

# [The atmospheres of sonnet 43 and sonnet 29 allude to browning and millays essay s...](https://assignbuster.com/the-atmospheres-of-sonnet-43-and-sonnet-29-allude-to-browning-and-millays-essay-sample/)

Love’s many contradicting forms are portrayed in two dramatically different sonnets, Sonnet 43 and Sonnet 29. Though both poems are written in Petrarchan sonnet form, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Edna St. Vincent Millay chronicle two contrasting marriages and their distinct attitudes towards love. Millay’s pessimistic Sonnet 29 depicts unrequited love as a passive force causing her disillusionment. On the other hand, Sonnet 43 attempts to quantify Browning’s endless and divine love for her spouse, Robert Browning. Through their respective poems, the writers convey outpours of emotion and how their personal experiences with love have changed both their lives. Common themes explored in the two poems consist of marriage, love and loyalty. Elements of the poems that enable this include their atmospheres, diction, tones and various poetic techniques.

The atmospheres of Sonnet 43 and Sonnet 29 allude to Browning and Millay’s outlooks on their respective marriages. Sonnet 29 exposes a woman’s grief for her deteriorating marriage and her husband, who “ no longer looks with love on me (the poet)”. Readers are overwhelmed by an anger-filled, threatening opening atmosphere in which the poet imposes on them to “ pity me not” for the “ light of day [that]…no longer walks the sky”. Millay’s despair is seen through the metaphor of her happiness and spirit as a diminished “ light”, repressed by the turmoil of her relationship. A sense of helpless sympathy is thus evoked by the melancholic, oppressive imagery and bitterly ironic diction.

In contrast to Sonnet 29, Elizabeth Barrett Browning begins with a grand portrayal of her love using numerous hyperboles, thus creating a majestic atmosphere. The poet loves her husband “ to the depth and breadth and height my soul can reach…for the ends of Being and ideal Grace”. Enjambment is employed to represent the ceaseless flow of love in Browning’s marriage. However, the sonnet concludes with a darkly ambiguous atmosphere that contrasts greatly to its optimistic introduction. The poet confesses that she shall “ but love thee (Robert Browning) better after death”. In addition to its implications of Browning’s eternal love, this reference to her marriage vows also has forbidding connotations of marriage causing her ultimate death. Consequently, it may be seen that the poet’s marriage and reliance on her husband is detrimental to her fragile character. From being bitterly resentful to miserably conscious of a love that is “ no more”, Millay’s emotions are depicted by the developing atmosphere of Sonnet 29. Similarly, Sonnet 43 alludes to Browning’s inner thoughts beyond the divinity and grandeur of her marriage through the dismal change in its atmosphere.

Religious diction is applied in Sonnet 43 where Browning expresses a spiritual bond that transcends her religion and beliefs. Her pious worship for her husband has replaced a love for her “ lost saints”, as illustrated by the reverential tone extending through the sonnet. Furthermore, it is the poet’s marriage that compels her to persevere, guiding her when she is “ feeling out of sight”. From the “ ends of Being and ideal Grace” to the contradicting subtleness of “ everyday’s most quiet need”, Browning’s compassion is as unwavering as it is strong. When its is revealed that she loves her husband “ with the passion put to use in [her] old grief’s”, readers are given implications of the poet’s possibly troubled past, which becomes irrelevant in the face of her marriage. Moreover, Browning’s love appears to defy the acts of God, as she claims to love her husband “ better after death”. This sense of an immortal love is further compounded by the repetition of “ I love thee”, creating a constant flow in the sonnet and giving it an intimate, personal touch.

Contrastingly, Sonnet 29 directly confronts Millay’s husband using spiteful diction to convey her deep resentment for the state of her marriage. Rather than reciting, “ I love thee” like Browning in her Sonnet 43, Millay repeats, “ Pity me not” for the grievances in her marriage, thus evoking sympathy from readers. In comparison to Browning’s theory of love being an eternal, resilient force, Millay describes a relationship that is susceptible to external forces that surround it. “ As the year goes by”, the “ beauties” of her marriage have been overcome by a “ man’s desire…hushed so soon”. Her husband’s “ waning” loyalty and fickleness is exposed by the comparison of their relationship to an “ ebbing tide [that] goes out to sea” and never returns. Such negative diction alludes to the passive nature of Millay’s unrequited love as opposed to Browning’s prosperous, active affection for her husband.