provide humanitarian assistance to the local population. Though it seemed that the two-decades-long ceasefire would hold, time had not eased tensions between the regional parties. Conflict would reappear in July 2006, when Hezbollah launched air and land attacks on IDF positions. Hezbollah fighters crossed the Blue Line into Israel, capturing two soldiers, wounding two, and killing three more. The next few days saw the conflict escalate until it spilled out of the Unifil zone, moving into the rest of the country. Israel crippled the national transport infrastructure, targeting Hezbollah neighbourhoods and areas of military significance. The conflict lasted 34 days, ending with a UN-brokered ceasefire on August 14, 2006.



Throughout the conflict, the Unifil troops conducted military observation, assisted in humanitarian efforts, and provided medical assistance.

The end of the hostilities saw a change once again to Unifil's role, this time rather sweeping. Among many items, the mandate of Security Council Resolution 1701 increased troop presence to 15,000 military personnel, up from 2,000 just before the conflict, and included the addition of a Maritime Task Force.⁵ Coinciding with the bolstered mandate, the state-of-the-art Camp Green Hill was speedily built to accommodate the troop surge. Compared to the smaller, original base, bound by the coastline on one side and the coastal road on the other, the extension is built up the slope and rivals the village of Naqoura in size. Green Hill is equipped like a resort, with an outdoor pool, private family residences, gym facilities, internet room, and a cafeteria.

We are looking at old photographs with Ali Youssef in his shop. In quick succession he pulls a half-dozen photo albums off the shelf, full of unlabelled snapshots given to him by soldiers on their campaigns. Acknowledging each one with a tapping index finger, he shows us men in their off-hours, in uniform or plainclothes, posing with locals, landmarks, firearms, beverages, and shelves of mingey merchandise in stock. Many of them date back to the thick of the civil war. By now he is in full lamentation mode. For him, today's tightened security means peacekeepers stay more and more on base, in barracks and on the internet, sequestered from the local community. The old days saw slower traffic but faster sales, more leniency on the curfew, international friends, relationships, love. Glory days! Two of his own sisters wed peacekeepers and now live in France. Outside, a Unifil truck whirrs past at an alarming speed. For 30 years crooked and cramped, the road was recently repaved and is in amazing condition—a smooth, grey gulf. His phone interrupts us: a delivery order for three kilos of kebabs and three kilos of meat for this afternoon. A battalion is celebrating a birthday tonight and they want him to bring up party supplies.



Returning to Beirut for the night, we drive to the south again the next day.⁶ Up and down the highway, it is educational to watch fellow cars while moving at great speed. Our eyes become adept at sensing another driver's character, occupation, familial status, urgency, belligerence quotient, egomania quotient, showboat quotient, etc. We judge swiftly and harshly on the road, we classify and typologize by the way they lean. We can do this in very small increments. For example, there is the worker's car; there is driver's first car after graduating from a scooter; there is the father's SUV driven by the son or daughter; there is the father driving himself; there are the taxicabs; there are the women-only taxicabs; there is the car that drives defensively, on lines rather than lanes; there is the Saudi; there are the Picantos; there are the lorries who are not required to drive on off-peak hours, making their deliveries, gassing up and blocking traffic in the middle of the day; there are the leapfrogging buses vying for customers at the next stop; there are the company-contract Toyotas and Hondas that cannot be directly purchased by individuals; there are the blown-out cars stranded on the curb.

"311" somehow gets us through the checkpoints for a second time. Industrious, Farid takes photos every few metres of the one-row town to later construct a panoramic elevation. He doesn't take our access here for granted and is determined to not leave empty-handed should our permission near the base

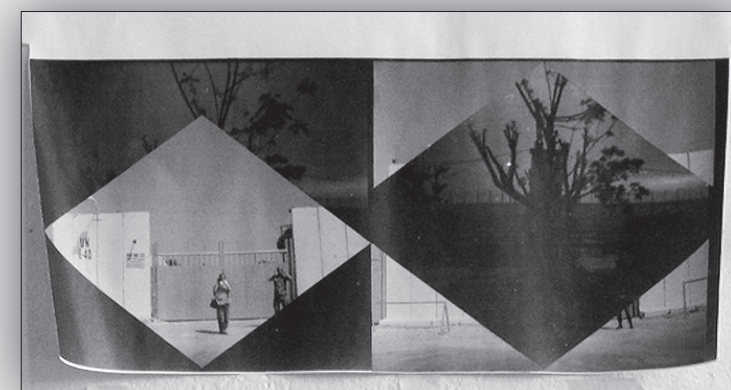
be suddenly revoked. For my part, I make a drawing from a concrete stoop, and then, looking almost slightly lost, pop in to Ali Youssef's again for a few minutes to watch TV.

