

BLACKOUTS MADE VISIBLE:
A VISUAL-TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF SARAH GLIDDEN'S
COMICS JOURNALISM

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DEDICATION

For my parents

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My name is at the top of this thesis, but only because of the goodwill and generosity of many, many others. Some of those named here never saw a word of my research but were still vital to my broader journalistic education.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis studies Sarah Glidden's largely unexamined book *Rolling Blackouts* as a significant contribution to the genre known as comics journalism. It argues that Glidden's work engages in a material struggle over the nature of journalism by using the comics form to intervene in an ongoing debate over the field's normative values. Glidden pictures how journalism can be done differently and challenges mainstream conventions by constructing (1) a model of journalistic authority that refuses to cover over deep epistemological uncertainties and (2) a complex ethics and aesthetics of listening. In addition, this thesis reads *Rolling Blackouts* through the lens of postcolonial theory, analyzing the way Glidden brings journalistic abstractions into contact with messy representational realities of transnational and interpersonal power imbalances. Glidden is particularly concerned with refugees created by American imperialism and how American journalists—working in comics or not—can position themselves to ethically represent these refugees. Ultimately, a close-reading of *Rolling Blackouts* suggests that comics journalism's documented concern with self-representation is less important than showing the intricacy of the embodied relationships between a comics journalist and her sources—particularly when those sources are the world's contemporary subalterns.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“ . . . I felt that comics freed me to think and imagine and see differently.”

- Edward Said, “Homage to Joe Sacco” in *Palestine*

In the preface to his 2011 collection *Journalism*, cartoonist Joe Sacco begins with a statement that reveals the defensive polemic hidden in the book’s title:

This volume collects most all the shorter reporting pieces I have done over the years for magazines, newspapers, and book anthologies. As such, it seems to call for some sort of introductory fusillade to rout all those who would naysay the legitimacy of comics as an effective means of journalism. (Sacco, 2011, p. xi)

While the critics Sacco references are never named, the arguments they make are not merely imagined. Their claims are based largely on the pervasive cultural assumption that drawings cannot fulfill journalism’s promise to be objective—one of mainstream American journalism’s cherished norms. Sacco does not try to mount a direct counterargument to this; his response is far more interesting. He embraces the charge that a cartoonist’s work is subjective, arguing that there is nothing literal about a drawing. It is the cartoonist’s choices of *what* gets depicted and *how*—the decisions that go into the assembly of each panel and page—that position comics drawn from reality as fundamentally interpretive (p. xii). Sacco’s “fusillade” can be summed up by this admission: “the comics medium is adamant, and it has forced me to make choices. In my view, that is part of its message” (p. xiv). My thesis seeks to further explore the unyielding power of the comics form and to articulate how it does journalism *differently*. While Sacco resists the application of “objectivity” to his work, there are many types of journalism. In what follows, I will examine the space comics journalism carves out for

itself, which is distinct from both the mainstream of journalism and other comics genres, including memoir and editorial cartoons.

The conflict Sacco identifies is not caused by some inevitable, irreconcilable clash between essential properties of comics and journalism, as some critics argue; instead, it emerges from the complex way in which comics (like any other medium) must navigate the norms and expectations that structure a social practice like journalism. While many contemporary creators of comics journalism operate outside the constraints of newsrooms, they must still actively deal with the baggage carried by the label “journalism.” Indeed, comics offers a chance to *make visible* the norms that guide and shape American journalism. Comics, as a form, is well-suited to depicting journalism as a practice that is carried out by particular individuals who must constantly navigate the pressures of institutions and material conditions. To borrow Sacco’s more poetic phrasing: “By admitting that I am present at the scene, I mean to signal to the reader that journalism is a process with seams and imperfections practiced by a human being—it is not a cold science carried out behind Plexiglas by a robot” (2011, p. xiii). Here, Sacco refers to the inevitable influence a journalist’s presence has on the stories she tells, as well as the ethics of that influence. The journalist is not an inanimate, invisible, infallible recording device, and the *way* she inhabits and sees her role will inevitably alter both journalistic narratives and their ostensible subjects.

My argument in the following pages centers on a close-reading of one particular text: Sarah Glidden’s *Rolling Blackouts: Dispatches from Turkey, Syria, and Iraq*. The comic is a complex interweaving of memoir and reportage that depicts Glidden’s

friends—reporters from the *Seattle Globalist*, a multimedia journalism collective—researching and reporting stories on the social, cultural, and economic fallout of the Iraq War. In the comic, Glidden re-tells many of the stories they uncover, while navigating the complications caused by the group’s other companion: a former marine who deployed to Iraq in 2007 and who returns to try and deepen his understanding of the Iraqi people. More importantly—for purposes of this study—*Rolling Blackouts* is also a self-reflexive meditation on the act of *doing* journalism. It actively explores what it means to be a journalist and how to act as one.

Although Glidden is now fairly active in comics journalism and produces drawn reports for outlets like *The Nib*, she entered cartooning through more personal comics. She was largely unfamiliar with the practice of journalism before beginning *Rolling Blackouts*, and the book is a living record of her practical education; she yields much space and time to her friends, whose meta-reflections on journalism constitute a huge portion of the narrative. Glidden’s avatar is, in her own words, “a curious but naive stand-in for the reader” to guide them through an understanding of what journalism is (Drake, 2013). Yet Glidden is also performing a type of work that is itself a rethinking or unsettling of what journalism *can* be. As a work of journalism itself, *Rolling Blackouts* is space where Sacco’s so-called “imperfections” of journalistic practice need not be smoothed over or ignored, a process that Nyberg (2012) has called the “invisibility” of journalistic conventions (p. 118). Rather, the comic provides an opportunity to foreground and explore conventions, to notice where journalism’s idealistic expectations for itself fall apart, and to imagine new terrains for journalists to traverse. Ultimately,

Glidden is engaged in what Carlson (2017) calls “the politics of journalistic authority,” or “a struggle over the basic norms and practices” that prop up the field as a legitimate arbitrator of reality (p. 192).

My metaphor of “new terrains” is not accidental. Sacco speaks of the “realm of journalism,” and it feels right to appropriate his metaphor because *Rolling Blackouts* grapples specifically with spatial, territorial, and national concerns. Glidden is an American cartoonist re-presenting people and cultures in the Middle East. She and her friends report stories from within a complex network of socio-political factors, including the mass displacement of Iraqis sparked by the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. In addition, the journalists who formed the *Globalist*—originally known as the *Common Language Project*—did so in reaction to the steady decline of foreign reporting in the 2000s. As Glidden puts it: “American journalism seemed to be turning inward,” away from the geopolitical crises of war and forced migration that its home country was so deeply implicated in (Drake, 2013). In that sense, *Rolling Blackouts* is outward-looking and exploratory both in its approach to American journalism’s conventions and to the subjects American media should concern themselves with. In addition, the question of Western journalists representing “The East”—especially in the context of foreign wars—invokes a whole range of potential problems, and my literature review will consider concepts raised by Edward Said’s *Orientalism* and other postcolonial theorists. While answering my research questions, I will examine how *Rolling Blackouts* fits into or unsettles the power dynamics that concern postcolonial theory. Glidden, by offering new ways to, as Said puts it, “think and imagine and see differently” through comics, also

engages in a complex politics of visibility that surrounds the representation of Self and Other in a postcolonial context.

My literature review will trace the way scholars have already identified apparent conflicts between mainstream journalistic norms and the form of comics, with special attention to the ongoing debate in journalism over the legitimacy of objectivity and transparency as competing norms. Comics journalism has developed within a complex web of different influences and pressures exerted by existing conventions of comics and journalism, both of which are old and heterogeneous institutions. As Chute (2016) notes: “Comics journalism is a genre both old and new, a practice in which we recognize the forceful reemergence of long traditions of ‘drawing to tell’ alongside newer features that reflect the conventions of modern comics and an engagement with what Mary Layoun calls ‘transnational circuits of seeing’” (p. 197). Scholars have traced roots of comics journalism to the underground comix tradition, as well as to narrative, literary journalism. My literature review will also consider these links, along with other adjacent media, including advocacy journalism and editorial cartoons.

The roots of my *own* study are in my undergraduate work at the University of Georgia, where I first rediscovered comics—always my favorite reading material at the dinner table—as an object of critical study. I pursued an independent study focused on graphic memoir and comics autobiography and ultimately went on to produce my own unpublished personal comics narrative that gestured towards journalism. In graduate school, I have incorporated my drawings into my work for the *Columbia Missourian*, and at least one editor has referred to me as “a cartoonist” in a crowded lecture hall. In other

words, I find myself consistently trying to determine what it means to be a comics journalist and how my drawings can fit into the context of American journalism. My research interests clearly reflect this personal investment; I only hope my work can also be an asset to the many diverse, energetic creators currently mapping all the unexplored possibilities of comics journalism.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Comics and journalism

In what follows, I will sketch a portrait of what I mean when I talk about “comics journalism” and explain my use of the term. Nyberg (2012) defines comics journalism as “a genre of nonfiction comics” that “combines the form of comics with the conventions of journalism” (p. 116). This is a good provisional definition, with the qualification that “comics” is a concept that resists formal, limited definitions; it is easily classified as a form or medium, but definitional projects that attempt to essentialize it by locating defining characteristics tend to falter under careful scrutiny (Delany 1999; Meskin, 2007). Likewise, there are many types of journalism, many sets of conventions, and many ways of talking about them. Thus, I adopt the approach—offered by both Delany (1999) and Kukkonen and Haberkorn (2010)—of analyzing what Glidden’s work *does*, without spending too much effort to establish what it *is* or *isn’t*.

For now, I will trace—within the scholarly discourse and with reference to comics journalists’ own perspectives—how interactions between the form of comics and the conventions of journalism play out. This section will outline the family trees of journalism and comics and examine the branches that intersect to produce comics journalism. This thesis is not a historical study; it will not catalogue all the possible influences on comics journalism, nor will it fully explore the competing, overlapping traditions and disciplines operating alongside the genre. It will include a discussion of journalistic forms that have clear resonance: narrative (or literary) journalism and

advocacy journalism/radical media. I will also consider comics journalism's kinship to comics autobiography and graphic memoir, as well as editorial cartoons.

What we call journalism. For research that is critically cautious about the project of definition, it is useful to begin with Zelizer's (2005) approach to journalism, which elegantly sidesteps the potentially crippling problem of settling on one. Zelizer critiques a standard set of terms—including “news,” “the press” and “information and communication”—for establishing a false “universal nature” for journalism (pp. 66-67). She puts them aside and instead close-reads the discourse of working journalists and scholars, ultimately laying out eleven different but overlapping ways that journalism is described. Similarly, Deuze (2005) notes that the scholarly literature describes journalism variously as “a profession, an industry, a literary genre, a culture or a complex social system” (p. 444). Unlike Zelizer, Deuze does ultimately stake his flag in the territory of a particular definition: professional ideology, or “a system of beliefs characteristic of a particular group, including—but not limited to—the general process of the production of meanings and ideas” (p. 445). That idea—not explicitly described by Zelizer—appears in other, similar forms throughout the literature. For instance, Thomas and Hindman (2015) deploy journalism as a paradigm, a system that “provides coherence to a particular collective through beliefs and values”—in this case, collectives of working journalists (p. 470).

While scholars have come to a general consensus that what we refer to as journalism should not be defined according to media platform (Mellado and Vos, 2017), most people's interaction with and understanding of journalism comes through texts such

as newspaper articles, TV broadcasts, social media posts—or comics. This requires a type of double vision, or the capacity to see journalism as a both abstract concept and material practice; in this, I follow Carlson (2017), who argues that scholars should “consider journalism as an idea, as something imagined, as much as we consider its material and organizational forms” (p. 78). This study will approach journalism, not as a type of text, but as a flexible set of ideological paradigms that surround and leave their markings on the content of texts. For example, what Reese (1997) refers to as the “mainstream news paradigm” (p. 437) has as a central tenant the epistemological stance of objectivity, “an observable pattern of news writing” that can be identified in multiple levels of the news production process, including particular features of a text (Schudson, 2001, pp. 149-150).

This assortment of potential definitions is a reminder that journalism is a heterogeneous concept, capturing numerous epistemological stances and beliefs that manifest in all types of media and operate from within many historical and cultural traditions. Again, following Carlson (2017), I see the “imprecision embedded in the referent *journalism*” as a productive opportunity, rather than a hindrance (p. 20). One of the central goals of my own research is to understand whether and how comics can produce different *journalisms*. Though I referenced mainstream news as an example, comics journalism actually has more kinship with journalism that formed in reaction to and operates primarily outside of dominant paradigms, including the traditions of narrative and advocacy. The next two sections will consider both in more detail.

Narrative journalism. Much of the scholarly discourse around comics journalism approaches the genre by way of narrative journalism, also known as literary journalism.

Like the larger category of journalism, narrative literary journalism is “a critical site of competing claims,” a place where scholars and practitioners have clashed repeatedly over how to define it, who practices it, and what it should be called (Hartsock, 2000, p. 11). This tension stems largely from literary journalism’s tendency to cross disciplinary boundaries; it seems to inhabit what Sims (1990) calls “the borderlands between fact and fiction” (p. v). Tom Wolfe argues that nonfiction writers working in the 1960s and 70s—including Norman Mailer, Joan Didion, Gay Talese, Truman Capote, and Hunter S. Thompson, among others—appropriated the subjects and themes that novelists of the era abandoned: “society, the social tableau, manners and morals, the whole business of ‘the way we live now,’ in Trollope’s phrase” (1973, p. 29). These writers did so by committing themselves to an exhaustive recreation of dialogue, scenes from people’s lives, and the minute details symbolic of “status life” (p. 33). What Wolfe describes came to be known as New Journalism. Scholars often describe it as an influence on Joe Sacco’s work (Versaci, 2007; Vanderbeke, 2010; Woo, 2010; Worden, 2016), and Sacco himself has cited Michael Herr and Hunter S. Thompson as influences (Gilson, 2005). Glidden has stated that she was thinking about New Journalism as a model or inspiration for *Rolling Blackouts* (Royal and Kunka, 2016). Interestingly, her original working title was “Stumbling Towards Damascus,” an allusion to the same Yeats poem from which Joan Didion’s seminal *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* takes its name (Royal and Kunka, 2016).

Whatever we choose to call this type of journalism, historians and anthologies have constructed a long backstory for the genre, arguing that it has existed in America since at least the late nineteenth century. John Hersey, who worked decades before Wolfe,

is often included in the tradition (Hartsock, 2000, pp. 185-187; Wolfe, 1973, p. 46). Like *Rolling Blackouts*, Hersey's *Hiroshima* documents the lives of people who were both misrepresented in American media and ripped apart by American foreign policy: Japanese survivors of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. While Hersey was concerned with recreating scenes and representing minute details, *Hiroshima* was not primarily concerned with capturing "the way we live now," as Wolfe puts it. Rather, it exposed readers to an entire people who had been effectively erased from America's collective consciousness by geographic distance, inadequate reporting, and the dehumanization of being cast as enemies—often by the press of the 1940s (Sharp, 2000).

In fact, narrative journalism often contains a contrarian streak and positions itself in opposition to mainstream journalistic values. Wolfe (1973) explicitly characterizes the emergence of New Journalism as a cultural power grab, a revolution against a rigid literary class structure in which journalists were "so low down . . . that they were barely noticed at all" (p. 25). Not only did New Journalism fight the literati's understanding of journalism, it also staged a revolt within newspapers, which were unprepared for reporting with "an esthetic dimension" (p. 11). Likewise, Hartsock (2000) argues that literary journalism developed in resistance to the way journalism was practiced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The rise of primarily factual, objective news reporting in American newspapers alienated its subjects by adopting epistemological principles imported from the sciences, essentially transforming people into the "objectified Other" (p. 42). At the same time, the papers paradoxically distanced their readers from a direct experience of the world. As an example, Hartsock notes that the

summary lede, which remains a key feature of modern journalism, aspires to eliminate uncertainty and “to leave no questions—meaning contingencies—unanswered” (p. 56). There is also the *New York Times*’s famous slogan, “All the News That’s Fit to Print,” which denies that anything not contained in its pages is significant. Stories not reported by the *Times*, the slogan implies, are not worth your attention.

By contrast, narrative journalists have tried to close gaps between reporters, readers, and the subjects of stories, often separating themselves from the mainstream by foregrounding their own subjectivity (Hartsock, 2000; Roberts and Giles, 2014). There are clear parallels with Sacco’s desire to discard journalism that is a “cold science” and his stubborn refusal to draw himself out of stories (2011, p. xiii). The explicit foregrounding a creator’s subjectivity is something comics scholars see as a significant point of overlap between comics and narrative journalism (Weber and Rall, 2017, p. 383). For instance, Versaci (2007), who has done the most work connecting comics to New Journalism, argues that comics journalists are working to “reanimate” New Journalism’s most salient feature: “the foregrounding of the individual perspective as an organizing consciousness” (p. 111).

In criticism of narrative journalism, the question of the author’s presence is often approached by way of a very specific rhetorical device: the extent to which a journalist is “visible” or “invisible” in her works. For example, Aare (2016) refers to this dynamic repeatedly, listing a range of ways that a narrator can be “visible” (or not) and arguing that even a seemingly conspicuous first-person narrator can “dim” her presence. Similarly, Versaci (2007) contrasts the prose styles of Tom Wolfe and Truman Capote,

arguing that Wolfe “establishes his presence as a conspicuous observer” through his “highly impressionistic and hyperkinetic narrative style,” while Capote “becomes a largely invisible narrator” (p. 109-110). However, there is disagreement about whether Wolfe’s narrative presence is easily discernible. Wolfe (1974) himself disputes the idea that New Journalism usually foregrounds a reporter’s consciousness: “In fact, most of the best work in the form has been done in the third-person narration *with the writer keeping himself absolutely invisible*” (p. 42; emphasis is mine). As the last sentence makes clear, even those who resist the charge of subjectivity draw upon the same discourse of narrator visibility. Eason (1990), who seems to agree with Wolfe, describes narrative journalism in a “realist” mode as driven partly by “the invisible camera eye of the narrator” (p. 199). In this set of definitions, there is a clear critical impulse to establish a binary or continuum between narrator visibility/invisibility. Comics, with its capacity to easily render the narrator’s physical presence, offers a chance to take this rhetorical gesture and let its visual implications play out.

Alternative journalism and radical media. Another branch of the journalistic family tree that is useful for understanding comics journalism is alternative or advocacy journalism. As the terms suggest, this is a journalism that subverts mainstream practices and operates according to a different set of norms and values. It also overlaps with narrative journalism. Wolfe (1973) complains that New Journalism was equated—erroneously, in his view—with advocacy journalism (pp. 42-43). Atton (2003), in the introduction to an issue of *Journalism* dedicated to alternative journalism, describes it this way:

Alternative media privileges a journalism that is closely wedded to notions of social responsibility, replacing an ideology of ‘objectivity’ with overt advocacy and oppositional practices. Its practices emphasize first person, eyewitness accounts by participants; a reworking of the populist approaches of tabloid newspapers to recover a ‘radical popular’ style of reporting; collective and antihierarchical forms of organization which eschew demarcation and specialization—and which importantly suggest an inclusive, radical form of civic journalism. (p. 267)

In addition, Forde (2011) notes that those who practice alternative journalism are typically cast as illegitimate by the mainstream, largely because they fail (or refuse) to adopt “conventional journalistic norms and a uniform set of news values” (p. 24). This is not surprising, as alternative, underground, and grassroots journalism usually arise out of dissatisfaction with mainstream representations of the world, serving as “a reminder of what the dominant forces in society are not providing, or are not able to provide” (p. 45). In this way, alternative journalism functions as a critique of its dominant journalistic counterparts, “a critique of practice, conducted in practice” (Harcup, 2005, p. 362). At the same time, some journalists move from the alternative to the mainstream—or even work for both simultaneously—suggesting that a binary understanding of their relationship is too reductive (Harcup, 2005).

Alternative journalism can also be approached under the larger conceptual umbrella of “radical media”: forms of communication that are usually small-scale and “express an alternative vision to hegemonic policies, priorities, and perspectives” (Downing, 2001, p. v). Downing’s tour of what he calls a rich and diverse “tapestry” of media encompasses various versions of the underground press, including labor publications, novels, and—particularly relevant here—alternative comix. While explicit connections between alternative and comics journalism are sparse in the published

literature, plenty of scholars place Sacco's work in the longer history of the alternative and underground comix movement (Walker, 2010, pp. 70-73; Weber and Rall, 2017, p. 381; Woo, 2010, p. 167; Worden, 2016, p. 7).

Finally, Downing's concept of "alternative vision" as a characteristic of radical media is useful to my study, both for its emphasis on active resistance to mainstream norms and for its perceptual implications. I wish to play on the phrase's semantic ambiguity; it can suggest a strange, perhaps even mystical, *sight* (in the sense that one 'has a vision'), but also an entirely different *way of seeing*. This is particularly relevant to *Rolling Blackouts* because, as I will argue in later chapters, Glidden offers both rarely seen images of refugee populations and alternative methods of constructing these images.

What we call comics. Since at least the 1980s, a substantial body of literature has spilled much ink arguing over what comics *is*. McCloud's (1993) effort to classify comics as "sequential art" is representative in the way that it has been both widely cited and heavily criticized (Delany 1999; Horrocks 2001). While I acknowledge that this struggle over definitions exists, I will not fully engage with it. Rather, I will sample the prominent set of theoretical approaches comics scholars have developed and leverage them to nuance my readings of *Rolling Blackouts*.

Art Spiegelman calls comics "picture writing," a description that opens up a productive series of visual/verbal possibilities for reading and interpretation (2011, p. 168). Under this rubric, comics relies on a particular visual vocabulary built primarily on cartoon iconography (McCloud, 1993). Comics is also structured by a formal grammar

that unfolds on the space of each page, and Chute (2008) offers a powerful critical lens for understanding how it operates:

Comics might be defined as a hybrid word-and-image form in which two narrative tracks, one verbal and one visual, register temporality spatially. Comics moves forward in time through the space of the page, through its progressive counterpoint of presence and absence: packed panels (also called frames) alternating with gutters (empty space). Highly textured in its narrative scaffolding, comics doesn't blend the visual and the verbal—or use one simply to illustrate the other—but is rather prone to present the two nonsynchronously; a reader of comics not only fills in the gaps between panels but also works with the often disjunctive back-and-forth of *reading* and *looking* for meaning. (p. 452)

There are many interesting layers to Chute's framework, but three features are particularly useful for my analysis: First, relations between word and image, which are not simply confined to familiar dynamics like opposition or illustration, but rather generate a universe of possible meanings by interacting without ever quite collapsing into one another. As Chute (2010) notes: "The words and images entwine, but never synthesize" (p. 5).

Second, transitions, or the reader's movement between panels and across gutters (the standard term for the empty space between panels) are a comic's primary motor, pushing it through time along Chute's "narrative tracks." They rely on the fact that images are placed in what McCloud (1993) calls "deliberate sequence," and they allow for new meanings—narrative or otherwise—to emerge. In a slight deviation from Chute's framing, it is important to note that this spatial framework is not confined to moving time *forward*; it can drive the narrative direction in unconventional directions: backwards or sideways.

Finally, Chute gestures towards the “space of the page” as the organizing canvas on which word/image and transitions are rendered. (This idea of space as an organizing principle in comics is often approached by contrasting it to film, which is also a sequence of images, but one structured by a movement through time.) If panels of the page serve as windows of a sort, the overall page becomes the architecture, the “scaffolding” that allows for narrative movement to play out. Thus, we must pay attention to the way meanings play out via spatial arrangements on the page—referred to hereafter as page design—and across pages in the work as a whole.

While this highly formalist sketch of comics is practical for my study, there are other options. For instance, one might approach comics through a lens of historical development and linkages with other art forms. Chute (2016) does this in her book, *Disaster Drawn*, which links Sacco and cartoonists with a longer tradition of artistic witnessing done by painters like Francisco Goya. In this spirit, the next two sections will examine historical traditions within comics that have clear and potentially productive overlaps with comics journalism.

Editorial cartoons. For those steeped in the news industry, there is an obvious connection between comics and journalism: the editorial cartoon. In America, the form developed during the nineteenth century in popular magazines like *Harper’s Weekly* and *Puck*, with influence from European humor magazines like *Punch* (Press, 1981). The emergence and adoption of photoengraving—a technology that significantly smoothed the path between a drawing and its mass reproduction—helped shepherd cartoonists into daily newspapers, both as staffers and through syndication (Press, 1981, p. 47). That

relationship has endured to the present, although the economic difficulties and ferocious staff cuts that plague modern newspapers have hit staff cartoonists especially hard (Lamb, 2004). Though their work typically dwells on broader currents in society and politics, editorial cartoonists do turn their pens inward on their own news organizations; usually, practice manifests as a way of commenting on the role and status of cartoonists within the news industry. Some explore the asymmetrical power dynamics between editors, publishers, and cartoonists that can lead to a drawing being scrapped (Lamb, 2004). Most of these drawings mock editors for being overly concerned with their imagined readership's sensibilities (pp. 148-155). As Lamb puts it:

In the newsroom, where freedom is ultimately measured, a cartoonist's freedom depends on the beliefs, tastes, politics, and even sense of humor of his or her publisher or editors, who have veto power over whether or not a drawing will be published. (p. 128)

By illustrating their own positions within the newsroom, editorial cartoonists reveal how they navigate the normative constraints placed upon their work by both bosses and, by extension, readership.

There is certainly kinship between editorial cartoons and comics journalism. For instance, Lamb (2004) treats Ted Rall as an editorial cartoonist, though his very outspoken commentary on things like American imperialism have pushed him to the edge of editorial cartooning circles. Rall has also been claimed as a comics journalist by scholars like Versaci (2007) and other comics journalists because of his longer works like *To Afghanistan and Back*. The two forms also pull from the same basic visual vocabulary—that of the cartoon—and share the same advantages and pitfalls of the visual idiom. Cartooning has been referred to as “communication to the quick,” a style of

representation that simplifies and clarifies in the service of speedy communication, but can also exaggerate and distort (Harrison, 1981, p. 12). In a similar formulation, McCloud (1993) calls the cartoon a practice of “amplification through simplification,” and defines it in relation to more realistic representation: “By stripping down an image to its essential ‘meaning,’ an artist can amplify that meaning in a way that realistic art can’t” (30.5).

Sometimes what gets amplified in cartoons are particular physical—and, by proxy, cultural—attributes that promote racist stereotypes; this uncomfortable history is substantial and not simply inhabited by fringe artists (Fischer, 1996, p. 71). For example, American editorial cartoons have historically deployed harmful stereotypes about Arab peoples, misrepresenting them as uniformly irrational and aggressive (Palmer, 1995), and contemporary cartoons often rely heavily upon Islamophobic caricatures (Gottschalk and Greenburg, 2011). Because *Rolling Blackouts* is concerned with how Iraqi refugees are depicted, I will attend to the ways in which Glidden’s work navigates (successfully or not) this particular problem of cartoon representation.

One distinct difference between the forms is that of ambition and scope. While editorial cartoons are overwhelmingly one or two panel-affairs produced daily, comics journalism often requires much more time-intensive labor that produces longer works—what Sacco has characterized as “slow journalism” (Chute, 2016, p. 201). Another difference is that comics journalists are not, on the whole, working in an already established place within news institutions. While Lamb (2004) describes editorial cartoonists as “second-class citizens of the editorial page,” comics journalists are more

often negotiating their position in journalism from the outside. This is partly because Glidden, Sacco, and other prominent comics journalists are grounded more in the underground comix movement and the branches of comics autobiography and memoir that grew out of it.

Comics autobiography and graphic memoir. The proliferation of comics memoir, autobiography, and personal narratives in America—all of which have received more comprehensive scholarly attention than comics journalism—began in the early 1970s. Although it is problematic to characterize any particular text as the “first” of a genre, Justin Green’s *Binky Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary* is considered one of the earliest (Gardner, 2008). Green’s work was birthed from the creative frenzy of the underground comix movement of the 1960s. Other prominent texts in the tradition of nonfiction (though not always alternative) comics include Harvey Pekar’s *American Splendor*, Alison Bechdel’s *Fun Home*, Art Spiegelman’s *Maus*, and Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis*. Glidden herself has produced autobiographical comics; her memoir, *How to Understand Israel in 60 Days or Less*, recounts her experience of traveling Israel as a progressive American Jew on a birthright tour.

The theoretical literature surrounding comics autobiography contains useful theoretical tools for examining self-representation, which is common in comics journalism and central to *Rolling Blackouts*. Gardner (2008) observes that the rupture of the “I” within comics autobiography—the distance between self-as-narrator and self-as-subject—is foregrounded by the comics form: “The split between autographer and subject is etched on every page, and the hand-crafted nature of the images and the

‘autobifictional’ nature of the narrative are undeniable” (p. 12). Whitlock (2006) uses the concept of “autographics” to “draw attention to the specific conjunctions of visual and verbal text in this genre of autobiography, and also to the subject positions that narrators negotiate in and through comics” (p. 966). She also pays close attention to the way certain comics creators engage in self-reflexivity, noting that the “autobiographical avatars”—or self-representations—actively engage in cartooning and drawing within the texts.

