A few favorite poems....

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What do the viewpoints of the narrators in these two poems tell us about their view of nature or human beings in nature. (Consider the language, tone, perspective, imagery, veracity, how connected to the world the speakers seem.)

**Papago Rain Songs**
(Tranditional)

I.
Clouds are standing in the east, they are approaching,
It rains in the distance;
Now it is raining here and the thunder rolls.

2.
Green rock mountains are thundering with clouds.
With this thunder the Akin village is shaking.
The water will come down the arroyo
and I will float on the water.
Afterward the corn will ripen in the fields.

3.
Close to the west the great ocean is singing.
The waves roll toward me, covered with many clouds.
Even here I catch the sound.
The earth is shaking beneath me and I hear deep rumbling.

4.
A cloud on top of Evergreen Mountain is singing.
A cloud on top of Evergreen Mountain is standing still.
It is raining and thundering up there.
It is raining here.
Under the mountain the corn tassels are shaking.
Under the mountain the slender spikes of child corn are glistening.
Flying Above California
Thom Gunn

Spread beneath me it lies--lean upland
sinewed and tawny in the sun, and

valley cool with mustard, or sweet with
loquat. I repeat under my breath

names of places I have not been to:
Crescent City, San Bernadino

--Mediterranean and Northern names.
Such richness can make you drunk. Sometimes

on fogless days be the Pacific,
there is a cold hard light without break

that reveals merely what is--no more
and no less. That limiting candor,

that accuracy of the beaches,
is part of the ultimate richness.
Those Winter Sundays
Robert Hayden

Sundays too my father got up early
and put his cloths on in the blueblack cold
then with cracked hands that ached
from labor in the weekday weather made
banked fires blaze. No one ever thanked him.

I’d wake and hear the cold splintering, breaking.
When the rooms were warm, he’d call,
and slowly I would rise and dress
fearing the chronic angers of that house.

Speaking indifferently to him,
who had driven out the cold
and polished my good shoes as well.
What did I know, what did I know
of love’s austere and lonely offices?

(1962)
My Papa's Waltz

Theodore Roethke

The whiskey on your breath
Could make a small boy dizzy;
But I hung on like death:
Such waltzing is not easy.

We romped until the pans
Slid from the kitchen shelf;
My mother's countenance
Could not unfrown itself.

The hand that held my wrist
Was battered on one knuckle;
At every step you missed
My right ear scraped a buckle.

You beat time on my head
With a palm caked hard by dirt,
Then waltzed me off to bed
Still clinging to your shirt.

(1948)
London
William Blake

I wander through each chartered street,
Near where the chartered Themes does flow,
And mark in every face I meet,
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every man,
In every Infant’s cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forged manacles I hear.

How the Chimney-sweeper’s cry
Every black’ning Church appalls;
And the hapless Soldier’s sigh
Runs in blood down palace walls.

But most through midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlot’s curse
Blasts the new-born infant’s tear
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.

(1794)
The World is Too Much With Us

—William Wordsworth

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon°
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon,
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers,
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not. —Great God! I’d rather be
A pagan suckled in a creed outworn
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus° rising from the sea;
Or hear Triton° low his wreathéd horn
(1807)
The Colonel

—Carolyn Forché

What you have heard is true. I was in his house. His wife carried a tray of coffee and sugar. His daughter filed her nails, his son went out for the night. There were daily papers, pet dogs, a pistol on the cushion beside him. The moon swung bare on its black cord over the house. One the television was a cop show. It was in English. Broken bottles were embedded in the walls around the house to scoop the kneecaps from a man’s legs or cut his hands to lace. On the windows there were gratings like those in liquor stores. We had dinner, rack of lamb, good wine, a gold bell was on the table for calling the maid. The maid brought green mangoes, salt, a type of bread. I was asked how I enjoyed the country. There was a brief commercial in Spanish. His wife took everything away. There was some talk then of how difficult it had become to govern. The parrot said hello on the terrace. The colonel told it to shut up, and pushed himself from the table. My friend said to me with his eyes: say nothing. The colonel returned with a sack used to bring groceries home. He spilled many human ears onto the table. They were like dried peach halves. There is no other way to say this. He took one of them into his hands, shook it in our faces, dropped it into a water glass. It came alive there. I am tired of fooling around he said. As for the rights of anyone, tell your people they can go fuck themselves. He swept the ears to the floor with his am and held the last of his wine in the air. Something for your poetry, no? he said. Some of the ears on the floor caught this scrap of his voice. Some of the ears on the floor were pressed to the ground.

