

Light(s) and darkness(es)
Lumière(s) et obscurité(s)

Special issue of *Journal of Energy History (JEHRHE)*
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Call for papers for a special issue: Light(s) and darkness(es)

Light—especially leading innovators, lighting companies, energy networks, and their technical dimensions—has been well studied by historians and humanists (Nye 1990, Hughes 1983, Friedel and Israel 2010, Edensor 2017). Scholarship has demonstrated how growing control of light has contributed to the gradual disappearance of darkness. Initially driven by safety concerns, cultural desires for luxury, modernity, and a vibrant night life increasingly shaped the history of light in urban areas. This history, which generally began in western metropoles in the 18th century, continues today in certain cities and countryside of Africa and Asia. More recent histories of night have begun to examine its social and cultural dimensions (Schivelbusch 1995, Ekirch 2005), but much remains to be explored by historians.

Nevertheless, as the title of this special issue suggests, light(s) and darkness(es) constitute two aspects of the same phenomenon; consequently, each should be studied in relation to the other. For instance, the development of lighting often resulted in spatial segregation between areas, even between streets in the same city, resulting in the coexistence of brightly lit zones in city centers and along central transportation corridors, while darker zones dominated the periphery—often in more modest neighborhoods or narrower streets. Moreover, these concepts are not fixed, and their relative meaning is a function of their environmental, technological, historical, and cultural contexts. In addition, the history of urban lighting shows how it was not a singular system and should thus be considered as multiple, as lighting sources were often superimposed on—and even coexisted with—one another, sometimes for decades. Scholars have explored, for example, intense competition between gas and electric utilities (Beltran 2002, Williot 1999). Finally, the growth of (artificial) lighting was neither pervasive nor permanent, with darkness returning periodically (Nye 2010). Blackouts had diverse causes (e.g. “natural” disasters or system failures, or deliberate ones, such as strikes or protests) and resulted in a multitude of experiences of darkness, ranging from hardship and danger to subversion and liberation. Yet, for those living in rural areas with less artificial lighting, the meanings and experiences of light and darkness were often different.

If historians of art have generally investigated these complex dynamics between light and dark more than historians, light is still too often analyzed alone, without reference to darkness. For these reasons, this special issue of *JEHRHE* aims to challenge this reductionistic framework, which simplifies the complex variety of historical (and contemporary) cases, in order to explore the nuances of light and darkness created by candle, kerosene, oil, gas, and electricity and therefore tease out the diverse, sometimes contradictory, meanings and experiences of light(s) and darkness(es) in the past. We thus seek to study the juxtaposition of light and dark, placing this contrast in dialogue within broader conversations in the history of energy, environmental history, the history of technology, and related fields.

This call for papers is centered around four main questions:

- How are light and darkness in tension with one another, juxtaposed, and/or coexistent? Are the borders between light and dark stark, or are there examples in which these distinctions blur and fall apart?
- How did various factors (political, economic, cultural, geographical, environmental, technological, etc.) shape the understandings and experiences of light/dark in diverse contexts (urban/rural, metropole/colony, etc.) and for different social groups (class, gender, race, etc.)?
- How did (some) people and societies shift from fearing darkness and seeing it as a source of multiple dangers, to seeking out and valuing it?
- How can the examination of light(s) and darkness(es) invite new insights with respect to the history of energy, and vice versa? That is, how can the history of energy help illuminate, so to speak, our understanding of the complex relationships between light and darkness in diverse contexts? And how does the investigation of light(s)/darkness(es) raise new questions vis-à-vis the history of energy?

The geographical focus of this issue is purposefully broad in scale (from street to continent, and perhaps to the planetary), with the hope that comparative studies may yield wider insights into light(s), darkness(es), and their interrelated dynamics.

Deadlines:

31 October 2017: Abstracts (300 words max.) for proposed articles and 2-pg cv in single pdf or Word document due to co-editors
 30 November 2017: Editorial decisions regarding abstracts
 15 March 2018: Submission of articles for peer review (6,000-7,000 words, including notes)
 15 June 2018: Deadline for peer reviewers
 1 September 2018: Revised article due
 5 October 2018: Deadline for peer reviewers
 15 November 2018: Final article due
 January 2019: Special issue publication

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Journal of Energy History / Revue d'histoire de l'énergie (JEHRHE)

The *Journal of Energy History / Revue d'histoire de l'énergie* is the first journal in French- or English-speaking academia dedicated to the study of the history of energy. At the heart of human history, concerns about energy have increasingly become global, complex, and pressing. They merit rigorous investigation and study, including historical inquiry. Furthermore, the history of energy helps us understand the history of human society and sheds light on contemporary challenges.

The *Journal of Energy History / Revue d'histoire de l'énergie* seeks to go beyond studies that treat different sources and forms of energy in isolation. The journal hopes to create new opportunities for scholarship and publication in which the full potential of historical research can be realized by comparing and contrasting different forms of energy produced and consumed in their social, political, economic, technological, and cultural contexts.

Although the *Journal of Energy History / Revue d'histoire de l'énergie* focuses on the period from the 18th century to the present—generally understood as the “modern” era in energy history—it will nonetheless consider all contributions, regardless of their period of

focus. The journal is also open to a range of disciplinary (and interdisciplinary) approaches that share a commitment to investigating historical processes and change over time.

The *Journal of Energy History / Revue d'histoire de l'énergie* will be published online, open access two times per year. Articles in English and French will be accepted and subject to peer review by two scholars. The journal is overseen by an international editorial board. Its readership is primarily academic, but diverse publishing formats, particularly “Out of the Box,” are intended to reach a wider audience and thus offer valuable opportunities to share research with the general public.