Of course, this practice of foregrounding the cartoonist as a character complicates any attempt to draw a clear distinction between autobiography and journalism, especially when considering comics travelogues like Guy Delisle’s *Burma Chronicles* and *Pyongyang*. While Schack (2014) classifies Delisle’s comics as “graphic journalism,” I read his work as primarily a distillation of his personal experiences rather than an attempt to represent the experiences of others; thus, his work seems closer to memoirs like *How to Understand Israel* than it does to comics that are self-reflexive and open about their narrator’s positionality but label themselves journalism, such as *Rolling Blackouts*. As a basic, practical distinction—to give myself critical ground to stand on—I suggest that comics journalism primarily faces outward, while the graphic memoir is primarily inward-looking. Worden (2016) draws this contrast between Sacco’s work and that of Spiegelman, Crumb, and Green (p. 8). Hartsock (2000) and Aare (2016) both attend to the same dynamic between journalistic and personal prose narratives. This is a matter of emphasis and direction and not an attempt to create rigidly distinct groupings; graphic

memoirs often grapple with the cartoonist's self in relation to broader social contexts, and journalism is not necessarily divorced from the personal.

Thus, while Glidden's personal education in journalism, as well as her emotional responses are important, they are not the central point. Indeed, it seems that the explicit self-representation of the cartoonist as a "journalist" in the text causes a particular rupture between genres. As Aare (2016) says of narrative journalism: "[a] reporter is never present on the scene—in reality or in the text—for her own sake" (p. 134). The journalist is there to report, to gather something from other people and to reproduce it in the form of representations for an audience. With this in mind, the next section will examine the state of scholarship and discourse on comics journalism and trace what happens when the two concepts are brought together.

How we talk about 'comics journalism'

Despite my use of the term, there is disagreement among scholars and mainstream commentators about whether it is appropriate. In fact, the discourse surrounding comics journalism can become quite muddled. One prominent example is a *New York Times Magazine* feature that proclaims a "renaissance" for comics (McGrath, 2004) and points to critical acceptance of an increasing number of "graphic novels" as evidence. While the author, Charles McGrath, admits that "graphic novel" is an inaccurate term that lumps together fiction and nonfiction, he declines to offer a better one, which becomes problematic when he examines Sacco's *Palestine*. McGrath positions Sacco as different from other cartoonists, observing that he relies on interviews and photos to gather

material, not just sketchbooks. Then, when McGrath opines on supposed limitations of the graphic novel—a lack of emotional depth and an inability to take itself seriously—he allows Sacco’s work to be an exception. The “graphic novel” category that McGrath constructs is destabilized when it tries to encompass Sacco’s work, and McGrath’s hedging suggests that he himself recognizes the term’s inadequacy. Though he does nod at the “journalistic” nature of what Sacco has produced (for the *Times Magazine* no less), he does not explain what he means. Worse, by using “graphic novel” in reference to Sacco, he reinforces the problematic assumption that drawings inherently shade towards fiction (Chute, 2008, p. 453; Chute 2016, p. 2).

These conceptual confusions and contradictory energies linger on, and one symptom of this is the many names for the thing in question. Adding to McGrath’s confusion over *Palestine*, scholars have referred to the same work as both “graphic journalism” (Schack, 2014) and a “non-fiction graphic novel,” (Woo, 2010) a sign of the persistent association with the New Journalism tradition. (Truman Capote coined the phrase “nonfiction novel” to describe his 1964 book *In Cold Blood* [Wolfe, 1973, p. 26]). Maher (2012) observes the same trend and catalogues even more terms including “graphic travelogue” and “graphic reportage” (p. 120). Other scholars have studied Sacco under the clearer, more productive concept of “documentary comics” (Chute, 2016; Mickwitz, 2016), and their research agenda overlaps with my own. However, Mickwitz positions documentary as an analytical approach that resists categorizing the comics she studies as journalism. She calls it a “literary paradigm” and argues that classifying comics this way can obscure connections between different genres doing documentary work (p.

3); Chute, who uses the term “comics journalism,” seems to position it as a genre under the umbrella of comics-as-documentary, but she does not fully explain the relationship between journalism and documentary, as she sees it.

Despite this uncertainty, this thesis uses the term comics journalism. The first justification for this is that Glidden often describes her work as such, and while authors do not hold ultimate authority over how their work should be read, to disregard how they talk about it is recklessly foolish. Glidden stops short of self-identifying as a “comics journalist” and consistently calls herself just a “cartoonist,” but she also says she is doing comics journalism (Drake, 2013; Hallett, 2011). Though this thesis does not focus on his work, Sacco coined the term comics journalism and refers to himself as a “comics journalist” (Chute, 2016, p. 197; Sacco, 2011). The most common alternative—graphic journalism—is also problematic, as affixing the word “graphic” to journalism threatens to sidestep crucial questions of form and medium. The adjective fails to capture the complex interplay of words and images in *Rolling Blackouts*. Even if I were following the lead of scholars like McCloud (1993) and privileging the pictorial in a definition of comics, the information *graphic*, as a form, has filled an established role within news organizations for decades (Smith and Hajash, 1988).

Of course, there are objections to the term “comics journalism” that are based on a belief that the comics form itself is fundamentally incapable of doing journalistic work, as Sacco’s (2011) manifesto points out. Those concerns are facile and unproductive in the way that they seek to disqualify comics from the realm of journalism. However, carefully considering them actually helps reveal the ways in which the form troubles journalism-

as-usual. The objections are central to my argument that comics can reshape what journalism is, and the next section will consider them in more detail.

Comics form and journalistic conventions

As Delany (1999) reminds us, the division of content and form is a provisional, though necessary, critical fiction (p. 259). The instability of this distinction is on full display when examining how the comics form ventures into the landscape of journalistic “content.” According to Nyberg (2012), the key question is “determining what happens to journalism when it is presented in comics form” (p. 116). Likewise, Sacco (2011) identifies aspects of the comics medium as integral to the message of his own works (p. xiv). Thus, it is crucial to understand *what* aspects of comics might shape journalism and *how* they do so. This line of reasoning follows Nyberg (2012), who argues that “comics journalism both adopts *and* adapts the processes of journalism” (p. 119). To revise and complicate the theoretical formulation posed earlier: my task is not only to understand the imprint journalism leaves upon comics, but also to ask what marks comics make on journalistic paradigms. Where and how do comics intervene in current journalistic debates over the field’s guiding norms and values?

A close-reading of the literature suggests that the hand-drawn image, and the way it opens up a new range of possible representations, is central to this intervention. Vanderbeke (2010) argues that the drawings of comics journalism force a reevaluation of journalistic truth claims. He argues that Art Spiegelman’s *In the Shadow of No Towers*—a book that visually depicts Spiegelman’s own experience of 9/11 and its aftermath—

functions as journalism, and that Spiegelman's visual representations of his memories are experiences that mainstream journalism cannot capture, complicating traditional journalistic notions of accuracy (p. 75). This capacity of drawing to recreate memory is an even more radical challenge when cartoonists use it to represent the experiences of others. When Joe Sacco draws images that interpret his sources' oral testimony, Nyberg (2012) calls this "uniquely comics journalism" (pp. 126-7).

On the other hand, Woo (2010) argues that Sacco's drawing of memories breaks away, not only from journalistic norms of objectivity, but also from the practice of verifying all his sources' testimony (a technique coupled with objectivity as a practice). According to Woo, both moves could undermine the audience-author relationship that journalism depends upon for its authority (pp. 173-5). Likewise, while they ostensibly argue for comics journalism's legitimacy as a genre, Weber and Rall's (2017) "strategies of authenticity," or visual techniques that cartoonists use to signal that they are representing reality, are haunted by a troubling false binary: Weber and Rall argue that comics journalists have to navigate "a tricky balancing act between facts and fiction, factuality and imagination" (p. 391). This account echoes the same problems of definition inadvertently mapped out by McGrath (2004). As a culture, we seem skeptical that drawings can be granted the authority to make truth-claims (Chute, 2016, pp. 1-2). This is an assumption that working comics journalists seem well aware of. I noted Sacco's position on this in my introduction, while self-described "graphic journalist" Dan Archer's manifesto (which is drawn in comics form) includes a skeptical, older member of what is presumably the media establishment objecting that comics can't report news

“because it’s drawn, therefore subjective!” (Archer, n.d.). While Archer never quite establishes what he means by “subjective” (presumably his critics don’t either), this discourse is a useful starting point for examining how comics troubles journalism.

Significantly, the drawn image also disrupts what Nyberg (2012) refers to as journalism’s conventional “invisibility,” or its tendency to hide traces of its own construction (p. 118). Mitchell (1986) can help explain this disruption, when he argues that humanity’s singular capacity to identify what we call images comes from our ability to “see something as ‘there’ and ‘not there’ at the same time” (p. 17); from this perspective, the drawings that make up comics scrawl an extra circle of emphasis around “not there.” They clearly operate on a different register than photographic images; photos, according to Sontag (2003), record mechanically and have their “credentials of objectivity” baked into their construction, yet still have an inescapable point of view, a reminder of the human (p. 23). Where photographs, for Sontag, embody this contradiction, drawings tend to discard the mechanical and more adamantly summon the haunting specter of human perspective.

Comics scholars who have studied comics memoir and autobiography often note the way that drawn lines invoke the presence of the cartoonist’s hand. Chute (2011) has taken these formal possibilities the furthest in the way that she emphasizes the *materiality* of Sacco’s work (p. 114). She argues that comics, as a hand-drawn medium, represent the physical marks of a body on the space of the page (p. 112). This embodied aspect of drawing calls attention to comics as material, constructed objects; they are non-transparent in the way that they refuse to subordinate artifice to narrative (Chute, 2008, p.

457). Comics never want you to forget that you are, in fact, reading *comics*. This is especially apparent in Sacco's work, which is often made up of densely packed pages that detain the reader, transforming the act of reading into a difficult "decoding" process (Chute, 2008, p. 460). But Chute (2016) takes this idea of drawn, material self-reflexivity even further:

Self-reflexivity is not only thematized in comics journalism but also constantly enacted through the point of view of its most basic syntactical element, drawn frames. In its most fundamental procedures, comics calls attention to itself as a medium that is engaged in the work of literally framing events and experiences, and as such is a figure for the mediating work of journalism itself. (p. 208)

This act of calling attention to itself is what Nyberg (2012) refers to as the "visible art of comics" (p. 118), and in this reference to visibility, one can see the outlines of a major source of tension between comics and journalism: objectivity. To talk about comics as journalism in the context of American journalism is to inevitably confront the concept. As Carlson (2017) observes: "No other norm or ideal of journalism has received as much attention as objectivity" (p. 40). Mindich (1998) makes a slightly stronger case: "If American journalism were a religion, as it has been called from time to time, its supreme deity would be 'objectivity'" (p. 1). Scholars have defined objectivity in terms of distance and detachment from journalism's subjects, as well as impartiality, balance, and an emphasis on verifiable facts (Mindich, 1998). The concept has long been crucial in establishing journalism's professional legitimacy (Vos, 2012), and has historically prescribed and bounded journalists' behavior (Schudson, 2001). For her part, Nyberg (2012) argues that objectivity works to obscure the constructed nature of journalism—the

fact that it is filtered through a human creator engaged in a creative, interpretive act—by relying on writing conventions like the third-person omniscient narrator (p. 117).

Scholars and practitioners also tend to talk about objectivity in terms of what it is *not*, establishing professional boundaries by defining themselves as distinct from other forms of communication (Carlson, 2017, p. 41; Mindich, 1998). Interestingly, comics journalists often turn this negative definition back upon itself by making similar rhetorical moves about their own work. Glidden has labeled the concept of the objective reporter—someone who goes out and simply records facts—as “bullshit” (Drake, 2013), while Sacco (2011) pointedly sets his own comics in opposition to objectivity (pp. xiii-xiv). He calls comics “an inherently interpretive medium,” explicitly positioning himself outside any traditional journalistic constraints of neutrality (p. xiv), a stance that has resonance with the epistemologies of literary and alternative journalism. Likewise, Archer, in his manifesto, adopts a similar position, arguing that comics “expose the fallacy of one single ‘objective truth’” (Archer, n.d.). Thus, while they may not be working within the confines of objectivity, comics journalists often do position themselves in relation to it. Nyberg (2012) observes that Sacco and other practitioners have to navigate the same professional norms that journalists typically follow (p. 117), but this does not mean they necessarily feel *bound* by them.

As we have seen, journalism can encompass competing values and epistemological stances, echoing Zelizer’s (2004) description of journalism as “a whole of disparate, often self-contradictory impulses” (p. 177). Importantly, norms like objectivity are not eternal, unchanging foundations; they were formed in particular

historical moments and can continue to change (Schudson, 2001; Vos, 2012). For example, Vos and Craft (2017) suggest that American journalism is currently experiencing a paradigm shift and that “transparency” is competing with objectivity, working to replace it as the normative basis for the field (p. 1516). Transparency is typically positioned as openness and a way of lessening the distance between journalists and audiences (Vos and Craft, 2017). In a move particularly relevant to *Rolling Blackouts*, Luyendijk (2010) has suggested deploying transparency in place of objectivity as a way of overcoming specific failures of international reporting, especially the type of reporting that simply perpetuates stereotypes about Arab peoples for American audiences (p. 18).

Some scholars argue that comics journalism is well-positioned to make the journalistic process visible, in accord with most descriptions of transparency (Nyberg, 2012, p. 118; Weber and Rall, 2017, p. 384). Glidden has stated that she was thinking about narrative journalism when working on *Rolling Blackouts*, particularly its skepticism about objectivity and its practice of foregrounding the author (who is making decisions about what the reader gets to see); she frames this as “authenticity and transparency” (Royal and Kunka, 2016). Even Woo’s (2010) argument against characterizing *Palestine* as journalism can be inverted: The fact that Sacco’s work reminds readers that what he reports is “a deliberate re-creation after the fact” feels like a process of transparency (p. 174).

Even if comics journalism can align with transparency as a journalistic norm, scholars have argued it does not have to. Woo (2010) imagines a type of comics

journalism that works within the norms of objectivity by prioritizing the conveyance of information rather than experience (p. 176), while Nyberg (2012) chooses to analyze a Sacco story that she argues is close to mainstream journalism in the way that it minimizes its explicit representation of the creative process (p. 123). Likewise, Singer (2016) reads against the grain of other scholarship on *Palestine*, seeing it as a work that makes use of the impartiality of objective journalism whenever Sacco finds it expedient. This is a reminder that, whatever comics is doing to journalism, it is drawing upon and perhaps literally redrawing existing conventions. The process is inherently unsettling and given persistent questions in scholarly and popular discourse about comics' legitimacy to operate as journalism, the next section will examine journalistic authority more broadly.

Constructing journalistic authority

Many studies of journalistic norms focus on journalists' own understandings and discourse, especially those that are not explicitly articulated in official forms and genres. Zelizer (1993) offers the concept of journalism as an "interpretive community," which establishes consensus about "proper" journalistic practice and norms primarily through informal discourse rather than official trainings or professional codes (Zelizer, 1993).

Rolling Blackouts relies heavily on what Carlson (2011) calls "metajournalistic discourse," which reveals how journalists,

articulate, negotiate, defend, and even obscure their cultural, social, and political significance. This is not idle banter, but one means by which journalists actively seek to define the boundaries of journalistic practice, locate their profession within society, and shape how their work should be received." (p. 268)

Of course, journalists do not have a monopoly over how meanings of their work are understood. Because journalism is a social practice, its normative conventions can be understood as shared, negotiated expectations. Carlson (2017) sees this dynamic as central to how journalism establishes its authority, which he defines as “a contingent relationship in which certain actors come to possess a right to create legitimate discursive knowledge about events in the world for others” (p. 13). The central claim of his book, *Journalistic Authority*, relies on the assumption that to encounter journalism is “to enter into a relationship”:

Even the mundane act of reading, watching, or listening to the news, like any relationship, comes with a slew of expectations. Journalists are supposed to relay, record, and interpret events in the world, the vast majority of which take place outside or beyond the scope of the audience’s daily experience. Audiences expect journalists to know and to communicate their knowing. (p. 7)

Significantly, journalism’s claims to cultural authority are also closely linked to the roles that journalists adopt and the ways in which they imagine themselves. Mellado (2015) argues that “the public evaluates journalism based on what they can see” and that “professional roles legitimize journalism” (p. 597). While journalistic roles have been little studied in comics journalism—Scherr’s (2016) study of Sacco is the exception—the concept is closely linked to norms and values; roles describe the expected behavior of people within a particular social context (Biddle, 1979), and a person’s behavior is shaped by the normative demands upon the social position they occupy (Mellado, Hellmueller, and Donsbach, 2017, p. 5). Journalistic roles in particular help operationalize concepts like objectivity, assisting journalists who have to navigate between a conceptual ideal and the demands of practical reality (Orenbring, 2017). This

gap between ideals and practices is understood as the distinction between role conception and role performance (Hallin, 2017). Role conceptions “have to do with how journalists understand the practice of journalism and how they justify it within the ‘profession’ and to other actors in society” (Hallin 2017, p. xi). On the other hand, role performance deals with how journalism actually manifests itself in society; it is made up of the discourses and writing styles that are the outcome of newsroom decisions (Mellado, Hellmueller, and Donsbach, 2017; Mellado and Lagos, 2014). In other words, while role conceptions refer to how a journalist imagines and justifies her work, role performance is what the public sees and evaluates. The relation between them is complex, as social forces and material conditions can alter how a journalist’s idealistic understanding of her role actually translates into her work (Hallin, 2017, p. xii; Mellado and Dalen, 2014).

Comics are a space to study the complex process of constructing journalistic roles and the authority they can provide. By representing themselves “out in the field” and by drawing attention to their reporting process, comics journalists can simultaneously imagine *and* perform their roles as journalists. In addition, comics like *Rolling Blackouts* that incorporate a large amount of metajournalistic discourse offer a particularly productive site for this analysis. Carlson (2017) describes the relationship between “narratives *of* journalism” and “narratives *about* journalism” as the difference between “the implicit relations embedded in news forms” and “the explicit articulations of norms and practices occurring alongside the news” (p. 77). *Rolling Blackouts* offers both kinds of narrative on the same canvas, delineating a space in which self-critique and self-aware negotiations of status can play out alongside a wealth of reported stories. In addition,

Glidden offers for scrutiny, not just herself, but her friends at the *Seattle Globalist* with whom she travels and learns from—positioning the group as its own heterogeneous interpretative community.

There is precedent for this approach in the literature. For example, Scherr (2016) argues that Sacco represents himself as a journalist in an explicitly self-aware way, crafting a meta-discourse that critiques his own appropriation and reproduction of his subjects' pain, ultimately "aligning the journalistic act with the forces of oppression" (p. 187). Chute (2016), following a slightly different argumentative track, notes that, "[c]omics journalism embodies and performs that duality by enabling the journalist both to inhabit a point of view and to show himself inhabiting it," a description that brings out the particular significance of *picturing* journalists on the page (p. 208). Mitchell's (1994) concept of the metapicture also offers a useful approach to comics that theorize their own status as journalism. While the concept refers, in a limited sense, to pictures engaged in self-reference, Pizzino (2016) has adapted this concept to study how particular comics visually grapple with their own institutional status and cultural illegitimacy (p. 51). Following this, I suggest that the visual representation of the comics journalist—a particular type of icon—acts as a metapicture of how the comics function as journalism and legitimate themselves as such.

Postcolonialism

Any attention to Glidden's self-representations as a journalist should also consider her positionality in relation to her subjects. Likewise, the question of *who* Glidden and

the other journalists speak to is critical, as are the particular national and cultural affiliations of each party. The spaces in which *Rolling Blackouts* operates are structured by divides, both geographic and cultural, between Western journalists and the peoples in Turkey, Syria, and Iraq. Appropriately, the most significant scholarly consideration of Glidden's work to date studies her under the rubric of postcolonialism; Davies (2017), writing in an anthology covering a broad range of postcolonial literatures, leads with Glidden's work as an example:

[*Rolling Blackouts*] seeks to correct the 'rolling blackouts' of the mainstream media, representing the personal experiences of those who so often remain nameless, the details of their lives overlooked by the speed of continuous news cycles. This is a project that . . . is an overarching concern for postcolonial literature, culture and criticism more widely, and Glidden's work is one example of what we might think of as 'postcolonial comics.' (p. 3)

The literature focused specifically on postcolonial *comics* is limited, and the question of what should qualify as a postcolonial text is still a live discussion (Hall and Tucker, 2004, p. 1). The relevant term itself is also contested, and when it is used without care, scholars run the ironic risk of perpetuating the type of homogenizing and flattening of native cultures performed by colonial discourses (Loomba, 2005). Despite this, I find it a useful concept for approaching the work of representation that *Rolling Blackouts* engages in. Though Glidden is not as explicit as Sacco—who, in *Palestine*, literally draws himself reading Edward Said's *Orientalism* while in the Gaza Strip (p. 177.5-6)—her doubled attention to how sources are depicted and to who is depicting them invites the application of the theories and tools that hang loosely around the term. As this thesis is focused specifically on comics, I follow Mehta and Mukherji (2015) in their understanding of postcolonial textualities as simultaneously engaged in, first, the deconstruction of

Western ways of rendering and, second, the “(re)scripting” of “missing or misrepresented identities in their precise contexts” (p. 2).

It is useful to identify a few major features of the intellectual corpus that helps drive postcolonial critiques. Said (1978) locates, as a subject of critical inquiry, a body of work known broadly as colonial discourse, a system of representations that he labels Orientalism. A key feature of Western depictions of the East is that they are derived from “institutions, traditions, conventions, agreed-upon codes of understanding,” rather than the reality they claim to capture (Said, 1978, p. 22). In other words, examining Western images of the so-called Orient is apt to reveal more about those *creating* the images. Said reformulates Orientalism in many ways, and two of the most interesting definitions are Orientalism as “that collection of dreams, images, and vocabularies available to anyone who has tried to talk about what lies east of the dividing line” (p. 73) and as “intellectual power” (p. 41). Said seems pessimistic about our ability to wrest representations from the claws of Orientalist fantasies, especially given their incessant, swelling presence in the mass media:

One aspect of the electronic, postmodern world is that there has been a reinforcement of the stereotypes by which the Orient is viewed. Television, the films, and all the media’s resources have forced information into more and more standardized molds. So far as the Orient is concerned, standardization and cultural stereotyping have intensified the hold of the nineteenth-century academic and imaginative demonology of the ‘mysterious Orient.’ This is nowhere more true than in the ways by which the Near East is grasped. (p. 26)

With the rise of the internet, this problem has only become more ubiquitous. Still, while Said’s concerns clearly remain relevant, *Orientalism* was first published forty years ago.

It is important to understand whether the situation has changed—and how it might still *be*

changed. A rigorous application of postcolonial tools also demands attention to historical, local specificity. Much of Said's critique is aimed at largely European scholars, while the emergence of American military hegemony in the twenty-first century is of a somewhat different character. For McClintock (1994 [1992]), the Gulf War inaugurated "a new kind of interventionism," one which marked a shift from a reserved American use of force—captured by the so-called "Vietnam syndrome"—to the open exercise of a new imperialism that has no need for colonies as such (p. 297). Likewise, Loomba (2005) observes that what can be called American imperialism involves substantial economic and military power without direct political control (p. 11).

In a slightly different articulation, Gregory (2004) has termed this age the "colonial present" and points to the way in which the 2003 U.S.-led invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq reenacted colonial dynamics of the early twentieth century (p. 224). This is the context in which *Rolling Blackouts* operates: Glidden and her friends report on people whose lives were upended as a direct result of the "war on terror," a global deployment of power that has revived old colonial, geographic divisions of 'us' and 'them' (p. 11). In other words, Orientalist ways of thinking, writing, imagining, and representing have not withered in the face of decolonization or postcolonial critique; rather, colonial discourse has taken new shapes, donned new garments, and put on new masks.

Gregory's upending of the linear temporal dynamics premised by "postcolonial"—forcing the so-called past into abrasive contact with the present—helps us to notice the ways in which representational systems perpetuate (and are in turn

perpetuated by) international imbalances and abuses of power. For example, the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq was propelled by a hyper-mediated understanding of the country as one of the “enemies of civilization” that rendered its actual inhabitants and their humanity largely invisible (p. 195). The question of whether and to what extent *Rolling Blackouts* can undermine the “imaginative geographies” constructed by contemporary American imperialism and make visible their people is particularly pressing. As Gregory notes:

[E]very repertory performance of the colonial present carries within it the twin possibilities of either reaffirming and even radicalizing the hold of the colonial past on the present *or* undoing its enclosures and approaching closer to the horizon of the *postcolonial*.” (p. 19)

Since Said first published *Orientalism*, cultural criticism has generally moved its focus from colonial representations to what might be called postcolonial literatures—a somewhat unstable, though still pertinent division (Williams and Chrisman, 1994, p. 5). The scope of postcolonialism encompasses, not just representations by colonizers or imperial powers, but also literatures of struggle and resistance belonging to native peoples in formerly (or still) colonized lands. While it feels wrong to refer to *Rolling Blackouts* as a type of colonial discourse per se, the text clearly does not fall into the latter category. Rather, the concept of struggle against a centralizing power helps bring into focus how the book functions as postcolonial comics. Namely, Glidden seems interested in a particular self-reflective *ethics* of representation that pushes back against the problems of international power asymmetries, even if she cannot vacate her own position as a Westerner. This is one of my main approaches to analyzing *Rolling*

Blackouts, a framework that draws on Williams and Chrisman's (1994) framing of the goal of postcolonial criticism:

Colonial discourse analysis and post-colonial theory are thus critiques of the process of production of knowledge about the Other. As such, they produce forms of knowledge themselves, but other knowledge, better knowledge it is hoped, responsive to Said's central question: 'How can we know and respect the Other?' (p. 8)

Constructing an ethics of knowledge production is hardly an easy goal. Luyendijk (2010), drawing both on his experience as a Western reporter in the Middle East and on Said's work, argues that even a reporter's self-knowledge of Orientalist ideologies is not enough to produce news that escapes their influence. Importantly, Luyendijk argues that the "bleak" reality of international reportage's simplification and distortion is not caused by violations of journalistic ethics or normative conventions, but is rather a predictable result of "the limitations inherent in the production of news" (p. 17). A movement towards journalism that could be considered postcolonial needs new journalistic genres and tools that are able to critique the interplay "between coverage and its influence on the very world it covers" (p. 19). To hide behind the obscuring structures of journalistic conventions—especially that of objectivity—would seem to stand in the way of such a critique. Thus, my analysis of *Rolling Blackouts* will consider the extent to which its interventions in journalism offer genuine alternative approaches to representation through comics.

On the other hand, the possibility of Westerners engaging in ethical representation of historically Othered peoples remains highly contested. Spivak's (1994 [1988]) question—Can the subaltern speak?—is perhaps the most significant challenge to such a

project, especially given the context of Glidden's prior work. Glidden's memoir, *How to Understand Israel*, has been critiqued for its failure to actually represent the voices and perspectives of the Palestinians with whom she sympathizes politically (Fischer, 2015). If Palestinian life "stays muted" in her earlier work, this makes *Rolling Blackouts* even more interesting for the way that it constantly pushes against a similar silencing of Iraqi refugees by global media. And yet, for Spivak, the possibility of hearing (or seeing) the subaltern—a figure of those excluded or erased from dominant historical narratives—constantly slips away, despite well-intended attempts to excavate her. The problem is not merely an absence of the subaltern's presence; the power imbalances between an intellectual and the subaltern literally render her un-hearable (and un-seeable). I find Morris's (2010) gloss useful in clarifying this aspect of Spivak's notoriously difficult text:

Subalternity is less an identity than what we might call a predicament, but this is true in a very odd sense. For, in Spivak's definition, it is the structured place from which the capacity to access power is radically obstructed. To the extent that anyone escapes the muting of subalternity, she ceases being a subaltern. (p. 8)

Davies (2017) presents a reading of Spivak that is appropriate for my focus on medium; to his mind, Spivak demonstrates that all stories "are mediated by some kind of representational tool or screen. That process of mediation will always contain within it dynamics of power and privilege that obscure, intervene in, and problematize the subaltern experience" (p. 8). There is a productive opportunity here. Representational tools are hardly uniform, and comics have an enormous capacity for self-reflexivity. The possibilities for drawn, self-aware critiques of power and privilege seem particularly fertile, and there is some evidence that comics journalism can offer alternative visions of Arab countries and lands. For instance, Knowles (2015) emphasizes how Joe Sacco is "a

perennial migrant, a transnational individual, and in many ways not at all a stereotypical Westerner” (p. 45). I am interested in whether Glidden’s work, as postcolonial comics, manages to break out of Orientalism’s limiting “collection of dreams, images, and vocabularies” (Said, 1978).

Perhaps Spivak is correct, and reconstituting individuals who have been marginalized as contemporary subalterns is an impossible goal. However, there are still ways to intervene in practices of representation so that new discourses do not blindly replicate the problems of colonialism. Despite the decline of foreign bureaus, international reporting and re-presentations of Eastern countries for Western audiences will continue. If American citizens are to take responsibility for their government’s international reign of terror—a prospect that *Rolling Blackouts* asks us to take seriously—it is imperative to struggle against the representational strictures of the colonial present. Thus, I will consider how Glidden’s comics re-present these fraught issues.

In doing so, I will attempt to append the considerations and priorities of critical cultural theory to the questions of journalistic conventions and thus advance scholarly consideration of the understudied relationship between journalism and imperial power. At the very least, Spivak’s and Said’s interventions should prompt us to question (and hopefully revise and complicate) the journalistic cliché of “giving voice to the voiceless” and challenge the assumed transparency of the journalist invoked by the subject-less verb “giving.” Are there other, more productive relationships that can be established using the self-reflexivity of comics journalism?

Research questions and goals

My survey of the literature guides me toward the following research questions, which fall into two groups centered around my main theoretical concerns:

Representing journalism

- RQ1a: How does Glidden represent the *Globalist* reporters and herself as journalists?
- RQ1b: How do these representations negotiate with journalistic norms?
- RQ1c: How does *Rolling Blackouts* establish its authority as journalism?