(1981)
Dear John Wayne
Louise Erdrich

August and the drive-in picture is packed.
We lounge on the hood of the Pontiac
surrounded by the slow-burning spirals they sell
at the window to vanquish the hordes of mosquitoes.
Nothing works. They break through the smoke screen for blood.

Always the lookout spots the Indians first,
spread north to south, barring progress.
The Sioux or some other Plains bunch
in spectacular columns, ICBM missiles,
feathers bristling in the meaningful sunset.

The drum breaks. There will be no parlance.
Only the arrows whistling, a death cloud of nerves,
swarming down on the settlers
who die beautifully, tumbling like dust weeds
into the history that brought us all here
together: this wide screen beneath the sign of the bear.

The sky fills, acres of blue squint and eye
that the crowd cheers. His face moves over us,
a thick cloud of vengeance, pitted
like the land that was once flesh. Each rut,
each scar makes it promise: It is
not over, this fight, not as long as you resist.

Everything we see belongs to us.

A few laughing Indians fall over the hood
slipping in the hot butter.
The eye sees a lot John, but the heart is so blind.
Death makes us owners of nothing.
He smiles, a horizon of teeth
the credits reel over, then the white fields
again blowing in the true-to-life dark.
The dark films over everything.
We get into the car
scratching our mosquito bites, speechless and small
as people are when the movie is done.
We are back in our skins.
How can we help but keep hearing his voice,
the flip side of the sound track, still playing:

_Come on, boys, we got_

_them where we want them, drunk, running._

_They’ll give us what we want, what we need._

Even his disease was the idea of
taking everything.

Those cells, burning, doubling, splitting out of their skins.

(1984)
To the Lady
Misuye Yamada

The one in San Francisco who asked:
Why did the Japanese
let the government put them
in those camps without protest?

Come to think of it I
should’ve run off to Canada
should’ve hijacked a plane to Algeria
should’ve pulled myself up from my
bra straps
and kicked ‘em in the groin
should’ve bombed a back
should’ve tried self-immolation
should’ve holed myself up in a
woodframe house
and let you watch me
burn up on the six o’clock news
should’ve run howling down the street
naked and assaulted you at breakfast
by AP wirephoto
should’ve screamed bloody murder
like Kitty Genovese

Then
YOU would’ve
come to my aid in shining armor
laid yourself across the railroad track
marched on Washington
tattoooed a Star of David on your arm
written six million enraged
letters to Congress

But we didn’t draw the line
anywhere
law and order Executive order 9066
social order moral order internal order

YOU let’m
I let’m
All are punished.

(1976)
Incident
Countee Cullen

Once riding in old Baltimore,
    Heart-filled, head-filled with glee,
I saw a Baltmorian
    Keep looking straight at me.

Now I was eight and very small,
    And he was no whit bigger,
So I smiled, but he poked out
    His tongue and called me, "Nigger."

I saw the whole of Baltimore
    From May to December:
Of all the things that happened there,
    That's all I remember.

1925
Theme for English B  Langston Hughes

The instructor said,

Go home and write
a page tonight.
And let that page come out of you—
Then it will be true.

I wonder if it's that simple?
I am twenty-two, colored, born in Winston-Salem.
I went to school there, then Durham, then here.
to this college on the hill above Harlem.
I am the only colored student in my class.
The steps from the hill lead down into Harlem,
through a park, across St. Nicholas,
Eighth Avenue, Seventh, and I come to the Y,
the Harlem Branch Y where I take the elevator
up to my room, sit down, and write this page.

