

# AMERICAN MATTERS

A Blog by Students at  
the Institute of North American History

Introducing Our

## Writers in Residence

for the Winter Term 2024/25

Being non-binary themselves, Andy Miebach's research interests are located primarily in the area of queer studies. After recently earning their bachelor's degree in English Studies and History, they are now pursuing their master's degree in the same subjects. Since the beginning of their academic career, their focus has been on works in the horror genre as well as women's history. Miebach especially enjoys writing about vampire and vampire-adjacent media, from classics to young adult novels and films. Before applying to university, they lived in Scotland as part of a gap year, working in hostels and enjoying the countryside while deciding on what to study. As a former indecisive teen, Miebach now participates in the university's study guide program in the hopes of helping other almost-adults decide where to go next. Currently, Miebach feels they have found the best place for them in academia, and they hope to continue on the same path for a long time to come.



Nele "Andy" Miebach



Wen Chen

Wen Chen is from Taiwan, pursuing a master's degree in North American Studies. She has always been fascinated by the world of humanities and social science, where she can research human beings, different cultures, and societies. Through social science, one can find the cause and effect behind a social system, analyzing the meaning beyond social constructs rooted in collective behaviors, actions, and customs. Chen's writing interests center on gender studies, feminism, African American history, and here, she mainly focuses on American politics. She enjoys visiting museums, discovering cafés, journaling, and doing yoga in her free time. Chen believes each individual's voice is crucial, and with her background, she hopes to bring new perspectives and share something different with you.



Verda Altın

Verda Altın studied English Literature during her undergraduate years, and her love for literature has been a lifelong passion. Initially, her focus was on medieval literature, which led to her admiration for Geoffrey Chaucer, who remains Altın's favorite author. To her, literature is an endless journey of discovery. Throughout Altın's academic journey, she has always been particularly fond of feminist criticism, which became the main focus of her studies and shaped how she analyzes literature. Over time, her interests expanded to include postcolonial studies and speculative fiction, as she

is compelled by their ability to challenge societal norms and explore alternative futures. Pursuing North American Studies has further broadened Altın's perspective, revealing new areas of exploration that she is eager to delve into. During this residency, Altın plans to contribute genre-based pieces, as well as commentaries on short stories and novels.

Rinske van der Horst is currently an English and Comparative Literature student. She loves studying literature and culture because it connects multiple fields (i.e., history, politics, psychology, aesthetics), helping us understand the social realities that shape who we are. Van der Horst is especially fascinated by the formation of identity and how identity markers such as race and gender are represented and discussed both today and in the past. She enjoys analyzing how stereotypes and beliefs are formed and how they can be challenged or rejected in media, film, and literature. Van der Horst also loves to immerse herself in popular culture and is always curious about how cultural shifts manifest, especially in music. Because of this, she is also part of the campus radio "Kölncampus," where she reviews music, films, and books and gets the chance to interview artists or experts in their field of specialty.



Rinske van der Horst

Sana Oswal is our resident poet. The first poem she ever wrote was on the back of her fourth-grade exam question paper looking to escape boredom as she tended to finish before others. Although Oswal claims it was a mediocre poem at best, it was still a fun form of self-expression. Since then, Oswal has written when she was bored, sad, confused, and especially when having something to say. It turns out she has a lot to say—whether it is about her place in the world or about works of art that have become an indelible part of who she is. So, you might find Oswal writing political or emotional poetry, or you might also find her writing about the most recent piece of media that has saved and/or destroyed her life. Either way, she can't wait.



Sana Oswal

Featuring the First  
Poet in Residence



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