Postcolonial comics

- RQ2a: How does Glidden represent the relationships between Western journalists and people in Turkey, Syria and Iraq?
- RQ2b: How do these representations reinforce or challenge American imperial or colonial power over “The East?”

The questions are designed to feed into each other, with interpretations drawing groundwork and evidence from answers to other questions. For instance, Glidden’s representations of journalists obviously depend on how they relate to their sources in Turkey, Syria and Iraq; and how journalists are represented in this context has postcolonial implications.

Ultimately, I wish to explore what kind of interventions Glidden is making, both explicitly and implicitly, in the normative sphere that defines who a journalist is and what it is that they do. To articulate this goal in a way that admits my own iconophilia: I am interested in how Glidden’s journalism re-imagines journalistic practice by translating it into the visual vocabulary and formal grammar of comics. In this way, I am working in the tradition of Mitchell (1994) whose approach to thinking about images is punctuated by a series of questions about how things—including images, minds, and narratives—

picture themselves. I am interested in the ways that comics journalism pictures itself, and I adapt his key observation about the ways that self-representation and self-knowledge are linked: how do comics journalists “show themselves in order to know themselves?” (1994, p. 48).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Close-reading comics

To answer my research questions, I have chosen to study Sarah Glidden's *Rolling Blackouts*. In what follows, I perform a close reading of the text, articulate the themes that I see rise to the surface of the comic, and interpret them using the theoretical tools described in my literature review. In addition, as Fairclough (2003) reminds us, texts are always an integral aspect of broader social and institutional discourses. Thus, I also place *Rolling Blackouts* in conversation with various con-texts. These fall into two main categories: published interviews with Glidden, and other media directly referenced by *Rolling Blackouts*, most notably the documentary film *Barzan*. Ultimately, the results emerge through a bottom-up, inductive approach to the text; my methodology is rigorous in gathering and examining concrete textual evidence that is present on the page, while using contextual material to inform and push on my readings.

This approach draws upon work done by scholars in the methodological fields of critical discourse analysis and visual studies: notably, Michel Foucault, Norman Fairclough, and W. J. T. Mitchell. Fairclough (2015) and Foucault (1980) offer ways of analyzing the way power dynamics manifest within discourse; and Foucault's concept of power/knowledge is foundational to Said's *Orientalism*. My research questions cannot be fully answered without an awareness of how power is exercised: between a journalist and her sources, or between Occident and Orient. Power can be a rather vague term, but here it is invoked primarily in reference to questions of *representation*: Who has the authority

and capacity to represent others? How does their position of authority structure of these representations?

While it is very common to treat images as a form of “text” or “discourse,” I argue this is inadequate as an approach to analyzing comics. One of Mitchell’s major theoretical contributions has been his patient resistance to the cultural and disciplinary power dynamics that attempt to subordinate and reduce forms of visual representations to verbal ones. Even though Fairclough (2015) alludes briefly to the fact that his methods can be applied to uncover the ideological content of images, he ultimately acknowledges that his approach is predominantly logocentric (p. 60).

On the other hand, I do not accept the idea, popular among comics scholars, that the medium is a *fusion* of words and images. The grammar of comics is more than simply an additive combination of separate visual/verbal meanings. I heed the warnings about approaching comics “with the separation of images and words firmly in mind” (Kukkonen and Haberkorn, 2010, p. 238) or hastily assuming that such separation is normal (Pizzino, 2016, p. 19). Approaching comics thoughtfully requires paying attention to words *as present in* images, and vice versa. My aim, then, is not to rely on a “commonsense” division between words and images, but rather to interpret the ways that words and images on the comics page flow ceaselessly into and out of one another. My primary figure of the divide between the two is that of a door already open, rather than a wall that must be breached or a gulf that must be bridged.

In more concrete terms: While Glidden’s style of “picture writing”—sparse renderings of scenes and neat transcription of dialogue—may sometimes seem to create

parallel word-image tracks, my analysis will pay particular attention to the ruptures in this apparently segregated space, like her practice of foregrounding speech balloons' physical presence on the page as a way of representing in-the-moment translations. While this analysis does rely heavily on the textual discourse voiced by the main characters—which is where much of the explicit metajournalistic discourse appears—it also focuses on the way images and the formal aspects of comics grammar reinforce, nuance, and contradict the verbal meanings.

Finally, my method of page citation needs a word of explanation. When referencing particular pages of *Rolling Blackouts*, I follow Pizzino (2016) and adopt the practice of noting both page and panel number, separated by a period. For example, a reference to the first panel on the opening page is cited as (7.1).

Choosing *Rolling Blackouts*

My main criteria for selecting a primary text required that it be engaged in the work of self-representation and self-reflexive commentary on journalism. While reading for my literature review, I kept track of other works and cartoonists that were mentioned, either in academic studies, trade articles, book reviews, or other media. I did preliminary readings of most works, either with physical copies or through online previews, to see if they included the cartoonist herself/himself as a character. Other cartoonists who are often (or sometimes) described as comics journalists include: Dan Archer, Matt Bors, Peter Bagge, Susie Cagle, David Collier, Guy Delisle, Josh Neufeld, and Ted Rall. I chose Glidden because, of all the cartoonists mentioned in the literature, she is the most

explicit about exploring what journalism *is*. She is also largely unstudied in the published literature, with Davies's (2017) discussion of her work in a postcolonial context as the exception. In addition, her previous work in memoir puts her in an interesting dialogue with the larger traditions of self-representation in comics. Joe Sacco might seem like a more obvious choice than Glidden because his body of work is acknowledged as canonical or foundational in shaping comics journalism. However, focusing on Glidden will provide future comics scholarship with a broader critical foundation: the field should not rely on a single creator (no matter how accomplished) for its picture of comics journalism.

Significance

As I argue in my literature review, the scholarly discourse around comics journalism is, as a whole, uncertain and somewhat muddled. I hope to move the field beyond a limiting obsession with definitions—a concern that often plagues comics studies (Hatfield, 2010)—and reductive, unhelpful questions about whether drawings can be journalistic. My attention to the way form and medium shape journalistic meaning may have broader resonance within journalism studies. Comics that function simultaneously *as* journalism and as a meta-discourse *about* journalism are a good starting point for positioning the genre within the field. Not many journalism scholars have even approached the genre so such a positioning would likely be helpful. This research could also have practical significance. If cartoonists are interested in carving out a place for themselves within—or in opposition to—current and historical understandings

of journalism, I hope to provide them, by way of Glidden's work, tools to undertake that difficult task.

While I would love to see the comics form become more widely accepted in journalistic circles, I also do not simply accept that comics journalism is still 'journalism as usual.' I am clearly interested in what makes comics journalism and comics journalists *different* from normal conceptions of journalism. I am ultimately of two minds. For practicing cartoonists or journalists, surrounded as they are by norms and expectations, Nelson's (2017) argument for comics journalism's legitimacy is seductive: "Journalism is journalism. While aesthetics may change, the ethics do not." Yet I argue that we should question the easy use of such a tautology. To deal rigorously with questions of form is also to think critically about ethics. Indeed, if Glidden offers a different model for journalistic authority and legitimacy—as I will argue—then this has massive relevance for the present moment, when reporters and news organizations are scrambling to shore up public trust in journalistic institutions.

In terms of foreign reporting and postcolonial concerns, the importance of *Rolling Blackouts* is striking. Glidden's insistence on foregrounding the experiences of the displaced and the dispossessed becomes more relevant by the day, as endless wars and the intensifying effects of climate change continue to force mass migration. While the particular images of Iraq and especially Syria, circa 2010, have been swept away by the rise of the Islamic State and the catastrophe of the Syrian Civil War, the underlying socio-political problems she reports on have only intensified.

CHAPTER FOUR:

HOW *ROLLING BLACKOUTS* PICTURES JOURNALISM

Overview of analysis

In what follows, I will explore the themes that emerged in response to my first three research questions. To restate them: How does Glidden represent the *Globalist* reporters and herself as journalists? How do these representations negotiate with journalistic norms? And how does *Rolling Blackouts* establish its authority as journalism? I will first introduce *Rolling Blackouts*'s four main characters; describe its narrative structure, which is constructed from three interlocking storylines; and lay out its basic visual grammar, which combines soft lines, gentle watercolors, and a restrained approach to page design. This is done mostly to help orient my readers, but it also allows for a closer analysis of the ways Glidden deviates from her own baseline structures. Her comic is a lengthy, complex, and multivalent text, and my description of its composition will prepare the way for an analysis of its central meanings.

After laying this necessary groundwork, my analysis then unfolds along five major lines. Drawing on the journalistic metadiscourse of Sarah Stuteville, one of the main characters, this section explores the idea of journalism as a series of complex, seemingly incompatible expectations held by journalists and their audiences. This clash of expectations is partly resolved by Sarah's choice to privilege the concept of storytelling as an end in itself. Yet she is unable to fully extricate herself from journalism's consequences for its sources. From there, I move to an analysis of how

Glidden represents the challenges involved in bringing the ethical ideal of journalistic independence into contact with material reality. Both Sarah and Glidden are caught up in the ethical challenge of reporting on friends, and in both cases, the potential moral pitfalls—rather than crippling their work—help open up the project of journalism to self-critique. This is particularly striking when done in comics form, and Glidden quite literally visualizes what the consequences and contradictions of journalistic detachment look like before ultimately settling on a stance of measured skepticism towards them. An analysis of this picturing of journalistic distance rounds out my first three major interpretive tracks.

Admittedly, any insights into Sarah and the *Globalist's* journalism are not self-evidently reflections on *comics* journalism. However, the metajournalistic discourse is undeniably operating on comics' own *terms*. Precise attention to *how* Glidden makes use of comics grammar to construct her representations reveals how she uses her friends to trace the outlines of comics-as-journalism. As Glidden's picture of journalism writ broad comes into being, so does her more specific metapicture of comics journalism. This becomes clear in my final two interpretive moves, which engage with Glidden's strategies for legitimating her work. Glidden, in positioning her work as journalism, adopts strategies of legitimization that draw on her proximity to established professional journalists. However, she also uses performed naivety and a constant refusal to fully answer her central question of what journalism to depict a paradoxical vision: uncertainty itself as a form of journalistic authority.

Characters and narrative structure

Rolling Blackouts is unambiguous about its central goal. Glidden states early in the narrative that she aimed to make a comic about how journalism works (Glidden, 2016, p. 14.8). To do so, Glidden accompanied her friends at the multimedia collective known as the *Seattle Globalist* on an overseas reporting trip. They spent two months in late 2010 traveling through Turkey, northern Iraq, and Syria. Glidden observed the reporters as they met and developed sources, conducted extensive interviews, and explored the cultural and social life of these countries. *Rolling Blackouts*, published nearly six years after the trip's completion, chronicles their process of reporting and, in doing so, depicts many of the stories the *Globalist* reporters eventually published on their website and in other venues. The comic is highly character-driven, and its four main characters are as follows:

- Sarah Glidden, a cartoonist.
- Sarah Stuteville, a print and multimedia journalist.
- Dan O'Brien, an Iraq war veteran and Sarah Stuteville's childhood friend.
- Alex Stonehill, a photographer and videographer.

Following the comic, I will refer to most of the main characters by their first names—all except for Glidden herself, so as to distinguish her from the other Sarah.

While there are many sub-plots and small stories woven throughout, the book's narrative backbone is structured along three major lines. The first is the journalists' pursuit of stories about displaced peoples and refugees; these are often, though not always, people whose lives were shattered by the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. Among other things, the group interviews a refugee blogger in Van, Turkey; spends weeks in

Sulaymaniyah, Iraq, interviewing and filming Sam Malkandi, an Iraqi Kurd who was deported from the U.S. after being accused of involvement in the 9/11 attacks; and explores the lives of the dispossessed Iraqi middle-class who have taken refuge in Damascus. The second central narrative involves the character of Dan, who returns to the Middle East with Glidden and the *Globalist* reporters in order to “feel out Arabs a little more. . . Kind of, like, understand them” (p. 38.5). Dan also creates a series of video blogs about his experiences, while Sarah interviews him for a story about his return to Iraq. The two storylines are deeply interwoven, but it is useful to distinguish them here at the outset. It helps reveal how Dan’s presence complicates Glidden’s primary project of understanding journalism, which is the third narrative track. While it is less easy to discern, the story of Glidden’s own education in journalism is woven throughout the comic, sometimes submerged, but always present.

Discussion scenes

Apart from her drawings of formal interviews and other clearly defined moments of reportage, Glidden also devotes many pages to rendering extended conversations between the main characters as they sit in places like hotel lobbies, bars, cafes, and taxis. Glidden has stated that she is committed to capturing the way people actually speak—their exact words and also their body language and interactions with one another; she is interested in the way conversations unfurl themselves, how they “meander” and contain moments of tension (Royal and Kunka, 2016). *Rolling Blackouts* enacts this desire, and

the narrative takes time to explore what might normally be considered, under more mainstream reporting conventions, unnecessary distractions from the main narrative.

The constant use of these scenes can make the reader feel as if they are seated at the table, a ghostly member of the group who is privy to behind-the-scenes knowledge about how journalism works. That, of course, is precisely one of Glidden's goals—to open up a world that is typically closed to readers and to render the *Globalist* reporters' methods, ideas, and decision-making visible on the page. Throughout my literature review, Joe Sacco's work was used as a type of standard for comics journalism, and Glidden's attention to conversation and interaction closely mirrors his comments about what gets left out of most reporting:

Since I am a 'character' in my own work, I give myself journalistic permission to show my interactions with those I meet. Much can be learned about people from these personal exchanges, which most mainstream newspaper reporters, alas, excise from their articles. (The stories journalists tell around a dinner table, which generally involve similar interactions, are often more interesting and revealing than what gets into their copy.) (Sacco, 2011, p. xiii)

Rolling Blackouts is quite literally founded on the “stories journalists tell around a dinner table.” Hearing this type of shop-talk from her *Globalist* friends is what inspired Glidden to undertake the project (p. 14). This is clearly a type of “metajournalistic discourse,” which Carlson (2011) observes is “not idle banter” but actively productive in the way that it positions and legitimates journalism as a field (p. 269). Glidden's sustained attention to that which is not idle banter promises to fill in the gaps created by decisions made in the construction of most journalistic texts, even those narratives that foreground the reporter's subjectivity.

Visual vocabulary and grammar

Glidden has noted that “comics really is a language. It has vocabulary, and it has grammar. It has style” (Pennsylvania Center for The Book, 2017). This perspective informs my analytical framework for approaching her work. My literature review identified, following Chute (2008), three features of comics grammar that are key to generating meaning: word/image relations, transitions between panels, and page design. These form the grammar of comics. Because every grammar needs raw material to work with, I consider a fourth key element in my analysis: pictorial vocabulary.

Glidden’s drawings are clean and rarely cluttered, structured from simple inked lines and brought to life by gentle watercolor tones. Both her figures and backgrounds tend to be sparse and cartoony; she usually represents faces, clothing, landscapes, and buildings with a minimum of detail and ink—a style McCloud (1993) would call “iconic.” The apparent simplicity of Glidden’s linework belies—or perhaps allows for—the incredible range of emotional expression that she captures, revealing again her commitment to capturing the fullness of conversation and human interaction. This includes body language and facial expressions. While her faces consist of little more than dots (for eyes) and a scattering of lines (nose, mouth, and eyebrows), the nuances of her characters’ emotional affects are usually clearly discernible.

Likewise, Glidden’s transitions and page designs in *Rolling Blackouts* rarely venture into surprising or experimental territory. She eschews large full-page spreads and only occasionally uses non-rectangular or borderless panels. Her pages are largely composed of restrained variations on a standard comics grid. While an arrangement of

nine identically sized panels seems to be her default design, Glidden usually introduces subtle disruptions. She often includes at least one or two larger panels per page, which expand particular moments in time or points in space. Still, these rarely disrupt the overall symmetry of the page, and the ghost of the nine-panel grid haunts the narrative even when it is not physically present.

Given the volume of dialogue in *Rolling Blackouts*, Glidden's panel transitions are similarly smooth and unobtrusive, usually moving the reader gently from one conversational beat to another. The combined weight of this approach across 300 pages leaves the impression that she is concerned primarily with facilitating narrative movement: The story and characters are foregrounded, and she puts formal properties in service of that end. In McCloud's (2006) terms, she works mostly as an "animist," a comics creator devoted "to the content of the work, putting craft entirely in service of its subject" (p. 230.2). However, I articulate these general features here partly to draw attention to notable exceptions—places where Glidden deviates from her own conventions to make a point. When she does so, it is almost always in service of a major narrative moment or thematic elaboration. In what follows, I will examine the meanings generated by these formal ruptures and the ways that drawing attention to the medium enacts Glidden's interventions in the field of journalistic practice.

Journalism as 'an expectation'

Rolling Blackouts offers a very natural entry point to engaging my research questions: Glidden's *own* question—"What is journalism?"—which bookends the

narrative. It occupies the sole text box on the narrative's opening page, hovering over our first glimpse of the *Globalist* reporters and providing the page's final words (Figure 1, p. 7.8). Near the end, the same question hangs conspicuously over a self-reflexive image of Glidden as she begins to draw the comic that will become *Rolling Blackouts* (Figure 17, p. 296.1). Glidden spends much of the book pursuing an answer to her question, whether explicitly or implicitly. Early in the narrative, Glidden establishes one central answer that demands to be taken seriously. While the group is in Istanbul preparing to set out, Glidden asks Sarah for her definition of journalism. Sarah responds by saying journalism is "anything that is informative, verifiable, accountable, and independent" (p. 26.9). This initial answer, articulated in the page's final panel, sets up the following page where Sarah's lengthy elaboration unfolds itself over six symmetrical panels:

Is it informative? Is it trying to inform people about a topic or a time or a person? Is it verifiable? Is it true and can we find out that it's true? Is it accountable? Do we know who did it, and if we find out that something was untrue, will they take responsibility for it? And is it independent? So did the person report this for no reason beyond getting to the truth, or did they do it because they were paid by an interested party? And using those terms seems like a really great way of thinking about it. Because it's not a medium and it's not a result and it's not a voice . . . It's an expectation. (Figure 4, p. 27.1-6)

The perceptive reader will note that the overwhelming majority of Sarah's answer is actually devoted to asking more questions (a strategy that Glidden herself will later adopt and adapt). Specifically, Sarah articulates a series of questions that evoke the presence of a critical reader, the implication being that these should be leveled at anything representing itself as "journalism," including *Rolling Blackouts*.

The way the panels are composed adds a distinctive weight to Sarah's speech; her words float as self-contained word balloons near the top of each panel, detached from her actual figure on the page and divorced from the page's literal action (the four main characters boarding a train). We know from context that Sarah is speaking; yet rendering her words this way elevates them beyond the particular, granting them the same visual significance that Glidden's own narrative voice usually has. In addition, the page's formal structure places special emphasis on her final three words—"It's an expectation"—which stand alone in the page's final panel (Figure 4, p. 27.6). Sarah's answer is joined with a parallel series of images, showing tightly framed shots of the reporters settling into the train; but the final panel zooms out, providing an outside look at the train and rendering it as a blurry series of lighted windows winding through a darkened Istanbul (Figure 4, p. 27.6). Sarah's final words float like some celestial body over the Turkish city, juxtaposed with fingers of light peeking over the mountains in the background; her words are a sun—but rising or setting? The image is ambiguous.

In this way, Sarah is quickly established as the book's primary authority on journalism and her answer becomes a standard by which the stories in *Rolling Blackouts* can be judged as journalism. Sarah is the person to whom Glidden's avatar on the page—acting in her own role as a naive, earnest stand-in for the reader—turns for insights into journalism as practice and profession. Glidden the cartoonist gives Sarah ample space to reflect on thorny issues of journalistic ethics and normative conventions, and her words constitute a large portion of the book's metajournalistic discourse.

Setting aside the further implications of Sarah's definition for now, it is useful to dwell on the other specific expectations that Sarah articulates throughout the narrative and on how they shape the stories she publishes. Her most prominent expectations belong to her imagined audience, and they are fraught with interesting contradictions. Sarah acknowledges that most people who would read the *Globalist's* stories are so busy that they'll probably only devote about fifteen minutes of their day to consuming something that's outside their own lives (p. 66.7). So, she asks, "how do you make sure your story becomes that fifteen minutes?" (p. 66.8). Likewise, she repeatedly reflects on the way American audiences are looking for something they can already relate to in a story (pp. 63.8, 67.3, 269.5-6).

At the same time, Sarah's goals for the *Globalist's* journalism are actually quite ambitious. The thematic drive of their reporting project stems from a desire to make the refugee crisis caused by the Iraq war less abstract for American audiences. That requires them to push against an enormous cultural barrier: the fact that "Americans don't take displacement from Iraq very seriously" (p. 20.4). With the story of Sam Malkandi, Sarah wants to help Americans "understand shifting allegiances and the complexities of politics" in the Middle East and get them to comprehend what it's like to live through material dispossession, exile, and geopolitical chaos (p. 108.7-8). As she tells Glidden: "Everything that I do in journalism is based on the idea that if people are exposed to more ideas and information, then they'll allow themselves to question things that they assumed were right" (p. 241.6). In other words, Sarah carves out her role as balanced between

what her imagined audience already wants and her desire to fundamentally challenge them.

Perhaps because of this fraught position, Sarah also downplays the question of whether her work will *actually* change minds. On the final page of *Rolling Blackouts*, she dispenses one final piece of wisdom to Glidden, who worries that her own work is useless or irrelevant because of changing conditions in Syria:

I used to have the same confusion about journalism as you. But I think that creating change can't be the goal of the journalist. I always ask myself: is it better that this story is out there in the world than if it wasn't? If the answer is yes, then you do it. The best we can hope for is that the story gets passed along. The way the reader uses that story to understand the world is up to them. (p. 298.4-7)

The vision of the journalist's role that Sarah unpacks here is a complex one. It requires a dual attention to what an audience expects of a reporter, but also to what the reporter can reasonably expect from their audience. It is constructed out of a fundamental tension between the two. Normative ideas that attempt to prescribe how audiences will make use of journalistic work—that journalism's primary purpose is to furnish information to citizens in democratic societies, for example (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2014)—often cling to a vision of a totalized world stabilized by journalism. Occasionally Sarah seems to align herself with these visions, as when she notes that, "Our politicians and their policies are only as smart as we are" (p. 278.8). But more often, she advances the possibility that journalists actually operate in a far more ambiguous and unstructured space. Her justification for doing journalistic work is that it can make the world better, but this clashes with the impossibility of knowing whether it actually will reach people. This, in

turn, has the effect of elevating the story itself. Journalistic work becomes, paradoxically, something that should be done for its own sake.

The ethics of independence

Significantly, Sarah's parsing of outcome moves in two directions: Just as she separates the telling of a story from its potential effect on readers, Sarah also actively tries to distinguish the stories she is telling from any material outcomes for the *subjects* of those stories. She tells Glidden, "I never assume that anything we do can directly help someone's cause," and tries to make that fact clear to her sources (p. 119.3). *Rolling Blackouts* foregrounds the fact that even stories themselves are not guaranteed, let alone any potential outcome. Though he is given less speaking space, Alex serves as the narrative's other main authority on journalism. He observes during one of the group's discussion scenes that uncertainty of outcome "is the hard part about journalism from a moral standpoint. You have to go around taking people's stories . . . They spend a lot of time telling you how they feel and what happened to them" (p. 66.1-2). Sarah finishes his thought: "And you can't guarantee that it's going to go anywhere" (p. 66.2). In context, this is partly a question of economics; there is little certainty (especially for freelancers) that an editor or publication will run a story. But it also echoes a key piece of Sarah's definition of journalism: "independence," or the question of whether journalism is being done "for no reason beyond getting to the truth" (Figure 4, p. 27.4). Alex and Sarah's words help bring into focus the fact that journalistic independence is tightly bound up

with questions of ethics—specifically the ethics of what impact journalism has on its sources when its storytelling obligations lie elsewhere.

By articulating these thoughts, Sarah positions her approach to journalism as distinct from advocacy work or even journalism that actively pursues social change. The role of journalist-as-advocate for people oppressed by inequity and injustice has been present in journalistic circles for decades (Janowitz, 1975; Fischer, 2016). In recent years, the concept of “impact journalism” or “journalism that makes a difference” has circulated in trade publications (Pitt and Green-Barber, 2017; Schmidt, 2019). By contrast, Sarah is clearly more interested in maintaining her autonomy as a journalistic actor, no matter how emotionally difficult it is. When commenting on the tragedy of the hundreds of thousands of deportations America carries out every year, she notes that “the hardest part is how there’s nothing you can do except tell the story and hope that one day the tides turn” (p. 119.9). Once again, she elevates the telling of a story as a way of dealing with this uncertainty.

However, Sarah’s comment also reveals how a desire for independence rubs up against the material reality of interacting ethically with sources. In *Rolling Blackouts*, this happens even when independence is framed in terms of state power. Sarah comments that, as a journalist, the idea of going into vulnerable refugee communities with a representative of the Syrian government “makes [her] want to fucking puke” (p. 243.9). This situation has practical implications for their work; as Alex comments skeptically: “Not only will the people be afraid to say what they actually think, but then the government will translate for us?” (p. 243.8). Sarah’s revulsion, though, contains a

distinctly ethical dimension. It reveals her understanding of existing power imbalances and evokes a desire to avoid bringing further pain to an already disadvantaged population; the implication is that if journalists cannot actively promise to help, they should, at minimum, avoid harm.

Even in interviews *without* a state-sponsored minder, interactions with vulnerable sources are fraught with potential ethical complications, and Glidden pointedly shows us the difficulty of maintaining journalistic independence in the material and emotional conditions that structure them. When the *Globalist* reporters speak to Habi Abdullah Ali, a Kurdish refugee from Mosul, they are confronted with his abject poverty; he can't pay for expensive medical operations, and he doesn't even have a heater for his family's tent (pp. 208-209). During the interview, Hadi asks, through a translator, if the reporters can find help for him (p. 209.4-5). On top of this, their translator tells Habi that the group can in fact talk to someone who might be able to aid him. Sarah pushes back, trying to clarify their role: "explain to him that we're journalists and not NGO workers and that we probably can't do that" (p. 209.6). She wants to make it clear that the *Globalist* crew cannot actually help Habi, but even she gives way to the emotional pressure of the moment and qualifies this with a "probably." Her sympathies are also clear in the expression of discomfort that Glidden paints onto her face (p. 209.6). This is one instance where the journalistic ideals Sarah holds are clearly difficult to translate into practice.

A far more explosive problem, from an ethics perspective, is Dan and Sarah's personal relationship, which seriously complicates the latter's role as an independent journalist. The two were childhood friends and are bound together by tragedy: a mutual

friend who killed himself when they were teenagers (p. 101). Interviewing Dan—especially for a story that dives deeply into his personal feelings—violates well-established journalistic norms about reporting on people with whom one has close personal connections. As Glidden observes, in what is arguably an understatement: “I think it’s hard interviewing your friends” (p. 232.4). Such relationships collapse what the Associated Press’s ethical guidelines call “appropriate professional distance” and introduce clear conflicts of interest that are prohibited in the ethics codes of prominent news institutions (Walters, 2018). Sarah is well-aware of this. In her words, the situation is “a moral shitstorm” (p. 101.5), and she notes, before the trip even begins, that other journalists think she’s “crazy” to bring Dan along (p. 16.4). As she is operating in a field that is structured largely by shared norms and expectations, Sarah’s reporting about Dan has the potential to be cast as illegitimate—as not even journalism.

Over the course of their many interviews, Dan resists her attempts to probe more deeply into his feelings about the Iraq war and consistently repeats the same narrative about his deployment: that he’s sorry the war happened, but glad he joined up to try and influence it in a positive direction (pp. 21-25, 73.8, 226.3); that he carries no guilt and no regrets (pp. 37.8, 73.9, 205.4). In her resulting story about him, Sarah calls these reasons “pretty well rehearsed by now” (Stuteville, 2011b). What Sarah wants, ultimately, is to get Dan “to embrace some of the uncertainty of whether or not the Iraq war was a good idea” (p. 195.4). She justifies this desire from a journalistic perspective, arguing that journalists have to acknowledge what they don’t know; she serves as Dan’s editor on his video blogs and pushes him to incorporate this uncertainty (p. 195.5). Of course, it must

be said that Dan is not a journalist. What is particularly interesting is the extent to which the ethical foundations of Sarah's own journalistic project become bound up in the question of whether Dan will challenge his own beliefs:

I think the crux of Dan's story is that he made a choice to be involved in this when most of the people whose lives have been affected by it did not make a choice. If I let that slide, I'll feel like I'm losing my own moral center in a story like this. I have to hold him to the fire and he either has to say that he doesn't care, or he has to acknowledge that it's fucked up and he was a part of it. (p. 196.4-6)

This echoes Sarah's desire to push her audience to challenge their own basic positions. She expresses that same sentiment about possible reactions to Dan's story, noting that she "wanted him to challenge lefties' assumptions about why people join up and what they thought about it afterwards" (p. 241.1). Yet, in Dan's case, her desire to break open assumptions is aimed at both her audience and her subject. And if this connection is not clear enough, Sarah makes it herself:

Everything that I do in journalism is based on the idea that if people are exposed to more ideas and information, then they'll allow themselves to question things that they assumed were right. And if that isn't true of Dan? It's like I provided him the most perfect choreographed experience just hoping that his opinion would budge a little bit. You can see the obvious parallels between that and what I do in journalism. (p. 241.6-8)

At the same time, Sarah also questions whether she could represent Dan as traumatized by his time in Iraq: "the idea of painting him in a bad light or doing anything disloyal toward him? I can't believe that I didn't even consider how much I couldn't do that" (p. 101.6). Getting Dan to change, in accordance with the stories about veterans that editors and audiences want and expect—that they are scarred and stricken with PTSD (p. 102)—would constitute a type of betrayal: "So now here I am trying to get him to say all this

stuff that he doesn't want to say. What does that say about me? I think loyalty is important too" (p. 102.8).