It's not easy to know what is true for you or me
at twenty-two, my age. But I guess I'm what
I feel and see and hear, Harlem, I hear you:
hear you, hear me—we two—you, me, talk on this page.
(I hear New York, too.) Me—who?
Well, I like to eat, sleep, drink, and be in love.
I like to work, read, learn, and understand life.
I like a pipe for a Christmas present,
or records—Bessie, bop, or Bach.
I guess being colored doesn't make me not like
the same things other folks like who are other races.

So will my page be colored that I write?
Being me, it will not be white.
But it will be
a part of you, instructor.
You are white—
yet a part of me, as I am a part of you.
That's American.
Sometimes perhaps you don't want to be a part of me.
Nor do I want to be a part of you.
But we are, that's true!
I guess you learn from me—
though you are older—and white—
and somewhat more free.

This is my page for English B. (1951)
Years later she thought of the door
how when she'd finished the dishes & looked up
at his green car pulling out of the driveway
she'd trudged to the door half-asleep to peer
through the screen at a puff of exhaust
ring over the RFD mailbox
how when she'd flicked a dead moth
& stared at the bench by the yellow
trellis festooned with Ramblers
she could not know an iron door would close
over the years she moved from house
to rooming house without leaving a trace
of scouring powder till a city awoke her
to faraway feelings reopening portals of thought
To My Daughter
Raymond Carver

*Everything I see will outlive me.*
Anna Akhamatova

It’s too late now to put a curse on you—wish you plain, say, as Yeats did his daughter. And when met her in Sligo, selling her paintings, it’d worked—she was the plainest, oldest woman in Ireland. But she was safe. For the longest time, his reasoning escaped me. Anyway, it’s too late for you, as I said. You’re grown up now, and lovely. You’re a beautiful drunk, daughter. But you’re a drunk. I can’t say you’re breaking my heart. I don’t have a heart when it comes to this booze thing. Sad, yes, Christ alone knows. Your old man, the one they call Shiloh, is back in town, and the drink has started to flow again. You’ve been drunk for three days, you tell me, when you know that drinking is like poison in our family. Didn’t your mother and I set you example enough? Two people who loved each other knocking each other around, knocking back the love we felt, glass by empty glass, curses and blows and betrayals? You must be crazy! Wasn’t all that enough for you? You want to die? Maybe I think I know you and I don’t. I’m not kidding, kiddo. Who are you kidding? Daughter, you can’t drink. The last few times I saw you, you were out of it. A cast on your collarbone, or else a splint on your finger, dark glasses to hide your beautiful bruised eyes. A lip should kiss instead of split. Oh Jesus, Jesus, Jesus Christ! You’ve got to take hold now. Do you hear me? Wake up! You’ve got to knock it off and get straight. Clean up your act. I’m asking you. Okay, telling you. Sure our family was made to squander, not collect. But turn this around now. You simply must—that’s all. Daughter, you can’t drink. It will kill you. Like it did your mother, and me. Like it did.
Anathema
Raymond Carver

The entire household suffered. My wife, myself, the two children, and dog whose puppies were born dead. Our affairs, such as they were, withered. My wife was dropped by her lover, the one-armed teacher of music who was her only contact with the outside world and the things of the mind. My own girlfriend said she couldn’t stand it anymore, and went back to her husband. The water was shut off. All that summer the house baked. The peach trees were blasted. Our little flower bed lay trampled. The brakes went out on the car, and the battery failed. The neighbors quit speaking to us and closed their doors in our faces. Checks flew back to us from merchants—and then mail stopped being delivered altogether. Only the sheriff got through from time to time—with one or the other of our children in the back seat, pleading to be taken anywhere but here. And then mice entered the house in droves. Followed by a bull snake. My wife found it sunning itself in the living room next to the dead TV. How she dealt with it is another matter. Chopped its head off right there on the floor. And then chopped it in two when it continued to writhe. We saw we couldn’t hold out any longer. We were beaten. We wanted to get down on our knees and say forgive us our sins, forgive us our lives. But it was too late. Too late. No one around would listen. We had to watch as the house was pulled down, the ground plowed up, and then we were dispersed in four directions.

