

Mirabeau Bridge

Translation of Guillaume Apollinaire's Le pont Mirabeau

'Neath Mirabeau Bridge flows the Seine
And our love
Must I recall then
That joy came always after pain

 Come the night, sound the hour
 The days pass, I endure

Hand in hand let's stand face to face
While under
Our bridge of arms race
The floods tired of the eternal gaze

 Come the night, sound the hour
 The days pass, I endure

Love runs out¹ as these waters flow
Love runs out²
As our life is slow
And as our hopes in violence grow³

 Come the night, sound the hour
 The days pass, I endure

The days pass, the weeks pass and then⁴
Nor time past
Nor love comes again
'Neath Mirabeau Bridge flows the Seine

 Come the night, sound the hour
 The days pass, I endure

Reuben Thomas

October 1998–February 2000, 22nd–30th April 2018, 3rd May 2024

8-3-5-8 metre (shorter than the original), and with the original's rhyming scheme.

I have set this poem (and the French original) to music.

It's amazing quite how deeply this poem is embedded in the French psyche. There's a pop setting by Marc Lavoine; a song by him used to promote Paris in summer 2004 quotes "la joie venait toujours après la peine", and Mylène Farmer sings, in *Californie* on *Anamorphosée*, "viennent la nuit, sonne l'heure". I doubt this is more than the tip of the iceberg. 31st August 2004

¹Originally "departs"

²Originally "departs"

³Originally "And as Hope does violent grow".

⁴Originally I settled on "The days and weeks pass out of ken", writing: 'or "The days and weeks are gone and then": avoids awkwardness of "ken" but makes the next line sound like a consequence.' In 2018 I tried "The days pass and the weeks pass then", writing "the solution above is more ambiguous", but in 2024 this version seemed better to me, and I don't think it makes the following lines sound like a consequence.