On the one hand, this deep and tangled ethical quagmire seems to reinforce the need for strict ethics policies. Sarah herself, reflecting after Dan has gone home, says she doesn't think she acted perfectly, and that there was no way to do so given the circumstances: "All of those journalistic norms that are usually in place for this very reason weren't there" (p. 280.3-4). If Sarah had kept the proper "professional distance" and avoided reporting on Dan, her "moral center" as a journalist would not have come under such threat. But Glidden does not allow us to settle on such an easy conclusion. Dan's storyline, in fact, offers a chance to open journalism up to self-critique and revision. Dan clearly forces Sarah to reevaluate her own position and working assumptions as a journalist; not only does his refusal to budge his opinions complicate her journalistic desires to challenge people, Sarah also openly questions whether she's "in journalism for the right reasons" after she clearly hurts him with one of her comments (p. 49.8).

In addition, Dan's refusal to submit to Sarah's narrative expectations—her search for the "storytelling angle" in which Dan changes as a person—forces her to write a different kind of story. In one particularly interesting twist, Dan literally upends the narrative Sarah wants when, during their final interview, he accidentally knocks over her recorder, erasing the audio file (pp. 230-1). Ironically, this was the interview where Dan admits it was "fucked up" that a million Iraqis lost their families, homes, and lives—*exactly* the concession Sarah wanted (p. 229.3). Sarah doesn't need this twist or this

admission of complicity in the end: She still produced a beautiful, haunting profile of Dan, which was published both on the *Globalist's* website (when it was still the *Common Language Project*) and as a cover story for the *Seattle Time's Pacific NW Magazine*. In it, she yields to the reality of the Dan she found, rather than the Dan she wanted to find: “Maybe Dan didn't want to be challenged on this trip, to see a different side of things” (Stuteville, 2011b).

Measuring journalistic distance

There is another, obvious layer here: Glidden herself is navigating a similar set of complications by reporting on her friends. Early in the narrative, Glidden foregrounds her own thoughts about journalism—an unusual moment, as she usually yields the mic to Sarah—and compares her work on *Rolling Blackouts* to her past autobiographical comics:

If I were working on another memoir . . . I'd have to be honest and show all of my flaws. But this isn't a memoir. I'm here to report on Sarah and Alex and Dan and whoever else we meet. They're the ones I have to be honest about. Which is even more terrifying, now that I think about it. (43.1-4)

Yet these are largely the extent of Glidden's worries. If she has any further ethical qualms about truthfully representing Alex and Sarah, she mutes them in the narrative. Her own journalistic independence is arguably problematized in the same way that Sarah's is, but she certainly never displays any other overt signs of struggle. From one perspective, this absence is not entirely surprising. My literature review drew a distinction between inward- and outward-looking narratives, and, given Glidden's comments about honesty, it

is clear that her primary focus is not on excavating her own feelings and flaws. To dwell too much on her *own* ethical crises could detract from her representations of both refugees and other practicing journalists.

At the same time, the other moments where Glidden *does* foreground her own thoughts about journalism—the times when she actively participates in metajournalistic discourse—trouble the line between memoir and journalism, effectively stealing the self-reflexive imperative of the former and adapting it to the latter. Her primary question—“What is journalism?”—is both continually answered and never answered; more precisely, *Rolling Blackouts* is marked by her ultimate refusal or inability to settle on a definitive conclusion. The direct re-articulation of her question near the end of the book is a striking example of this. The page’s structure precisely mirrors that of Sarah’s definition near the beginning of the text (Figure 4, p. 27); Glidden’s thoughts play out over six identical panels—the only other page in the book with this construction—and like Sarah, Glidden articulates a series of questions about journalism:

Is it exposing your reader to a history they might not otherwise hear about, one that might put other events in context? Is it showing them a story of someone who has suffered injustice and hoping that they will make connections to other, similar injustices that continue? Is it making something because you hope people will respond in what you think is the ‘correct’ way and take action? Is it telling the story that came to you, even if it’s not the one you went out looking for? (Figure 17, 296.2-4)

The questions are paired with images of powerful moments from the preceding pages of the narrative, emphasizing the extent to which Glidden’s understanding of what journalism “is” was birthed from the concrete moments of her reporting trip. What Glidden lays out are a set of possibilities for what journalism *might* be, based on the

journalism she has witnessed in practice. The page echoes what she has stated in interviews: “I think that asking that question—what is journalism?—has always been integral to the process of doing journalism itself” (Drake, 2013). In other words, the practice of journalism, for Glidden, is fundamentally a process of self-interrogation, always in motion and never quite settled.

In addition, Glidden seems not as contained by or concerned with the same journalistic norms as Sarah. The word “objectivity” appears nowhere in the narrative, apart from a brief appearance in the introduction, where Glidden disavows it and subjects the concept to critique. There, she describes a chain of storytelling, in which experience is transformed into narrative by “highlighting some experiences, forgetting others” (p. 6): “Our memories are stories that we rewrite and edit every time we recall them, not files stored away in a box somewhere, waiting to be taken out and looked at,” Glidden writes (p. 6). This highlighting and editing process is only exacerbated when stories are retold by others: “For this reason, true objectivity is impossible in narrative journalism (and arguably in any kind of journalism)” (p. 6). In this way, Glidden aligns herself with the disruptive force of narrative literary journalism that resists a foreclosing of contingencies and questions (Hartsock, 2000).

Perhaps the closest contemporary referent for the ethical tangles in *Rolling Blackouts* can be found in the so-called “New New Journalism”—longform narrative reporting, usually in book form, that requires journalists to immerse themselves in people’s private lives for extended periods of time (Boynton, 2005). Indeed, Sarah’s (and Glidden’s) self-aware musings echo Larssen and Hornmoen’s (2013) conclusion, drawn

from interviewing contemporary practitioners, that the ethical responsibility of literary journalists must be to “continuously reflect on the way they approach and use vulnerable sources, and on the power they possess in their communication with them” (p. 93).

Perhaps, then, journalistic independence is less necessary than a rigorous attention to a journalist’s own relationship to the world. Clinging to an unexamined ideal of independence can obscure the ways that the figure of the journalist is unavoidably *dependent*: on friends, on audiences, on sources, on material circumstances. Glidden, by contrast, literally makes visible the moments that make her uncomfortable, as well as those that deconstruct any journalistic picture that represents itself as unproblematically detached. This a self-reflexivity that the comics medium foregrounds relentlessly in its very grammar. As Chute (2016) argues, comics’ drawn frames function “a figure for the mediating work of journalism itself” (p. 208). Glidden asks, not rhetorically: “What is journalistic distance? Can it be measured? How much does it even matter?” (Figure 11, 211.8). In fact, the sheer materiality of comics and its framing of interviews—especially those with vulnerable sources—collapse that distance, which can be measured out literally on the page. Glidden represents, again and again, the way journalists and sources are physically and emotionally brought together in the confines of a panel. In one particularly representative interview—what the *Globalist* reporters call a “deep hangout” (264.1)—the journalists and Glidden drink with a pair of sources, and over the course of the page, start dancing to Shakira with them. Glidden observes: “Every glass of Syrian wine helps dissolve the barrier between subject and journalist” (264.5).

After the interview with Habi Abdullah Ali, the impoverished Kurdish refugee, the *Globalist's* translator remarks to Glidden that he is going to buy the family a heater, again complicating the idea of independence and the ethical rules that prohibit intervention. The translator, who is a Kurdish photojournalist and a refugee himself, gives a conflicted, somewhat confusing explanation: "I totally agree that you shouldn't give your subject stuff. But sometimes they need help" (Figure 11, p. 211.5). Glidden then provides us one final glimpse of Habi. He is holding a child, standing outside his temporary (or all-too-permanent?) shelter, and Glidden asks: "Is it even possible to report on a person's life without intervening in it?" (Figure 11, p. 211.6). The distance between us and Habi is significant, but he and his child are clearly returning our gaze. In this way, the image seems to offer its own ambiguous answer to her Glidden's question. Perhaps any vision of the detached reporter is simply a comfortable delusion, one that allows the journalist to ignore the material circumstances of those they interview.

Strategies of legitimization

Somewhat paradoxically, the extent to which these explorations of journalistic ethics are useful and effective depends on how seriously we treat Sarah as qualified to speak on questions of journalism. *Rolling Blackouts* is pointedly ambiguous about this. Despite Glidden's clear deference to Sarah's experience and knowledge, neither woman seems especially interested in establishing an ultimate, authoritative voice on journalism. Sarah's occupation of that role is clearly provisional. She couches "her" definition of journalism in terms that leave it open to question and critique, noting that defining

journalism is “something that a lot of people are debating right now” (26.8). She also draws on discursive resources that she attributes to others, introducing her answer as “one definition people are using that I like” (p. 26.9). There are moments when Sarah is even more explicit about the uncertainty surrounding her role as a reporter. “I’m trying to figure out what kind of journalist I am,” she muses while trying to sort out the complex logistics of their trip (p. 48.2). Later, in Iraq, she pushes back on the image—which Glidden has helped construct—of herself and Alex as confident pros: “I know that the narrative of the *Globalist* is that we’re these confident young people who have figured out how to do this, and maybe we’re not showing you that right now” (p. 99.6).

The effects of this subtle de-centering of Sarah and the *Globalist* reporters as authorities *on* journalism opens up another closely related and very significant question: to what extent does *Rolling Blackouts* critique their actual authority *as* journalists? From whence does their legitimacy as reporters spring? As noted in my literature review, the concept of journalistic authority is a constantly contested struggle over journalism’s right to be listened to (Carlson, 2017). It is performative and mediated, both constructed and justified in the space between social actors and their audience: namely, the journalistic text (Carlson, 2017; Mellado 2015). Authority and legitimacy are closely linked; for journalists, their legitimacy as those who can represent “reality” or “truth” depends in large part upon their authority—the extent to which audiences and sources respect their claims to knowledge and expertise.

By framing journalism as an “expectation” and constantly referencing the demands of her imagined readership, Sarah acknowledges that journalistic authority is a

product of negotiation, not something simply derived from a set of rules or a central arbitrator. This nods toward a potential distributing, even democratization of the concept. She suggests this, too, in the way she conducts herself in interviews; there is one question she always asks, one that “everyone has an answer for”: some variation of ‘tell me how your group or work is misunderstood’ (p. 55.1). On one level, this is clearly a diligent way of ensuring accuracy by pushing back against dominant misconceptions of her subjects. But it also indicates a recognition that the authority to tell true stories does not lie simply with the journalist who collects them. The legitimacy of those stories is negotiated into being by both source and journalist.

Of course, no matter how journalistic authority is constructed, its actual stability and currency in the culture writ broad is hardly guaranteed. By asking people to correct the myths that cling to their particular identity or profession, Sarah nods toward the fact that the media’s misrepresentation of its subjects is perhaps the *default* mode—a key factor in the erosion of journalism’s cultural capital. Alex also catalogues some of the sins of journalism: “Emotionally manipulating people, then simplifying their stories” (p. 99.9). Sarah observes in response, her face downcast, that journalism isn’t “the noble profession” she wanted it to be (p. 99.9). She also notes that, despite her anger that journalism is “the second-most hated profession” in America, she understands public sentiment is driven by “elitism and arrogance” in the industry (p. 273.1-6). This collapse of public trust in news institutions has been well-documented, and journalists have responded in various ways to deal with this crisis of legitimation (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2014). Some have simply doubled down on historically dominant norms like objectivity;

others have attempted to foreground alternatives such as transparency. These latter include many of the various, similar-sounding collaborative projects to rebuild trust that have proliferated in recent years (Schmidt, 2018). This normative pivot has relevance for my research, as *Rolling Blackouts* offers a particularly radical attempt at ‘lifting the curtain’ by showing how journalism works.

Glidden’s representations of other reporters are important, but the more interesting work being done on questions of authority, legitimacy, and transparency takes place at the level of Glidden’s *self*-representations. Because she codes her work as “journalism” rather than “memoir,” Glidden also invites the expected scrutiny that Sarah layers into her original definition. Yet, as I have noted, *Rolling Blackouts* is premised largely on a conception of journalism-as-self-critique, and Glidden’s self-representations offer us the opportunity to see a different kind of journalism, as expressed within *comics*—one that has the potential to renegotiate normative conventions, reopen an engagement with closed ethical problems, and show us a different vision of journalistic authority. Questions of medium are crucial, as comics already struggles with its own problems of cultural legitimacy. A brief detour is useful here, to bring the importance of this into focus.

Weber and Rall (2017) cite the history of cultural illegitimacy that has long plagued the comics form, arguing that readers might be skeptical about the seriousness of journalism presented as comics (p. 390). Their point draws on the history of the relationship between comics and news institutions—i.e. that comics in newspapers or news magazines have been (and still are) viewed as either fiction or funny pictures (p.

390). But the history Weber and Rall sketch is paradoxical. Even as they argue that visual “strategies of authenticity” can separate comics journalists from this ‘unserious’ legacy of comics, they construct a narrative that says the medium of comics was already elevated to the rank of “serious literature” by the emergence of the graphic novel in the 1970s (p. 381). What Weber and Rall fail to explain is how this supposed legitimacy meshes with comics journalism’s contemporary need to authenticate itself.

This story about the graphic novel proving to the world that comics can be “serious” is what Pizzino (2016) names the *Bildungsroman* discourse. Pizzino argues the following: This historical narrative grants a privileged status to certain works while simultaneously disparaging the medium as a whole. Comics used to be just for kids, but now certain comics separate themselves from the rest due to their literary qualities and serious themes. Or rather, this is the cultural story that gets repeated over and over. In fact, this coming-of-age discourse actually obscures the way that comics have been subject to oppressive cultural attacks and legal regulation by framing their development as a process of natural growth (Pizzino, 2016, p. 31). Despite critical claims that the boundaries between low and high art have collapsed or blurred to insignificance, the *Bildungsroman* discourse ultimately reinforces the boundary separating comics from ‘legitimate’ culture by elevating a select few “graphic novels” as exceptions.

This problematic ‘comics aren’t just for kids anymore’ narrative is a central feature of the trade articles that deal with comics journalism (Johnston, 2016; Pett, 2005; Williams, 2005). Some critics who claim comics are still juvenile argue that high-profile comics journalism—Joe Sacco’s, most notably—is simply an exception to the rule

(Hajdu, 2003, 19). Even accounts that display an awareness of comics' marginalization *still* rely on a cultural caricature of the medium's "essential" nature, arguing implicitly that serious work has somehow transcended this default state. Bessie (2011) uses this narrative with Sacco's work:

[*Palestine*] is not a comic in the traditional sense of the word—it is not funny, but a profoundly sad, engaging and earnest work by a serious investigative journalist. It does not include men in tights, talking animals or punchlines, but rather, real people in real situations which Sacco observed himself.

The comics scholar might wearily point out that Art Spiegelman's *Maus* has forever exploded the myth that comics with talking animals cannot be "profoundly sad, engaging and earnest," while I personally find Sacco's moments of ironic self-critique in *Palestine* very humorous (if darkly so). More importantly, though, is the fact that this pervasive pattern of "making a case" for comics journalism, as Williams (2005) puts it, suggests a default skepticism of the form.

This is closely linked with the scholarly and popular discourse (noted in my literature review) that casts drawing as less truthful than prose. Weber and Rall (2017), channeling this narrative somewhat naively, suggest that the central challenge for comics journalism is to convey to readers that its representations are true—or at least, not fictional. Weber and Rall are thus primarily concerned with "visual strategies that comics journalists use in their comics to achieve authenticity" (p. 377). Interestingly, the most prominent justifications of comics journalism feel the need to defend the practice of *drawing* writ broad, and do not explicitly engage with comics as a historically denigrated medium (Archer, n.d.; Sacco, 2011); this suggests that comics journalists are, perhaps,

less concerned with the corrosive effects of their medium's oppression and more interested in the practical question of how to leverage the medium's formal properties to claim *journalistic* authority. Carlson (2017) notes that "material choices" in journalistic texts go a long way toward constructing legitimacy (p. 51). Along these lines—and returning now to a more direct consideration of my research questions—I suggest that specific elements of *Rolling Blackouts*'s formal composition offer, not strategies of authenticity, but new strategies of *legitimization*.

These strategies emerge on the page where Sarah's definition of journalism-as-expectation plays out. The page is the final one in the chapter "Starting Out." Its placement invokes a certain circularity, as the page's first panel (Figure 4, p. 27.1) compresses and mirrors—word-for-word and image-for-image—the action of the chapter's first two panels (Figure 2, p. 11.1-2). On both pages Glidden, Dan, and Sarah are depicted standing in an Istanbul train station gazing up at a map of Turkey and its geographic surroundings. "Blammo! There they are!" Sarah says twice, with the second instance playing out under her free-floating definition of journalism. This doubling of narrative action closely links the question of defining journalism with the group's actual physical travel, their practice of entering "all the countries we're supposed to be afraid of," a phrase that also appears twice (Figure 2, p. 11.2; Figure 4, 27.1).

From one perspective this sequence can be read recursively. The parallelism of the chapter's opening and closing pages invites a constant rereading and return to the map-as-starting-point, which would keep us from actually boarding a train (and moving beyond Sarah's initial definition of journalism). This interpretation yields to Glidden's stated

apprehensiveness on the opening page, dwelling eternally on her nerves so that she never works up the courage to board the train and start crafting comics journalism (Figure 2, p. 11.6-7). Obviously, the crafting happened: The book continues for pages and pages beyond this point. But the possibility of this reading helps emphasize exactly *what* gets Glidden on board the train. As she watches Sarah and Alex enter, Glidden observes that she has “complete faith” in them (Figure 3, p. 12.1). The narrative cuts short right as Glidden herself is about to board, flashing backward in time to a brief glimpse of the *Globalist*’s origin and success; this is also a story of how Glidden’s stated assumption that they were “crazy” and that their venture would end in failure was upended and her faith established. When the present-day narrative resumes on the chapter’s final page, Sarah’s definition takes on significance as a physical incarnation of Glidden’s confidence in her friends; it seems to pull Glidden’s cartoon avatar forward, hovering over her as she boards the train, stores her luggage, and settles on her bed to stare out the train window (Figure 4, 27.1-6).

If we zoom out, we can see that this sequence serves as a figure for one potential strategy of legitimizing comics journalism—yoking the project with established creators and deriving a sort of adjacent authority from their expertise. We can see this at work in collaborations where cartoonists provide illustrations of other people’s reporting. In fact, this is how Glidden frames her own first published work of comics journalism: She uses the *Globalist*’s reporting to create “The Waiting Room,” a short comic published on the digital platform *Cartoon Movement* (p. 297.3).

Uncertainty as authority

However, the authority invested in Sarah is clearly provisional and unstable. Moreover, *Rolling Blackouts* is not simply an illustration of other people's work; it claims to be *doing* journalism and needs to stand on the strength of Glidden's own creative authority. This comes into focus through an examination of the linkages between the definition page and Glidden's own direct confrontation with journalism's cultural legitimacy near the end of *Rolling Blackouts*. Once again, Glidden's re-articulation of her original question—"What is journalism?"—near the end of the narrative is crucial here (Figure 17, p. 296.1). As noted previously, she pointedly refuses to settle on any one answer or any answer that isn't another question. In fact, Glidden closes the page by revising her original question: "Maybe the question really is: What is journalism FOR? What's the point?" (Figure 17, 296.6). This is a clear pivot away from the problem of definition—which has been rendered unanswerable—to an explicit concern with legitimacy and cultural authority. After all, if journalism is pointless, what right does it have to ask for an audience?

The broader context of this page is crucial for understanding the meanings at work here because it constitutes a very specific crisis of legitimacy for Glidden born from a corresponding geopolitical crisis. On the preceding two pages, she reflects on the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War, which makes her original goal seem diminished in value: "The Iraqi refugees we met in overwhelming numbers will soon be eclipsed by their former hosts, half of whom will leave their own homes within the next few years" (Figure 16, p. 295.7). Because of this, Glidden is having difficulty actually starting on the

comic that will become *Rolling Blackouts*. In an image that will be familiar to any creator, she draws herself facing down the blank page, as her narrative voice observes: “My original question seems far less important than all this” (Figure 16, p. 295.8). Glidden doesn’t linger on the crisis of legitimacy for long, though. In the next panel, she acknowledges that she isn’t prepared or qualified to make work about the situation in Syria and represents the moment of her pen poised over the blank page. Whitlock (2006) asks us to pay attention to places where a cartoonist’s autobiographical avatar reflects on the conventions of comics or drawing, and this is clearly one such moment.

I noted that *Rolling Blackout’s* opening chapter offers a form of legitimacy that relies on its proximity to (more-or-less) traditional journalists; Sarah, Alex, and the *Globalist* can hardly be considered mainstream, but they are operating in a social space that is more welcoming to video, audio, prose, and photography than comics. *Rolling Blackouts*, though, presents a potential strategy that is far more radical: uncertainty as a form of authority. The sequence that positions Glidden in front of the blank page helps to bring this idea to the surface. The central and immediately obvious irony of this scene is that, to draw it and to imbue it with narrative significance, Glidden *had* to succeed. The preceding 294 pages literally must pass through that blank piece of lined paper. In this way, the blank page becomes, in Mitchell’s (1994) terms, a metapicture—specifically, a metapicture of the ambiguity of Glidden’s legitimacy as a journalist. It pictures both her self-doubt and the inverse proof of her accomplishment.

This ambiguity threads throughout the comic, and Glidden begins her construction of her self-representations with a gesture towards uncertainty. In our first

full glimpse of her on the page, her thoughts are fraught with anxiety: “Mostly, I’m not sure if I’m ready for what I’ve signed up for” (Figure 2, p. 11.7). When she is alone with Dan, Glidden hesitates to ask him questions directly—after all, he is Sarah’s subject (pp. 212.4, 252.2). Likewise, she refrains from asking “personal questions” about an Iraqi photojournalist whose family was displaced from Kirkuk, even though the history of Kurdish displacement is still “a knot of confusion” for her (p. 132.2-3). Even more striking than her hesitancy to ask certain questions, though, is Glidden’s refusal to provide actual answers. Glidden has noted on multiple occasions that she’s not in the business of providing definitive answers about the subjects she writes about. This was the case with her previous book, *How to Understand Israel in 60 Days or Less*—the joke of the title being that truly understanding the complex historical, geopolitical conflict that constitutes the state of Israel is impossible. As she told *Bookslut* after the release of that book:

I definitely know more about all sorts of things relating to Israel, but now I’m much less likely to tell someone that I have any conclusive answers to their questions about it. A long meandering conversation about it, however, is a different story altogether. (Pedler, 2010)

Likewise, she has said of *Rolling Blackout*’s ambiguous, open ending: “That’s kind of my thing. I don’t have answers” (Royal and Kunka, 2016).

In this performance of uncertainty, Glidden offers a potential way of legitimizing comics as journalism. It helps to look again at Sacco and his influence on comics journalism. He is someone who is cited routinely as an authority on comics journalism or as the “father” of the field. Glidden cites him as a major influence. Yet it is telling that the

first time Glidden ever asked him for professional advice, he gracefully disavowed his own authority, giving Glidden, not “how-to” answers to her questions about comics journalism, but rather encouragement for her to keep forging her own path. As Glidden recalls:

that . . . was a great guide as I was working on [*Rolling Blackouts*], to kind of follow my gut. So if there was something I was worried about . . . then it meant that I was kind of constructing my own path in the right way. (Royal and Kunka, 2016)

Worry and uncertainty, in this account, become guiderails to structure the very process of doing comics journalism. This aligns with Sacco’s (2011) comments about the visual stylistics of comics journalism; “Fortunately,” he writes, “there is no stylebook to tell the comics journalist how far he or she must go to get . . . details right” and, thus, “a drawing reflects the vision of the individual cartoonist” (p. xxii).

All Glidden’s uncertainty is crystalized in the image that opens the final chapter, “Home.” Glidden’s figure, arms wrapped protectively around a book, stares back at the proceeding pages, as if wondering how she can ever draw the experiences and put them into order (Figure 15, p. 291). The central irony embodied by this figure—as with the icon of the blank page—is that she already *has*. Here, Glidden plays on her own visibility as a narrator in a way that escapes the debates about “voice” that bedevil the literature on narrative journalism. Rather, she constructs a silent portrait of tentative apprehension that is only possible because it is preceded by nearly 300 pages that demonstrate, through their combined weight and presence, Glidden’s skill and insight. She invests herself with an enormous amount of creative authority via the comics medium; she is literally

responsible for recreating people, capturing the authenticity of their words, gestures, emotions, and reasoning. She archives a vast number of stories about refugees and about journalism; and it is *her* hand that does so, no one else's. These pages are themselves a clear, material argument for her authority that slam up against her decision to close the narrative by questioning it.

How might we understand this paradox, and what are its implications for journalism beyond comics? The creation of comics journalism, as envisioned by Glidden and Sacco, offers a clear challenge to mainstream conventions. As Carlson (2017) observes:

News stories tend toward the proclamation of certainties while masking uncertainties. The reliance on direct quotations tends to privilege institutional sources while making it harder for alternative voices to be heard. Meanwhile, in the absence of the author's voice, and particularly the lack of first-person address, impersonal news accounts seem absolute or unimpeachable. These characteristics support news accounts as authoritative utterances assembled by professional journalists. (p. 58)

Glidden essentially offers herself as a new model—the persona she constructs rejects conceptions of the position of the reporter as privileged knower and dispenser of truths. This is different even from other forms of journalism such as alternative and advocacy journalism, which eschew objectivity but often lay claim to authority because the reporting is done by someone *of* a specific community. This is the turn that the *Globalist* reporters eventually take. Glidden, when visiting their offices near the end of the book, notes that they have “reconfigured the *Globalist*, focusing less on publishing their own journalism and more on making the site a platform for new local voices in the city” (p. 297.1).

Glidden, too, is interested in foregrounding others' voices: notably those of her friends, who provide insights into journalism, and those of the dispossessed. Primarily, though, she still constructs an authority that relies on foregrounding herself, and this authority comes from taking on the role of a naive learner. Sacco (2011) might call this an admission of imperfection (p. xiii), but it is only imperfection in a model of the world that operates as a comprehensible, closed whole where journalism acts as a "cold science," providing rational information to a rational audience and extracting that information from sources without actually affecting them. This clearly has overlaps with narrative journalism's goal of breaking open the totalizing, non-negotiable vision of the world offered by such a perspective. Glidden is not the first to question the stability of knowledge or the capacity of a journalist to adequately represent the world; yet, what Glidden does differently is that she constructs a world where inhabiting that instability becomes the grounds for getting beyond it.

In essence, Glidden shows what most journalism omits. She represents the bifurcated selves of the journalist-as-authority—the naive, questioning individual who begins a story and the competent knower who tells it. Rarely is there evidence of the first self, except in throwaway lines added with the greatest reluctance. Glidden refuses to excise it. Instead, she dwells on it, returns to it, and positions it as the more honest and useful position. She included herself as a character, not so that *Rolling Blackouts* would turn into a personal story, but rather because "it gives the reader someone to bumble along with" (Dueben, 2016). In doing so, she offers a model of transparency that proposes to rip back the conventions that hide, not just the decision-making process of a

newsroom, not just a journalist's subjectivity and personal biases, but the core of a journalist's legitimacy to represent reality. She looks at the halo of epistemological authority that journalism depends upon and deems it another curtain to be cast aside.

Why listen to Glidden as an authority on journalism, the Middle East, or anything else? Precisely because she won't provide you with an answer. To do so would shortchange the meandering reality she attempts to represent, and perhaps reading the uncertain, never fully closed stories she offers will provide a new way to understand and interact with those peoples she chooses to represent. Of course, the particular circumstances of those people—largely Iraqi refugees—introduce their own contingencies that further complicate Glidden's journalistic project. It is those problems that are the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE:

ROLLING BLACKOUTS AS POSTCOLONIAL COMICS

Overview of analysis

In what follows, I will examine the development and interplay of the meanings that emerged in response to my second group of research questions: How does Glidden represent the relationships between Western journalists and people in Turkey, Syria, and Iraq? And how do these representations reinforce or challenge colonial understandings of “The East?”

The opening page of *Rolling Blackouts* was previously an entry point to tackling questions of journalism (Figure 1, p. 7). It also functions as a place where the energies driving postcolonial critique manifest themselves and demand to be taken seriously. Not coincidentally, the page is abrupt and unsettling. Readers are dropped with little context and no explanation into Douma, Syria, where we are faced by a woman wearing a red headscarf. She welcomes us and tells us: “I never liked you” (Figure 1, p. 7.1). The woman is positioned so that she faces readers directly, as if the panels are a series of windows allowing her to return our gaze. It also quickly becomes clear that our perspective is aligned with a second, off-panel character. This person asks whether the woman wants to tell her story but assures her it’s okay if she doesn’t (Figure 1, p. 7.2-5). We learn in the final panel that this character is Sarah Stuteville when a shift in perspective reveals that the woman has been addressing Sarah, Glidden, and the rest of the *Globalist* reporters (Figure 1, p. 7.8). (The woman is never named; Sarah notes in a

blog post that she asked not to be [Stuteville, 2011a].) Close-reading the woman's address reveals a complex, sometimes contradictory set of desires and emotions; she wants to welcome the American journalists, yet detests the country they represent. She is afraid and says she will cry, but still wants to talk. The woman clearly wants her story to be heard, but wants even more for it to be *understood*: "No, no, I talk with you about my story, but . . . Please. Understand me, okay? Please understand" (Figure 1, p. 7.6-7).