Two Irish soldiers are at Beaufort, the crusader-era fortress overlooking the Litani River.

"Do you know why the crusaders built their castle on such precipitous slopes?"

"Defence, I suppose."

*"Sorry, not at all, boy! They built them there so that the mingey men couldn't build their shops up against the wall."*⁷



Late in the day, the concrete wall sets the west-facing shop-fronts in full shadow. Out behind, the ragged slope is still sunlit for a couple more hours. I was told not to trust the lush, bucolic patches of landscape in the distance—those might still be rife with landmines. We have a meeting with the mayor in an hour, which is bound to help our research. Down the street, Farid buys a pair of Timberlands—great quality mingey knock-offs—while I examine canvas bags and postcards. I resolve to buy something tomorrow. I also resolve to take more photographs, and get a shave in the Salon Vasco Barber Shop, located in a shipping container.

We try supper at the Baldakinen Cafe, or Chez Nassim, across from the "French Gates" of the Unifil base. Nassim, taciturn, gets his son to cook, and goes outside to play backgammon amid drying laundry. A couple of army guys arrive with a big truck to siphon well water. We are the only customers. Maybe

it's off-season. We prepare for our meeting, unfolding the list of big research questions. For starters, who is this mysterious landowner, and what is his relationship to the United Nations? What legal recourse is there against the threat of vacating the squatters and shutting down Mingey Street?

Once everything is on the table—two large tilapia and an immodest amount of tabouleh—the son of Nassim unpacks his Korg PA 800 and, with a sheepish smile, plies us with raucous dabke music until we push our chairs from the table. The owner properly fleeces us—needle, thread and hat—thanks to our stranger status and my hair colour. Not as many blondes as in the old days.

Between the potholes in the road there's another hole—this is how the conditions in the south were described to me. There is in fact no third visit, no tomorrow in Naqoura. Not long after paying a visit to the mayor, a Lebanese military intelligence officer arrives unannounced (dispatched by the Unifil base, which was watching our movements, and our taking of photo graphs, via security cameras) and asks us, politely enough, to



leave town immediately: our post-it note is now no longer valid. The mayor is also polite, but certainly not about to argue on our behalf. Instead, we find ourselves back in Beirut, at the imposing fortress that is the Ministry of National Defence, to secure a proper pass for future trips. It's the last task we accomplish before this leg of fieldwork ends.

We are sitting in an office called "Inquiry Clerk," a ten-soldier office on the second floor. The harsh glare of afternoon light casts all ten in shadow, especially the one closest to the large windows and furthest from the door; he is supervising the nine and ignoring the two of us. There are three silent phones on his desk, two landline and one cellular; otherwise it is clear, an icy expanse. Contrast this with the rotund soldier-clerk who attends to us, whose small table is overflowing with dossiers, opened envelopes, official statements, scraps of notes. A gloriously misshapen mountain range with deep fissures. Our soldier is perspiring. With a pencil on lined notepad, he is writing for us a letter of request to help us receive permission to access a place we have already twice been to. But every line of handwriting is interrupted by another case on his watch—a stolen car, trespassing, a misdemeanour—and then there's us, a foreigner and his Lebanese friend hoping for a bit of good news. His single phone rings off the hook. One time he just loses it, and tosses the receiver over the cliff, where it dangles by its cord. Paper is resilient enough, but it's transfixing to watch the files manhandled. Nothing is placed. The stapler crunches and staples pierce. Folders slip and fall from palms of their own volition. The ordeal bores, only because it is basting slowly in its own bureaucracy. The signed, sealed, and stamped fates of civilians circulate around us in a beige-grey haze.

