When we address the concept of "Metaphoric Networks in Lexia to Perplexia" the concept of understanding computers as environments becomes important. The computer enables us to explore new forms of authorship and inter-authorship. As multi-valent functional machines computers make possible new approaches to the sciences, the arts, and the humanities often employing metaphor in a salient manner. The potential of the computer to augment communication and understanding as well as to provide new perspectives related to knowledge acquisition, meaning production, and human consciousness, becomes subtly enfolded in Lexia to Perplexia. Yet, disruptive language use, miscommunication, ambiguity, personalized language forms and punning playfulness also embody the potential for evocative meta-collapses of meaning production. The evocative nature of these meta-collapses invariably extend meaning through their rich poetic ambiguity generating a kind of oscillation between meaning and meaning collapse. This is where Memmott enrolls theory and practice within an experiential frame. He enables theoretical concerns to be addressed within an experiential mixed-semiotic network of resonant meaning oscillations.

The environmental qualities that the computer and related systems of connectivity provide, open out what some might consider new language potentials. Bolter and Grusin in Remediation: Understanding New Media describe the process of new media forms being constructed out of older media. Certainly this is partially true of computer-based environments. Yet the computer opens up some new language potentials that stem from the operative nature of cybernetic systems, the mutability of media-elements in computer-based environmental space, the spatial nature of environments and the distributed/connective nature that such systems enable.

When we speak of "metaphoric networks" one must begin to consider what relation metaphor has to computer code and the generation of computer-based media-elements. One can not underestimate the importance of metaphor in communication processes.

Metaphor - A transferring of one word the sense of another, from metaphorein; meta, over and pherein, to bear. A figure of speech in which one thing is likened to another different
thing by being spoken of as if it were that other; implied comparison, in which a word of phrase ordinarily and primarily used of one thing is applied to another.²

This responsive text was itself written within the framing environment of the "desktop metaphor". Inside this metaphor one asks where does the metaphor leave off and the text take over? We look at the computer screen closely and we see a set or field of pixels. The pixels are presented through an underlying code functioning within a particular software/hardware environment. This software/hardware environment enables the creation of a particular "language" space. The pixels form patterns that look like words or images. We read these patterns as words or images or some word/image hybrid. Thus, this light configuration is "likened" to a word or image or word/image hybrid and we understand it as such. We compare the environment of the screen to our embodied memory of past relationships, gleaning the shape of words and images, symbols, formulas — patterns. In general these are not fixed figures in Lexia to Perplexia, presented through the auspices of the computer — they are generated, malleable and operative time-based configurations that are authored to be responsive to interactive exploration. Thus we might describe computer networks themselves as being literal and "metaphoric networks" in that they enable the circulation of metaphors through technological means. We have the vehicle of light, hardware/software, and connectivity, forming an evocative, richly ambiguous, extended environment of "implied comparison" brought about through cognition. The computer also enables the nesting of metaphor in that the word or image produced through light configurations can also function as a metaphor in itself.

The choice of Memmott to explore the notion of codes on a series of different levels, in the light of the above, becomes quite interesting. This includes the mis-use of standard textual codes through the employment of non-standard punctuation, the displacement of mathematical symbols, the rebus-like exploration of textual and symbolic formulas, the displacement/replacement of computer-based code words, the creative employment of symbols as well as the exploration of context-relevant neologisms. This text of light embodies an oscillation between computer-based code and text, as well as between the literal and the metaphorical. Often Memmott disrupts the textual meaning in the service of generating graphical and/or pictorial meaning. The work also oscillates between self-referentiality and external reference. The conceptual territory that the work
reveals is illusive. Does the computer present an environmental territory or the dissolution of territory, or a form of territorial oscillation?

One question that the work brings to light explores an extended notion of "creole"— "A creole is a new language that arises when two different language communities come into contact". This exploration of creole potentially moves beyond the integration of English with programming languages. If we also consider images, glyphs, and symbols to be "language", here Memmott is perhaps beginning to address a mixed-semiotic creole that merges visual language with textual language — here both languages are supported by an underlying code language and operational variables functioning within a particular connective computer-based hardware environment. Even if one does not accept this as a computer-related extension of linguistic creole, one can consider the work to be functioning as a "metaphoric network" that is likened to the concept of creole through the environmental neighboring of image, text and code, where the "code" operates on multiple levels.

This creole embodies a circulation of "codes" and their disruption including the textual, the imagistic/graphical, and through computer-based code-related text and symbols. This "creolization" is accomplished through a series of textual puns and visual word/graphic/code plays as well as through the operative nature of the interactive encoded environment. The narrative that one gleans through navigation of this environment is associative and generates a rich conceptual field. The operative, mixed-semiotic nature of the environment enables the exploration of meaning potentials brought about through dynamic interaction.

A hinting at "metamorphosis" oscillates and envelopes both human and machine change within the "Posthuman" cybernetic circuit. Memmott constantly explores multi-language condensations, generating a shifting flow of evocations. We might say that he is exploring meta-metamorphosis. Such a strategy of oscillation moves between resonance and collapse — between the legible and the illegible in a sphere of meaning production that enfolds sense, nonsense and the extended sense of his created language. The work is a machine of attraction and repulsion which drives the interactant to continue despite the ambiguities, drawing them into the game of deciphering this multi-modal media environment.
Lexia to Perplexia is experienced through the oscillating body of an image/text that enfolds the performative with the semiotic poly-valent. At one moment we literally bring about the collapse of textual legibility at the service of graphic resonance — the literal and metaphorical layering of "texts". The "terminal identity" of the image/text creole is made operative through interactivity. Meaning emerges through computer-based use. The work operates on the associative powers of the interactant — a delicate equation that balances the meaning force of words, symbols, text, and images in an ongoing process of evocative experiential meaning "summing". Pierce states that "meaning is that which the sign conveys". Here we are exploring a circulation of shifting sign configurations.

Our new task is to define approaches to this image/text/code creole in part through the literal and metaphorical understanding of "syntax, verb forms, and vocabulary." We must also recognize how new "hybrid" languages might function differently to the "languages" that they are born of. These new "hybrid-languages" need not generate meaning based on the rules we have become accustomed to through our long history with textual meaning production. Perhaps as the creole between the language of images and texts [of various kinds] is explored, we need to define new elucidating approaches to meaning production that are environmentally appropriate to this enfolding of mixed-semiotic collections, light patterns and operative processes.

We are now at the point of exploring an expanded set of media-element collections in computer-based environments, as an extension of language as we know it (notice I avoid the term media-vocabulary). We are also becoming involved with the potentials of computer-based processes that become operative in general computer-based environments. We must expand the nature of the concept of creole to address the variable media-neighborings that are generative of meaning in mutable, interactive, computer-based, authored environments. Beside the language of texts, code, symbols and 2D images, we should also include the languages of digital sound, 3D images, digital video etc. We must begin to address the complex meanings embodied through avatars, bots and other new responsive computer-based entities and forms. Our collection of mixed-semiotic media elements and processes should also include an extended understanding of media-behaviors — the potentials of encoding behavior, of artificial life and artificial intelligence as applied to authored poetic computer-based media-environments. In particular we must come to understand how computer-based spaces enable new environmental qualities of meaning production. We
should also include the relevance of the interface, and of extended context as elements of meaning exploration — enfolding the computer-environment with the potentials of differing forms of embodied experience in the world-at-large.


2  Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary, Dorset and Baber, 1983