(1984)
For Tess

—Raymond Carver

Out on the Strait the water is whitecapping, as they say here. It’s rough, and I’m glad I’m not out. Glad I fished all day on Morse Creek, casting a red Daredevil back and forth. I didn’t catch anything. No bites, even, not one. But it was okay. It was fine! I carried your dad’s pocketknife and was followed by a dog its owner called Dixie. At times I was so happy I had to quit fishing. Once I lay on the bank with my eyes closed, listening to the sound the water made, and to the wind in the tops of the trees. The same wind that blows out on the Strait, but a different wind, too. For a while I even let myself imagine I had died—and that was all right, at least for a couple of minutes, until it really sank in: Dead. As I was laying there with my eyes closed just after I’d imagined what it might be like if in fact I never got up again, I thought of you. I opened my eyes then and got right up and went back to being happy again. I’m grateful to you, you see. I wanted to tell you.

(1985)
The Bravest
Tom Paxton

The first plane hit the other tower
Right after I came in
It left a gaping, fiery hole
Where offices had been.
We stood and watched in horror
As we saw the first ones fall.
Then someone yelled "Get out! Get out!
They're trying to kill us all."

I grabbed the pictures from my desk
And joined the flight for life.
With every step I called the names
Of my children and my wife.
And then we heard them coming up
From several floors below.
A crowd of fire fighters,
With their heavy gear in tow.

Now every time I try to sleep
I'm haunted by the sound,
Of firemen pounding up the stairs
While we were coming down.

And when we met them on the stairs
They said we were too slow.
"Get out! Get out!" they yelled at us -
"The whole thing's going to go"
They didn't have to tell us twice -
We'd seen the world on fire.
We kept on running down the stairs
While they kept climbing higher.

Now every time I try to sleep
I'm haunted by the sound,
Of firemen pounding up the stairs
While we were coming down.

Thank God, we made it to the street;
We ran through ash and smoke.
I did not know which way to run -
I thought that I would choke.
A fireman took me by the arm
And pointed me uptown.
Then "Christ!" I heard him whisper
As the tower came roaring down

So, now I go to funerals
For men I never knew.
The pipers play Amazing Grace,
As the coffins come in view.
They must have seen it coming
When they turned to face the fire.
They sent us down to safety,
Then, they kept on climbing higher

Now every time I try to sleep
I'm haunted by the sound,
Of firemen pounding up the stairs
While we were coming down.

(2002)
**Untitled**

Ani DiFranco

(inspired by the September 11th massacre, a poem/lyric in progress)

yes,
us people are just poems
we're 90% metaphor
with a leanness of meaning
approaching hyper-distillation
and once upon a time
we were moonshine
rushing down the throat of a giraffe
yes, rushing down the long hallway
despite what the p.a. announcement says
yes, rushing down the long stairs
with the whiskey of eternity
fermented and distilled
to eighteen minutes
burning down our throats
down the hall
down the stairs
in a building so tall
that it will always be there
yes, it's part of a pair
there on the bow of noah's ark
the most prestigious couple
just kickin back parked
against a perfectly blue sky
on a morning beatific
in its indian summer breeze
on the day that america
fell to its knees
after strutting around for a century
without saying thank you
or please