This exchange raises a series of questions that, while seemingly obvious, are nonetheless critical. The first is: Can the reporters actually understand? Sarah says that she does, but *Rolling Blackouts* as a whole suggests that communication and dialogue in such a situation are fraught with difficulties, gaps, and disjunctures that are not easy to bridge. In addition, because the reader's position is aligned with Sarah's—and because *Rolling Blackouts* is deeply concerned with audience expectations—Glidden also invites us to turn that question upon ourselves. The opening page welcomes us into a reading experience that, far from enlightening us, may actually reveal enormous deficiencies in our capacity to understand; in this way, the unnamed woman reminds us of our own personal "rolling blackouts."

This critique of cross-cultural understanding is a recurring concern of *Rolling Blackouts*, and it helps position the book as part of the larger body of literature known as postcolonial comics. The numerous gaps in understanding that *Rolling Blackouts* confronts are symptomatic of Gregory's (2004) colonial present, or the perpetuation of colonizing systems of power and oppression in the twenty-first century, especially in context of the global War on Terror. Gregory traces the way that the 2003 U.S.-led

invasion of Iraq reestablished old “imaginative geographies of colonial power” that draw a dividing line between “us” and “them” (p. 246). Selling the invasion required the effacement of the Iraqi people’s status as human beings, rendering them “invisible so that their country could be reduced to a series of ‘targets’” (p. 199). Glidden, who opposed the 2003 invasion, is clearly attuned to the ways in which this type of epistemic violence has only continued during the ongoing refugee crisis; her opening page renders one of these very people extremely, conspicuously visible.

In what follows, I use the interpretive frameworks provided by postcolonial theory to examine how Glidden’s comic re-imagines old problems of Western representation. While she can hardly escape the power imbalances that shadow her American identity, my close-readings suggest that *Rolling Blackouts* offers new ways of navigating and foregrounding them. To begin, I will unpack the question of cross-cultural understanding and interpret the way particular failures of conversation and communication help Glidden construct an aesthetics of listening. This functions in two ways, through an attention to silence and to speech; both concepts are imbued with distinct visual dimensions in comics. Glidden’s silent landscapes and her subtle, elegant method of representing translation—through speech bubbles—trace the limits of transnational dialogue in a postcolonial context. At the same time, Glidden’s vision of graphic listening offers an opportunity to further her positioning of journalism as self-critique, one that asks Western journalists to recognize but not re-inscribe their own national affiliations—a tricky balancing act.

On top of these aural practices, this section also attends to the more obvious visual techniques Glidden uses to disrupt stereotypes, erasures, and “rolling blackouts” circulated by the mass media; she is committed to representing figures who occupy subaltern positions. This project, though, slams up against distinctly Orientalist problems of power/knowledge. Every representation that Glidden crafts runs the risk of participating in the dynamics that totalize the East and use it to prop up the West’s understanding of itself. As with other representational challenges she faces, Glidden positions her own self-awareness as a challenge to this problematic possibility. In this case, as in her reimagining of journalistic authority, Glidden embraces a type of uncertainty and rehabilitates the concept of “rolling blackouts”—symbolic of the gaps in our capacity to understand the Other—as a potentially positive force.

Cross-cultural understanding

It is worth returning to the opening page to identify exactly what makes the unnamed woman’s address so disorienting and discomforting. The lack of context contributes to the feeling, but even on rereading, the woman’s identification of the reporters—and by extension, the readership—with the American government is particularly striking: “I never liked you . . . I not like your government. I not like . . . EVERYBODY” (Figure 1, p. 7.1-3). The opening page forces us to remember and confront our own national affiliations, as well as those of Glidden and the *Globalist* reporters. The specters of our home countries have consequences for both the production and interpretation of representations. In his manifesto for comics journalism, Joe Sacco

(2011) points out that “[a]n American journalist arriving on the tarmac in Afghanistan does not immediately drop her American views to become a blank slate on which her new sharp-eyed observations can now be impressed” (p. xiii). Said’s (1978) words on the subject, while aimed specifically at intellectuals, can be adapted to this question of international reportage:

[F]or a European or American studying the Orient there can be no disclaiming the main circumstances of his actuality: that he comes up against the Orient as a European or American first, as an individual second. And to be a European or an American in such a situation is by no means an inert fact. It meant and means being aware, however dimly, that one belongs to a power with definite interests in the Orient, and more important, that one belongs to a part of the earth with a definite history of involvement in the Orient almost since the time of Homer. (p. 11)

Glidden is aware of this “history of involvement,” and she sometimes directly reveals layers of Western interference and broken promises in the Middle East. When discussing the complicated history of Iraqi Kurdistan, Glidden dwells on the fact that George H.W. Bush’s administration encouraged Kurdish uprisings against Saddam Hussein at the end of the Gulf War while giving the impression that America would assist them (p. 123.1). But America didn’t, and Sam Malkandi, an Iraqi Kurd, gives voice to this failure: “[Bush] didn’t help them get rid of Saddam, so they were a little upset by that” (p. 123.2). In subsequent panels, Glidden unpacks the result of this American interference and betrayal, and its sheer scale makes clear that Sam’s comment is a polite understatement: “The refugee crisis that resulted was huge. About 1.5 million Kurds fled to the mountains of Iran and Turkey. Thousands died” (p. 123.3). Glidden notes this was simply “one more broken promise” (p. 123.4).

These international actions clearly have broad consequences, and Glidden attends to the specific ways that people's lives and expectations have been shaped by the exercise of American military power. While on the train from Istanbul to Van, Dan and Sarah have a conversation with an Iranian man who tells them that he is "always happy to meet Americans" (p. 46.4). At the same time, he reveals the way that American imperialism changes even personal decisions like having kids: "I don't want to bring children into a country that could be bombed by America," he tells them (p. 46.9). Although he does not display the same direct, but ambivalent distaste for Americans as the unnamed Iraqi woman—his reaction feels more like long-suffering resignation—he still gestures toward the way that Americans traveling abroad will inevitably be identified with their country's history (and present) of deploying asymmetrical levels of violence.

As is the case with most problematic aspects of their situation, Glidden and the *Globalist* reporters are aware of this. Their awareness manifests most clearly in Sarah's persistent attempts to get Dan to admit his own culpability in the damage done to Iraq, which she turns back on herself and the rest of the group: "In that sense, all of here were participants too. It's not the same as being in the military, but we have to identify with that conflict because we are identified with that conflict by others" (p. 39.7-8). Glidden consistently represents the difficulty—and also the potential impropriety—of trying to separate one's national ties from one's role as a journalist. This fact further complicates expectations of journalistic independence because, as Sarah notes, the people they meet will define them in terms of their feelings about America in general. Whether they are truly independent from their government is somewhat beside the point for the people they

meet. Dan is more aware of this than anyone and reveals a desire to avoid being identified solely as a former soldier (p. 48.7-8).

While Dan is not a reporter, his presence helps to reveal the particular mechanics of how gaps in understanding manifest and function. His stated goal is to better understand the Iraqi people; yet, in a striking parallel with the unnamed Iraqi woman, Dan seems equally concerned with whether they will understand *him*. In addition, despite his wish that Sarah avoid mentioning that he was a soldier, he consistently reveals that fact himself. It is his most consistent conversational tool, and he identifies himself as a veteran when talking with the director of a museum that commemorates Kurdish history (p. 143.7) and a former Ba'athist colonel in Iraq (p. 236.3). The most interesting examples come while the group is traveling across northern Iraq by cab. Dan tries to talk to Ibrahim, their Kurdish driver, about his time in the military and says he feels comfortable trying because the Kurds' lives were demonstrably improved by the fall of Saddam Hussein (p. 89.4). Over the course of a page, he tries to do so, telling Ibrahim that he was in Ramadi and Fallujah with the American army (Figure 5, p. 90). But in response he gets only uncertain questions and a non-committal, "I don't know." After several tries, Dan leans back and says to Sarah, "I don't think Ibrahim got that" (Figure 6, p. 91.1).

Glidden positions this failed dialogue as more than an amusing, awkward anecdote. In terms of page design, it stands out from the rest of the narrative in the way that Glidden represents each panel from the same static perspective (Figure 5, p. 90.1-9). Each of the page's nine panels reveals a near-identical image, a shot (composed as though

we are sitting on the taxi's dashboard) of Dan leaning forward from the back seat as Ibrahim drives. Thus, even as Dan tries in different ways to connect with Ibrahim, the page is imbued with a strange sense of stasis, reinforcing the fact that Dan is unable to actually move the conversation forward. The oddly stable perspective mirrors the opening page where, for seven panels, images of the unnamed Iraqi woman unfold in near symmetry (Figure 1, p. 7.1-7). But Dan's conversation with Ibrahim lacks the shift in perspective and expanded final panel that reveals the *Globalist* reporters (Figure 1, p. 7.8). In its place there are two panels of silence in the cab, like a pair of exclamation points to cap off his failure (Figure 5, p. 90.8-9). In a fascinating inversion, where the woman hopes to be heard but seems afraid she won't be, Dan believes he will be understood but seemingly isn't.

At least this is Dan's perception. He tries a second time, a few pages later, with similar surface results (p. 97-8). Sarah also represents this subsequent exchange in her story about Dan. And while she tells Dan that she doesn't know whether Ibrahim got the message, she contradicts herself in a narrative aside: "But I'm lying. I'm pretty sure the driver understood" (Stuteville, 2011b). Clearly this exchange is fraught with layers of uncertainty, and as readers, we have no real basis to evaluate whether communication actually succeeded. But it is this very gap in our knowledge that feels so significant. Glidden is not representing an example of cosmopolitan, transnational understanding and communion, but rather its failure. Importantly, what this reveals is not the impossibility of achieving understanding *per se*; Glidden represents numerous conversations between Sarah, Alex, and Ibrahim (pp. 84-5; 94-5). Rather, the rupture in communication

represents Dan's failure to have his sense of self bolstered by Iraqi Kurdistan. He wants validation that his military presence in Iraq was a positive good, a reassurance that Ibrahim is unable or unwilling to provide. By attending only to successful translation and exchange—and eliding failures of understanding—we risk, like Dan, simply using the Other to service our own preferred self-image.

Listening as visual practice

Given Dan's communicative struggles, what is a better stance for Western journalists to adopt? Sarah's own response to the unnamed Iraqi woman suggests a possibility that shifts the emphasis away from understanding—in whatever direction—to one of its prerequisites: *listening*. Sarah articulates the necessity of this practice in a story that came out of the trip, "The Quiet American: Why my generation should listen to Iraqi refugees":

I was the first American many of these people had met, and I felt a lot of pressure to say the right thing or offer sufficient answers to their questions (about the war, resettlement to America, the stability of U.S. refugee assistance and how their kids could go to college). And then I realized that I wasn't supposed to be doing the talking: I was supposed to be listening. And so I did a lot of listening. (Stuteville, 2011a)

Clearly and obviously, practicing journalism requires one to listen. Lunsford and Rosenblatt (2011), in their analysis of what they call "graphic listening" in comics journalism, observe that journalism "often involves intense listening, followed by a journalistic 'report' of that experience of listening" (p. 130). What is fascinating about Sarah's report is that it reproduces not just the experiences heard, but the fact that

listening depends on a suppression of reciprocal dialogue. To listen properly, Sarah is forced to recognize her status as an American but cannot justify it. In other words, and to echo Spivak's (1994 [1988]) play on the double-meanings of the word, Sarah's role as a journalist becomes one where she must *represent* her nation—as a physical, symbolic stand-in for its actions—but cannot *re-present* it—in terms of speaking for it. If she is going to report on this woman's experience, Sarah must mute the claims of her own national affiliations but cannot erase them—a crucial distinction.

This is not an easy task, and Sarah recounts her discomfort while facing the woman: “My body reacted to her words before my mind did. My stomach turned cold, shame burned in my chest (and face) and the hair on my arms and neck rose in a prickly wave of embarrassment” (Stuteville, 2011a). The physical details of Sarah's reaction are fascinating and serve as a reminder that journalism is an embodied practice; further, they echo the ways in which Glidden illustrates the material difficulties of maintaining independence or distance. In fact, occupying a role of journalistic detachment in an interview so obviously structured by postcolonial energies seems patently impossible. Sarah does manage to steady herself enough to do her job, but she does *not* retreat to a more comfortable or conventional position (such as one clothed in objectivity). Instead, she prepares to listen by gazing around:

But then I looked at her and I looked at all the faces gathering behind her and I multiplied that number over and over again until it radiated out across the city and the region and the oceans and the world. (Stuteville, 2011a)

This moment represents an interesting conceptual collision with *Rolling Blackouts*; the practices of listening that the comic offers are not premised simply on the ear, but also on

the eye. Significantly, both of Dan's attempts at dialogue with Ibrahim collapse into extended panels of silence. In both cases, Glidden moves from the narrow interior of the cab to broader shots of the Kurdistan landscape, rare wordless panels in her dialogue-heavy narrative (Figure 6, p. 91.4-5; 98.5). While she includes these types of establishing shots throughout the section—using them to move between different conversations in the cab—she lingers on the landscape for almost an entire page after Dan's first failure, providing the closest thing to a “silent page” that we get amidst the dense verbiage that makes up *Rolling Blackouts*.

These visuals remind us that cross-cultural communication is not simply a matter of free-floating discourse; for comics in particular, these conversations are embedded in material surroundings that come with a particular visual dimension. Banita (2013) argues that the use of silent panels can help us work through “an ethics of the foreign gaze” (p. 50). In delineating what she calls a taxonomy of still panels, she argues that the “silent aesthetics of comics journalism” represents a challenge to “dialogic visions of cosmopolitanism” (p. 51). In other words, silent panels that suppress both the narrative explanatory voice and well-meaning attempts at translation are a challenge to the assumptions of transnationalism: “its consistent and coherent rationalism, its doctrine of universal reasoning secured by dialogue with others” (p. 52).

The Iraqi landscapes that Glidden renders have a certain haunting beauty, but in a narrative that yearns to convey and achieve understanding, they could seem like pretty distractions. They require that we linger in spaces that may not have any immediate instrumental or narrative value. Yet, the visual intervention at the moment of dialogic

collapse feels like a critique of pure instrumentalism, especially in a journalistic context where conversations are judged by their usefulness to a journalist. It is worth remembering, here, that most journalism is not packaged as a two-way exchange or dialogue—even in most Q&As. The understandings prioritized are most often those of the *audience*. Slowing down to attend to images that seem “mute,” then, reveals an alternative to rapacious, appropriative journalistic work that mines its sources for information to be consumed—an escape hatch from a transnational knowledge economy in which abstracted goods flow from East to West.

The silent panels speak eloquently. In fact, positioned as they are within a vast sea of conversation and narration, they feel quite loud. The landscapes certainly seem to speak back to Dan. After Sarah remarks that “maybe something was lost in translation” between him and Ibrahim, Dan turns to gaze out the taxi window, as though literally looking for what was lost (Figure 6, 91.1-2). We read along the line of his gaze, moving from inside the cab to his view out the window, which in turn opens up into the two-panel lingering stillness. It is a familiar move to any American reader used to riding in a car. The landscapes Dan (and we) see proclaim themselves as familiar in this sense too. In commenting on the countryside, Sarah describes it as beautiful, but also notes that, “It kind of looks like California,” to which Glidden responds: “Everywhere kind of looks like California” (87.2-3). Their taxi drive across Iraqi Kurdistan could be a road trip across the American West Coast, an area which in predictably Western fashion, manages to universalize itself.

Yet the sense of familiarity is not total. Glidden's images contain a counter-discourse—a rebuke to Dan and his instrumental use of Ibrahim. As we are about to leave the page and return to the interiority of our road trip, we are confronted with a detail that feels both alien and difficult to interpret. Glidden depicts a sign where the word “Welcome” is distinguishable, but not much else. It sits next to what appears to be a shrine or small monument, with what seems to be an Iraqi flag. I hedge these descriptions with qualifiers because it is, in fact, difficult for me to know what I am looking at. Perhaps someone with more extensive knowledge of the Iraqi landscape would understand—but that is precisely the point.

This feels like such a minor detail that it barely deserves mention. But this visual hiccup in an otherwise tranquil panel without words helps us move outwards and notice how other images pulse with a similar sense of alterity. Several pages later, the group passes a prison in which Saddam Hussein tortured Iraqi Kurds (p. 94). After Ibrahim explains what it is, Sarah gazes at it through the taxi's rear window. There is one panel of silence before Sarah gives voice to the incongruity: “That Saddam prison is kind of blowing my mind right now,” she says. “What an evil-looking place.”

Not a familiar feature of California's landscape, it seems.

Listening to subalterns

The other places where listening functions as a visual, aesthetic practice come when Glidden draws the process of in-the-moment translations. The way Glidden handles these moments is by a sort of doubling of speech balloons: She represents the subject's

speech underneath a second balloon that carries the translation. This method is elegant in the way that it foregrounds the translation's practical necessity—for Glidden's non-Arabic-speaking audience, anyway—without completely erasing the fact that translation is taking place. The original speech is always present as a reminder, peeking out from below the translation. Maher (2012), in a study of Sacco's comics, notes a similar dynamic in which Sacco draws attention to the presence of a translator; this, Maher argues, serves as a “contrast to typical practice in more traditional forms of journalism, in which translation and interpreting tend to be invisible” (p. 122). In this sense, Glidden's use of overlapping balloons draws a sort of doubled attention to translation: both to the bodily presence of two speakers, subject and translator, and also to the presence of two languages that co-exist in the same space. Thus, even as English still literally obscures and covers her subject's discourse—certainly a less-than-ideal situation—the presence of the original speech is impossible to overlook.

Glidden also uses this technique to set up one of the most powerful, unsettling moments of the narrative. It occurs in what is arguably the climax of the book's refugee-narrative. When Glidden and the *Globalist* reporters travel to a UNHCR center, where refugees wait in interminable lines for basic supplies, they encounter the same woman who appears on the first page of *Rolling Blackouts* (Figures 13 and 14, 284-8). For the reader, this is a re-encounter, but this time, the woman's interaction with the main characters is given more breadth and context. As the opening page suggests, the woman speaks limited English—enough to communicate her displeasure, but not enough to engage in a complete interview, it seems. The *Globalist* reporters rely on Sarab, a young

Iraqi woman, as an impromptu translator, and dialogue proceeds with the same overlapping bubbles we've come to expect.

However, in the final panels of their conversation, the force of what the woman is saying (which turns out to be about the U.S.-led invasion) causes their translator to stop and look apprehensively at Sarah; as the woman speaks on, Glidden *also* refuses to translate—not in the moment and not afterwards (Figures 13 and 14, pp. 287-288). There is a particular disjuncture here; we've become used to having Glidden's elegant overlapping speech balloons do the work for us. Glidden's task has been, throughout, to help readers understand and to make refugee experiences comprehensible for an American audience. But here, at this critical moment, we are deprived of this support and thrown back to the uncomfortable reading position of the first page. And while this technique would unsettle the assumed privilege of the majority of her audience, it would not affect everyone. Glidden has stated that, in rendering this scene, she was thinking about two types of readers: those who cannot read Arabic and those who *can* (Royal and Kunka, 2016). Glidden withdraws her support for the former, and, in doing so, exposes the gap between readerships. She shows, not a successful transfer of information and experience across cultures, but the messiness and difficulty of doing so and the peril of assuming such an exchange could be unproblematic or frictionless.

"Can the subaltern speak?" asks Spivak. "Perhaps," *Rolling Blackouts* seems to answer. The more pressing question that Glidden confronts is whether we are capable of *listening* properly, a natural inverse of Spivak's question. For Birla (2010), Spivak's intervention "asks us to supplement the benevolent intention of 'speaking for' with an

ethics of responsibility—in the sense of cultivating a capacity to respond to and be responsive to the other” (p. 93). Lunsford and Rosenblatt’s (2011) account of graphic listening suggests that *simply* listening as a journalist is not adequate to this task. They argue that the comics of Sacco critique

a purely *instrumental* form of listening, where the reporter listens not to know a person or to form a relational connection through listening but to obtain that person’s objectified experience which in some ways then no longer belongs to him or her. (p. 134)

This type of listening, in effect, describes a type of journalistic appropriation that turns a person’s experience into a packaged commodity. Here, we see the way that aesthetic practices of listening can be, at the same time, an *ethics* of listening. To listen in ways that restructure the relationships between reporter and source can be a way of renegotiating inequitable power relations, just as the silent panels in *Rolling Blackouts* disrupt the easy transfer of information and experience across borders. Both visual strategies are ethical interventions in the normative sphere of journalism.

In addition, an ethics of listening also seems to depend on exactly what is *being listened to*; not everything a journalist hears fits into the usual conventions of a story, but Glidden’s commitment to representing sprawling conversations and the rhythms of interviews exposes moments that might otherwise be excised. If we understand the subaltern as, following Morris (2010), “the structured place from which the capacity to access power is radically obstructed,” then we should attend to the places in which normal power dynamics that constitute the journalist-source interaction are upended. There is one such key moment that Sarah herself provokes. In an interview with a group

of middle-class Iraqi refugees living in Damascus, Sarah asks a woman if there is a question she would like to answer that Sarah hasn't asked. Perhaps something is lost in translation—or perhaps the woman is simply tired of being on the receiving end of American power of any sort—but the woman turns this into an opportunity to ask Sarah a series of haunting questions that, once again, pin responsibility for the Iraq war on an ambiguous “you”:

Why did you do this? Why did America invade my country? I would like to ask all the international community why you didn't stop the Americans from invading Iraq? Why did the Americans invade Iraq? Why did they destroy it? They killed sons and kids and mothers. Why is that? Most of her family has been lost. Why did they do this? What do they want from us? There are so many countries who have done more than Iraqis have done. Why didn't they invade them all and leave us alone? It was a tragedy. Thank you. (Figure 12, 251.2-8)

The extent to which the woman wrests control of the interview from Sarah is clear. Here Glidden gives us a picture of what happens when the normal interview script is flipped, when a journalist enters another country, not to interrogate, but to *be* interrogated. This parallels the project of journalism as radical self-critique and is another way that the role of the journalist is positioned as both questioner and questioned. Clearly, to remain a journalist, one cannot abdicate the power to question. But to justify entering a population whose lives have been irrevocably shaped by the exercise of American power, perhaps the only responsible way to act as a journalist is to open oneself up as a subject. Simply listening to stories is not enough, but perhaps listening to criticism offers a way forward.

Making the subaltern visible

The motivating forces behind the *Globalist's* reporting trip include a desire to bring attention to the refugee crisis and ongoing conflicts caused by American interventionism. The fact that the Iraq war is “not in the headlines anymore” is framed by Sarah as problematic (p. 20.2). She would like to prevent her American audience from turning away from people displaced by it—the subalterns created by American power and subsequently overlooked by American media. Of course, the mere fact of American media attention to the Middle East is not an unequivocal good; the circulation of racist, negative stereotypes about Arab peoples—specifically those who are practicing Muslims—in print media, broadcasts, and political cartoons has a long, well-documented history in the U.S. (Artz and Pollock, 1995; Gottschalk and Greenburg, 2011).

Again, the *Globalist* reporters are aware of this context. The question Sarah asks in every interview—how are you usually misunderstood?—is a clear acknowledgement of the pervasiveness of misrepresentation, as well as an attempt to rewrite broken narratives. From one such interview, Sarah receives (and Glidden depicts) an alternative understanding of refugees. A UNHCR worker tells her that, while most people think of refugees as “people with dirty clothes,” the reality is far less pejorative: “[Refugees] have skills; they have ideas . . . everybody has a story and they’re all very interesting” (p. 55.2-3). Likewise, the *Globalist's* reporting on Sam Malkandi—the Kurdish immigrant who was deported from the U.S. after being accused of assisting the 9/11 attackers—pushes against patterns of (mis)representation that frame Arabs-as-terrorists, which have long been in circulation, but became particularly pronounced post-9/11; this is a clear priority

of the documentary film *Barzan*, where footage of Sam and his family's domestic life as American residents constantly intrudes into the government's official narrative that he is a national security threat.

Glidden's strategies for dealing with this are different, as she is confronting problems of a slightly different register: namely, those introduced by cartoon iconography. Part of the cartoon's power as a communicative tool and artistic device lies in its ability to amplify and simplify; yet this, paradoxically, is also its greatest liability. Art Spiegelman, creator of *Maus*, has noted that the stereotype is "the basic building block of all cartoon art" (Spiegelman, 1997). Davis (2017), expanding on this observation, broadens the implications to comics as a form:

There is here an obvious conflict generated by attempts to bring the terms 'postcolonial' and 'comics' together: where comics seemingly rely on a visual vocabulary of stereotype and simplification, the central project of postcolonial studies is to deconstruct stereotypes, resist reductive representations, and shed light on racial discrimination and other forms of essentialism. (p. 10)

How then does Glidden attempt to overcome this type of reductive representational essentialism? One way is her explicit engagement with a politics of visibility. Chute (2016) argues that comics can intervene "against a culture of invisibility" undertaking "the risk of representation" (p. 5). Against the risk of slipping into stereotype or erasure, Glidden insists on foregrounding the voices and bodies of the people whose stories she represents. The narrative's opening page is again a marker of this priority (Figure 1, p. 7). The woman who confronts the *Globalist* reporters not only speaks, but the page design—repeated panels from the same point of view—tries to make her conspicuously visible and bodily. Her physical identity is impressed on us over and over again. Glidden's

aesthetic attention to gesture and expression renders the woman as an emotionally complex figure, and her face and hands move in concert with her words, articulating the contradictions of her address in a physical register.

There are interesting ambiguities in this representative strategy. On the one hand, journalism's capacity to truly deal with the unnamed woman seems dubious at best. The page is constructed so that the woman's presence—duplicated in eight successive panels—threatens to render Glidden's central goal insignificant; hovering unobtrusively in the last panel, the question "What is journalism?" can seem like an easily overlooked afterthought. Glidden herself barely even makes the page; her cartoon avatar is bisected by the final panel's right edge, rendering her presence as a journalist tenuous and unstable at best (Figure 1, p. 7.8). Glidden's opening gambit, then, seems to make her ostensible subject practically ephemeral in the face of the reality she purports to capture.

This is one possible reading. However, the page also permits a more hopeful interpretation. Glidden has clearly chosen to render this woman anyway, and, as my previous chapter demonstrates, the force of the woman's critique does not preclude a complex reconsideration of journalism's authority to represent in such a context. But how? In order to make space for her question, Glidden must widen the final panel, and, in doing so, she literally reframes how we see the woman's address. The woman is faced by multiple representatives of the West, all with different recording devices in hand: digital recorders, a camera, and a pad of paper (Figure 1, 7.8). In addition, as Glidden asks what journalism is, the woman ends by welcoming the journalists in her language and theirs: "Afwan. Welcome" (Figure 1, 7.8). The suggestion is, to be welcomed by the subjects it

purports to understand, journalism must interrogate its own material relationship to them. The mere act of bearing witness to this woman, representing her, and communicating her words is not enough. Attempts at dialogue are not enough. Even graphic listening is not enough. Glidden asks that we widen our frame of representation, pay attention to *how* the bearing of witness is done, who is doing it, and in what specific media it is made visible.

Journalistic power/knowledge

Part of this attention to how representations are constructed involves a consideration of the ways in which Glidden's work is bound up in concerns about power. It is helpful to think about how the journalists, in Foucauldian terms, might exercise a form of power/knowledge. The term refers to power's productive capacity to generate new information that, in turn, makes control and constraint more effective; in an interview, Foucault (1980) explains that his scholarly method has been "to make visible" this process, which he sums up as follows: "The exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power" (p. 51-2). Journalism's actual authority to create knowledge is clearly relevant here. While Carlson (2017) is careful to draw a distinction between journalistic *authority* and journalistic *power*, he does note that the two are closely linked. Journalism holds the particular power to represent and to "attain control over the circulation of meaning" (p. 191). This is particularly pressing within a postcolonial text, which must confront a history of colonial representations that have been used to contain and dominate; Said (1978) describes Orientalism as "intellectual power," drawing on a Foucauldian dynamic of

power/knowledge in which “[k]nowledge of the Orient, because generated out of strength, in a sense creates the Orient, the Oriental, and his world” (pp. 41, 40).

To start, it is useful to look at a very explicit example of “productive power” as used by the military. While Glidden and the *Globalist* reporters are in Sulaymaniyah, Iraq, they meet a photojournalist, Sebastian, who embedded with the American military several years before. Glidden chooses to visually represent several of the stories he recounts. One of these is of American soldiers rounding up “military-aged males” in Iraq and collecting their biometrics: retina scans, fingerprints, and photographs (Figure 7, p. 134). It is a scene of surveillance and information-gathering that will enable a tighter control over the Iraqi populace. It is also explicitly about power imbalances; Sebastian’s comment that, “They have no idea what they’re giving away,” sits uncomfortably with a close-up of an Iraqi man’s eye, held open by an American soldier’s fingers (p. 134.4). This is an image that is explicitly concerned with fine-grained bodily restraint that produces equally fine-grained knowledge. It is also quite clear that the Iraqi men are not truly giving their consent in any meaningful way. Glidden has noted that she feels somewhat uncomfortable using comics to visually recreate or re-imagine things she hasn’t witnessed (Dueben, 2016); that she chooses to do so in this case seems to emphasize the stakes—the way that journalistic witnessing can be conscripted into the task of surveillance and control.

