ENGL 3570

January 30, 2023

Meme Assignment

I’ve chosen the meme attached below because it resonates with how I felt during the early to mid-stages of the first of several lockdowns during the pandemic. During this time, I was at least somewhat aware of the effects that the global pandemic and resulting sequester periods, but still felt optimistic enough to make jokes about the situation. I wasn’t alone in feeling this way. I had several friends who created memes and jokes about our predicament, especially about the terms, concepts, and phrases that entered our collective lexicon seemingly overnight due to COVID-19. Take, for example, SARS-CoV-2 itself, which was humorously renamed to “The Rona” or “Miss Rona”. Furthermore, the word “pandemic” was substituted with nearly any word beginning with the letter P from “panini” to “panorama” to “Panda Express”.

Some may argue that this was in poor taste since the pandemic was already affecting the lives of many, even in the early months. However, these examples and more display the use of humor to “defang” some of the serious topics being repeated incessantly in the news and media cycle, relieving some of the anxiety many people felt at the time.

This meme in particular describes my experience with the pandemic in a variety of ways, some personal and some more general. Like many people, the COVID lockdown allowed me to explore a variety of interests, both old and new, to keep myself busy and to distract from the reality of the pandemic (even if only temporarily). Like the creator of the meme (presumably), the reality TV show RuPaul’s Drag Race and drag in general were among these pastimes. I had several online friends that I initially met because of our interest in Drag Race, but hadn’t spoken to consistently for a while before the pandemic. Once lockdowns were in place, we started getting in touch again, bonding again over our shared excitement about the show’s new season and our shared experiences during the lockdown.

It’s events like these that shaped the first few months of my pandemic experience: a combination of jokes and hobbies to cope with the pandemic and maintain bonds with others in a time where physically meeting them was unsafe. While it may seem far fetched, I believe the meme I’ve chosen represents that in a concise, humorous way.

Figure : Alt Text: A tweet from user @mariataccardi which reads, "Accidentally said 'Maxine Vandate' in a meeting just now and would like to offer it to anyone needing a drag name, you're welcome."