and the shock was subsonic
and the smoke was deafening
between the setup and the punch line
cuz we were all on time for work that day
we all boarded that plane for to fly
and then while the fires were raging
we all climbed up on the windowsill
and then we all held hands
and jumped into the sky
and every borough looked up when it heard the first blast
and then every dumb action movie was summarily surpassed
and the exodus uptown by foot and motorcar
looked more like war than anything i've seen so far
so far
so fierce and ingenious
a poetic specter so far gone
that every jackass newscaster was struck dumb and stumbling
over 'oh my god' and 'this is unbelievable' and on and on
and i'll tell you what, while we're at it
you can keep the pentagon
keep the propaganda
keep each and every tv
that's been trying to convince me
to participate
in some prep school punk's plan to perpetuate retribution
perpetuate retribution
even as the blue toxic smoke of our lesson in retribution
is still hanging in the air
and there's ash on our shoes
and there's ash in our hair
and there's a fine silt on every mantle
from hell's kitchen to brooklyn
and the streets are full of stories
sudden twists and near misses
and soon every open bar is crammed to the rafters
with tales of narrowly averted disasters
and the whiskey is flowin
like never before
as all over the country
folks just shake their heads
and pour

so here's a toast to all the folks who live in palestine
afghanistan
iraq
el salvador

here's a toast to the folks living on the pine ridge reservation
under the stone cold gaze of mt. rushmore

here's a toast to all those nurses and doctors
who daily provide women with a choice
who stand down a threat the size of oklahoma city
just to listen to a young woman's voice

here's a toast to all the folks on death row right now
awaiting the executioner's guillotine
who are shackled there with dread and can only escape into their heads
to find peace in the form of a dream

cuz take away our playstations
and we are a third world nation
under the thumb of some blue blood royal son
who stole the oval office and that phony election
i mean
it don't take a weatherman
to look around and see the weather
jeb said he'd deliver florida, folks
and boy did he ever

and we hold these truths to be self evident:
#1 george w. bush is not president
#2 america is not a true democracy
#3 the media is not fooling me
cuz i am a poem heeding hyper-distillation
i've got no room for a lie so verbose
i'm looking out over my whole human family
and i'm raising my glass in a toast

here's to our last drink of fossil fuels
let us vow to get off of this sauce
shoo away the swarms of commuter planes
and find that train ticket we lost
cuz once upon a time the line followed the river
and peeked into all the backyards
and the laundry was waving
the graffiti was teasing us
from brick walls and bridges
we were rolling over ridges
through valleys
under stars
i dream of touring like duke ellington
in my own railroad car
i dream of waiting on the tall blonde wooden benches
in a grand station aglow with grace
and then standing out on the platform
and feeling the air on my face

give back the night its distant whistle
give the darkness back its soul
give the big oil companies the finger finally
and relearn how to rock-n-roll
yes, the lessons are all around us and a change is waiting there
so it's time to pick through the rubble, clean the streets
and clear the air
get our government to pull its big dick out of the sand
of someone else's desert
put it back in its pants
and quit the hypocritical chants of
freedom forever
cuz when one lone phone rang
in two thousand and one
at ten after nine
on nine one one
which is the number we all called
when that lone phone rang right off the wall
right off our desk and down the long hall
down the long stairs
in a building so tall
that the whole world turned
just to watch it fall

and while we're at it
remember the first time around?
the bomb?
the ryder truck?
the parking garage?
the princess that didn't even feel the pea?
remember joking around in our apartment on avenue D?
can you imagine how many paper coffee cups would have to change their design
following a fantastical reversal of the new york skyline?!
it was a joke, of course
it was a joke
at the time
and that was just a few years ago
so let the record show
that the FBI was all over that case
that the plot was obvious and in everybody's face
and scoping that scene
religiously
the CIA
or is it KGB?
committing countless crimes against humanity
with this kind of eventuality
as its excuse
for abuse after expensive abuse
and it didn't have a clue
look, another window to see through
way up here
on the 104th floor
look
another key
another door
10% literal
90% metaphor
3000 some poems disguised as people
on an almost too perfect day
should be more than pawns
in some asshole's passion play
so now it's your job
and it's my job
to make it that way
to make sure they didn't die in vain
sshhhhhhh....
baby listen
hear the train?

http://www.righteousbabe.com/ani/poem.html