This is one type of power/knowledge, but the character of Sam Malkandi draws attention to its other forms and to the distinctions between the American government and journalism as institutions that shape particular subjects. (*Rolling Blackouts* and *Barzan*,

the documentary film about Sam, both take a sympathetic view of his case, and, as the two are tightly bound together, I will consider their representations together. While I am interested in the particular mechanisms of representational power that function in comics, the film enacts similar dynamics, which allows me to push readings further.) Sam's case is fraught with a series of fascinating contradictions that feed into a whole series of American mythologies, many with a strong Orientalist tint. He is an Iraqi Kurd who lived much of his adult life as a refugee in Iran and Pakistan before being resettled in America in 1998 (p. 105). His family became comfortable and established, even purchasing a house in Seattle. As Glidden observes, his story is that of "the refugee American dream" (p. 106.1). He is also incredibly fond of American culture in a way that makes it easy for Western journalists to connect with him. Their conversations are peppered with references to American snack foods. While this feels, perhaps, a bit too perfect, it is the image that Sam consistently projects—it is seemingly his baseline self-representation, the way he sees himself, and the way he wants the world to see him.

Yet Sam was deported to Iraq, which is where Glidden and the *Globalist* reporters interview him. One of the reasons they are even interested in Sam is because of how he got there: their government's post-9/11 immigration policies. Sam's life in America took a devastating turn when he was implicated in the planning of the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center. The 9/11 Commission Report, published in 2004, refers to a man named "Barzan" who supposedly helped one of the hijackers apply for a U.S. visa. Sam sometimes went by the nickname Barzan, and the Department of Homeland Security established a connection between Sam and an al Qaeda operative who he met in a Seattle

mall. Sam defended himself by claiming that the meeting was chance, but, after a five-year legal process, the government deported him. *Barzan* and *Rolling Blackouts* both pay attention to the fact that, in Sarah's words, removing "a potential threat" sounds good for the American government (p. 114.8). After Sam has been ordered removed, the documentary includes an audio clip from an NPR report that emphasizes the triumphant nature of this particular spin: "The Department of Homeland Security is trumpeting what it calls an important victory against a suspected al Qaeda agent living in the United States."

Thus, while Sam is "super into America" and actually "celebrating with American flags and stuff" when the 2003 invasion of Iraq occupies Baghdad, he is also cast in the role of a terrorist (p. 106.3). There are two distinct, competing representations of Sam—his own and the government's—which are fundamentally incompatible. If there is any doubt about this, Sarah (as one would expect) lays out the core issues very clearly:

The first interesting thing is he's this really patriotic, hard-working, deeply loved man who gets accused of terrorism and deported . . . But . . . on paper, he's an Iraqi guy who went to Iran and then Pakistan and then came to the United States, was approached by a guy from al Qaeda, helped him in some way, and then showed up in the 9/11 Commission Report. (178.2-4)

On one level, the reporters seem to be in the business of rescuing the first, all-American version of Sam and deconstructing the Sam who is invested with the political establishment's desire for surveillance, control, and removal. As the NPR report plays out, the film juxtaposes it with a home video of Sam driving; the camera turns and lingers for a moment on his young son, Devon (who was born in America), sleeping peacefully in the back seat. Likewise, Glidden uses two facing pages in *Rolling Blackouts* to dwell

on the disjuncture between the Sam “whose name is in the 9/11 Commission Report” and the Sam that the journalists actually encounter. On the first page, in the moments before she meets Sam, Glidden wonders who he is as a person. “What is a suspected terrorist like?” she thinks in the final panel, as she eyes an approaching car with apprehension. “Someone deemed too dangerous to stay in America?” (p. 110.8). As we move between pages, the break between this version of Sam and the one Glidden comes to know becomes immediately apparent. The Sam who emerges from the car cuts an unremarkable figure on the page, slightly pudgy and balding; his greeting is only notable for its banality: “Hi! I’m Sam!” (p. 111.1). In the car, Sarah and Sam are “engaged in an important discussion” about their favorite American snack foods (p. 111.2-6).

However, while Sarah insists that she is not trying to “re-try” the allegations against Sam (p. 108.9), both *Barzan* and *Rolling Blackouts* reproduce the same institutional discourse that crafted Sam as a subject to be deported. The film is full of shots of official documentation that originally put him on trial: the 9/11 Commission Report and Sam’s immigration forms. There is also a letter to a medical clinic—used by the al Qaeda agent to try and bolster his visa application—for which Sam provided his home address. The combined effect of this official discourse is to cast Sam as, not just an illegitimate “alien,” but a pathological liar. The core of the government’s case rests on the fact that Sam lied on his original application to the UNHCR. He admits to this, telling DHS and the FBI that he falsely claimed political persecution to bolster his application for refugee status. This leads to the core ironies of his story: that he was deported, not on

terrorism charges, but for this lie, and that the government only knew about it because he admitted to it. Sam is, in other words, punished for mis-representing himself.

This is precisely the language that the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals uses, describing what it calls Sam's "history of misrepresentations" and "a pattern of misrepresentation" that it traces from his lie to UNHCR to his inability to satisfactorily explain the Seattle mall story. In *Rolling Blackouts*, Glidden reproduces key passages from the court decision:

Malkandi's history of misrepresentations about his past and continued evasion of the truth casts a shadow over his present story. Though it cannot be overlooked that these statements were made initially in furtherance of his refugee status, he nonetheless spun quite a tale and continued to do so for a long time. . . . Given his history, it is no surprise that the Board of Immigration Appeals discounted his improbable story of a chance meeting and a willingness to follow-up with a medical appointment for a perfect stranger. A pattern of misrepresentation has developed that cannot be ignored. (p. 168.7-8)

Glidden's reproduction of the court documents helps draw our attention to the fact that the reporters are operating within a field of contested, competing representations that have real political consequences. Glidden and the *Globalist* reporters must engage with the version of Sam that the government constructs, whether it is legitimate and truthful or not.

Further, to intervene and resurrect the Sam as a subject who can represent himself—a very postcolonial goal—journalists must engage in a similar dynamic of power and surveillance. *Rolling Blackouts* makes visible this set of disciplinary mechanisms. Glidden pays particular attention to the way that Sam is surrounded by recording devices. To create a documentary, the journalists bring their camera into Sam's

home to document the mundane parts of his life. The unassuming term for this type of footage, “B-roll,” belies how important it is to capturing his humanity. Sarah describes this to Glidden, as the two watch Alex filming Sam’s morning routine: “It gives people a sense of what someone’s life is like. And morning is when people seem to be most themselves, in a way” (p. 156.7-8). Yet capturing this authentic self requires them to enter and record Sam’s personal, domestic sphere. That it is done with his full cooperation does not diminish this fact.

What is fascinating, however, is the way that this act of recording and documenting doesn’t so much capture the “real” Sam—obviously a rather naive project—as generate a *new* version of Sam. This is made very clear in the scene that depicts the *Globalist*’s first interview with him in his house. As she does in the opening chapter, Glidden simultaneously ruptures the normal flow of narrative time and disrupts the usual restrained relationship between word and image. The first page in this sequence depicts the living room in the house where Sam is living; six panels move in what McCloud (1993) calls “aspect-to-aspect” transitions, showing different parts of a larger whole without connecting the images in a clear narrative sequence. We see a window, a corner, a bedroom door, a glimpse of an adjoining bathroom, an empty chair (Figure 8, p. 146.1-6). The room is strikingly empty, and Glidden notes in the final panel that Sam “doesn’t usually come to this part of the house” (Figure 8, p.146.8). He has good reason not to. It reminds him of his first wife, who killed herself while the two were exiled in Iran (Figure 8, p. 146.6).

The *Globalist* reporters are not only responsible for making Sam go somewhere he doesn't usually venture. Glidden's words in the final panel are also paired with a shot of Alex's camera; it faces us directly, and as we gaze back into the lens, it reminds us of the way that the camera pins and locates us, capturing our bodies in a particular way. In addition, as I noted, this page disrupts the narrative sequence. Several pages later, as the interview draws to a close, Glidden reveals that Sam's words—the ones floating unmoored—came at the very *end* of the exchange when Sarah asks specifically about the room: "Actually it is a bit of a tragedy this room. . . It has a lot of memories for me" (p. 151.3-4). Like the opening chapter, where I identified a circularity of structure, this scene can be read as recursive. It invites a constant rereading, which threatens to trap Sam in the very room that he is usually reluctant to enter. Further, it forces him to literally re-live the painful memories that are associated with it. Glidden is attuned to this, and Sam's case is one of the instances where she chooses to visualize things she does not directly witness. She does not discriminate and represents happy, tranquil scenes of Sam and his family living in Seattle. Yet she also chooses to represent the moment of his wife's suicide, when she locked herself inside a house and set it on fire (p. 161.4).

In this way, the journalistic digging responsible for representing Sam's story is positioned, not as a weighing and judging of the "proper" representation already in circulation, but its own intervention into the representational struggle over who Sam is. To understand the significance of this insight, it helps to examine a pivotal scene, from which the book's title is derived, that sits at the heart of both the Sulaymaniyah section and the comic as a whole. Glidden is in her hotel room reading a history of the Iraqi

Kurdish people (Figure 9, p. 152). Over the course of a standard nine-panel grid, she puts down her book, gets up from her bed, and looks out the window. There she sees a patch of darkness in the middle of the otherwise bright city: “There isn’t enough electricity to illuminate the whole city at once. Rolling blackouts are used to ease the strain on the grid and keep things functioning” (Figure 9, p. 152.7-8) As with so many pages, Glidden positions this moment as more than a simple observation of life in the Middle East. In the central panel of the page, Glidden is poised between two states: she has put down her book but hasn’t yet moved to the window. As she sits on the bed, in limbo, her narrative voice continues a thought from the previous panel about Kurdish history: “Maybe finding out what happened still doesn’t tell you anything about why people are the way they are. Why they do the things they do” (Figure 9, p. 152.5).

Couched as it is in gentle skepticism, this panel feels like an indictment of the attempt to excavate the “real” Sam Malkandi. I have analyzed the way that Glidden embraces an ethos of uncertainty to legitimize her work as journalism, but this is something different. Though it ostensibly refers to understanding the Kurdish people, her thought parallels another moment, after the final interview with Sam, when she notes that: “In the end, it doesn’t really matter whether or not Sam was telling us the truth” (p. 191.7). The only story that she and the *Globalist* reporters can tell is the one where “the government cut corners to get rid of him” (p. 191.7). Of course, that is one story that *Rolling Blackouts* represents: one in which the U.S. dispensed with justice to, in a very Orientalist tradition, prop up its own national identity in the very power it exercises on Sam, a manufactured representative of the Other hiding in the very heart of the Self. The

power dynamics at play force possible interpretations of Sam into a tight mold, and even his apparent American-ness can be construed as sinister, a threat—the perfect sleeper agent.

Sarah ultimately stakes her role as a journalist—as someone who can represent what is true—on the Sam that they found in their interviews: “Unless I have no powers of observation whatsoever, how can I believe that guy sat there and told me that whole story and it was all a lie? If that’s true, then I don’t know anything” (p. 191.6). She is deeply concerned with discovering who Sam is—just as she is obsessed with understanding Dan. (This also echoes her claim that she would lose her “moral center” if she did not challenge Dan on his view of the Iraq war.) In a narrative concerned with gaps in understanding and ruptures in communication, the inaccessibility of the “real” Sam Malkandi is, perhaps, the deepest epistemological fissure. But Glidden’s musing on the nature of “rolling blackouts” suggests that Sarah’s concern may be misplaced. Perhaps the “rolling blackouts” of our understanding are what keep the lights on and the system functioning. The totalized, understood world promised by clean narratives of “Truth” are as misleading as they are seductive. This is a particularly powerful thought to be contained in comics form—a literal grid (of ink and paper rather than electricity) across which these blackouts roll.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Summary of results

In previous chapters, I described and interpreted the ways in which *Rolling Blackouts* understands itself as comics journalism. In doing so, I sought to trace the potential of comics to do journalism differently by closely examining the way Sarah Glidden combines metajournalistic discourse and the formal grammar of comics. A number of consistent patterns emerged, yet it seems as though the strongest, most meaningful insights that *Rolling Blackouts* offers are found in exceptional situations: in Dan and Sarah's personal relationship, for example, but also in the ruptures to Glidden's normally subdued visual vocabulary and page designs. Of course, limit cases are precisely the place to turn conventional understandings back upon themselves and watch how they falter—another central goal of this project.

In chapter four I built an argument around Glidden's reimagining of journalistic authority. This drew heavily upon a reading of Sarah's metajournalistic discourse to tease out her understanding of her role as a journalist—one shaped by conflicting sets of expectations—as well as her approach to journalistic independence. While Glidden does derive some of her legitimacy as a journalist from Sarah's presence, this is only one potential strategy. Ultimately, Glidden draws a vision of journalism that relies on incessant self-critique and articulates, paradoxically, a form of cultural legitimacy for comics journalism that functions by admitting the precarity of its own authority. Even in

an era when journalistic institutions seem more-than-eager to open themselves up to external scrutiny as a way of (re)establishing trust, this feels radical.

Of course, an understanding of ‘how journalism works’ is impossible to divorce from the particular circumstances in which a journalist operates, as well as her own positionality. Glidden and the *Globalist* reporters serve as representatives of America in lands that bear the clear marks of Western imperialism. To that end, I pushed my insights about journalism in the abstract into conversation with postcolonial theory. This helped reveal the way that Glidden positions cross-cultural *listening*—as opposed to communication—as a visual practice with distinct ethical dimensions. Likewise, her attention to the way visual representations of Iraqi refugees are generated invites us to broaden our understanding of what it means to bear witness to include the disciplinary workings of power/knowledge.

Further implications

My research suggests a number of possible challenges for dominant forms of journalism to consider; certain meanings established in the peripheral, marginal form of comics can and should, I think, migrate toward the center. Glidden’s comics journalism offers a new role for journalists to perform, one which relies on a radically unstable version of journalistic authority. To adapt Chute’s (2016) phrase, comics allows Glidden to both imagine and inhabit a performance of uncertainty. In addition, *Rolling Blackouts* as a picture of journalistic performance emphasizes the importance of considering the actual *staging* of that performance. In other words, it matters greatly that Glidden is

learning to perform as a journalist on what can be called a postcolonial stage. This should serve as a reminder to journalists operating under mainstream paradigms that whatever normative values one uses to guide one's work should not—and in fact cannot—be divorced from the locations in which they are practiced. In that sense, this thesis serves as a counterweight to scholarship that strives to abstractly schematize journalistic roles, like that of the watchdog. It is important to think about the granularity of such concepts as they manifest in particular contexts. Where the dog stands and who it is watching should become unavoidable questions.

Similarly, the dual practice of listening envisioned by Glidden—a matter of aesthetics and ethics—offers a chance to reevaluate professional codes of ethics. Ward and Wasserman (2014) draw a distinction between closed and open ethics within media, a difference that hinges on whether professional media communities that develop ethical standards (whether formally or informally) are sealed off from other communities or acting in dialogue with them. They argue that an ethics of listening practiced by peripheral media forms could force a reckoning among legacy platforms: “Alternative media based on listening could place a moral imperative on the mainstream media to use these new media platforms to actively seek out marginalized voices from other parts of the world” (p. 840).

Comics journalism links to other outside journalistic traditions and its relative obscurity certainly qualifies it as a peripheral media form. In addition, an aesthetics of listening for comics journalists has ramifications for the ethics of *reading* as well. I have argued that *Rolling Blackouts* represents moments where traditional power relations

between sources and journalists are reversed, where communication is disrupted, and where narratives become distinctly uncomfortable for an audience. Yet the moments of unintelligibility and discomfort are precisely the point. Americans should not have an easy reading experience when confronting a person who has been dispossessed by their government. It is difficult to “consume” such work, and while this fact may drive away some readers, those who stay must practice alternative ways of engaging with the text.

These are some of the implications for journalism broadly speaking. Where then does this leave our picture of comics journalism? What is comics *doing* to journalism that is different? The visual strategies this thesis has identified in Glidden’s work do not quite seem like an adequate answer. Listening and seeing are not the exclusive province of comics, and presumably a journalist could construct an unsettled authority of uncertainty in other media. If there is one consistent theme in the scholarship on comics journalism, it is the claim that the comics medium foregrounds itself (and the journalist’s consciousness) as a shaper of reality, reminding readers that journalism produces a mediated, non-direct vision of reality (Maher, 2012, p. 123; Versaci, 2007, p. 115; Woo, 2010). Certainly, my own research relied heavily on the concepts of self-representation and self-reflexivity. Yet, I think a close-reading of *Rolling Blackouts* suggests that the importance of the journalistic self has, perhaps, been overvalued. The best answer to the question of what comics can do to journalism hinges on the complex relationship between Glidden and her subjects: the people she sees and listens to, draws and gives voice to. *Rolling Blackouts* constantly places journalists and refugees within the same literal, visual frame. It offers an opportunity to see the relationships between reporters

and particularly vulnerable sources play out and redirects our attention to the material conditions that structure these relationships. By representing visual connections between journalists and refugees, Glidden reveals the way that practicing journalism inevitably marks the world, even as it tries to document and map it (Chute, 2016, p. 18)—further challenging any normative picture of the journalist as simply a detached observer. The key concept becomes, then, the journalistic self *in relation* to others.

I previously argued that Glidden tears back the curtains that obscure journalistic practice, describing this as a form of radical transparency. Perhaps she is also critiquing a transparency that reveals *only* the self. *Rolling Blackouts* crafts a vision that foregrounds the material conditions of a journalist/source relationship. In other words, transparency about choices and decisions or biases and subjectivities does not go far enough. A journalist needs to be able to show the effects her work has on her subjects—as in the case of Sam Malkandi, who is actively shaped by the demands of documentary filmmaking and journalistic interviews.

In addition, Glidden's images are themselves both bodily and embodied; they document the bodies of the marginalized and, collected together, are themselves a living corpus. As Chute (2011), quoting Alison Bechdel, writes: in comics, “paper is skin, ink is blood” (p. 112). There is also the inescapable irony of comics' status as hand-drawn artifacts; the same capacity that opens up the potential to reconstitute bodies (Chute, 2011) also appropriates its subjects as part of the cartoonist's own self—representation in comics always shades into self-representation. For a cartoonist who wishes to escape the generic conventions of autobiography, this is a challenge. Indeed, while musing on the

emotional difficulty of representing other people's pain, Glidden reveals that, for her, drawing a person is partly a process of "inhabiting" them (Wertz, 2017). She describes the way that her own body starts to reflect the body she renders on the page: "Sometimes, when you're drawing someone making a funny face, you realize that you're making that face. So, you'll be drawing someone smiling like a grimace-y smile, and then you realize that you're smiling that way" (Wertz, 2017). It feels appropriate to widen the lens and point out that Glidden is by no means the only cartoonist to observe this. Joe Sacco, whose investment in detailed renderings of his subjects is extraordinary, uses identical language to describe the process of drawing:

When you're drawing it's hard to be distanced. In fact you have to inhabit what you're drawing — the person you're shooting and the person falling to the ground. You have to feel how their hands would be placed and so on. You find yourself almost doing this reflexively with your own body, to find out how you would draw those muscles. Is it depressing? If you see enough of the world it's depressing. Drawing it is like taking a concentrated dose of it. (Burrows, 2012)

This reveals a type of embodied knowledge at the heart of comics journalism, generated from a two-way relation. On the one hand, the subject's body and how it comes into being on the page reaches out and shapes the cartoonist's own body; at the same time, the emotional identification with that person permits the cartoonist to take up residence in their body. It utterly collapses the distance between comics journalist and subject.

This possibility feels both liberating and terrifying. Here, the bleeding of aesthetics into ethics becomes critical, especially in a postcolonial context. How is the subaltern to speak if she is reconstituted as a part of the cartoonist's body? This is a question that remains difficult to answer. Spivak's point that the subaltern as such will

never have access to power—representational or otherwise—itself clamors to be heard at this moment. I acknowledge this, but I will end by observing that, as much as the cartoonist shapes the received images of her subjects, an *ethical* comics journalist—insofar as she is committed to pursuing authentic, truthful representation—is clearly acted *upon* by her subjects. While Glidden and Sacco describe this process as one of inhabiting, the reverse seems equally true. These cartoonists see their bodies literally altered and reshaped by the demands of drawing. For that moment, at least, the subaltern inhabits them.

Limitations

There were several key limitations to this study. The first is simply the sheer scope and density of the text in question. I was forced to pick key pages very carefully and discarded many images and anecdotes that would no doubt enrich, nuance, and challenge my analysis. I tried, as often as possible, to note alternative possible interpretations of the evidence I did choose, but close-reading is ultimately a somewhat idiosyncratic methodology and my interpretations remain open to challenge by any skilled reader of comics.

Another limitation is that my focus on a single text necessarily precluded a deep consideration of other pieces of comics journalism. This study was not a portrait of the field, but rather a deep dive into a single, complex instance of it. In addition, not all works of comics journalism are as openly self-reflective as *Rolling Blackouts*, nor are all as interested in dwelling on the problems of doing journalism. Some try simply to

transmit information; others just want to tell a story. It is likely that not all works will complicate and push on journalistic norms. Certainly, not all works are equally interested in making visible the seams of journalistic practice. So, while I believe many of my insights can be taken and adapted beyond the particularities of *Rolling Blackouts*, they should be understood with that caveat in mind.

Future study

During their trip, the reporters for the *Seattle Globalist* produced a vast amount of material, almost all of which is accessible online. Though I used bits and pieces to inform my readings of *Rolling Blackouts*, I did not come close to a full consideration of the ways in which the various representations play off of each other. Dan's video blogs, for example, seem to offer a particularly productive opportunity to compare his own self-representations to Glidden's depictions of him. In addition, *Rolling Blackouts* also serves as an *archive* for some of these media—sometimes without even intending to. The most curious example of this is the case of the documentary *Barzan*. Because the film's distributor went out of business, *Barzan* is now mostly inaccessible to the casual viewer (C. Dimon, personal communication, Aug. 12, 2019). I know this because I went to some lengths to track down a copy. It is no longer viewable on streaming services, nor can one easily buy a physical version; the only copy that appears on Worldcat is not actually obtainable through Interlibrary Loan, as its owner, a library in Seattle, deems it too rare to lend out (I. Hui, personal communication, Aug. 12, 2019). I eventually obtained a copy by contacting the executive producer who sent it to me for use in my research.

What this means is that *Rolling Blackouts* now serves as the primary repository for both Sam's story and the film itself. This curiosity, though perhaps not incredibly meaningful in itself, should bring our attention to the question of *how* media represent other media, which can in turn yield further insights that help to better position comics journalism within the heterogeneous field that constitutes journalism more broadly. In the case of Sam Malkandi, there are innumerable links between acting and performance in theater. Sam was trained as an actor, a fact that *Rolling Blackouts* and *Barzan* draw considerable attention to. This invites a consideration of the way journalists, especially in documentary, serve as directors and their sources as actors.

Rolling Blackouts also invites more explicit comparisons between journalism and imperialism. Dan's presence opens up a whole range of mostly unstated connections between the aims and practices of international journalism and the American military, drawing attention to the way journalism's representational power and authority sit uncomfortably with the idea of ethically bearing witness across national borders. I observed this dynamic, but did not explore its full implications, as it ultimately moved me away from my focus on the relationship between journalists and their sources in a postcolonial context. However, given American journalism's complicity in helping to manufacture consent for the Iraq war in the first place, an analysis of the way *Rolling Blackouts* represents this relationship to American military power would be invaluable.

Many of the same thematic meanings that I uncovered in *Rolling Blackouts* may have relevance to other works of comics journalism. I believe my insights into the nature of journalistic authority may have broader relevance for a study of comics journalists

who engage in explicit self-representation. For instance, Maher (2016) has noted the way that Sacco uses self-critique and self-referential irony to draw attention to his own status as a mediator of stories. While Weber and Rall (2017) suggest an analysis of “authentication strategies” in comics journalism, I submit that a broader consideration of legitimization strategies will ultimately be more productive—both in the way that it adds to discussions of journalistic authority and in its awareness of the history and present of comics as a marginalized form.

Finally, this thesis’s engagement with postcolonial and critical cultural theory remains incomplete. The most significant absence is an active consideration of gender and the ideas raised by transnational feminist scholarship. An important—if not the most important—aspect of Spivak’s central question is a feminist critique; as she notes of the subaltern: “The woman is doubly in shadow” (Sivak, 1994 [1988], p. 84). The question is a live one, given Glidden’s attention to female Iraqi refugees who are almost certainly Muslim. Abu-Lughod (2002) identifies an especially insidious discourse of the “liberation of Muslim women” that has been used to ideologically buttress the War on Terror. It is especially problematic in the way that it (re)establishes rigid binaries between West and East, while ignoring the history of colonial policy that was justified on strikingly similar grounds. Thus, a broader consideration of the links between American journalism and military power would benefit from an analysis of gender dynamics in *Rolling Blackouts*. For this thesis to ignore such an important aspect of postcolonial subalternity is, I admit, a strikingly ironic omission. But it also reveals just how much work remains to be done.

