

Feb. 20, 2023 2:00pm

I walked into my American Nonfiction class at around 2:15, confused by the assignment. We were to read an excerpt from “The Autobiography of Alice B. Tolkas.” It’s a book written by Gertrude Stein from the perspective of her dear friend Alice B. Tolkas. In our slice of the 310 paged book, Gertrude focused on her own life. She gave backstory for her early years, why she lived in France, her college experience, and her relationship with Alice. I got the impression that the whole book was Gertrude stroking her own ego from the perspective of her friend.

“What’d you think of this week’s piece?” I asked my classmate Jay. I’m not well read, and Jay can pick up on subtleties in text that I miss. I had them in my Creative Approaches to Literature class last year.

“I thought it was a cool concept; to write about yourself from your friend’s perspective,” they said. “What’d you think?”

“I liked the concept, but it seemed like she was stroking her ego a lot,” I said.

“I could see that,” Jay said.

Our classmate, Alisa, chimed in from the otherside of the room, “I found the ego stroking came off sarcastically, like she was writing about her friend teasing her for how arrogant she is.”

Alisa had come back to school after 2 decades of doing hair.

“Could be, I missed that when I read it, but it’d make sense during the exaggerated explanation of her brilliance during the college part,” I said. “But writing about yourself from the perspective of someone who likes you seems easy. Writing from the perspective of someone who doesn’t like you, that would be a challenge.”

“That would take a lot of self awareness,” Alisa said. “You’d have to be able to separate yourself and see what behaviors of yours might aggravate a person, or explore things you’ve done that might have hurt them.”

“I don’t know if I’d want to give people who don’t like me that space in my brain,” Jay said.

That’s what it is to be a Maverick. It’s the comradery of coming into a room to share perspectives with differing people. Some of us share dorms with people we’ve never met. Some of us live in our childhood rooms at our parents house. Some of us stay in our childhood rooms to help our parents. Some of us have part time jobs at coffee shops and juice bars. Some of us fit classes into our full time careers. Some of us will graduate in four years. Some of us will take four years to decide on a major. The one thing we all have in common is an intrigue in our studies, and a craving to share in the knowledge of our classmates and professors.