At long last we are sent away, one floor up, to a lieutenant-colonel—not a general as we had hoped. Nevertheless, he is cordial and holds some clout. He shakes hands like a politician. In the background, a television turned to news purrs at a low volume. Normally he says he works with international and domestic media outlets to arrange their access to controlled

areas. We tell him we made an inquiry at the ten-soldier office. He nods thoughtfully, and makes a quick little wave with his left hand, a wave that levels coastlines of paperwork. “Forget it. That takes three days to reach my desk. Email me.” We shake hands again. Good news indeed! And all I can think is, had he just come from a manicurist? ○

ENDNOTES

- 1 This text would not exist were it not for Farid Noufaily, for his observations and translations, as well as his analytic, diplomatic, and driving skills.
- 2 See <http://Unifil.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=11561&language=en-US>.
- 3 The word *mingey* (or sometimes *mingy* or *mingi*) dates back to the 1960s, and here I borrow heavily from the 1988 article “Mingey Street and the Story Behind a Name,” written by Lt. Col. McMahon in a United Nations public relations magazine called *Litani* (Vol. 13, No. 5). Belgian settlers returning home from the Congo wanted to exchange the local francs into a more reliable currency at the same time Irish units were deployed. In the face of escalating rates, black market currency exchanges sprang up, with street-corner lenders bellowing, “Mingey, mingey, francs for dollar!” Mingey was the Congolese patois for “much” or “many.” Originally denoting a rate of exchange, it came to mean any object of little value and cheap to produce, something brought home as gifts or souvenirs: locally produced ebony and ivory carvings, trinkets, cheap goods. At the end of a soldier’s six-month rotation, items were bundled in a “mingey box” and sent on their way.
 The word also traveled with later Irish deployments to Cyprus and Sinai. Local “mingey men,” mobile or stationary, followed suit, quick to cater to the units. The word was made to be shouted aloud and not put in a dictionary. Both the word and its concept seem malleable, interchangeable, and suspect to all kinds of alterations. Certainly such markets are quick to coalesce where and when conditions are ripe, and just as quick to disappear, traceless.
 The adjective, with its slippery spelling and even more slippery dealings, was thrown towards Lebanon in 1978, where it stuck. In Naqoura, it became synonymous for a whole street of local entrepreneurs in the spirit of a kind of international exchange. McMahon states: “As the interim force became a more permanent fixture, more permanent shanties started to appear whose signs read ‘Genuine Lebanese Mingey Shop.’ Ten years have passed. Naqoura has become a city. Mingey shops cropped up outside the camp. Soon a whole street existed and what could be more natural than to call it Mingey Street.” I am struck by McMahon’s assessment of Naqoura as a *city* of all things—one in which the vast majority of inhabitants are on brief campaigns, as members of some foreign military squadron.
- 4 A byproduct of the ceasefire was that Hezbollah took over the military and civil affairs in the south, and began operating as an ad-hoc government.

- 5 As of 2012, the tally is 11,256 troops, 338 international civilians, and 656 local staff, with representatives from 38 nations: Armenia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, Brunei, Cambodia, China, Croatia, Cyprus, El Salvador, Finland, France, FYR of Macedonia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Nepal, Nigeria, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Turkey.
 - 6 But where, actually, does the south begin? One tries to spot differences, a tone in the plasterwork, or different postures in the passersby. Windows open, there is the combined fragrance of orange, lemon, and banana trees. I ask Farid. Steve: Where does the south begin?
 Farid: It seems to be a relative answer, in that different people residing in different parts along the north-south axis perceive the south differently. To most people in Beirut or north of Beirut, they see the south as starting after the airport, just south of the airport, along that trench riddled with pillboxes. To most people from the south of Beirut, the south would begin at Saïda. To those in Saïda, the south begins in Sour. When I try to think of a precise moment, though, it would have to be at the messy roundabout just outside Sour, where we turn left to continue south. It’s the place before the refugee camp/military gate to the right, and the banana trees covered in that surreal mesh. To me, it’s really the only time you feel a clear change in orientation; it feels like you’re orbiting around this major point, picking up momentum, breaking away from the gravity of one thing in order to enter something else...
 - 7 Lt. Col. McMahon again, retelling this rather lousy joke in his otherwise informative article in *Litani*.
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- BIO Steven Chodoriwsky has held research positions at Jan van Eyck Academie and Center for Contemporary Art in Kitakyushu, and was educated in architecture at Tokyo Institute of Technology and University of Waterloo. His practice employs installation, performance, built form, photography, and text. He collaborates with Farid Noufaily on works under the heading *Feral Economies*. He was born in Englehart and lives in Ithaca.