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APPENDIX

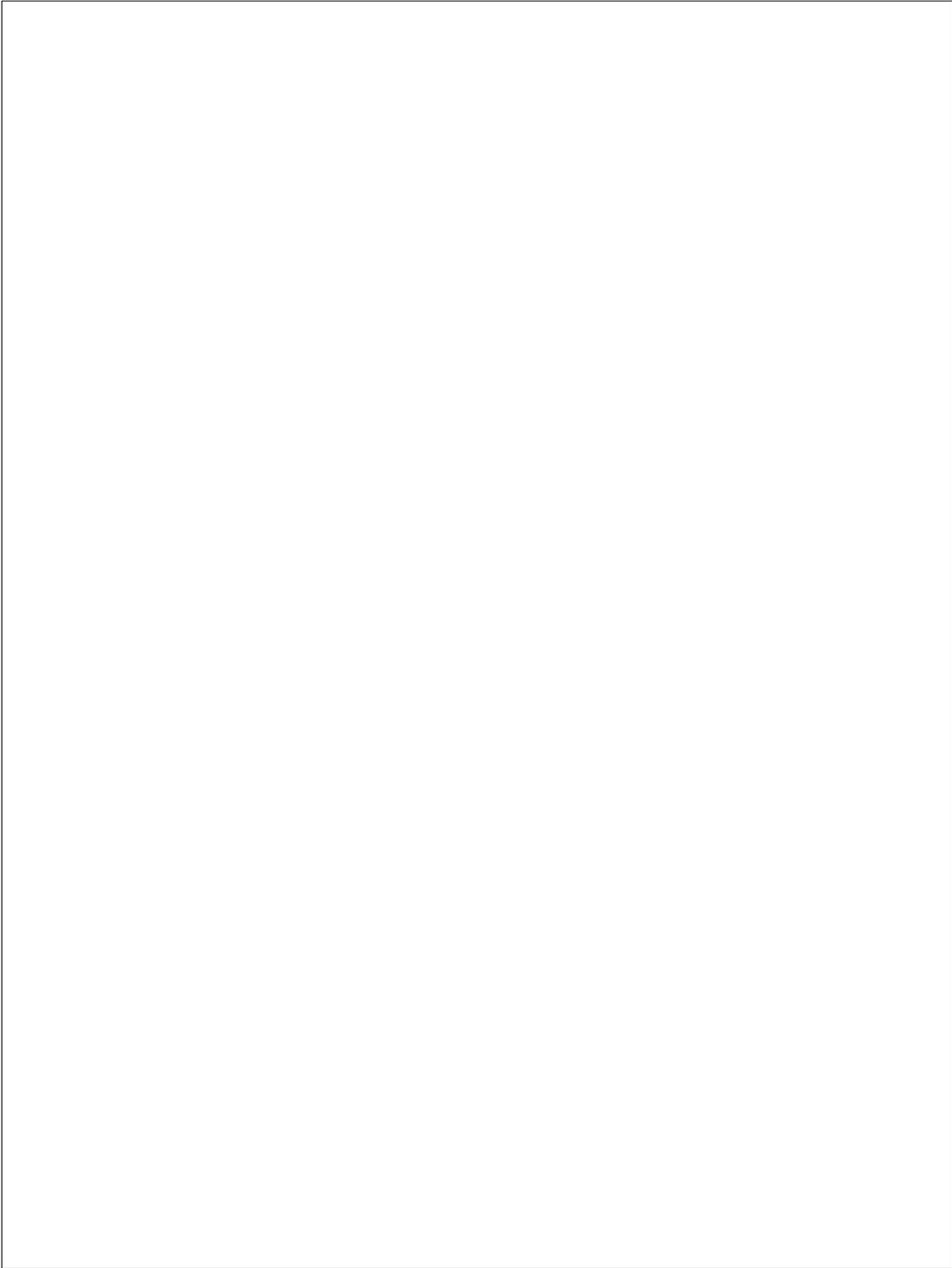


Figure 1. Rolling Blackouts, p. 7

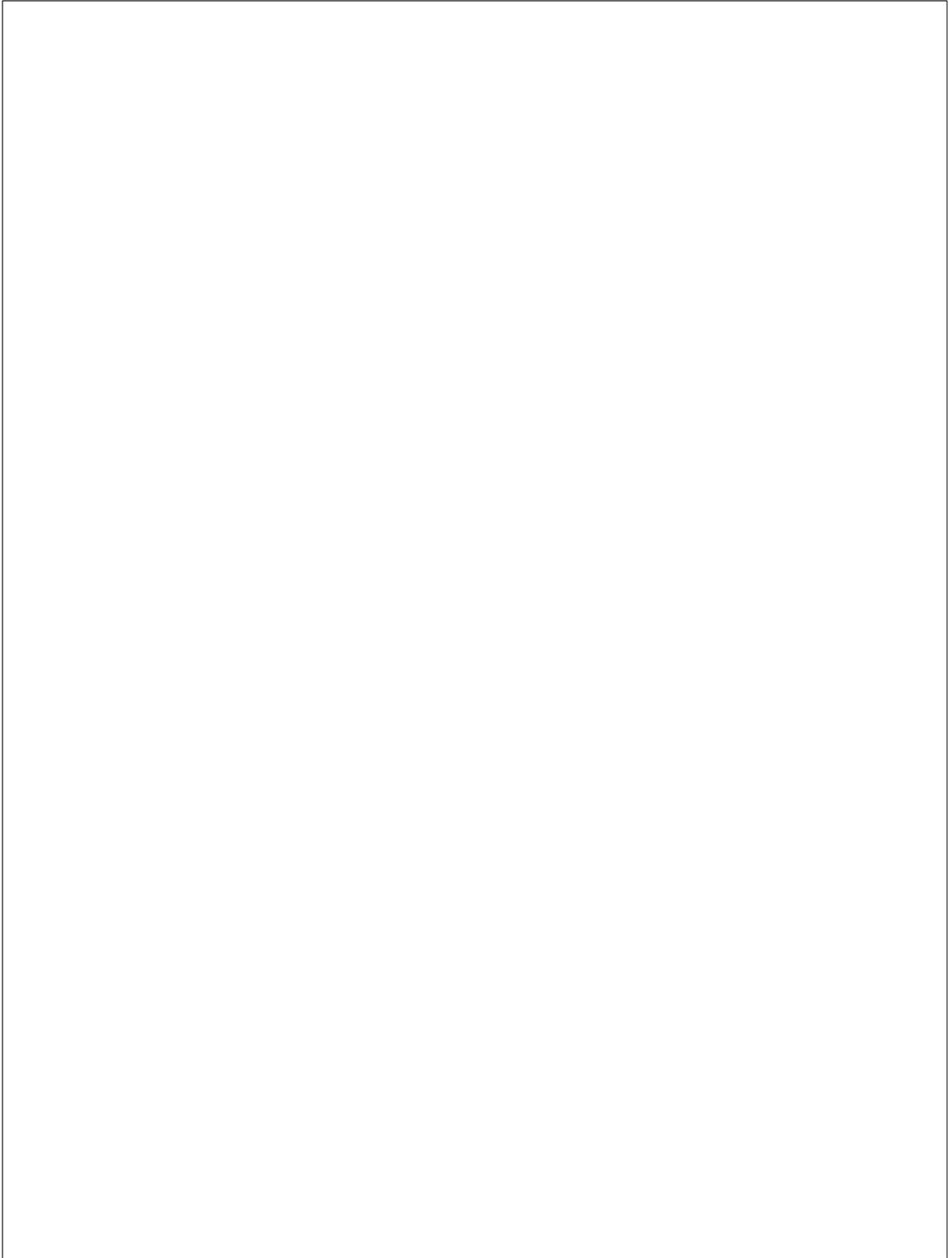


Figure 2. Rolling Blackouts, p. 11

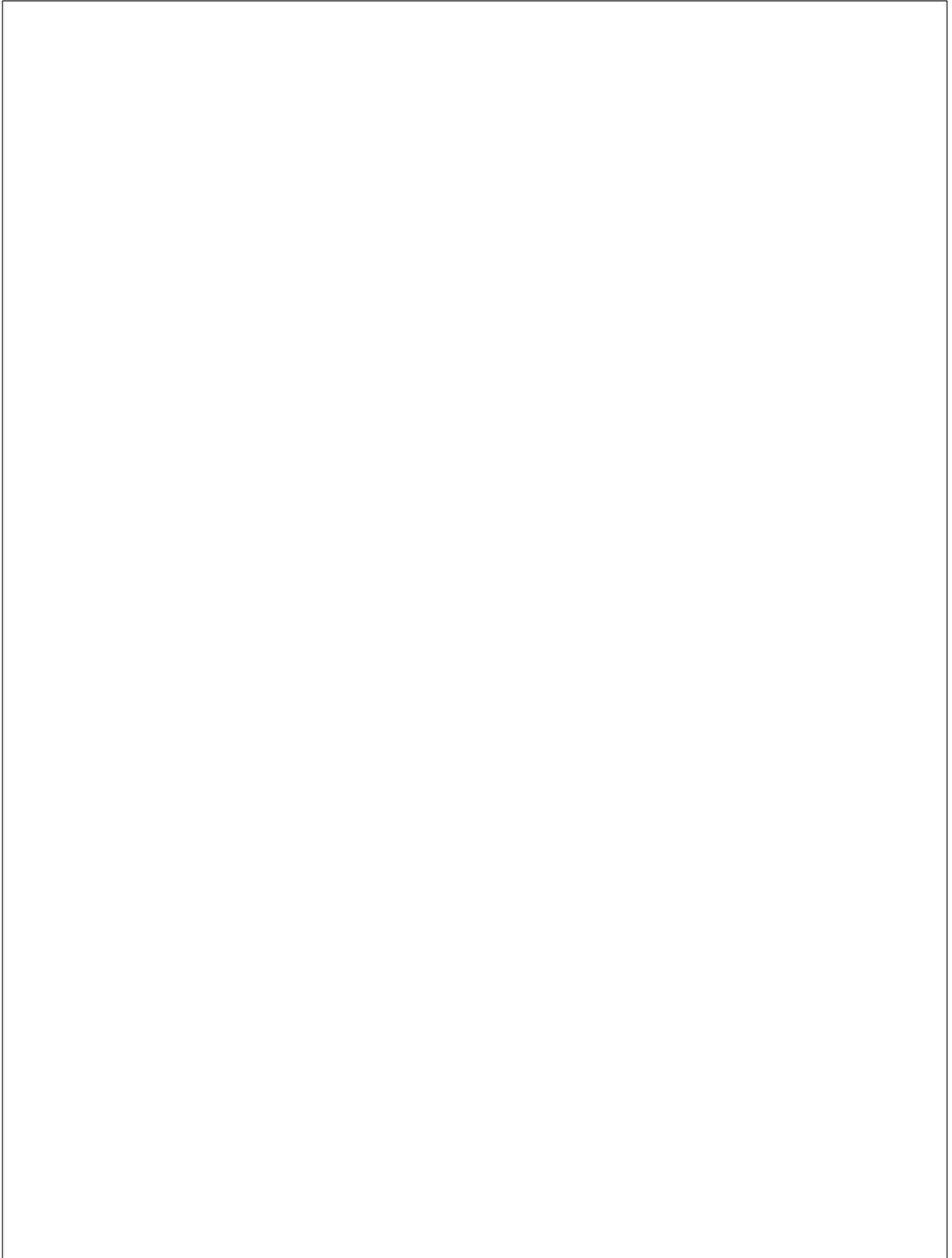


Figure 3. Rolling Blackouts, p. 12

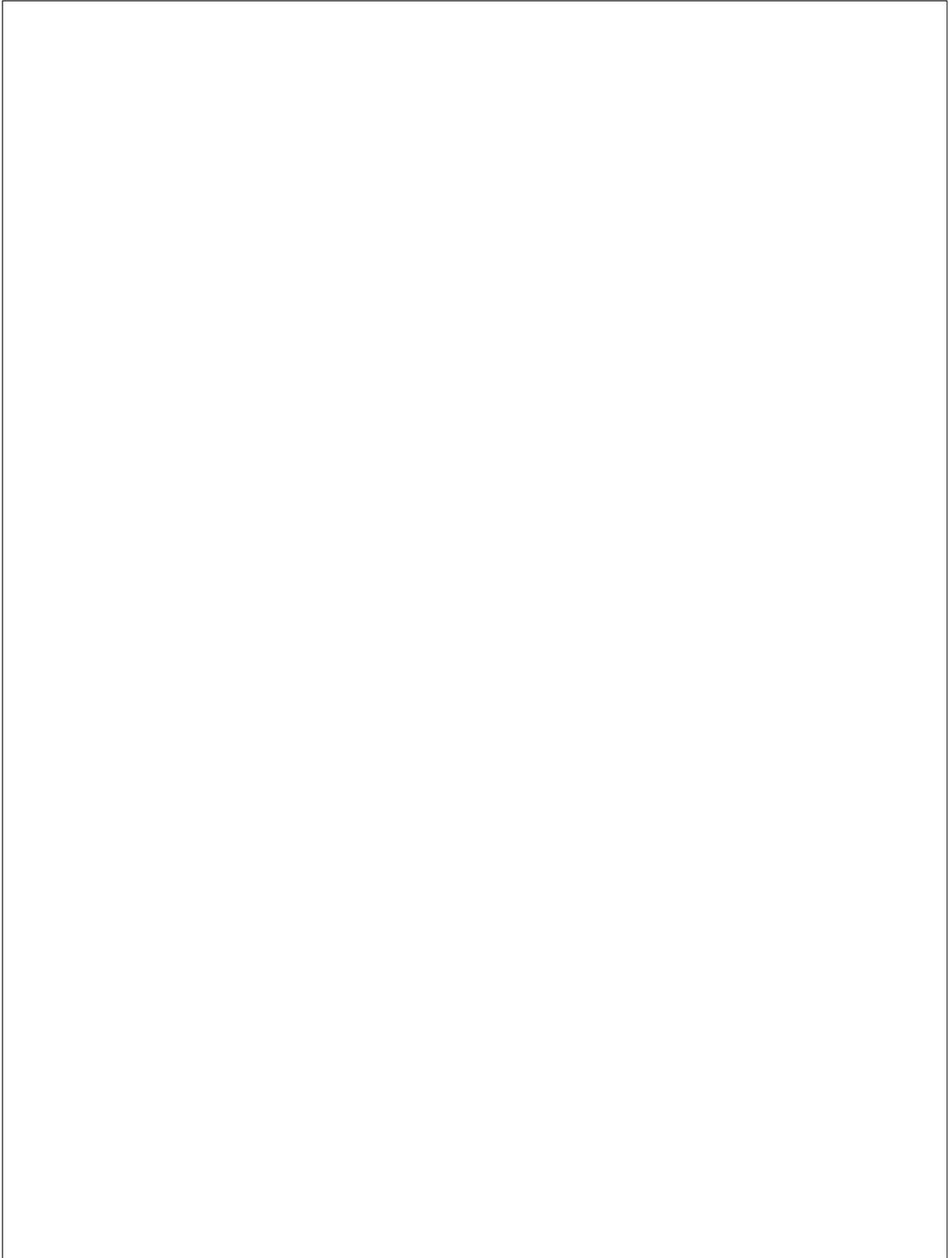


Figure 4. Rolling Blackouts, p. 27

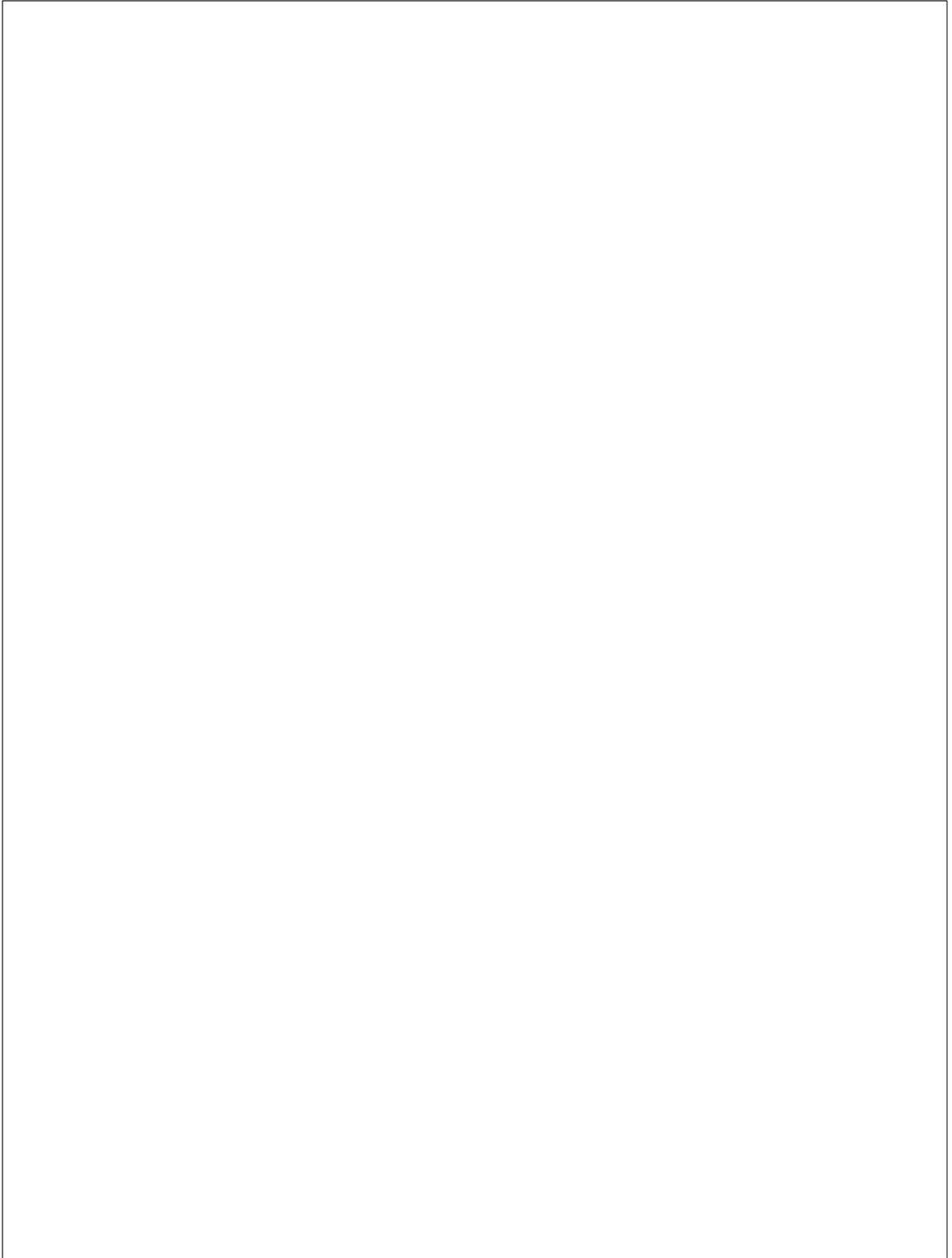


Figure 5. Rolling Blackouts, p. 90

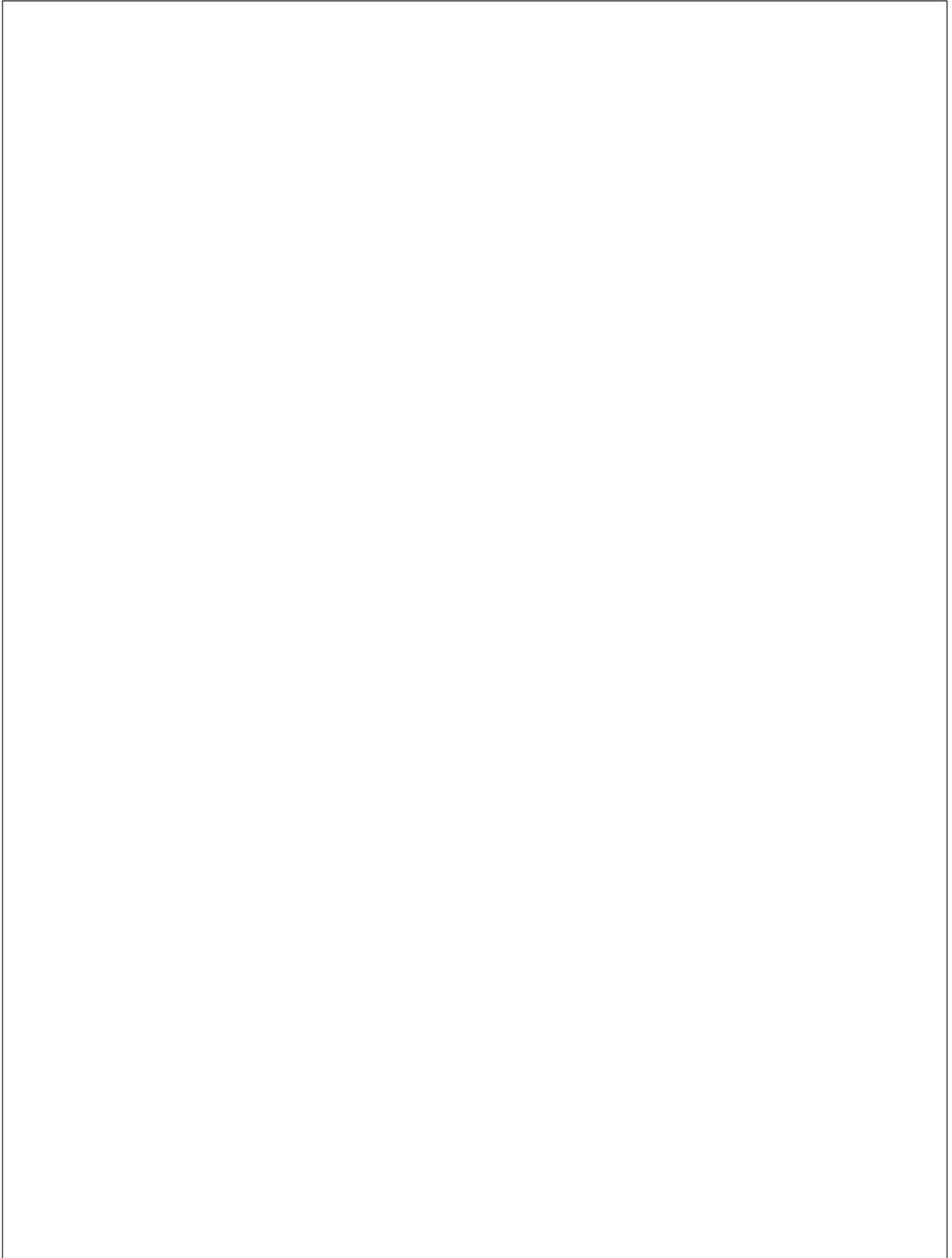


Figure 6. Rolling Blackouts, p. 91

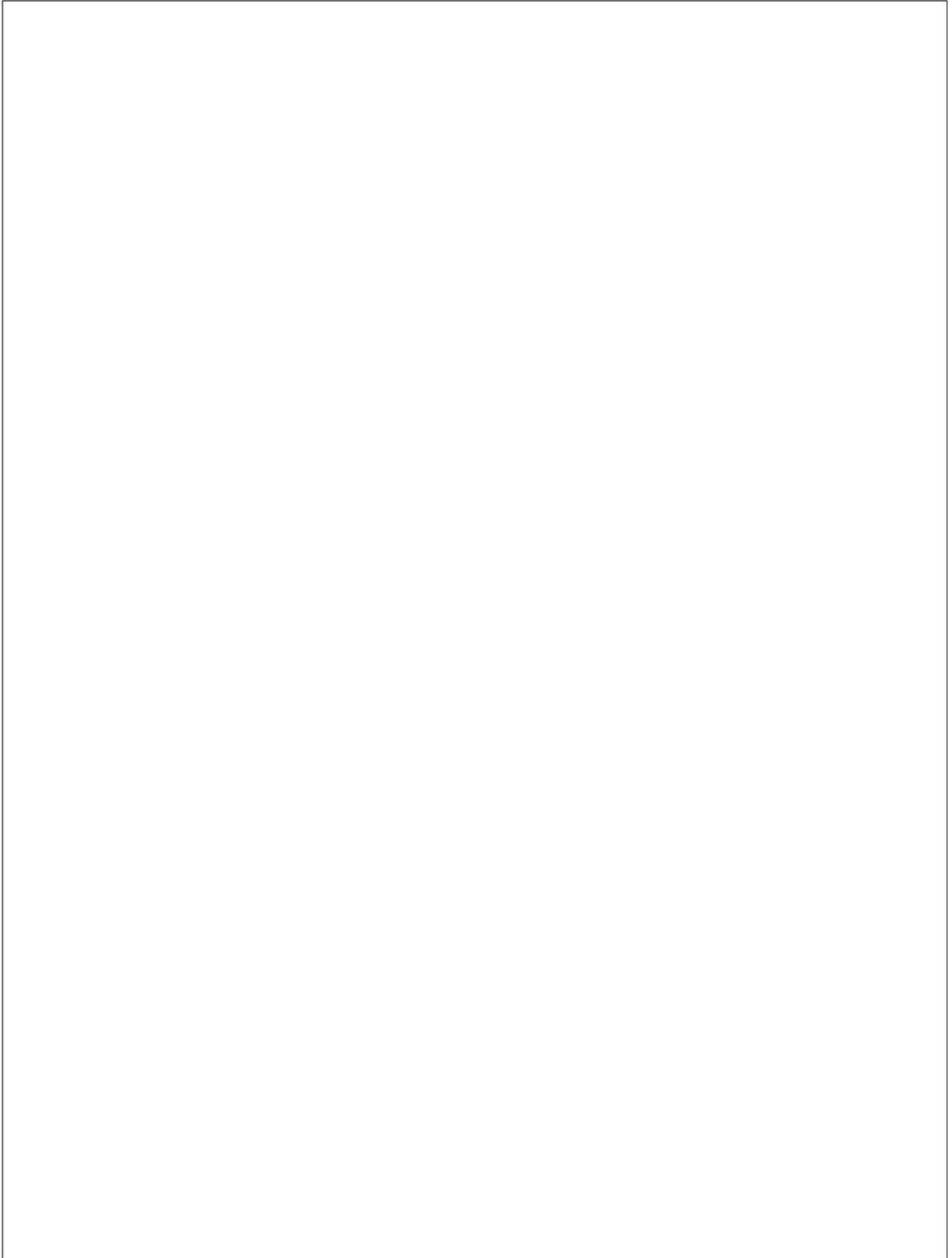


Figure 7. Rolling Blackouts, p. 134

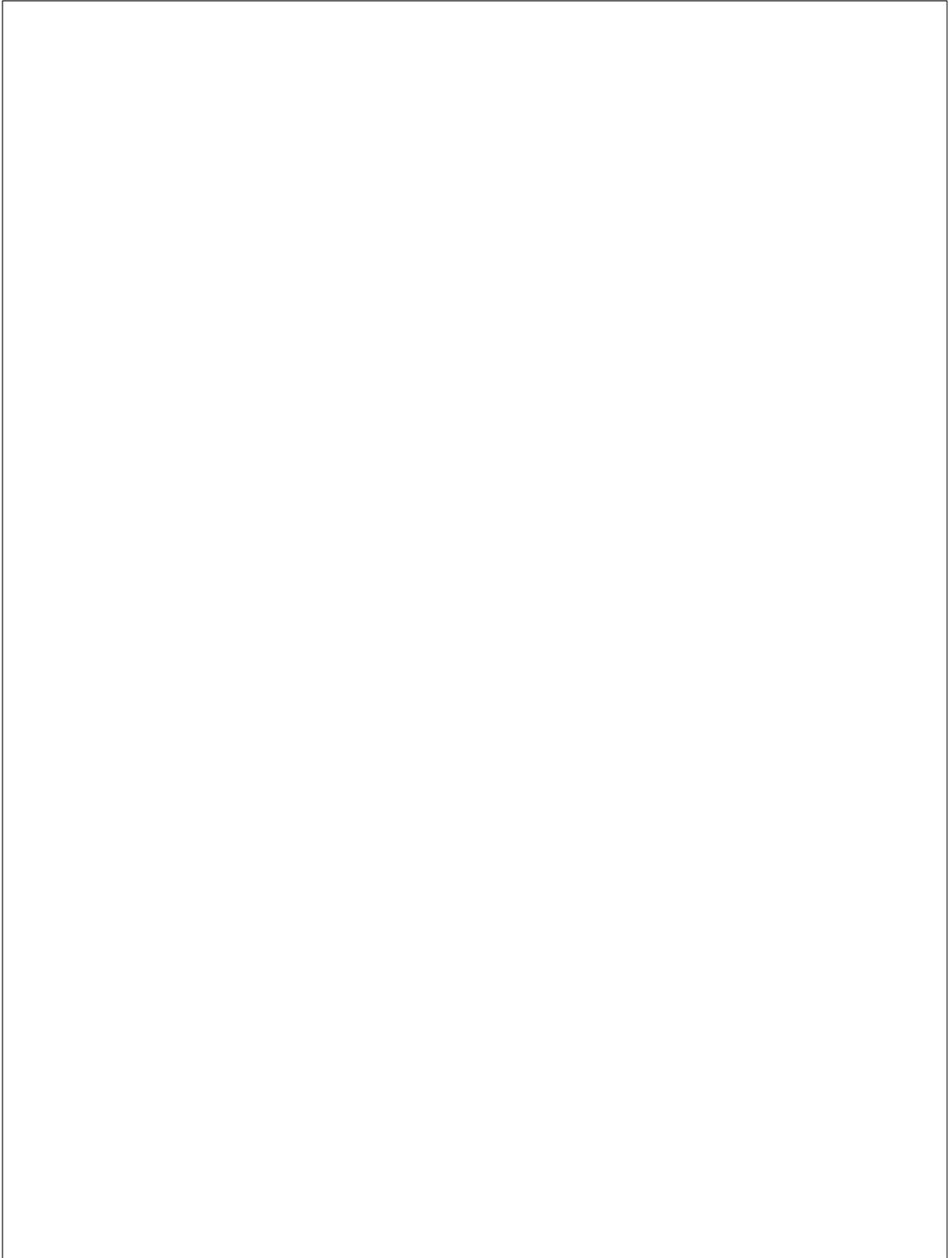


Figure 8. Rolling Blackouts, p. 146

