On the Language of Hallucinations: Visions (1759) by Charles Bonnet

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Background

Although hallucinatory experiences are not aphasic ones, they have been considered products of an impaired central nervous system since Charles Bonnet first described what is now known as The Charles Bonnet Syndrome. “Visions” (Bonnet, 1759), has not been translated; it reports the non-demented hallucinations of Bonnet’s grandfather, Charles Lullin. Rare commentaries on “Visions”, (e.g., Floumoy, 1902), focus on the clinical dimensions, frequently discussing putative ophthalmological components (e.g. Hedges, 2007). In the process of completing our translation of “Visions” we noted features of Lullin’s hallucinated images that are of potential neurolinguistic and neuropsychological interest: colors are a prominent component of all images and colors were judged of high luminance; components of the image were repeated (perseverated?) over time with minor variations; images frequently originated in one hemifield; there was frequent movement of two sorts, construction-deconstruction of an image and movement of the image against the background. Some of these features may have a subcortical origin, others seem to be clearly cortical.

References