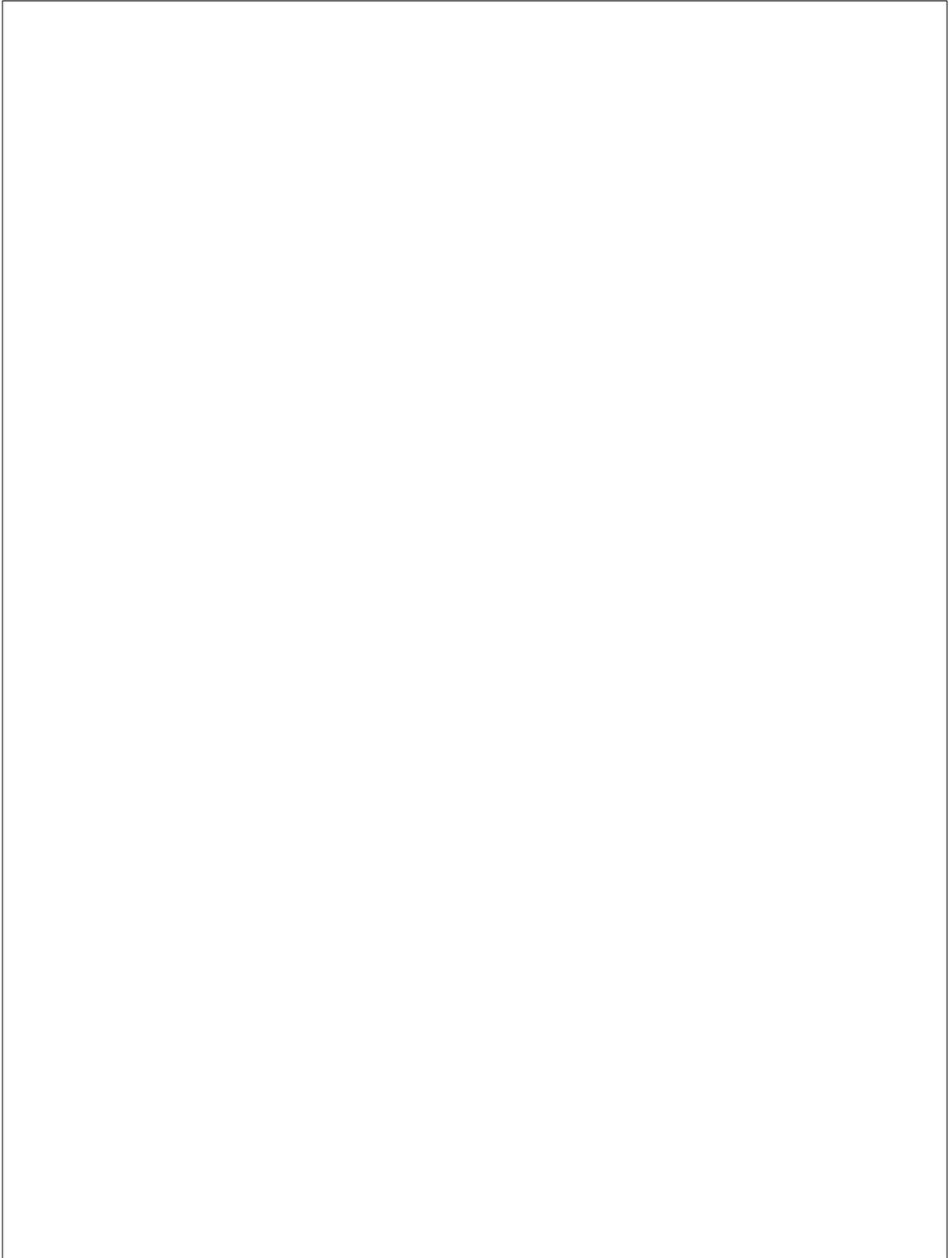


Figure 9. Rolling Blackouts, p. 152

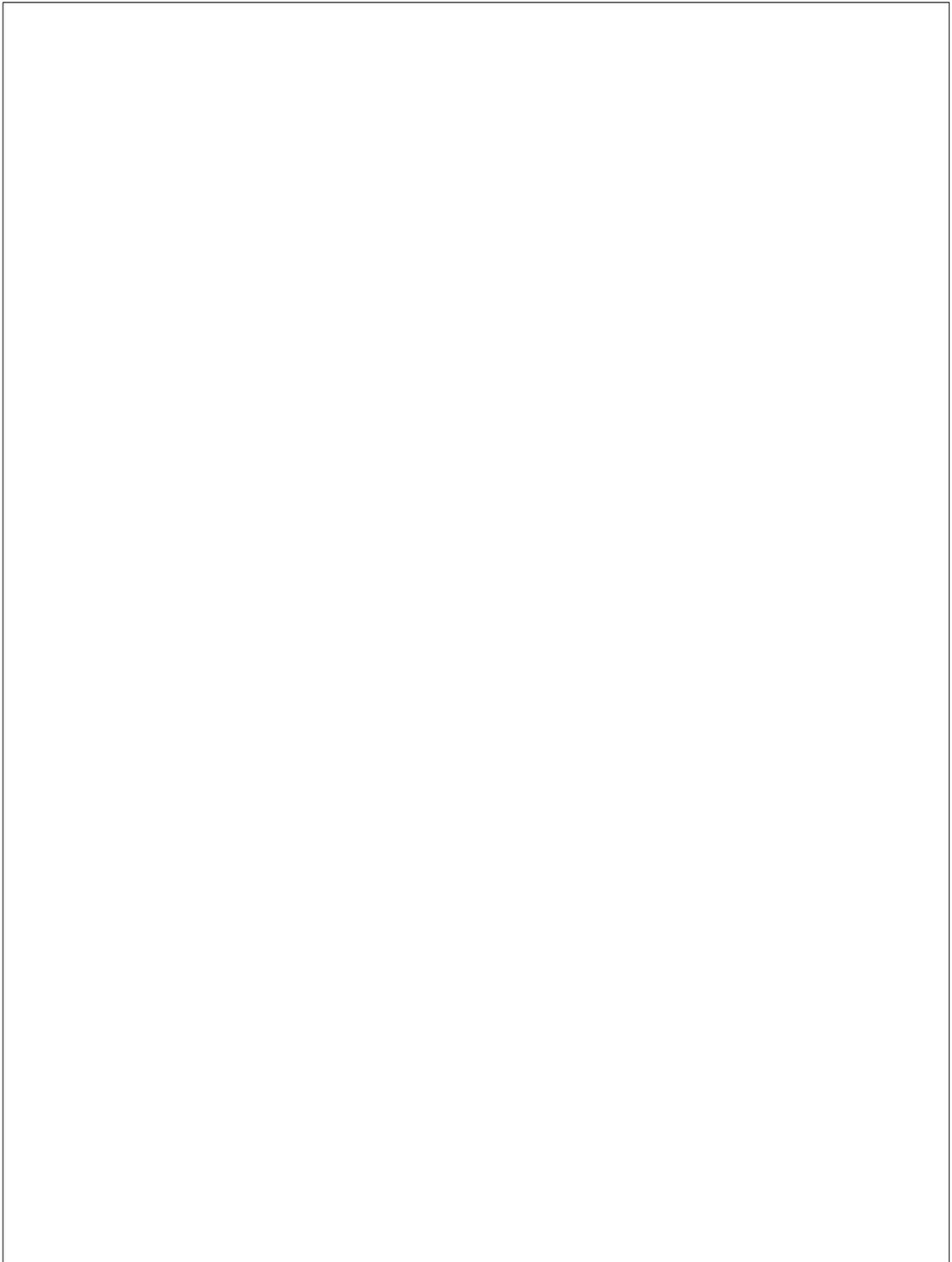


Figure 10. Rolling Blackouts, p. 161

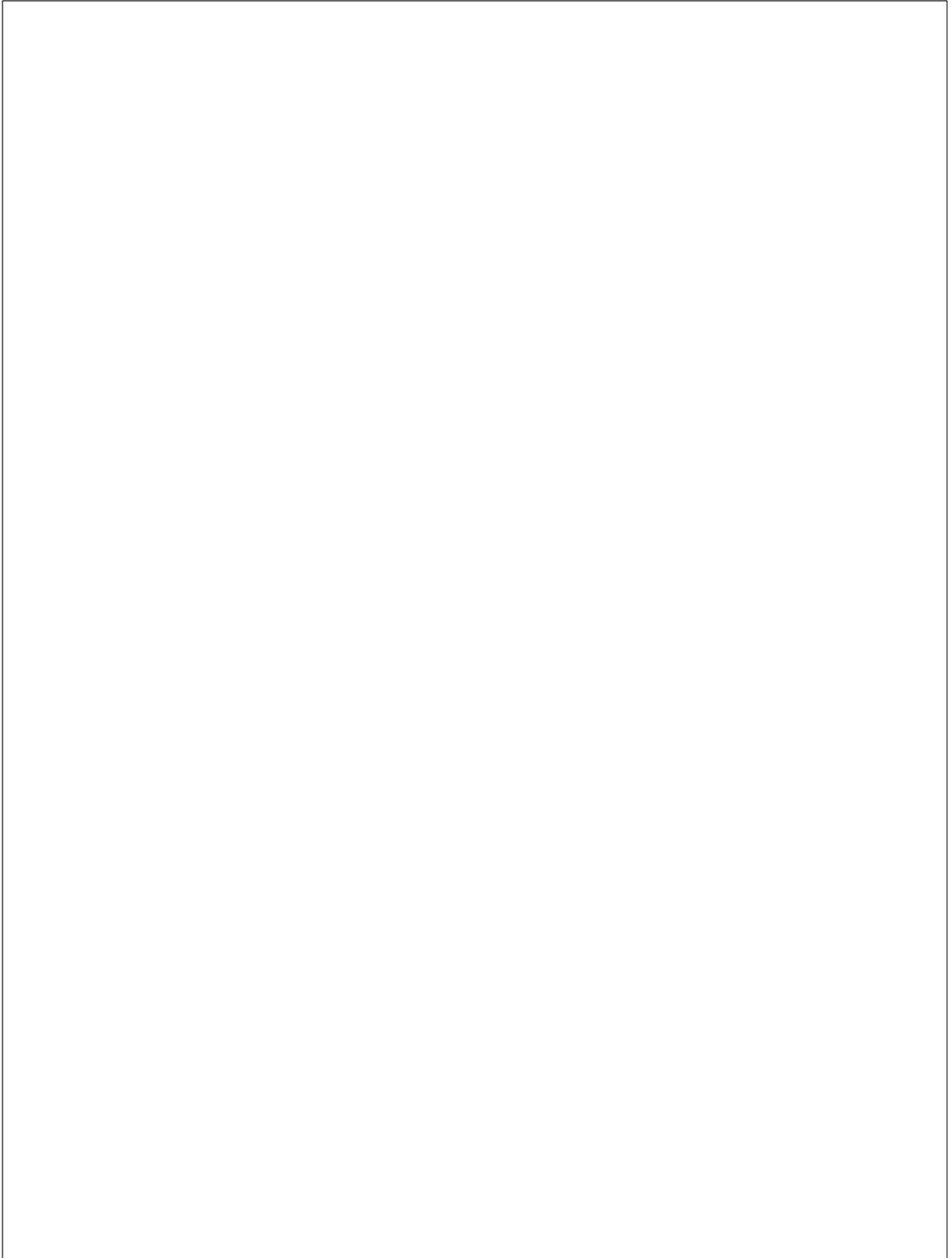


Figure 11. Rolling Blackouts, p. 211

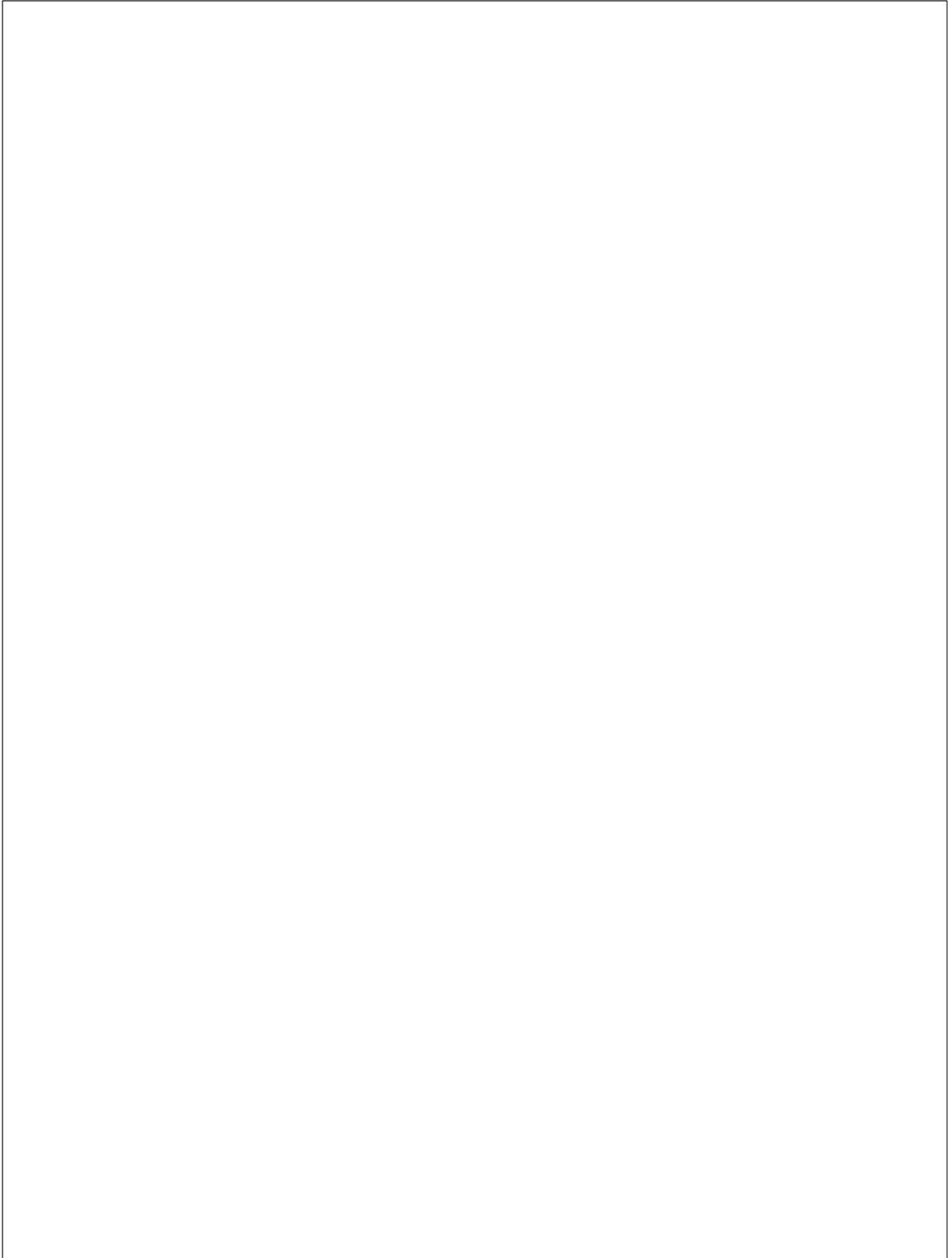


Figure 12. Rolling Blackouts, p. 251

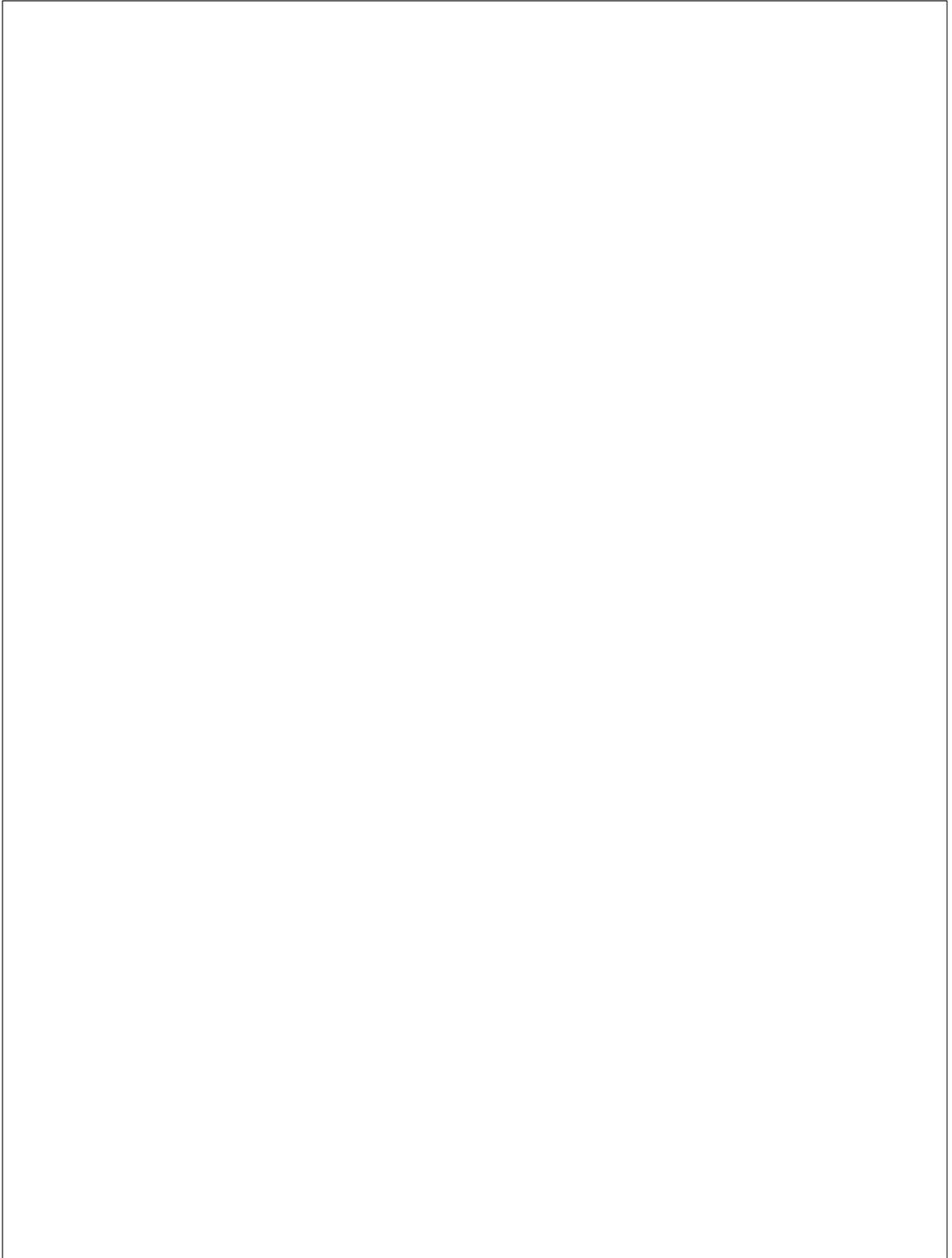


Figure 13. Rolling Blackouts, p. 287

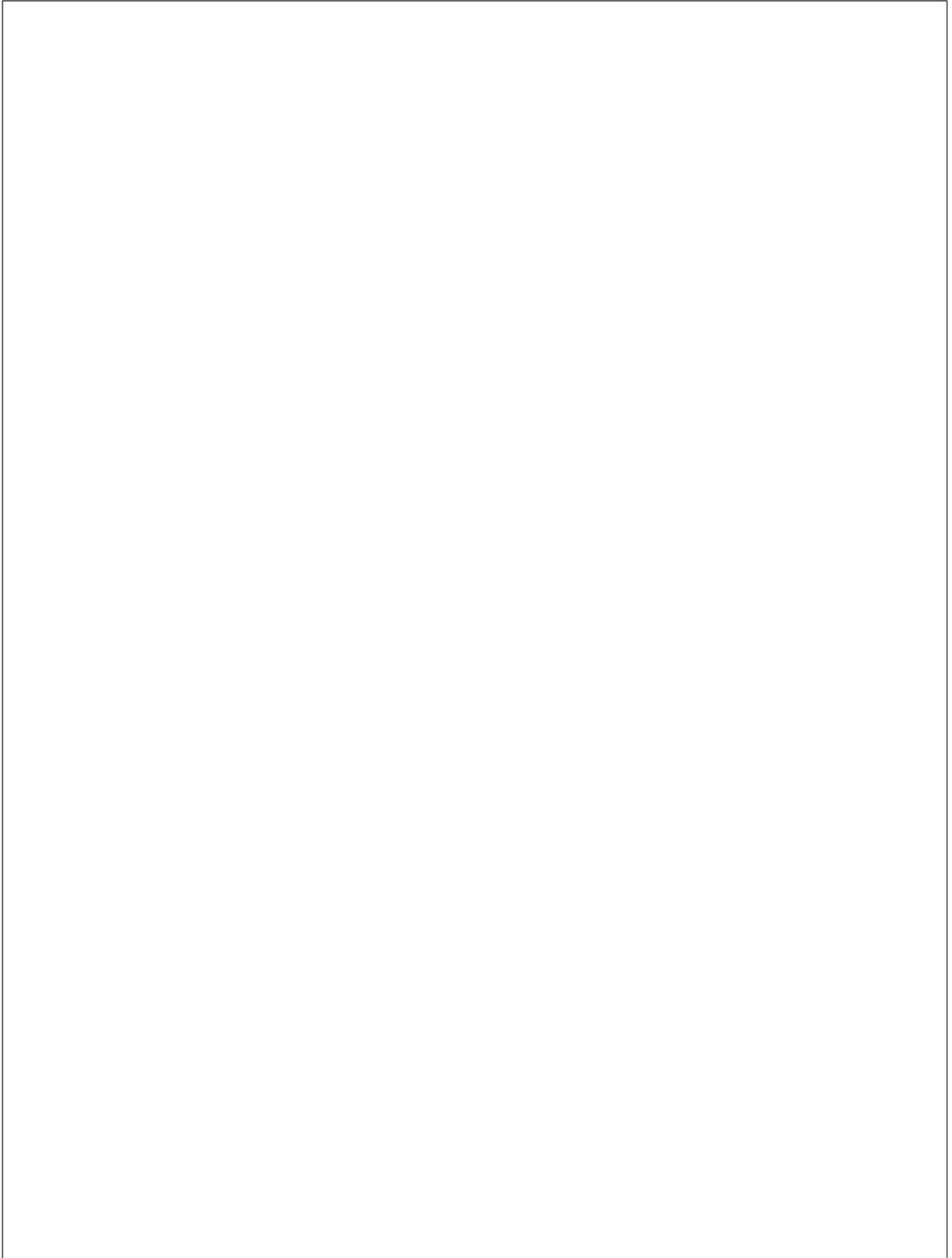


Figure 14. Rolling Blackouts, p. 288

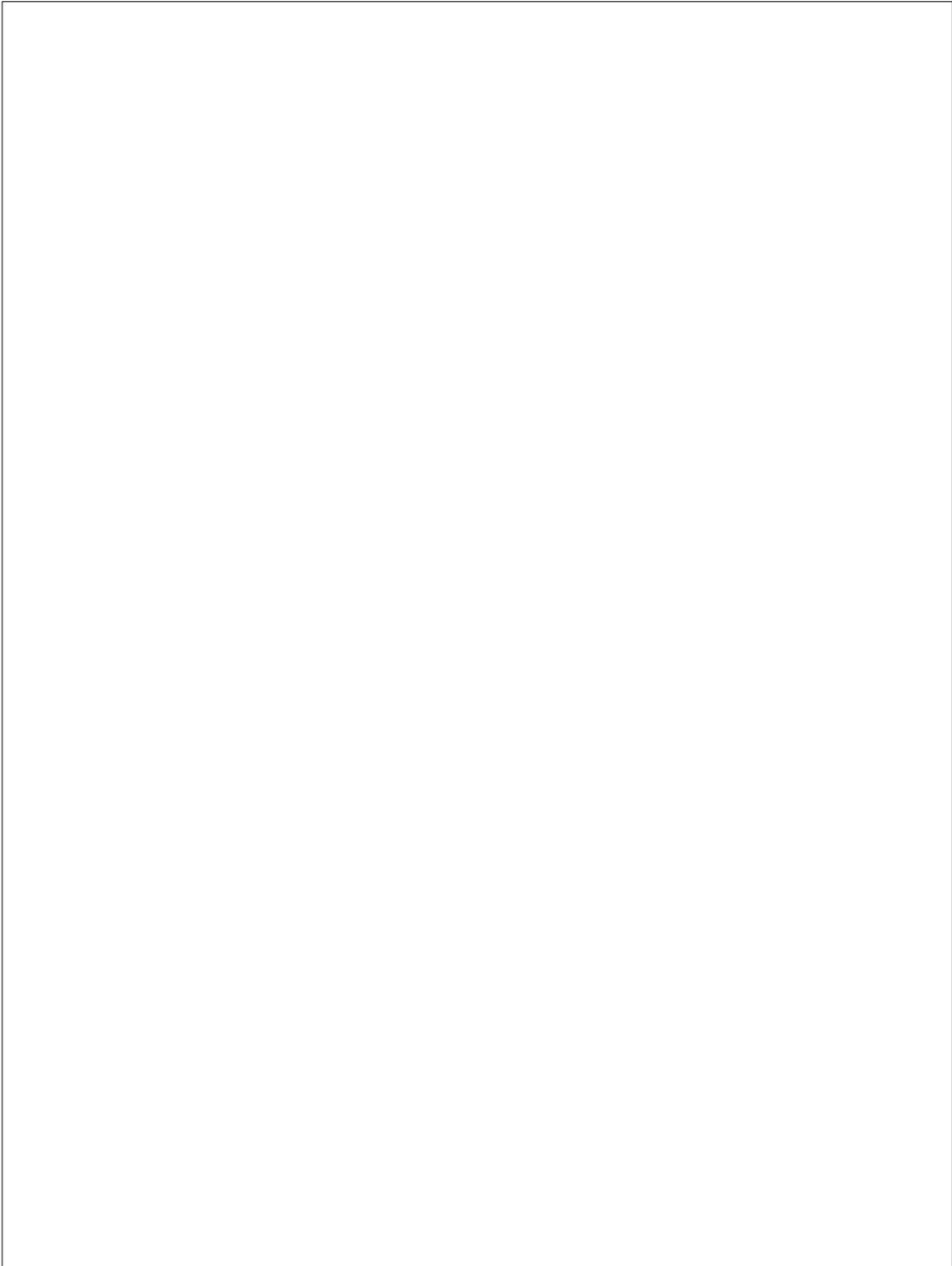


Figure 15. Rolling Blackouts, p. 291

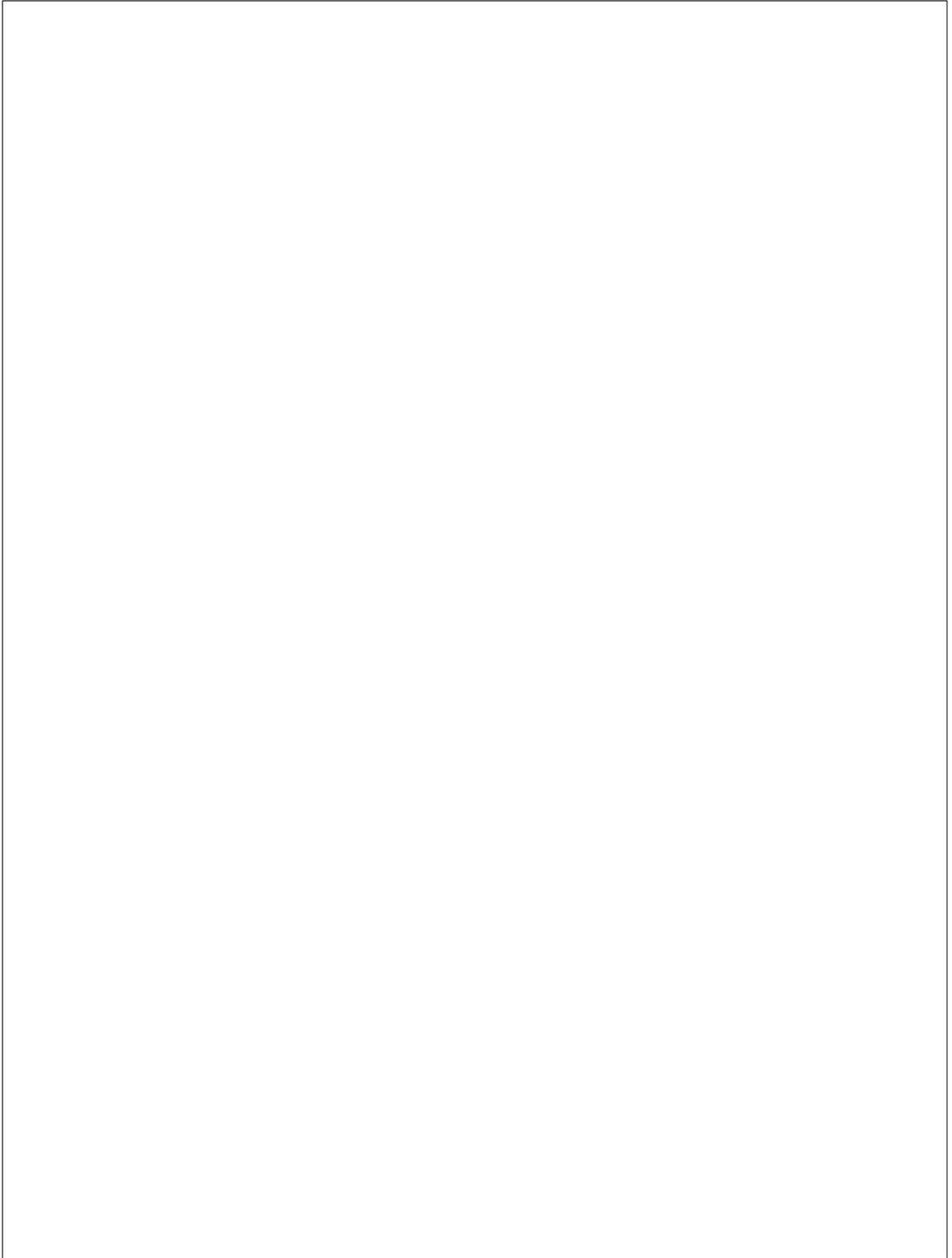


Figure 16. Rolling Blackouts, p. 295

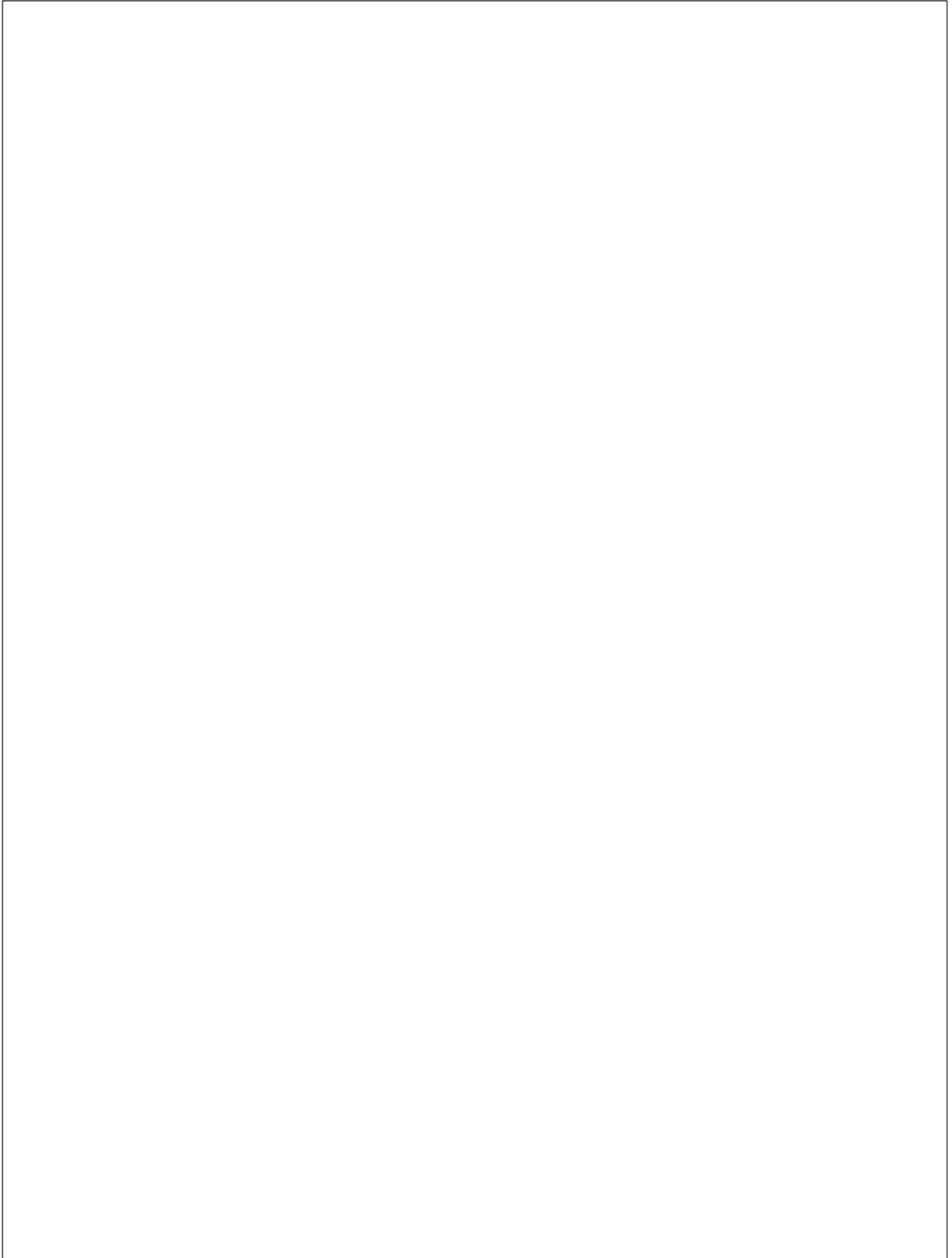


Figure 17. Rolling Blackouts, p. 296